

REUNIFICATION AND THE DEMISE OF THE WEST CAMEROON EDUCATION BOARD, 1961-1972: AN HISTORICAL APPRAISAL OF THE IMPACT OF FINANCIAL CONSTRAINTS

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ABSTRACT

This paper looks at the demise of the West Cameroon Education Board from the perspective of an outcome of financial constraints on the West Cameroon Government. It argues that the educational choices of the West Cameroon Government significantly accentuated financial constraints which contributed to the fragilization and eventual demise of the Education Board, ultimately paving the way for the interference of the Federal Government in the West Cameroon educational system. The paper uses the historical-analytical method to interpret data collected mostly from the National Archives Buea (NAB) and presents findings according to the chronological and thematic approach. It reveals that the rapid expansion of education in West Cameroon between 1961 and 1969 accentuated financial constraints on Government which helped to fragilize the Education Board. This made the West Cameroon educational system vulnerable to Federal Government interference and eventual take over by 1972. Thus, accounting for the demise of the West Cameroon Education Board.

Keywords: Federal Government, Financial Constraints, West Cameroon Education Board

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In his book, first published in 2005 as *The Golden Age of Southern (West) Cameroon* and later revised in 2016 into *The Golden Age of Sothern Cameroons*, Anthony Ndi largely demonstrates that the perfect harmony created by the federal arrangement in Cameroon was only distorted by external forces: Ahidjo.¹ According to his view, Ahidjo's invincible hand was responsible for almost everything that did not go well with the Federal System of Government.² In the domain of education, Ndi considers the partnership and collaboration between Government, Christian denominations and Local Councils as one of the key indicators of this sole-called "Golden Age".³ Since the aim of education was geared towards character formation and

¹Anthony Ndi, *The Golden Age of Southern Cameroons: Vital Lessons for Cameroon* (Denver/Bamenda: Spears Media Press, 2016), 151-185.

²Ibid.

³Anthony Ndi, *National Integration and Nation Building in Cameroon: The Golden Age of Southern (West) Cameroon 1946-1972; Impact of Christianity* (Bamenda: 2005), 28-39.

responsible citizenship, Ndi applauds the fact that Government and Local Councils controlled only a handful of educational institutions, while the bulk of educational institutions were placed under the control of Christian denominations.⁴ Also, he alludes that the West Cameroon Government built on the legacy of the British colonial education policy by leaving education almost entirely in the hands of Christian denominations.⁵ Julius Amin asserts that throughout the Federal period, there was more of continuity than change in the West Cameroon educational system, which was largely inspired by provisions of the 1952 Nigerian education ordinance.⁶

One shortcoming in Anthony Ndi's analysis is the fact that the sustenance of Christian denominational control of education imposed huge expenditure on the Government of West Cameroon. By 1971, education cost constituted 94% of the West Cameroon budget. This was aggravated by the fact that Christian denominations in the region practically refused to share in the education cost, claiming education was solely the responsibility of Government. As the cost of education increased, the West Cameroon Government suffered the financial pressure and consequently, it fragilized the economy of the region, leading to the decline and ultimate demise of the Education Board. It is in this context that this paper approaches the outcome of financial constraints as a function of the liquidation of the one of the key educational advisory structures in former West Cameroon; the Education Board.

Several works have appraised the federal period in Cameroon. Some classics include: Ngoh's *Cameroon: From a Federal to a Unitary State 1961-1972*; Ndiva Kofele-Kale's *An African Experiment in Nation Building: The Bilingual Cameroon Republic Since Reunification*; and Neville Rubin's *Cameroon: An African Federation*. As generalist studies, they give a broad overview of the intricacies that came with the federal arrangement between West and East Cameroon. They emphasize Cameroon as a unique case study of an attempt to federate two unlikely colonial cultures in Africa. Overall, the historiography of reunification and the federal period in Cameroon has overemphasized political and economic developments linked to the rescindment of the West Cameroon State. Regarding the liquidation of structures of the Federated State of West Cameroon, there are authors who align almost completely with Anthony Ndi's Ahidjo-factor in their analyses of the rescindment of the West Cameroon State. Monoji argues that the abrogation of the Cameroon Federation was as a result of masked machinations of Ahidjo.⁷ Others have tried to create a balance between internal and external forces responsible for the demise of key structures of the defunct West Cameroon State.⁸ These studies have not adequately handled the role played by education cost in accentuating the financial difficulties that led to the insolvency of West Cameroon.⁹ Therefore, this paper looks

⁴Ibid, 28-29.

⁵Ibid, 39.

⁶Julius A. Amin, "Continuity and Change in Cameroon's Education: The Case of West Cameroon", *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 35, No.4(2000):434.

⁷Valentine Elize Monoji, "Abrogation of the Cameroon Federation: Economic Bases and Ramification in Anglophone Cameroon, 1961-1996, PhD Thesis, The University of Bamenda, 2023.

⁸N.K. Takor & K.N. Yufenyuy, "The Southern-West Cameroon(s) Development Agency, 1956- 1973: Historical Evidence of Hope and Despair in Economic Development", *International Journal of History and Cultural Studies* 4, Issue 3 (2018).

⁹Roland N. Ndille, "Cameroon 1884-Present (2018): The History of a People, by Victor Julius Ngoh", *African Historical Review* 52, No. 1 (2021): 102-107.

at the demise of the West Cameroon Education Board from the perspective of an outcome of financial constraints on the West Cameroon Government.

Recent trends in Cameroon have shown an exaggerated glorification of reminiscences of the West Cameroon years. As if to say everything about West Cameroon was flawless and perfect. Such reminiscences, often factually unchecked, have helped to fuel the on-going anglophone crisis in Cameroon. This paper is therefore very relevant and timely. It uses the case of the West Cameroon Education Board because of the central role it played in furnishing most, if not all of the educational choices and decisions of the West Cameroon Government. The paper spans the period between 1961 and 1972, which was the lifespan of the Federal System of Government in Cameroon. In 1961, the West Cameroon Government officially went into force and one of its first decisions was to put in place the West Cameroon Education Board. The year 1972 marked the collapse of the West Cameroon State and the demise of the West Cameroon Education Board. The paper argues that the educational choices of the West Cameroon Government significantly accentuated financial constraints which contributed to the fragilization and eventual demise of the Education Board, ultimately paving the way for the interference of the Federal Government in the West Cameroon educational system. This point of view is articulated according to four key themes, preceded by an introduction and succeeded by a conclusion. Some of the issues raised and discussed are: the historical background; establishment and composition of the Education Board; operations of the Education Board; and the impact of financial constraints on the operations of the Education Board.

2.0 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

West Cameroon constituted that part of Cameroon formerly under British Mandate and Trusteeship administrations; an arrangement that came because of the defeat of the Germans in the First World War in Cameroon by 1916. Therefore, the British administered that section of Cameroon separately from the French section which later became East Cameroon after reunification and the adoption of a Federal System of Government in 1961. As a British administered territory, former Southern Cameroons was nurtured in decentralized and democratic culture of educational administration. This led to the creation of the Southern Cameroons Education Board in 1954.

At the Education Board meeting of February 1960, Augustine Ngom Jua, addressing the members of the Board as Minister of Social Services, proclaimed the importance of preserving a sound link with the sound traditions in the past to further the training of our children and young men and women. He went further to laud the composition of the Board's membership, which according to him: "...old members brought to the reconstituted board the benefit of their rich experiences in the previously constituted Board, while benefitting from the fresh ideas and vast practical experiences of its new members" (*emphasis added*).¹⁰ Jua explained that the Board was inclined to bridge the gap between idealism and available resources anticipated to achieve maximum improvement and benefit to the Southern Cameroons as a whole.¹¹ This statement by Jua articulated the mission and purpose of the Education Board, which was simply

¹⁰NAB, Address of the Hon. Minister of Social Services to the Board of Education meeting on 22 February 1960.

¹¹Ibid.

to give government professional advice in order to ensure that educational decisions and choices matched the resources available to serve that purpose.

The following year, 1961, former Southern Cameroons decided in a plebiscite vote to achieve its independence by joining the independent Republic of Cameroon. At reunification, Southern Cameroons and the Republic of Cameroon agreed to adopt a model of decentralization built on a federal system of government. This implied that the Regional Governments set up in West and East Cameroon were empowered to exercise managerial powers over their own local affairs, which included primary education. Although, the Federal Constitution of 1961 placed secondary and higher education strictly under the jurisdiction of the federal government, the Federal Government felt it was necessary to give a little bit of time for both inherited educational cultures to evolve separately. So, as a result of administrative tolerance, the West Cameroon Government was allowed to manage its secondary education sector within the first three to five years of reunification. Therefore, the 1961 West Cameroon constitution empowered the West Cameroon Education Board, hereafter known as the Education Board, to advise and direct all educational decisions made by the West Cameroon Government. The cardinal mission of the Education Board was to keep Government educational planning in check and ensure that decision-making on educational matters matched the limited resources available to fund the expansion of education in West Cameroon. On this basis, the Education Board was established, constituted and went operational during the Federal period in Cameroon.

2.1 Establishment and Composition of the West Cameroon Education Board

Article 38(b) of the Federal constitution of 1 September 1961 stated that Federated States may set up for themselves such institutions as they choose. This encouraged the West Cameroon Government to tailor her education policy towards conserving the “sound” traditions inherited during the period of over 40 years under British administration.¹² More to that, Article 43 of the same Federal Constitution conferred on the Government of each of the Federated States the powers to initiate legislation. To Amin, this encouraged the West Cameroon Government to pattern education along the provisions of the 1952 Nigerian Education Ordinance, which included the appropriation of the Education Board.¹³ By so doing, government conferred responsibility on the Board to look into all education matters in the Federated State of West Cameroon and submit their recommendations to the State Government.¹⁴

As Prime Minister, John Ngu Foncha assumed the role/authority formerly exercised by the Commissioner to constitute and appoint members on the Education Board. According to the 1961 West Cameroon Constitution, it was the duty of the Prime Minister to constitute the Board of Education. Prime Minister John Ngu Foncha authorized the reconstitution of the Board of Education in 1961. This automatically cancelled Public Notice SCN/437 of 1959 that constituted the old Board. It also increased membership in the new education board to twenty members. Thus, increasing the representation of local councils to seven representatives in 1962

¹²Ministry of Education and Social Welfare, West Cameroon Education Policy: Investment in Education (Buea: West Cameroon Government Press, 1963), 2.

¹³Julius A. Amin, “Continuity and Change in Cameroon’s Education: The Case of West Cameroon”, *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 35, No.4(2000):434.

¹⁴NAB, Sb/a (1965), Board of Education, West Cameroon

and to eight representatives in 1963. On 18 September 1961, the Director of Education, G.H. Campbell on leaving Buea for Lagos handed over to A.D. Mengot, who cumulated the offices of Director of Education and Federal Cultural Delegate of West Cameroon from 1962 to 1965.¹⁵

On his part, the Secretary of State for Education was directly responsible to the West Cameroon House of Assembly on all questions related to education. It was the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Education to make sure that would-be members of the Board were competent enough and had the right moral standing to take up the task committed to them. Also, the Secretary of State for Education determined the program for meetings of the education board. Once the Prime Minister issued a communique constituting the Education Board, the Secretary of State for Education instructed the Director of Education to convene a meeting of the Board in the minimum possible time of not more than 14 days.¹⁶

Local councils were required to nominate only representatives who had practical knowledge and experiences in the field of education. Other agencies involved in educational activities like the CDC and government departments of Cooperatives and Community Development, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Health and Sanitation were invited from time to time to take part during deliberations of the Board of Education. Such a broad-based composition of the board was in line with the goal of the West Cameroon Government to ensure all-round efficiency in the management of education.¹⁷ The Board was allowed to be reconstituted in a quorum comprising of the chairman and six unofficial members (*i.e.* members not holding any office under the government to which appointment was made by the Secretary of State for Primary Education). In a situation where a member was absent, either due to sickness or an unavoidable cause, an alternate member was appointed to take his or her place on the Board during that particular session.¹⁸ Table 1 shows the membership of the West Cameroon Board of Education in 1963.

Table 1: Membership of the West Cameroon Board of Education in 1963

Member	Status	Interest
A.D. Mengot	Official member	Chairman
W.S.O. Stanley	Official member	Acting Inspector of Education
J. Wollen	Official member	Government Trade Center Ombe
S.P. Fohtung	Official member	Acting Principal of Government Trade Center Ombe

¹⁵NAB, File No. PMO 474/S.2Sb/a (1963) 18, Prime Minister's Office, West Cameroon.

¹⁶NAB, Sb/a (1963) 3, Primary Schools. General Correspondence.

¹⁷NAB, Sb/a (1963) 4, Board of Education, West Cameroon.

¹⁸Sb (1968) 1, West Cameroon Education Ordinance 1968, NAB, 4.

Mrs. Atabong	Official member	Secretary
Rev. Mother Mary Aquinas	Official member	Principal of Holy Rosary Secondary School Okoyong
Father Olislagers	Official member	Saint Paul Teacher Training Center Bonjongo
Rev. Father Damen	Official member	Saint Joseph College Sasse
E.A Zimbelman	Official member	Protestant Teacher Training Colleges
Miss L. Weber	Official member	Women Teacher Training Center Mankon
E.K. Martin	Official member	Supervisor of schools
E.A. Ekiti	Official member	Supervisor of schools
R.N. Ayuk	Unofficial member	Sumbe community school
D. Wan-Obi	Unofficial member	Trade Unionist
Nicholas Njonji	Unofficial member	Local Council
P.N. Kome	Unofficial member	Local Council
Vincent Ntumvi	Unofficial member	Local Council
John Nkwawi	Unofficial member	Local Council
Alexander B. Chia	Unofficial member	Local Council
R.N. Chia	Unofficial member	Local Council
E. Nyamboli	Unofficial member	Local Council
T.N. Keke	Unofficial member	Local Council

Source: Sb/a (1963) 5, West Cameroon, Board of Education, 1963, NAB.

From the table above, the appointment of eight non-official members from local councils of the six divisions that made up West Cameroon was done to preserve the democratic characteristic of the Board of Education. These Non-official members were called upon to use their personal experiences and enthusiasm to participate in deliberations of the board while protecting the interests of their respective Local Council Areas. Government counted on Official and Denominational representatives of the Board to provide the professional expertise

required to edify the non-official members of the Board about the procedures related to educational decision-making in the territory.¹⁹

Considering that the lifespan of the Board of Education was three years, the mandate of the members who constituted the 1963 Board only expired by the end of 1965.²⁰ When the Board of Education met on Thursday 25th February 1965 invitations were sent mostly to those considered to be of higher expertise in the field of education. This notwithstanding, the non-official members returned to the Board in May 1965 mainly to complete their three-year mandate. The February 1965 Board meeting comprised of nineteen (19) members, while the May 1965 Board meeting had twenty-one (21) members in attendance. With the coming of a new government in 1965 and expiration of the mandate of non-official members of the Board, it was obvious that Local Divisional Councils needed to nominate representatives for appointment by Prime Minister A.N. Jua.

The 1966 Board of Education was composed of seventeen (17) representatives appointed by Government. The number of members on the Board increased to thirty-two (32) members in 1968. This included sixteen (16) ex-officio members and sixteen (16) non-official members. The 1968/1969 Annual Report of the West Cameroon Department of Primary Education explained that: “the broad-based composition of the Education Board provided the opportunity for the Ministry to benefit from professional advice as a result of the fruitful exchange of ideas and information by members”.²¹ Few years later, Government saw the need to revise the Board’s membership because the large size of the Board became too unwieldy and unproductive.²² In the education bill placed before the West Cameroon House of Assembly in 1969 and approved in 1970, the Board’s membership was not to exceed 15 persons.²³ Being Secretary of State for Primary Education at the time, N.N. Mbile noted that the small size of the Board of Education in 1970 was convenient for efficient and constructive work.²⁴

2.3 Operations of the West Cameroon Education Board

The functions of the Education Board were defined as follows: (1) to advise and report to Government on any questions of policy or other matters of importance affecting education in West Cameroon; (2) to appoint Standing Committees and Ad hoc Committees from time to time to deal with any aspect on education requiring closer study or investigation; (3) generally to perform such other duties as may be prescribed by or under this Ordinance.²⁵ The Education Board functioned only within legislations for educational development in the region, as recognised by the West Cameroon Government. Accordingly, Prime Minister J.N. Foncha explains that:

¹⁹NAB, Sb/a (1963) 5, Board of Education, West Cameroon.

²⁰NAB, Sb/a (1965) 4, Board of Education, West Cameroon.

²¹NAB, The Annual Report of the West Cameroon Primary Education Department for the Year 1968-1969.

²²NAB, Sb/a (1970), Extracts from the proceedings of the 16th Board of Education held in the House of Assembly Chambers on 14th and 15th September 1970.

²³West Cameroon Gazette of 18 April 1970.

²⁴Sb/a (1970), Extracts from the proceedings of the 16th Board of Education held in the House of Assembly Chamber.

²⁵Ibid.

...the importance of education in West Cameroon dictated an endless rapport between government and the population in order to prevent a situation whereby when complaints came, or when explanations were needed; if events...took the wrong course, we (Government) will be blamed (*paraphrased*).²⁶

In this regard, Government spelt out the terms of reference for each session of the Board of Education meeting before members convened at plenary. In two or three days at most, Board members met at Buea in plenary to deliberate on the proposed agenda. The plenary session usually began with general discussions on previous minutes. Specialized committees and sub-committees were established to further examine the issues raised and report results to the plenary meeting of the Board.

The Education Board had the responsibility to delineate government education policy in West Cameroon. This was intended primarily to guarantee a steady supply of manpower required to build the young Cameroon Federation. It was also required to take into account the exigency of harmonizing the cultural and educational backgrounds of the two Federated States as derived from national policies defined by the Federal Ministry of National Education. Faced with the consequence of refusing to join the Independent Federation of Nigeria, the West Cameroon Government turned to the Board of Education to formulate a new education policy that reflected the changing times. At the Board meeting in 1962, Board members were asked to deliberate on the content of the education policy that the West Cameroon Government would pursue.²⁷ A sub-committee of the Education Board comprised of E.A. Ekiti (Basel Mission Education Secretary), Reverend Lawrence (Cameroon Baptist Mission Education Secretary), Father Damen (Roman Catholic Mission Education Secretary), W.S.O. Stanley (Education Department) and Permanent Secretary of the Secretariat of Education. This sub-committee was responsible for drafting the West Cameroon education policy that was adopted in 1963.

Consequent to the Reunification, the Foncha Government in 1962 asked the Board of Education to discuss on the adoption of new syllabuses for schools in West Cameroon. As chairman of the 1963 Board meeting, A.D. Mengot raised the topic for Board members to consider the reduction of the duration of the primary school course in West Cameroon from eight years to six years in order to match the duration of primary education in the Federated State of East Cameroon.²⁸ The premise laid before members of the Board was the fact that fixing the primary school course at six years in East Cameroon automatically places children at disadvantage should the length of the primary school course in West Cameroon be maintained at eight years.

After a close study of the syllabus of East Cameroon, board members concluded that it was inferior compared to that of West Cameroon. It was suggested that government should choose a more progressive option by moving from eight to seven years before adopting a six-year primary course. There were also concerns whether the drop in the length of the primary school course would not pose any significant drop in the quality of the education attained. The board recommended that government was to fully support kindergarten classes to prepare children

²⁶NAB, File No. PMO 474/S.2, Sb/a (1963) 18, Prime Minister's Office, West Cameroon,

²⁷Sb/a (1963) 4, Board of Education, West Cameroon, NAB.

²⁸West Cameroon Education Policy, 1963

for the short course.²⁹ At the end of discussions, the Board appointed a sub-committee and vested it with full powers to study the proposed new syllabuses, make relevant amendments and recommendations, and then forward same to the Ministry for approval. Board members were unanimous that government could only implement the reform as from January 1964.

The Board advised the West Cameroon government to preserve the English way of life first and only take gradual steps towards the eventual appropriation of French as a second foreign language. In the opinion of the Board, French was not to be taught to persons who have not acquired a solid foundation of English because that might cause a maladjustment and as a result make Pidgin English the lingua franca among majority of the population. This was aggravated by the fact that the state of East Cameroon paid unparalleled attention to the teaching and learning of English Language.³⁰ The Board stated that it was pointless introducing French at an early stage as in primary schools, which might end up even undermining the place of English in West Cameroon. This notwithstanding, the Board felt secondary schools and teacher training colleges were better placed to appropriate French as a second foreign language. In the point of view of the Board, with the intensification of the teaching of French in secondary and post-secondary institutions and by more frequent social contact with citizens of East Cameroon government was sure to achieve what the Board termed a graduated bilingualism by conscious and unconscious means.³¹

Still in the same 1963 meeting, Board members condemned the practice whereby untrained teachers were assigned senior classes without any supervision by the headmaster. The Board believed that prioritizing teacher-training would encourage new teachers to attend teacher training colleges and also retain older teachers in the profession. During deliberations, it was pointed out that it was necessary for teacher training colleges to harmonize the procedure of entry into these colleges. It was also suggested that student-teachers should be thoroughly trained while still at the teacher training colleges. Board members agreed that the teacher's competence to teach efficiently was a function of the quality of training they received.

In addition, Board members deliberated on the alternative of shifting from the West African Examination Council to the London General Certificate of Examination Board for the purpose of testing and certification at the end of the secondary grammar certificate course. Board members deliberated on a situation whereby West Cameroonian students could be rendered stranded if the West African Examination Council excluded them from taking the different end of course examinations it prepared. As a result, the Board unanimously accepted that end of course examinations for grammar colleges in the State of West Cameroon should be prepared by the London University as from the 1963/1964 academic year upwards. In the same vein, the Board recommended that the end of course examinations for West Cameroonian students in technical and commercial colleges should be prepared by the Royal Society Arts (RSA) and City and Guilds. These recommendations were accepted by the Executive Council and the first batch of students were admitted into the different sessions of the examinations in 1964.³²

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Piet Konings & Francis B. Nyamnjoh, *Negotiating an Anglophone Identity: A Study of the Politics of Recognition and Representation in Cameroon* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2003), 58. See Also, Anthony Ndi, *The Golden Age of Southern Cameroons: Prime Lessons for Cameroon* (Denver/Bamenda: Spears Media Press, 2016), 156.

³¹West Cameroon Education Policy, 1963.

³²Sb/a (1963) 4, Board of Education, West Cameroon, NAB.

Furthermore, the Board addressed issues of irregularity in common entrance examinations into teacher training and secondary colleges. A.D. Mengot as the chairman of the Board proposed the creation of an examining board void of discrimination and favoritism, with individual cases being carefully scrutinized.³³ The responsibility was passed on to the Principals' Committee to review conditions of the prepared the proposed entrance examination and report its recommendations to the Board. Members of the Board agreed that opportunities must be based on merit. With opportunities provided in terms of places in teacher training and secondary colleges and scholarships, the Board decided that only brilliant and academically performing students in post-primary schools were deserving of the available opportunities.

The Chairman of the 1963 Education Board presented the plan of the education department to add new subjects in the teacher training program.³⁴ This included the teaching of certificate programs in Mathematics and French. He explained that the teaching of Mathematics was appropriate because of the need to equip pupil-teachers with the relevant competence to handle Arithmetic, especially at the level of Senior Primary Classes. Likewise, French was suggested as a compulsory subject in the training of Grades II and Grade III teachers. Board members, who opted for a gradual diffusion of the French language as a second foreign language, considered it very important to prepare teachers who were to train the next generation of French-speakers in West Cameroon.³⁵ Concerning the addition of new subjects in the training of student-teachers in the different teacher training colleges, the Board concluded that it was appropriate for the Syllabus sub-committee to meet and draw up subject syllabuses to facilitate the teaching of these subjects in the teacher training colleges.³⁶

The chairman announced to the Board that as of the 1st of January 1963, the education department had devolved some of its functions to education authorities of voluntary agencies.³⁷ This was as a result of the reorganization of the administrative machinery of voluntary agency schools. The supervision of denominational schools was placed under education secretaries who were expected to report directly to the educational department. In addition, the education secretaries were assisted by two supervisors; one for the Grassland Zone and the other for the Forest Zone. The chairman demanded that all correspondences between these voluntary agency schools and the education department must first pass through the education secretaries, otherwise: "...failure to do so would result in the letters being returned to the senders with no action taken."³⁸ This was coming after a similar step was put in place earlier, with the appointment of school managers to oversee the running of schools owned by local councils. The decisions taken on the board were binding on all agencies operating secondary schools in West Cameroon.

As a result of the Addis Ababa Conference of 1961, most developing countries committed themselves to achieve universal primary education (UPE) by 1980. Consequently, on 28 January 1963, the Secretary of State of Education asked the Director of Education to include an item on the possibility of raising the enrolment in Senior Primary Schools from 40 to 50

³³Ibid.

³⁴Sb/a (1963) 5, Board of Education, West Cameroon, NAB.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Sb/a (1965) 4, Board of Education, West Cameroon, NAB.

pupils as part of the agenda of the 1963 Board meeting. It was the wish of government that the Board should discuss the possibility of permitting quadruple infants classes in primary schools (i.e. Infants 1A, 1B, 1C, 1D; Infants 2A, 2B, 2C, 2D) to drain off the backlog of children awaiting entrance. With enrolment figures as of 1963 standing at 95,159 pupils (67,454 boys and 27,705 girls) and the total number of primary schools at 590, Government demanded that the Board should also find a way of increasing the maximum enrolment in secondary schools from 30 to 35 per class.³⁹ This was intended to rapidly expand this level of education before the Federal Ministry of National Education took control of secondary and technical education as clearly stated in the Federal Constitution of 1961. Board members eventually agreed that any increment in enrolment (as proposed by government) could only be possible if and when the number of trained teachers increased.⁴⁰

The chairman announced Government's proposal to increase class enrollment as follows: infants I and II from 40 to 50; Standard I and II, from 40 to 45; and Standard III-VI, from 36 to 40. This proposal promised to increase the school going population on one hand and provide more opportunities for aspiring scholars as well. A heated debate ensued with majority of Board members repeatedly laying emphasis on the fact that education in West Cameroon was not merely aiming for mass literacy, but strived towards quality, which warranted a reduced class size rather than an increased class size. Considering some of the constraints to the expansion of primary education, 1963 Board meeting outlined a number of limitations, such as:

inadequate textbooks; improper follow up and respond to educational needs of pupils; insufficient classroom facilities; and shortages in trained teachers. The board was unanimous that if government was to increase enrollment in primary schools, then she must provide the facilities required for such an expansion.⁴¹

The members of the board noted that: "...adding more pupils to the existing classes would only encourage inefficiency and unsatisfactory work..."⁴² In the end, they were unanimous that any increment should be limited only to senior primary classes (Standard III-VI) and form one classes of secondary colleges. It was concluded that: "where the education of a child may be jeopardized the admission of over the maximum is made a special case, subject to the approval of the education officer of the area".⁴³ As such, enrolment in senior primary classes per class rose from 36 to 40 pupils and in forms one of secondary colleges from 30 to 35 students.

The chairman, A.D. Mengot asked the members of the 1963 Education Board to consider the introduction of four-class infant school which was a triple stream primary school.⁴⁴ He pointed out that the project may pose problems not only of accommodation, but of staffing as well. Revisiting this suggestion in 1966, it was stated that the goal was to tackle the problem of overcrowded schools.⁴⁵ During deliberations, Board members laid emphasis on the need of

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Sb/a (1963) 5, Board of Education, West Cameroon, NAB.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Sb/a (1965) 4, Board of Education, West Cameroon, NAB.

more training facilities for teachers and the construction of more school buildings in both the urban and rural areas to avoid concentrating on increasing the population of large schools in townships. The Board recommended the establishment of triple stream infant classes in large towns like Victoria, Tiko, Kumba, Mamfe, Bamenda and Nsaw where names of children were already on the waiting list of admission.

As of July 1963, out of the 3,157 primary school teachers in West Cameroon, 1,126 were probationary teachers while 973 were certificated. Most schools complained of the lack of trained or certificated teachers.⁴⁶ Therefore, the Board proposed that a trained teacher should be put in charge of a higher class while closely supervising the work of the probationary teacher. Probationary teachers were supposed to teach infant classes, Grade III teachers taught Standard I and II, and with the Grade II teachers teaching from Standards III to VI.⁴⁷ To increase the number of certificated teachers, the June 1966 Board of Education recommended that an emergency training course be put in place to permit successful probationary teachers to be enlisted in the education department register as C-teachers.⁴⁸

Board members condemned the practice whereby multiple scholarships were awarded to particular pupils while others lacked basic school needs. At the 1963 Board of education meeting, Vincent Ntumvi accused denominational organizations (with the bulk of post-primary education in their hands) of depriving children of the opportunity of being admitted into their secondary colleges because they were not part of their denominations.⁴⁹ As Principal of Saint Joseph College Sasse, Father Damen argued that 19 out of the 60 available places in Sasse College went to boys from non-denominational schools.⁵⁰ The representatives of the Missions on the other hand indicted the Local Councils of bias in their award of scholarships which were hardly offered to those outside their local government area.

The Board advised the West Cameroon Government to discontinue or better still restrict the practice of issuing honorary certificates to some C-teachers and proposed the putting in place of in-service training for these C-teachers to: "brush themselves up professionally in order to meet up the present modern trends of teaching and to gain recognition by the award of certificate to be granted."⁵¹ As school Manager of the Victoria Divisional Council, Mr. Ntumvi brought to the notice of the other Board members at the June 1966 meeting that many probationary teachers had their appointments terminated. He cited the case of a Roman Catholic Mission School in the Muyuka Area. Although Father Sullivan, the Education Secretary of the Roman Catholic Mission in West Cameroon declared that he was unaware, another member of the Board confirmed that what Mr. Ntumvi said was true. As Chairman of the meeting, S.N. Shu stepped in and explained that all probationary teachers had only two attempts to write the Common Entrance and in case they failed on their second trial, they risked being kicked out once a trained teacher was available.

⁴⁶Wilfred Ntuba Ntoko, 81 years, Former Provincial Delegate of National Education, Interviewed in Kumba, 10 June 2024.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Sb/a (1965) 4, Board of Education, West Cameroon, NAB.

⁴⁹Sb/a (1963) 4, Board of Education, West Cameroon, NAB.

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Sb/a (1965) 4, Board of Education, West Cameroon, NAB.

At the June 1966 Board meeting, when the Chairman, S.N. Shu recommended that 12% of all new intakes into teacher training colleges should be reserved for Local Council teachers, the Mission representatives argued that Local Councils did not merit the allocation of such a huge percentage.⁵² They stated that candidates from Local Council schools were always fewer and this would support mediocrity over quality. Mission representatives equally accused Local Councils of collecting taxes from every taxable citizen, yet providing education only to a few, which was very unfair according to them.⁵³ It ended with the Board ruling in favor of the suggestion that if the Missions were to give special considerations in terms of allocating a percentage of places in their teacher training colleges for the Local Council teachers, then local councils had to award scholarships to those who did not originate from their Local Council Area.⁵⁴

It was the responsibility of the West Cameroon Education Board to fix conditions for service of teachers in the region. A wide range of incentives was considered during debates by the members of board in order for government to reward the hard work, devotion and decency of individual teachers.⁵⁵ At the 13th session of the Board's meeting in 1966, the issue of offering State accolades and other decorations to outstanding teachers was raised. This was probably to tackle such concerns as was presented to the Cameroons Times by the Buea Teachers' Association (BATA) that condemned the oversight by State authorities who they alleged did not consider teachers for state decorations, *in spite of the useful and noble work put in daily*.⁵⁶

Those teachers whose names had been removed from the teachers' register at the Education Department on allegation of misconduct could appeal formally before members of the Board of Education, so long their appeal was backed up with evidence.⁵⁷ All cases of immoral behavior or violation of professional ethics were however excluded from the board's consideration and only subject to the assessment of the education department.⁵⁸ The Board fixed the criteria for appointment of school managers. Though biased on age and experience, the goal of the board was to ensure that young teachers proved their devotion to the teaching profession.

Government entrusted to the Board of Education the responsible to regulate the conduct/behavior of learners and teachers. Board members condemned dishonesty, drunkenness, fighting, use of foul language and brutality within the school milieu. Other vices such as immoral relations among members of staff or their spouses in school or college as well as misusing the Agency's or public property and equipment were strongly opposed by the Board.⁵⁹ Concerning indiscipline in schools, the Board blamed the parents, teachers and the public at large. Some members stated how during holidays, primary school pupils organized drinking and dancing parties late into the night and this accounted for the indiscipline in school. In order to remedy the situation, the Board urged the teacher-parent association to institute ways and means of handling cases of indiscipline through cooperation in order to restore discipline in schools. In this connection, the Board asked Government to authorize the

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Sb/a (1963) 5, Board of Education, NAB, declassified by Prince Mbain Henry on 6-6-1978.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Cameroon Times, "Teachers frown at not being decorated", Vol. 7, No.39, Thursday, 20 April 1967, 3.

⁵⁷NAB, Sb/a (1965) 4, Board of Education, West Cameroon.

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Ibid.

ensorship of films in order to restrict the content viewed by pupils and students within the region.

The Executive Council observed that some teachers were reputed for indiscriminately suspending learners from classes which was considered to be detrimental to the progress of the learners. Board members were unanimous that the suspension of learners should not be done indiscriminately. At the end of the deliberations, the Board ruled that in cases of gross insubordination, the teachers could ask the guilty pupils or students to stand outside the classroom for a few minutes.⁶⁰

Government asked for the Board's consideration for the dissolution of local education committees. To Government, the poor performance of these local education committees warranted them to be scraped off. This was intended to enable Government to take over the role of deciding on the opening of schools.⁶¹ Board members made it clear that such proposals ought to come directly from those who knew the realities on the ground. It was agreed that Permanent Education Planning Committees should be set up to cater for the educational needs at both regional and divisional levels.⁶² This came to replace the local education committees which existed prior to reunification and were criticized for being underperforming and lacked dedicated members to handle responsibility under its charge.⁶³ The board was unanimous that this was necessary to give the Education Department a realistic picture of the educational needs of the region. It equally recommended that one-third of members of these committees must be educational experts.⁶⁴

The Executive Council asked the Board to recommend ways to expand domestic science to all girls' secondary schools. At the 1965 Board meeting, Board members pointed out the necessity for government to encourage private proprietors and Missions to open schools in order to expand the choices and opportunities of aspiring West Cameroonians scholars. They equally noted that government's idea to expand domestic science was indeed a laudable one, but insisted that it was the place of Government to provide the funds needed especially as domestic science was a very expensive course to pursue.⁶⁵

2.4 Impact of Financial Constraints on Operations of the West Cameroon Education Board

A major problem that signaled demise of the West Cameroon Education Board was the rapid spread of secondary education in West Cameroon came with a lot of expenses incurred. Although education in West Cameroon was considered as investment, the dividends proved counterproductive to the State Government, required to pay the greatest price for the ever-increasing cost of education. In 1969/1970, over 94 percent of the internal revenue of West Cameroon was needed by the Education Department and Secretariat of State for Primary

⁶⁰Sb/a (1965) 11, Education Department Policy, NAB.

⁶¹NAB, Sb/a (1965) 4, Board of Education, West Cameroon.

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³NAB, Sb/a (1947) 17, Memorandum on Educational Policy in Nigeria, NAB, 7; Sb/a (1963) 12, Education policy general.

⁶⁴NAB, Sb/a (1963) 5, Board of Education, West Cameroon.

⁶⁵NAB, Sb/a (1965) 4, Board of Education, West Cameroon.

Education.⁶⁶ As such, 1078 million francs CFA was expended out of a total internal revenue of 1143 million francs CFA.⁶⁷ Justified by the rapid expansion and diversification of education, addition of private proprietors as educational stakeholders and increases in number of teachers recruited. Coupled with the recessionary state of the economy, the West Cameroon Government needed to respond to other sectors requiring attention.⁶⁸ Considering how crucial it was to balance accurately the budget of West Cameroon in order to sustain the economy.

Besides, wastage in the West Cameroon educational system was of grave concern to the Board of Education. The rate of repetition was exceptionally very high and dropout attributed to curriculum content and variety of educational opportunities available for pupils to choose after completion of the primary school course. Despite the high percentage of primary school enrolments, the drop-out rate was exceptionally high. According to one authority, for every 1000 pupils entering the first grade of the primary entering the first grade of the primary cycle, only 398 entered the sixth form. Only 100 of these pupils actually received the elementary certificate. The high rate of dropouts and repeaters was attributable to the shortage of qualified and effective teachers.

In an attempt to regulate wastage, the Education Board criticized the Education Department for expenses incurred from the publication of the West Cameroon teachers' journal. According to the Board, the four issues of the journal published between 1962 and 1965 had amassed debts over 600, 000 francs CFA. Unsold copies of the journal of all the issues were said to have filled every education office because teachers were reluctant to procure copies. Evidently attempts to coerce members of the Board to mount pressure on teachers and pupil-teachers to patronize the journal ended as a blatant failure. Board members criticized most of the topics presented in the journal to be unappealing to the daily pedagogic needs of teachers and that contributors were overtly pompous. The Board took a unanimous position that the journal should sell on its own merit.⁶⁹

The rapid expansion of secondary education increased the cost of education in West Cameroon.⁷⁰ In a Memorandum prepared by the Education Board and presented to the Executive Council on 30 January 1963, the Secretary of State for Education and Social Welfare warned that: "If we expand education without the concomitant expansion in finance, we shall end up with a form of diluted half-learning, generally described under the title of pseudo-education".⁷¹ Some of the secondary schools opened by Christian Denominations included; Sacred Heart College Mankon, Saker Baptist College, Our Lady of Lourdes College Mankon, Joseph Merrick Baptist College Ndu, Saint Bedes Ashing-Kom, among others.⁷² During the early 1960s, secondary grammar and commercial education expanded to different parts of West Cameroon. New private commercial schools emerged, such as Pioneer Commercial College Kumba, National Commercial College Kumba, and Cameroon College of Commerce. In Bamenda, Longla Commercial College was opened in 1964 and Providence Commercial

⁶⁶Memorandum No. WCA (71) 22, File No. CSS. 403 of 24th March 1971.

⁶⁷Ibid.

⁶⁸Harold D. Nelson et al, *Area Handbook for the United Republic of Cameroon*, 128-129.

⁶⁹NAB, Sb/a (1965) 4, Board of Education, West Cameroon.

⁷⁰NAB, File No. SS.257/vol.2, Sb/a (1965) 11, Education Department Policy 1965.

⁷¹Sb/a (1963) 12, "Education Policy General", NAB, 15.

⁷²Andrew Azong-Wara, aged 77, Former student of Sacred Heart College Mankon, Interviewed at Buea, 14 May 2024

College in 1965/1966. By 1972, the number of private commercial educational institutions increased to sixteen. As the number of agencies increased, the cost became more and more unbearable mainly due to heavy reliance on government grants-in-aid.⁷³ Hence, the Federal Government's desire to directly control educational administration to stabilize national education budgets and ensure that private partners shared effectively in the cost of providing educational services to Cameroonians, however in strict compliance to laid down educational regulations.

The dependence of voluntary agencies to operate on grants-in-aid caused the expansion of education to be incommensurate to increased economic growth. By implication, the West Cameroon Government was bound to bear the financial brunt through the payment of a high cost of education.⁷⁴ At a conference held in Saker Baptist College on 17 and 18 December 1965, protestant school administrators asked the federal government to step in and assist them. One of the points raised was that: "all the West Cameroon secondary schools have been operating on deficit budgets and the principals have reached the stage when they cannot run away any longer unless they receive the grants before the second school term begins".⁷⁵ They went as far as to threaten that if nothing was done, they would either close their schools or obtain permission from the federal minister to raise their school fees. The Federal Government however stepped in with the promise of providing subvention of 50,000,000 francs for the 1965/1966 academic year and also pay 15,000,000 francs to cover debts owed during the previous academic year (1964/1965).⁷⁶ This notwithstanding, the amounts promised were considered very insufficient considering the expansion of secondary education in West Cameroon.

To deal with the ailing financial situation of West Cameroon, a committee of inquiry was set up in July 1966 chaired by Simon-Joseph Epale. The members of this committee included S.N. Ekobena, J. Thrupp, P.M Effange, M.N. Sabum, and W.M. Ntuba- as secretary. This committee recommended among other things that free primary education should be completely abolished as well as strict measures instituted for the award of secondary school scholarships to West Cameroonian students.⁷⁷

By 1968, the Executive Council asked the Education Board to advise on the reduction of the number of schools in West Cameroon.⁷⁸ The Board of Education agreed to set up a sub-committee to decide between schools to be closed and those to remain operational. The proposals of this sub-committee led to an administrative reform of 1971 intended to lower cost of education in West Cameroon. It is worth mentioning that the cost of education formerly stood at 94 percent of the annual budget West Cameroon.⁷⁹ To this effect, a certain number of schools were expected to be closed while the State Government took over the running of 150

⁷³Nixon Kahjum Takor and Lambert Munang Ngong, "A Critical Inventory of Secondary Lay Private Educational Precursors in Bamenda, 1962-1990", *Journal of Arts and Humanities (JAH)* 4, No.1(2021): 11.

⁷⁴Sba (1970), "Extracts from the Proceedings of the 16th Board of Education held in the House of Assembly Chambers on 14th and 15th September 1970; cost of primary education in West Cameroon, and other Correspondences", 1970.

⁷⁵Memorandum No. WCA (71) 22, File No. CSS. 403 of 24th March 1971.

⁷⁶Ibid.

⁷⁷Ngoh, "Dismantling the Federal System", In *Cameroon, From a Federal to a Unitary State 1961-1972*, 149.

⁷⁸Ibid.

⁷⁹See File No. PMO. 385/S.2/81 of 9th February 1970.

Local Council and denominational primary schools. Unproductive teachers were dismissed and Government grants-in-aid system was revised to ensure that voluntary or private operating agencies paid higher cost of providing educational services. N.N. Mbile remarks though it was painful for the West Cameroon Government, a total number of 2000 teachers were retrenched during this period.⁸⁰ More so, education rates were increased mainly to shift more responsibility to local communities. The ultimate aim being the maintenance of quality education without over-burdening Government.

From the report of the Secretary for Finance Honorable Henry Namata Elangwe presented during the budget session of the West Cameroon House of Assembly during on 23rd of June 1969, it showed that West Cameroon benefited a larger share of Federal subventions than East Cameroon.⁸¹ Figures of Federal subventions received by the two federated states from 1964 to 1969 stood at 9,344,000,000 francs CFA for West Cameroon and 5,520,000,000 francs for East Cameroon.⁸² Secretary for Finance's report indicated that even with the reduction in the subventions received by West Cameroon in the 1967/1968 and 1968/1969 financial years, the Federated State of East Cameroon did not receive federal subventions during those years. The report further revealed that the head of the draft estimates with the largest provision was that of education which accounted for over 25% of the estimates of West Cameroon. Considering the allocation of the sum of 1,400 million as Federal subvention to West Cameroon for 1969/1970, Honorable Elangwe cautioned that apart from education, it was important for the State Government to diversify attention to other sectors of the economy.⁸³

As part of the measures to stabilize Federal budgets, the Federal Government insisted that private organizations and/or partners in West Cameroon must bear the responsibility for running their own educational institutions. This therefore affected the budget for Education Board meetings and conferences. For the year 1968/1969, 554,000 francs was provided for the payment of expenses in connection with Board meetings and conferences. The Director of Education felt the purchase of stationery in the Department of Education was more pertinent than holding Education Board meetings. He informed the Ministry of Finance that instead of using all of the amount voted by the West Cameroon House of Assembly for the holding of Education Board meetings, he was going to divert part of the money to provide for stationeries. Consequently, the Ministry of Finance concluded that the Department of Education only needed 200,000 francs to pay for the conduct of and other expenses incidental to the conduct of Board meetings. The Annual Report of the Department of Education for 1968/1969 noted that: "if things continue in this way, Board meetings and conferences will come to an end with the result that the Ministry will have to make policies without professional advice and fruitful professional exchange of ideas and information will be curtailed."⁸⁴ Since it was still necessary

⁸⁰N.N. Mbile, *Cameroon Political Story: Memories of An Authentic Eye Witness* (Limbe: Presprint, 2000), 237.

⁸¹NAB, Cc 11/8, Federated State of West Cameroon, Budget Session of the West Cameroon House of Assembly, 23rd June 1969, Speech by the Prime Minister of West Cameroon, Mr. S.T. Muna (Buea: Government Press).

⁸²Ibid.

⁸³Ibid.

⁸⁴NAB, The Annual Report of the West Cameroon Primary Education Department for the Year 1968-1969.

to direct Government spending wisely, the Executive Council approved the composition of the Education Board on 7 February 1970.⁸⁵

Reflecting upon achievements of educational stakeholders, the West Cameroon Executive Council declared that: “truly, we can be proud of this record which is symbolic of the determination of our people to march abreast with the rest of mankind and so prepare those who would have to take over from us, to be worthy successors”.⁸⁶ Based on this resolve, the West Cameroon Government appealed to the Federal Government that Federal grants were always insufficient to sustain voluntary agencies through the grants-in-aid system and that most teachers only wanted favorable remuneration for their services.⁸⁷ However, the Executive Council acknowledged that:

It is now a regular though painful feature for us to be able to pay only part of such salaries each month. We are conscious of the hardship and economic instability that this brings about to those on whom rests the charge of bringing up the young, but we stand the greater risk of halting progress in the other services of the State, if we were to venture to pay teachers 100% of their requirement.⁸⁸

Due to financial difficulties experienced by the West Cameroon Government, integrating the systems of educational administration in Cameroon was considered the most appropriate means of stabilizing Federal Government expenditures on national education. Between 1967 and 1972, expenditures increased significantly, from 4.2 billion francs CFA in 1967 to 9.2 billion francs CFA in 1972.⁸⁹ These figures included amounts offered the West Cameroon Government to balance its budget on grants-in-aid to voluntary agencies. Based on the expansion of education intended to meet regional needs of West Cameroon, Government expended huge sums of federal grants in subsidizing private/mission agencies involved in the sector.

The weak and inflationary state of the West Cameroon economy caused voluntary agency teachers to complain about disparity in their salaries compared to civil service teachers.⁹⁰ As such, the West Cameroon union of teachers clamored for equality in the salaries of voluntary agency teachers and civil servants.⁹¹ Few years back, in 1965, the Board had debated on issue of voluntary agency teachers who expressed the desire for government to draw up unified conditions of service in order for them to be treated the same way as teachers in the civil service.⁹² According to the representative of the West Cameroon Union of Teachers, this was very necessary since all teachers within the region were serving the Government either under

⁸⁵Sba (1970), “Extracts from the Proceedings of the 16th Board of Education held in the House of Assembly Chambers on 14th and 15th September 1970; cost of primary education in West Cameroon, and other Correspondences”, 1970.

⁸⁶NAB, File No. CSS. 403, West Cameroon Executive Council, Memorandum No. WCA (71) 22 of 24th March 1971.

⁸⁷NAB, Sb/a 1966/18, Educational Reports on Primary and other Aspects of Education-West Cameroon 1966-1972.

⁸⁸Memorandum No. WCA (71) 22, File No. CSS. 403 of 24th March 1971.

⁸⁹Ibid, 115.

⁹⁰Mélanie Torrent, *Diplomacy and Nation-Building in Africa: Franco-British Relations and Cameroon at the End of Empire* (London/New York: I.B. Tauris, 2012), 76.

⁹¹Victor Julius Ngoh, Professor of History, Interviewed at Buea on 9 May 2024.

⁹²NAB, Sb/a (1965) 3, Board of Education, West Cameroon.

the voluntary agencies or in the civil service. Likewise, unified conditions of service were interpreted as binding on all teachers in West Cameroon. The Federal Cultural Delegate stated the Director had taken into account all the differences in practices of the various agencies before formulating the unified conditions of service. To this effect, the Education Board condemned the practice whereby teachers sent petitions bypassing the normal administrative hierarchy.⁹³ This was considered by both the Executive Council and Board of Education as the wrong procedure and therefore could not receive the attention demanded by the petitioners.⁹⁴

A petition was sent to the presidency of the Federal Republic in 1969 by an unknown group of teachers who claimed that their salaries were deducted during holidays.⁹⁵ In response, Paul Biya, who was Secretary General in the presidency, stated in a letter sent to the Secretary of State for primary education in West Cameroon on 18 October 1969. He asked for appropriate clarification on the issue concerning a request for the transformation of private (denominational or voluntary agency) schools into official schools as well as ending reduction in salaries of private teachers during holidays.⁹⁶ Although the West Cameroon Government and West Cameroon union of teachers refuted claims of any reduction in the salaries of teachers during holidays, it however showed an early sign of hibernation in cooperation among key educational stakeholders in West Cameroon.

Surprisingly, the Secretary of State for primary education and Permanent Secretary in the office of the Prime Minister were completely unaware of any petition presented by private teachers in West Cameroon. The Permanent Secretary at the Prime Minister's office however noted that:

...a referendum amongst teachers would result in a vote in favour of becoming Government teachers, though (...) not suggested that such a method be used. [It was recommended that] the W.C.U.T should be able to gauge the feeling of its members. [Regardless,] teachers' salaries (were) not reduced during holidays contrary to the statement in the attached letter [*Emphasis added*].⁹⁷

By 29 January 1970, the West Cameroon Government, after consultations with Mr. Tamen, the secretary general of the W.C.U.T, denying any knowledge of a letter sent to the Federal presidency. He also refuted the claims that teachers' salaries were reduced during vacations and stated that it was something considered illegal even if such practices actually existed.⁹⁸ In fact, the secretariat of primary education denied receiving any complaints concerning this matter. The West Cameroon Government's appeal to the Federal Government was that teachers wanted to be favourably remunerated, suppose Federal subventions were always insufficient to maintain the grants-in-aid system that sustained voluntary agencies and equally subsidized

⁹³Ibid.

⁹⁴Ibid.

⁹⁵West Cameroon, Ministry of Primary Education, Letter No.B.14/SG/PRF of 18 October 1969, NAB.

⁹⁶West Cameroon, Letter No.B.14/SG/PRF of 18 October 1969, NAB.

⁹⁷NAB, West Cameroon, Letter No.PM.385/S.2/76 of 3rd November 1969.

⁹⁸Ibid.

teachers' salaries.⁹⁹ Although regrettable, the situation was neither new nor unknown to the Executive Council, especially whenever budgeted expenditure was insufficient.¹⁰⁰

Over 94 percent of the internal revenue of West Cameroon for 1969/1970 was needed by the Education Department and Secretariat of State for Primary Education, that is, 1078 million francs CFA spent from the total internal revenue of 1143 million francs CFA. According to J.T. Nchamukong, the sum of 600 million francs CFA was to be raised only to pay teachers' salaries, while 168,750,000 francs was still needed to pay the presidentially decreed 4% and 3% salary awards and the single salary adjustment made to teachers.¹⁰¹ The problem of teachers' salaries was so serious to the extent that the Executive Council acknowledged that:

It was a regular, though painful feature for the West Cameroon Government to be able to pay only part of the salaries of teachers each month. We are conscious of the hardship and economic instability that this brings about to those on whom rests the charge of bringing up the young, but we stand the greater risk of halting progress in the other services of the State, if we were to venture to pay teachers 100% of their requirement.¹⁰²

Sympathizing with the teachers, J.E. Ebaima wrote that Roman Catholic Mission school teachers went for several months without receiving their salaries.¹⁰³ By 1971, Ahidjo provided a special presidential bailout of over 500 million francs CFA, of which 330 million francs CFA was used to offset the bill for teachers' salaries in the 1970/1971 fiscal year. He also pledged to put at the disposal of the West Cameroon Government the sum of 168,750,000 francs, as part a 4% and 3% salary awards and the single salary adjustment to teachers.¹⁰⁴ During his budget speech before the West Cameroon House of Assembly in 1971, Prime Minister S.T. Muna outlined everything done to meet the needs of teachers and put an end to rumors and threats of strike actions.¹⁰⁵ Out of the total amount promised, the sum of 168,175,000 francs was placed at the disposal of the West Cameroon Government in 1972.¹⁰⁶ The fund was forwarded to voluntary agencies which were responsible for onward payments to their teachers. The Education Secretaries of Cameroon Baptist Convention and Presbyterian Mission, E.T. Bakari and E.A. Ekiti confirmed to the Cameroon Times Newspaper that these funds were indeed paid into the respective treasuries of the Missions.¹⁰⁷

The closure of denominational teacher training colleges in West Cameroon signaled the beginning of the end of the West Cameroon Education Board. Out of the 12 teacher training centres that existed prior to the dismantling of federal structures, only Government Teacher

⁹⁹NAB, Sb/a 1966/18, Educational Reports on Primary and other Aspects of Education-West Cameroon 1966-1972.

¹⁰⁰NAB, File No. CSS. 403, No. WCA (71) 22, West Cameroon Executive Council, Memorandum, 24th March 1971.

¹⁰¹*Cameroon Times*, "At Last Teachers' Pay Now Ready", vol 12, No. 60, Wed. June 1, 1972.

¹⁰²Memorandum No. WCA (71) 22, File No. CSS. 403 of 24th March 1971.

¹⁰³*Cameroon Scope*, "Should Teachers Feed on Stones?", vol. 2, No. 5, July 17, 1970.

¹⁰⁴NAB, Cc 11/8, Federated State of West Cameroon, Budget Session of the West Cameroon House of Assembly, 23rd June 1969, Speech by the Prime Minister of West Cameroon, Mr. S.T. Muna.

¹⁰⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷*Cameroon Times*, "We Have Now Got Teachers Arrears", Vol. 12, No. 71, July 6, 1972.

Training College Kumba survived. Even though, cost of education continued to increase. Consequently, denominational and private educational establishments were placed under a completely different education financing regime; that is, replacing the grants-in-aid scheme with State subventions. This was aggravated further with the centralization of decision-making almost entirely in the hands of the Federal Government.

The final collapse of West Cameroon Education Board is largely attributed to the rescindment of federalism. In an address to the Federal House of Assembly on 6 May 1972, President Ahmadou Ahidjo indicated that the time was ripe to consult the people of Cameroon, “who are sovereign and masters of their destiny” to decide their future whether to continue with federalism or not.¹⁰⁸ The choice of Cameroonians to dismantle federal structures led to the integration of former West Cameroon in a United Republic of Cameroon.¹⁰⁹ Inasmuch as the Board functioned statutorily, it lost legality with the adoption of the Unitary Constitution of 2nd June 1972. Thus, by the end of 1972, the West Cameroon Education Board had already become obsolete. The West Cameroon Education Department was replaced by two provincial delegations of National Education set up in the then North West and South West Provinces and placed under the direct supervision of the Minister of National Education.

3.0 CONCLUSION

This paper looked at the demise of the West Cameroon Education Board from the perspective of an outcome of financial constraints on the West Cameroon Government. It argues that the educational choices of the West Cameroon Government significantly accentuated financial constraints which contributed to the fragilization and eventual demise of the Education Board, ultimately paving the way for the interference of the Federal Government in the West Cameroon educational system. The paper reveals that upon the reunification between Southern Cameroons and the Republic of Cameroon, the determination to preserve the educational identity and traditions laid down by the British contributed to the birth of the West Cameroon Education Board. The main mission of this board was to place a check on all Government educational decisions and ensure that the choices made matched the resources available to serve educational purposes. On the contrary, the rapid expansion of education led to increased Government expenditure on education. Coupled with the intensification of financial hardship on Government, the partnership and collaboration with Local Councils and Christian denominations proved to be unproductive. Consequently, fragilizing the operations of the West Cameroon Education Board and paving way for the interference of the Federal Government in the educational affairs of the West Cameroon Government. This made the West Cameroon educational system vulnerable to Federal Government interference and eventual take over by 1972. Thus, accounting for the demise of the West Cameroon Education Board.

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¹⁰⁹*New Cameroon*, “Teachers May Go Federal”, vol.2, No.31, June 9, 1971, 9.

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