



# Conservative and Evolutionary Trends in the Implementation Narratives on the Harmonization Policy in Cameroon Education System

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## ABSTRACT

It is generally agreed that a curriculum however well designed must be implemented throughout a centralized school system if it is to make any impact or if students are to attend its goals and objectives. In the Cameroon Educational system, the Government has enacted several policies beginning with the policy of harmonization in 1963, a few years after she became independent. These policies which are guidelines for educational practices include but are not limited to; harmonization, bilingualism, multilingualism and ruralization. The importance of these policy issues had been earlier stated in the Conferences of Education in Africa which started with the Addis Ababa Conference of 1961, reiterated in the National Education Law of 1998, the Sector Wide Approach of 2006 and most recently in the Growth and Employment Strategic Plan for 2010-2020 and the vision 2035. In order to implement the above curriculum policies, many principles and actors must be involved. Looking at the principles of curriculum implementation, Fullan (2007) contends that one of the most important issues is that implementation is a process not an event. It occurs gradually overtime during which characteristics of the change, school system, and external factors must be continuously addressed. It is in this context that this paper seeks to find the extent to which Cameroon's Curriculum policy of Harmonization has been implemented in schools by all concerned, from the period of 1961 to 2015. It will also look at how these efforts have affected teaching and learning in the school system.

## INTRODUCTION

According to the conference of ministers of Education of the African Union held on August 2007 in South Africa, harmonization is a process of ensuring articulation, both horizontal and vertical between programmes. Harmonization also entails establishing benchmarks for curricula, programme delivery and equivalences for the same course.

In Cameroon, harmonization meant selecting educational practices from the French Cameroon and British Cameroon inherited education systems at

independence and blending them with Cameroon post-colonial objectives in order to create one system suitable to Cameroon's post-colonial needs. Stated in Law No. 63/DF/13of 19/6/63 harmonization was the first curriculum policy enacted in Cameroon after independence and reunification.

### Theoretical approach to Trends in Implementation of Harmonization

In curriculum, theories are used to provide explanations for practice that help to facilitate the

creation and implementation of the curriculum. This study discusses the conservative and evolutionary theories as an approach to provide an understanding of trends in the implementation of the Curriculum policy of Harmonization in Cameroon education system.

### **Conservative Theory**

Propounded by Edmund Burke, conservatism is a political ideology that is concerned with protecting the status-quo of a state. According to O'Hara (2011) conservatism is a survey that captures the essence of a creed that so often decries change but has proven remarkably adept at surviving it. Conservatives are often engaged with the politics of nostalgia (Jan-Werner Muller, 2006). They are less interested in putting forth a political doctrine than in expressing a disposition. O'Hara (2011) argues that, conservatism is a nostalgic glance backwards that allows conservatives to see more clearly. Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski and Sulloway (2003) also contend that conservatives are less concerned with equality, more comfortable in maintaining the status-quo, more likely to show favouritism for high status or advantaged groups over low status or disadvantaged groups to the extent that their system justifying attitudes are characterized by resistance to change and tolerance for inequality.

Using a multi-dimensional approach to understanding conservatism, Muller (2006) proposed four dimensions of conservatism which he termed sociological, methodological, dispositional and philosophical conservatism.

Conservatism from a sociological dimension is simply the ideology or the specific political programme of a particular social group trying to hold onto its privileges. He contends that this kind of conservatism originates from the period in history when the European aristocracy started defending itself against the rising bourgeoisie and subsequently against mass democracy. He further argues that, the precondition for sociological conservatism is some distinct threat to an existing social order. It is about, an active defence; a resistance to change that threatens an existing status-quo.

The second dimension is the methodological conservatism also known as prudential particularism. It is a claim about the nature and the process of change. While not suggesting that they ought to be no change at all or a commitment in favour of pure "stationariness" or a highly selective commitment to "Yell Stop" (Muller, 2006, P. 362), methodological conservatism, argues that reforms are necessary from time to time, but they ought to work carefully or even cautiously to improve what is already there. This means that change should be incremental and should take place in steps. Burke (1993) admits that "a state without the means of some change is without the means of its conservation (P. 21). It is about a carefully managed process of change, or put differently of rendering safe the change that is desirable and in many cases inevitable.

The third dimension of conservatism as seen by Muller is the dispositional or aesthetic conservatism. He holds that central to this dimension are two presumptions; on the one hand is the presumption in favour of the past or sometimes even a peculiar vision of the present, and on the other hand a presumption in favour of a particular or the concrete. These dispositions give rise to stances of nostalgia. In describing the dispositional conservatism, Oakeshott (1991) pointed out that:

*to be conservative, then is to prefer the familiar to the unknown, to prefer the tried to the untried, fact to mystery, the actual to the possible, the limited to the unbounded, the limited to the near to the distant, the sufficient to the superabundant, the convenient to the perfect, present laughter to utopian bliss (P. 408).*

The fourth dimension according to Muller (2006) is the philosophical. Also called the anthropological, this stance implies a commitment to realizing a set of substantive values, irrespective of whether these values are already instantiated in the present. This means that for philosophical conservatives, the primary question is not about what the past suggests, or how or by which proven method, these values should be implemented. The question deals with what sets of values should be considered. They are primarily interested in the importance of hierarchical relationships, or some more or less naturalized conception of inequality.

Burke (1955) examined the relationship between conservatism and schooling in terms of the role of the school, the nature of the curriculum, and the role of the teacher. The school, in the conservative ideology, is a repository of cultural values. It is an agency for transmitting the cultural heritage and values from the mature to the culturally immature, thus preserving them for future generations. The school's role is to unite the individual with the heritage and to instil a sense of belonging to the group whose traditions are manifested in the institution. In addition to its general role as an agency for transmitting and perpetuating the cultural heritage, the school also aids other institutions by identifying the future elite and providing the education appropriate to its destiny as a leadership group. The education of leadership elite can take place either through special schools established solely for the task, or by tracking or streaming, which places those who display leadership potential in special classes within a comprehensive setting. Whatever the mode, there is an appropriate preparation for the elite. It should be noted that this leadership elite is to exhibit both character and intellectual acumen.

For conservatives, the curriculum transmits the general culture to all and also provides appropriate education to the various straits of the society. It includes the generally accepted basic skills found in most school programmes – reading, writing and arithmetic. In addition, loyalty to and membership in the community, often the nation-state is developed by

a selective use of the literature to exemplify significant cultural themes. History, too, is a core subject for providing a perspective into the evolution of the culture and its heritage. Fine arts, music, and dance are also used to expose students to the cultural heritage. Defined and prescribed cultural values are used to shape behaviour or character to conform to traditional norms or to national character. Whatever possible, conservatives prefer to integrate character formation or development within a religious context.

Secondary and higher education continues to cultivate intellectual discipline through the study of subjects such as the native language, classical and foreign languages, mathematics, history, literature and science. Often, conservative educators identify a core of prescribed studies designed for all students to ensure the uniform transmittal of the cultural heritage.

The teacher in the Conservative educational setting is an agent of transmitting the cultural heritage to children and youth so that they can incorporate it into their intellectual outlooks and characters. Such teachers should be people who cherish the cultural heritage, who know it well and who reflect in their personalities and behaviour the culture's traditional values. Like the idealist teacher, they are character models that students can imitate. While they may use educational technology to transmit the tradition more effectively, conservative teachers are neither agents seeking to change or reconstruct society, nor do such teachers encourage cultural alternatives and diversity. In a world that has grown increasingly unstable because of social and technological change, incessant mobility and moral relativism, conservative teachers use the school as a stabilizing agency. Their task is to maintain the cultural heritage as a repository of the enduring achievements of the human race by introducing it to the young so that they can absorb it and perpetuate it.

Stressing continuity rather than change, conservatives emphasize the power of the cultural tradition to shape knowledge, character and values. Seeing human beings as unequal in abilities and capacity, conservatism views the good society as one that is organized hierarchically. Education, based on the conservative ideology, is primarily a process of cultural transmission and preservation. Indeed, it is part of the cultural continuum that exists between the generations.

Applied to this study, conservative curriculum policy is resistance to change in curriculum practice. Those who support it are nostalgic about the colonial curriculum and seek to maintain it, sometimes for what they refer to as maintaining standards.

### **Evolutionary Theory**

Evolution refers to a slow progress; a gradual incremental and cumulative progress which is a counterpoint to revolution. It can refer to maturation and movement towards 'advancement' or to 'directionless movement' in which we make no reference to the 'the idea of progress' without considering the possibility of regress (Sementelli, 2007.p 743-5; Steinmo, 2010. p 20). It can refer to

natural selection, describing the 'blind' adaptation by species to their environment, artificial selection, describing the ability of 'entrepreneurs' to learn and innovate as they adapt to their environment, or a process in which actors adapt to and help create their environment (Kerr, 2002. p. 336; 2003. p. 120, Kay, 2003. p. 108, Room, 2012). It can describe 'pure mutations', perhaps equivalent to major policy change, or 'phyletic transformations', equivalent to incremental change (Durant and Diehl, 1989 p. 195). It can be used as a metaphor or a description of reality (Curry, 2003; Kay, 2003. pp. 105, 119, 125; Lewis and Steinmo, 2008.p 33). Finally, it can refer to the role of individuals, the population as a whole and/or the role of its environment.

Evolution in policy studies is used frequently to describe policy change. Lewis and Steinmo, (2010) portray 'evolutionary theory' as the solution to a wide range of unresolved debates on endogenous and exogenous change, the nature of institutions, rational choice and norms, and structure and agency. The notion of evolution came into social science from Charles Darwin's (1809 -1882) theory of biological evolution which stated that species of organisms have evolved from simpler organisms through the process of variation, and natural selection.

Proposed by August Comte (1798-1857), Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) and Spencer (1820-1903), the basic assumption of this theory is that change is a characteristic feature of human society, the present observed condition of the society presumed to be the result of change in the past. It also holds that change results from operations of forces within the society or culture. Cairney (2013) suggests that evolution in public policy could be used to describe the following processes:

- The cumulative, long-term development of policy solutions.
- Major disruptions in the way that policy makers think about, and try to solve, policy problems.
- The maintenance or radical reform of policy-making institutions.
- Emergent behaviour within complex systems.
- The trial-and-error strategies adopted by actors, such as policy entrepreneurs, when adapting to their environment.
- The coming together of multiple factors to create the conditions for major policy change.

Evolutionary theories are also based on the assumption that society gradually change from simple beginnings into even more complex forms. According to the evolutionary theorists, social change means progress towards something better. They see change as positive and beneficial. To them the evolutionary process implied that societies would necessarily reach new and higher levels of civilization. Mondal Puja in an article published on <http://www.yourarticlelibrary.com> accessed on 23/12/2015, summarized the following assumptions of evolutionary theory.

- That change is inevitable and natural
- That change is gradual and continuous

- That change is sequential and in certain stages
- That all successive stages of change, are higher over preceding stages, thus evolution is progressive
- That forces of change are inherent in the object
- That stages of change are non-reversible
- That the direction of change is from simple to complex, from homogeneity to heterogeneity, from undifferentiated to the differentiated in form and function.
- That all societies pass through same stages of development.

According to Kingdon (1984, 1995), the policy process consists of three separate streams – problems (agenda setting), policies (ideas or solutions) and politics (receptivity to solutions) – and major policy change may only occur when they come together during a brief ‘window of opportunity’. The problem stream provides the potential for major policy-making disruptions and non-incremental change when there are lurches of attention, often caused by a combination of novelty (including ‘focusing events’) and latent interest (Kingdon, 1984. p 103; Durant and Diehl, 1989; Birkland, 1997; Cairney, 2012. pp.187–8, 234; Cairney et al, 2012.p. 222). This shift of attention is a necessary but insufficient condition for major change. Change also requires that a feasible policy solution exists – and solutions cannot be produced at short notice. They often develop over years or decades.

To deal with this disconnect between attention and the time it takes to produce solutions, communities of policy specialists develop proposals in anticipation of problems (Kingdon, 1984, pp 122–4). Kingdon describes the time and effort it takes for feasible policy solutions to develop; they whirl around in the ‘policy primeval soup’, proposed by one actor then ‘softened up’ by many participants to ‘recombine familiar elements’ and change their ‘technical feasibility’, ‘value acceptability’ or anticipated costs (1984: 138–46; 1995: 226–7). ‘Evolution’ describes the slow progress of an idea towards acceptability within the policy community. It is complete when policy makers are receptive to the solution and have the motive and opportunity to adopt it (Kingdon, 1995, pp. 165–6; Lieberman, 2002). Policy changes, but only when new solutions are made more consistent with existing practices. The role of policy entrepreneurs is important but limited: they are the well-informed and well-connected insiders who provide the knowledge and tenacity to help bring the ‘streams’ together – but as ‘surfers waiting for the big wave’ rather than people who control policy processes (Kingdon, 1995, 225; 1984, p. 173; Lustick, 2011, p. 204).

Baumgartner and Jones (1993, pp. 35–7) explained that policy monopolies exist in subsystems when some actors are able to create or maintain institutions whose rules reflect a particular policy image. They advocate the importance of creating multiple ‘venues’ with the potential for the losers in policy disputes in one venue to challenge the status quo and seek more sympathetic audiences in others. These challenges are possible when groups pursue new policy images and try to encourage greater

attention and participation in other venues. The success of such challenges is significant in number, but rare as a proportion of government activity, because policy makers must ignore most issues. They also exhibit ‘selective attention’ – when their existing view of how the world works, and should work, limits further the problems to which they pay attention and the solutions they are willing to consider. Change often requires a critical mass of attention and pressure to overcome the conservatism of decision makers and to shift their attention from competing problems (Jones & Baumgartner, 2005, pp. 19–20, 48–51).

With regard to the study, evolutionary curriculum policy is a gradual and continuous change in curriculum practice. Advocates of this theory, believe that change takes time because people become accustomed to the status quo and prefer to make modifications in new behaviour in small and gradual steps.

### Background to Harmonization

At independence, Cameroon inherited two colonial systems of education, the one French and the other British. In the former British Cameroon, colonial education was in the hands of the administration, the missionaries and the local authorities. The objectives of education as set by the administration was to train temporal civil servants who would help in the running of the affairs of the colony and also to train clerks who would work with the administration and security service (Courade and Courade, 1977).

Akoulouze (1984) pointed out that the fostering of education in the former British Cameroon corresponded with the need for personnel, but given the fact that Nigeria supplied the personnel used in this zone, the administration did not see the need for Government to expand its educational services. Missionaries considered education as an instrument for propagating their religion and so one of the objectives of confessional schools was to train catechists, pastors, priests and teachers. Akoulouze (1984) however argued that the British trained a small number of personnel, who became a small group of local elite oriented towards the British way of life and encouraged the use of English in the other types of educational establishments.

In the former French Cameroon, the objectives of education were almost the same as those laid down in public and in mission schools of the former British Cameroon. However, it was different in two perspectives: it aimed at assimilating the indigenes and it was strongly centralized. Gwanfogbe (2006) pointed out that education in the former French Cameroon had been maintained at Independence under the Ministry of Education, Youth and Culture in a centralized structure as inherited from the French Colonial administration. Meanwhile, West Cameroon had fought and gained a decentralized education system by achieving regional status in the Nigerian federation.

Since reunification of the British and French Cameroon in 1961, one of the problems that plagued the nation was how to cope with the British and French

inherited systems of education. The former French Cameroon became the Federated State of East Cameroon, and the Former British Southern Cameroon became the Federated State of West Cameroon. Both states were under the control of Federal Government (Gwanfogbe, 2006). Primary education, including the training of teachers for primary schools was left to the Government of the Federated states and placed in each region under a Secretary of State for Education. A decree of June 1962 organized the Secretariat of State for Education. Each Secretariat of State had inspectors of schools. The two states operated two different systems of education. For example, while West Cameroon operated an eight-year primary school system that began at the age of

five years, East Cameroon operated a six year programme that began at the age of six years. It is worthy to note that, while the French-speaking system lasted six years, the English-speaking system took eight years to be completed. However, successful candidates from both systems ended up with a First School Leaving Certificate (F.S.L.C.) from the West Cameroon Education system and an equivalent Certificat d'Etudes Primaires Elementaires (C.E.P.E.) from the East Cameroon system. Though Nursery education was optional in both states, it started in East Cameroon at the age of four years and in West Cameroon at the age of three years. The difference in the systems is represented in the table below.

**Table 1: Structure of Primary Education in East and West Cameroon before Harmonization.**

East Cameroon			West Cameroon	
Age	Class Levels	Certificates	Class Levels	Certificates
3		C.E.P.E	Nursery one	F.S.L.C
4	Ecole Maternelle		Nursery two	
5	Ecole Maternelle		Infant one	
6	Initiation class		Infant two	
7			Standard one	
8	Preparatory class		Standard two	
9	Elementary class 1		Standard three	
10	Intermediate class 1		Standard four	
11	Intermediate class 2		Standard five	
12			Standard six	

*From Nwana in Ndongko and Tambo (2000.p.12)*

In secondary education, the West Cameroon operated a five year first cycle and a two year second cycle secondary education at the end of which successful candidates obtained the GCE O/L and GCE A/L respectively, East Cameroon operated a four year first cycle and a three year second cycle secondary

school system at the end of which successful candidates obtained a Brevet and a Baccalaureate certificate respectively. In addition, in the first year of the second cycle of the secondary school in East Cameroon, candidates obtained the Probatoire Certificate.

**Table 2: Structure of Secondary School in East and West Cameroon before Harmonization**

West Cameroon			East Cameroon			
Age	Class levels	Certificates	Age	Class levels	Certificates	
13	Form one	GCE O/L	12	Sixieme	1 <sup>st</sup> Cycle	BREVET
14	Form two		13	Cinquieme		
15	Form three		14	Quatrieme		
16	Form four		15	Troisieme		
17	Form five		16	Seconde		
18	Lower sixth	GCE/AL	17	Premiere	2 <sup>nd</sup> Cycle	Probatoire
19	Upper sixth		18	Terminal	Cycle	Baccalaureate

*From Nwana in Ndongko and Tambo (2000.p.12)*

Harmonization of these systems became the major focus of curriculum policy in Cameroon. This was a strategy with a key purpose of blending the educational practices of French-speaking and English-speaking, without actually creating a monolithic system (Tchombe, 1998).

**Content of Harmonization**

Following the advice of UNESCO, the first Law on Education was issued harmonizing education in Cameroon. This was Law No 63/DF/13 of 19 June 1963 passed by the Federal House of Assembly.

Harmonization took two different forms: structural harmonization and programme harmonization.

**Structural Harmonization**

This revolved around the length of courses, the beginning and ending of the academic year, the dates of holidays and the basic aims of education. Before the enactment of this policy, the age to begin nursery education in West Cameroon was three years while in East Cameroon, it started at the age of four years. West Cameroon operated an eight-year primary school system which commenced at the age of five

years, whereas in East Cameroon primary education lasted six years and started at the age of six years.

The policy of harmonization aimed at providing solutions to the differences in the structures of the two sub-systems of education. This policy stipulated that the academic year will begin in September and end in June and that the primary school system in West Cameroon will be reduced to seven years from 1963 and to six years from 1965. The law further stated that, In East Cameroon, secondary Education will last seven years consisting of a five year first cycle and a two year second cycle.

### Programme Harmonization

From 1963 to 1968, attempts at programme harmonization were made under the guidance of the then Federal Minister of Education Mr. Eteki Mboumoua. Addressing a meeting on harmonization, the minister said that Government policy in programme harmonization aimed at "providing the same content of education to all Cameroonians no matter where they were situated in the nation ... to determine examination to be done on the national level... since education was to be Cameroonian in content and spirit". Participants were to select from both systems what was valuable, enriching and educationally good, and of acceptable standard.

### Implementation of Policy of Harmonization

Attempts at Implementation of Harmonization of the two educational sub-systems will be discussed under the federal period from 1963-1972 and the Unitary period from 1982 to present.

### Harmonization during the Federal Period from 1963-1972

After independence, political authorities in West Cameroon noticed some short comings in the economic and social change effort. They attributed these to the colonial education system. The slow rate in the expansion of education and the fact that it had not stimulated rapid economic and social changes in the country was the remote cause for the reforms in the English-speaking primary education system (Akoulouze, 1984). This reform was initiated by the parliament of the former federated state of West Cameroon in 1963. The objectives of this reform were:

- The democratization and the universalization of primary education.
- Modernisation and social mobility through a democratic and universal education.
- Orientation of education towards technological knowledge
- Reduction of all sorts of gaps through education.

On the first objective, Courade and Courade (1977) remarked that as from 1959-1971, primary school registration increased from 64,000 to 210,000 pupils representing a percentage growth of 27% to 70%. He further contends that the policy of

democratization and universalization within the West Cameroon Government made an attempt to raise the standard of teachers. In 1972, 94% of teachers attended refresher courses as against 22% in the former French East Cameroon.

In the former East Cameroon, the awareness in the failure of the primary education system started within the first years of independence. This was reported during a congress of Cameroon Union held in Ebolowa in 1962. Furthermore, two institutes in France did studies and published statistics illustrating the gravity of the poor situation of education in the former East Cameroon. They reported that the cost of education was becoming increasingly expensive and that the school was not adapted to the economic, social and cultural needs of the country in the following aspects:

- The school inherited from the colonial system did not offer wide chances of employment and as such led to a high unemployment rate.
- The school inherited from the colonial system trained exclusively for urban jobs and thus triggered rural exodus.
- The standards of education had fallen to the extent that it affected employers and officials of public service.
- The conduct of the youth seemed to be degrading such that they paid very little attention to their cultural heritage.

The first structure that was created aiming at reforming the system was the Government Teachers Training College (ENIR) opened in Yaounde in 1967. It was aimed at training teacher animators in this new system to work towards the reform. Later in 1974, the government created a new and expanded version of ENIR called Institute for applied Pedagogy (IPAR) in Buea with objectives to:

- train teachers,
- offer refresher courses to teachers in service,
- enable research on the programmes and methods for the training and recycling of teachers for primary schools,
- Produce school manuals and other pedagogic supports.

The objectives set out in Buea were those defined by the teaching reform in the former east Cameroon. In order to experiment the new programmes and new methods, 290 pilot schools were created across the provinces.

In addition to these common objectives in the two teachers training institutes, there was a dire need to harmonize the two primary school systems; English-speaking and French-speaking. Nwana in Ndongko and Tambo (2000) pointed out that after visiting the unified Cameroon from March 10<sup>th</sup> to May 20<sup>th</sup> and studying the problem of education faced by the new State, between UNESCO provided the following three suggestions for harmonization.

Firstly, that French Cameroon could impose its prevailing education system with French as the

medium of instruction. Though a cheaper choice to make, this option was rejected by the English-speaking West Cameroon, because it looked like an extension of the French colonial power on the English-speaking population and thus would make them conquered people.

The second option held that after harmonizing the curricula of the two inherited educational systems, the same programme could be taught in both languages, that is, West Cameroon teaching its programme in English while East Cameroon teaches its programme in French. The above proposition sounded difficult and costly to implement. However it was more feasible if only an additional clause stating that while the different system would maintain their languages as media for instruction in their respective zones, the language of the other system should be taught as part of the programme.

Thirdly, that a new system could be introduced beginning with the lowest class and continuing year by year until an entirely new local system comes into being. This last option was also considered because to them, a new system meant a harmonized or a reformed programme.

After studying the proposal made by UNESCO, the government of Cameroon decided to

settle for a joint option two and three. In 1963, therefore, the different administrations while acting independently produced similar laws harmonizing the structure of education in Cameroon. The laws were:

- a) Loi fédérale No.1.63/13 du juin 1963 portant organisation de l'enseignement publique secondaire et technique (J.O.R.F.C.1963 )
- b) Loi No.1.63/COR-5, du juillet 1963 ; portant organisation de l'enseignement primaire élémentaire
- c) West Cameroon Education Policy : Investment in Education (July 1963)

The harmonization ought to have been in the form of structures and programmes of both systems. This consisted of the same number of years of study, the same dates of holidays, and the same beginning and ending of the academic year, for both the English-speaking and French-speaking systems. The same programme was to be adopted, the same methods and evaluation systems adopted and the second official language (French or English) introduced in schools. The envisaged structural harmonization is represented in the table below.

**Table 3: Structural Harmonization as proposed by the Education Law of 1963.**

East Cameroon		West Cameroon.	
Level of Education	Duration	Level of Education	Duration
Primary education	6years	Primary Education	6years
1 <sup>st</sup> Cycle Secondary Education	5years	1 <sup>st</sup> Cycle Secondary Education	5years
2 <sup>nd</sup> Cycle Secondary Education	2years	2 <sup>nd</sup> Cycle Secondary Education	2years

*Adapted from Nwana in Ndongko and Tambo (2000.p.14.)*

In the first ten years of independence, considerable success was registered in structural harmonization so that by 1973, the dates of holidays and the beginning and ending of the academic year are same in both sub systems. However the lengths of courses in both sections have not been fully harmonized. The French-speaking resisted this change. While the English-speaking sub system has reduced the length of course in the primary school to six years as practiced in the French-speaking system, the French-speaking subsystem has still not changed their first and second cycle secondary school system to five and two year respectively as stipulated by the Education Policy statement of 1963.

As far as programme harmonization was concerned, the East Cameroon law made no mention on harmonizing the curricula. However, the West Cameroon law stressed on the introduction of the French language in all post primary institutions in West Cameroon and indicated that the curriculum should take into consideration the economy, culture and political structure of the country. Considerable efforts were made by the Cameroon government toward harmonizing the curriculum of the sub-systems. For example, in the 1965/66 academic year, a joint committee of education experts for the harmonization

of Education and under the chairmanship of the Minister of National Education, Youth and Culture met in Yaounde from 13<sup>th</sup> January to 15<sup>th</sup> January 1966 to examine the secondary school syllabuses and the examination systems of the two states. They made the following recommendations:

- That the B.E.P.C. and the G.C.E. Ordinary level certificates obtained after the first cycle of secondary school in the East and West Cameroon respectively be replaced by a common certificate known as the Certificate for General Education (C.G.E.).
- That the Baccalaureate Certificate and the G.C.E. Certificate obtained after the second cycle secondary education level in East and West Cameroon respectively be replaced by Secondary Education Leaving Certificate (S.E.L.C.).

The following subjects would consist of the syllabus of the first cycle secondary school of both sub- systems. Each student at this level no matter the option was required to take eight compulsory and two optional subjects from the syllabus. These subjects include;

**Table 4: Proposed First cycle secondary school syllabus by joint Committee for Harmonization of Education in Yaounde from 13<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1966.**

<b>COMPULSORY SUBJECTS</b>		
<b>Arts</b>	<b>Science</b>	<b>Agriculture</b>
English	English	English
French	French	French
Mathematics	Mathematics	Mathematics
History	History	Geography
Geography	Geography	Biology
Biology	Biology	Botany
Economics	Physics	Physics
A third language	Chemistry	Chemistry
<b>OPTIONAL SUBJECTS</b>		
Civics	Economics	
Mathematics II	Business Administration	
Domestic Science	Physical Education	
Shorthand/Typing	Physics	
Fine Arts	Chemistry	
Music	A third language	

*From Nwana in Ndongko and Tambo (2000.p. 15)*

The joint committee also proposed that for the second cycle of the secondary school, each made the following recommendations for the subjects to be offered in the second cycle of secondary education for

both sub-systems: Each student is required to take three or four subjects plus one subsidiary subject, one optional subject chosen from the following series.

**Table 5: Proposed second cycle Secondary syllabus by joint Committee for Harmonization of Education in Yaounde from 13<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1966.**

<b>Series</b>	<b>Compulsory</b>	<b>One option</b>
	English Literature French Literature History Philosophy	Geography Mathematics Economics A third Language
	History Geography Economics Philosophy French/English	Mathematics French Literature English Literature A third Language
	Economics French or English Literature Geography /Philosophy	Mathematics Biology A third Language
	Economics Mathematics Geography French/English	Philosophy Botany Zoology A third Language
	Physics Chemistry Mathematics French/English	Philosophy Botany Zoology A third Language
	Biology Chemistry Physics French/English	Mathematics Philosophy Geography
	Biology Chemistry Mathematics	Geography Philosophy Botany A third Language

*From Nwana in Ndongko and Tambo (2000.p. 15)*

In 1968, the same committee met again at Lycee des Jeunes filles in Douala to propose new syllabuses based on the work done in Yaounde in 1966. Again in 1977, another committee was held in

Yaounde to put finishing touches to the syllabuses produced at the Douala conference. In September 1973, one year after a 1972 Presidential Order No.1 CMR/72/018 setting up the Institute of National

Education (INE) in Yaounde, another degree was signed requesting the INE to carry out educational research in secondary school education with a view to harmonizing or improving the proposed secondary school syllabus. Some syllabuses (Mathematics, Civics, History, Geography) prepared by INE were tried at the Government Bilingual College Molyko. Text books for these subjects produced by the same institute were produced for try-out. Nwana in Ndongko and Tambo (2000) contends that till date, no assessment has been made on the work carried out by the Institute.

### **The Unitary state from 1982 to present**

By 1982, the Government took off attempts at reforming the new Cameroon General Certificate of Education (G.C.E) Examination. A Ministerial circular dated signed in September 1983, stated that as from the 1985 session for the G.C.E. 'O' level and 1987 for the 'A' level a candidate for the either examination must pass in a specific number and range of subjects before they qualify for the award of a certificate. Nwana in Tambo and Ndongko (2003) affirms that the purpose of the reform was to convert the Cameroon G.C.E examination from a single subject certificate to a group certificate examination. In addition the 'O' level English, French and Mathematics were compulsory subjects to be written by the candidates sitting for the exams. It further stated that a candidate who fail to have at least an 'E' grade in all the three compulsory subjects would not qualify for the certificate except as otherwise decided by the Minister of Education. Rene Ze Nguelle who was then Minister signed the circular argued that while not doing enough to be bilingual, English-speaking students were doing very poorly in Science oriented subjects.

These reforms angered the English-speaking students especially in Northwest and Southwest Provinces who protested and boycotted school arguing that only the English-speaking education system was reformed while the French-speaking system remained untouched; that the syllabus in the science subjects were too French-oriented which made it very difficult for English-speaking students with the British system of education to succeed in the examinations; they felt that the reforms were an attempt by the French to eradicate the English culture and assimilate the English-speaking: and that the Minister should not be given the powers to decide who should or should not be given an academic certificate. The student protest led to the suspension of the projected reforms and the appointment of a presidential Commission to study the problem.

Another attempt at reforming the G.C.E. Examinations to align with the Brevet by George Ngango who was Minister of Education, was also resisted. In 1989, the Government organized an educational conference which though abortive, aimed at harmonizing School Programme. However in 1993, the Government created the General certificate of education and the Baccalaureate examination boards to take care of secondary school graduation examination that were steadily losing their credibility.

In 1995, the Government organized a national education forum to deliberate on new perspectives on national education in Cameroon. Tambo (2003) described the forum as a landmark event in the educational development in Cameroon. He argues that for more than three decades following independence and reunification Cameroon was running an education system dictated by the whims and caprices of high government officials.

Some reasons that motivated the holding of the 1995 Education Forum included; the lack of a proper education policy, poor implementation of legislation dealing with education, the neglect of local and national cultural values especially as concerns languages; poor adapted and overloaded programmes, and the fact, despite the different readjustments and reforms attempt the education system has undergone, national realities have not always been taken into consideration as the system still reflects the two colonial inherited systems.

Conscious of the limitation of the Cameroon education policy, the Forum was a consultative body aimed at providing recommendations or proposals to be submitted to the government for a new educational policy. Tambo (2003) concluded that the Forum achieved its objectives when the Ministry of National education submitted its report to the National Assembly in 1998, which the passed it into a Law to Lay Down Guidelines for Education in Cameroon. Since then this document has been used as a policy document to guide teaching in Primary and secondary school in Cameroon. Following suit, have been an unprecedented and evolutionary formulations of many strategic documents by governments to provide sustainable education to Cameroonians.

### **Trends in Implementation of Harmonization**

A careful examination of the narrative on harmonization as presented in the foregoing parts of this chapter would lead to the conclusion that the harmonization policy though inspired by a revolutionary ideology was at the level of implementation governed mainly by conservative and evolutionary trends.

Independence and reunification in 1960/61 was as a result of a series of revolutionary actions aimed at liberating Cameroonians from the colonial gap. Education policy especially in the area of school curriculum was therefore expected to undergo a revolutionary change after independence. Since independence and reunification of French Cameroon and British Southern Cameroon, the issue of harmonization of the educational programmes of the French-speaking and the English-speaking sectors is one of the most critical policies in the educational system. Independence and reunification meant turning a new page in the history of Cameroon. The need for radical changes in the educational system ushered in the curriculum policy of Harmonization. Harmonization of both systems is central to political development in Cameroon. It is one of the ways through which national integration and national unity can be achieved. However, fifty years after

Cameroon's reunification, questions of integration and national unity have remained a disturbing issue in Cameroon's Educational landscape. Despite efforts made towards the implementation of this policy, only structural harmonization has been partly achieved. The curriculum contents of both sub systems still remain conservative and reflect their colonial past.

### Conservative Trend

The conservative trend is evident in the resistance of the two subsystems with respect to structural and curriculum matters. Conservatism is seen in the structure of courses, teaching methods, examinations and other school practices that have remained essentially true to their colonial heritage. The francophones tended to kick against innovations that went against practices in France and the Anglophones tended to do the same with regard to changes that went against practices in Britain.

As far as the structure of the two subsystems is concerned, the lengths of courses in both sections have not been fully harmonized. The French-speaking resisted this change. While the English-speaking sub system has reduced the length of course in the primary school to six years as practised in the French-speaking subsystem, the French-speaking subsystem has still not changed its first and second cycle secondary school system to five and two years respectively as stipulated by the Federal Law of 1963 and repeated in the 1998 Law.

In the English-speaking sub-system, the certificate testifying completion of primary education is still referred to as the First School Leaving Certificate (FSLC). A pass in the Common Entrance Examination (CEE) organized by the Government is still required of candidates for admission into secondary school. The General Certification Examination is still largely a single-subject Certificate as inherited from Britain.

In the French-speaking sub-system, the six-year primary school course is still described in terms of colonial- inherited nomenclature (Section initial, Cours preparatoires, cours moyens...). At the secondary level, the 4-3 secondary education course, the Probatoire and Bacaleureat Examinations have been maintained and structured essentially as there were inherited at independence from France.

### Evolutionary Trend

The Evolutionary Trend in the Harmonization Policy is demonstrable in the willingness of the two sub-systems to gradually change the structures and the curricula inherited from the French and British colonial administration.

Considerable success has been registered in harmonization of structures so that by 1973, the dates of holidays and the beginning and ending of the academic year were same in both sub systems. The English-speaking subsystem has gradually changed to align with that of the French-speaking sub- system. The first move with regard to the length of the primary course was taken in 1965 when the number of years for study in primary school was reduced from 8years to

7years, and the second move occurred in 2006 from 7years to 6years as was stipulated by the Education Laws of 1963 and 1998. Furthermore, the English-speaking sub-system changed its nomenclature for the different levels of primary school from "the Standard" to the "class".

### Factors Accounting for the Conservative and Evolutionary Trends in the Implementation of Harmonization

Factors accounting for the conservative and evolutionary trends had to do with political considerations, cultural resistance and resources.

#### Political Consideration

The Ex-Minister of Education, Rene Ze Nguele, declared in an interview with Akoulouze (1984) that the harmonization of the English-speaking and French-speaking primary education was more a political than a technical issue complicated by the problem of cultural alienation. There was therefore a need to tackle this problem in order to arrive at the objective of the reform in school.

Furthermore, the meaning of Harmonization has raised a lot of controversy within Cameroonians. Consequently, the process of harmonizing the two educational systems has been misconstrued. Resistance in implementing the policy of harmonization continue to persist because the process has been conceived as assimilation, (Fonkeng, 2007; Ngalim, 2014), homogenization and immersion (Echu, 2005). This is in line with Fullan & Park (1981); Miles & Louis (1990) who found that clarity about goals and process related to curriculum change is critical. Actors are cooperative to change efforts if they understand the meaning and purpose of that change. Successful implementation can take place when actors are actually clear about what they would do when implementing a policy. They must have an image of what to do to achieve the intended goal.

#### Cultural Resistance

Given that every system of education represents an important aspect in the culture of a society, harmonization of the two systems would have meant disintegration of an aspect of culture of each community. In Cameroon there are two dominant cultures: English and French, and harmonization of the two systems meant the abandonment of certain cultural aspects of both systems to embrace a mix system. Thomas (1981) argues that when two cultures coexist, they become rivals so much so that one will dominate the other. Literature on cultural dependency shows that when cultures parallelly evolve, their interaction may lead to the following four phenomena;

- Accommodation of one cultural group, whereby each group voluntarily adopts certain aspects of the other group, yet still preserves its own identity:

- Elimination of one group by the other. By this, the eliminated culture either wilfully or forcefully abandons some of its cultural aspects and replace them with those of the other group:
- Domination of one group. This occurs when the dominated group decides to adopt the domineering group's culture:
- Integration of two groups. In this process, two cultures merge to form one. The combination of the two cultures is done by contributions from each group. When it is done voluntarily, it is called parallel accommodation and when it is defined and imposed by a neutral authority, the integration is done through negotiations and impositions.

In the case of harmonization of the two sub-systems of education in Cameroon, it could be integration through negotiation or imposition. Negotiated or imposed integration takes into consideration the will for public interest to achieve a politico-cultural unity than the will of every social or cultural group. However, during negotiation or imposition, there is always the desire to dominate and resist domination. This explains why the authorities in charge of the harmonization were perpetually linked to the education system of their former colonial masters. The study argues that Harmonization in the Cameroon System of Education has been interpreted in terms of homogenization whereby the French-speaking system has an overdue advantage over the English-speaking system. This has led to excessive centralization and control of educational practices from Yaounde.

Another hindrance to harmonization is the bi-cultural nature of Cameroon. Owing to its colonial heritage, Cameroon is a bicultural state where two cultures of the English-speaking and the French-speaking must co-exist in many aspects of national life. Harmonization of the two cultures for educational purposes also poses great difficulty in that each culture jealously preserves its values and cultural heritage. Neither of the two subsystems is ready to compromise their educational value for the sake of harmonizing the educational system of Cameroon. The need to preserve each culture actually frustrates the policy of Harmonization in Cameroon education system. However, debates on harmonization of the educational system in Cameroon are still ongoing.

### **Inadequate Resources**

Gwanfogbe (2006) argues that the feeling of nostalgia for the colonial curriculum and educational practices is a reason why harmonization was resisted by both subsystems. After reunification, the East and West Cameroon government were still under the continued influence of the former metropolis through financial assistance and supply of expatriates. East Cameroon continued to sign bilateral treaties with France for material and financial report. Even when the First Bilingual secondary school was open, teachers came from France and Britain and more so, the first two principals of the school were French men. This

made it quite difficult for the Cameroonians to break free from the colonial Yoke.

### **CONCLUSION**

Since independence and reunification of French Cameroon and British Southern Cameroon, the issue of harmonization of the educational programmes of the French-speaking and the English-speaking sectors is one of the most critical policies in the educational system. Independence and reunification meant turning a new page in the history of Cameroon. The need for radical changes in the educational system ushered in the curriculum policy of Harmonization. Harmonization of both systems is central to political development in Cameroon. It is one of the ways through which national integration and national unity can be achieved. However, fifty years after Cameroons reunification, questions of integration and national unity have remained a disturbing issue in Cameroon's Educational landscape. Despite efforts made towards the implementation of this policy, only structural harmonization has been partly achieved. The curriculum contents of both sub systems still remain conservative and reflect their colonial past.

Harmonization took both a revolutionary and the conservative trends in its implementation. It was evolutionary because the policy marked a point of departure from the colonial system whereby the aims of education that were meant for the interest of the colonial administrators experience a paradigm shift towards education that should meet the needs and interest of Cameroonians. It however took a conservative trend because of resistance.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

In view of the above narratives, this study concludes that though harmonization has been achieved in some areas, there are certain pockets of resistance in the harmonization process. The education Laws of 1963 and 1998 stipulated that education in Cameroon is in two sub-systems; the English –speaking subsystem and the French-speaking subsystem. The laws therefore recommended that the structures and programmes of both subsystems be harmonized. However, till date the process has not been completed. The study therefore recommends that the French sub-system should complete the harmonization process by establishing a 5-year and 2-year secondary education system to match with practice in the English-speaking subsystem as recommended by the Education Laws.

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