

# **Evaluating the Strategic Objectives of Cameroonian Higher Education**



**Evaluating the Strategic Objectives of  
Cameroonian Higher Education:  
An application of  
the Balanced Scorecard**

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## **Abstract**

*“An idea can only become a reality once it is broken down into organized, actionable elements.”* Scott Belsky (2010, p.74)

Bilola Theresia Samfoga Doh

### **Evaluating the Strategic Objectives of Cameroonian Higher Education: An application of the Balanced Scorecard**

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Contemporary higher education operates in an environment of dwindling and parsimonious resources; the increasing need for accountability and relevance to varying stakeholders with differing expectations. These relatively new trends in higher education have been faced by business organizations which have developed different ways of operating in response. This study outlines one way by which business organizations have addressed similar circumstances to show how the Cameroon higher education (HE) could learn from business organizations to manage strategic objectives.

The balanced scorecard (BSC) has been used by business organizations to address similar trends. This study evaluates the strategic objectives of Cameroonian higher education using the balanced scorecard. The system level is used to identify the general strategic objectives and one state university is used to represent the translation and implementation of the objectives at the institution level. The BSC principles used include: operational strategic objectives; organizational alignment to the strategy; making strategy everyone's everyday job; making strategy continual and; mobilizing the leadership for change. The underlying concepts in these principles are communication, consensus, relevance, and a participatory approach. The study employs data from policy documents, relevant literature, websites and semi-structured interviews. The research approach is qualitative and the analyses are done by making meaning of phenomena in their natural contexts.

The results show that there is a general knowledge of the strategic objectives but there is disagreement on the relevance of these objectives to HE and on the type of approaches used in implementing the objectives. It was also found that the relevant stakeholders are known, but not all the respondents agree on the importance of these stakeholders. All stakeholders do not have the same level of influence-the state is the most influential. Reporting is sufficiently done but there are insufficient provisions for feedback from stakeholders.



The study concludes that the BSC principles can be applied to the management of strategic objectives in Cameroon HE. For Cameroonian higher education, it is recommended that the focus should be first, on developing tools for strategy before the strategy itself. Even though the need for the BSC is confirmed the context does not seem sufficiently ready to implement the BSC as a strategic management tool. The proposed BSC framework can only be used as a communication tool. The barriers to managing strategic objectives in Cameroon HE are related to the communication, consensus, clarity and relevance. However, the system has prospects for improved management and eventual adoption of the BSC as both a strategic management and communication tool. In line with other BSC applications to higher education, this study concluded that it is more feasible to apply the balanced scorecard to a single higher education institution than to a higher education system.

The study makes a contribution to the BSC by showing how its principles can be used in a non-business context. The study also opens up possibilities for future research on the same topic in a different context or the same context with a wider scope (more institutions and respondents); the same study with a deeper focus on the interrelationships between the different strategic objectives (strategy maps). The study could also be extended by including the perspectives of the identified stakeholders who are not directly part of the higher education system but constitute the environment in which higher education operates.

Keywords: balanced scorecard, Cameroon, higher education, strategic objectives, strategy.

## Tiivistelmä

*“An idea can only become a reality once it is broken down into organized, actionable elements.”* Scott Belsky (2010, p.74)

Bilola Theresia Samfoga Doh

### **Kamerunin korkeakoulutuksen strategisten tavoitteiden arviointi: Balanced scorecard – sovellus**

Koulutussosiologian tutkimuskeskus, Turun yliopisto

Korkeakoulut toimivat nykyään niukkenevien resurssien toimintaympäristössä ja niiden toimintaa leimaa lisääntyvä tilivelvollisuus eri sidosryhmille vaihtuvine odotuksineen. Liike-elämä ja yritykset ovat jo aiemmin kohdanneet vastaavat kehityssuunnat ja ovat myös kehittäneet erilaisia tapoja vastata niihin. Tämä tutkimus tarkastelee yhtä menettelytapaa, balanced scorecard (BSC), jolla yritykset ovat reagoineet tilanteeseen; tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on selvittää mitä Kamerunin korkeakoulutus voisi oppia yritysten tavasta hallita strategisia tavoitteita.

Tässä tutkimuksessa arvioidaan Kamerunin korkeakoulutuksen strategisia tavoitteita balanced scorecard -menetelmän avulla. Järjestelmätasolla identifioidaan yleiset strategiset tavoitteet ja yhden valtion yliopiston kautta tarkastellaan miten tavoitteet toimeenpannaan instituutiotasolla. Periaatteet, joita BSC-menetelmä käyttää ovat: strategisten tavoitteiden toimintakelpoisuus, organisaation linjaukset suhteessa strategiaan, strategian toteuttaminen jokapäiväisessä työskentelyssä, strategian vakiinnuttaminen ja johdon mobilisointi toteuttamaan muutoksia. Näiden periaatteiden perustana olevat käsitteet ovat tiedotus, yhteisymmärrys, merkityksellisyys ja osallistuvuus. Tutkimusaineistona ovat toimenpideasiakirjat, relevantti kirjallisuus, verkkosivut ja semi-strukturoidut haastattelut. Tutkimuksen lähestymistapa on laadullinen ja analyyseissä keskeistä on ymmärtää ilmiöiden merkitykset niiden omassa kontekstissaan.

Tulokset osoittavat, että strategisista tavoitteista on olemassa yleisluontoista tietoa, mutta niiden relevanssista korkeakoulutukselle on eriäviä käsityksiä, kuten myös tavoitteiden toimeenpanon menettelytavoista. Yksi tulos on, että vaikka relevantit sidosryhmät tiedetään, vastaajat ovat eri mieltä eri sidosryhmien tärkeydestä. Kaikki sidosryhmät eivät ole yhtä vaikutusvaltaisia; valtiovalta on selvästi vaikutusvaltaisim. Raportointi on määrällisesti riittävää, sen sijaan sidosryhmillä ei ole tarpeeksi mahdollisuuksia antaa palautetta.

Tutkimuksen keskeinen johtopäätös on että BSC:n suosittamia periaatteita voidaan soveltaa strategisten tavoitteiden hallintaan Kamerunin korkeakoulutuksessa. Tutkimuksen mukaan Kamerunin korkeakoulutuksen olisi syytä keskittyä ensin strategisten työkalujen kehittämiseen ja vasta sitten itse strategiaan. Vaikka BSC-arvioinnille on kiistatta tarve, konteksti ei ole vielä riittävän valmis BSC-sovelluksen käyttöönottoon strategisen johtamisen välineenä. Toistaiseksi BSC viitekehystä voidaan käyttää lähinnä vain viestintätarkoituksiin. Strategisten tavoitteiden hallinnan hankaluudet Kamerunin korkeakoulutuksessa nivoutuvat ongelmiin kommunikaatiossa, puuttuvaan yhteisymmärrykseen ja selkeyteen sekä merkityksellisyyden jakamiseen. Kuitenkin Kamerunin korkeakoulujärjestelmällä on mahdollisuuksia kehittyneempään johtamiseen ja ottaa ajan mittaan käyttöön BSC sekä strategisen johtamisen että kommunikaation välineenä. Yhtäpitävästi muista korkeakoulutukseen sovelletuista BSC-asetelmista tehtyjen havaintojen kanssa tämä tutkimus päättyy siihen johtopäätökseen, että on toteuttamiskelpoisempaa soveltaa balanced scorecardia korkeakoulu kerrallaan kuin koko korkeakoulujärjestelmään.

Tutkimuksen kontribuutio BSC-traditiolle on siinä, että se osoittaa kuinka BSC:n periaatteita voidaan käyttää liiketoimintaympäristön ulkopuolella. Tutkimus myös avaa uusia mahdollisuuksia siihen miten samaa asetelmaa voitaisiin soveltaa eri ympäristöön tai samaan ympäristöön laajemmassa tarkastelussa (enemmän instituutioita ja respondenteja); ja jatkotutkimus voitaisiin kohdistaa esimerkiksi eri strategisten tavoitteiden väliseen tarkasteluun (strategiset kartat). Tutkimusta voitaisiin myös laajentaa tuomalla mukaan myös sellaisten sidosryhmien näkökulma, jotka eivät ole suoranaisesti osa korkeakoulujärjestelmää, mutta muodostavat ympäristön, jossa korkeakoulutus toimii.

Avainsanat: balanced scorecard, Kamerun, korkeakoulutus, strategiset tavoitteet, strategia.

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# **1 INTRODUCTION**

## **1.1 Study Background: Policy Context of Cameroon Higher Education**

Chapter 1 presents a background to the research topic in the general higher education literature and in Cameroonian higher education policy context. The background is followed by the research problem and rationale of the study.

In a rapidly changing world and consequently very dynamic higher education landscape, higher education systems face many challenges. Barely recovering from the onset of massification in the seventies, higher education is faced with increasing competition, extensive internationalization, higher demand for quality and the obligation to prove themselves to varying stakeholders. These stakeholders ‘unfortunately’ often are sponsors and at the same time beneficiaries of higher education’s products and services. The variety and instability of these challenges call for appropriate strategic responses from higher education (Gilliot, Overlaet and Verdain 2001, p. 179). However, the focus on university management and the development of concepts and tools for university management is relatively novel when compared to strategic management of business organizations. Clark (1983) and Keller (1983) were the first to indicate the need for better and updated management practices in higher education. But Kotler and Murphy

(1981, p.470) predicted that for “colleges and universities to survive in the troubled years ahead, a strong emphasis on planning is essential.” They suggested that “the type of planning that appears to be most appropriate for the future is strategic market planning.” They further assert that such planning is “one of the most revolutionary commercial sector developments and promises to be a potent tool for use in non-profit organizations.” One of the pressing issues in university strategy debate is the process involved in identifying and implementing goals or policies which are strategic (relevant to the demands of stakeholders and the dynamic higher education environment). Besides its missions of teaching, research and service, the role of higher education has been extended to responsiveness to evolving worldwide trends, new fiscal challenges, and diversifying expectations. These have given higher education<sup>1</sup> (HE) a much sharper attention than ever before. Nowadays, strategic thinking and strategy-based actions enable higher education to successfully adapt to its ever-changing environment.

Underlying much of the global austerity in higher education is the swelling demand of the past four decades. Nearly all national higher education systems have dramatically grown since the mid- and late 1960s. They have grown in sheer numbers and the cohort of participation. In most low and middle income countries, the combination of high birth rates and increasing percentages of these increasing numbers completing secondary education and aspiring to higher education is generating a massive demand pressure on higher

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<sup>1</sup> To avoid ambiguity higher education (in Cameroon) refers to all post-secondary education. In this study, it is limited to universities only. Higher education as a system involves all universities and the administrative bodies within which they run. In the context of this study, the higher education system includes the ministry in charge of higher education, state universities and its stakeholders.

education. Consequently, the trajectory of these increasing numbers and their increasing costs is, in almost all countries far exceeding the likely trajectory of increasing tax-generated revenues (Johnstone, B., in GUNI<sup>2</sup>2006, p.121). This phenomena are intensified by the diversity and variety of goals, demands and expectations. There are older expectations to widen access, provide citizen education, improve social inclusion and enhance human capital for national development. Moreover, globalisation and changes in the structure of the global economy have brought new pressures to bear on higher education systems. For instance, there are pressures to provide better quality education and research, high-ranking and attractive institutions for hubs of innovation and the competitiveness of nations. At the same time, the university whose role was previously less questionable is more than ever before, required to demonstrate or increase its contributions to regional and national development. Higher education today is in a tension between such local/national and global missions. The surging responsibilities lead to the necessity for innovative management mechanisms to render universities more efficient and responsive to both their traditional and new roles. Pursuant to the foregoing, governments and funding agencies are increasingly becoming strategic, cost and efficiency-conscious as well as result-oriented in their evaluations of higher education. Higher education has shifted from a position based on individuals who learn to corporatist structures based on individuals who teach or administrate (Escotet, M.A. in GUNI, 2006, p.126). Escotet further argues that control has become a necessary mechanism inasmuch as its objective is to teach institutions to develop mechanisms for self-control and regulation. Escotet's view corroborates with those

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<sup>2</sup> Global University Network for Innovation

of other HE scholars that the state's role in higher education has changed. For instance the different swings that have taken place over the last two decades in the steering of higher education, notably from state-run to autonomous universities. For example, the 'reinvention of government' (Peters, 2001), the 'state supervisory model' (De Boer and Goedegebuure, 2003; Maassen and Vught, 1994) and the 'evaluative state' (Neave, 1998).

Another current trend in higher education addresses efficiency and effectiveness. Recently, techniques for strategic planning, management by objectives, skills and results, as well as quality assessment have been incorporated (Escotet, 2006, p.1). Cameroonian higher education is no stranger to the trends that other higher education systems face. The new policy on university governance laid down in decree No. 2005/383 of 17<sup>th</sup> December 2005 was aimed at improving governance of higher education in four perspectives (managerial, academic, financial and social governance). The decree emphasizes efficiency, effectiveness, management with rigour transparency and results. The background of this decree was the need to ameliorate administrative and financial management of universities. It is asserted that the purpose was to review and reorient higher education to meet the needs of the society and the labour market as well as to be globally competitive.

The expectations for the university go beyond the basic missions of teaching, research and service to the society. Higher education does not need to train without focusing on where the graduates will end up (motive for professionalization). The financial resources available to higher education are questioned in the midst of economic crises. It is echoed that higher education needs to prove its importance and

contribution to society to merit such investments. The quality and relevance (responding to societal needs) of training need to be enhanced and there is also need for effective and efficient management of higher education in all dimensions.

This current research outlines the determination and implementation of strategic objectives in Cameroon's higher education system. The balanced scorecard (BSC) and its related concepts are used as the foundation for analyses. In order to show how far the BSC can enhance the understanding and involvement of all relevant stakeholders in determining and implementing strategic objectives, the study applies the BSC approach to the current strategic objectives of higher education in Cameroon. This application highlights the disconnections (gaps in involving all relevant stakeholders, consideration of available resources and possible negative outcomes of pursuing objectives). The proposed BSC framework highlights its potential to reduce these disconnections. Since financial success is not their primary objective, non-profits cannot use the standard architecture of the balanced scorecard where financial objectives are the ultimate, high-level outcomes to be achieved (Kaplan and Norton 2010, p.23).

Non-profits generally focus on objectives related to their societal impact such as: reducing poverty and unemployment, pollution, curbing disease, reducing school dropout rates, improving health, environmental issues, providing education and economic opportunities. A non-profit or public sector agency's mission represents its accountability to society as well as the rationale for its existence and ongoing support (Kaplan and Norton, 2010 p.23). Higher education is one of such non-profit organizations, focussing not only on its

traditional missions of knowledge creation, conservation and dissemination but also on making an impact in its environment and responding to changes in that environment.

### ***History, Structure and Policy Context of Higher Education in Cameroon***

The educational system in Cameroon owes its origins to its last European colonial background as a former French and British Colony. Consequently, the system is dominantly a hybrid of the French and British educational systems and thus, a 'bicultural' system of education. At the primary and secondary school levels, there is a clear cut policy distinction or division into two educational sub-systems (Tchombe, 2001, p.11): the Francophone (approximately 70 per cent for 8 regions) and the Anglophone subsystem (about 30 per cent for the 2 Anglophone regions).

The Cameroon higher education began from the creation of the National University Complex to its transition to the Federal University of Yaoundé in 1962. Although earlier attempts pointed to the idea of integrating the two subsystems at the higher education level, the experience revealed the significance and persistence of the previous educational traditions of the students which reflected in the teaching-learning process and affected the quality of education (Njeuma et al., 1999; Doh, 2007, p. 29-30). This was the case with the 'bilingual' University of Yaoundé, where the traditions were for instance; to reflect on linguistic issues (serious problem of language balance), methodological and curricular issues. Such cultural connotations made the teaching and learning process burdensome, especially when the

teacher was likely to have only a ‘monocultural’ experience (Doh, 2007, p.3). During the 1993 University Reforms in Cameroon these issues were taken into consideration. Two universities were consequently conceived solely in monocultural traditions as per Decree No.92/074 of 13th April 1992; the Universities of Ngaoundere and Buea in the Francophone and Anglo-Saxon traditions respectively.

The Cameroon higher education system is composed of eight (8) state owned universities<sup>3</sup> and a private sector of over 163 institutions (as at September 2014; MINESUP portal of private higher education institutions in Cameroon<sup>4</sup>). Private higher education constitutes only about 15 per cent of the entire student and staff population in Cameroon higher education (SUP INFOS 2010a). These students pay the full cost of their education through tuition fees, which may be as much as 5 to 20 times of what their students in the public sector pay. Cameroon also hosts the sub-regional virtual university and one national virtual university. Although there have been several deliberate policies to harmonise or cross substitute elements of the two higher education traditions, the inherited traditions of the two systems reflect in various aspects. For example: institutional and governance structures, degree structures and credit systems, methodologies and curricular issues and sometimes on perspectives of funding. As at 2013/2014 academic year, the student population was 351,020 with 5020 teachers (MINESUP 2013/2014). The annual student population growth could be estimated at around 12 per cent (Sup Infos, September 2011 p.10).

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<sup>3</sup> State universities are owned and predominantly funded by the state.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.minesup.gov.cm/ipescam/>

The Cameroon higher education system presents a ‘unitary’ structure (Doh 2007, p.20). Although each HEI is has a considerable degree of autonomy, they are centrally administered by the Ministry of Higher Education to which they are accountable. Higher education is considered a national priority, organized and controlled by the state (LOHE,<sup>5</sup> 2001, art.3; ESSP<sup>6</sup> 2006, p.32).

The Ministry of Higher Education (MINESUP) is the main governance body for the state universities. It defines policies for both the state and private higher education sectors. The Ministry is headed by a Minister who is assisted by a Secretary General, a General Inspectorate for academics and service control as well as various directors of departments (MINESUP, 2012). Universities are headed by Rectors or Vice-Chancellors in the French and Anglo-Saxon universities respectively. They are assisted by Vice Rectors and Deputy Vice-Chancellors respectively. In addition to the Rectorates or Vice-Chancellery are the offices of the Secretaries General or Registrar for French and Anglo-Saxon Universities respectively. They are in charge of routine administrative matters in the Central Administration of the universities. The Secretaries General or Registrar are statutory secretaries to the various decision-making organs of the Universities (e.g. the Committee of Deans and Directors, Senate and the University Councils). Directors head various services in the Central Administration of the Universities and Deans and Directors head faculties, schools and institutes. In the basic units of the universities

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<sup>5</sup> Law on the Orientation of Higher Education. Available online at: <http://www.spm.gov.cm/fr/documentation/textes-legislatifs-et-reglementaires/article/loi-n-005-du-16-avril-2001-portant-orientation-de-lenseignement-superieur.html>

<sup>6</sup> Education Sector Strategic Plan



there are heads of department and programme coordinators. The University has a governing council presided over by the 'President du Conseil de l'Administration' (Chairman of the University Council). In this council, the presidency of the country, the ministries of higher education, finance, public service, planning and labour are represented, as well as external stakeholders (MINESUP website, 2013).

French and English are the languages of instruction in higher education. Both languages are used in the Bilingual Universities for teaching and learning depending on the first language of the teacher or student. Only French or English is used in the monolingual Francophone or Anglo-Saxon Universities, respectively. Admission into the university is based on the two high school graduate qualifications-Baccalaureat (BAC) and the General Certificate of Education (G.C.E) Advanced Level for French and English-speaking high school graduates respectively. Other requirements include language proficiency and relevance of high school subjects to the intended field of study. Admission into professional and technical university centres, schools and institutes are based on highly competitive entrance examinations (Njeuma et al, 1999, p. 5).

The HE system operates within the framework of the 1993 reforms. With funding problems and quality decline in the University of Yaoundé, the government, between 1992 and 1993 initiated a vast reform of the HE system. The reforms were contained in presidential decrees numbers: 92/074 of 13th April 1992, 93/026 of 19th January 1993, 93/034 of 19th January 1993 and; 93/027 of 19th January 1993. The objectives addressed by these decrees included amongst others: a) to encourage the participation of the different partners in the

management and financing of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), b) Enhance autonomy in academic, administrative and management issues, c) professionalize the higher education system d) de-concentration and decentralisation, and e) increase inter-university and international co-operation. A principal feature of the reforms was that it granted autonomy to universities to generate extra funds for projects. Before the 1993 reforms, the structure of the Cameroon HE system was dominantly French-patterned. The pre-1993 higher education system consisted of the main university (the then University of Yaoundé) with several university-level institutions, professional/technical schools, institutes and centres which were completely separated from or simply lodged in the university. Thirty (30) years after its creation, this university had 40.000 students in a campus meant for 5000 students (Njeuma et al., 1999 p.4).

Before 2008, the higher education system in Cameroon comprised of two degree structures according to the French and Anglo-Saxon (or Anglo-American) systems. To ensure mobility between the two subsystems and in response to the pressures of regional integration and globalisation, the degree structures were harmonised according to the Bachelor, Master and Doctoral structure. The Francophone structure today is called the LMD system (Licence, Master and Doctoral cycles of 3+2+3 years each) corresponding to BMD (Bachelor, Master and Doctoral cycles) which existed in the Anglophone system. This new and comparable degree structure went operational from 2008.

Besides education and general government strategy papers, there have been revisions and additions to the 1993 reforms which relate to higher education. Some of these include:

- Law No. 005 of 16<sup>th</sup> April 2001 (LOHE) on the orientation of higher education in Cameroon. It defines the orientation of higher education in terms of teaching, research, and contribution to development, bilingualism and cooperation.
- Decree No. 2005/383 of 17<sup>th</sup> October 2005 on New University Governance lays down the financial regulations applicable to universities.
- The 9<sup>th</sup> August 2008 decree creating the University of Maroua.
- Decree No. 2010/372 of 14<sup>th</sup> December 2010, creating a second Anglo Saxon state university, the University of Bamenda.
- The University-Industry Charter signed on 20<sup>th</sup> December 2010 expressing the values that should be upheld and the rules and regulations in university-industry relations.
- The 2006-2009 Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP).
- The 2010-2014 Growth and Employment Strategy Paper (GESP).

Higher education objectives result from overlapping national and international policies. Cameroon is a signatory to several international conventions related to education. As a developing and aid-dependent country, Cameroon's higher education system is influenced by the World Bank, UNESCO, the African Development Bank and other sub regional organizations which shape what is deemed strategic for higher education (see Doh 2012, p. 30). In identifying the strategic objectives and why they are considered strategic (see SQ4 and UQ4 in appendix I and II); some interviewees for this study began by referring to or retelling the history of the Cameroon University. The intention was to explain the mission for which the Cameroonian university was created,

how outdated it has become and the need for adapting to the changing national and international higher education environment. The history of Cameroonian higher education explains why and how the higher education objectives are shaped. The priority was and still is to reform the higher education system and enhance its relevance to societal needs. At independence, higher education was mainly for training of cadres to replace the departing colonialist in the state administrative machinery.

The issue of relevance to the job market was not a problem until the early 1980s. In 1983-84 the population grew fast and the state was unable to absorb all HE graduates and the first responses were to recruit 1000 HE graduates and 1500 two years later. The reasoning was that the state (university curricular were tailored to meet the needs of the state) had to employ graduates but the population was growing and the needs of the country were changing. From 1984, there was an economic crisis: state companies were closed and recruitment into the public service was stalled. This is when the question of relevance to the labour market became increasingly crucial. In the 1990s when liberalism, multipartism and university crises kicked in, the 1993 university reforms were initiated. The 1993 reforms were a result of looking back into the history of Cameroon's higher education and examining whether the objectives of the 1960s were still relevant. From 1985 studies on restructuring the education sector revealed the problem of relevance of the education system in general and higher education in particular. There are some alumni associations which could track where the graduates are. However, the following questions are not answerable: What becomes of graduates? Does training respond to any needs? Are there avenues of discussion and interaction with the socio-professional environment? On the one hand the university is training

and on the other, the socio-professional environment is absorbing what it can. There are eight universities which are a huge investment during severe financial crises. What is the relevance of this investment? What is the role of higher education? The foregoing history created a need for reforming higher education in order to ensure that its graduates are useable to the society, especially to non-state employers. There was a need to partner with the socio-professional environment to have an exact idea of what they need. This information had to be the basis of reforming study programmes.

When it was noticed that the enrolment capacity of the university had been largely exceeded but the university centres were under enrolled, without thinking university centres were turned into full-fledged universities. The idea was that some students will enrol in the university centre-turned university and the former lone university of Yaoundé 1 will be decongested. In actual fact the reforms were more infrastructural while the study programmes remained the same. As one respondent in this study puts it, “the same type of ‘useless or unemployable graduates’ will be produced. If we had one problem with the lone university of Yaoundé, we multiply the problem by six universities because physical proximity to the university has been increased. The number of bachelor’s degree holders plummeted without a corresponding curriculum revision, producing the same ‘useless’ graduates”.

Another thrust of the policy context is professionalization, why professionalization? When socio-professional actors are questioned on how they recruit people to work, they respond as follows: “these people have to be professionals. Your theories at the university are good but

we need people who are ready to act, to practice the profession.” Beneath professionalization is-employability, the realisation that adapting to the socio-professional environment is not enough. The interviewees however cautioned that the ability of this environment to absorb university products is weak. The Cameroonian university today (2011/2012) has 250.000 students but the companies which can employ graduates are few. The idea is not just for the student to fit the needs of the job market but be able to create jobs and be self-employed. The concepts driving the reform are relevance, professionalization and employability. These reforms result from the reflections of Cameroonians and the involvement of external development partners.

## **1.2 Rationale of the Study**

The study explores the possibilities of implementing the balanced scorecard approach to managing strategic objectives in the Cameroonian higher education context. The five principles of the successful balanced scorecard (BSC) organizations as outlined by Kaplan and Norton (2001a) are used to evaluate the process of identifying and implementing strategic objectives in order to reveal the gaps and how these can be narrowed by the principles. The study also outlines the interactions between the strategic objectives and evaluates how they are implemented, particularly at the institutional level. Kaplan and Norton (2001a, p.7-17) posit that the five principles for achieving focus and alignment of strategic objectives include:

1. Translating strategy into operational terms.
2. Aligning the organization to the strategy.
3. Make the strategy everyone's job.
4. Make the strategy a continual process.
5. Mobilize change through executive leadership.

The first three of these four principles are the most relevant to higher education and the Cameroonian context. Executive leadership in mobilizing change is not clear in the higher education context in Cameroon because university heads are academics at the same time and the idea of being a manager as defined in business terms would be fuzzy to use. However, for the higher education system as a whole, the Ministry of Higher Education could represent the executive body because it is where the strategic objectives are identified, implementation strategies chosen and evaluation of success validated.

To identify the components of the different perspectives of the BSC, the study identifies what objectives are deemed strategic in Cameroonian HE, by whom and for whom. To identify what are the targets of the objectives and how success is determined, the study identifies the measures of performance used to assess whether objectives have been met sufficiently. As a strategic management framework, the BSC success principles and underlying concepts are used to analyse how and why strategic objectives are formulated. It is intended that the study should clarify some requirements for the success of strategic objectives. The focus on a flexible and responsive approach to identifying and implementing objectives assumes that for higher education to be successful it needs to be in constant dialogue with its environment and stakeholders. The BSC as a framework in this

study can be considered as an intermediate range theory used to understand and explain specific aspects of strategic objective formulation and implementation in order to connect theory and research (Bryman 2008, p.6). Through a holistic, yet flexible framework for managing objectives, it is assumed that higher education can maintain its relevance and be more sensitive to the changes in stakeholders' expectations. The emerging balanced scorecard framework is used to evaluate the achievement of the identified objectives.

According to Kaplan and Norton (2004, p.1), even the most well-conceived, most-likely-to-succeed strategy needs real-world monitoring. Things change; the environment in which the strategy was developed may no longer be operative. Yet most organizations lack a management process for monitoring, guiding, and updating strategy (ibid). The environment in which the Cameroon higher education was born has changed greatly and the policy makers have realised that the foundation is shaky, but how can they ensure that they are adapting correctly and making provisions for future changes? Higher education in Cameroon, like every other has seen a fair share of change (change in the roles it needs to play, change in governance, and changes in who/what it has to respond to) and is constantly striving to keep tract (see Doh 2012, p.135-180) but it is important to be successful not just in keeping tract but in keeping to the most relevant tract.

Given that the application of management concepts in higher education is limited this study makes a contribution to management in higher education. The study presents a comprehensive study of the strategic objectives of higher education as perceived by policy makers in Cameroon and the institutions where the policies are implemented. It is



always important to know the gap/coherence between what obtains at the system or conception level and the institution or implementation level. Knowledge of these facilitates measures for improvement and ways of reducing the asymmetry.

The main significance of this study lies in its relative novelty of using a business management framework to analyse the identification and implementation of strategic objectives in higher education. In this sense it is a stimulus for future research on the use of the BSC especially in Cameroon higher education. Another aspect of novelty is the application of the BSC not just to the institution level but to a higher education system. Most studies (Hafner 1998; Beard 2009; Hladchenko 2015; Umayal and Sugathi 2010; Brown 2012) of the BSC in higher education focus on single institutions or implementation at the institution level only. The study adds to the literature on higher education in Cameroon which is relatively limited, especially the literature on what aspects of performance management are used.

### **1.3 Research Problem**

Emerging trends, new economic challenges and diversifying expectations are not uncommon in the today's higher education. The role of higher education (HE) especially in rendering its workforce and management capable of coping in this environment has placed HE in a much sharper focus than ever before. As a further complication, many developing countries have found that foreign agencies and regional organizations are pressing them to develop accountability or quality

mechanisms that may be more extensive or introduced more quickly than the country can handle (see Chapman in Higher Education in the Developing World: Changing Contexts and Institutional Responses).

In contrast, countries with the most experience in performance management often took a slow and incremental pace in its development. In European countries where performance management has been used, initiatives emerged incrementally and at a different pace in each country. They resulted from local efforts by universities and government agencies to address difficulties which were extensively deliberated. Faced by external pressures or not, every higher education system faces the task of policy formulation whether with tracking performance or other issues.

There is no single solution to accountability and efficiency problems in higher education. Each country, institution or system of higher education has to choose which components of a performance-based management (PBM) system are suitable to its circumstances. The balanced scorecard approach provides a holistic but flexible approach suitable for adaptation to specific higher education contexts.

Today, strategic thought and strategy-based actions enable higher education systems to stay relevant in their changing environment. Strategic objectives depict the present situation as well as the desired future and help higher education to improve its performance and relevance by being in constant touch with its environment. Issues of relevance and accountability, not uncommon to the business world are becoming increasingly significant in higher education. This implies that an understanding of how businesses handle these issues and how their

approaches can be useful in higher education strategy formulation and implementation is extremely useful. Kotler and Murphy's (1981, p.470) assertion in the early 80s pictures post 1993 Cameroon higher education. Alluding to American higher education, Kotler and Murphy (ibid) stated that at least one demographic impact will be positive. "Institutions will be compelled to become more introspective and analytical, to undertake long- range planning, something they did not have to do in good times. They will be forced to set priorities and develop strategies, overcome institutional inertia and make long-overdue choices-for example, to identify areas of growing student interest and create new programs to replace those for which demand may have fallen off." Kotler and Murphy (1981, p.470) advocated that a consumer orientation will benefit higher education. Universities in Cameroon were not created with a strategic planning capability. They are basically good at procedures, that is, consistently doing the same things from day to day. The patterns of operation and results were established to meet the environmental conditions existing at the time of their creation; and the manner of conducting their affairs persist long after these procedures have lost their effectiveness in a new higher education environment (see Kotler and Murphy, 1981, p.470). Kotler and Murphy (ibid) also hold that few collegiate leaders are able and willing to focus systematically on change. They are largely concerned with today's operations and results.

In Cameroon higher education, changes in the goals, strategies, and organizational systems usually occur as reactions to crises rather than as thoughtful adaptations in advance of crises ('firefighting' approach as coined by Niven 2008, p.67). One such example is the 1993 reforms which tried to address the crises of the lone University of Yaoundé, but

in doing so multiplied some of the problems which still exist now. Ngwana (2001, p.6) holds that the 1993 higher education reforms in Cameroon were a welcome initiative and have had a significant effect on the improvement of quality and access in the higher education system. But he cautions that a superficial quantitative assessment of the achievements of the reforms may easily lead to an oversimplification of the present predicaments of the system. The 1993 reforms and most other reforms have been born out of an urgent need to fix problems with little preparation and forethought especially relating to available human and financial resources. The current study also touches on how objectives pursued stay relevant and adaptive to conditions (resources, demands, and expectations). The tendency to leap before looking at the implications of objectives is also evident in some policy documents which hold that lofty initiatives were taken before thinking.

According to 2GC Active Management<sup>7</sup>, the benefits that can be obtained from the balanced scorecard (BSC) depend on what it is used for. They outline two applications of the BSC: 'operational control' and 'strategic management' which require different design and development processes with different benefits. 2GC Active Management holds that the balanced scorecard used for strategic management addresses the following questions:

- What strategic objectives are we trying to achieve?
- What activities need to happen to achieve them?
- Are the activities being done?

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<sup>7</sup><http://2gc.eu/files/resources/2GC-FAQ2-080901.pdf>

2GC Active Management is a specialist strategic management consultancy and thought leader in the Performance Management field based in Britain.

- Are we achieving targeted results?

The purpose of applying the BSC for strategic management is to help managers agree and then articulate the strategic direction or roadmap for their organization and be able to monitor the activities required for their achievement. 2GC Active Management holds that this application shifts the balance from tracking performance to monitoring whether the objectives have been set and the extent to which the planned actions to achieve them are being taken. The balanced scorecard for strategic management is primarily used to support decisions about ‘interventions’ needed to ensure that strategic goals are being successfully achieved. The benefits arising from the balanced scorecard for strategic management include: reaching a consensus and articulation of a set of key strategic objectives aligned to where the organization sees itself in future; clarity of the links between implementation activities and the strategic objectives of the organization and where trade-offs are required; encouraging dialogue about strategic objectives and expectations. Despite the widespread acceptance (and criticisms) of the balanced scorecard, research on its effectiveness is limited (Atkinson et al., 1997; Ittner and Larcker, 2001). It is argued that as a management system, the BSC may be more in tune with the value of modern organizations than pure financial measures (Kaplan and Norton 1992, 1996).

## 2 METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Research Question

This section explains the research question. The study addresses the following research question:

*To what extent do the balanced scorecard and its underlying concepts apply to Cameroon higher education strategic objectives?*

Strategic objectives are the “ongoing activities and processes that organizations use to systematically coordinate and align resources and actions with the mission, vision and strategy.” “The process towards the achievement of these objectives transforms the plan (strategic objectives) into a system that provides strategic performance feedback to decision making and also enables the plan to evolve and grow as requirements and other circumstances change” (Balanced Scorecard Institute)<sup>8</sup>. So strategic management involves strategic objectives, stakeholders involved in their formulation and execution, strategies for implementation and how success is determined.

This research question stems from previous research carried out in Cameroon (Samfoga Doh, 2010). The research revealed that higher

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<sup>8</sup> <http://balancedscorecard.org/Resources/StrategicPlanningBasics/tabid/459/Default.aspx>

education in Cameroon has its basic functions like every other higher education system but at the same time, there are some objectives that are defined as urgent, priority or strategic to contribute to the country's goal of becoming an emergent nation. The main research question can be expanded into the following sub questions which guided the interviews:

- What are the strategic objectives of higher education in Cameroon?
- What influences/is influenced by the strategic objectives of Cameroon higher education?
- How do the BSC principles apply to the strategic objectives of higher education in Cameroon?
- What are the possible perspectives, objectives and measures in a balanced scorecard for Cameroon higher education?

## **2.2 Research Design**

Empirical inquiry includes different designs which are often quantitative, qualitative or a mixture of these two. The overall design for this study is qualitative. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005), "qualitative research is a method of inquiry employed in many different academic disciplines, traditionally in the social sciences." They hold that it "is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self." "At this level,

qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Denzin and Lincoln 2005, p. 3).

Qualitative research aims for an in-depth understanding of phenomena and the reasons that govern phenomena. Qualitative research investigates the why and how of decision making, not just what, where, and when. Hence, smaller but focused samples are more often used than large samples. The current study investigates the what, why and how of higher education strategic objectives in Cameroon. Qualitative research is often associated with an interpretive framework, which is more descriptive or narrative in its findings. It seeks to understand issues from the perspective of the population involved (Denzin and Lincoln 2005, p.3). This study sought to understand the formulation and implementation of strategic objectives from the perspective of the higher education actors at the system and institutional levels. Qualitative research has several different research approaches. In the social sciences one of such approaches is the basic/standard/pragmatic qualitative research, where a wide-ranging approach is chosen to best fit the research question(s). This was the approach employed in this study. As a professional field of study, higher education emerged in the 1930s and was influenced by the positivist paradigm (the most dominant at that time). But with continuous paradigmatic debates in the social sciences and the emergence of the interpretivist and critical paradigms, higher education studies have had a corresponding paradigm shift (Kezar, 2004 p.43; Schwandt, 1998 p.223).



Epistemology is *'how we know what we know'* (Crotty, 1998, p.8) or *'the nature of the relationship between the knower or would be knower and what can be known'* (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p.201). Epistemology is related to ontology- *'the study of being'* (Crotty, 1998, p.10). Epistemology as used in this section refers to the knowledge behind the methodology choices of the study and the related philosophical positions informing these methodological choices. Interpretivism is based on the view that strategy should respect the differences between people and therefore requires a grasp of the subjective meaning of perspectives (Bryman, 2001, p.13).

This study adopts an interpretivist approach to understand the 'how' and 'why' of strategic objectives in Cameroon. Interpretivist in that the study greatly relies on naturalistic methods including interviewing and analyses of existing texts; meanings emerge from the research process and qualitative methods are employed for data collection and analyses. According to Kezar (2006, p. 343) "there is not a single knowable reality that we can access since all understanding is filtered through human beings, people construct and interpret knowledge and therefore knowledge is relative". This paradigm guided the study in that higher education policy makers may define strategic objectives but each university, faculty, unit, department may interpret it in their own way and this determines how they go about implementation. Using the BSC approach the study outlines how the possibility for differences in interpretation and implementation can be minimised.

These epistemological considerations constitute the guiding foundation for the data analysis. Data analysis techniques in qualitative research are directed by an epistemology reflective of a paradigm that

endeavours to gain knowledge from the respondents' perspectives. Epistemological and ontological assumptions are then translated into different methodological strategies. The goal of a qualitative study is to appreciate the intricate realm of human experience and behaviour from the viewpoint of those involved in the particular situation. Sidani and Sechrest (1996, p.296) hold that "flexibility in design, data collection, and analysis of research is strongly recommended to gain 'deep' understanding and a valid representation of the participants' viewpoints." They summarise qualitative methodologies as "founded on a relativistic ontology, an interpretive or constructivist epistemology, naturalistic or interpretive methods, and inductive reasoning. The methodological flexibility of qualitative approaches is valuable when exploring new problems or observing unanticipated variations in a plan and results" (p.297).

The Cameroon higher education system is used to describe how the balanced scorecard applies to the management of strategic objectives in higher education. The research context is the Cameroon higher education system focusing on state universities only. One of the eight (8) state universities is used as a case study to represent the institutional perspective. The use of one university reveals how the objectives set by the system (ministry) level were interpreted and implemented at the institutional level.

The University of Buea is one of the eight state universities created by the 1993 reforms and the first Anglo-Saxon University in Cameroon. In terms of strategic planning and objectives it was the first state university in Cameroon to develop a five-year strategic plan after the 1993 reforms (Ngwana 2003, p.3). For this study, its second (current)

strategic plan was used. The University of Buea (UB) was chosen based on its experience in the concepts under study and the relative ease to get respondents. For a university to adopt the balanced scorecard approach it needs to have a strategic plan or some experience with strategic planning. Since the University of Buea is already in its second strategic plan, it is considered appropriate for this study. In addition, as an alumnus of the university, the researcher is familiar with the university environment. As a practical prerequisite, this contributes to the understanding of the context in which the interviewee is speaking (see Bryman 2004, p.324-325).

### **2.3 Data Collection and Instrumentation**

The interviews were conducted at the Cameroon Ministry of Higher Education and the University of Buea. Respondents at the ministry included technical advisers to the minister, inspectors and heads of units. Given that the study treats higher education as a system, it would have been possible to limit the interviews only to the ministry but the perspective of institutional managers (vice-chancellor, registrar, deans, directors, heads of units, divisions and departments, and faculty officers) was needed to widen the knowledge on strategic objectives in Cameroon. As the main links between the ministry (which identifies and articulates objectives) and the actual day-to-day executors (lecturers and other administrative staff), it was important to find out how these institutional managers interpret objectives and apply them at the institutional level.

Purposive sampling is the most recommended sampling method for qualitative research because it is essentially strategic and attempts at establishing the best correspondence between research questions and the sample (Bryman, 2004 p.333-334; Lunenburg and Irby 2008, p.166). Convenience sampling was employed due to the fixed time and resources available for the study and the need to adapt to the requests of respondents. Snowball sampling was unintentionally used to identify some respondents: during the interviews some respondents suggested possible respondents who could be knowledgeable in the research topic.

The selection of participants was therefore a combination of purposive, (convenience) and snowball sampling. Before going to the field, 30 respondents who would be suitable for the research topic were identified. However, only 20 respondents were interviewed, some of whom were not initially identified. These were either suggested by respondents or were available and willing to be interviewed. The number of interviews was also determined by the timeframe for data collection, the availability and willingness of respondents and their expected familiarity (based on the position they hold) with the research topic.

This study deals with the identification of strategic objectives which is the premise of the Ministry of Higher Education as defined by Cameroon higher education policy documents (see the LOHE, 2001). Hence eight (8) of the respondents were from the ministry. In this study they are represented as M1 to M8. Twelve (12) respondents were from one of the state universities (University of Buea). They are represented in this study as UB1 to UB12. The following table (Table 1) depicts

the roles of respondents' positions in identifying and implementing strategic objectives at the ministry and university levels.

**Table 1.** Respondents by role in identifying and implementing strategic objectives and administrative set-up

<b>Role/Position<sup>9</sup></b>	<b>Identifying Objectives</b>	<b>Implementing Objectives</b>	<b>Evaluating Objectives</b>
<b>Ministry<sup>10</sup>(M)</b>	8	8	3
Minister	0	0	0
Private Secretariat	0	0	0
Technical Advisers	1	1	1
General Inspectors	1	1	1
Inspectorate of Academic Affairs	2	2	1
<b>University of Buea (UB)</b>	5	12	12
Institution Level	5	5	5
Faculty/School Level	0	3	3
Department Level	0	4	4

Of the 20 respondents three (3) were female and seventeen (17) were male. There were two (2) female respondents from the University of Buea and one (1) from the ministry. In terms of main contribution of their position (job), all eight (8) of the ministry respondents were

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<sup>9</sup> Position refers to the respondents' job and its description. For instance, as a technical adviser to the minister of higher education, how do you contribute to identifying and implementing strategic objectives? The focus was on what the respondent contributes to the process of identifying and implementing higher education strategic objectives.

<sup>10</sup> Administrative set up according to Decree No. 2012/433 of 1st October 2012 concerning organisation of the Ministry of Higher Education.

involved in formulating objectives and implementing and 3 (three) were also involved in evaluating objectives at the system level- M1, M2 and M7. At the University of Buea, the respondents could be classified into institution or central administration (5 respondents), Faculty/School level (3 respondents) and Department (4 respondents).

The basis for this classification is the realisation that interviewees used these during the interviews. For instance, some interviewees will answer a question but refer you to find out more from others: 'they at the central administration.....they at the departments'. All five (5) respondents from the central administration were involved in formulating objectives, implementing and evaluating objectives at the institutional level. The faculty and department level respondents (7) were all involved in implementation and evaluation at their levels. The presentation and analyses of the data does not take into account gender differences of the respondents because they were very few female respondents (3 out of 20) and there were no significant differences between male and female respondent's responses. This gender imbalance was unavoidable because of the fixed timeframe for data collection and the researcher had to do with those who were available and willing. In addition, the differences between the different levels of respondents (institution, faculty and department) were not emphasized because the responses did not reveal differences based on these, except where the respondent pointed out that it was not his/her level to answer a question. The interview questions were formulated along the following four themes:

- A. Background (Position and Role in Policy Identification and Implementation).
- B. Identification of strategic objectives and stakeholders.
- C. Implementation and evaluation: measures, revision and relevance.
- D. Undefined (open questions).

Theme 'A' included questions related to the position that the respondent holds and how they are involved in the identification and implementation of strategic objectives. It included description of how they contribute to these in their daily job-related activities. One of the BSc success principles is that strategy should be everyone's everyday job (Kaplan and Norton 2001a). It was important to find out how the respondents see their daily activities in relation to the strategic objectives. According to the BSC approach, the overall objectives should be understood by all employees/actors and each should be able to clearly see how their specific job contributes to the strategic objectives. It is not enough to know what the objectives are without knowing how you contribute to them. As Niven (2008 p.8) states, "one thing strategy gurus seem to agree on is this: despite the challenges of creating a strategy, ultimately it is more important and valuable to demonstrate the ability to execute the strategy." He argues that, "it is one thing to sit down and craft what is seemingly a winning strategy, but successfully implementing is another thing entirely. For those who can execute, the rewards are significant." Theme 'A' was also meant to address the concept of 'vision barrier' where only five (5) per cent of those involved understand what the strategic objectives are (Niven 2008, p.9). The responses showed how the respondents see their role in the formulation and implementation of the strategic objectives.

Theme 'B' included questions on what are the strategic objectives and who or what influences the choice to assume that they are strategic. The aim of this question was to identify who are the important stakeholders or factors that influence the strategic objectives of higher education. The BSC approach involves relevance to stakeholder expectations. To be able to outline a BSC, it is important to know who these stakeholders in Cameroon higher education are.

Theme 'C' included questions on implementation strategies and how the achievement of objectives was measured. This question intended to obtain information on how objectives were implemented and more importantly how their success was measured/could be measured.

Theme 'D' was undefined and allowed the respondent to provide additional information which they feel was left out or could be relevant for the study. It allowed the respondents to give any open comments or suggestions related to the research topic.

The interview guides were drafted based on the literature and policy document reviews and followed the basic elements in preparing a research interview guide (see Bryman 2004, p.324) among which are:

- Ensured order in the topic areas but allowed for change in order of questions as determined by specific interviews.
- Formulation of interview questions in a way that answers research question(s) but not being too specific.
- Use language that is comprehensible and relevant to respondents. Respondents could answer in English or French according to their first official language and concepts in questions were simplified to suit the context.



This guide was then submitted to the dissertation supervisor for comments and corrections. After the corrections, the interview guides in appendix I and II were produced. Twenty (20) semi-structured interviews were conducted at the Cameroon Ministry of Higher Education and the University of Buea from in December 2011 to January 2012. It was estimated that each interview should be approximately one (1) hour: maximum 5minutes per question. The interviews lasted for 25-75 minutes each. The duration depended on the respondent's willingness and volume/depth of responses they wanted to provide. The short interviews were those where respondents gave very brief answers with little explanation and vice-versa for the long interviews. Before leaving for the data collection, some of the probable respondents were contacted (by phone and email) to ascertain their willingness and availability to take part in the research. This proved very helpful because most of the respondents knew beforehand and could make time for the research. Through these contacts, it was also possible to obtain copies of some policy documents. These a priori contacts were also a way of creating relationships and building trust. The request for authorisation was prepared and signed by the research supervisor on behalf of the Research Unit for the Sociology of education, University of Turku (RUSE) where the research is hosted. On the first visit at the ministry, a request for authorisation to do research was submitted and approved (See appendix III-IV). Eight interviews were then conducted at the ministry.

For each interview, the researcher presented herself, the authorisation and the research topic to the respondent. The respondent either accepted to be interviewed immediately or proposed a convenient time

to participate. At the start of the interview, the introduction part (see appendix I) of the interview guide was read out. It informed the respondent that the interview will be recorded and used anonymously for research only. The recorder was then turned on to begin the interview. The interview guide is followed but allowance is made for the respondent to answer in a way that they do not stick to simply answering the question but are free to provide any information which is useful for the study. Relevant issues raised by the respondents are noted and used to ask new questions or re-orientate questions on the interview guide. At the end of the interview, the researcher thanks the respondent and turns off the recorder. The respondent is asked if and how they will like to receive the results of the study.

At the University of Buea, the procedure is similar to the ministry. On the first visit, a request for authorization to conduct research was submitted and approved by the Vice-Chancellor on the same day<sup>11</sup> and the interviews began. After that, the interview followed the interview guide in Appendix II and the same procedure like in the ministry. Twelve (12) interviews were conducted at the University of Buea.

Most of the interviews were conducted during working hours in the respondents' offices. In three cases, the interviews were conducted at the respondent's homes. These were done at the request of the respondent because they could not find time to be interviewed during working hours. When approached, some respondents preferred to be given the interview guide to be read for the interview to be conducted

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<sup>11</sup> Due to the limited time for the research visit, the authorization was granted on the same day and a written authorization (in regularization) was later sent to me. See copy in Appendix VI.

at a time of their convenience. In such cases a copy of the guide was given and the scheduled time for the interview was agreed upon.

At the end of each day, the interview recordings were checked to make sure that they were properly done and also to identify new issues which could be used in the following interviews. The recordings were then downloaded to a computer. After completing the interviews and returning from the research trip to Cameroon, the researcher listened to the recordings twice and then began the transcription and in some cases (where the responses were given in French) translation into English as well. The completed transcripts were then reread twice before beginning coding and categorization to use the data without devolving the respondents' identity. This was followed by a reiterative and connected process of reporting results, listening to the recordings, consulting the transcripts, policy documents and literature.

Literature on higher education, the balanced scorecard, performance management and strategic planning were also reviewed. In addition, some articles, theses, and dissertations relating to the Cameroon higher education were also reviewed. The policy document and literature review process was a recurrent process than spun through all phases of the research. The aim was to link the concepts and themes in the literature with the higher education policy context in Cameroon. Documents and literature were selected based on their relevance to the themes and concepts of the study. Yin (1984) holds that triangulation can be achieved when data is collected from different sources. In addition to semi-structured interviews, data was obtained from policy documents, strategic plans, newsletters, websites, and annual reports. These documents contained precise data on how and why strategic

objectives were identified, their implementation and reports on the state of performance (see Bryman, 2008 p.296; Yin, 1984 p.87).

At the system level, the strategic objectives were identified from the law on the orientation of higher education (2006, Art.6 (1)), the special edition<sup>12</sup> of the Ministry's monthly review (Sup Infos, September 2011), other editions of the review which were relevant to the research (April, May, June 2007, July 2010, March 2011, May 2011, the Growth and Employment Strategy Paper, the partnership charter between universities and the industry, President's message to youths (2011, 2014) and online government portals (e.g. ministerial website<sup>13</sup>, the prime ministry's website and the website of the presidency of Cameroon).

At the university level, the 2007-2015 strategic plan of the University of Buea, University of Buea Annual reports (2006/2007-2009/2010 academic years), University of Buea Research Policy and Management Guide 2007-2012, the Buea University Newsletter (September 2007, December 2008, and December 2009), and the website of the University of Buea<sup>14</sup>. The choice of the documents and website content was based first on their relevance to the research topic and availability. These documents provided data on the strategic objectives of higher education, how and why strategic objectives are identified, who is involved and what has been done to implement them. These documents

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<sup>12</sup> Sup Infos is the Cameroon Ministry of Higher Education's monthly review of what is happening in Cameroon HE. The September 2011 special edition (more comprehensive in volume and content) was produced during the celebration of the 50 years of the Cameroon University. It was titled '*1961-2011 Les 50 Ans de L'université Camerounaise*' (1961-2011 the 50 years of the Cameroonian University).

<sup>13</sup> [www.minesup.gov.cm](http://www.minesup.gov.cm)

<sup>14</sup> [www.ubuea.cm](http://www.ubuea.cm)

equally serve as source of information on how the success in the objectives is evaluated. Examples include University of Buea annual reports which summarise what has been done to achieve objectives in any given academic year, challenges involved and how to improve in the following year; the ministry's monthly review serves a similar purpose for the higher education system. According to the interviewees, these reports also served as a link to external actors (informing them of what is being done in higher education in general. E.g. the ministry's website and monthly review and; at the University of Buea in particular (e.g. the annual reports and the Buea University Newsletter).

## **2.4 Data Analyses**

The analyses of the literature took a qualitative content analysis approach which is probably the most prevalent approach to qualitative analyses (Bryman 2004, p.392). Also called ethnographic content analysis, qualitative content analysis is an approach where the role of the researcher is emphasized in the construction of the meaning of texts (Altheide, 1996). There is an emphasis on allowing categories to emerge out of the data and the significance of understanding the meaning in the context in which the phenomenon appeared (Bryman 2004, p. 189). Altheide (1996, p.16) holds that ethnographic content analysis is “a recursive and reflexive movement between concept development-sampling-data collection-coding-analysis and interpretation.” The aim is to be systematic and analytic but not rigid. Categories from the literature on the BSC and performance management initially guided this research but others were allowed to

emerge during the study, with an orientation to constant discovery and constant comparisons of relevant aspects.

The analyses of policy documents and interview transcripts used a hermeneutic approach to qualitative content analysis which has been influential in the general formulation of interpretivism (Bryman 2004, p.394). Bryman holds that the central idea behind this approach is that the researcher seeks to bring out the meaning of the text from the perspective of its author. This means attention to the social and historical context in which the text was produced. This influenced the choice of interview as a means of data collection because the use of the hermeneutic approach requires collecting data in a way that understanding of the context is encouraged. The understanding of the context also influenced the choice of the institutional case study. Data analysis is continuous and reiterative throughout the dissertation. Even though Chapter 4 is a systematic presentation and analyses of the data, referrals to the data are made all through the dissertation when deemed necessary for clarification. In my opinion this type of approach increases the readability of the work especially because it involves a relatively unknown higher education context- Cameroon.

## **2.5 Scope**

The study is focused on state-owned universities in Cameroon. State higher education includes on the one hand, multi faculty universities (offering professional and academic degrees) and on the other higher professional training (offering strictly professional training). State-owned implies that the university is created and largely funded (70-80

per cent) by the state with the policy objectives are directly determined and communicated by the state. One reason for the choice to focus on state universities was the relative availability of data concerning these. The choice was equally motivated by the fact that the state universities are the oldest and most established higher education institutions in Cameroon with the first (University of Yaoundé 1) created in the 1960s. Their age and establishment would reveal clearer patterns of operation and since most of them act as mentors to other types of higher education institutions (HEIs) they are more representative of the policies of higher education (HE) in Cameroon. Another reason for the choice of state universities was to ensure consistency. The policy documents reveal that the university (University of Buea) chosen to represent the institutional level in this study was one of the first HEIs involved in strategic planning. Since the University of Buea is a state university, it is more representative for the study to focus on state universities.

In terms of higher education objectives the study is limited to those objectives defined by respondents and policy documents as strategic. As concerns the strategic objectives of Cameroon higher education and the strategic plan of the University of Buea, objectives are taken as given. The main focus of the study is not to do an in depth analyses of how these objectives were arrived at. The study only identifies the stakeholders or factors which make objectives strategic. The importance of this aspect is the principle of relevance in the balanced scorecard and the policy documents where the allusion to relevance is abundant.

## **2.6 Trustworthiness and Compliance to Ethics**

It is a fact that every academic research should consider the ethical and reliability issues involved. These considerations are relatively easier to address when the research design is quantitative but for qualitative research, there are no hard and fast rules (Bryman 2004, p.272-273). However, Guba (1985) and Guba and Lincoln (1994) hold that it is necessary to outline alternative ways of establishing the quality of qualitative research. They propose 'trustworthiness' and 'authenticity'. Trustworthiness as applicable to this research includes the following criteria:

- Credibility which relates to internal validity and stresses multiple accounts of social reality. Ensuring credibility means that the research is conducted according to good practice and submitted to respondents for confirmation (respondent validation). Since the time and resources of the current study did not allow for resubmission to respondents, credibility was ensured by contacting respondents by phone when the answers to interview questions needed to be clarified. Another technique recommended by Guba and Lincoln is triangulation which entails using more than one method or source of data. The credibility of this study can be established by its use of more than one data source. The data from policy documents was confirmed by different policy documents and websites reiterating the same aspects. Further confirmation was through the interviews and the correspondence of answers between different respondents. Sidani and Sechrest (1996, p. 294) hold that "when findings of multiple methods or sources converge, confidence in the validity of conclusions is enhanced." They



further state that agreements in results “indicate that the methods are assessing the same phenomenon and the unique bias of each method is reduced or eliminated. The plausibility of rival explanations is also diminished because various perspectives are represented in the research process.”

- Transferability is the ability of a research study to similar contexts but qualitative research usually means an intensive study of a small group sharing certain characteristics (depth rather than breadth). According to Guba and Lincoln (1985, p.316), the applicability of findings to some other context or to the same context at different times is an empirical issue. But they encourage qualitative researchers to provide a ‘thick description’, rich accounts of details. They argue that this provides others with a database for making judgements about the possible transferability of findings to other contexts. The current study provides a rich account of how and why strategic objectives of Cameroon higher education are what they are.

As to how ethical issues were addressed, anonymity of respondents proved to be a very important issue. It was reiterated by respondents and emphasized in the repeated research permission letters granted. The interview introduction includes my statement to use the data anonymously for research purposes only. This has been respected to the letter in the entire research process. Ensuring anonymity has not been an easy task due to the small and well-defined respondents. But the identities have been hidden by referring to question numbers (e.g. SQ1), and letters plus numbers (e.g. M1 or UB1) to refer to ministry and university respondents throughout the dissertation. In addition,

interviewees were informed that their responses will be recorded and transcribed. They were also allowed to decide if and how they will like to receive the results of the research. Consent to participate was by accepting to be interviewed and recorded for the research. Official permissions to conduct research from the Ministry of Higher Education and the University of Buea were also obtained. This permission covered the conduction of interviews and use of relevant policy documents and publications (see Appendix for III-VI).

## **2.7 Limitations in the Methodology**

As customary to qualitative research, the choices made in this research have their inherent limitations. Firstly, the use of just one university as a case to represent the eight state universities in Cameroon may seem insufficient as it may mean reduced validity of the conclusions. However, the other option would have been to involve all or many of the state universities but then dilute the amount of information that can be obtained from each university. Such an approach will not fit with the entire research approach which aims for a deep understanding. In addition, if one state university is not representative in number, it is representative in terms of how it links with the concepts of the study and how state universities are expected to follow the regulations of the Ministry of Higher Education. As earlier mentioned, after the 1993 reforms the University of Buea was the first of the state universities to outline a five year strategic plan based on consultations and involvement of various actors who were considered stakeholders and; analysis of the environment in which the university operated at the time (see Ngwana, 2003). Also, the use of different data sources

(triangulation) minimizes this weakness. Another premise for transferability is the fact that the system level (ministry) was included. All state universities take directives from the ministry, have the same stakeholders, and interpret the same strategic objectives to suit their individual contexts. The gap may be in the absence of data on how the different state universities interpret the same strategic objectives of higher education.

Another limitation lies in the focus on the generic balanced scorecard with modifications to suit the context in terms of the different perspectives, corresponding objectives and measures. This choice is justified because the information system in Cameroon does not provide all the information required to use the newer versions of the BSC. This however does not cancel the feasibility of the BSC concepts in managing Cameroon higher education because a generic balanced scorecard can be used with basic programmes like Microsoft Excel and can portray a quick check on the progress of objectives at any level of management. Like most other studies where the BSC is applied to higher education or education in developing country contexts (e.g. Kassahun, 2010; Umayal and Suganthi, 2010; Tohidi, Jafari and Asfar, 2010), this study focuses on the basic form of the BSC only. Information on how objectives and perspectives are linked may not be sufficiently clear but this does not limit the purpose of showing how applicable the BSC is to Cameroon higher education strategic objectives.

Like other qualitative research endeavours, this study has the fundamental question of accuracy. Evidence of this can be seen where some of the details are not given exactly. It is equally possible that the

researcher's interpretations of reality are not the same for everyone or not the same as the source meant them to be. In higher education, especially when it relates to policies and objectives, the meanings held by the different actors/levels (e.g. the ministry, university, department, and society) may differ. This may entail the policy level failing to include the peculiarities of the university and departments or the university and departments misinterpreting policy intentions and objectives. However, efforts were made to minimise this limitation by using several policy document sources and the different respondents provided information on the interpretation of policy at the university and department levels. Convergence or divergence between ministry respondents and university respondents or; between respondents at the same level is used as a proxy for how different or similar the interpretations are.

According to Malterud (2001, p. 484) research is influenced by preconceptions on the research topic. Preconceptions are not the same as bias, unless the researcher fails to recognize them. Malterud believes that if reflexivity is thoroughly maintained, personal issues can be valuable sources for relevant research. As to how the researcher's background affected the methodological choices, some aspects like the choice of the institutional case were partly determined by the researcher's familiarity with the context and previous research conducted there. Another preconception which may have influenced what and how the research was done is the believe (contrary to widely held conceptions) that the problem of higher education in Cameroon and most developing countries is not necessarily the need for additional human and material resources, but the need to better manage

what is already available. This belief may have played in the approach to the interviews, literature, analyses and conclusions.

It will also be noticed that the study pays considerable attention to the relevance or responsiveness aspect of higher education vis-à-vis stakeholders and the environment in which it operates. This may seem contrary to the culture of higher education but the interviews and policy documents reveal that addressing relevance is at the heart of the policy reforms that have taken place in Cameroon higher education. This relevance implies relevance to the changing labour market, national needs, international higher education trends, civil society, and technological developments. In addition, the focus on relevance reflects the current higher education environment where accountability and usefulness are emphasized or expected. All of the interviewees directly or indirectly alluded to the need for higher education to be up to date and in constant connection with these aspects.

### **3 ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK**

Chapter 3 reviews the literature for concepts and data used in the study. The literature includes articles, books, websites and policy documents. The review concentrates on the contents related to the balanced scorecard (BSC) which is the main theoretical underpinning for the study. The related concepts which are used to build the theoretical framework include strategic objectives, the balanced scorecard concepts and success principles, performance management and new public management, sources and stakeholders of strategic objectives in higher education, strategic planning and measures of success. Stakeholders are discussed within objectives because the objectives usually reveal what/who is driving them. They also reveal the reasons or specific stakeholders to whom the achievement of the objective is directed. Before delving into the literature, the context of the study is discussed. A review of Cameroon higher education policy documents is presented in order to highlight how the concepts are relevant to the context.

### **3.1 Strategic Objectives of Higher Education in Cameroon**

In order to understand the strategic objectives, this section begins with an outline of general objectives of higher education and how they are articulated in Cameroon higher education policy documents.

“Universities and higher education institutions educate highly qualified graduates and responsible citizens to meet the needs of all sectors of human activity; they provide opportunities for higher learning and for learning throughout life; they advance, create and disseminate knowledge. As part of their service to the community, universities provide relevant expertise to assist societies in cultural, social and economic development; they understand, interpret, preserve, enhance, promote and disseminate national and regional, international and historic cultures in a context of cultural pluralism and diversity; universities protect and enhance societal values by training young people in the values which form the basis of democratic citizenship; they contribute to the development and improvement of education at all levels, including through the training of teachers” (UNESCO, 2005).

In accordance with their basic missions as well as the present demands from an ever changing society, several scholars agree that there are basically three objectives that countries around the world today seek to achieve with regards to higher education namely:

- i. Increasing access to and equity in HE
- ii. Increasing the external efficiency of HE systems by improving both –the quality of education and the relevance of programmes.

- iii. Improving internal efficiency and sustainability of HE systems.

Several HE scholars hold that these are the most important policy objectives of HE in most countries today (Salmi and Hauptman, 2006, p.113; Sanyal and Martin, 2006, p.98; Johnstone, 2006, p.120-126). In order to do justice to contextual realities this section includes the situation of HE in Cameroon with regards to these objectives and the changing landscape of HE in the global context. Cameroon's 1993 reforms, (the most comprehensive reforms in the system) outline the following objectives *inter alia*<sup>15</sup>:

- Provide all Cameroonians with the opportunity to acquire university education.
- Increase higher education opportunities and make university programmes more professional and responsive to market forces.
- Optimise the use of infrastructure, facilities and services.

Higher education in Cameroon has been characterized by a series of reforms which either claim to institute 'new' objectives or reiterate already existing ones. Most of these reforms are triggered by the state of higher education, especially the challenges at the time of the reform. For instance the first ever and broadest reforms were the 1993 reforms which resulted from overcrowding and resulting resource challenges in the lone University of Yaoundé 1. Observably, a central objective of all the reforms or policies is relevance of higher education to: changing societal, national, regional, international and labour market expectations (see the 1993 reforms; the Growth and Employment

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<sup>15</sup> See Ngwana, T.A. (2003) University Strategic Planning in Cameroon: What Lessons for Sub-Saharan Africa? Education Policy Analysis Archives, 11 (47). Retrieved on 20<sup>th</sup> April 2010



Strategy (2009); the New University Governance Policy (2005); the 2001 law on the orientation of higher education; the Education Sector Strategy (2006) and; the university of Buea Strategic Plan (2007-2015). According to decree No.93/027 Cameroon state universities should engage in education, scientific and technical research for development and; promote social progress, culture and national consciousness.

The most recent law on the orientation of higher education in Cameroon (16<sup>th</sup> April 2001) states that the fundamental mission of higher education is to produce, organize and disseminate scientific, cultural, professional and ethical knowledge for national development and the advancement of humanity (section 1, Art. 2.). From this mission the law outlines the following objectives in chapter 1, Art. 6(1):

- Excellence in all areas of knowledge;
- The promotion of science, culture and social advancement;
- Social advancement, with the participation of competent national structures and socio-professional milieu with regards to programmes, organization of theoretical and practical education, and internships.
- Contribution to development activities.
- The training and refinement of managerial personnel.
- The reinforcement of ethical sense and national conscience.
- The promotion of democracy and development of a democratic culture and bilingualism.

The current development document guiding the economic focus of the HE system in Cameroon is the Growth and Employment Strategy Paper (GESP). The GESP is a revised and a more focussed version of the two poverty reduction strategy papers of 2003 and 2006 (Doh 2012, p.32).

It describes “*the country’s progress towards achieving and realising*” those goals as well as commits and reaffirms the government determination to entirely realise the Millennium Development Goals (GESP 2009, p. 14). The GESP represents the country’s first strategic plan focusing on a ten year period from 2010 to 2020. It translates the first sets of the development goals and shared vision of Cameroon becoming emergent by 2035 which includes: reducing poverty to a socially acceptable level; becoming a middle income country; acquiring the status of a newly industrialised country; reinforcing national unity and consolidating the democratic process. Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) are prepared by the member countries of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in broad consultation with stakeholders and development partners, including the staff of the World Bank and the IMF. Updated every three years with annual progress reports, they describe the country’s macroeconomic, structural, and social policies in support of growth and poverty reduction, as well as associated external financing needs and major sources of financing (IMF Country Report No. 10/257 of August 2010). The PRSP for Cameroon which was drafted in 2003 is summarised by Bloom, et al., (2006, p.40) in the following points:

- Development of education and professional training as a means of escaping poverty. The importance of developing vocational, educational, and professional higher education is stressed upon. Of those with higher education, only 7.7 per cent were in poverty compared to 50.1 per cent with no education (p. 16). There is emphasis on training to facilitate integration into the labour market and developing partnerships with the private sector.

- The need to improve the governance of the entire education system, to train and recruit more teachers. The PRSP highlights that higher education is suffering from a capacity problem and there is also a significant slide toward administration instead of teaching and research.
- The need to strengthen infrastructure of universities, and increase private sector involvement in capacity development (including restaurants, lodgings and transportation). One of such is the information and communication technologies.
- Budgetary increase from 3.8 to 5.8 per cent of total expenditure for tertiary education.
- New universities that reflect the regional realities should be created.

The GESP is a demonstration of “the Government's will to continue efforts aimed at full achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). It is one of the second-generation PRSPs designed by the government, following a dynamic and open process, involving full participation of the population at the grassroots, civil society organizations, the private sector and development partners” (see GESP 2009, p.11). The GESP considers “the challenge of growth and creation of employment opportunities as being at the very centre of its actions in favour of poverty reduction. The GESP, in accordance with the Paris Declaration is the reference framework of government policy and actions as well as the point of convergence for cooperation with development partners.”

The GESP has been designed to cover about ten years, but as a strategic planning paper, it is open to revision, as the need arises, so it can be

tailored to the nation's socio-economic trends and to international circumstances, through a repeated and participatory process. Now that the country has a reference document addressing the issue of growth, the challenge lies in its proper implementation. In this regard, the Government plans to speed up the reforms underway and take all the appropriate steps, so that improvement of economic performances should be translated into concrete results such as the creation of employment opportunities, poverty reduction, and visible improvement in the living conditions of the population (GESP 2009, p.11).

It is further explained that “the GESP was drafted to replace the PRSP because government was able to maintain a stable macroeconomic framework and sustain positive growth rates up to 2008 by implementing the PRSP adopted in April 2003. However, the overall growth rate was not up to the expected level necessary for drastic poverty reduction” (GESP 2009, p. 11). Some system level administrators hold that the operationalization of the GESP incites Cameroon higher education institutions to subject themselves to the same functioning imperatives as their counterparts in the North (Sup Infos, September 2011, p.7). These include contributing to Cameroon’s emergence by 2035; increasing the role of external stakeholders and; enhancing both national and the international competitiveness of higher education.

Some strategies by which these imperatives will be addressed include:

- Development of short professional courses for rapid integration and corresponding regulation of the flow of students.
- To include the exigencies of regional development and a balanced development of regions, an urgent restructuring of the university map in line with the new developments like the development of short professional higher education.

- Gradual outsourcing of public and private universities and the promotion of lifelong on-campus and distance education (Sup Infos, September 2011, p.7).

The GESP objectives updated with regard to vision 2035 objectives (GESP 2009, p.74-75) covers the following objectives for higher education:

- i. Improve access (25 per cent by 2020) and equity;
- ii. Improve efficiency and quality of education;
- iii. Forge efficient partnerships with all stakeholders in education and training;
- iv. Improve management and governance (p.76).

The New University Governance Policy (NUGP) is a strategy path to transform the Cameroonian HE from *'its actual state of inefficiency to its materialisation'* (NUGP 2009). It establishes a five multi-dimensional but mutually-exclusive package which is to be consistently implemented and envisaged to drive the long term reorientation processes of higher education: academic governance (of the core missions of universities, teaching research and service); managerial governance (capacity building for modern governance and administrative practices); resource and financial management; digital governance (of ICT in higher education) and; social governance (of living conditions, financial and communication support systems for students and staff). The NUGP is the backdrop of most of the strategic objectives identified in this study. According to MINESUP, 2009 in Doh (2012, p.141), the New University Governance Policy (NUGP) is operationalized into broad long term objectives which include:

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

The Libreville declaration of 11<sup>th</sup> February 2005, to which Cameroon is a signatory, enacted the adoption of the Bologna Process in CEMAC countries<sup>16</sup>. Celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Cameroonian University, the ministry's bilingual monthly review (Sup Infos September 2011, p.14) postulates that the challenges of the day include professionalization, improvement of the use of ICTs, employability and widening access.

Speaking at a press conference in October 2007, a university administrator summarised the New University Governance Policy (NUGP) as follows: "a higher education reform promulgated by the head of state during his February 11 2007 message to the youths." This thinking is consistent with Hayward, Ncayiyana and Johnson (2003, p.12) which holds that, at the institutional level, the strategic plan should recognise national education objectives and self-consciously build on the institution's visions and goals. In a bid to apply the new

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<sup>16</sup>The Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC) is a sub-regional organization with the following member countries: Cameroon, Chad, Central African Republic, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and Congo.

university governance policy outlined by the head of state in his 2007 message to the youths and the subsequent declaration of the minister of higher education, the University of Buea has been carrying out activities geared towards reviewing its syllabi. Even though this activity is done every five years, in 2007 it was done with a consideration of the vision of the Cameroon government to align teaching programmes in the higher educational system to a three-tier degree structure known as the Bologna Process. The initiative has as its main features the professionalization of university programmes, diversification of offer with emphasis on professional and technical education, improvement of teaching quality, expansion of cooperation, research and quality assurance (BUN 2007, p.7).

The NUGP also emphasises quality assurance and requires that programme delivery takes the format of the BMP (Bachelor, Master's, PhD). All of these are aimed at increasing correspondence between university training and the requirements of the job market. This has the objective to produce graduates capable of creating jobs for themselves and animating the country's economy'. The purpose is to enable students have a hands-on experience through internships. When the student leaves the university, he/she should be ready for the job market (BUN 2007, p.4). The essential marks of the NUGP are professionalism, relevance and quality performance" (BUN 2009, p.13).

The general objectives of the Bologna Process are to have a higher education which is: effective and open, with the quality and capability to operate with other old and new partners; attentive to the demands of qualification and the society and; engages in research for development (Sup Infos 2011, p.48).

The 2006 education strategy (ESSP) conveyed the conceptualisation of NUGP within the broader programme in Cameroonian education (Doh 2012, p.34).The ESSP guided the activities of the educational system in Cameroon (basic, secondary and post-secondary higher education from 2006-2009). It is summarized here with a bearing on the objectives that relate to higher education. The education strategy focuses on access, efficiency, quality assurance, relevance, funding and interactions within the education system. The strategy was written in conformity with the government's desire for education to be a major factor in promoting responsible and active citizenship. The government policy stems from the realisation that all over the world, the strongest value added depends on the techniques used for production and exchange. This makes knowledge an essential strategic resource and a decisive comparative advantage economic competition. A major challenge for the government is to accommodate the surmounting demand for higher education while ensuring equity. To this end, higher education should provide diverse opportunities, involve all actors and provide a framework to improve access. In concrete terms, this entails:

- increasing enrolment into state universities to 113,000 in 2015 with a focus on science and technology disciplines whose enrolment should be 30, 000 and 10, 000 respectively in 2015;
- developing distance higher education which accommodates 15, 000 students by 2015;
- Support private higher education to attain an enrolment of 25, 000 by 2015.

According to the education sector strategy, internal efficiency and quality of educational services is a priority which will be addressed by:



- Significantly reducing waste: reducing the minimum time to complete a bachelor's degree from six (6) years in 2004 to four (4) years in 2015.
- Developing a culture of steering by results. Higher education will conceive institutional mechanisms of quality, accreditation, follow-up and authorization; make provisions for evaluation of academic activities, professionalization and contribution to development; continuously study the most reputable and performing systems and aim to introduce relevant innovations and initiatives which increase performance; management of funding to promote research and training of personnel.
- Revising study programmes to have a coherent and reactive system with regards to the needs of the socio-professional environment. Every graduate should have a good connection with the professional environment in their discipline and be able to create and manage a small and medium-sized enterprise. Higher education should prepare the student to take advantage of regional integration and globalization, by instilling the ability to communicate and work in a multicultural environment, with tolerance and acceptance of diversity.
- Improving access to global document resources and supporting scientific and technical production.
- Promoting access to new information and communication technologies (ICT) especially with higher education being the engine of developing ICTs.
- Developing effective partnerships with the different components of the social environment, there will be provisions for interactions between teachers, students and the socio-professional environment through teaching, centres for

interaction, internships, training in entrepreneurship, diversifying technological components.

- Improving management and governance with special attention given to decentralization of resource management, participatory management, cost mastery and reinforcement of institutional capacity. Enhancing the quality of pedagogic supervision

The University of Buea's current strategic plan (2007-2015) defines the roadmap for achieving the 2015 objectives set out in the education sector policy of Cameroon and defined more rigorously in the 2001 and 2005 texts related to higher education in Cameroon (UB annual report 2009/2010, p.1). This section also outlines some implementation strategies/approaches of these objectives at the University of Buea. The second strategic plan of the University of Buea was drawn at a time when the Cameroon higher education system was undergoing profound reforms in the context of the New University Governance Policy (NUGP) which advocates professionalism, relevance and quality (UB Strategic Plan 2007-2015, p. IX). According to the plan, the university takes the opportunity to grow from a mainly teaching to a teaching, research and service university. The plan therefore makes provisions for restructuring of teaching, research and service. The strategic plan is based on international (UNESCO, poverty reduction strategy papers, millennium development goals, the African Union and the New Partnership for African Development); national (2007 Presidential decree and policy pronouncement of 11<sup>th</sup> February 2007, national education sector plan, Decrees organizing the University of Buea and the Law on the orientation of higher education in Cameroon) and; institutional (strategic plan 1993-2003 and internal service notes) policy documents.

According to its website<sup>17</sup>, “the mission of the University of Buea is to provide opportunities for quality education through teaching and research in an environment that is conducive to such pursuits and in ways that respond to market forces. The University is dedicated to the continuous quest for excellence, the promotion of moral and human values, and service to the community. The teaching and research programmes emphasize relevance, encourage tolerance and promote creative, critical and independent thinking”. Based on this mission the university’s current strategic plan (2007-2015) outlines the following objectives:

1. Improved teaching conditions, staff competence and teaching quality.
2. Diversification of study programmes and relevance to labour market needs.
3. Improved student welfare provisions.
4. Improved research output, relevance and good practice.
5. Implementation of the new university governance policy.
6. Enhanced auxiliary staff quantity and quality and working conditions.
7. Increased institutional self-generated income.

### ***National, regional and international stakeholders of Cameroon higher education***

This section discusses the main actors/groups that influence and/or are influenced by the strategic objectives of higher education in Cameroon. Stakeholders refer to any group or individual who affects or is affected

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<sup>17</sup> <http://ubuea.cm/about/>

by the achievement of higher education objectives (see Freeman 1984, p.46). It was noticed that some stakeholders influence more than they are influenced by the strategic objectives and vice-versa. For instance, students, civil society and university teachers are influenced more than they influence the strategic objectives of higher education (see section 4.5 for the stakeholders according to respondents). From the foregoing summary of the strategic objectives of higher education as defined by policy documents at the system and institutional level it is evident that the state is the main stakeholder in terms of what is decided to be the priority. Some respondents attest the importance of the state in defining and implementing strategic objectives. When asked who/what determines strategic objectives of higher education, respondents identified the state as: the first actor and main sponsor who determines strategic objectives; the dominant stakeholder, employer and manager of teaching personnel; the piper who determines the tune and; the one who decides what the university is because its resources are required to operate.

Higher education is seen as a prerogative of the state and policy for state universities are directly designed by the government in a top-down approach. All the respondents in this study identified the state as the main stakeholder in Cameroon's higher education. Even when this identification was not directly in response to the question about the stakeholders are (see SQ4 and UQ5 in Appendices I and II), the respondents indirectly acknowledged this when answering some other questions. It is worth noting that the admittance that the state is major stakeholder does not imply that the respondents accept the state's role. Some respondents allude to the fact higher education does not have a choice than to act according to the dictates of the state which foots the bulk of higher education bills.

It was also realized that the state here does not always represent an institution but embodies the individual(s) heading the institution. For instance, most of the documents refer to objectives as identified by the head of state (president) and refer to policy initiatives by crediting them to people. This may be an advantage in the sense that the BSC approach requires some form of ownership of the vision in which an organization sees itself and what is to be achieved. According to Kaplan and Norton (2001a), the executives of successful organizations created a climate for change, a vision of what change could accomplish and governance processes that promote communications, interactions and learning about the strategies. However, this researcher argues that the extreme focus on people than institutions in Cameroon could also be a stumbling block in the sense that policies thrive and die with the individuals who own them (when an individual holds a position, his/her policies are upheld and when they no longer hold the position the policies are changed or forgotten). For instance if the current president owns the New University Governance Policy and happens to be replaced, the new president then decides to initiate his own policy which may require 'new' resources or skills. Such a situation promotes waste and is an antithesis to the continuous improvement thinking of the BSC. Other national stakeholders include the private sector employers (industries and companies), the civil society, university teachers and students, and localities.

International stakeholders include the International Monetary Fund (IMF) which influences and interacts with the country through the growth and employment strategy paper. The IMF is a major donor for the education sector in Cameroon and therefore influences what objectives are considered strategic. The policies related to the IMF and the World Bank which have influenced the higher education objectives

in Cameroon include the millennium development goals and the poverty reduction agendas. In addition, there is a recurrent reference (in policy documents and interviews) to UNESCO and the principles of the 1999 UNESCO world conference on science held in Budapest. In its preamble and mission statement, the 1998 World Declaration on Higher education (WDHE) stated that there was an absolute necessity for the involvement of stakeholders “including students and families, business and industry” and for HE research to “provide as part of service to the community, relevant expertise”. Article 6a of the declaration lays emphasis on a “long term orientation based on relevance” as the “fit between what the society expects of institutions and what the institutions do” The WDHE called for HE to reinforce its role in society, including the development of the whole education system. There is the importance of cooperation following its Article 7 where the declaration highlights the necessity to strengthen the relationship between HE, the world of work and other parts of society. Other stakeholders include CEMAC, NEPAD and the African Union, the Africa-EU partnership, the UN and its agencies.

This context and stakeholders of Cameroon higher education are captured in the following excerpt from the interviews for this study. The excerpt highlights the push for relevance to national development goals and to international standards:

“First of all the whole development strategy of the country plays a major role. We are a country described as developing in terms of literacy levels, life expectancy, employment rate, average daily incomes and standard of living. The main thrust of our government is to move forward. Cameroon is endowed with natural and human resources and the idea is to make Cameroon a better place to live with

easier transport means, more educated and healthier people, better nutrition and the usual objectives of development. HE is playing a key role. Our strategic objectives result from national development needs but it is also sensitive to the principles of UNESCO to which Cameroon has been a member since independence. The UNESCO world conference on HE in Budapest 1999 laid down clear strategies and the direction of contemporary and global higher education. Countries are no longer discreet entities like before. They are interdependent and we now need a new type of civil service. If people are trained in Cameroon, they should be able to work elsewhere with very little additional orientation” (UB5).

The policy documents also reveal that the determination and implementation of Cameroon’s higher education strategic objectives is influenced by international trends. These include globalization and its components; competition, growing demand for accountability and relevance; mobility of students, harmonization and readability of qualifications; technological advancement and the knowledge economy; growing importance of lifelong learning and distance education. The stakeholders identified by the respondents are presented in the next chapter (the data and discussion in section 4.5 and table 9).

Every organization or main part of a composite organization sometimes has to make some major decisions that affect the entire the organization for years into the future. Such decisions are not simply about small modifications, but are the kind of decisions that may lead to a different organizational structure, or significant changes in the relationships among stakeholders, the competitive position, or strategic partners of the organization. Sometimes the outside world forces such decisions on an organization. Such forces may include major changes in the market

needs, changes in government policy, and tremendous changes by competing organizations. Sometimes, it is something within the organization that demands a major reassessment- technological change driving new methods of carrying out work, weakening of its financial basis, or a change in the management of the organization, and changes in the employee demands requiring a large restructuring<sup>18</sup>.

Just like other organizations, the university whose role was previously less questionable is increasingly required to prove or improve its contributions to regional and national and international development. The surging responsibilities lead to the necessity for innovative management mechanisms to render universities more efficient and responsive to both their traditional and new roles/demands. Pursuant to the foregoing, governments and funding agencies are increasingly becoming strategic, cost and efficiency-conscious as well as result-oriented in their evaluations of higher education. Besides, globalisation and changes in the structure of the global economy have brought new pressures to bear on higher education systems. Organizations have always faced such pressures to make huge decisions but such pressure is relatively new to higher education. In recent years, the pressure has augmented to the point where a logical yet flexible process of dealing with such decisions is necessary. One approach which has been used by business organizations is the balanced scorecard (BSC) and its related

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<sup>18</sup> Course lecture on strategic management

[http://courses.aiu.edu/Certificate/Administration per cent20and per cent20MKT/Strategic per cent20Management/Leccion per cent201/Session per cent201 per cent20Strategic per cent20Management.pdf](http://courses.aiu.edu/Certificate/Administration%20and%20per%20MKT/Strategic%20Management/Leccion%201/Session%20per%20Strategic%20Management.pdf)



concepts. The following sections discuss these related concepts and how they build up to the BSC approach.

### **3.2 From Performance Monitoring to Performance Management**

In his 1954 book, *The Practice of Management*, Peter Drucker argued that all employees should have personal performance objectives that strongly align to the company strategy. Drucker (1954, p.126-129) holds that each manager from the highest to the lowest unit in an organizations needs to have clearly defined objectives. These objectives should be directly related to individual job positions and the relations of these objectives to the overall objectives of the whole organization should be visible to all. Drucker (ibid) also asserts the importance of the involvement of all organizational units in the development of the objectives of the organization. In addition, everyone in the organization should identify how success/failure in achieving objectives is measured. Drucker's standpoint is an important facet of the BSC approach-communication. This communication embodies the BSC principle of making strategy everyone's everyday job-the importance of everyone involved being clearly informed of the strategic objectives and how they are contributing to achieving them in their daily activities.

Management is the process aimed at achieving high performance. It is involves making the "organization perform well" by "defining organizational goals and making decisions about the efficient and effective use of organizational resources" (Donnelly, Gibson and

Ivancevich, 1995). Performance management is ensuring a greater prospect of achieving desired results by addressing questions that have to do with how to achieve the results, the institutional and environmental circumstances in which the processes and outcomes take place, and the behaviours of the different stakeholders involved. The historical trends of performance measurement can be traced from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century to the renewed interest in performance and accountability for reinvention during the 90s (Osborne and Gaebler, 1992). Performance measurement has captured the attention of policy makers as an objective tool for efficiency and fiscal prudence, yet some of its suggested strategies have been noticeably simplistic. As a result many expect that performance can be improved by a number of quick solutions. Halachmi (2005) makes the case for a shift from performance measurement to performance management. He suggests that performance measurement can be seen as a sub system of performance management but not always the most crucial sub system as portrayed by its proponents. The problem with performance management systems today is that they assume that simply measuring performance will ensure its improvement.

Managing performance is much more meaningful than just collecting data for the purpose of measuring performance. Do these assumptions mirror the reality of evaluating and improving performance especially in higher education where change is incremental (Clark, 1983, p.235) and not necessarily a linear relationship between cause and effect? Higher education's response (HE) to today's pressures has been on the search for increased revenue, and cost cutting measures, but the effects of these are diluted if HE is unable to innovate and alter its production processes as a way of sustaining quality as well. Higher education is

not known for managerial flexibility and adaptability and their reaction has been to reduce costs while waiting for things to get better. Few higher education policy makers would undertake the hard tasks of rethinking their systems. According to Breneman and Yakoboski (2011, p.20) this ‘hunker down and pray for better times’ approach may work for a while but is not a sustainable one.

In order to improve performance, there is the need to manage performance rather than simply measure a given aspect of performance. According to the business dictionary,<sup>19</sup> performance management is an assessment of an employee, process, equipment or other factors to gauge progress toward predetermined goals. Management of performance may also mean measurement of efficiency and effectiveness or; management of important stakeholders and the relations with these stakeholders. Despite the seeming fluidity and flexibility associated with the BSC, it forces a systematic analysis of the institution and its environment and generates a sense of ‘expanse’ by setting future direction goals. Performance management implies that attention should be shifting from one aspect to another as circumstances change within or without the institution/organization.

Performance management has been a common practice in the private sector for a long time. However, because its purpose was financial control and reporting, it had an excessive financial focus with only fragile links to strategic planning and operations. But in the turbulent and globalised environment of higher education, the lack of long span strategic objectives will render HE less competitive. Financially driven

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<sup>19</sup> <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/performance-management.html>

performance management is not designed to provide wide-ranging, multi-faceted information on strategic changes in aspects which are of strategic significance. In response to the necessity for a blend of the traditional quantitative and the more intangible qualitative performance measures Kaplan and Norton (1992; 1996) developed the balanced scorecard.

In a performance management system, strategic planning involves identifying the current status and purpose (mission and objectives) of an organization and its desired future (vision). Based on these and an analyses of the environment in which the organization operates, a strategic plan is drawn. The BSC is one tool by which the objectives to reach the vision are communicated, implemented and assessed. Performance measurement and performance funding link the strategy and the BSC with its provisions for measurement and rewards.

### **3.3 Strategic objectives, strategy and strategic planning in Higher Education**

According to Dess, Lumpkin and Taylor (2005, p.1), strategic objectives are guides to where an organization intends to see itself in a given period of time (vision). They hold that for an objective to be strategic, it has to fulfil the following conditions:

- A strategic objective should clearly state what needs to be done within a defined timeframe, with provisions for measuring progress.
- It should be consistent with the mission (purpose) and vision and must be achievable within the organization's capabilities and environment.

Dess, Lumpkin and Taylor (2005, p.1) further reiterate that when strategic objectives meet these criteria, there are many benefits for the organization. They ensure that all employees are working towards the same set of objectives. Challenging objectives motivate and inspire employees for a greater level of commitment and effort. In addition, there is always a tendency for different parts of an organization to pursue their own goals rather than the overall organization goals. Although well-intentioned, these may work negatively for the organization. Meaningful objectives reduce problems from information asymmetry. In this study, the higher education system is the organization and all the state higher education institutions are its parts and employees. The state determines the vision of the country, education in general and higher education-specific policies. The strategic objectives or themes are determined by the Ministry of Higher Education and all the institutional strategic plans mirror these. Based on the interview responses of this study *'strategic objectives are the most important objectives of the Cameroon higher education that contribute to national needs, mirror national policy and international trends; and contribute to the national vision of becoming an emergent country by 2035'* (SQ4 and UQ4)

The operational definition of a strategic objective in this study is an objective that *'is deemed strategic by the interviewees or Cameroon policy documents'* and meets at least one of the following criteria *'clearly states what has to be done, provides some criteria for measuring success, is consistent with the national and education sectors' main visions, and has a timeframe for its achievement'*.

Strategic planning is an organizational management activity that is used to set priorities, focus energy and resources, strengthen operations, ensure that employees and other stakeholders work towards common goals, establish agreement around intended results, and assess and adjust the organization's direction in response to changes (Balanced Scorecard Institute<sup>20</sup>). The focus of the decisions in the strategic plan is the organization as a whole in its environment as a whole<sup>21</sup>. A strategic plan broadly defines actions aimed at creating a desired future. It is the result of a systematic process of envisioning a desired future and translating this vision into broadly defined goals or objectives, and a sequence of steps to achieve them. At every stage of strategic-planning the planner(s) asks, 'What must be done at the previous (lower) stage to reach here?' The business dictionary defines strategic objectives as "an organization's articulated aims or responses to address major change or improvement, competitiveness or social issues, and business advantages". Strategic objectives are generally focused both externally and internally and relate to significant customer, market, product, or technological opportunities and challenges (strategic challenges). Broadly stated, they are what an organization must achieve to remain or become competitive and ensure long-term sustainability." Strategic objectives set an organization's longer-term directions and guide resource allocations and redistributions.

A strategic plan is a document used to communicate with the organization, the organizations goals, the actions needed to achieve those goals and all of the other critical elements developed during the

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<sup>20</sup> [www.balancedscorecard.org](http://www.balancedscorecard.org)

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.simply-strategic-planning.com/definition-of-strategic-planning.html>

planning exercise.<sup>22</sup> Strategic planning is the formulation and implementation of the major goals of HE based on a consideration of resources and assessment of the internal and external environment in which it operates. Generally it involves one or all of the following questions: What does higher education do? For whom does higher education do what it does? How does HE excel in what it does? Strategic planning as used in this study is defined as the “*process of deciding upon objectives, on changes in these objectives, on the resources used to attain these objectives, and on the policies that are to govern the acquisition, use, and disposition of these resources*” (Anthony 1965, p.16). It is the process of developing and maintaining a strategic fit between the organization (higher education), its changing environment and stakeholders’ expectations (adapted from Kotler and Murphy, 1981, p.471). According to them this definition suggests the appropriate steps that higher education can take to improve itself.

Maintaining a strategic fit requires attempting to answer all the foregoing questions both in policy formulation and implementation. Kotler and Murphy (1981, p471) propose the following steps: First, there must be a cautious analysis of both today's and the future’s likely environment. Then an appraisal is carried out to determine higher education’s major resources as providing a picture of what it can accomplish. The environment and resource analyses permit the organization to formulate new and suitable goals that it wishes to pursue for the planned period. Goal formulation is followed by strategy formulation in which the most cost-effective strategy is chosen for reaching the goals. The strategy will certainly point to certain changes

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<sup>22</sup> [www.balancedscorecard.org](http://www.balancedscorecard.org)

that must be made to successfully implement it. Finally attention is directed to improving the organization's systems of information, planning, and control to permit carrying out the strategy effectively. However, this study assumes that the strategic plan (outlined strategic objectives/themes and strategies) already exist and the balanced scorecard approach is used to detail the process from how (stakeholders and origin of objective) determined the objectives and how they are being implemented.

According to Cameroon policy documents, there is the need to render Cameroonian higher education more relevant and visible. Some policy makers wondered why, despite all the efforts and the success of Cameroonian students abroad, its higher education institutions hardly feature in any university rankings. They explained that there is a need for managing and measuring performance in higher education both at the system and institutional levels. Chandler (1962) defines strategy as “the determination of the basic long-term goals of an enterprise, and the adoption of courses of action and the allocation of resources necessary for carrying out these goals.” Porter (1980) holds that strategy is “a broad formula for how a business is going to compete, what its goals should be, and what policies will be needed to carry out those goals” and the “...combination of the *ends* (goals) for which the organization is striving and the *means* (policies, actions) by which it is seeking to get there.” Mintzberg, Ahlstrand and Lampel (1998) outline different perspectives of strategy:

- Strategy as plan – a directed course of action to achieve an *intended* set of goals; comparable to the strategic planning

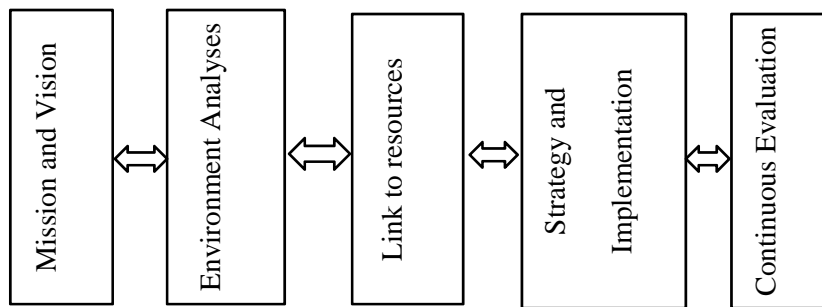


concept. This definition relates to clear communication of objectives.

- Strategy as a pattern – a consistent pattern of past behaviour, with a strategy *realized* over time rather than planned or *intended*. Where the realized pattern was different from the intent, Mintzberg referred to the strategy as *emergent*. Strategy as a pattern relates to continuity and interrelations between the objectives and between the different units in an organization.
- Strategy as a position – locating brands, products, or companies within the market, based on the needs of consumers or other stakeholders; a strategy determined primarily by factors outside the organization. Strategy as position addresses relevance to those who influence or are influenced by the activities of an organization.
- Strategy as a ploy – a specific manoeuvre intended to outsmart a competitor. In higher education this is related to specialisation and focusing on strengths to be competitive.

These definitions of strategy seem to be overlapping and cannot be used as mutually exclusive definitions especially in higher education. Strategy usually involves two main processes: *formulation* and *implementation*. “Formulation involves analysing the environment, making the diagnosis, and developing the guiding policy. It includes such activities as strategic planning and strategic thinking. Implementation refers to the action plans taken to achieve the goals established by the guiding policy” (Mintzberg, 1996; Rumelt, 2011). This study uses the strategy as “*a directed course of actions to achieve an intended set of strategic objectives. It relates to the actions being taken to arrive at the objectives defined in the strategic plan or policy*”

*documents.*” Strategy in this study includes the defined strategic ends (objectives) and the means (policies, actions) by which the system or institution is seeking to arrive at these ends. A strategic plan is only as successful as the mission, vision and goals that it enshrines. “The success of the plan also depends on the accuracy of the environmental assessment, capacity, resources needed and the time frame for implementation. At one level the strategic plan must be carefully crafted, the stakeholders consulted and convinced of its value and feasibility.” Hayward et al., (2003, p.12) also argue that, at the institutional level, the strategic plan should recognise national education objectives and self-consciously build on the institution’s visions and goals. Hayward et al., (2003, p.38) propose the following strategic planning framework:



Source: Adapted from Hayward et al., (2003 p.38)

**Figure 1.** Strategic planning framework

The following section discusses strategic planning as used in higher education. “Higher Education (HE) is expensive. It requires highly trained individuals; a large physical infrastructure; and in some disciplines sophisticated equipment and facilities. It is difficult to cut cost and at the same time increase productivity especially in the face of massification” (Kallisson and Cohen, 2010, p.47). However, gains from eliminating inefficiency through strategic planning can render HE more responsive to its objectives. “The fundamental purpose of strategic planning in HE is to provide an ongoing process of examination and evaluation of strengths, weaknesses, goals, resource requirements and future prospects and; to set out a coherent plan to respond to the findings” in order to build strength and effectiveness (Hayward, Ncayiyana and Johnson, 2003, p.3). The general aim should be to focus on what can be done best in the context of the global and national environments. Strategic planning does not occur in a void, it happens inside and is shaped by the HE environment, national HE policies, available resources, institutional/system culture, missions and visions. Ngwana (2003, p.1) argues that “global, regional and local realities can complement each other” through strategic planning.

With all the challenges which have equally served as triggers for the drift towards funding by results in most countries, strategic planning in higher education takes on an even greater importance. The Changing HE landscape and circumstances gives strategic planning added urgency. Moreover, there is severe competition for exceptional staff, students, and resources. Strategic planning is about locating, defining or discovering niches and seeking to be the best in these. Porter holds that ‘strategic positioning’ means performing activities different from those of rivals or performing similar activities in different ways (Porter 1996, p.3).

A major aim of the University of Buea’s strategic planning was to increase and stabilise the level of funding which was unpredictable and unsustainable, especially state funding (Ngwana, 2003, p.12). Ngwana further asserts that this funding situation obviously had an adverse effect on teaching, learning and research. This implies that strategic planning served in alleviating information asymmetry between the institution and funders and enhancing trust (see Milgrom and Robert, 1992). Enhanced trust would attract more funding. As per Mockler (1995), although strategy design is fundamental to understanding strategic management, it does not satisfactorily provide the palpable direction for action which can be provided by strategy execution. He provides a framework for strategy formulation explained below.

Mockler holds that it is important to “define the nature and objectives” in the form or purpose of existence (of HEIs). The mission is important in highlighting the “direction to which resources will be concentrated or the proportion of resource allocation.” HEIs might define their missions and goals to reflect the needs of both their internal (staff and

students) and external stakeholders (labour market, the local community, the state, international community) (Sallis 1993, p.21-23). This is one aspect in strategic planning that enhances trust between HE and its multiple stakeholders because their expectations or demands are taken into consideration. This identification of stakeholder needs is done by 'environmental scanning'.

*External Analysis* or '*environmental scanning*' as Morrison, Renfro and Boucher (1984, p.12) assert, situates the HEI in the national, regional and global arena. One aim of environmental scanning is to detect possible threats and opportunities. Competition and compatibility are driving the strategies of most HEIs today. These constitute in themselves the *sine qua non* of change (Ngwana, 2003, p.13). Morrison, Renfro and Boucher (1984, p.12) assert that during the 1960s and 1970s planners succeeded with an inside-out perspective and it was assumed that knowledge about internal issues were most important. At the same time it was increasingly found that the outside-in perspective was more important than the inside-out perspective. Thus it became important to scan more widely in the external environment. Morrison, Renfro and Boucher (ibid) however hold that there are two barriers to implementing environmental analysis in higher education: i) learning the new process and, ii.) achieving the necessary organizational acceptance and commitment to make the process work and be worthwhile. These barriers may be associated to the bottom-heaviness of higher education as well its approach to any change (change in HE is incremental) (see Clark, 1983, p.8, 182-184).

According to Pashiardis (1996) strategic planning assumes an open system where organizations must constantly change and adapt as needs

of the larger society change. This argument is one of the thrusts of the current study: the need for HE in Cameroon to become open and adapt constantly to changes in the global higher education environment if they want to catch-up with other parts of the world. Strategic planning gives a concrete direction to the identification and implementation of strategic objectives. It can also allow institutions to take up specific programmes or projects with a clear notion of their utility to the system or national strategy (Davies and Allisson 1999, p.112).

Structure is also important because it is a framework for accountability and evaluation especially in aspects where performance-based funding is used. It is not in the scope of this study to provide a comprehensive model for competitive advantage of HE in Cameroon. However, according to Ngwana (2003, p.14) the geographical, economic and socio-cultural potentials of HEIs in Cameroon, like in many other countries could constitute strengths and opportunities on which strategic planning can build. Ngwana (ibid) further asserts that “by implication each university has the potential for the development of centres of competence that might place it in a significant position within national and international competitiveness.” Such an adaptation is not different from the general framework of formulating strategy in business. Strategy formulation and implementation will depend on the desired image of the particular system or institution (see Ivy, 2001).

One main concern of educational managers and analysts is to ascertain the difference between the typical corporate models of strategic planning and those relevant to higher education (Saker and Speed, 1996). However, these concerns do not erase the fact that HE has begun

to see the increasing need for planning in order to maintain its responsiveness to a rapidly changing environment (Kriemadis, 1997).

One justification for strategic planning in higher education is Carnoy and Rhoten's (2002) explanation of the epistemological changes in educational policy analysis. They hold that "prior to the 1950s educational policy analysis saw educational change as rooted in educational philosophies or theories, new conceptions of what knowledge should be transmitted and hence organize institutions accordingly." This view was strongly challenged in the 1960s by new studies providing evidence that educational reforms should be situated within economic and social change.

Johnson and Scholes, 2002 in Kettunen (2008, p.4) hold that the "process of strategic planning typically has three main phases, namely strategic analysis, strategic choice and strategy implementation. In the first phase, an analysis is done in order to understand the position of the organization in its environment. In the phase of strategic choice, various options are evaluated and a specific strategy is selected. The final phase is concerned with the communication and implementation of the strategic plan. It includes the budgeting, human resources plan and action plan, which are necessary to allocate the financial and human resources and set the timetables" (Kettunen 2008, p.4). Kettunen further contends that "it is important to match the capabilities of the organization with the environment in which it operates and HEIs do not necessarily differ from many other organizations, because they operate in competitive markets. HEIs compete for students and funds from public and private sources" (p.5).

Obviously, strategic planning in higher education does not precisely match the process in a business setting. This is because academic institutions are characterized by a high concentration of specialists and typically a substantial amount of organizational rigidity. Planning is therefore more democratic. We cannot ignore the context of leadership and strategic planning in higher education which is often more complex than in a business organization. Higher education systems and institutions are classic illustrations of what organization theorists call '*loosely coupled*' systems (Orton and Weick, 1990). In loosely coupled systems, individual units have high autonomy relative to the larger system in which they are operating, often depicting a federated character. What happens in one part of the system can have little or no effect in another or can provoke unexpected responses disproportionate to the cause. The links between elements are often misunderstood or uneven. In loosely coupled systems the forces for incorporation-worrying about the entire picture, its individuality, its integrity and its future-are often weaker than the forces for speciality. Academics tend to be more loyal to their disciplines and units than to the university as a whole (Clark 1983, 76-81).

In a business setting, executives developing strategies have reasonable control over the allocation of resources and the deployment of personnel, even when their operating units are highly decentralized. Therefore, they can think all-inclusively and see how scarce resources such as money, human resources and infrastructure can be best used. These organizations often have clear goals and operate within an organizational arrangement that is given all validity by its members. Comparing to the Cameroonian context, some Cameroon policy makers hold that there is a lot of resistance and academics are very



conservative because they believe that they are educated and they are versed with their science. They do not expect to be told to go and reason with others. It is very difficult to convince them. For instance most academics think that professionalization is not the concern of the university. When it is said that there is need to consult and even integrate the professional in university education, academics generally limit themselves to internships. The traditional context of higher education characterized as loosely coupled (Orton and Weick 1990) and organized anarchy (Cohen and March 1974) in terms of its federated character is under severe pressure in several facets.

Firstly, change in Cameroon higher education often occurred under conditions of relative sufficiency, often with incremental funding and limited time pressures. Today, the challenge to reform usually goes along with both time pressures and insufficient resources. Tight deadlines and parsimonious resources, unless handled with exceptional skill and delicacy, lead to protectiveness or categorical opposition. Pessimism is not a fruitful atmosphere for thoughtful improvements.

Secondly, the origin of reforms and change is often at the system level rather than, as in the past, at the unit level. Overhauling the higher education curriculum is not, if it ever was, simply the different departments each rebuilding their programme and course offerings. It has become a concern from the system's professionalization agenda and requirement for the university curricula to be validated by system level actors. Drawing and implementing curricular follow the system directives to involve socio-economic stakeholders.

Thirdly, most of the strategic objectives try to address challenges facing higher education. The challenges facing higher education require

collaborative efforts to be able to meet these objectives. Such objectives like increasing funding and diversifying funding sources cannot be successfully achieved without the involvement of non-higher education experts as part of the different stakeholders. The involvement of others (out of university) actors in the university is relatively new but unavoidable to higher education.

Fourthly, collaborative skills and understandings of people who might be called 'external' stakeholders are insufficient, as are the limited settings where higher education and these stakeholders can learn to think together about mutual challenges. Higher education seems increasingly overloaded and lecturers feel overworked. There is no interval to step back, get perspective, see the larger picture and think about the best use of resources in moving towards the system's objectives. At a time when decision-making speed and the interdependence of higher education seem not only necessary but indispensable, loose coupling can tend to be a significant problem.

Fifth, a new, more rigorous monitoring environment for higher education intensifies the tensions between higher education and the business world. Typically it falls to the state to tussle with, understand and implement outside controls. One such instance is in trying to increase non-state funding for higher education in Cameroon. It is explained (Respondent M1) that the university has been given autonomy but they have not been given the possibility to place calls for contracts from non-university or non-government actors. Discussions have been started with the Ministry of Finance but the companies do not like the idea of giving this advantage to universities. The companies hold that they pay taxes which are used to fund universities. These

same universities should not be given the opportunity to become competitors. The situation is left to the government to resolve.

Although Cameroonian universities are increasingly creating small firms and delivering consultancy services, the idea that the university can enter into the game like a company does is still to be completely digested. There are some regulatory texts which have been produced, e.g. the National polytechnic has a structure of studies which is used in business activities but they encounter so many difficulties. The University of Dschang is also involved in similar activities but the portion of income generated from such business and consultancy services is not substantial. It is advocated by the higher education policy makers that the universities need to be encouraged along this path and the fiscal administrators need to be made to understand that the sustainable future of the university is not in tax subventions but depends on the university's ability to earn its own money. This earning (for now) is not very much by increasing fees but much more by engaging in contract research and consultancy services. Judging from the foregoing, the intentions of the New Policy on University Governance of 2005 were good and meant to address such issues but in practice there is still much to be done. In such a situation, the state is increasingly thrust into the role of an extremely unwelcome messenger. In addition to the already mentioned challenges to implementing strategic objectives, Niven's (2008, p.8-9) describes four barriers to the successful implementation of strategies.

According to Niven (ibid), "the vast majority of organizations have a long way to go when it comes to communicating their most important messages- vision and strategy -to their most important constituents:

employees.” The vision barrier is related to what Kaplan and Norton (2001) term, ‘*making strategy everyone’s everyday job*’. Many financial measures were developed at the turn of the twentieth century. The current world is substantially different and value is created largely from intangible assets such as knowledge and information. If an institution, a department, a faculty, an employee is going to contribute to the success of an organization in a meaningful way; they must know where the organization is headed and how to get there. Only then can these individual components combine talents with others from across the higher education system to create value for stakeholders and ultimately achieve higher education’s mission. The importance of the knowledge economy and the university as the main custodian of knowledge cannot be overemphasized.

The *People barrier* relates to the use of financial rewards to make sure that objectives are achieved efficiently with regards to time and resources. This approach to management, often referred to as performance funding has its drawbacks especially in higher education where some objectives need very long periods to materialize. For decades, the debate has raged on whether incentive compensation plans really lead to improved performance. The answer is difficult, but it is perhaps benign to observe that an incentive of any kind tends to increase focus, at least temporarily. Strategy cannot be executed if the focus is continually on the short term. By its very nature, strategy requires a longer range view of an organization’s circumstances. Financial incentives can distort or entirely block an organization’s perception of its strategy. The use of incentives is not a clear issue in Cameroon higher education. Some incentives do not have sufficient

follow-up (measurement criteria) and some seem to be political instruments disguised as incentives.

Despite its increasing prominence as a means of managing higher or attaining various objectives in higher education, the use of incentives has attracted several criticisms. Performance based funding of higher education is blamed for reinforcing a Darwinian theory of ‘survival of the fittest’ (Daye, 2005, p.5) where ‘seemingly’ more performing institutions, individuals, or units are being reinforced through financial incentives to perform better to the detriment of the less performing ones. Despite his critical stance on performance indicators Johnes (1996) foretold that the clamour (still evident today) remains in order to stimulate productivity and needs to be widely thought of as positively correlated with both performance (true and observed) and future resources. According to Johnes (ibid), the methods used to determine indicators all use observable variables to try to measure the immeasurable. The outputs of higher education are merely proxied by performance indicators. Most importantly, the crude indicators measure the ‘proxies of’ output, not the value created.

According to Niven (2008, p.8-9), sixty per cent of organizations do not link their budgets to strategy. Niven holds that “for many organizations, it is as simple as looking at last year’s budget and adding or subtracting a few percentage points as appropriate.” Niven (ibid) asserts that “this is a particularly damaging blow to executing strategy. What is a budget if not a detailed articulation of the priorities of the enterprise for the next fiscal year?” The fiscal year for the Cameroonian

Ministry of Finance<sup>23</sup> begins in January and the activities of the university begin in September when re-sit examinations are taken. So there is a four-month period which is difficult for the university because it has to wait for the Ministry of Finance to start financial disbursements in January. Notwithstanding, during this period the university still has to achieve its objectives. At the university level it was revealed that they are running way below the required budget.

If the budget is not linked to some form of strategic objectives, then what does that say about the priorities? Do they even have any, or are they simply turning around and wasting already limited resources? In Cameroon higher education, examples of such strategies are rife: for instance the goal for ‘one student, one job’ seems unrealistic because the socio-political environment does not yet have the resources to make this agenda reachable. It is a challenge for industries to contribute to the professionalization agenda by providing internship opportunities for students and consultancy services to the university (BUN 2008, p.6). How capable are these same industries to absorb the professionally trained university graduates? An example of how some of the actors in Cameroon higher education are oblivious to resource-objective links can be seen in the following quote interview excerpt. When asked about a new initiative:

Question: “What are some of the resources that the university has put in place to make for these adjustments, considering that lecture hours will definitely increase?”

Answer:

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<sup>23</sup> The Ministry of Finance handles and distributes the budgets to other ministries and universities.

“This is the kind of question ultimately for the government to answer- a popular question that trails a new initiative. But I cannot give you a popular answer. Yes, indeed there is tremendous pressure on human and material resources even now, that is, with or without the Bologna Process, so the problem has been aggravated. With regards to human resources, brain drain is a real threat. Our current globalized world speaks economics and no country can hold down its human resources with paltry salary scales. The universities are emptying out..... All the same, the government has opened up possibilities for hiring new teachers- 130 for UB.....It’s a good step ahead. As for infrastructure..... the vice-chancellor outlined impressive projects for the current fiscal year among which are classrooms and office blocks. For the time being, however, lectures and tutorials are taught in the same spaces” (BUN 2007, p.9).

In a related quote assessing the quality of members of the teaching staff it is stated that: “the quality is good, given that most of us are not having the ideal situation and so we can make do with what we have and they [teachers] are doing their best” (BUN 2007, p. 11).

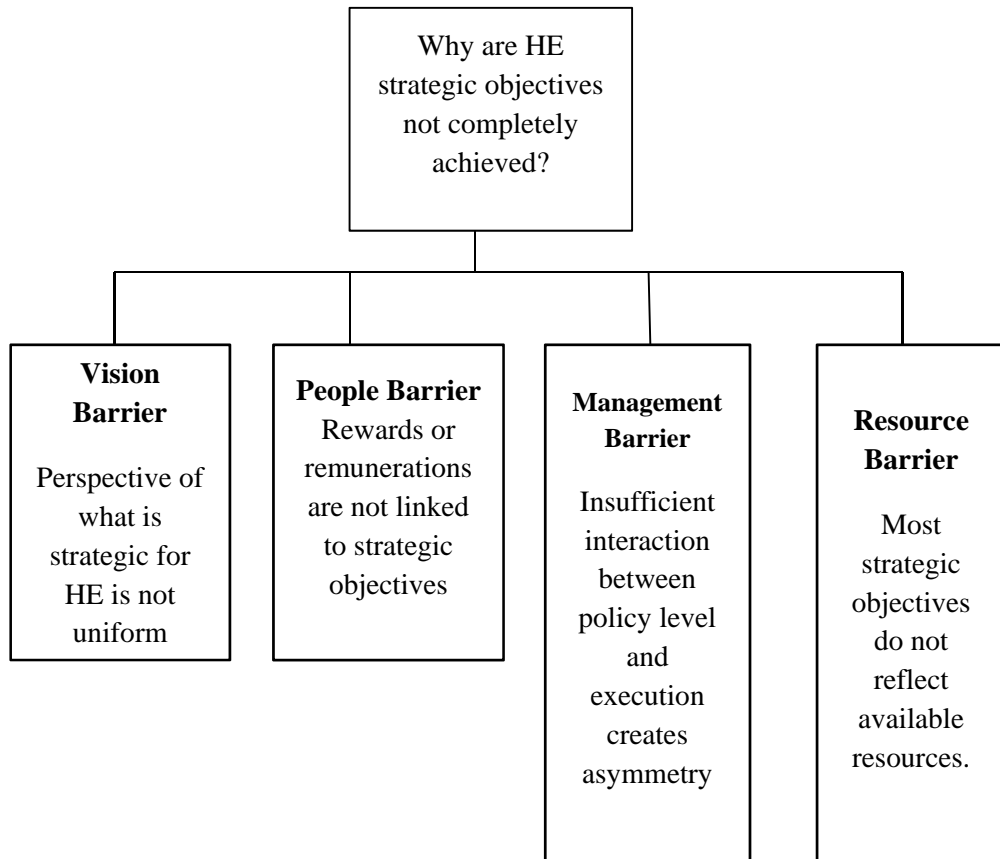
One year into the implementation of the Bologna Process (from 2007-2008), the members of the planning committee reiterated that “the government and the university [still] had the challenges of providing the necessary infrastructure and manpower needs that ensure quality and greater professionalization in Cameroon” (BUN 2007, p.6). The quotes reveal that there is a weak link between policy/objectives and the resources available for their implementation.

Niven (2008,p.9) uses the phrase “management by walking around?” which suggests staying close to your employees (in the context of this research it also implies staying close to the realities of the national and

international higher education environment) by frequent interaction, ensuring that communication is reciprocal and beneficial to all. However Niven (ibid) believes that we are in the age of ‘management by firefighting’. We move from one crisis to the next, never taking the time to pause and reflect” on the overall mission. Niven (2008, p.9) continues that: “a client of mine uses the analogy of ‘working *in* the business’- fighting fires, versus ‘working *on* the business’- taking the necessary break to examine things from a larger perspective.” The quotes from the Buea University Newsletter (BUN, see previous page) also reveal a management barrier. Off course the University of Buea should find it easier to implement the Bologna Process because it was already operating with the Anglo-Saxon credit system. Did the policy makers have a feel of what the situation was: what resources are needed to implement the Bologna process? This question seems insufficiently answered by the responses above.

Another example of the people barrier can be seen from the assessment of the members of the Bologna Process implementation committee (one year into its adoption) where they state that academic staff were faced with the challenge of remaining committed to their careers under conditions of increased workload without commensurate remunerations and means of professional growth while industries were faced with the challenge of supporting the highly professional training through internships and consultancies (BUN 2008, p.6). The reason for including these barriers was their relevance to the Cameroon context of higher education. From the examples cited it can be concluded that these barriers are interrelated and not mutually exclusive. The barriers could be applied in the Cameroon higher education as shown by Figure 2.





**Figure 2.** Barriers to implementing strategic objectives in Cameroon higher education (Adapted from Niven 2008, p.9)

Despite these barriers, strategies are drawn and a first step to implementation is communicating the strategy and receiving feedback. Considering that the main catalyst for Cameroon higher education reforms has been the perceived need for relevance, it seems important to discuss some communication channels that are used by successful

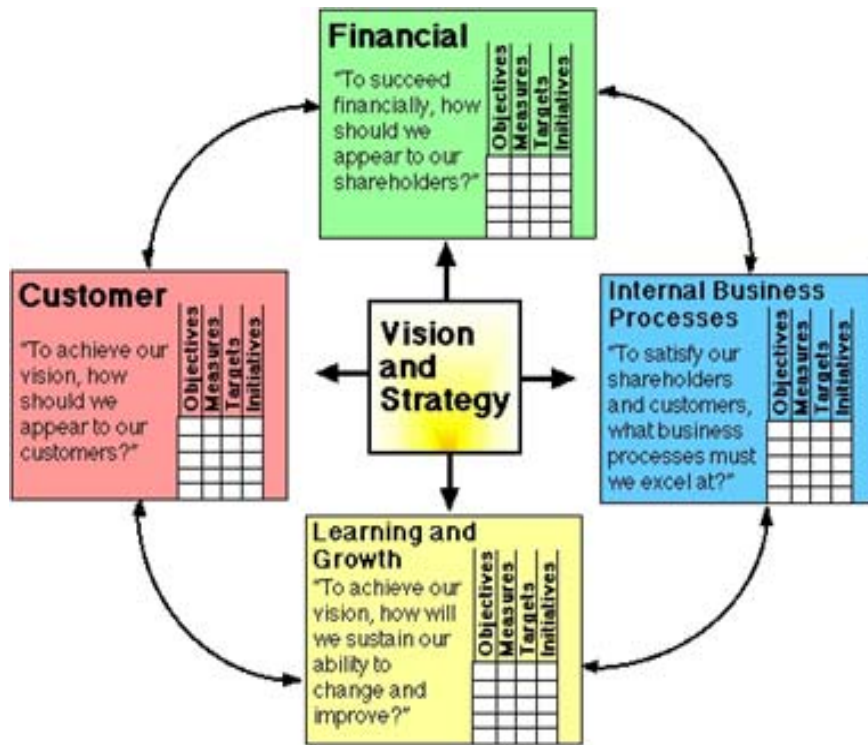
companies. As per Kaplan and Norton (2001a, p.218-219), these channels include but are not limited to: brochures, meetings, newsletters, education programmes, the internet, reports, formal speeches, face-to-face communications and telephone conversations. Kaplan and Norton (ibid) hold that most of these companies used a comprehensive mix of these and not just a single medium.

### **3.4 The Balanced Scorecard**

According to the Balanced Scorecard Institute<sup>24</sup>, “the balanced scorecard is a strategic planning and management system that is used extensively in business and industry, government, and non-profit organizations.” The balanced scorecard is used to align business activities to the vision and strategy of the organization, improve communication and, monitor the organization’s performance against strategic objectives. The balanced scorecard (BSC) is a framework to translate strategic objectives into a set of performance indicators distributed along four perspectives (financial, customer/stakeholder, internal processes and the learning and growth perspective). Figure 3 (on the next page) shows the balanced scorecard and the questions answered by each perspective. The BSC enables transformation of the overall strategy into effective management. Its proponents (Kaplan and Norton, 1996) believe that financial indicators alone are insufficient to measure performance and that organizations which relied on such short term indicators were sacrificing long term progress for short term performance. According to Kaplan (2001) the balanced scorecard can be applied to not-for-profit and any other government agency.

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<sup>24</sup> <http://balancedscorecard.org/>



Source: Balanced Scorecard Institute. Adapted from Robert S. Kaplan and David P. Norton, "Using the Balanced Scorecard as a Strategic Management System," Harvard Business Review (January-February 1996), 76

**Figure 3.** The balanced scorecard perspectives

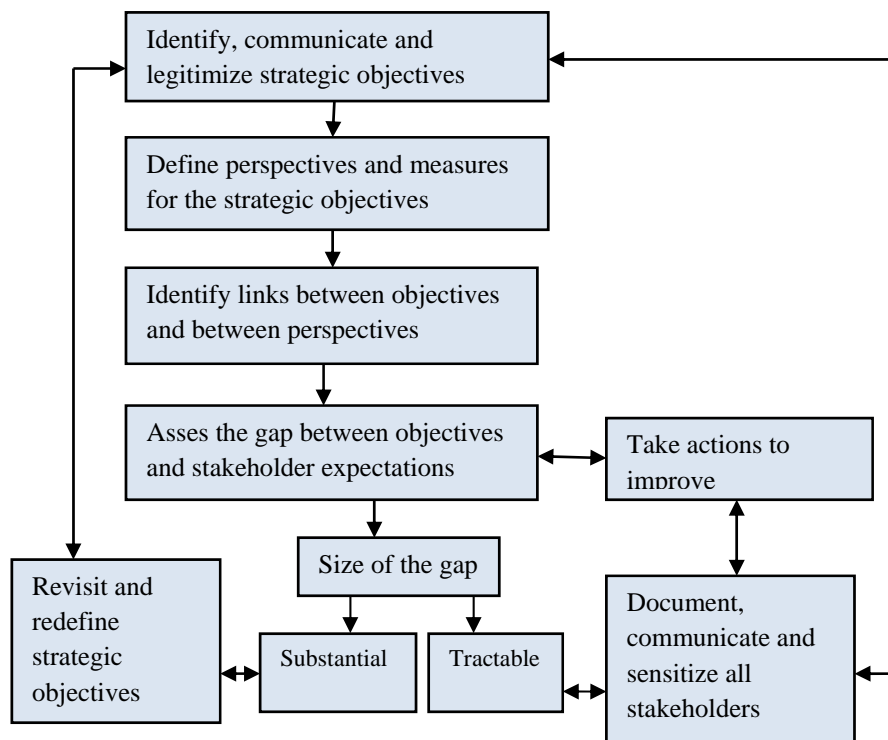
Figure represents the balanced scorecard as presented by its first proponents. The idea is that strategic objectives emanate from the vision and strategy of the organization. In order to know what is targeted, the objectives are distributed along the customer, financial, internal business processes and learning and growth perspectives. Even though the perspectives are interrelated, the framework helps to show

how success or failure in one perspective affects the others as well as the need to ensure a balance between all the perspectives.

Through the years, the balanced scorecard has evolved from the original measurement tool (Kaplan and Norton, 1992) to a possible instrument for implementing strategies (Kaplan and Norton 1996) and a framework for determining the alignment of an organization's resources with its strategy (Kaplan and Norton 2004). These shifts have highlighted the balance scorecard as a strategic communication and management system, giving considerable importance to several implementation issues not previously documented. The BSC has also been classified as a performance measurement system (Niven 2002; Kaplan and Norton 2001b), a strategic management system (Kaplan and Norton, 1996) and a communication tool (Kaplan and Norton, 1992; Niven, 2002; Nistor, 2009).

“Once organizations developed the Balanced Scorecard, Kaplan and Norton began realizing that the scorecard was more than just a performance measurement system. They realized that the scorecard putting the organization's focus on the future enables the organization to soon develop its new measures into a management system.” The balanced scorecard provides the ‘recipe’ that enables components already existing in the organization to be combined for long-standing value creation (Kaplan and Norton 2001a, p.10). The BSC helps measure the performance level, in correlation with the institution's strategic planning, financing and accounting (Figure 4 depicts a balanced scorecard performance management process) which can be applied both at the higher education system and institutional levels). Based on identified and communicated strategies, measures and

perspectives are defined. It is equally important to know the link between the perspectives and between the objectives. These objectives are compared with the expectations of the organization's stakeholders and actions are taken to improve performance. In this process it is important that all the stakeholders within and without the organization know what objectives the organization is pursuing and how they fit in. The objectives are redefined if there is a substantial difference between the objectives and stakeholder expectations (or performance). However, if the gap is tractable, it is documented and communicated to all stakeholders to enable them contribute to improving performance or reducing the divergence.



**Figure 4.** Continuous performance management and improvement process of the balanced scorecard approach

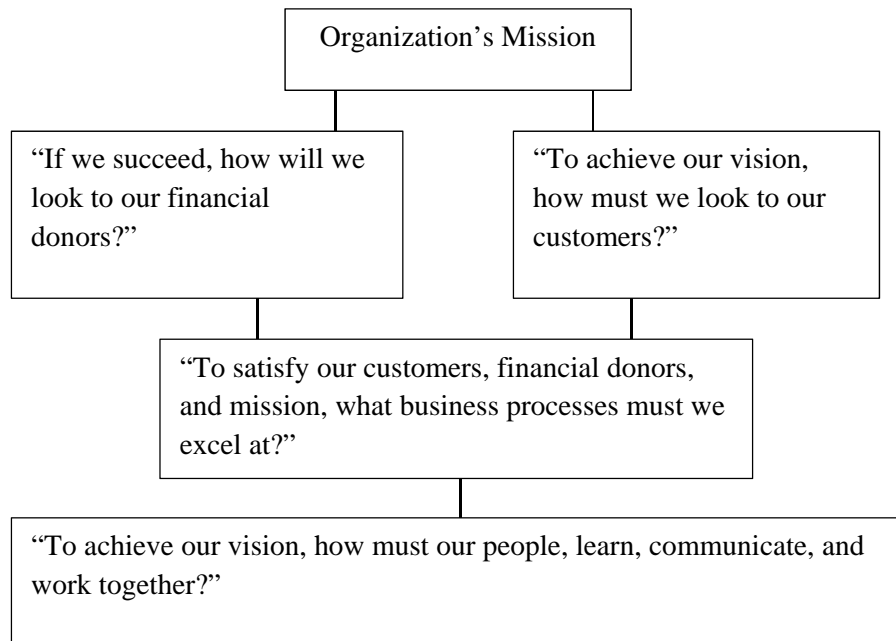
### *The Balanced Scorecard as a Performance Management Approach*

In order to advance performance, there is the need to manage performance rather than simply measure any given aspect of performance across the board. According to Hatry (1999) performance management is a recurring activity. For it to be meaningful there needs to be benchmarking and comparisons over time. Performance management implies that attention should be shifting from one dimension to another as circumstances change within or without the organization. However, with performance measurement, such shifts cannot be allowed because not everything can be measured. Halachmi (2005) makes the case for a shift from performance measurement to performance management. Performance management has been a common practice in the private sector for a long while, but because its purpose was financial control and reporting it had excessive financial focus with only tenuous links to strategic plans and operations.

Management is the process of making the organization perform well by defining organizational goals and making decisions about the efficient and effective use of organizational resources (Donnelly et al., 1995). Performance management is about ensuring a greater likelihood of achieving desired outcomes by addressing issues that have to do with the business process expected to generate the expected results; the institutional and environmental contexts in which the processes and outcomes take place and; the behaviours of various stakeholders. According to Gianakis (2002, p.36) performance management is one of the central tenets of the 'reinventing government' movement which has been a key driver in the reform of the public sector in recent years.

Performance management is not necessarily determined by formal standards and technical measurements. According to Johnstone (2006, p. 595) performance is mostly situational and mediated by subjective concerns that go beyond simple economic rationality. Johnstone further asserts that performance management systems are largely socially rather than technically constructed and operated. According to Kaplan (2001a, p.133-135) the balanced scorecard can be applied to non-profits and any other government agency (see figure 5 for a public sector BSC). An effective management system must include efforts to manage organizational culture. This culture is not independent of external components and stakeholders. The effort to manage organizational culture calls for constant monitoring of that 'culture' for any changes as well as patterns of interactions within and with other organizations.

Holzer and Kloby (2005) assert that performance management requires judicious management of the link between the organization and important elements from its environment, owners or customers in particular. When done rightly, the involvement of stakeholders can become a promising strategy for mobilizing support, new ideas, and critical feedback that facilitate the timely fine-tuning of operations. Reviewing several cases, Holzer and Kloby (2005) demonstrate how involvement in the performance management process is feasible and can be highly beneficial to all the parties involved. On its surface, performance management seems to have much to offer. According to Halachmi (2005, p.510) performance measurement where outside control is replaced by greater managerial flexibility may hold the key to success. In the public sector, the BSC can be defined as follows:



**Figure 5:** Public sector balanced scorecard (Kaplan and Norton 2001a, p.135)

However, the balanced scorecard framework has also been criticized by some scholars (Kennerley and Neely, 2005; Neely, 2006; Nørreklit, 2000; Elkington, 1998). Most early criticisms of the balanced scorecard concentrated on the interconnection between the balanced scorecard perspectives (Nørreklit, 2000). However, Kaplan and Norton (1992, 1996, 2006) argue that an objective to improve employee skills (learning and growth perspective) improves customer service (an internal process), which improves customer satisfaction (customer perspective), and this will improve revenue and profits (financial perspective). Nørreklit (2000, p.83) questions the chain of causes and results among elements of the balanced scorecard. Nørreklit (ibid) argues that there was no empirical data supporting the connection



argument, but Kaplan and Norton have not swayed from this argument and have become more assertive about the causality, especially if it is supported with strategy mapping.

Other criticisms are related to how to choose specific measures to report (Egalson and Waldersee, 2000; Kennerley and Neely, 2000). Kaplan and Norton (1996) have focused on fewer measures per function than more measures. Another main criticism of the balanced scorecard pertains to its alignment of all measures into four perspectives (Kennerley and Neely, 2000). Papalexandris, Pratacos and Soderquist (2005) point out that the balanced scorecard pays little attention to different critical supporting factors such as change management, quality assurance, development of ICT infrastructure and risk management which are critical for the successful implementation of a balanced scorecard. Consistent with this criticism is the view of Bontis, Dragonetti, Jacobsen and Roos (1999, p.397) that the BSC is relatively rigid in the perspectives that drive the identification of success factors and there would be a tendency to miss important success factors which do not fall neatly into any of the categories. Most key success factors will be cross-perspective impacting simultaneously more than one dimension of the intangible resources of the institution.

However, Kaplan and Norton (1996) hold that the four perspectives need not be straitjacket and could be expanded as suitable but then treated as a comprehensive classification of all possible measures. They argue that some organizations may need more than four perspectives, or the names of the perspectives may be modified to address the needs of the organization. Other critics opine that the balanced scorecard is too simplistic and not balanced as it is portrayed (Pickard, 2006). In

addition to these criticisms there are also alternative management systems which are briefly discussed in the following section.

### ***Alternatives to the Balanced Scorecard***

The idea of linking measures to strategy seems not to be unique to the balanced scorecard. McNair, Lynch and Cross (1990) introduced a performance pyramid in which the vision of the “balance” was incorporated into the financial and non-financial measures of performance. Grady (1991) also stated that the strategic objectives of a company ought to be broken down into critical success factors and critical actions. The Performance-Based Management Special Interest Group (PBM SIG 2001, p.16-17) describes the following alternatives to the balanced scorecard:

The ‘Critical Few’ approach assumes that “having too many measures: generating large amounts of routine data could distract the senior management’s focus from those measures that are the most critical to the organization’s success. The process of simplifying and extracting a large number of performance measures across the organization and to select critical few that drive strategic success is part of the performance measurement process itself. It helps sharpen the understanding of the strategic plan and its supporting objectives. The selection of critical few performance measures highlights the need for a balance between internal and external requirements, as well as financial and non-financial measures.” Although there is no a stated, ‘right’ number of strategic measures, the best practice companies usually have a defined working number of measures. The number of measures is between 3 and 15 at each level within the organization depending on how complex

the organization is. As with the balanced scorecard, the ‘critical few’ framework develops strategically focused business perspectives and then identifies performance objectives and measures for each perspective. Organizations identify a working number of measures for each perspective or performance indexes.

The performance dashboard is an information system that captures financial and non-financial measures as indicators of successful strategy implementation. In France, companies have developed and used the *Tableau de Bord*, a dashboard of key indicators of organizational success, for more than two decades. The *Tableau de Bord* is designed to help pilot the organization by identifying key success factors, especially those that can be measured as physical variables.

In 1988, the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award (MBNQA) was instituted to promote total quality management (TQM). TQM has undergone many changes and is now generally referred to by other names like ‘continuous improvement’ or ‘reengineering’. However, all Baldrige winners do not look at TQM as a distinct program or entity. They integrate its thinking and practices into their organization’s daily operations. The Baldrige standards call for a balance among customer satisfaction, employee satisfaction, and business results. The award is based on requirements created through a public-private partnership and focused on three business factors: Approach (the processes used to run an organization), Deployment (the execution of the processes needed to run an organization), and Results (the product of the execution of processes needed to run an organization). Based on a 1000-point scale, the award conditions are divided into seven perspectives: leadership,

strategic planning, customer and market focus, information and analysis, human resource focus, process management, and business results. Having discussed the BSC as performance management system it is important to outline the types of applications of the BSC.

### ***Applications of the Balanced Scorecard to Higher Education***

As earlier mentioned, the balanced scorecard (BSC) was originally meant for business organizations but its proponents hold that it can be used in non-profit sectors like higher education. Most organizations regularly and dutifully complete the strategic planning process. However studies suggest that only 10 per cent are successful in implementing these strategies (Kiechel, 1982). Since the BSC was originally designed for profit-making organizations, most of its applications studies have been in such organizations (Fonvielle and Carr 2001; Malmi 2001). There are relatively few studies on the applicability of the BSC in higher education. Some of these higher education-related studies have centred on performance measurement and showing how the current environment of higher education necessitates the use of private sector approaches to planning and responding to external stakeholders. Other applications have also been used to show the importance of management over the measurement of performance. In addition, some scholars have proposed models of the BSC that could be used for higher education in addressing specific issues. Others have stressed the need for aligning objectives to mission and vision and using the BSC as a communication tool for strategic plans. There are also some BSC applications as related to performance measurement and responsiveness to stakeholders.

Armitage and Scholey (2004) successfully applied the BSC to a specific master's degree program in business, entrepreneurship, and technology. O'Neil, Bensimon, Diamond and Moore (1999) study was largely related to the BSC as a tool for communication. They described how a faculty committee at the Rosier School of Education adapted a BSC model originally developed for business firms to satisfy the central administration's need to know how they measure up to other schools of education. The format of the BSC used by the faculty included the following four perspectives: i) academic management perspective (How do we look to our university leadership?); ii) the internal business perspective (What do we excel at?); iii) the innovation and learning perspective (Can we continue to improve and create value?); iv) the stakeholder perspective (how do students and employers see us?). O'Neil et al., (1999) outline the following benefits from the 'academic' scorecard implementation:

- An easier approach for the university to accomplish its strategic goals.
- A systematic and consistent way for the chancellor's office to evaluate performance reports from various schools and departments.
- Common measures across academic units with shared characteristics.
- The simplicity of the BSC made it easier for academic units to show how budget allocations are linked to the metrics of excellence.

Drtna, Gilbert and Alon (2007) proposed incorporating measures with well-defined strategies as a first step with several guidelines. Bailey, Chow and Haddad (1999) surveyed business school deans' opinions about the potential useful measurements for a balanced scorecard.

Chang and Chow (1999) recounted that responses in a survey of 69 accounting department heads were largely assertive of the balanced

scorecard's applicability and benefits to accounting programs. They also reveal that in 1993 the University of California, San Diego's (UCSD) senior management launched a BSC planning and performance monitoring system for 30 institutional functions using three primary data sources: i) UCSD's internal financial reports; ii) National Association of College and University Business Officers benchmarks; and iii) faculty, staff and student customer-satisfaction surveys. This was conducted within the framework of the university's vision, mission, and values. The reported benefits and outcomes include reorganization of the workload in the vice-chancellor's area, revision of job descriptions according to performance standards, the introduction of continual training for user departments, ongoing customer assessments and increased responsiveness to communication needs using technology.

Cullen, Joyce, Hassall, and Broadbent (2003) proposed the use of a BSC in educational institutions to reinforce managing rather than just monitoring performance. Sutherland (2000) recounted that the Rosier School of Education at the University of Southern California adopted the balanced scorecard approach to evaluate its academic program and planning process. Beard (2009, p.1) asserts that the BSC is one of the business management tools that have also been used successfully in higher education. Beard (ibid) reports on the measures that administrators chose for the balanced scorecards of two educational institutions and whose success was recognized through the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award. Beard holds that leaders are more often recognizing the importance of being customer-focused by collecting information for performance evaluation and continuous improvement. Beard also highlights the need to develop a systems'

thinking as outlined in the core values of performance excellence in education according to The Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award Program. Beard (2009, p.1) argues that the increasingly significant accountability issues in higher education could benefit from knowledge of similar changes which have occurred in the private sector. Beard holds that the BSC approach is an opportunity to translate the mission into a comprehensive, coherent, communicable and mobilizing framework for external stakeholders and internal actors.

Amaratunga and Baldry (2000) measures higher education sector performance and confirms a relation between performance measurement and quality based on the balanced scorecard framework. Kassahun (2010) outlines an academic scorecard as a strategic framework for measuring institutional performance in Ethiopia. Cribb and Hogan (2003) discuss a balanced scorecard methodology for a university library in Australia. They examine the process of identifying performance measures and linking the library's balanced scorecard to the overall university's balanced scorecard. They hold that the balanced scorecard provides a means of articulating the what, why and how well aspects of strategic plans. Karathanos and Karathanos (2005) present the detailed measures of the balanced scorecards of the first three recipients of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality award. They stress the importance of clearly aligning measures with the mission, core values, and strategic goals. Bally (2008) applies the balanced scorecard to the Fort Hare University (South Africa) to show how the balanced scorecard can be used for integrated planning in higher education. Umayal and Suganthi, (2010) present a model for measuring performance of educational institutions based on the balanced scorecard. Nayeri, Mashhadi and Mohajeri (2008) develop a BSC strategic model to evaluate the strategic environment of business higher

education in Iran. The model is customized and applied to six top Iranian business schools and the position of each is defined in comparison to the other chosen schools. Papenhausen and Einstein (2006) outline how the BSC could be implemented at a college of business.

Kettunen, J. (2009) argues that the BSC approach, though designed for the communication, implementation and monitoring of the strategic plan can be used in the strategic planning process. Kettunen (ibid) argues that “the BSC helps management to see in the planning stage what elements the strategic plan should have and what kind of structure the strategic plan should take to favour both its efficient communication and implementation.”

Tohidi, Jafari and Afshar, 2010 use the BSC to show how a strategy map is planned for educational institutions. The data is obtained through interviews with managers who planned strategies for their organizations and those who had not. They also discuss the BSC potentials and flexibility as compared to other strategic planning models to solve organizational problems and increase efficiency and effectiveness.

Azizi, Behzadian and Afshari (2012) highlight the balanced scorecard perspectives which are suitable for the universities. They conducted an extensive survey on different perspectives adopted by different higher education institutions. They asserted that universities and higher education institutions as non-profit organizations can use four main BSC perspectives by replacing the customer perspective with the financial perspective at top of scorecard.



Beginning from a premise that most studies of the balanced scorecard have not defined perspectives that reflect the non-profit characteristic of higher education, Sofian and Al-Hosaini (2015) identify relevant perspectives for higher education. Sofian and Al-Hosaini (ibid) suggest that the balanced scorecard for higher education should have community participation, innovation, strategic partnership and scientific research excellence as perspectives. They argue that these perspectives can be used to monitor performance and adjusting to challenges emerging during the implementation of objectives. Sofian and Al-Hosaini address the applicability of the BSC in terms of the differences between applying in business organizations and educational institutions. They (p.33) conclude that the BSC is a prominent tool to strategize and monitor performance with the strength of establishing an evaluation system with appropriate performance indicators.

### ***Rationale for the Balanced Scorecard***

Strategy is not an end in itself. It is only a means to communicate lines of action. Implementation is what produces recognisable results. “Many, if not most organizations dutifully complete strategic planning on a regular basis. However, some studies suggest that fewer than 10 per cent are successful in implementing the strategies created” (Walter, K. in MacLellan, 2007, p.3). MacLellan (2007, p.3) holds that the real problem is usually bad execution, not bad strategy. The BSC potentially presents an approach to managing objectives in a way that they are not only successful but flexible enough to meet the constantly changing demands from higher education stakeholders.

Niven (2008, p.147) argues that the balanced scorecard provides the framework for an organization to move from a position of deciding to live their strategy to actually executing it. Niven (ibid ) opines that “a well-constructed balanced scorecard will describe the strategy, breaking it down into its component parts through the objectives and measures chosen in each of the four perspectives”. In the same thinking, Kettunen (2009, p.31) argues that “the balanced scorecard is not only a tool for communicating and implementing the strategic plan, but also an approach to plan strategies in a way that takes all perspectives into account, defines clear strategic objectives, assumes causal relationships among the objectives, and defines strategic themes describing what management believes must be done in order to achieve the desired outcomes.”

Niven (2008, p.67) provides a checklist with corresponding scores to assess the need for a balanced scorecard. Niven’s original assessment

list is in Appendix VII. The following section discusses the points identified as relevant to the Cameroon higher education context.

- Failure to report higher education activities has little notice or consequence. In Cameroon, reporting to stakeholders and other actors is done via: annual reports, monthly reviews, interviews and press conferences, radio programmes and newsletters. It is not an obligation for higher education to report its activities and reporting is not coordinated. Every university reports in ways that they choose to. Where there are obligations to it usually has to do with financial reporting.
- There are strategic objectives (present or past) but higher education has a hard time successfully implementing them. The objectives of higher education in Cameroon seem to be the same, just articulated under different policy forms or words. The objective to professionalize higher education and focus more on technological disciplines is a recurring objective. These are always expressed with the need for urgency, which implies that they have never been substantially achieved. In its 1974 session, the national council for higher education and scientific research recommended the reinforcement of professionalization of higher education and special effort towards developing technologies (Sup Infos 2011, p.38). The professionalization and technology agenda is still pressed today (see strategic objectives in section 3.1). Some higher education policy makers (e.g. respondent M2 in the current study) in Cameroon hold that there needs to be real revolt for people to realise the need for changes, but as long as there is calm, proposals are made with a few changes and structures. Notwithstanding, the policy documents rots somewhere without ever being implemented. At

best the policies are reiterated over and over and become like shouting in the desert. This has led to many uncompleted initiatives.

- Budgeting for higher education is very political and based on historical trends.
- There are numerous strategic initiatives taking place in Cameroon higher education and it is possible that not all are truly strategic in nature. Priorities in higher education are often dictated by current necessity or ‘firefighting’. One such priority was the increase in number of universities in 1993 (see sections 1.1 and 3.1) to solve the problem of an overcrowded lone university.
- There is insufficient accountability in higher education for the achievement of strategic objectives. The government has been spending more on higher education with minimal provisions for accountability. In 2005, the government outlined a new policy (new university governance policy) which was intended to address accountability. Despite the good intentions, implementation and results have been limited.
- Higher education in Cameroon faces increasing pressure from stakeholders (the state, society, students, labour market, international partners/donors, etc.) to demonstrate the results of its activities. The environment in which Cameroon higher education operates is constantly changing, and in order to succeed, HE needs to change too. Such changes include involving the world of work in programme design, offering and assessments.

- Cameroon higher education does not (as at when the data was collected in 2011-2012) have clearly defined performance indicators for its strategic objectives.
- Like every other higher education system, Cameroon higher education creates significant value from intangible assets like knowledge creation, research results, impact in society, fostering national unity and bilingualism.

The relevance of these points and how they indicate the need for the balanced scorecard approach in Cameroon higher education are discussed in the results and discussion chapters.

The New modern university outlined by Cameroon's growth and employment strategy paper (GESP) is no longer a centre for scholars, isolated from the world and critics of temporal powers, but a forum around which complex processes of innovation and industrial development are built, a centre for social promotion, notably the training of highly skilled staff, a communication crux and a business incubator (Sup Infos September 2011, p.7). The preceding assertion is evidence of the changing environment in which higher education operates and the changing expectations of its stakeholders. There appears to be a need for mechanisms like the BSC to be able to identify what and how to respond, and to determine if the responses are relevant to the environment.

It is believed that the international visibility of Cameroonian universities depends on the undoubted quality and social relevance of curricula and research results. According to Sup Infos (2011, p.7), attaining international competitiveness depends on connecting university training to major global networks, beginning with national

and sub-regional networks and; restructuring university research around competitive integrated poles of excellence: working on themes related to national research policy, the GESP and the vision of Cameroon by 2035. It is believed that this connection and restructuring can only be achieved if the challenges of good governance, transparency in management, accountability, equity, decentralization and participation are shared by all stakeholders of the university community (Sup Infos September 2011, p.7).

The foregoing concerns and recommendations are engrained in the BSC. Relevance to national policy is related to relevance of activities to overall goals; transparency and accountability in management is related to providing clear measures of performance and making sure that all actors and stakeholders are constantly informed; linking university training to global networks and participation is related to responding to the environment and stakeholders.

Kettunen (2009, p.31) also holds “that the balanced scorecard can be used to evaluate the performance of an institution and the achievement of its strategic objectives.” Kettunen argues that “the evaluation of higher education institutions and their activities is easily random, inaccurate and uncertain if there is no common framework to evaluate the institutions.” In his opinion, “a common framework helps evaluators avoid misinterpretations and erroneous conceptions. An accurate evaluation helps the institution in enhancement-led evaluations to select the right remedies and continuously improve.”

The Cameroon Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) holds that the education system lacks a real dashboard or statistical information

system to evade foggy steering of the system (ESSP 2006, p.77). The ESSP (p.78) further posits that steering by results is still underdeveloped due to the weakness of provisions for evaluation. According to article 32 of the 2001 law on the orientation of higher education in Cameroon (LOHE), the state will periodically evaluate higher education with the objective of: i) establishing a culture and practice of evaluation and; ii) enhancing quality, relevance and efficiency. But in practice, this evaluation is not systematic. For instance the LOHE states that this evaluation is done according to fixed rules and regulations, but these practical modalities have never been made explicit neither for auto-evaluation nor for external evaluations (ESSP 2006, p.78).

According to Yee-Chin 2004, the BSC can assist non-profits in accomplishing the same strategic planning and control functions like for-profits. These functions include: “clarifying and gaining consensus about strategy; communicating strategy; aligning departmental and personal goals to the strategy; linking strategic objectives to long-term targets and annual budgets; identifying and aligning strategic initiatives; performing periodic and systematic strategic reviews; obtaining feedback to be informed and improve strategy.” In addition to the benefits (and some criticisms) of the BSC, Kaplan and Norton (2001a, p.7-17) outlined some principles that successful companies have applied to implement their strategies. The following section discusses these principles and their applicability to Cameroon.

### ***The BSC Principles for Successful Strategic Objectives***

The central idea behind Kaplan and Norton's (2001a, p.7-17) five principles of is that highly productive organizations are those which can implement their strategic objectives exceptionally well. Such organizations typically emphasize implementation than formulation of objectives. It is believed that once the strategic objectives of these high performing organizations have been identified, they concentrate on aligning all their resources to achieving these objectives (ibid). In the current study it is assumed that the strategic objectives of higher education in Cameroon have been defined and the study tries to fit the objectives within the framework of these principles to be able to see how they could enhance successful implementation of strategic objectives. The central concepts that seem to run through these principles are communication, alignment and relevance. These are suitable to the context of Cameroon higher education because the policy documents and interviews reveal that these are the same concepts that have been prevalent in most reforms of higher education objectives. According to Kaplan and Norton (2001a, p.7-17), the high performing organizations use the balanced scorecard approach and apply the following key principles:

### ***Express Strategic Objectives in Operational Terms***

The crux of this principle is that even the best strategy cannot be implemented if it is not understood by all those involved. Kaplan and Norton (2001a, p.65) posit that any strategy which cannot be adequately described cannot be understood. Therefore, the first step in implementing strategic objectives is to build a reliable and consistent framework for describing strategy. The construction of a balanced



scorecard involves translating the strategy into a logical architecture which specifies the different elements of the strategy. The BSC becomes an understandable and common point of reference for all higher education employees and stakeholders. The concepts underlying this principle are clarity and communication because the objectives have to be clearly presented to facilitate communication.

### ***Align the Organization to Strategic Objectives***

Organizations consist of several sectors, units and specialized departments, each with its own operations and sometimes its strategic objectives (see Kaplan and Norton 2001a, p.11). A higher education system, like other organizations is made up of different institutions, faculties, schools and departments. All of these parts may have their own operations and specific strategic objectives. These entail that these parts may have distinct bodies of knowledge, language, culture (Clark 1983, p.72-75) and are loosely coupled as described by Orton and Weick (1990). From these specialties, practical silos arise and become a major challenge to implementing common strategic objectives. It becomes difficult to communicate and coordinate across the specialties (Kaplan and Norton, 2001a, p.11-12). For the strategic objectives to represent more than the sum of all these parts, their strategic objectives must be linked and integrated (p.11). When such alignment is done, all the parts of the higher education system have well-defined strategic objectives articulated and assessable. The underlying concepts of aligning the organization are relevance, communication and consensus.

### ***Make strategy everyone's everyday job***

According to this principle, the leaders in higher education (system and institutional) should understand that they cannot implement strategic objectives by themselves. It is required that all those involved in implementation should understand the strategic objectives and go about their day-to-day activities in ways that contribute to the strategic objectives (see Kaplan and Norton 2001a, p.12). This is not top-down direction; it is top-down communication (ibid). The policy makers need to understand that individuals in the university departments can create considerable value by finding new and improved ways of implementing the strategic objectives. The process begins by using the balanced scorecard to communicate and educate (Kaplan and Norton 2001a, p.12). The balanced scorecard enables individual objectives to be integrated across the higher education institution and linked to system level strategic objectives. The entire strategy is communicated, to be understood as such and then it is easier for individuals to align their personal objectives to the strategy (Kaplan and Norton 2001a, p.13).

In some cases incentive compensation (“balanced pay check”) may be linked to the balanced scorecard (Kaplan and Norton 2001a, p.213) but, for higher education this type of incentive will have to be linked to objectives with visible results and mostly post achievement than pre-achievement. The reason is that most of the results of higher education objectives are intangible or take long to be visible. Strategy becomes everyone's job when they understand it and are motivated to make it succeed. As earlier mentioned, aligning the employee to the strategic objectives has not always been indispensable. Tasks were simple performed as training had been acquired. Today, this type of operation

is obsolete and has been replaced by knowledge work. In order to create value, there must be alignment to strategic objectives. According to Kaplan and Norton (2001a, p.12) strategy-focused organizations understand that employees are the ones who produce innovative ideas that make strategies work. Kaplan and Norton (ibid) use the BSC in three processes to align employees to strategic objectives: creating strategic awareness, defining individual and team objectives and linking compensation/incentives to the balanced scorecard. The underlying concepts in making strategy everyone's job are communication, involvement and a participatory approach; relevance.

### ***Make strategy a continual process***

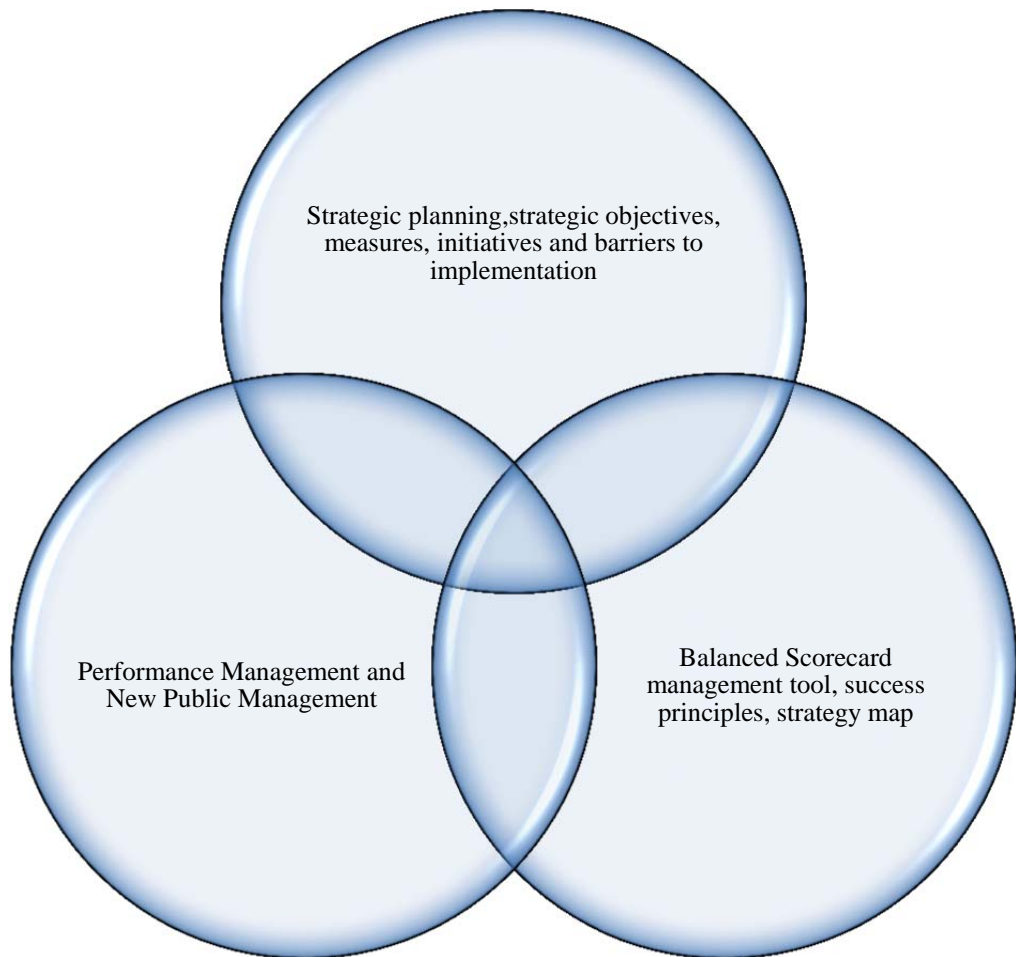
Kaplan and Norton's (2001a, p.13-15) main idea of this principle is that a strategy-focused organization has feedback loops which allow the strategy to be updated and revised continuously. This ensures that strategic objective revision/evaluation becomes integral to the strategic objectives and not something which is done once a year and becomes progressively irrelevant to the environment of the organization. The initial balanced scorecard can be said to represent hypotheses about strategic objectives at the time of formulation, the best estimate that of what can be successful (Kaplan and Norton, 2001a, p.15). As the strategic objectives are put into action, there is feedback on actual results which facilitate revising and adapting accordingly (ibid). The underlying concepts in making strategy a continual process are relevance, communication, involvement and a participatory approach.

### *Mobilize leadership for change*

Without the active involvement of the organization's executive, no strategy will succeed. Kaplan and Norton (2001a, p. 15) hold that processes and tools are not all what is required to implement strategy. Implementing reforms or new strategic objectives always requires change (ibid). This kind of change involves transformation and is different from routine changes which are done in response to routine evaluations. The Cameroonian Minister of higher education is the chief executive at the system level (he takes directives from the presidency) and the Vice-Chancellor or rector is the chief executive for the university level. An example of new and transformative objectives in Cameroon is the implementation of the Bologna Process began in 2007. According to Kaplan and Norton (2001a, p. 16), the executives of successful organizations created a climate for change, a vision of what change could accomplish and governance processes that promote communications, interactions and learning about the strategies.

However, these leaders found that their most important challenge was in communicating the strategic objectives to those who were to implement them. These executives developed visions of what success would look like and then let the employees find innovative ways of accomplishing the objectives. In so doing, it was easier to communicate strategy rather than try to control. The balanced scorecard was used for communication than control. In the case of the Bologna Process in Cameroon, the ministry and presidency provided the necessary information about why the change was necessary. Regulatory instruments were also provided and at the university level there were changes in the syllabus, method of course delivery and credits earning.

However, at the University of Buea, it was realized that there was insufficient effort at gaining consensus about whether the change was needed (BUN 2008, p.6). It was also observed that not all teachers were sufficiently knowledgeable about what the Bologna Process is and how it has to bring change (see BUN 2008, p.6). This implies that communication is a problem in Cameroon higher education. Communication seems to be substantially addressed when it relates to communicating what strategy is, but it is problematic to communicate why the strategic objective should be what it is; explaining how it can be achieved and what its achievement will benefit higher education. Based on the foregoing review of the literature and policy documents, the study uses the following framework (see figure 6). The underlying motive for the use of the BSC principles is the increasing importance of performance management and new public management in higher education. The study however does not focus on all the activities and objectives of higher education. Some objectives are seemingly more urgent than others and can be managed by performance management approaches like the BSC. This approach considers that some generic objectives cannot be managed in this way. However, the task of defining what is urgent or strategic was left to the policy documents and interviews. From these, the strategic objectives of the Cameroon higher education system and their translation into the strategic objectives of the case university (University of Buea) were identified. Some measures of success and initiatives that have been taken towards achieving the objectives were also identified. The challenges or barriers to successful implementation of strategic objectives are also adapted from Niven's (2008, p.9-10) barriers to successful strategies.



**Figure 6.** Analytical framework

## 4 DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSES

The current chapter presents the data from policy documents and the results of the interviews following the analytical framework. It is necessary to restate the research question to enable the reader understand how the results and analyses are presented. The research question is as follows:

**Research Question:** *To what extent do the balanced scorecard and its underlying concepts apply to Cameroon higher education strategic objectives?*

- What are the strategic objectives of higher education in Cameroon?
- What influences/is influenced by the strategic objectives of Cameroon higher education?
- How do the BSC principles apply to the strategic objectives of higher education in Cameroon?
- What are the possible perspectives, objectives and measures in a balanced scorecard for Cameroon higher education?

#### **4.1 Strategic objectives of Cameroon higher education according to respondents**

Higher education in Cameroon has been characterized by a series of reforms which either claim to institute ‘new’ objectives or reiterate already existing ones. Most of these reforms are triggered by the state of higher education, especially the challenges at the time of the particular reform. This section outlines the strategic objectives of higher education as per the policy document reviews and interviews conducted at the Ministry of Higher Education and one state university. According to the 2001 law on the orientation of higher education, the state formulates higher education policy and ensures its implementation. The law further states that all other actors (socio-economic partners, public and private national and international institutions, etc.) take part in policy formulation and implementation according to laid down regulations. One of such regulatory provisions is the university-industry charter signed on 20th December 2010. Based on the interview responses and policy documents, strategic objectives as used here are, *‘the most important focus of the Cameroon higher education that contribute to national needs, mirror national policy and international trends; and contribute to the national vision of becoming an emergent country by 2035’*. To identify the strategic objectives outlined here, this study defines strategic objective as any objective which *‘is deemed strategic by the interviewees or Cameroon policy documents’* and meets at least one of the following criteria *‘clearly states what has to be done, provides some criteria for measuring success, is consistent with the national and education sectors’ main visions, and has a timeframe for its achievement’*. (See section 3.3; SQ4 and UQ4 in Appendix I and II).



It should be noted that at the time of data collection, the main document relating to higher education objectives was the education sector strategy. As to whether higher education has its own strategic plan, the respondents' opinions were divided. Some (e.g. M1) held that in addition to the education strategy, there are strategic themes from other policy documents (like laws and decrees). Respondent M2 revealed that efforts to outline a strategic plan for higher education have been hindered by the status of higher education in the education sector and sometimes by the importance of people over institutions (see section 3.1 and 3.4). M2 mentioned that a ten year plan was written for 2010-2020 but it was not approved because there was an argument that a higher education strategic plan should not precede a general plan for the education sector. This respondent revealed the choice of the leader of the drafting committee for the education strategy was based on a personal relationship and not on expertise. M2 also noted that the importance given to higher education can be seen in the budget allocation ratio till 2015. For every 100 FCFA in the education sector, 50 per cent is for basic education, 35 per cent for secondary education and 15 per cent to be distributed between higher education and professional education. M2 argued that these are some constraints which hinder higher education from pursuing its objectives. All the other respondents held that higher education strategic objectives are included in the education strategy, policy themes and documents related to higher education. Higher education (at the time of the interviews) did not have its own strategic plan. However M1 holds that HE cannot produce a plan without the dominant involvement of the other educational sectors. It was stated that a higher education strategic plan needs to be consistent with the lower education levels because HE receives the products of these levels to continue training.

According to the respondents, the strategic objectives of higher education in Cameroon include:

1. Professionalization of higher education and ensuring the employability of graduates;
2. Enhancement of the relevance of training to labour market needs, national and international trends;
3. Enhancement of the quality of training, infrastructure and human resources;
4. Equitable access;
5. Enhancement of the use of ICTs;
6. Enhancement of research and its contribution to societal needs;
7. Efficient management;
8. Fostering national unity and integration;
9. Interaction with and involvement of the socio-professional environment.
10. Increased funding and reduce dependence on state funding.

These objectives are presented according to the eight (8) respondents at the ministry (M1 to M8) and the twelve (12) respondents at the University of Buea (UB1 to UB12) as follows:

**Table 2.** Strategic objectives according to respondents at the Cameroon Ministry of Higher Education and the University of Buea

Objective	Respondents	
	Ministry	University of Buea
Professionalization of programmes <sup>25</sup> and employability of graduates	M1- M8 (8) <sup>26</sup>	UB2, UB4, UB6,UB9,UB10,UB7 (6)
Enhancing relevance	M1-M8 (8)	UB2, UB4, UB9,UB8 (4)
Enhancing quality	M1,M4,M8,M3, M5,M7 (6)	UB2, UB7,UB8,UB1 (4)
Ensuring equitable access	M1,M7(2)	UB1,UB2,UB8 (3)
Enhancement of the use of ICTs	M1,M3,M5, M4, M7,M8 (6)	UB2 (1)
Enhancement of research and outreach	M1,M3,M5, M4, M7,M8 (6)	UB 5, UB12, UB11,UB6,UB3 (5)
Efficient management	M1,M2, M6,M3,M5,M7 (6)	UB1,UB2 (2)
Fostering national unity and integration	None (0)	UB12, UB5 (2)
Interaction with the socio-professional environment	M1-M8 (8)	UB11, UB5,UB3,UB12 (4)
Increase funding	M1-M8	UB1-UB12

<sup>25</sup> Professionalization as used in the Cameroon higher education context is captured in Doh's definition that: '*professionalization is a strategy to adapt curriculum and its related technologies (teaching and learning) to socio-professional needs and applicability*' (Doh 2012, p 143).

<sup>26</sup> The figures in brackets () represent the number of respondents who mentioned a particular objective. E.g. (8) here means that eight respondents at the ministry identified 'professionalization and employability' as a strategic objective.

According to the respondents at the Ministry of Higher Education, the most important objectives of higher education in Cameroon are increased funding; professionalization and employability; enhancing relevance; and enhancing interactions with the socio-professional environment. All the eight respondents at the ministry mentioned these as the strategic objectives. All the 20 respondents in the study held that increased funding is a strategic objective of higher education. However, these respondents did not mention similar strategies for increased funding. There were varying opinions especially with regards to whether state universities should seek funding from non-state sources for activities other than contract or commissioned research. It was also revealed that some of the strategies receive very intense revolt from the society and students. For instance increasing tuition fees has been strongly resisted because the Cameroonian society sees higher education as a public good which has to be free for all (M1, M2, UB10).

Most of the ministry respondents (six out of eight) also agree that quality enhancement; the use of ICTs, research and outreach enhancement and; management efficiency are strategic. None of the respondents at the Ministry regarded fostering national unity as a strategic objective for Cameroon higher education and only two (2) respondents considered equitable access as a strategic objective.

At the University of Buea, the most popular strategic objectives were 'increased funding' and 'professionalization and employability' where twelve (12) and 6 (six) of the respondents mentioned these objectives respectively. 'Enhancing research and the service mission' of the university was identified by five (5) of the 12 respondents at the

university. Four (4) respondents mentioned ‘interactions with the socio-professional environment’. Three (3) respondents mentioned ‘ensuring equitable access’. ‘Efficient management’ and ‘fostering national unity’ were mentioned by only two (2) respondents respectively. The least popular objective for respondents at the University of Buea was ‘enhancing the use of ICTs’ which was identified by only one (1) respondent.

Despite citing these as objectives the respondents do not all agree on whether these objectives should be the premise of higher education? The objectives were found to be coherent with what was outlined in the policy documents reviewed in section 3.1 of this dissertation. This can be a basis for concluding that the problem of communicating ‘the what’ of strategic objectives within the higher education is almost insignificant. Additional evidence of success in communicating the objectives is the correlation between the responses from the Ministry of Higher Education and those from the institution.

The only objective which was in the policy documents but cited by only few (two) respondents is the aim to ‘foster national unity and integration’. The explanation for this unpopularity is that it is a seemingly broad objective that involves several other national sectors. This may make higher education to minimise its importance. Secondly, the quest for national unity has been inherent in all national policies since independence due to the need to unite the French and English parts of Cameroon. This longevity may have made it seem too obvious to mention. Another explanation for its unpopularity in higher education is the possibility that the respondents may have perceived national unity and integration as an already significantly achieved

objective which is also not directly the premise of higher education. Another reason may be that the respondents are aware of this objective but they do not deem it. However, the policy documents indicate that there are several provisions and initiatives to foster national unity and integration. Some of these initiatives include compulsory courses for the two official languages; regional balance in the choice of university heads and yearly interuniversity games. The respondents at the ministry believe that these objectives are the premise of higher education but they are also aware that most of the academics at the universities do not hold the same opinion. For instance concerning professionalization and employability, M1 holds that there are severe difficulties in convincing the teachers to acknowledge responsibility for preparing the students for employment. Many teachers do not consider this as part of university education. M1 adds that the thinking of university academics is:

“..... like you have a meat mincer and all you care about is mincing the meat without looking at where it is going or what happens to the meat as it gets out of the mincer. It is scandalous, it's a problem. Meanwhile, in the law it is written that higher education has three missions: teaching research and contribution to development. The university has to care for its products. Which company produces goods and doesn't cater for their marketing? But this is the French concept of the university which is totally outdated. In our society the university needs to cater for its graduates. But to do this they have to first anticipate (foresee). There is a need for the professional world to come into the university, it is imperative, and it is a necessity”.

M2 corroborates M1 as follows:

“There is a lot of resistance and academics are very conservative because they believe that they are educated and they are versed with their science, how can they be told to go and reason with others. So it is very difficult to convince them. First when you say professionalization most academics think that it is not the role of the university. When it is said that there is need to consult and even integrate the professional in university education, academics generally limit themselves to internships.”

This conservatism or scepticism by university level academics is evident in the following statements by some respondents:

“There is this fight between what the government thinks and what we as managers of the university think” (UB10).

“The talk about professionalization is a borrowed issue. The university has a traditional function of creating and disseminating knowledge. Its function has never been to be professional. The university is an elitist structure by definition and it does not need to go outside to ask people what to do and how to do it. Another problem with professionalization of universities is that in a country like Cameroon we do not see how that can operationally happen. Do we have the means to transform some traditional disciplines to professionalized ones? Is the market ready for this?”(UB 7).

The views of UB7 are consistent with Doh (2012, p.186) which argues that the professionalization policy is not matched by an appropriately strong demand side. Doh (ibid) agrees with Hartog (2000) that this situation could reinforce the risk of over education in the system.

Reinert (2007, p.320-21) in Doh (2012, p.186) argues that “...nations that address only the supply side of educated people end up educating for migration”.

During the first few interviews, it was noticed that ‘brain drain’ was repeatedly mentioned (especially in response to SQ12 and UQ20)<sup>27</sup> as a challenge of higher education in Cameroon. Brain drain was then raised in some of the interviews when the respondents’ answers hinted on the subject. Some of the respondents argued that there is little to be done about brain drain but Cameroon tries to train as many as possible so that some graduates will remain and benefit the country. Brain drain is also considered by some respondents as indicative of the quality of training offered in Cameroonian higher education. It was stated that the creation of an environment to retain graduates does not depend on higher education.

However, according to respondent M2, the ministries of professional training and higher education have been involved in approaching the student associations in the diaspora. These are mostly in Germany, Switzerland and to some extent France. The graduates are offered the possibilities of returning even if not definitely. They are also asked what they can contribute to Cameroon. There is a platform of exchange with them where the two ministries visit them every year. But there are no active policies like the Chinese have. For instance it was revealed that there are 1500 Cameroonian computer science teachers in Germany.

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<sup>27</sup> This was a provision for respondents to say anything which they deemed relevant for the research topic.



Other respondents see brain drain as a real threat which can be alleviated by developing appropriate infrastructure, improving financial and non-financial incentives and developing a proper human resource plan.

As earlier mentioned, there is also disagreement on the kind of strategies that are used to pursue some of these objectives. The aim of asking the respondents about strategic objectives was to identify the objectives and find out how successfully the higher education strategy has been expressed to those who are supposed to implement it. From the foregoing it can be concluded that there is success in communicating the strategy. Most of the respondents mentioned the same strategic objectives that were found in the policy documents (see section 3.3 in chapter 3). It is equally worth reiterating that the responses from the ministry and those from the institution were in consistent. We can therefore conclude that the Cameroon Ministry of Higher Education and the administration of the University of Buea succeed in expressing the strategic objectives, though not necessarily in operational terms because the respondents were not in agreement on whether these were the right objectives and how they will benefit higher education.

There seems to be success also in mobilizing leadership for change. The leaders of Cameroon higher education have been able to internalize these strategic objectives and mention them at every opportunity (review meetings and reports, press conferences and press releases, public occasions and radio programmes) (see Kaplan and Norton 2001a, p.217). This shows their commitment and belief in the necessity for such changes. They have been able to provide the necessary

instruments and regulations for implementing these objectives. However, from the responses, there is failure to align higher education to the strategic objectives. For instance with the professionalization policy, some respondents held that there are new professional programmes and increase in the professional content of traditional disciplines, but the professionalization agenda seems to have unclear definitions. For instance respondent UB7 holds that there is confusion:

“For example, I asked a philosophy teacher ‘can you professionalise philosophy?’ and his answer was ‘we are trying to teach the students in a way that they can get jobs’. This is just increasing the confusion which has been in mutation since the 1990s when we began revising the curriculum of HE in Cameroon.”(UB7)

## **4.2 Role Clarity - Making Strategic Objectives Everyone’s Everyday Job**

Management by objectives was introduced by Peter Drucker in his classic 1954 book, *The Practice of Management*. Drucker maintained that, in an organization “all employees should have personal performance objectives that aligned strongly to the company strategy.”

Translating this into the Cameroon higher education institution or system implies that each administrative head, from the minister down to the auxiliary staff needs clearly spelt out duties. These duties should outline what the person’s own managerial unit/position (e.g. faculty/dean) is supposed to produce. They should be able to clearly lay out what the unit contributes to the university or the system strategic

objectives. Every head of unit should participate in the development of the higher unit to which he belongs. They should be able to know concretely what is expected of them and why as well as how success will be measured. According to Niven (2008, p.9) “employee empowerment, mutual communication and information sharing are terms whose benefits executives and managers frequently advocate” but rarely execute. Niven further states that, “the fact of the matter is that the vast majority of organizations have a long way to go when it comes to communicating their most important messages– vision and strategy–to their most important constituents: employees.” It was realised that the respondents were either more aware of their job descriptions or completely unable to state how they contribute to the strategic objectives. In order to be able to assess the awareness of the contribution of their position/unit to the achievement of strategic objectives, respondents were asked the following question: *‘What does your job/position contribute to the identification, implementation and evaluation of strategic objectives in Cameroonian higher education?’* The responses are presented in the following tables:

**Table 3.** Roles of respondents at the Ministry of Higher Education

<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Role Description</b>
<b>M1</b>	Identification, implementation and evaluation. Reflect on HE prospects and contribute to strategic objectives. Ensure that strategic objectives are being implemented: formulation, implementation and evaluation.
<b>M2</b>	Identification, implementation and evaluation, especially objectives related to academic activities: formulation, implementation and evaluation.
<b>M3</b>	In this service, we are the brain of the ministry, prospecting for higher education policy: formulation, implementation.
<b>M4</b>	Develop ICTs in all aspects of higher education- infrastructural, innovation technologies, online and distance learning: formulation, implementation.
<b>M5</b>	Think about and contribute to the type of strategic objectives that are necessary at the time: formulation, implementation and evaluation.
<b>M6</b>	Identification and implementation of objectives related to academic activities.
<b>M7</b>	Identification, implementation and evaluation. Contribute ideas on strategic directions of HE: formulation, implementation and evaluation.
<b>M8</b>	Communicating the activities of higher education to the public and all relevant stakeholders: formulation, implementation.

Table 3 presents how the respondents at the ministry think that their jobs contribute to the overall strategic objectives of higher education in Cameroon. Three (3) of the eight (8) respondents can be classified as involved in formulating, implementing and evaluating objectives. All eight are involved in implementation and evaluation of strategic

objectives. But it is noticed that the respondents hardly tied their contribution to any specific strategic objective.

In terms of policy provision to clarify job descriptions, the University of Buea has published a document (Terms of Reference for university officials and staff) and the ministry also provides job descriptions. However, the balanced scorecard does not limit communication to job description; it requires that employees can directly link the role of their job to the strategic objectives of the organization. In this case the respondents should be able to state the role of their job in meeting one or more of the strategic objectives. After taking a look at the official job descriptions of the respondents (ministry) contained in Decree N° 2012/433, it was realized that the respondents are more familiar with what is required by the job than with the actual contributions of the job to the achievement of strategic objectives.

**Table 4.** Roles of respondents at the University of Buea

<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Role Description</b>
<b>UB1</b>	I can say that my job is to ensure that strategic objectives for efficient management and quality are achieved: formulation, implementation and evaluation.
<b>UB2</b>	Contributes to the infrastructural targets of the university to ensure that our students and staff have quality equipment and space to teach and learn in: formulation, implementation and evaluation.
<b>UB3</b>	Responsibility for administrative and financial management-management efficiency: implementation and evaluation.
<b>UB4</b>	Planning and overseeing the work of administrative staff: implementation and evaluation.
<b>UB5</b>	Running of academic and administrative affairs of the university: formulation, implementation and evaluation.
<b>UB6</b>	Involved in student admissions, fees, examinations and in keeping records: formulation, implementation and evaluation.
<b>UB7</b>	Overseeing research activities: implementation and evaluation.
<b>UB8</b>	Administration of department and overseeing the execution of teaching and learning: implementation and evaluation.
<b>UB9</b>	Coordinating and managing all student-related activities: implementation and evaluation.
<b>UB10</b>	Running department by overseeing teaching and learning: formulation, implementation and evaluation.
<b>UB11</b>	Financial and administrative management; implementation and evaluation.
<b>UB12</b>	In charge of both academic and administrative affairs: formulation, implementation and evaluation.

A similar trend was noticed at the University of Buea (see Table 4) where the responses were much related to job descriptions than to

which and how strategic objectives were contributed to. Five (5) of the responses could classify their respondents as involved in formulation, implementation and evaluation of success in strategic objectives. It should be noted that these five respondents were all from the central administration and their positions include more administrative duties than teaching or research duties.

All the other seven (7) respondents from the faculty level administration (3) and department level (4) could be seen to be involved in implementing and evaluating strategic objectives at their levels. It should be noted that all respondents at the ministry were considered in their administrative capacities. This does not mean that the perspective of the respondent as the teacher (basic unit) is omitted. Three (3) of the respondents at the ministry also teach courses and supervise students in state universities. Of the 12 respondents at the University of Buea, only one of the respondents is not involved in teaching or research and performs solely administrative duties.

It can be concluded that there is limited knowledge on how individual jobs contribute to achieving strategic objectives. Most of the respondents could not directly link their jobs to strategic objectives. There is therefore limited effort to make strategy everyone's everyday job in Cameroon higher education. There seems to be excessive focus on administrative descriptions than on what each job description brings to the higher education objectives. This may be on the assumption that the each individual should be able to decipher the contribution of their job to the strategic objectives. The interviews prove that this is not the case for many of the respondents. The need for the BSC corresponds to Niven's assessment (point 9) that 'our employees do not know how

their daily activities contribute to the organization's success' (Niven 2008, p.67-68).

### **4.3 Relevance to Changing Environment- Making Strategy Continual**

This study uses relevance as defined by the 1998 UNESCO world declaration on higher education (WDHE) and as applied in the Cameroon higher education context. In its Article 6a, the UNESCO declaration defines relevance as *the fit between what society expects of institutions and what they do*. The declaration further states that “this requires ethical standards, political impartiality, critical capacities and, at the same time, a better articulation with the problems of society and the world of work, basing long-term orientations on societal aims and needs, including respect for cultures and environmental protection.” The concern (according to the UNESCO WDHE) is to provide access to both broad general education and targeted, career-specific education, often interdisciplinary, focusing on skills and aptitudes, both of which equip individuals to live in a variety of changing settings, and to be able to change occupations. Speaking on the need for professionalization, a Cameroon higher education policy maker holds that: “the university has become a community faced with the demands of the society of which it is the expression and architect, the university is bound to adjust and carry out reforms at the risk of drowning in illusions” (Sup Infos, 2010b, p.7).

Such statements correspond with the literature on higher education which highlights the changing environment and the need for the



university to look beyond its walls and be relevant to its environment (Gibbons, 1998). Respondents M4 and M8 also hold that the formulation and implementation of strategic objectives is a permanent process because the system has to continuously adapt and be in line with today's needs. M4 states that: *'Our higher education system is very dynamic. A closed system stands the risk of explosion if it does not consider the needs of its society'*. The following tables present the responses of the respondents in relation to how often the strategic objectives are revised and adapted to changes in the higher education environment.

**Table 5.** Revision and adaptation of strategic objectives (Ministry)

<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Response (Summary)</b>
<b>M1</b>	Involvement of the socio-professional milieu in programme design, implementation and evaluation. In terms of student and graduate feedback, we should learn from Anglo-Saxon universities. It is inexistent here because it is not in French culture. We need active alumni associations from where we can get employment feedback. Regularity of revisions depends on need.
<b>M2</b>	Reforms are always the fruit of reflections with Cameroonian and development partners with whom we constantly concert. Revision of the ESSP <sup>28</sup> began in 2010 to be adapted to 2012-2015.
<b>M3</b>	Objectives are linked to the national goal of emergence and regional integration requirements like the BMP <sup>29</sup> . How often we revise policies is difficult to answer but revisions are done if needed.
<b>M4</b>	Permanent process of revision and adaptation. Today we are working on a new education sector strategy because the system has to

<sup>28</sup> Education Sector Strategic Plan

<sup>29</sup> Bachelor, Masters, PhD of the Bologna Process.

	continuously adapt and be in line with today's trends. Our higher education system is very dynamic. A closed system stands the risk of explosion if it does not consider the needs of its society.
<b>M5</b>	Student-led education to enable students to be able to create jobs. Memorandum of understanding with the ministry of small and medium sized enterprises allocating 150 million for a yearly competition-UNAC <sup>30</sup> which identifies and sponsors enterprises created by students.
<b>M6</b>	Reforms consider the country's national and international socio-economic environment. Most reforms are direct responses to changes in this environment. No exact frequency of revisions because the expectations change.
<b>M7</b>	Involving the socio-professional actors in programme design, implementation and evaluation. Continuous revision.
<b>M8</b>	Our actions are determined by national and international trends. In 2010, the ministry signed a ministry-private sector charter so that when we organize seminars we involve companies and the civil society. This is to be able to include their opinions in what we do. We systematically involve and inform them about our actions because they are the ones who evaluate us. These trends are always changing and we try to update accordingly.

From Table 5, it can be concluded that there is awareness that the university is operating in very dynamic environment and needs to constantly adapt its strategic objectives to the environment. However these changes are not outlined in specific annual plans of action. They are initiated through new or updated policy papers and regulations. The respondents at the Cameroon Ministry of Higher Education hold that these revisions or changes are constant. In terms of how this revision or adapting is done by involving stakeholders from the socio-professional

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<sup>30</sup> Universitaire Académique.

environment in the university's activities. Adaptation is also done by promoting student-led education to enable students to create jobs and by considering the national and international socio-economic environment. The ministry and university also enter into partnership agreements with non-university actors for feedback and funding. There were no precise intervals at which the reforms or revision of strategic objectives were done.

From the foregoing it is revealed that revision at the university level is done quarterly, annually and when the need arises. These reforms are done in consideration of relevant stakeholders. Feedback loops exist in terms of the reporting that is done through different media but there seems to be insufficient opportunities for the inflow of feedback. Higher education at the system level is doing sufficient reporting to its stakeholders but the opportunities to hear from these stakeholders are limited to open days, strategic planning meetings, open forums and seminars. In the case of student feedback, provisions are made but there are rarely implemented. It was also discovered that reporting within the higher education system is addressed but at the international level there is insufficient or negative reporting. Some respondents also held that at the institutional level, reporting to the immediate local environment is minimal. Despite the numerous modes of reporting to stakeholders, the respondents could not tell whether these reports actually reached the relevant stakeholders. Only one respondent mentioned that concerns are raised when the Buea University Newsletter is not published. This is important in assessing the need for a balanced scorecard in Cameroon higher education. Niven (2008, p. 67-68: see Appendix VII, N<sup>o</sup> 2).

**Table 6.** Revision and adaptation of strategic objectives at the University of Buea

<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Response (Summary)</b>
<b>UB1</b>	Of course we are regularly revisiting our objectives. Quality, efficiency and effectiveness are universal parameters. Whoever wants to address labour market needs must pay attention and act accordingly. Quite regular revision.
<b>UB2</b>	Our objectives are reviewed annually when we collect information to produce the annual reports. Our objectives are very relevant to national needs and international trends because they emanate from these.
<b>UB3</b>	Yearly reports.
<b>UB4</b>	Yearly and also as the need arises.
<b>UB5</b>	Every three (3) months the heads of faculties/schools are required to send a report of what they have been doing. These are reviewed by the Vice-Chancellor and the deputy vice-chancellor in charge of internal control to revise and update objectives.
<b>UB6</b>	No answer.
<b>UB7</b>	We operate in relation to the national needs because it is Cameroon's money being spent. No answer on frequency of revision of objectives.
<b>UB8</b>	Quarterly reports enable us to revise our strategic objectives to suit the conditions at the time.
<b>UB9</b>	No answer.
<b>UB10</b>	The university makes every effort to meet national needs and the ministry helps with that. They recently sent a team (PAPESAC <sup>31</sup> ) to come and talk to us about syllabus design and the competence approach. Cameroon is the only country in the CEMAC region which is taking modernization of training serious. Most of the research activity in the region is done in Cameroon. The local community benefits from the research done by our postgraduate students in the

<sup>31</sup> Higher Education for Professions in Central Africa Expert Support Team.

	Fako area. E.g. types of portable water, mosquito species, and prevalent diseases. We are always in tune with changes.
<b>UB11</b>	Yearly
<b>UB12</b>	We have a series of planning meetings at the beginning of each financial year. We discuss how to sustain our achievements, revise objectives which need to be revised; decide how to reallocate budgets from discontinued activities and how to downsize over-sized initiatives.

According to most respondents at the University of Buea (see Table 6), the strategic objectives are revised yearly or quarterly. The writing of annual reports makes provision for revising and replacing objectives which have become irrelevant to be revised or replaced. Some respondents hold that the university's constant effort to meet national policy expectations addresses relevance. It was also revealed that the strategic objectives emanate from national needs and international trends, hence relevance is maintained. Two respondents (UB7, UB9) were unable to identify how and when strategic objectives are revised to maintain relevance.

Due to of the importance given to the professionalization of higher education, It seemed important to find out if there was any provision for feedback from the graduates and the labour market (see SQ11 in appendix I and UQ16 in appendix II). Considering that the goal is to produce employable graduates, it would be logical that graduate employment would be one proxy of the success/failure of this strategic objective. It was revealed by both the ministry and the university respondents (see table 7) that very little was being done to know how the graduates are faring. Statistics on graduate employment were limited or absent.

**Table 7.** Provision for graduate follow-up according to the Ministry respondents

<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Provision for Graduate follow-up</b>
<b>M1</b>	No provision.
<b>M2</b>	Our only 'database' is the national employment fund which only provides data about unemployment. We are encouraging state universities to create services for alumni follow-up. Some universities have expressed the need for the creation of an office for follow-up because it cannot be left in the hands of academics who are already overloaded. This was a strong recommendation from our audit of the higher education system; nothing has been done about it. This is a major difficulty of the system but we know that such data is important for relevance and quality assurance but for now it does not exist.
<b>M3</b>	Our duty is training and follow-up is difficult for us. It is not our task.
<b>M4</b>	We have started something and the results will be available soon. We are using student associations in non-university higher education (e.g. polytechnics). We are lacking when it concerns university graduates.
<b>M5</b>	Follow-up is important for evaluation but I will not lie, we cannot tell what becomes of our students after graduation.
<b>M6</b>	We recognise the importance of knowing how our graduates fare after studying but we have no provision for that. It has been difficult to organize such because most academics think that it is out of the realm of higher education.
<b>M7</b>	No provision.
<b>M8</b>	We are tracking polytechnic graduates through alumni associations.

**Table 8.** Provision for graduate follow-up according to University of Buea respondents

<b>UB1</b>	When our graduates compete for jobs they usually come out top, which means that we probably give the best. To the best of my knowledge there is no official research or effort to get information on the situation of our graduates.
<b>UB2</b>	It is unfortunate that we are not catering for our alumni properly. I hope we can improve. There is an alumni which is doing well but there is no coordinated effort for them. Even when some of these graduates reach out to provide some support, they are greeted with unnecessary rules and regulations. For instance an alumnus offered to teach computer science for no salary but the response was 'let us see whether the texts provide for these'. The graduate got disappointed and abandoned the initiative, yet we badly need education on ICTs.
<b>UB3</b>	No answer.
<b>UB4</b>	There is no direct link or provision but there are indirect communications with graduates who contact the university through e-mails.
<b>UB5</b>	A tracer study was done in 2004-2005 by one of the deputy vice-chancellors. There haven't been any other tracer studies since then. We will commission one before the end of this strategic plan. Our first BMP batch graduated in 2010, we need to give them time-maybe 3years so we can have a good sample to study employability, employer sophistication, etc.
<b>UB6</b>	We have a public relations office which is currently building a database of the university's alumni, where there are and what they are doing. We are contacting them through e-mails and phone calls.
<b>UB7</b>	We have an alumni office. I know that a study was done some time ago by a group of researchers but am not sure we can track graduates. However, we know that the placement rate of our graduates is good in both quantity and quality.
<b>UB8</b>	I don't know. I was working on something about having a unit for

	graduate follow-up but it is a big project which cannot be followed through by an individual.
<b>UB9</b>	No answer
<b>UB10</b>	Systematically there is no provision. At my level, I ask every graduate who comes to my office-‘ <i>where are you now? How did you get there?</i> ’ We have some information on how our graduates are faring comparatively and the results are good nationally and internationally. To the best of my knowledge, the public relations and alumni office does not have a database or some project which finds out what becomes of our graduates.
<b>UB11</b>	I cannot say anything about that.
<b>UB12</b>	I think a tracer study was done some years ago. But I don’t know very much about it.

From the tables 7 and 8, it is seen that provisions for follow-up of graduates is limited and there is no systematic effort to obtain information on where the university graduates end. Where some efforts have been made there is little knowledge about them. For instance, at the ministry only M2 mentioned that from 1985 till date, studies about restructuring the higher education system have revealed the problem of relevance. There is a need for the higher education system to have provisions for graduate follow-up. M2 asserted that such interactions are currently limited to alumni associations and very few avenues for interaction with the socio-professional environment.

However, it can be concluded there is limited but uncoordinated effort to follow-up graduate employment. There is awareness of the importance of such information to able to ensure quality and relevance of higher education strategic objectives as well as the need for a coordinated and systematic follow-up of higher education graduates.



## **4.4 Implementation Strategies and Outcome Measures (indicators or criteria)**

This section summarises the main implementation strategies for the objectives identified in section 4.1. It should be noted that the outcome measures are interpretations of the information from interviews and policy documents. During the interviews it was revealed that the indicators/criteria were in the process of writing or it was mentioned that there are some outcome measures. Except for the University of Buea Strategic Plan 2007-2015 and the annual reports (2006-2010), the researcher could not able to obtain any document which specifically outlined measures of performance.

In order to facilitate the presentation of the data, the strategic objectives are grouped into the four perspectives in the proposed BSC resulting from this study (See section 5.2 for a detailed discussion on these perspectives).

### ***4.4.1 Stakeholder Perspective***

The objectives included in the stakeholder perspective are those that address the following questions: *who are higher education stakeholders and how do they view higher education? How are they involved in higher education activities? Is higher education meeting their expectations?* The data revealed that objectives in this perspective include:

1. **Enhanced Relevance** responds to the society's demand for university graduates to be useful. It also responds to the government's expectation for higher education to work with and meet the needs of all its stakeholders. Relevance is being addressed by forums and frameworks for consultation and feedback from stakeholders, increased interactions with the labour market and reporting to stakeholders. There are also efforts at locating study programmes based on the needs or potentials the geographical regions. The consultations with stakeholders include the involvement of the socio-professional environment in the design and delivery of courses/programmes.

Enhancement of relevance is measured by the number of university-industry and other partnerships per academic year; the extent of involvement of socio-professional actors in curriculum design, teaching and student assessment; number of new programmes per year; estimated number of employed graduates and those in postgraduate studies; brain drain and; the number and regularity of reporting activities or media. For instance the University of Buea has a target of creating at least 30 partnerships per academic year and in 2010 the ministry signed the University-Industry charter. State universities are provided opportunities like the CAMPUS 2007 held in July 2007 to showcase their products to the public and the University of Buea organizes research planning days to disseminate research results to the public. To address relevance to regional needs, an institute of fisheries sciences was created in the port city of Douala. A medical school was started in 2006 at the University of Buea in response to the gross deficiency in paramedical staff. An example of response to national and international relevance is the adoption of the Bologna Process and

University of Buea's 2008/2009 syllabus review in line with the Bologna Process and the new university governance policy.

2. **Professionalization and Employability** is definitely addressing the stakeholders of higher education because it is a relatively 'new' task to higher education. It may have been addressed in the 'service or outreach' mission of the university but the focus and importance was not always as at present. Professionalization and employability is sought by: increasing the professional content of traditional programmes and creation of new professional programmes; increasing technological study options and encouraging enrolment into these (enrolment was less than five percent before 2000); involving potential employers in programme design and delivery and; development of student entrepreneurship, job search and job creation skills; the accreditation requirement that all new programmes are designed with input from the socio-professional environment. Success in professionalization is assessed by the number of professional and new programmes; percentage of student enrolment into technological and professional programmes and; the number of graduate initiatives for self-employment and job creation. Examples of achieving this objective include: an increase in the number of programmes at the University of Buea from 57 in 2007/2008 to 98 in 2009/2010; organization of business employment forums at the University of Buea beginning from 2008.
  
3. **National Unity and Integration** is addressed by providing opportunities for interactions between staff and students from the two language regions in order to promote bilingualism; the appointment of university heads considers representation of

language regions; recognition of language when creating new institutions; bilingual admission and study practices/requirements. Some measures for this objective include the proportion of Francophone and Anglophone university heads; social or academic occasions that promote bilingualism and; the number of bilingual universities. Some examples of actions in this objective include the yearly university games hosted by different universities as an opportunity for interaction between participating athletes and other university staff; mandatory official language courses for undergraduates (e.g. Functional French and English courses at the University of Buea).

#### **4.4.2 Financial Perspective**

The strategic objectives in the financial perspective are those that address the following questions: *How well does higher education relate its objectives to costs and resources? Who are the sponsors of higher education? How does higher education increase and diversify its funding?* Cameroon higher education objectives addressing the financial perspective include:

**Increase and diversify funding** is addressed by provisions for universities to generate income from non-state sources. In addition, the percentage of the income from research is estimated to increase from 1 per cent to 15 per cent by 2015. The university of Buea saw a 7.8 per cent increase in income from external research grants between 2007 and 2010. The increase and diversity of funding for higher education is measured by the percentage of state funding as

compared to other funding sources and; the amount of non-state funding, especially from research funding.

#### ***4.4.3 Processes and Structures Perspective***

**1. Efficient management** is addressed by the establishment of regulatory frameworks and instances like the new university governance policy at the system level and the research policy and management guide at the University of Buea (UB). In addition, all university central administration offices have units for cooperation and relationships with the business world. These are headed by a deputy vice chancellor or vice rector. Other strategies for efficient management include enhancement of staff (both teaching and auxiliary) academic competence and quantity as well as their management skills. The progress of efficient management is measured by the number staff promotions per academic year; the student teacher ratio; percentage of staff holding or enrolled in a PhD (the target is at least 80 per cent for the University of Buea). The UB was authorized to recruit 130 teachers in 2006/2007; there was a 30.5 per cent increase in the number of teachers at the UB between 2007-2010 and the student-teacher ratio improved from 45:1 in 2007/2008 to 41.5:1 in 2009/2010; the percentage of teaching staff enrolled in a PhD increased from 53 per cent in 2008/2009 to 95 per cent in 2009/2010. In other to enhance management competence at the UB, workshops and seminars have been organized on entrepreneurship, community service, financial management and budget execution.

- 2. Equitable access** addresses the response to the national policy of ensuring access to university education for everyone. Equitable access also responds to the expectation of higher education to foster national unity and integration because equality facilitates unity. At the system level, this objective has been implemented by the creation of distance learning study options and creating one university and one university institute of technology per geographical region. However, the University of Buea's annual report (2009/2010, p.5) stated that only 1 per cent of programmes were offered via distance mode. This makes the target of 10 per cent by 2015 to seem out of reach. The success towards equitable access is measured by the number and percentage of programmes/courses offered via distance learning. Examples of these include two virtual universities offering masters' level degrees as well as distance learning programmes (primary, nursery and nursing education) at the University of Buea.
  
- 3. Interaction with the Socio-professional environment** is addressed by institutionalizing interactions (e.g. a unit for research, cooperation and relations with the business world is found in all state universities) and increasing higher education-industry and other partnerships. Some actions include the organization of business forums at the University of Buea beginning from 2008; the signing of the university-industry charter in 2010 to institutionalize partnerships between higher education entities and business entities; cooperation partnerships with international organizations for human and material support.

To assess the success in interactions with the socio-professional environment, attention is paid to the number of university-industry and other partnerships per year; the percentage of funding from these partnerships and; the number of opportunities for interactions in a year. Some examples of such interactions include 26 university-private sector agreements, 23 new linkages and 15 partnership agreements with international universities at the University of Buea in 2008/2009.

- 4. Enhancement of research and its contribution to societal needs** is addressed by new research funding schemes and study programmes related to the needs of the locality of the university. There are also provisions for developing research-related skills like the use of ICTs and methodology training. Some initiatives to enhance research include the statutory research allowances for university academics; the mobility grant scheme for research trips and; the faculty and university grant schemes at the University of Buea. Contribution to societal needs is exemplified by the student and staff research activities which contribute to the needs of the university's locality (e.g. research on portable water sources and types of parasites; research on volcanoes to be able to predict future eruptions of the mount Fako in Buea and; other forms of contract research conducted for locally situated corporations and companies). Research enhancement and its relevance are measured by the number of postgraduate programmes; enrolment and completion rate in postgraduate studies; the number of new research funding schemes; percentage of the recurrent budget allocated to research; number of nationally-oriented research projects; number of research projects commissioned by locality agencies;

percentage of income from research and; number of research publications and resulting promotions of staff to higher academic ranks.

#### ***4.4.4 Innovation and Learning Perspective***

Strategic objectives in the innovation and learning perspective address the following question: *Is higher education continuously revising its objectives and strategies to fit changing expectations and resources?*

The objectives in the learning and innovation perspective include: the enhancement of the use of ICTs, quality enhancement, enhancement of research and its contributions, efficient management, professionalization and employability and; enhanced relevance. It can be noticed that only the first two objectives have not been discussed in the already presented perspectives. This is an unavoidable occurrence because the perspectives and the objectives themselves cannot be mutually exclusive. To avoid repetition only the data on the enhancement of the use of ICTs and quality enhancement are presented in the innovation and learning perspective.

- **Enhancement of the use of ICTs** is addressed by increasing the support and capacity for ICT. For instance, the Institute for Digital University Governance provides technical and pedagogical ICT support to all the state universities. This increased support is evidenced by the expansion of internet access in university campuses and lowering the cost of internet access in university cybercafés; creation and regular updating of ministry and university websites; use of ICTs in teaching,



assessment and administration. The success in the use of ICTs is measured by the number of teachers and students who are able to use ICTs; number of functioning websites and regularity of updates; the extent and cost of internet access on university campuses; the amount of information on higher education websites; amount and access to electronic study material and; the number of distance learning options.

- **Quality enhancement** in higher education is an all-encompassing objective but the interviews and policy documents reveal that it is equally an objective that receives considerable attention on its own. Quality enhancement in Cameroon is addressed by provisions for evaluation, control and auditing. It was also revealed that quality is addressed by increasing and updating human, technical and material infrastructure. Some provisions include the presence of a control/internal evaluation instance in all the state universities, building of classroom and office spaces At the University of Buea, the control unit monitors financial management, reception of goods and services, the state of teaching infrastructure, personnel census, and exam invigilation conduct The quality enhancement objective is measured by the number and extent of control/evaluation provisions; the estimated<sup>32</sup> number of graduates in postgraduate studies within and out of Cameroon; estimated number of employed graduates; brain drain; student-teacher ratios; and the number of lecturers per office (the University of Buea has a target of at least two lecturers per

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<sup>32</sup> Estimated is used here because there is no information on how graduates are faring but interviewees and policy refer to these as proxies for quality.

office but as at 2009/2010 the average was 4 to 5 per office) and; the amount of student accommodation available on university campuses.

Like the strategic objectives themselves, it can be observed that the implementation strategies are not mutually exclusive but overlapping. For instance, strategies for enhancing relevance could equally enhance quality and vice-versa. It is also worth noting that the outcome measures provided may not necessarily be those intended by the Cameroon higher education policy makers but it was necessary to extract these from the data which was available to be able to show how the objectives could be used in the proposed scorecard framework. It should be noted that the strategies and examples include information from the interviews as well as policy documents. The responses from the ministry and the university are not presented separately because the ministry is (usually) where the objectives are defined, but the implementation for the most part is the premise of the university. The responses from the ministry respondents included some strategies but most of the examples relate to university activities because that is where the objectives can actually be seen in action.

In addition to the general difficulty in defining indicators or outcome measures, higher education strategic objectives are much more difficult to measure because most of them have intangible results. However, proxies for higher education activities can be used to indicate the success attained in certain objectives. For instance, the increase in number of professional programmes and professional content do not tell if the graduates have become employable but it shows that something is being done for the professionalization of training. This is not a peculiarity for Cameroon higher education because generally,

measuring results in higher education does not always give a complete picture.

The argument is that some measurement is better than no measurement. The types of measures in Cameroon seem to focus on processes towards the objective and not on the final objective itself. The use of the balanced scorecard success concepts facilitates the identification of measures by enhancing communication, relevance and clarity. For instance if all stakeholders are considered from the formulation through implementation to evaluation of success, it is easier to choose the right outcome measures. For professionalization and employability the socio-professional environment and its actors can say what they see as professional and employable graduates. The problem is that at the formulation phase, these outcome measures are hypotheses which can only be tested when the strategic objective has been pursued for some time. This time differs from objective to objective.

#### **4.5 Interactions with Stakeholders and the Environment of Cameroon Higher Education**

The stakeholders of higher education include government, alumni, students, parents, faculty, staff, users, donors, and community (Umashankar and Dutta, 2007; Grayson, 2004; Stewart and Hubin, 2001; Ruben, 1999). According to Sallis (1993, p.22), “the diversity of ‘customers’ makes it all the more important for educational institutions to focus on customer wants and to develop mechanisms for responding to them.” Sallis (ibid) holds that it can be helpful to make distinctions between:

- “primary customers—who directly receive the service;
- secondary customers—such as parents, governors, sponsoring employers of vocational students. All of these have a direct stake in the education of a particular individual or in a particular institution;
- tertiary customers—who have a less direct but nonetheless crucial stake holding in education, such as future employers, government and society as a whole;
- internal customers—who are the employees of the institution and have a critical stake holding in the organization’s success.”

Amaral and Magalhaes (2002, p.2) and Musial (2010, p. 46) distinguish between internal and external stakeholders, the former being the academic community and the latter coming from outside the university. External stakeholders are individual and groups with interests in higher education but no immediate links to them (Musial 2010, p.46) These external stakeholders include partners and sponsors in research projects, the government and employers.

The main expectations of these stakeholders in Cameroon can be summarized as producing graduates who contribute to the society. However, the focus of each stakeholder is different. Notwithstanding, evaluations and assessments of success in achieving higher education objectives increasingly focus on the ability respond to the expectations of these multiple stakeholders (Stewart and Hubin, 2001). Higher education policy makers in Cameroon are increasingly seeking for ways to improve the interactions with all stakeholders to be able to stay in tune with their demands, implement corresponding changes and receive feedback on how well there are fulfilling the needs of the

stakeholders. This is evident in new policies, revision of old policies and discontinuation of outdated policies.

In Cameroon there are two main sectors of higher education- the private and public HE sectors. According to some interviewees for this study, the type of stakeholders and their involvement depends on which sector is the focus (UB1 and M3).

Another influence of how stakeholders can be viewed is in how the policies are determined. According to respondents M2 and M6 study, the mode of steering is authoritarian with most policies defined in a top-down way. These respondents hold that policy is not determined by a participatory approach where students, parents, civil society and all stakeholders are involved on an equal plane because the state provides the greatest share of funding. Some evidence of the dominance of the state in policy determination is in the how there have been referred to in policy documents and some of the interviewees. For instance the Bologna Process is described as 'higher education reforms promulgated by the Head of State,...It shows the new orientation'(BUN, 2007 p.4).

The interviews revealed that the involvement of these stakeholders in itself is a source of problems which are integrated into the reform and modernisation of higher education (HE). The first of such is the unclear status of higher education. Is it a public or commercial good? This question ignites a philosophical debate that determines the mode of funding and organization of HE. Some respondents assert that in most parts of the west, it is well established that HE is commercial product. They hold that if it is commercial product, then there is a need for rules

and regulations that ensure transparency of the market; equivalence system and possibility for mobility.

It was stated that Cameroon could not escape the BMP<sup>33</sup> because its higher education involves external partners and Cameroonian students move to other countries too. Some respondents state that the need for the BMP practically imposed itself on Cameroonian university institutions. Within the framework of partnerships with the Economic and Monetary Community of Central African States (CEMAC) and the European Union, it was decided that a uniform higher education system in the like of the Bologna Process be adopted. In 2006 many heads of state signed the declaration on the constitution and establishment of an integrated higher education area in Central Africa, with the main driver being the introduction of the BMP system. According to one policy maker, these clearly advance the perception of higher education as a commercial product.

Notwithstanding, the Cameroonian law on the orientation of higher education considers higher education as a public good funded by the state. It is a situation where there is both competition and state subventions, subventions which have caused the universities to be lax. One policy level respondent stated that the attitude of universities is like saying “we wait for the state and use the funds to deliver what we can”. This respondent holds that for HE to self-finance, the rules of the game need to be changed. It is however recognized that this change is a problem in Cameroon. The society is not ready to accept that HE is paid for. People pay huge sums (up to One million FCFA) for private

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<sup>33</sup> Bachelor, Master, PhD or the Bologna Process

higher education, primary or secondary education, but they don't want to pay the token tuition fee of 50,000 FCFA. The state cannot sufficiently fund HE.

Stakeholders as used in this study refer to '*all actors/groups that influence and/or are influenced by the strategic objectives of higher education*'. The respondents identified the following stakeholders for Cameroonian higher education.

- The State (government);
- National needs and policies (e.g. integration, bilingualism, and employment);
- Private employers and industries (socio-professional environment);
- International and regional organizations or donors;
- International higher trends (e.g. globalization, knowledge economy, mobility, competition, etc.);
- University Academics;
- Civil Society;
- University students;
- Local environment of a university.

**Table 9.** Stakeholders of Cameroon Higher Education according to respondents at the Ministry and University of Buea

Stakeholder	Respondents		Total (of 20)
	Ministry (Number)	University (Number)	
<b>The State</b>	M1,M2,M3, M5,M7 (5)	UB2,UB5, UB6,UB7,UB10, UB12 (6)	11
<b>National needs/policies</b>	M1-M8 (8)	UB1,UB2,UB5,UB10,UB12 (5)	13
<b>Private employers and industries</b>	M1, M2,M3,M4,M5, M7,M8 (7)	UB2,UB3,UB5,UB7,UB10,UB11, UB12 (7)	14
<b>International and regional organizations donors and research agencies</b>	M1,M4,M7,M8 (4)	UB5,UB12,UB8 (3)	7
<b>International trends</b>	M1,M2,M4,M7, M8 (5)	UB2,UB5,UB8,UB12 (4)	9
<b>University academics</b>	M1,M3,M5,M7 (4)	UB1,UB2,UB6,UB8 (4)	8
<b>University students</b>	M2,M4,M8 (3)	UB2,UB6,UB9 (3)	6
<b>Civil society</b>	M1,M2,M4,M8 (4)	UB6,UB10 (2)	6
<b>Local environment of the university</b>	M1,M8 (2)	UB5,UB7,UB10,UB12 (4)	6

From Table 9, it is noticed that 14 of the 20 respondents see private employers and industries as stakeholders of higher education. Like for some of the other stakeholders, the respondents do not agree entirely that private employers or industries should influence the strategic objectives that higher education pursues. Thirteen (13) respondents



hold that national needs and policies play a role in strategic objectives. All the ministry respondents agreed. Eleven (11) of the 20 respondents hold that the state influences and is influenced by the strategic objectives of higher education. Most of the respondents did not only see the state as the main stakeholder but also as the most important because the state determines objectives and is the major sponsor of higher education. However, their opinion as to whether the state should have that high level of involvement was not entirely positive, especially for respondents at the university. These respondents felt that the government should not tell the university what it should do because academics are professionals who should be left to run the university in the way they deem best. For instance respondent UB7 states that,

“The main stakeholder is the government. If the government is already there to represent us, why do we want to launch something called stakeholders? If government does not want to fund universities, it should not create them. The university is an elitist structure by definition and it does not need to go outside to ask people what to do and how to do it.”

Some respondents (UB7, UB10, and UB1) expressed scepticism concerning the government’s involvement and the type of objectives determined. The respondents however recognized that the state is indispensable because it bears most of the costs. Nine (9) respondents held that international trends influence the strategic objectives. Eight (8) of the respondents stated that university academics influence and are influenced by the strategic objectives of higher education. ‘University students’, ‘civil society’ and ‘immediate local environment’ were stated as stakeholders by only 6 of the 20 respondents.

Sallis 1993 (p.23) opines that it is often difficult to ensure that the primary customers' views are paramount and there are strong forces pulling against it. This seems to be the case in Cameroon higher education. The respondents (M1, M2, M3, M8, M6, UB1, UB2, UB6, and UB8) held that students as stakeholders are influenced by higher education strategic objectives but in terms of how much their views influence these objectives, most respondents held that students are considered immature and it is assumed that their choices should be made for them. Respondents held that even where the students are given a chance to influence objectives, they are more concerned with trivial issues which do not directly affect their studies or life after graduation. One respondent (UB7) unequivocally stated that students are not the prime reason for university's existence.

Other respondents stated that there is lot of consideration in interactions with students but as stakeholders students have little influence. They hold that the Cameroonian student is immature and does not consider himself as a citizen in whole. He considers himself a cadet and society has for long considered the student as such and he has been led to internalize this mentality. It was revealed that students are not yet at point where they can be actively involved. Most respondents agreed that it is ideal to involve students in the formulation and implementation of strategic objectives but the quantity and quality of knowledge that students bring to the university is limited. As such burdening them with co-running the university is seen as a distracting them from their real objective (to study) of being in the university. In this mind set, some respondents hold that students are mostly at the receiving end and what they think they badly need and cannot have, they protest. Despite acknowledging the immaturity of students, a

faculty respondent argues that it is matter of their age and stage in life and they need more support than castigation. It is worth mentioning that the interviews were conducted on the heels of a series of student protests at the University of Buea. The image of the effects of these revolts could have still been fresh in the minds of the respondents and influenced their perspectives on how much students should be involved.

Civil society was less frequently stated as a stakeholder of higher education (6 respondents) perhaps because the emphasis on the role of the civil society and socio-professional environment seems to be a new aspect that came with the Bologna Process and professionalization. Most of the respondents hold that civil society is very minimally present in university affairs. As for the socio-professional environment, it was stated that it was the introduction of BMP in relation to professionalization and the competencies approach that highlighted its involvement. It is what catalysed the consultation of the socio-professional milieu and the ministry instructed that no programme should be approved if it has not been established in consultation with the socio-professional milieu.

Six (6) of the respondents held that the local environment in which the university is located influences and is influenced by the university's strategic objectives. This was especially the case of the University of Buea where all respondents mentioned how their activities influenced the locality and region. The respondents held that the influence is on the type of research that students choose for their final year theses; where internships are done; lecturers conducting research that directly affects the local community and; contract research done for companies

in the region. Even though the local environment was not mentioned by most respondents when asked who the stakeholders are, the question (see UQ17 in appendix II) on relevance of their objectives produced responses that indicate that the local environment is a major stakeholder of the university's activities.

In addition, the respondents also pointed out that not all stakeholders of higher education have a good representation in how higher education is managed (M1, M2, M4, M8, UB2, UB3, UB 10, UB11, and UB9) and agree on the necessity to get all on board. Some respondents stated that the government disburses funds and then abandons higher education without checking if the money was used for the purposes it was given.

From the foregoing we can conclude that the stakeholders of Cameroonian higher education are known both at the ministry and institutional levels. The extent to which they are involved or kept abreast with the formulation and implementation of strategic objectives is not the same. The state seems to be the most influential stakeholder for obvious reasons. The students are the least influential because they are considered immature and undecided. The socio-professional environment is a relatively newly recognised stakeholder but it is gaining influence. However, not all academics agree on the involvement of stakeholders, especially non-higher education ones. In summary, the strategic objectives of higher education result from national development objectives, international trends and the progress of science and knowledge.

However, it was also acknowledged that the input of students and graduates is minimal because of the absence of a feedback culture and

the consideration that university students are immature. The relevant stakeholders are recognized and being involved but the status and extent of involvement are not equal. The extent of involvement is determined by regulatory instruments (laws, decrees, etc.), the amount of financial contribution to higher education and age (students). In this sense, the state is the most influential of all the stakeholders. The teachers or university academics who are the actual executors of strategic objectives are not sufficiently involved especially in formulation and evaluation of success. According to Hayward, Ncayiyana and Johnson. (2003, p.12), “a strategic plan is only as successful as the mission, vision and goals that it enshrines. The success of the plan also depends on the accuracy of the environmental assessment, capacity, needed resources and time frame for implementation. At one level the strategic plan must be carefully crafted, the stakeholders consulted and convinced of its value and feasibility.” At another level, the most important aspects affecting success are the opinions and ingenuity that go into thinking about goals and provision for dynamic realities (see Hayward et al., 2003, p.12).

The Ministry of Higher Education and the University of Buea reports their activities through the following media:

**Table 10.** Modes of reporting on the strategic objectives of higher education in Cameroon

<b>Ministry</b>	<b>University of Buea</b>
-Bilingual monthly review of the ministry (Sup Infos) -Other internal communications	-Annual reports. -Annual or biannual Buea University Newsletter.
Radio and TV programmes	-Weekly 'university half hour' on a local radio station and TV news, - On-campus radio station.
Public speeches, press conferences, press releases and interviews.	-Press conferences and releases, Speeches by university officials during public occasions (e.g. matriculation and graduation ceremonies), -Interviews granted by university officials.
Interactions with the public and society	Interactions with the local community through research and other outreach activities.
Research	Research activities
Ministry's websites (main and thematic websites)	University website
Workshops and seminars	Workshops and seminars
Participation in national events e.g. labour day celebrations.	Participation in national events e.g. brains thrust competition, national youth day and university games.
	Open days and forums where the public is invited to the university.

It was noticed that the earlier versions of the University of Buea annual report (2006-2009) were relatively less detailed or comprehensive in the amount of information provided. The 2009/2010 annual report was much more detailed. In its foreword, the depth of the report is attributed to serving the dual purpose of an annual report and a mid-term report for the Strategic Plan 2007-2015 (UB Annual Report 2009/2010, p. xiv). In a retrospective look at the performance of the University of

Buea since the 2007, it is asserted that the university has made considerable progress in key domains of teaching, research, internal governance, and outreach. The report outlines the following as noteworthy achievements.

- Increase in the number of academic programmes from 60 to 116 (40 Bachelor's, 44 Master's, and 32 PhD programmes).
- Increase in student enrolment from 10,203 in 2006/2007 to 13,887 (12 per cent) in 2009/2010 and a corresponding increase in the number of teaching staff from 235 to 334.
- Considerable expansion of access to the internet, library holdings and digital library subscriptions.
- Construction of new amphitheatres (auditoria), staff offices and laboratories: doubling of floor space from 6,000 to 12,000.
- Expansion of research funding and output as well as increase in cooperation with national and international academic institutions.
- Transformation of student union actions from confrontation and strife to peace and dialogue.

It was also noticed that earlier versions (SUP INFOS 2007-2010) of the Ministry of Higher Education's bilingual review were less detailed than the 2011 version which was a special edition to mark the fifty years of the existence of Cameroon higher education. The September 2011 edition presented multiple accounts of the history and policies of higher education in Cameroon as well as copies of the main laws and decrees related to higher education. Reporting seems to be considerably addressed both at the ministry and the University of Buea. But, most of the respondents could not give a clear answer to whom or how the

annual reports, university newsletters and bilingual reviews were disseminated.

However, in their descriptions of how the annual reports are compiled and published, it was realized that when the report is published, copies are sent to stakeholders (government representatives in the university council, the Ministry of Higher Education and faculties within the University of Buea). The annual report is also uploaded on the university's web site. Respondents could easily point out who/what higher education needs to report to or be accountable but their responses concerning these publications revealed that some of the reporting ended only within the ministry or university. Respondent UB8 aptly captures this dissemination loophole as follows:

“Reports are written but they have to be accessible to be of impact. I think we need to have more forums where we talk about the university, sell the university. How does the lay person know about these reports? We have an immediate community to which we need to reach out first and then regional, national and international.”

As at 2010/2011, the University of Buea's website contained summaries of the annual report, but as at 2013, no annual report was available on the University's website ([www.ubuea.cm](http://www.ubuea.cm)). It is also worth-noting that the mode and level of reporting, just like other implementation strategies may vary with the coming and going of different university heads. It was noticed that the University of Buea website had a different presentation, name and type of content upon the change of the institutional head. The September 2011 version of the ministry's review also available on the ministry's website is unbearably slow to download. Given that the hard copies are sold at 500-1,000



FCFA (approx.0.77-1.52 Euros), it is likely that students and the layman on the street do not get to ever see these reports. There appears to be problem with how dissemination is done (see the opinions of M1, UB8 and UB10 in table 11).

We can conclude that the Cameroon higher education system uses a mix of reporting channels to communicate with stakeholders. However this mix is not comprehensive because some seemingly important media are either underused or not used at all.

As to the effects of reporting and getting feedback from relevant stakeholders, most of the respondents (16 of the 20 respondents) agreed that reporting about the activities of higher education was necessary and had effects on the type of students attracted, image of the university, sponsors and type of funding sources. This is confirmed by the following excerpt from the Buea University Newsletter:

“When UB participates in fairs like Campus 2007, the image of the UB comes into play. This face-to-face contact with the general public is very challenging.....The yields of CAMPUS 2007 have already come to fruition. There is an unprecedented rise in the number of students knocking at the doors of the UB for admission.....” (BUN 2007, p.19).

The following direct or paraphrased quotes from respondents reveal how reporting affects higher education:

**Table 11.** Opinions on the effect of reporting higher Education activities to stakeholders

<b>Respondent (s)</b>	<b>Opinion</b>
<b>M1</b>	“When we look at the top 100 universities, our universities are not classified. It poses a problem for us. We ask ourselves “but why are our universities not classified?” Is it because we sell ourselves badly? Is it because our products are bad?”
<b>M2, M3, M5, M6, M8</b>	Reporting has built confidence in our higher education- many students come from neighbouring countries to study here.
<b>UB1</b>	The university’s reputation depends largely on the perception of our activities by the public. This perception can only be informed by our reporting.
<b>UB2, UB4</b>	The effects of reporting are both positive and negative depending on what is reported and how it is reported. We have gained partnerships and funding because of reporting but we have also gained a negative image when student revolts are reported on the internet. If reports are negative, the university’s reputation is negatively affected and vice-versa.
<b>UB3, UB11</b>	Reporting has a positive effect. These reports enable the public to know our strengths and our weaknesses, so that they can be able to assist us. The importance of this knowledge is seen when we approach them for funding, collaboration, employment and internships. Our students are warmly welcomed. For instance, the Cameroon national radio and television employs most of our graduates.
<b>UB5,12</b>	The impact of reporting has not been evaluated but when we interrupt or delay the publishing of the Buea University Newsletter, people ask what is happening.
<b>UB6</b>	Reporting has a positive effect on the number and type of correspondence with other universities. The university cannot live like an island. If we are the only ones who know what we are doing here,

	our impact is limited. In the present globalized world, you cannot have a big organization like this and you do not make it known.
<b>UB7</b>	Reporting does not have any effect.
<b>UB8</b>	In order to have an impact, reporting needs to be more accessible especially to the immediate local environment of the university.
<b>UB9</b>	Provide the central administration with a feel of what is actually happening in the faculties- communication within the university.
<b>UB10</b>	National reporting is being done sufficiently but international reporting via the internet is very insufficient. Much of what happens in Cameroon higher education is unknown outside of Cameroon. Those who do international university classifications find very little information on our websites and are forced to keep us out of the list. It is only the University of Yaoundé 1 that appears in the first 100 in Africa while Rwanda has at least two universities in the list. This is not because we are not doing better; it is because we are not selling ourselves well. This also affects the way our graduates and staff are rated, especially out of Cameroon. The global presence of a university is extremely important in the current times.

From Table 11, the respondents hold that reporting or ‘selling’ the activities of higher education to the public and other external stakeholders has both positive and negative effects. These effects include increase in number of applicants; opportunities for funding and other forms of support; enhancing communication within the university; building the university, students and graduate reputation; increasing visibility for international competitiveness; increase in the number of partnerships and cooperation opportunities. Negative reporting (e.g. reporting on violent student revolts) destroys the university’s reputation. Some respondents however hold that the reporting about higher education in Cameroon seems to be insufficient (M1, UB10). They (UB10) hold that national reporting may be

sufficient but reporting to the international audience still needs to be improved especially through the internet. Respondent UB8 holds that the impact of reporting is limited by the audience to whom reporting is directed. UB8 believes that the immediate locality of the institution should be more aware of its activities. However, UB7 holds that reporting is ineffective.

As to how inclusive the planning is done at the University of Buea, the respondents' accounts revealed that the process of the drawing up the institution's current strategic plan involved input from all levels of the institution and external stakeholders. The respondents held that it was imperative to involve all stakeholders (especially external stakeholders) because without them most of the objectives would not be achieved. Summarily the respondents described the process of drawing the 2007-2015 strategic plan as follows:

The central administration sent out a request for all heads of department (HODs) in collaboration with their teachers to identify and synthesize the ideas of their departmental strategic objectives. Every teacher was involved and provided input. The basic ideas emanated from the teachers before going through the head of department to the dean and then to the central administration. The students' inputs were also sought through student representatives from all faculties. All this information was sent through the faculty deans and school director to the central administration. To get the perspectives of all stakeholders (those who can have an input in the university or benefit from the university's activities) questionnaires and focussed group interviews were used. These stakeholders were:

- Industries who needed to say what they want, what type of training they require for university students. As users of university products, they needed to specify what kind of products, they require.
- Financial sponsors who can contribute especially in the infrastructural and research objectives. The University of Buea library has greatly benefitted from donations and other structures have been realized through donations.
- The council which is the highest decision-making body of the university. It consists of representatives from ministries (finance, planning, secondary education, higher education, social affairs, scientific research and innovation); the presidency and the prime ministry; local and traditional authorities like the mayor and chiefs; the governor of the region; organizations in the region like the Cameroon Development Corporation, the South-West Development Authority and the National Oil Refinery. The council is very important because nothing is implemented at the university without passing through the council.
- Foreign embassy representatives.
- Alumni of the University of Buea.

Based on all the input, the plan was written and a stakeholder meeting was convened to present the plan to these stakeholders for their comments and approval. Since the institution of the plan, the university produces annual reports on how far strategic objectives have been achieved as well as the failures, challenges and revisions.

As to the how the annual reports are written, the respondents held that it is also an inclusive process in which the input of all levels of the institution is collected. Every year, the Vice-chancellor sends a request for faculties to submit their annual reports. This request has a very clear framework which includes achievements, challenges and suggestions for the next academic year based on the strategic objectives. These reports are written from the input of all staff via their heads of department to the dean. From these departmental reports, the deans prepare faculty reports which are sent to the central administration. A drafting committee is set up to integrate these reports and the Vice-chancellor also includes input concerning the general progress of the university towards its strategic objectives. The drafting committee then writes the report which the Vice-chancellor and his close staff review as part of his duty to report to the university council. Despite the existence of a drafting committee, the Vice-chancellor has to stay close to the process because he is responsible for all the information that is published.

It can be concluded that there is sufficient reporting to national stakeholders but insufficient reporting to international stakeholders. As earlier mentioned, the feedback seems one-sided because opportunities for feedback from stakeholders are relatively limited. This signals one of Niven's need assessment factors for a balanced scorecard: "if we did not produce our current performance reports for a month, nobody will notice" (Niven 2008, p.67-68). It was however acknowledged that reporting about higher education was necessary for the achievement of strategic objectives. Respondents held that reporting affected the number and type of students, partners, funding sources and opportunities, facilitation of communication, and building reputation.

So strategy is a continual process because some feedback is gotten and reporting is done.

#### **4.6 Peculiarities of the System and University of Buea in Relation to Other State Universities**

The balanced scorecard is a business concept which involves positioning an organization in an environment in a way that it has unique or peculiar characteristics not existent in its competitors. The organization needs to be able to identify its strengths. Even though this study could have still produced a balanced scorecard without the information on how the University of Buea is better than other state universities, it was decided to include this because the policy documents and some respondents made allusion to the need for Cameroon higher education institutions to specialize and compete with institutions within and without the country. The question of peculiarity was not included in the interviews at the Ministry of Higher Education, but some respondents mentioned that Cameroon higher education was reliable and stable (studies were not frequently interrupted by strikes). Some of them also cited the influx of students from other Central African countries as a sign of the trust that the system enjoys from the sub region. The presence of the hub of the Pan African University in Cameroon is seen as a mark of Africa's confidence in Cameroon's higher education. So at the system level, the respondents and policy documents identified the following peculiarities or strengths:

- Trust and confidence within the African region which is evident in student influx and the decision to host regional study

programmes like the Pan African University, the Catholic University of Central Africa and the regional virtual university.

- Economic and higher education leadership in the Central African region. Most of the research in the sub-region is done in Cameroon.
- Bilingualism allows for attraction of both Anglophone and francophone actors (researchers, students, teachers and donors). The respondents however held that the Francophone proportion was much greater than the Anglophone.
- Cameroon is one of the countries returning trust to HE for Africa's development. Some African countries mainstream HE in their economic development strategies (see Doh 2012). These were the cases, (as at mid-2000) of Malawi, Cameroon and Zambia who highlighted the use of their higher education in their poverty reduction strategy papers with Ethiopia and Cameroon envisaging to significantly increase their HE budgets<sup>34</sup> (Bloom et al., 2006, p.6; IMF 2003, 2006).

The respondents of the University of Buea hold that a student, employer or other stakeholder will choose the University of Buea over other state universities for the following reasons:

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<sup>34</sup> Cameroon envisages an increase from 3.8 per cent to 5.8 per cent (Bloom et al 2006, PRPS 2003 and 2006).



**Table 12.** Strengths of the University of Buea

<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Strength(s) of the University of Buea</b>
<b>UB1</b>	Best programme coverage in the country. Staff commitment and best performance of graduates in public exams and job interviews. Moral upbringing and discipline are not ignored.
<b>UB2</b>	Relatively stricter admission policy which ensures quality of students. Companies come to ask for the first 10-20 students graduating from a study programme. This is a sign of confidence in the quality of our products.
<b>UB3</b>	More attention given to quality control and discipline.
<b>UB4</b>	The first Anglo-Saxon university in Cameroon. Wider programme offerings. Besides the school of journalism (which is highly competitive and expensive), we are the only university which offers journalism.
<b>UB5</b>	English is the language of modern science and we are the first university in Cameroon where instruction is solely in English. Better organization. Successful graduates.
<b>UB6</b>	Strict admission policy ensures that we enrol the best. It is the only state university that produces permanent completion certificates; others give only transcripts and attestations. Annual graduation ceremony.
<b>UB7</b>	Good graduate placement rate in a country with high unemployment rates. Our students always find a way.
<b>UB8</b>	The first Anglo-Saxon university in the country. Lesser congestion of classrooms: lower student-teacher ratios. First university in Cameroon to adopt the BMP system.
<b>UB9</b>	No answer.
<b>UB10</b>	Transparent organization. Better quality assurance procedures. Admission of most qualified students. For a university of our age (22 years) we are doing better than some older state higher education institutions.
<b>UB11</b>	Our students are the most sought after by national employers.
<b>UB12</b>	We were the first English only university in Cameroon. Our graduates are the least unemployed.

According to the respondents at the University of Buea, the university is different or has an advantage over state universities. The most frequently cited strengths were strict admission policies which ensured that the most qualified applicants were enrolled. The respondents explained that as opposed to other universities where admission depended only on passing the end of high school certificate exams, the university of Buea has general minimum requirements and specific programme requirements for grades scored in the General Certificate Examinations. Another strength which was frequently cited is the being the first Anglo-Saxon university in the country. Respondents held that the university was the first choice for most Anglophone high school graduates. They also held that the use of English as the sole language of instruction better positions the university in modern science which is mainly in English.

The wideness of programme coverage was also cited as strength with the explanation that the options for study are wider than in other state universities. Despite facing the same imbalance between infrastructure and student numbers, the University of Buea has lower student-teacher ratios and is less congested than other state universities. The university's graduate employment rate, performance in public exams and job interviews were cited as advantages over other institutions. Moral upbringing and discipline were cited and respondents argued that the focus was not only on producing educated but also well-behaved citizens. The respondents also held that the university gives more attention to quality than other state universities. Some respondents held that students and other stakeholders are also attracted by the University's annual graduation ceremony which is unique in the country. It can be concluded that the University of Buea is aware of its

strengths in relation to other universities. These strengths are about ways of doing things (training in English, staff commitment, discipline, moral upbringing and strict admission policy) peculiar academic programmes (wide programme offerings, unique programmes like journalism) and quality of students and graduates.

#### **4.7 Challenges to Implementation of Strategic Objectives**

This section presents the barriers to implementing strategic objectives of higher education as cited by the respondents and the policy documents. Hayward, Ncayiyana and Johnson (2003, p.12) hold that the success of the strategic plan also depends on “the accuracy of the environmental assessment, capacity, resources needed and time frame for implementation.” The most frequently cited challenge to the implementation of strategic objectives is linked to resources available to higher education. All the University of Buea annual reports alluded to resource challenges as impediments to executing objectives. In addition, all the reports from the faculties mentioning that their main constraints were insufficient financial, human and infrastructural resources, the annual reports referred to the state funding as: having marked uncertainties in rhythm of disbursement (2008/2009, p.21); slow, very small and sometimes left unpaid (2006/2007, p.20; p.30); grossly inadequate (2007/2008, p.22) and; sporadic (2009/2010, p.9).

The resource challenge (especially financial) was mentioned by all the respondents. Their responses can be grouped under into different facets:

### *Mismatch between plans and resources*

It was revealed that most of the decisions to adopt and implement strategic objectives were not preceded by analyses of the means to actually meet these objectives. This led to overly ambitious objectives which were sometimes partially implemented or completely abandoned because the resources were insufficient. Examples of such mismatches include the goal to professionalize education and enhance employability of graduates. The respondents hold that the socio-economic environment of Cameroon is not ready for such because there are very few employers besides the already saturated public service. The respondents however hold that in terms of training students in preparation for creating jobs by themselves, the professionalization agenda could be met. M1, M2, UB5, and UB10 hold that the idea is not only to be able to find a job but to be able to create a job. However, there were also concerns about training for brain drain, which is already a problem. As one university administrator holds:

“Our current globalized world speaks economics and no country can hold down its human resources on paltry salary scales. The universities are emptying out” (BUN 2007, p.9).

Another evidence of a mismatch between objectives and resources is the objective to widen access and diversify programmes without a corresponding provision of the infrastructure and number of teaching staff. For instance respondent UB2 cited that an amphitheatre meant for 750 students has to hold 1000 students for some popular or compulsory interdisciplinary courses where students come from several different departments. It was also mentioned that the university has lecturers

without offices and there is frequent shortage of laboratory reagents. In the annual report of the University of Buea (2007/2008, p.22) it is stated that a new salary scale instituted in February 2008 produced extra unanticipated expenditure of 15million FCFA. The mismatch between objectives and resources becomes a vicious cycle where quality is compromised. The already insufficient resources are mismanaged. For instance the Cameroon government uses money to train professionals who become more attractive for the international job market and eventually leave because the national market was not ready for them. According to respondent M2, “the ability of the socio-professional environment is weak. The Cameroonian university today is 250 000 students. When you look at the companies which can employ degree holders, there are not many.” M2 provides more evidence of the mismatch and financial constraints in the following assertion:

“Higher education has embarked on a global reform aimed at modernising, modernising in a society of professionalization, a society of employability, a society of comparability with the international environment, in a society of the amelioration of administrative, academic and financial governance. But also in an environment of financial constraints where there is no money to implement the policies. This is the challenge that we face. So when you ask what is urgent in my opinion, everything is urgent. You cannot make a choice between funding issues, quality and relevance issues, professionalization, and introduction of the BMP. Everything is a priority and we are trying to address all these simultaneously with very limited means”

M1 and UB10 also advance similar arguments as follows:

“A problem in our country is that we do not know how to plan our actions. We do not have a model for a representation of our needs against our expenses. By looking at the population growth rate, the university enrolment growth rate we need to be able to forecast what will be the effects of these increases and what we can do to ensure quality”(M1).

“The best way to generate money to run a university is through fees. The government has forbidden collection of fees above 50,000 FCFA on the pretext that they will send subventions. But this subvention has stayed at 1.9billion FCFA for several years. Even when student numbers and study programmes have more than doubled the subvention is the same. You know that three new faculties were recently created: engineering, technology and agriculture, but behold the budget did not bulge. So there is the problem of how to get funding to meet up with our vision and the changing trends” (UB10).

This mismatch is related to one of the BSC success principles because if strategy is expressed in operational terms, it will be easy to see if there is a mismatch with resources.

### ***The Status of higher education in Cameroon***

According to respondent M2, the status of Cameroon higher education presents a challenge to the implementation of strategic objectives. M2 holds that there is still a philosophical debate on whether higher education is a public or a consumer good. If it is a commercial good, then there is a need for rules that ensure transparency, competition,

mobility and equivalence. M2 holds that Cameroonian higher education is choosing to embrace some aspects of higher education as a commercial product while ignoring other aspects. For instance the adoption of the BMP means mobility and equivalence but the law on the orientation of higher education still holds that higher education is a public good. The respondents held that the government cannot be completely blamed because the society does not seem ready for paid higher education. For instance respondents stated that the same parents who complain about the minimal tuition fee are willing to pay comparable higher sums for private education even at primary school level.

The main issue with this challenge is that all attempts at increasing higher education funding through tuition fees have been met by strike actions and revolts by students and parents. The challenge is evident in the fact that lecturers consider themselves as state employees with a limited entrepreneurial mentality. M2 holds that when you tell these lecturers that they need to bring money into the university through contract research or consultancy, it is not easily accepted. However, some of the respondents mentioned that their already excessive workload limits the time for such activities (UB1, UB4, and UB8). This remains a real challenge because the insufficient resources of the state cannot ensure the achievement of all strategic objectives in the way that they are intended.

Some respondents cited the challenge for the society to understand that higher education is expensive and cannot be left for other countries to fund. It was stated that the cost of higher education is a national issue which has not been given sufficient attention. Despite granting

autonomy to universities, the respondents stated that the regulations and control do not permit universities to generate funds from fees in special or professional programmes like Masters in Business Administration. The reactions to any increase in fees are strikes and protests.

Another evidence of how the status of higher education hampers the achievement of objectives is the difference in cost between programmes or discipline. Every student in a state university pays 50,000 FCFA francs<sup>35</sup> (approx. 76 Euros) per year. However the actual cost per student differs between disciplines and so do the possibilities for being employed after graduation. Some respondents stated that these promoted inequality despite the will to enhance equitable access. Most of the non-state funding can only come from contracts and projects.

***Insufficient financial resources, management and accountability challenges***

Even though it is contrary to the researcher's thinking (resources are insufficient but it is more important to enhance the management of available resources), the insufficiency of financial resources seems to be the most important challenge to strategic objectives. All the respondents agreed that the insufficiency of resources is a major impediment to the achievement of objectives. However it was also noticed that the issue was not mainly about the amount of resources but in the way they are managed.

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<sup>35</sup> The Central African CFA franc (French franc CFA or simply franc) is the currency of Cameroon and five other central African countries.



The respondents alluded to funding as a major challenge for performance which has led to infrastructural problems like overcrowded classrooms and offices. It was also stated that research is even more affected by funding problems. The government's share of funding for research was said to as low as 5 per cent and the rest came from international organisations like the World Health Organization. In addition the research funding from the state was not disbursed on any competitive bases and there is no provision for accountability. This questions the efficiency and effectiveness of the already meagre research funds. Some respondents held that the New University Governance Policy (NUGP 2005) was aimed at addressing these management issues but the execution has been slow.

Another challenge related to funding is the disparity between the university academic year and the financial year of the Ministry of Finance which disburses state funds. The university year begins in September while the financial year begins in September. In addition most students only complete their tuition fees in February when examinations are held. This entails that the university has to function on a budget deficit between September and December. It was revealed that the Minister of Finance may choose to give subsidies to the universities for these months but university heads prioritise staff salaries and administrative costs over costs which are related to academic activities. This plays negatively on the quality of teaching and learning.

From the foregoing challenges, it can be concluded that there is need to increase the amount of funding from tuition fees. It is complicated as it may create inequalities and provoke revolts from the public. The

government seems to be on the side of the public but at the same time urges universities to increase non-state funding. However, it was revealed by respondent UB10 that some universities (like the University of Douala) have ignored the government's stand and instituted some fee-paying study options. UB10 recommends that the state should allow universities to institute some fee-paying courses/programmes as one way to generate incomes.

It is also evident that the government's subsidies which are the main source of funding for state universities is very insufficient for the objectives that higher education is expected to pursue. But the respondents' assertions also reveal that the management and accountability for the already insufficient resources is problematic. This again necessitates the BSC success principles of making strategy a continual process by linking it to budgets. A strategy map showing the interrelations between the different objectives could help in both planning and execution. It facilitates the understanding of how the achievement or failure in one objective affects other objectives. As earlier discussed, there are barriers that generally impede strategy implementation (Niven 2008, p. 9-10). These are discussed in the following section in relation to Cameroon higher education.

The *vision barrier* is related to the awareness about the vision and strategic objectives by the employees (those who are supposed to implement the outlined strategies). As to the knowledge of where Cameroon higher education is headed, it is evident that those who are supposed to implement the strategic objectives are aware of what needs to be achieved. The objectives stated in the policy documents at the system and institutional levels (see section 3.1) correspond with what

the respondents outlined as strategic objectives (see section 4.1). According to the balanced scorecard institute, “strategic planning is an organizational management activity that is used to set priorities; focus energy and resources; strengthen operations; ensure that employees and other stakeholders are working toward common goals; establish agreement around intended outcomes/results and; assess and adjust the organization's direction in response to a changing environment” (Balanced Scorecard Institute<sup>36</sup>). The interviews revealed that there is a real clarity and communication problem within the higher education system. Some of the respondents either referred to administrators as those who know what the strategic objectives are while some responses implied the following statement: ‘I am just giving my (unsure) opinion about what the objectives are but I cannot say that these are exactly what they are’-answer. Respondent M1 admits that: *“The central administration should be able to communicate, to sell the strategy. I have the feeling that we are not doing enough but I believe that there is a real communication problem. Everyone needs to understand where we are heading to.”* In addition, it was noticed that consensus on whether the objectives being pursued are higher education’s domain, was limited. This was especially true of objectives like ‘professionalization of training and employability of graduates’ which has been subject to scepticism and most respondents at the university acknowledge its importance but believe that it is not higher education to worry about what happens to graduates. The respondents at the ministry are aware that the professionalization agenda is not popular with university academics but they believe that it is a necessity that the academics need to be made to accept (M1, M2, M4, M5, M7, and M8).

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<sup>36</sup> [www.balancedscorecard.org](http://www.balancedscorecard.org)

The state hands down objectives and widely publicizes them but the academics do not entirely agree that the objectives are leading to the right direction. So in principle, the respondents know the strategic objectives are but some of them do not agree that the university should pursue these in the first place. How can commitment to perform well be established in such circumstances? It was equally seen that the respondents were not in agreement about the implementation strategies. As to individual roles towards the strategic objectives, the data (see section 4.2: tables 3 and 4) shows that respondents know about job descriptions provided by the ministry and their institution but find it difficult to link this job description to specific strategic objectives which they are able to identify. This implies a communication and clarity problem in the strategy formulation and implementation process.

The *people barrier* relates to the use of financial resources to ensure performance and achievement of objectives. Often referred to as performance funding, it has its drawbacks especially in higher education where some objectives need very long periods to produce results. Niven (2008, p.9-10) holds that “the debate has raged on whether incentive compensation plans really do lead to improved performance.” He proceeds that “we may never know the answer, but it is probably safe to suggest that an incentive of any kind tends to increase focus, at least temporarily. Financial incentives can distort or entirely block an organization’s strategic view.” The use of incentives is not clear or easy to understand in Cameroon higher education. Some incentives do not have sufficient follow-up (measurement criteria) and some are political instruments disguised as incentives. For instance, the research modernization grant is meant to promote research but it is neither competitive nor is there a specific provision for its recipients to be accountable. M2 states that “.....we (the state) are giving the money.

We are giving more than 2Million FCFA per year for research on no competition bases. We just give to everyone.....” Despite its increasing prominence as a means of managing higher education for or attaining various objectives in higher education, the use of incentives has attracted several criticisms.

The *resource barrier* is probably the most salient. According to Niven (2008) 60 per cent of organizations do not link their strategy to budgets and this deals a particularly damaging blow to executing strategy. Evidence of the resource barrier is compelling in the interviews and annual reports. Some interviewee opinions are already reported in the discussion on the ‘mismatch between plan and resources’ (section 2 in 4.7) as one of the challenges to implementing strategic objectives.

#### **4.8 Assessing the need for the Balanced Scorecard in Cameroonian Higher Education**

Niven (2008, p.67-68) presents a questionnaire and scoring guide to assess the need for the balanced scorecard. The original version is included in Appendix VII. This section presents the questionnaire and possible scores for Cameroon higher education (Table 13) as well as the bases of the scores in Table 13. The scores are the results of the study’s evaluation of the policy documents and interviews. They have been adapted to the higher education context and Cameroon in particular. Niven’s questionnaire included 20 items but all are not included here. The excluded ones were either irrelevant to the context or could not be scored from the information available.

The interviews and documents revealed that higher education pays attention to reporting its activities to stakeholders. However, the dissemination and impact of these results is not sufficiently considered. For instance, the scope of distribution of university annual reports seems to be within the university and state stakeholders only. By implication, if higher education failed to report its activities there will be no notice. Like every other higher education system, the universities in Cameroon are meant to create value through knowledge. To create such value, objectives have been defined but according to the interviewees, most of these have been difficult to implement. Examples include the diversity and increase in non-state funding, efficient management and enhanced relevance. It was also frequently mentioned that most objectives are not carefully thought through but result from spontaneous reactions to problems. This minimizes consideration of resources and provisions for monitoring achievement of objectives. The budgeting for higher education has not been adapted to the changes in scope and size of higher education institutions. There has been an increasing call for higher education to prove its value in society especially with the state being its biggest sponsor. As explained by some respondents, some of the objectives may not be strategic. For instance it was argued that the 'professionalization' objective may rather promote the out flux of university graduates who are better equipped for a labour market that does not exist in Cameroon.

**Table 13.** Assessing the need for the BSC in Cameroonian higher education

Need	Score (on 5)
<b>If we did not produce our current reports for a month, nobody will notice.</b>	4
<b>We have strategic objectives (past and present) but we have had a hard time implementing them.</b>	5
<b>We create significant value from intangible assets like knowledge and innovation.</b>	5
<b>We rarely review our performance measures and make suggestions or new innovative outcome measures.</b>	4
<b>Budgeting is largely political and based on historical trends</b>	5
<b>Our employees do not have a solid understanding of our vision, mission and strategic objectives.</b>	3
<b>Our employees do not know how their day-to-day actions contribute to the success in strategic objectives.</b>	4
<b>People tend to stay within their 'silos' and as a result we have little collaboration among departments.</b>	5
<b>Priorities are often dictated by current necessity or 'firefighting'.</b>	5
<b>We have numerous strategic objectives and it is possible that not all are truly strategic.</b>	5
<b>We face increased pressure from stakeholders to demonstrate results</b>	5
<b>The environment in which we operate is changing and in order to succeed, we too must change</b>	5
<b>We do not always have clearly defined targets for tangible and intangible outcomes.</b>	4
<b>We sometimes make decisions that are beneficial in the short term but may be harmful to long term value creation.</b>	4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>63</b>

Source: Adapted from Niven (2008, p.67-68)

According to Niven (2008, p.67-68), scores in the range of 61-100 suggest difficulty in successfully implementing strategic objectives and meeting the expectations of stakeholders. The score of 63 (see Table 13) is based on the opinions of the respondents and evidence from policy documents about the objectives that higher education is pursuing in Cameroon. Niven (ibid) posits that a balanced scorecard system is strongly recommended to help focus on strategy implementation and aligning higher education to its goals.



## **5 RESULTS**

In the previous chapter, the data was presented and analysed in line with the literature reviewed. In this chapter the specific findings are highlighted in relation to the research question. The proposed BSC framework is presented.

### **5.1 Comparing the Perceptions of Role at the System and Institution Levels**

#### *System: identifying and evaluating strategic objectives*

Given that the main divergence existed in how the respondents at the ministry see themselves in the management of strategic objectives, this section discusses these perceptions of role by both levels (see tables 3 and 4 in section 4.2). At the Cameroon Ministry of Higher Education, three (3) of the eight (8) respondents can be classified as involved in formulating, implementing and evaluating objectives. All eight (8) are involved in implementation and evaluation of strategic objectives. It should be noted that all respondents at the ministry were considered in their administrative capacities. This does not mean that the perspective of the respondent as the teacher (basic unit) and actual executor of the strategic objectives is omitted. The classification was based on their direct answers or the job description of the positions they hold. It can

be concluded that respondents at the Ministry of Higher Education could easily identify themselves as involved in identifying strategic objectives and evaluating how they have been implemented. In the balanced scorecard, the ministry therefore represents the executive in the Cameroon higher education system whose role is to clearly articulate strategy and ensure that those who have to implement it are informed and involved.

The respondents at the ministry made statements that implied ownership and control of the process of identifying and implementing strategic objectives. The responses also portray the indispensable role of the state (the presidency) in either stating what objectives have to be pursued or validating the objectives proposed by the Ministry of Higher Education. This state involvement is unavoidable as long as higher education largely depends on the state for its subsistence. The role of the ministry and the state are also recognized by the respondents at the University of Buea who hold that their objectives are interpretations of what is defined by the ministry and the presidency.

The respondents at the ministry agree that the universities should be autonomous in the way they implement strategic objectives but these should be within the rules and regulations laid down in policy documents that relate to strategic objectives. A frequently cited example was the 2005 decree which directly addresses management efficiency. The respondents held that the intentions of the decree were good but the implementation has been slow because the university administrators are uncomfortable with the level of decentralization that the decree provides for inside-university governance. The pertinence of these regulations was not denied by the respondents at the university

level. However, it was stated, there is a fight between what the state and ministry think and what the university level administrators think should be done.

***Institution: translation of system strategic objectives and implementation strategies***

Five (5) of the responses at the University of Buea could classify their respondents as involved in formulation, implementation and evaluation of success in strategic objectives. It should be noted that these five respondents were all from the central administration and their positions entail more administrative duties than teaching or research. All the other seven (7) respondents from the faculty level administration (3) and department level (4) could be seen to be involved in implementing and evaluating strategic objectives at their levels. As stated by one of the university administrators, the University of Buea strategic plan is ambitious but realistic (BUN 2007, p.15). In the researcher's assessment this is a true assertion and this ambitious but realistic perspective is a translation of the strategic objectives of the higher education system in general and is consistent with the views of strategic planning scholars. For instance, Hayward, Ncayiyana and Johnson (2003, p.12) hold that the institutional strategic plan should recognise national higher education objectives and self-consciously build on the country's vision and goals. This is also mirrored in the way respondents view themselves in the process of identifying and implementing strategic objectives. The translation and communication of system objectives to the institution is the premise of the university's central administration.

The other respondents only view themselves as executors of the objectives and their involvement in evaluation is at the level of their respective units- classroom, department, or faculty. However, not all the respondents hold that they should be limited to implementation and evaluation at their levels. Some respondents highlighted the need for more involvement of the university academics in the strategy formulation process because they are the actual architects of the implementation process. They are better acquainted with the prevailing conditions, especially challenges. Another reason why the respondents at the university see themselves as only executors is that the state is very influential in the management of higher education, due to its provision of the bulk of funding.

According to Niven (2008, p.147) it is possible to develop a balanced scorecard without a strategy and some organizations will do just that. But Niven holds that such a scorecard would consist of a mix of financial and non-financial indicators straddling the four perspectives. Niven (ibid) continues that, “what you would not possess, however, is a common linkage or theme running through the scorecard because strategy is the common thread that weaves through the scorecard tying the disparate elements of customers, processes, employees, and financial stakeholders into one coherent whole. Without the unifying theme represented by the strategy, it is a collection of good ideas that lack a coherent story or direction.” The balanced scorecard and strategy go together. Kaplan and Norton (in Niven 2008, p.147) hold that, “the formulation of strategy is an art. The description of strategy, however, should not be an art. If we can describe strategy in a more disciplined way, we increase the likelihood of successful implementation. With a

balanced scorecard that tells the story of the strategy, we now have a reliable foundation” (Niven 2008, p.147).

Due to the absence of clear plan or document on what the strategic objectives of higher education are, it was not easy to identify the measures of success. This difficulty was also noticed in the interviews. The respondents could state what the strategic objectives are but it was difficult to pinpoint how the success in achieving these objectives is measured. This could be the result of unclear communication and differing understanding of where the higher education system is headed. If an objective is not clearly understood, then the evaluation of its achievement cannot be successfully done. The study had to rely on the “incomplete” information provided by interviews and policy documents.

The resulting balanced scorecard shows links between objectives and the measures identified but most of these measures are not measuring the right things. For instance measuring equitable access with the number of universities per geographical region does not tell if the presence of these universities have actually led to more enrolment of students from that region into that university. The measure addresses access by bringing the university closer to people but do the people actually enrol in these universities? The older and already overcrowded universities seem to still be the main points of attraction for university students from all over the country. Another explanation for the difficulty to find appropriate measures of success is the nature of most products of higher education products-intangibility. It could also be that the system level focuses on identifying objectives which it then dictates

to institutions without corresponding amounts of efforts at how to ascertain that the objectives are met.

At the institutional level, it was relatively easier for the respondents to state the measures that are used at the institution level to assess success. One explanation could be the existence of a strategic plan (even though only four respondents directly referred to it). It also makes the potential to develop and use a scorecard framework for the University of Buea a more feasible task. The measures are clearer and the links with the strategic objectives would be more visible. The proposed BSC framework may seem to be more applicable to the institutional level in Cameroon than the whole higher education system.

## **5.2 Balanced Scorecard Framework for Higher Education Strategic Objectives in Cameroon**

The following balanced scorecard framework is adapted from the original BSC by Kaplan and Norton (1996); a proposed BSC for higher education institutions by Umayal and Suganthi (2010, p.18) and a conceptual framework for evaluating performance (Kettunen 2008, p.328). It represents four perspectives, the kind of questions answered by strategic objectives that fall within each perspective and some success measures. It should be noted that the measures provided are not exhaustive. Based on the data from the interviews and policy documents the possible perspectives of a balanced scorecard for Cameroon higher education are presented. The perspectives were chosen on the bases of the interview data, policy documents and

literature review which identified strategic objectives, measures of success and some strategies of implementation.

1. The stakeholder perspective includes objectives that relate to who/what influence the strategic objectives of higher education. This perspective includes how these stakeholders are involved and how their expectations met. The strategies to meet objectives in the stakeholder perspective are strategies for involving, reporting to, giving and receiving feedback from stakeholders.
2. The financial perspective relates to how objectives take into account the available resources; objectives in the financial perspective also include identification of sponsors and how funding is increased by diversifying the funding sources.
3. The innovation and learning perspective includes objectives related to how (and how often) higher education adapts to changing trends and stakeholder expectations. It relates to how higher education learns, improves and innovates to achieve its strategic objectives. The innovation and learning perspective also includes provisions for feedback, improvement and revision in strategic objectives to ensure relevance to stakeholder expectations.
4. The processes and structures perspective includes objectives that address the way higher education functions. Strategies for these objectives relate to provisions for clear regulatory mechanisms which are understood and accepted by all stakeholders. Processes and structures include objectives that address the internal management of higher education. It includes the regulations and ways of operating within higher education.

The proposed framework also shows that the objectives within the different perspectives are not exclusive. One objective could belong to more than one perspective. This does not present a short coming, if the main aim is clear communication of the link between what an objective is addressing and how to evaluate whether the objective is being achieved. It could be argued that the framework could be classified as any other form of presentation of objectives and measures. The difference is in the questions that the different perspectives address. Together they give a picture of what higher education in Cameroon is pursuing and how achievement is measured. The perspectives could help in the definition of strategic objectives that answer specific questions. In this researcher's opinion, the order of the perspectives is insignificant because there are different premises for ordering them and as earlier mentioned; the perspectives are not mutually exclusive.

For instance if we want to order the perspectives from the premise of the barriers/challenges to implementation, the financial perspective will come first, followed by the processes. It is easily seen that some objectives in the financial perspective are dependent on objectives in the stakeholder perspective. If we try to order the perspectives according to the most recent objectives of higher education (recent in terms of what is most stressed in policy documents and interviews) then the stakeholder perspective comes first, followed by innovation and learning and then the processes. However, these two perspectives cannot be more important than the others because of the interdependence of the objectives within all the perspectives. Each objective and its perspective directly or indirectly affect the other perspectives and objectives.



The stakeholder perspective relates to the financial perspective in that most stakeholders are also the source of higher education funding and expenses (e.g. the state and international donors are funders, students are the bases of some expenses in higher education such as investments in lecture halls, lecturers are stakeholders who need to be paid salaries and other benefits). The stakeholder perspective is related to innovation and learning because higher in Cameroon needs to continuously adapt and revise its strategic objectives according to changes. These changes stem from stakeholder demands and trends. The accomplishment of objectives in the stakeholder perspective indispensably facilitates objectives in the innovation and learning and the process perspectives.

The stakeholder perspective is linked to the ‘innovation and learning’ and process perspectives in that the internal operation of higher education at the system and institutional levels affect the way strategic objectives are achieved. These processes affect the way stakeholders define success or failure in implementing objectives. For instance if higher education chooses to pursue professionalization because the labour market requires professional skills but the adopted professionalization strategies are not accepted by students or teachers, they are likely to rate the success on this objective negatively.

The financial perspective relates to innovation, learning and processes: whatever improvements, innovations or revisions are made; a link to available resources is an indispensable first step. Modifications in management require consideration of available and potential resources.

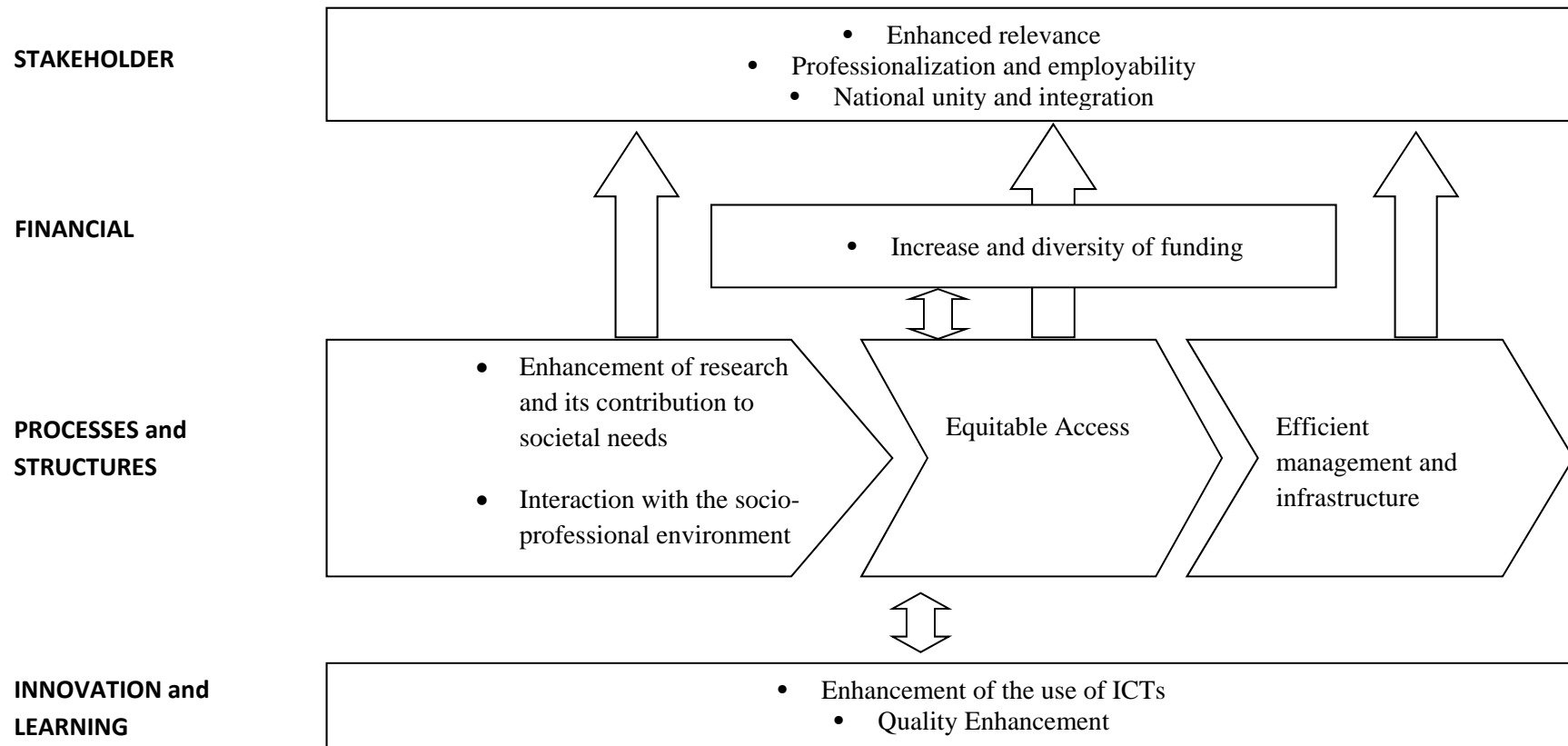


Figure 7. Strategy map for Cameroon higher education

All the four perspectives are linked to the strategic objectives in a mutually effecting manner. For instance the strategic objectives are determined in relation to resources and the need for innovation, learning and relevant processes. These equally influence how and if the strategic objectives are relevant or successfully achieved.

The proposed balanced scorecard framework for Cameroon higher education is depicted by Figure 7. Figure 7 is a strategy map outlining the strategic objectives of Cameroon higher education and the interrelations between the objectives in the different BSC perspectives. The stakeholder perspective includes objectives that directly respond to the expectations of the higher education stakeholders. These are the results of the processes and structures that higher education uses to pursue objectives. Ideally these processes and structure should be aligned with the funding for higher education. The innovation and learning perspective includes the capabilities of higher education and the ability to learn and adapt in order to achieve the objectives in the 'processes and structures' perspective. In order to assess the achievement of the strategic objectives and how the achievements in one perspective are linked to the others, it is necessary to identify the measures of performance. Despite the seeming fuzziness of the measures at the system level the University of Buea's 2007-2015 strategic plan and its 2007-2010 annual reports provide some information on how the institution measures its achievements on the defined objectives. The measures are outlined in table 14 according to the balanced scorecard perspectives and the corresponding strategic objectives.

**Table 14. Measures for the strategic objectives of the University of Buea from 2007-2015**

<b>BSC Perspective</b>	<b>Strategic Objective</b>	<b>Measure(s)</b>
<b>Processes and Structures</b>	Interaction	Outreach and linkages
	Equitable access	Male-female enrolment ratios
		Admission Requirements
	Research	Post graduate education
		Research funding
		Research contribution to national needs
		Research output and new research centres
	Management and infrastructure	Student welfare
		Implementation of new regulations
<b>Innovation and Learning</b>	Information and Communication Technologies	Availability and use of ICTs for administration, teaching and learning
	Quality	Staff quality and teaching conditions

		Graduation time (years) and completion rate Provisions for student feedback
<b>Stakeholder</b>	Relevance	Number and regularity of reporting and feedback channels
		Involvement of non-higher education actors
	Employability	Professional programmes and courses; enrolment numbers
		Programme diversity
National unity and integration	Provision for bilingualism; regional equity in university admissions and management	
<b>Financial</b>	Funding	Funding amount and source

**Table 15. Targets for the strategic objectives of the University of Buea from 2007-2015**

<b>Measure</b>	<b>Target (2007–2015)</b>
Number and regularity of reporting	Consistent annual and quarterly reports
Involvement of non-higher education actors	Involvement of socio-professional actors in programme design, delivery and assessment
Professional programmes and courses; enrolment numbers	Professional component for all programmes; one professional programme per department
Programme diversity	Increase in number and scope of study programmes
Provision for bilingualism; regional equity in university management	No specified Target
Funding amount and source	15% increase in self-generated income from research and donations.
Outreach and linkages	30 partnerships with industries and other institutions
Male-female enrolment ratios	No specified target
Admission Requirements	No specified target
Post graduate education	Post graduate option for all programmes

Research funding	15% of the university's budget allocated to research
Research contribution to national needs	No specified target
Research output and new research centres	One article per staff and one patent per technical department per year; postgraduate training in all disciplines
Student welfare	Accommodation for 5000students on campus
Implementation of new regulations	Complete use of the NUGP and the Bologna Process and other procedures
Use of ICTs for administration, teaching and learning	At least 10% of study programmes by distance mode; use of ICTs
Staff quality and teaching conditions	80% of lecturers with a PhD; two lecturers per office; library acquisition of all core course books; at most 50:1 student-teacher ratio; 30 new lecturers per year
Graduation time and completion rate Provisions for student feedback	At most 4 years for undergraduates and 95% completion rate.< 10% drop out rate

Table 14 outlines the strategic objectives of higher education as mirrored at the University of Buea for the period from 2007-2015. Some measures for the achievement of the objectives are also identified. Table 15 outlines some targets that the University of Buea aimed to reach by 2015. In order to show the interrelations between the objectives, this section discusses first the relations from the innovation and learning perspective to the stakeholder perspective (see Figure 7 and Table 14). Then the interrelations between the objectives and measures from the stakeholder to the innovation and learning perspective are discussed. The objectives in the innovation and learning perspective permit the University to improve and respond to internal and external developments. Such improvements and responses are measured by the extent to which information and communication technologies are used. Even though some of the targets have not been reached, 1% of the study programmes are offered via distance mode, wireless internet has been installed on campus and the internet is increasingly used for teleconferencing, posting assignments, course registration and the library. Other measures of quality include the staff quality, teaching conditions and student completion rate. 90 per cent of the lecturers have enrolled in a doctoral programme and the student-teacher ratio has reduced from 45:1 in 2007 to 41.5:1 (see Table 15). This is in line with the target of at most 50:1 stated in the strategic plan.

The increased use of ICTs and quality enhancement should facilitate the research, interactions, equitable access and render management more efficient. For instance the use of ICTs increases access to new research and funding opportunities. The research funding opportunities contribute to increasing the university funding amount and sources. It also multiplies the possibility to use experts who are not within the country for teleconferences. These external contacts serve for linkages.



The number of linkages increased from 20 to 60 in 2007-2010. Teachers' enrolment into doctoral programmes increases research activity and output of the academic staff. This is also accounting for increased postgraduate education and research contribution to national needs. Through distance learning, access is extended to some students who would normally not be able to enrol. Some of distance education programmes are professional (e.g. the Masters programme in Nursing), thus contributing to employability and relevance. The contribution to relevance is the interaction of students with the socio-professional environment through internships and practical lessons. The creation of professional programmes is also addressing the country's need for health personnel.

Objectives in the stakeholder perspective are related to the relations of the institution with what/who influences the activities of the institution. For the University of Buea, these stakeholders include the Cameroonian society and state, students, graduates, the labour market expectations, national and international sponsors, international trends (e.g. globalization, ICTs, internationalization, knowledge economy and international organizations). In order to be visible and accountable to these stakeholders the university aimed at increasing the opportunities for reporting and feedback. Some initiatives towards relevance are the production of university annual reports, even though the scope of dissemination is limited. The University also organizes fairs and seminars to showcase university research and other activities to the public. Other initiatives include student feedback questionnaires which were not implemented due to teachers' reticence. These interaction opportunities relate to employability when students, teachers and employers interact in a professional programme because the employer gets to know the university's activities and vice-versa. It has also been

stated that the relationships with the students facilitate employment after graduation. In addition, when the stakeholders are informed about the university and vice-versa, the potential sponsors know the financial needs of the university and the university knows what kind of research is required by the sponsors. The result is an enhancement in relevance and funding opportunities. There has been a 92% increase in external research grants, putting university-generated income at 26% of the yearly budget. The increased funding is in turn used to enhance research and management infrastructure which in turn enhances the quality of teaching and learning conditions.

As is the case with measuring performance in higher education, the measures used by the University of Buea largely relate to the process of implementation and not the actual impact of the objectives. One of such is using the number of professional programmes and courses to measure employability. This gives a picture of whether the university is preparing a professional graduate but there are no measures on how these professional programmes have actually improved the ability to get employed easily and speedily after graduation.

### **5.3 Summary of Findings**

There is agreement on what the strategic objectives of higher education are and their pertinence at all levels of the higher education system. The respondents are equally informed about the initiatives or actions being taken to pursue these objectives. This implies that the executive (the ministry and the state) have been successful in selling the strategy to those who are involved in implementing it. However, there are disagreements on how to pursue the objectives and whether the

objectives are the premise of higher education. There was limited consensus at the formulation phase. The university level seems to be insufficiently consulted when the objectives are being identified and the ways of pursuing them are being chosen. This makes it difficult for them to see the role of their day-to-day jobs in the strategy.

It was also revealed that the relevant stakeholders of higher education are known at the ministry and university level. The respondents mentioned the same stakeholders. However these stakeholders do not have the same status and extent of influence in higher education strategic objectives. The state has the highest status and greatest influence while the students have the least. However, some respondents did not see the importance of identifying, responding or reporting to stakeholders. They believe that the university is for scholarship and does not need to be told what to do by outsiders.

In the following section the findings are summarized as directly related to the research question and sub questions. The research questions and sub questions were as follows:

*To what extent do the balanced scorecard and its underlying concepts apply to Cameroon higher education strategic objectives?*

- What are the strategic objectives of higher education in Cameroon?
- What influences/is influenced by the strategic objectives of Cameroon higher education?
- How do the BSC principles apply to the strategic objectives of higher education in Cameroon?

- What are the possible perspectives, objectives and measures in a balanced scorecard for Cameroon higher education?

### **What are the strategic objectives of higher education in Cameroon?**

The first step in answering the research question was to review Cameroon higher education policy documents and identify the strategic objectives. Then the interviews were used to confirm what that these are the strategic objectives as well as why they are chosen. In this study, a strategic objective *'is every objective deemed strategic by the interviewees or Cameroon policy documents'* and meets at least one of the following criteria *'clearly states what has to be done, provides some criteria for measuring success, is consistent with the national and education sectors' main visions, and has a timeframe for its achievement'*. The definition was adopted in a bid to stay true to the research approach of making meaning from the views of the respondents but at the same time being able to obtain data relevant to the research questions. The criteria were added to be able to obtain data on the BSC success principles, some type of measures and relevance. According to the respondents at the Ministry of Higher Education (8) and the respondents at the University of Buea (12) the strategic objectives of higher education in Cameroon are:

1. Professionalization of higher education and ensuring employability of graduates;
2. Enhancement of relevance of training to labour market needs, national and international higher education trends;

3. Enhancement of quality of training, infrastructure and human resources;
4. Equitable access;
5. Enhancement of the use of ICTs,
6. Enhancement of research and its contribution to societal needs;
7. Management efficiency;
8. Foster national unity and integration;
9. Interaction with and involvement of the socio-professional environment.
10. Increase funding and reduce dependence on state funding.

**What influences/is influenced by the strategic objectives of Cameroon higher education?**

In addition to stating the strategic objectives, the policy documents and interviews revealed who/what are behind the strategic objectives. Considering that the BSC approach requires that the organization should be able to identify, interact with and inform its relevant stakeholders. The Cameroon higher education also places great importance on relevance and reporting to stakeholders. Stakeholders as used in this study refer to *‘all actors/groups that influence and/or are influenced by the strategic objectives of higher education’*. In the Cameroon higher education, these stakeholders do not have the same level of influence. It was also noticed that the reporting to stakeholders was more from the higher education system to stakeholders than vice-versa. In other words, provision for feedback from stakeholders was limited. Stakeholders also include the environment in which the higher education system operates. The respondents and policy documents identified the following stakeholders:

- The State (government);
- National needs and policies (e.g. increase employment, achieve emergence by 2035, integration and unity, and international competitiveness);
- Private employers and industries (socio-professional environment);
- International and regional organizations or donors;
- International higher trends (e.g. globalization, knowledge economy, mobility, competition, etc.);
- University Academics;
- Civil Society;
- University students;
- Local environment of a university.

**How do the BSC principles apply to the strategic objectives of higher education in Cameroon?**

The first step in answering this research question was to review what the BSC literature defines as BSC success principles and how they are applicable to organizations. These principles were then applied to the data collected in Cameroon with the aim of finding out if there are gaps in management that could be enhanced by the success principles. The following section discusses the BSC success principles in relation to the strategic objectives of higher education in Cameroon.

### **Expressing strategy in operational terms and aligning the organization to strategy**

The proponents (policy makers and university administrators) of strategic objectives have been able to express most of the strategic objectives in operational terms. However this clarity is limited to what the objectives are and not why these objectives are strategic. Evidence of this limitation is that the respondents know what the strategic objectives are but they do not agree on the importance of the objectives for higher education. It was also difficult to identify the outcome measures for the strategic objectives. This was difficult for the respondents as well as for the researcher to extract from the policy documents. Where these measures exist, there were just proxies and not real measures of the strategic objectives.

For instance outcome measures for professionalization and employability include the number of professional programmes. These figures do not tell whether the graduates from these programmes have been rendered fit for the labour market. The figures only show what has been done towards that objective. Another example is that some rewards are given for the wrong reasons. For instance, one respondent revealed that lecturers are rewarded for the number of hours taught per year. This fails to check the quality of what was taught. It begs the questions 'did the students learn what is required for that course? Were the learning outcomes met?' One can conclude that some aspects of the strategy are clearly defined while some are incomplete or address the wrong things. The study reveals that most reforms or objectives are initiated before ever thinking about the possible implications.

Alignment of the organization (higher education) to the strategic objectives is not something that is sufficiently integrated into the process of identifying strategies. The practice is to act like fire fighters. They come in when there is a fire and try to turn it off with no reference to the past or to future implications. Referring to the 1993 reforms, one respondent stated that underlying the need to decongest the lone university was a political goal to avoid the concentration of people who are able to protest (intellectuals) in one place. So without taking time to think, the university centres were transformed into full-fledged universities with the same type of programmes. This implies that some strategic objectives are underlined by undeclared political goals. These underlying agendas prevent thinking or prospecting to foresee potential implications. Such prospecting would mean aligning higher education to the objectives, taking into consideration the peculiarities of the system and the different parts which will be affected by the strategic objectives.

### **Make strategy everyone's everyday job**

There is limited knowledge on how individual jobs contribute to achieving strategic objectives. Most of the respondents could not directly link their jobs to strategic objectives. There is therefore limited effort to make strategy everyone's everyday job in higher education. There seems to be excessive focus on administrative descriptions than on what each job description brings to the higher education objectives. This may be on the assumption that the each individual should be able to decipher the contribution of their job to the strategic objectives. The interviews prove that this is not the case for many of the respondents. The need for the BSC corresponds to Niven's assessment that



employees do not know how their daily activities contribute to the organization's success (see Niven 2008, p.67-68- Item 9 in Appendix VII) He also states that "the vast majority of organizations have a long way to go when it comes to communicating their most important messages — vision and strategy — to their most important constituents: employees." It is realised that respondents are more aware of their job descriptions or completely unable to state how they contribute to strategic objectives. One can conclude that the proponents of the strategic objectives still have a long way to go when it comes to communicating the strategy to their most important constituents: the lecturers and the university administrators.

### **Make strategy a continual process**

The strategic objectives are not to be seen as an end in themselves but as reference points for all the stakeholders within and without the higher education system. These objectives are intended to be continuously adaptive and revisable as the environment of higher education requires. This is a form of addressing relevance as *the fit between what society expects of institutions and what they do*. The policy documents and responses reveal that there is awareness that the university is operating in a dynamic environment and needs to constantly adapt its strategic objectives accordingly. The revision or adapting is done by involving stakeholders from the socio-professional environment in the university's activities. Adaptation is also done by promoting student-led education, enabling students to create jobs and by considering the national and international socio-economic environment. The ministry and university also enter into partnership agreements with non-university actors for feedback and funding. There

were no precise intervals at which the reforms or revision of strategic objectives were done.

Reporting and revision at the university level is done quarterly, annually and when the need arises. These reforms are done in consideration of relevant stakeholders. Feedback loops exist in terms of the reporting that is done through different media but there is insufficient opportunity for inflow of feedback. Higher education at the system level is doing sufficient reporting to its stakeholders but the opportunities to hear from these stakeholders are limited to open days, strategic planning meetings, open forums and seminars. Provisions for student feedback are made but there are rarely or only partially implemented. Provisions for graduate feedback are limited and uncoordinated Reporting within the higher education system is addressed but at the international level there is insufficient or negative reporting. Some respondents also held that at the institutional level, reporting to the immediate local environment is minimal. Despite the numerous modes of reporting to stakeholders, the respondents could not tell whether these reports actually reached the relevant stakeholders.

### **Mobilize leadership for change**

In the case of the BMP (Bachelor, Master, PhD) sequence in Cameroon, the ministry and presidency provided the necessary information about why the change was necessary. Regulatory instruments were also provided and at the university level there were changes in the curricula and the way courses and credits were delivered. However, at the University of Buea, it was realized that there

was insufficient effort at gaining consensus about whether change was needed. It was also revealed that not all teachers were sufficiently knowledgeable about what the BMP is and how it has to bring change. This implies that communication, a major concept underlying this principle, is a problem in Cameroon higher education. The communication issue seems to be addressed when it relates to communicating what strategy is, but is problematic in terms of communicating why the strategic objective should be what it is; explaining how it can be achieved and what its achievement will mean for higher education.

**What are the possible perspectives, goals and measures in a balanced scorecard for Cameroon higher education?**

The main BSC concepts used in this study and appropriate to the Cameroonian context are relevance, clarity, commitment, and communication as follows:

- Relevance to changing environment and stakeholders.
- Clarity and awareness of strategic objectives and initiatives by all actors.
- Commitment and clarity of roles.
- Link and communication to all relevant stakeholders.
- Relevance of implementation initiatives to strategic objectives.
- Awareness of peculiarities in relation to other like organizations (other higher education systems in the region and state higher education institutions in Cameroon).

On the basis of these concepts and the data, the following BSC the innovation and learning; processes and structures; stakeholder and; financial perspectives are used (see section 5.2).

## **6 CONCLUSIONS, PROSPECTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Chapters 4 and 5 presented the data and meanings of the data. Chapter 6 draws conclusions from the results and prospects for strategic management and the balanced scorecard in Cameroonian higher education. The recommendations for policy and future research are outlined.

### **6.1 Conclusions and prospects for Cameroon higher education management and the BSC success principles**

The score (63/100 in Table 13) from Niven's need assessment questionnaire implies difficulty in successfully implementing strategic objectives and meeting the expectations of stakeholders. Based on this, a balanced scorecard approach is strongly recommended to help focus on strategy implementation and aligning higher education to its goals. However, in terms of data and information infrastructure, Cameroon higher education may not be ready for a balanced scorecard approach. The principles and underlying concepts present sources of improvements in the identification and implementation of strategic objectives. The concepts of clarity, communication, consensus,

participation and relevance seem to be difficult to attain in the identification and implementation of strategic objectives in Cameroon higher education.

The ability (or the inability) to fill the balanced scorecard framework (presented chapter 5) with all the required information and answers to the questions in the different perspectives may be a good starting point to evaluate the extent to which the success principles and underlying concepts are being applied. Cameroon higher education however already possesses most of the necessary information and prerequisites for a balanced scorecard (strategic objectives, initiatives, some measures and the need for management to improve). The difficulties lie in legitimizing these objectives to those involved and gaining consensus on the process of identifying and implementing the strategic objectives. The BSC in itself can mostly be used as a communication tool for the strategic objectives of higher education in Cameroon. As a starting point, the BSC success principles can be applied to the process of identifying and implementing strategic objectives. The proposed BSC framework shows the links between the strategic objectives and measures of their achievement. It could be used at all levels of the higher education system to facilitate understanding of the vision of the system in general.

Another conclusion is that the prospects for better management of strategic objectives in Cameroon higher education are good because the system can already build on the strengths identified and make efforts to reduce the challenges faced. It is important to note that communication and clarity seem to be serious setbacks. The balanced scorecard success

principles and their underlying concepts could have the following functions:

- Translating the strategic objectives into measurable parameters
- Communicating the strategic objectives
- Aligning individual jobs with the strategic objectives
- Providing feedback on implementation

By

- Setting the objectives
- Determining performance measures
- Facilitating the prediction of outcomes
- Determining the implementation initiatives
- Providing the ability to see the big picture

The idea of the BSC as a strategic management and measurement tool seems to be more applicable to a single higher education institution than to a higher education system. It was noticed that the links between the strategic objectives, initiatives and measures would be clearer at the institution level than at the system level. This is consistent with other applications of the BSC to higher education which have either focused on single institutions or units within institutions. The confirmation that the BSC is more suitable to single institutions does not mean that the BSC cannot contribute anything to the management of strategic objectives in higher education systems. In the case of Cameroon, the basic framework can be used at the identification phase to ensure that all the necessary aspects have been addressed: relevant stakeholder involvement, consensus on the objectives, clarity and measurability of results.

At the implementation and evaluation phase, it can be used to evaluate the clarity of the objectives to all stakeholders involved, provisions for revision as well as the links between objectives and measures. Kettunen (2009, p.31) also holds that the Balanced Scorecard can be used to evaluate the performance of an institution and the achievement of its strategic objectives. Kettunen (ibid) argues “that the evaluation of higher education institutions and their activities is easily random, inaccurate and uncertain if there is no common framework to evaluate the institutions.” In his opinion, “a common framework helps evaluators avoid misinterpretations and erroneous conceptions.”

Even though the study involved only one state university, the results may be applicable to other state universities in Cameroon. The inclusion of the system level makes the results transferable because all the state universities follow the directives of the ministry and have the same stakeholders, strategic objectives and measures. The gap in this study is the inability to see the differences in how the strategic objectives are interpreted by the different university locality contexts.

In terms of strengths of the Cameroon higher education system and the University of Buea, the following were stated by interviewees or identified from policy documents:

- Trust and confidence within the African region which is evident in student influx and the ability to host regional study programmes like the Pan African University, the Catholic University of Central Africa and the regional virtual university.



- Economic and higher education leadership in the Central African region. Most of the research in the sub region is done in Cameroon.
- Bilingualism which facilitates the attraction of both Anglophone and francophone actors (researchers, students, teachers and donors).
- Cameroon is one of the countries returning trust to HE for Africa's development. Some African countries mainstream HE in their economic development strategies (see Doh 2012). These were the cases, (as at mid-2000) of Malawi, Cameroon and Zambia who highlighted the use of their higher education in their poverty reduction strategy papers with Ethiopia and Cameroon envisaging to significantly increase their HE budgets<sup>37</sup> (Bloom, Canning and Chan, 2006 p, 6; IMF 2003, 2006).
- English as a language of instruction means connection to modern science whose main language is English.
- The wideness of programme offerings.
- The performance of graduates on the national and international labour markets.
- There are promising new initiatives like the master programme in higher education governance<sup>38</sup> being established at the University of Yaoundé 2 which creates an opportunity for training in the management of higher education.

It can also be concluded that all the relevant stakeholders of higher education are recognized but the state remains the most influential

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<sup>37</sup> Cameroon envisages an increase from 3.8 per cent to 5.8 per cent (Bloom, et al., 2006, PRPS 2003 and 2006).

<sup>38</sup> <http://www.universite-yde2.org/uy2/spip.php?article99>

stakeholder and has control over the other stakeholders. It defines the rules and regulations of interactions between higher education and stakeholders. There is substantial provision for national reporting to stakeholders but there is insufficient reporting to international stakeholders and insufficient provisions for feedback from stakeholders to higher education. It is also concluded that a mix of communication channels is used for reporting but this mix is not comprehensive because some media are either underused or not used at all. In addition opportunities for feedback from the stakeholders are not commensurate to the reporting to them.

## **6.2 Recommendations for Policy and Future Research**

In the 1990s, Peter Drucker himself lessened the significance of his organization management method –management by objectives when he said, “it’s just another tool. It is not the great cure for management inefficiency.” The recommendations and the proposed BSC are just a contribution to the management of higher education. They do not present a panacea for all the management issues faced by Cameroon higher education but it is believed that the study makes a significant contribution to how management of higher education in Cameroon is done. The study presents interesting new avenues for research and possible ways of looking to improve the way strategic objectives are identified and implemented in Cameroon higher education. The following section outlines a few recommendations to the Cameroon higher education policy makers.

Continuity cannot be achieved when objectives or strategies are tightly linked or dependent on people than on institutions. As is the case in Cameroon in general (management culture even in other sectors), it was realized that there is excessive importance placed on the individuals than on institutions. This creates a situation where whole objectives or initiatives become obsolete because of a change in leadership. For a system to be sustainable and for long term objectives to be sustained there is need for a shift in the focus from people to institutions. According to Carter McNamara (n.d.), performance management facilitates depersonalizing issues; focussing on behaviours and results and not people.

It may be beneficial to develop tools and create awareness before plans or regulations. The policy makers can construct and expand their ability to guide the system by developing planning tools or a planning groundwork rather than plans. Thus, for example, by building a base of information that highlights key indicators like the income and expenditure, enrolment data, scholarly and teaching productivity and quality, graduate employment rate, specific study programme employment rate. A context is established over time. Within this context thinking about the necessity for higher education to pursue the identified objectives is facilitated. By highlighting how the decentralization of finance management within the universities will aid in management efficiency, the universities are informed about the need for rules and regulations before these are initiated. Not everyone will like the production of such information but over time attention will be drawn to the need for change because such data will highlight future trends. Concerning, brain drain issues, it was stated that “...the issue of brain drain is real and haunts us..... there is need for appropriate

infrastructure, improvement of financial and non-financial incentives and development of a proper human resource plan” (BUN 2009, p.29). “With regards to human resources, brain drain is a real threat. Our current globalized world speaks economics and no country can hold down its human resources on paltry salary scales. The universities are emptying out” (BUN 2007, p.9). It is necessary to avoid pursuing objectives which may be counterproductive. It is necessary to think out of the box and do some prospection of the future. How can you advocate increasing professional programmes when you do not have data on the actual number of graduates who remain to work in the national labour market? In addition there is limited information on the readiness of the national market to absorb all these graduates. The idea of developing tools before objectives is related to thinking about resources and infrastructure before taking actions. It was stated that the 1993 reforms multiplied one problem by six in just a few years. In a bid to solve the problem of overcrowding in the lone University of Yaoundé 1, five other state universities were created without thinking about infrastructure to accommodate students and teachers. The result was five more universities with similar problems.

Those who identify and propose strategic objectives should limit them to a few themes and reiterate them constantly as if they were a stump speech. The policy makers can take an even more active guiding role by emphasizing a limited number of strategic themes that, if persuasive, can direct decision making. The themes must be inclusive in character, relevant to most, if not all the institutions and higher education- related agencies in the system, but implemented locally by each institution in its own unique way. The themes would therefore respect institutional

autonomy while providing them with a collective focus for acting and planning.

The influence of stakeholders should be revisited. It is recommended that the lecturers (those who actually implement) should be more involved, especially in the identification and implementation of strategic objectives. Their involvement in identification means more ownership of the process and reduction in the tendency to feel alienated or just being there to do what is prescribed.

In terms of reporting, the higher education system should review its mode of reporting and try to establish its presence on international media as much as national coverage is done. With the assumption that reporting determines the type of students, partnerships, and funding opportunities– the wider the scope of reporting, the better the opportunities. It is also recommended that the provisions for reporting to the higher education system (feedback) should be increased. This will enable higher education to better see where to change or improve.

Like every scientific endeavour, this study did not exhaust all the possibilities for research around the topic of strategic objectives of higher education in Cameroon. In this light, the study opens up the following possibilities for future research.

Firstly, the study was limited to the Ministry of Higher Education and one state institution. Future studies could use a more representative approach by: including all the eight state universities; including both state and private institutions and; including the professional higher education institutions. A wider study could equally use data collection

instruments that allow for wider coverage (e.g. surveys or questionnaires).

Secondly, the seeming importance of relevance to Cameroonian higher education necessitates a study on the employability of higher education graduates in the Cameroonian labour market. This may take the form of assessing the situation before and after the implementation of the Bologna Process and the New University Governance Policy.

Thirdly, a study that involves the perspectives of some of the mentioned stakeholders will be interesting and useful to inform policy makers on how these stakeholders see the strategic objectives of higher education.

This study could be extended by conducting a study to show the links (strategy maps for both system and institutional objectives) in the balanced scorecard components, analysing how and why these links exist. In addition, future studies could build on the existing national statistics on higher education institutions in Cameroon. Such data could be used to present the time series data which can be useful to set target values for the planning periods.

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[http://courses.aiu.edu/Certificate/Administration\\_per](http://courses.aiu.edu/Certificate/Administration_per)

[cent20and per cent20MKT/Strategic per cent20Management/Leccion per cent201/Session per cent201 per cent20Strategic per cent20Management.pdf](#)

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Seminar on the creation of a masters and doctoral programme in Higher Education Governance at the University of Yaoundé 2 <http://www.universite-yde2.org/uy2/spip.php?article99>

## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX I: Interview Guide for Respondents at the Cameroon Ministry of Higher Education (S<sup>40</sup>)

#### Introduction

My name is Bilola Theresia. I am a PhD student from the University Of Turku, Finland. I am conducting interviews towards my dissertation on “the formulation and implementation of strategic objectives in higher education”. The interview will be recorded and later transcribed for use as research data. This information will be used anonymously for research purposes only. Thank you for accepting to participate in my study. The interview is organized into the following themes:

#### THEMES

- E. Background (Position and Role in Policy Identification and Implementation).
- F. Identification of strategic objectives and stakeholders.
- G. Implementation and evaluation: measures, revision and relevance.
- H. Undefined (open questions).

#### **A. Background (Position and Role in Policy Identification and Implementation)<sup>41</sup>**

SQ1. **Main role(s) attached to position** a.) Policy formulation b.)  
Policy implementation d.)Teaching e.)Research

f.) All of the above (please state what is most relevant to your current position  
e.g. rector: teaching, research, administration) e.) Other (please specify)

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<sup>40</sup>‘S’ stands for System level or interviews at the Ministry of Higher Education.  
‘Q’ stands for question and is always followed by the question number e.g. ‘SQ1’ stands for System level question number 1 and ‘UQ1’ is University level question number 1.

<sup>41</sup> SQ1 and SQ2 filled by researcher after interview based on responses to SQ3

SQ2. **Gender:** a.)Male                      b.)Female

SQ3. What does your job/position contribute to the identification, implementation and evaluation of strategic objectives in Cameroonian higher education?

### **B. Identification of strategic objectives and stakeholders**

SQ4. How do you define strategic objective in the context of Cameroon higher education?

- What are the most urgent or priority objectives that the higher education system in Cameroon is currently striving to achieve?
- Why are these considered the priority at this time?

SQ5. Who are the key stakeholders in determining the objectives of higher education in Cameroon?

- Why are they considered stakeholders (customers, funders, etc.)?

SQ6. The new policy on university governance laid down in Decree No.2005/383 of 17<sup>th</sup> October 2005 emphasizes effectiveness, efficiency, and management with rigor, transparency and results in higher education. What does effectiveness, efficiency and management with rigor, transparency and results mean in the Cameroonian higher education context?

### **C. Implementation and evaluation: measures, revision and relevance**

SQ7. How often are strategic objectives of higher education revisited or redefined? What drives the re-evaluations e.g. funding, global trends, students (customers), labour market needs?

SQ8. What are the key measures of the successful implementation of the strategic objectives you have mentioned?

- Professionalization of higher education and employability of graduates

- Implementation of the new university governance policy
- Research modernisation

SQ9. Has there been a change or revision of the foregoing objectives? Why?

SQ10. How does Cameroon higher education ensure its usefulness (relevance to job market, national needs, global environment, etc.)?

SQ11. Does the ministry follow up with students' lives (after graduation)? For instance by researching on the employability of graduates, migration statistics etc.?

- Does this affect the assessment of the relevance of Cameroon university education?

#### **D. Undefined (open questions)**

SQ12. Is there anything else you would like to add concerning the formulation, implementation and evaluation of objectives in Cameroon higher education?

Thank you very much for your time. If you are interested in getting the results of this study, please indicate your interest and how you will like to be contacted.



## **APPENDIX II: Interview Guide for Respondents at the University of Buea (U<sup>42</sup>)**

### **Introduction**

My name is Bilola Theresia. I am a PhD student from the University Of Turku, Finland. I am conducting interviews towards my dissertation on “*the formulation and implementation of strategic objectives in higher education*”. The interview will be recorded and later transcribed for use as research data. This information will be used anonymously for research purposes only. Thank you for accepting to participate in my study. The interview is organized along the following themes:

### **THEMES**

- Background (Position and Role in Policy Identification and Implementation)
- Mission, Strategic Objectives and Stakeholders
- Relevance and measures
- Undefined (open question)

#### **A. Background (Position and Role in Policy Identification and Implementation)<sup>43</sup>**

##### **UQ1. Position:**

- a.) University central administration
- b.) Faculty administrator
- c.) Academic staff
- d.) Departmental Administrator
- e.) Support Staff
- f.) All of the above (please state which is most relevant to your current

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<sup>42</sup> ‘U’ stands for University level or interviews carried out at the University of Buea.

<sup>43</sup> UQ1 and UQ2 filled by researcher after interview based on responses to UQ3.

position e.g. rector: academic staff, research, administration) g.) Other  
(please specify)

UQ2. Gender: a.)Male b.)Female

UQ3. What does your job/position contribute to the identification, implementation and evaluation of strategic objectives in Cameroonian higher education?

#### **B. Mission, Strategic Objectives and Stakeholders**

UQ4. What are the most urgent objectives of HE in Cameroon and why are they considered urgent?

UQ5. How do these objectives trickle down to the University of Buea in teaching, research and outreach?

UQ6. Are these objectives revisited or adapted to the constantly changing environment of higher education?

UQ7. According to the annual report 2006/2007, “a collective effort involving all staff and input from other partners was used to draw the current strategic plan”. Who are these stakeholders and what form of evaluation did they do?

UQ8. How was the staff involved?

UQ9. Are all these stakeholders in the compiling and dissemination of annual reports?

UQ10. Why would a student or another stakeholder choose the University of Buea over the other seven (7) state universities?

UQ11. To whom does the UB account for:

- Use of Financial Resources

- Achievement of strategic objectives

### **C. Relevance and measures**

UQ12. Can you describe the process of compiling the annual reports?

UQ13. Why has it become more important to report the university's activities widely (online, etc.)?

UQ14. Besides the annual reports, are there other ways by which the university 'sells' itself?

UQ15. How does this exposure affect the university in terms of reputation, attracting partnerships, graduate employment etc.?

UQ16. Does the university know how its graduates fare on the labour market?

UQ17. How relevant are the SPs of the university to:

- National needs
- Needs of its region of location

UQ18. How does the university measure that the following objectives have been met and what strategies are used to achieve them?

- Implementation of the BMP
- Enhancement of postgraduate education and staff competence
- Enhancing Research Management and dissemination of results
- Internal Quality Assurance Procedures
- Improvement in Infrastructure

UQ19. As the prime stakeholders or beneficiaries of the university, how are students involved in identifying and implementing the University's objectives?

**D. Undefined (open question)**

UQ20. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Thank you very much for your time. If you are interested in getting the results of this study, please indicate your interest and how you will like to be contacted.

**APPENDIX III: Request for Authorisation to Conduct Research at the  
Ministry of Higher Education**



His Excellency the Minister of Higher Education  
Cameroon.

Sir,

**Subject: Strategic Policy Formulation and Implementation in Cameroonian  
Higher Education.**

It is our pleasure to contact you on the above subject. We are of the Research Unit for the Sociology of Education, University of Turku-Finland. Our institute specialises in research on the sociology of education and education policy, including international comparative research. RUSE participates in current debates on national educational policy and provides postgraduate training in the sociology of education by integrating students in its research projects. It has been of interest to us to understand the how, why and for whom strategic policies are formulated and implemented in higher education. The study will serve to inform policy on the gaps in policy and implementation as well as recommendations for improvement. The study involves interviews and document reviews and would be conducted by our Cameroonian researcher, Bilola Theresia Samfoga Doh, for data required for her doctoral dissertation. The interviews and document reviews aim at obtaining interpretations of:

1. The strategic objectives of higher education in Cameroon.
2. System and institutional perception on the formulation and implementation of strategic objectives.

The target respondents are staff at the conceptual and implementation levels of the Cameroon higher education system: the Ministry of Higher Education the central administration of some of the State Universities and academics. Considering that our researcher is a bilingual Cameroonian, the interviews would be in French or English (depending on the respondent's first language) and will be conducted in December 2011-Jauary 2012. On grounds of the interest we and the higher education research community attach to the relevance of such research projects in informing policy, we would appreciate if you would kindly authorise and provide the necessary assistance to enable Mrs Samfoga Doh undertake the research.

Sincerely,

Professor, Director (Project Supervisor)

Research Unit for the Sociology of Education, RUSE

Hämeenkatu 1

FIN-20014 University of Turku

Finland

Tel +358 2 333 6682

Fax. +358 2 333 6524

e-mail: [ruse@utu.fi](mailto:ruse@utu.fi)

www: [ruse.utu.fi](http://ruse.utu.fi)

**APPENDIX IV: Approval of Request to Conduct Research at the  
Ministry of Higher Education <sup>44</sup>**

Republic of Cameroon  
Ministry of Higher Education  
Planning, Research and Cooperation  
Cooperation Unit

The Minister  
To  
The Project Supervisor  
University of Turku-Finland  
Research Unit for the Sociology of Education, RUSE  
Hameenkatu 1, FIN-20014 FINLAND  
Tel: +35823336682 /Fax +35823336524  
E-mail : [ruse@utu.fi](mailto:ruse@utu.fi)/ [www.ruse.utu.fi](http://www.ruse.utu.fi)

Ref ; Y/L of  
Subject ; Authorization to carry out research on the Cameroon Higher  
Education System.

Dear Sir,

In response to your letter referenced above, I hereby wish to inform you  
that I unreservedly authorise Ms BILOLA THERESIA SAMFOGA  
DOH to carry out her research in Cameroon Higher Education  
Institutions. Upon arrival, she should get in contact with the Planning,

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<sup>44</sup> All authorizations were given in hard copy or fax. The contents of these were reproduced here without the French part of the letterhead, signature, and the stamp and dates. The hard or faxed copies were seen by the dissertation supervisor/ unit coordinator. Font sizes are not the same as in the original copies.

Research and Cooperation Unit of my ministry for practical modalities./-

Kindly Accept my best regards.

Stamp of the Ministry of Higher  
Education and signature of the Minister of higher education



**APPENDIX V: Request for Authorisation to Conduct Research at the University of Buea**



The Vice-Chancellor,  
University of Buea  
Cameroon.

Sir,

**Subject: Strategic Policy Formulation and Implementation in  
Cameroonian Higher Education.**

It is our pleasure to contact you on the above subject. We are of the Research Unit for the Sociology of Education, University of Turku-Finland. Our institute specialises in research on the sociology of education and education policy, including international comparative research. RUSE participates in current debates on national educational policy and provides postgraduate training in the sociology of education by integrating students in its research projects. It has been of interest to us to understand the how, why and for whom strategic policies are formulated and implemented in higher education. The study will serve to inform policy on the gaps in policy and implementation as well as recommendations for improvement. The study involves interviews and document reviews and would be conducted by our Cameroonian researcher, Bilola Theresia Samfoga Doh, for data required for

her doctoral dissertation. The interviews and document reviews aim at obtaining interpretations of:

1. The strategic objectives of higher education in Cameroon.
2. System and institutional perception on the formulation and implementation of strategic objectives.

The target respondents are staff at the conceptual and implementation levels of the Cameroon higher education system; the Ministry of Higher Education and of the central administration of some of the State Universities and academics. Considering that our researcher is a bilingual Cameroonian, the interviews would be in French or English (depending on the respondent's first language) and will be conducted in December 2011-Jauary 2012. On grounds of the interest we and the higher education research community attach to the relevance of such research projects in informing policy, we would appreciate if you would kindly authorise and provide the necessary assistance to enable Mrs Samfoga Doh undertake the research.

Sincerely,  
Professor, Director (Project Supervisor)

Research Unit for the Sociology of Education, RUSE  
Hämeenkatu 1  
FIN-20014 University of Turku  
Finland  
Tel +358 2 333 6682  
Fax. +358 2 333 6524  
e-mail: [ruse@utu.fi](mailto:ruse@utu.fi)  
www: [ruse.utu.fi](http://ruse.utu.fi)

**APPENDIX VI: Approval of Request to Conduct Research at the  
University of Buea**

UNIVERSITY OF BUEA

P.O.Box 63<sup>45</sup>  
Buea, CAMEROON  
Tel: (237) 33 32 21 34/ 33 32 26 90/ 33 32 27 06  
Fax: (237) 332 22 72

---

Your Ref: \_\_\_\_\_

Our Ref: \_\_\_\_\_

Bilola Theresia Samfoga Doh  
Doctoral Student  
Research Unit for the Sociology of Education  
Hameenkatu 1  
FIN-20014, University of Turku  
Finland  
E-mail: [mirauha@utu.fi](mailto:mirauha@utu.fi)  
Fax: +358-2-333 6524

Authorization to do Research (in Regularization)

We write in response to your request for a formal authorization to do research on the topic “Strategic Policy Formulation in Cameroon Higher Education”, at the University of Buea. We are pleased to grant you this formal authorization in regularization of the earlier approval by the Vice-Chancellor during your research visit to the University of Buea.

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<sup>45</sup> Some parts of the letterhead and dates are excluded to maintain confidentiality.

We hope that the data collected has been useful for your research and reiterate our request that this data is utilized strictly for the study. We further expect respect of confidentiality and other ethical considerations in the exploitation of the information collected during the course of this study.

Vice-Chancellor's signature and stamp of the University of Buea

Vice-Chancellor

cc:

-DVCs

-REG

**APPENDIX VII: Assessing the Need for a Balanced Scorecard (Niven 2008, p.67-68)**

12345	1. We have invested in quality management and other improvement initiatives but we have not seen corresponding increase in customer results.
12345	2. If we did not produce our current performance reports for a month, nobody will notice
12345	3. We create significant value from intangible assets such as employee knowledge and innovation, customer relationships and strong culture.
12345	4. We have a strategy (have had strategies in the past) but have had difficulties implementing them.
12345	5. We rarely review our performance measures and suggest new and innovative measures.
12345	6. Our senior management team spends the majority of their time discussing variances from the plan and other operational issues.
12345	7. Budgeting at our organization is very political and largely based on historical trends.
12345	8. Our employees do not have a solid understanding of our mission, vision and strategy. They do not know how their day-to-day actions contribute to the success in our strategic objectives.
12345	9. Nobody owns the performance measurement process.
12345	10. We have numerous 'strategic' initiatives, but it is possible that not all are truly strategic.
12345	11. There is little accountability for the things that we agree to do.
12345	12. People tend to stay within their 'silos' and as a result we have little collaboration among departments.
12345	13. Our employees cannot easily access the critical information needed to serve customers.

12345	14. Our priorities are often dictated by current necessity or 'firefighting'.
12345	15. The environment in which we operate is changing, and in order to succeed we too must change.
12345	16. We face increased pressure from stakeholders to show results.
12345	17. We do not have clearly defined performance targets for financial and non- financial indicators.
12345	18. We cannot clearly articulate our strategy in a one-page document or map.
12345	19. We sometimes make decisions that are beneficial in the short-term but harm long term value creation.
12345	20. Our employees do not know how their day-to-day actions contribute to the organization's success.

Source: Niven (2008 p.67-68). Some changes in wordings

**APPENDIX VIII: Balanced Scorecard for Higher Educational Institutions (Umayal and Suganthi, 2010)**

Perspective	Goal	Measures
Learning and Growth	Pedagogy enhancement	Innovation in teaching and learning method
		Distance learning facilities
	Technology leadership	Innovations in programmes and curriculum
		Enhancing facilities
	Quality driven process	Awards
		Value added learning
		Certification
		Accreditation
Internal Business	Upgrading curriculum	Introduction of new programmes
		Availability and use of latest technology
	Teaching and learning skills	Faculty credentials
		Production efficiency
	Enhancing facilities	Development and motivation of students and faculty
	Customer	Reputation of the institution in the public
Curriculum standards		
Market share		
Yield		

		Positions held by alumni
		Feedback from customers (students, parents, employers, etc)
	Student placements	Students potential
		Performance of students
	Quality of faculty	Skills of faculty
		Teaching-learning facilities
		Counselling and mentoring of students
	Good citizenship	Number of students and faculty in public service
		Philanthropic and legally clean records of students, faculty and alumni
	Financial	Increased grants and contracts
Fund raising		
Alumni relations		
Resource accountability		Maximum asset utilization
Increased revenue streams		Executive education
		Academic capitalism
		Encouragement of chairs and professorships
Budgeting		Fee structure
		Salary structure
		Fund allotments for various issues

Source: (Umayal and Suganthi 2010, p.18)



## **APPENDIX IX: List of Abbreviations**

ALUCAM	Compagnie Camerounaise de l'aluminium/ Cameroon aluminium company
A' Levels	Advanced Levels
AUF	Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie
BAC	Baccalaureate
BSC	Balanced Scorecard
BMP	Bachelor, Master, PhD
BUN	Buea University Newsletter
CEMAC	Communauté Economique et Monétaire de l'Afrique Centrale/ Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa
DVC	Deputy Vice-Chancellor
ENSA	Ecole Nationale Supérieure Agronomique (/ National Higher School of Agronomy
ENSAI	Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Sciences Agro-industrielles/National Higher School of Agro-Industrial Sciences
EO	Evaluating Objectives
ESSP	Education Sector Strategic Plan/ Stratégie Sectorielle de l'Education

EU	European Union
FCFA	Franc Communauté Financière Africaine
G.C.E.	General Certificate of Education
GESP/DSCE	Growth and Employment Strategy Paper/ Document de la Stratégie pour la Croissance et l'Emploi
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HOD	Head of Department
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INJS/NIYS	Institut National de la Jeunesse et des Sports / National Institute of Youth and Sports
IRIC	Institut de Relations Internationales du Cameroun/ International Relations Institute of Cameroon
IT	Information Technology
IUT	Institut Universitaire de Technologie

LMD	Licence, Mastère, Doctorat
LOHE	Law on the orientation of higher education/Loi d'Orientation de l'Enseignement Supérieure
M	Ministry (Respondent from the Ministry of Higher Education when followed by a number, e.g. M4)
MBNQA	Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award
MIDENO	North-West Development Authority
MINEFI	Ministry of Finance
MINESUP	Ministère d'Enseignement Supérieur/Ministry of Higher Education
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NUGP	New University Governance Policy/La Nouvelle Gouvernance Universitaire
PAPESAC	Higher Education for Professions in Central Africa Expert Support Team
PAU	Pan-African University
PBM	Performance- Based Management
PBM SIG	Performance-Based Management Special Interest Group

PBF	Performance-Based Funding
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
SIG	Special Interest Group
SPHE	Short Professional Higher Education
SP	Strategic Plan/ Strategic planning
TQM	Total Quality Management
UB	University of Buea (Respondent from the University of Buea when followed by a number, e.g. UB1)
UBDEF	University of Buea Development Fund
UCCAO	Union Centrale des Sociétés Coopératives Agricole de L'Ouest
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization
WHO	World Health Organization
WDHE	World Declaration on Higher Education