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## Research Article

# ADMINISTRATIVE CHANGE AND THE ENHANCEMENT OF RELEVANCE IN STATE HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM IN CAMEROON

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## ABSTRACT

This study was designed to examine administrative change and the enhancement of relevance in state higher education system in Cameroon. The study was guided by two objectives which examine how change in administrative policy and administrative skills will enhance the relevance in state higher education system in Cameroon. This is supported by the theory of Fullan who state that that educational change is a process and to begin the change process you must be able to fully involve all human participants (stakeholders) in the change process for a better sustainability. This is supported by the theory of Fullan who state that that educational change is a process and to begin the change process you must be able to fully involve all human participants (stakeholders) in the change process for a better sustainability. The concurrent mixed-methods research design specifically the concurrent triangulation design was adopted for the study. Questionnaire and an interview guide were the instruments used for the study. The questionnaire consisted of both close and open ended questions for lecturers and post graduate students and interview guide for university administrators (HODs). The sample population for the study was made up of 1,915 lecturers, and 40 administrators (HODs) from the universities of Buea, Yaounde II, Douala, Bamenda, Yaounde I, Dschang, Maroua and Ngaoundere. The purposive and stratified sampling techniques was adopted for the study. Data from close ended questions was analysed using SPSS 23.0, with the aid of descriptive and inferential statistical tools while open ended questions were analysed thematically. The Spearman's rho was used to test the research

hypotheses formulated in the study. Majority of the lecturers (86.4%) agreed that there is a need for change in administrative policy to enhance relevance of Higher Education and a majority of the lecturers (71.3%) equally agreed that there is a need for change in administrative skills to enhance relevance of Higher Education. Hypothetically, there is a significant, positive and moderate relationship between administrative change and the enhancement of relevance in state Universities (R- value 0.207\*\*, p-value < 0.001 < 0.05). Therefore, it was generally recommended that, for the enhancement of relevance in state higher education system in Cameroon orientation services should be organized before admission to enable student understand and make correct chooses. Specifically, in line with change in administrative policy most administrative posts should be elective for a given term of office in order to enable efficiency. Elective positions for HOD, Deans, Directors, Registrar and Vice Chancellors and in line with change in administrative skills, there should be innovation at the level of the administration by bringing in competent personal who will bring about the desired change to better enhance the relevant of HE.

### KEYWORDS

Administrative Change, Enhancement of Relevance and Higher Education System.

### INTRODUCTION

The need for relevance in the educational system is an ongoing debate particularly in Africa. The Phelps-stokes commission report of 1919 and 1922 for education in Africa pointed out as follows: it seems clear that educational polices of the governments and missions have hitherto been inadequate and to a considerable extent, unreal so far as the vital needs of Africa are concerned (Fonkeg, 2010). The Addis Ababa conference on the development of education in Africa in 1961 emphasized on the relevance with the need for the reorganization of education for adaptation to the social, economic and political development of Africans. The Jumptian conference of 1990 and many recent conferences on education in Africa have focused on the need for relevance in the educational system a call for innovative changes.

Change is an inevitable part of human beings, the institutions they establish as well as their environment, climate, economy and politics. Given a long history of

relative stability and steady growth, higher education now finds itself in a new era and environment in which it is confronted with an array of challenges and forces for change. We live in a world of change at the individual, social, corporate, national, regional, and global levels. Significant change at this point in the evolution of higher education appears eminent due to powerful environmental forces related to technology, competition, and the workplace/workforce (Kezar & Eckel, 2003). One of the division of higher education that required change to improve on quality is the administration. Administrative changes in higher education (HE) involve the creation of or changes to an academic administrative policy, skills and unit at a university at the level of administrative units, colleges, schools, divisions (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2023).

Sergiovanni (2001) indicated that sustainable change for a better HE system can only be ensured through a cultural administrative, learning transformation of

attitudes, behaviours and beliefs. Change is not just about the creation of new policies, procedures and skills to implement effective teaching and learning. It is also about the development of personal strategies to respond to, and seek to influence the impact of, structural and personal change as well as organisational change in the fast growing world and to meet the demands of the job market and evident of relevance. Etomes (2020) holds that relevance in HE is very necessary as the aspect of the society and the labour market changes, there is a need for curriculum development for graduates, especially in higher education institutions to meet the needs of the society and the labour market.

### Context and Justification of Study

Law No. 005 of 16th April 2001 on the orientation of higher education in Cameroon, defines the orientation of higher education in terms of teaching, research, and contribution to development and bilingualism and cooperation. In line with the change process for the enhancement of relevance. The law emphasizes that for the relevance of HE to be upheld in terms of skill acquisition and professionalization, it should aim at solving local problems. The absence of this causes the country poor items of economic growth and prosperity. In this light, attention should be on the training and further training of senior staff who are at the forefront of promoting and enhancing higher education relevance by organizing the training of trainers and professionals to meet up the changing needs of the job markets. Train senior staff for scientific and technical domains to attend to the fast growing global world for skill acquisition and professionalization pertinent for any economic growth of every country. This significant change can only be achieved or well implemented in HE through a change in administration. With regard to administrative

change in the context of this study, the 2001 Law aimed at moving from a centralized system of higher education administration to a decentralized territorial unit, socio-economic partners, as well as national or international state or private institutions or organizations shall contribute to the elaboration and implementation of the higher education policy according to the formal and regulatory means to boost its relevance. To this end, administrators through a decentralized system shall manage and supervise all internal services and operational structures of higher education institutions. From the perspective for the theory of change by Fullan, this is possible as it indicates the link between administrative change and the enhancement of relevance in higher education.

In essence, to meet the challenges and expectations of higher education institutions in Cameroon, the issue of enhancement of relevance in higher education has to be treated appropriately. When looking at the arena in which higher education and the vast numbers of people who inhabit and work either directly or indirectly in higher education, it is easy to see changes. Within the educational system, the various stakeholders (administrative staff, students, and teachers) have varying problems, needs, views, demands and expectations in view of change. It is believed that education is to develop creativity, skills, employment, professionalization and a sense of initiative in learners (Law No. 005 of 16th April 2001). However, the relevance is still an issue of concern with the challenges and changes in our society today; it requires higher quality of education, levels of learning and advanced knowledge to cope and meet the demands of these realities. Coping with the shift in the teaching learning process recently is one of the most difficult tasks facing educational institutions and its administrative unite (Etomes, 2020). Today, higher education operates in an environment which is

continually changing and thus needs attention. Therefore, a change in administrative policy and a change in administrative skills are very significant aspect for and the enhancement of relevance in state higher education system in Cameroon.

This study has as major objective to evaluate how administrative change enhances relevance in state higher education system in Cameroon. Specifically, the study investigates:

1. Change in administrative policy and the enhancement of relevance in state higher education system in Cameroon.
2. Change in administrative skills and the enhancement of relevance in state higher education system in Cameroon.

Based on the above objectives, one general hypothesis was tested which verified the significant relationship between administrative change and the enhancement of relevance in state higher education system in Cameroon.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Higher education has continuously been thought of in relation to their relevance in the development of the economy. The idea of improving universities (Cloete et. al., 2011) emphasized the relevance of higher education in development to meet the human resource needs of an ever-changing world. Higher education lies at the nexus of growth, jobs, and competitiveness and has the potential to serve as a catalyst for economic transformation. The higher education system sits at the apex of the education system, supporting the lower levels of education, preparing professionals and skilled labour, and serving as an incubator for research. As developing countries expand basic education systems and increasingly transition into the knowledge

economy, higher education will play an important role, as acknowledged in the Sustainable Development Goals, serving as an incubator for the knowledge base and human capital needed to promote and sustain development across many sectors. In particular, Sustainable Development Goal 4 aims to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” UNGA (2015) all aim at enhancing the relevance higher education.

According to the agenda 2063 framework, Africa needs to significantly enhance and improve its human capital in order to achieve the economic transformation envisaged under Agenda 2063 (UNESCO, 2015). This transformation calls for a transition from low to high productivity sectors, which is critical for enhancing productivity and competitiveness of African economies in a global knowledge-based economy. Most of Africa’s recent growth performance can be attributed to harvesting the “low hanging fruits” related to macroeconomic policy reforms, political stability, improvements in business climate and export of primary commodities (Africa 2050 Realizing the Continent’s Potential). While these are important to jump-start economic growth, they are not by themselves sufficient to sustain and expand growth in the long run. Within the African continent, the administrative skills and polices needs to change to meet the quality of higher education significantly, with an education that builds critical capacities, and expand skills in order for her to harness new jobs and technological opportunities in a global knowledge-based economy.

In line with change in administrative policy necessary for the enhancement of relevance in state higher education, the Universities Act 2002 has drastically implemented a change in administrative policy by expanding institutional autonomy; universities are now

free to decide on employment conditions, academic programmes, and resource allocation without government approval (Sporn, 2002). Recent changes towards greater institutional autonomy are seen even in countries, like Japan and Korea, where autonomy has previously been relatively restricted. The Japanese government has recently changed the legal status of national universities into public corporations, in many aspects influenced by the British reform in 1988 that transformed the ownership of polytechnics from local authorities to higher education corporations. In Korea, “the special act on national university management”, which aims at substantially increasing the autonomy of national universities, is currently the subject of legislation.

This calls for a change in universities administrative policy procedures to be made autonomous in nature, such that administrators can exercise their administrative freedom in determining what type of academic programmes should be taught, how they should be taught, who should teach them and who is admissible to study in the academic programmes, while pursuing quality and relevant education (Usman, 2014). Burns, (2010) states for higher education relevance to be upheld to meet the needs of the job market in today’s changing world. It requires a leader who is “relational, collective and purposeful” (p.18) and that it is important for leaders to work alongside their followers to understand their values and principles. Others add that leaders must have the ability to engage in honest dialogue and develop authentic relations, which are based on trust and transparency, in order to successfully lead change (Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May, & Walumbwa, 2005). These examples align with transformational leadership, which provides a greater emphasis on first building the supportive relationships that are needed to be able to harness the relevance of an educational

system in order to successfully meet societal demands (Branson, Franken, & Penney, 2016).

Marshall (2008) holds the view that among education leaders, school leaders have a unique and profoundly important role to play in shaping both their school communities and the quality of the education system when granted autonomy. The school and its leaders are seen as a showpiece in every community, bringing about new development, new ideas, and changes in the behaviours of pupils/students. Various activities in the school system develop the child’s potentialities, thereby, preparing the child for leadership positions in life. In effect every economy needs to continually overhaul their education system which is the engine for development in order to serve the needs of the time both individual and society.

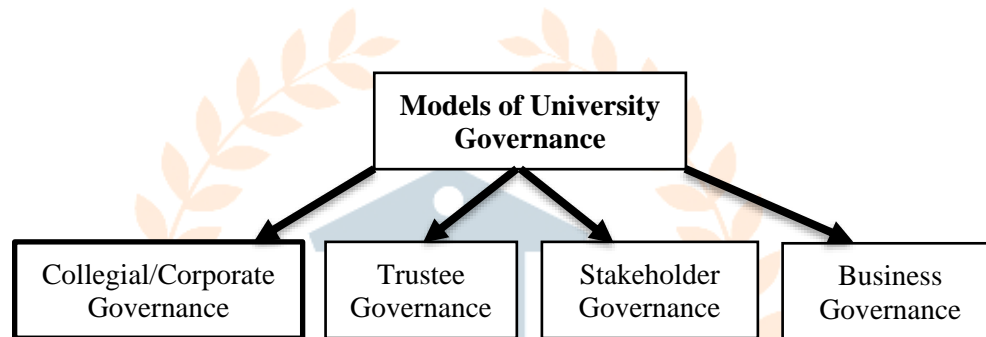
Developing an administrative autonomous structure which is appropriate for the achievement of the goals of an educational organization is probably one of the greatest challenges facing educational organizations from meeting the demand of the society. To many people, particularly, proponents of structural rational theories of organizations, an organizational chart reflects its structure. This is not true because it does not tell the whole story of the importance of the organization (Titanji, 2017). A structure is more than what is contained in an organizational chart which comprises, among other things, the distribution of formal powers and how official communication is supposed to be routed. Attention needs to be paid to the autonomous structure of an educational organization because it is related to the commitment, relevance and morale of its workers as well as their productivity. For example, tasks that are routine (or structured) may be better within a centralized structure than would be the case with tasks that are non-routine (not structured). It is believed that a

change in policy without a change in administrative skill will not be enough to bring about the desired relevance in HE.

Looking at change in administrative skills and the enhancement of relevance in state higher education, Cameron & Quinn, (2011) advocated that for HE

products to meet the changing needs of the society in terms of professionalization, skills acquisition for employment, its administrative skills are of great importance. The administrative skill should reflect the four models of university governance of collegial/corporate governance, trustee governance, stakeholder governance, and business governance.

Figure 1: Models of University Governance



**Sours: Researcher 2023**

These labels are believed to, “match key management theories about organizational success, approaches to organizational quality, leadership roles, and management skills which are of great importance in the enhancement of organizational relevance (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). A change from administrative skills to Collegial governance is believed to bring about innovation and partnerships building which is based on commitment to innovation. Because they are dynamic, entrepreneurial, and creative in nature, these organization types favour individual initiative, establish bases for experimentation and innovativeness as these are believed to lead to new resources and profitability.

Lack (2006) reported that education expert Fullan, in his book titled ‘The New Meaning of Educational change’, that “Reform is not just putting into place the

latest policy. It means a change in administrative policy and a change in administrative skills, cultures of the classrooms, the schools, the universities, and so on. There is more to educational change than most people realize”. Fullan further stated that restructuring schools and education has been relatively simple but re-culturing them has not. According to him, for change to be substantive and long lasting, improving and strengthening relationships among various stakeholders is very important.

As a result of the impact of modern science, technology, transportation, the globalization and internationalization of education, communications, business and employment, change in today’s world need to be both endemic and dramatic. Many would argue that they are surrounded by, and enriched by, the impact of change. Some people think about change or system reform in an organization while others do

not want to hear about change. They want to maintain the status quo. While others feel that change might bring out their deficiencies or weaknesses. Change or system reform is highly needed in all establishments and educational institutions should be on the alert to embrace change whenever it is necessary. School Leaders/administrators should be “big thinkers” and should come up with “big ideas” to make their institutions stand out in the society. Fullan (2008) described ‘change’ in three ways: new materials; new behaviours and practices; and new beliefs and understanding.

From a theoretical point of view, the educational change model by Fullan (1940-Present) argued that educational change is a process and to begin the change process you must be able to fully involve all human participants (stakeholders) in the change process for a better sustainability (Fullan, 1999, Ellsworth, 2000). The day to day functioning of educational institutions is about changing or enhancing the capacity of teachers, learners, administrative staff in the domains of knowledge, skills, attitudes and policy geared towards the enhancement of relevance in the education system and according to (Fullan, 2007), the role of the leader in the change process is very critical. The leaders (Administrators) must understand the change process and the complexities involved in change. Many experts share the view that the bottom line of the change process be it change in administrative policy or skill is seen from a developmental perspective, it is to enhance student outcomes through bringing about desired changes in the system (Sergiovanni & Starrat 2000). In line with administrative change and the enhancement of relevance in higher education, Fullan’s first stage of the change process (initiation) determines whether change in administrative policy and skill, determines the relevance of HE system. The

principle of initiation says change involves learning to do something new, and interaction is the primary basis for social learning. New meanings, new behaviours, new skills, and new beliefs depend significantly on whether teachers are working as isolated individuals or are exchanging ideas, support, and positive feelings about their work. The quality of working relationships among teachers is strongly related to implementation. Collegiality, open communication, trust, support and help, learning on the job, getting results, and job satisfaction and morale are closely interrelated.

### METHODOLOGY

The concurrent mixed-methods research design specifically the concurrent triangulation design was adopted for the study.

The population of the study comprise of the eight (08) long existing state universities of Buea, Yaounde II, Douala, Bamenda, Yaounde I, Dschang, Maroua and Ngaoundere. The sample population for the study was made up of 1,915 lecturers and 40 administrators (HODs) from the universities. The purposive and stratified sampling techniques was adopted for the study.

The instruments use for data collection were a questionnaire (closed and open ended questions) for lecturers and an interview guide for university administrators (HODs).

Data from the close ended questions was analysed using SPSS 23.0, with the aid of descriptive and inferential statistical tools while open ended questions were analysed thematically. The hypotheses of the study were tested using a non-parametric test (Spearman’s Rho test) presented at 95% level of confidence interval with alpha set at 0.05 levels accepting 5% margin of error.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the study will be presented and supported by literature and the works of other researchers. Quantitative data will be presented first followed qualitative data.

### Demographic Data

Among the 1718 lecturers successfully work with, 56.5% (970) of the lecturers are male and 43.6% (748) are female. Indicating that most of those who will be at the implementation stage of administrative change are male. With reference to longevity in service, 32.6% (560) have worked for less than 5 years, 29.0% (499) have worked for 5-10 years, 26.7% (459) have worked

for 11-15 years, 7.7% (133) for 16-20 years and 3.9% (67) for above 20 years. Finally, based on professional rank, 19.3% (331) of the lecturers are instructors, 23.0% (395) are assistant lecturers, 33.3% (571) are senior lecturers, and 17.2% (295) are associate professors. This implies that Cameroon state Universities has plenty of senior and assistant lecturers. Who can either work to make or mare the enhancement of relevance in higher education in any case of administrative change.

### Change in Administrative Policy and the Enhancement of Relevance in Higher Education

The table below depicts lecturers' opinion on change in administrative policy and the enhancement of relevance in higher education.

**Table 1: Lecturers Opinion on Change in Administrative Policy and the Enhancement of Relevance in Higher Education**

Statements	Stretched				Collapsed	
	SA	A	D	SD	SA/A	D/SD
Leaders in higher education need to be trained for the effective implementation of educational policies.	1183 (68.9%)	447 (26.0%)	70 (4.1%)	18 (1.0%)	1630 (94.9%)	88 (5.1%)
Students' orientation and counselling in the university should be before the choice of programs by students.	1046 (60.9%)	560 (32.6%)	95 (5.5%)	17 (1.0%)	1606 (93.5%)	112 (6.5%)
Universities have the opportunity to develop internal policies that enhances quality	649 (37.8%)	914 (53.2%)	113 (6.6%)	42 (2.4%)	1563 (91.0%)	155 (9.0%)
Universities should be given full control in the recruitment of lecturers	798 (46.5%)	531 (30.9%)	162 (9.4%)	226 (13.2%)	1329 (77.4%)	388 (22.6%)
There is need for a change in students admission policies such as entry qualifications	602 (35.0%)	693 (40.3%)	332 (19.3%)	91 (5.3%)	1295 (75.4%)	423 (24.6%)
<b>Multiple Responses Set (MRS)</b>	<b>4278 (49.8%)</b>	<b>3145 (36.6%)</b>	<b>772 (8.9%)</b>	<b>394 (4.6%)</b>	<b>7423 (86.4%)</b>	<b>1166 (13.6%)</b>

n=1718

Majority of the lecturers (86.4%) agreed that there is a need for change in administrative policy to enhance relevance of Higher Education. One of the major requirement presented by lecturers (94.9%) is the need for training of administrators in higher education for

effective policy implementation. Lecturers (93.5%) also agreed that students' orientation and counselling needs to be done before admission. In addition, Universities should be given autonomy to develop internal policies that enhances quality (91.0%), some of which included the full control on the recruitment of





lecturers (77.4%) and a change in students' admission policies such as entry requirement.

In line with our study, Etomes, Fonkeng, and Ndile (2021) also called for a change in admission policies and this aspect of administrative change was frequently mentioned by the participants of our study to enhance the relevance of Higher education institutions. Cameron & Quinn (2011) had advocated that for HE products to meet the changing needs of society in terms of professionalization, and skills acquired from employment, its administrative structure is of great importance. This is to say that for our higher education to remain relevant in the current time, change in the administrative system is very important.

Coulombe, Tremblay & Marchand (2004) also highlighted the need for a school change for real improvement which focuses on problems of school administration, pedagogy, didactics, school culture, new literacies, social aspects in education, as well as research. Increasing school autonomy (administration) and decentralization seems to be a common and significant change in most countries during the past 20 years. Most often these changes affect the relevance and productivity of the institutions.

The table below depicts changes expect in the university administrative policy as reported by lecturers.

**Table 2: Changes Lecturers Expect in the University Administrative Policy**

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Quotations</b>
<b>Election of leaders</b>	<p><i>"Leaders must be elected by their peers.</i></p> <p><i>"Consider the election of university officials (rectors, heads of institutions)"</i></p> <p><i>"Responsible officers must be elected by their colleagues"</i></p> <p><i>"Most administrative posts should be elective for a given term of office"</i></p> <p><i>"Leaders should be voted, not appointed so that we will have efficient administrators."</i></p> <p><i>"Establishments should be given the opportunity to choose peer leaders as it often is in other Anglo-Saxon universities in the world"</i></p> <p><i>"Election of some university hierarchy"</i></p>
<b>Amendment of examination rules</b>	<p><i>"Election of vice-chancellors and heads of departments."</i></p> <p><i>"Examination rules and regulations should be amended"</i></p> <p><i>"The time interval students use in writing exams should be added"</i></p> <p><i>"Examination procedures should be ameliorated"</i></p> <p><i>"Add the number of hours students use in writing examinations"</i></p> <p><i>"Rules and regulations of the exams should be amended as well as the time given to students during evaluations should be amended"</i></p> <p><i>"Examination rules and regulations should be amended"</i></p>
<b>Admission policies</b>	<p><i>"Changes in admission policies.</i></p> <p><i>"Orientation services before admission"</i></p> <p><i>"Changes at the admission level"</i></p> <p><i>"Good admission policies"</i></p> <p><i>"Change in student admission policies."</i></p>
<b>Graduation policy</b>	<p><i>"The Dean and heads of the partners have to amend certain decisions such that students should no longer repeat a year because of course."</i></p> <p><i>"Students should no more repeat a year because of a single course"</i></p> <p><i>"Students should no more repeat because of a single course"</i></p>
<b>Appointment based on competence</b>	<p><i>"Administrators should be appointed based on their competence and not longevity in service."</i></p> <p><i>"Key positions should be given on merit and not because of friendship or man know man or godfather issues."</i></p>

Based on changes in administrative policy expected by lecturers, many of them recommended election of leaders in to university top position categorically stating that “Leaders should be voted, not appointed so that we will have efficient administrators; ‘Consider the election of university officials (election of vice-chancellors, deans and heads of departments) and that Most administrative posts should be elective for a given term of office.” Also, a good number of lecturers also call on the need to amend examination rules and admission policies be change, “Examination rules and regulations should be amended; “Rules and regulations of the exams should be amended as well as the time given to students during evaluations should be amended and that changes in admission policies and Orientation services before admission” will bring about enhancement of relevance in higher education. Law No. 005 of 16 April 2001 to Guide Higher Education Article 3 states that, the State shall grant the Higher Education realm a national priority status and it shall organize and supervise Higher Education. Meaning that for relevance of HE to be improved and sustained, there should be changing innovations in its administrative procedures from a centralized to a decentralized system of administration in HE whereby, the state university authorities will be able to organize

and supervise the activities of universities with limited or no direct control from the ministry.

Other changes in administrative policy mentioned are the need for graduation policy and appointment based on competence should be considered if really we want to enhance relevance in higher education. “The Dean and heads of department have to amend certain decisions such that students should no longer repeat a year because of course” that “administrators should be appointed based on their competence and not longevity in service and key positions should be given on merit and not because of friendship or man know man or godfather issues.” The findings of our study tie with that of Abdelghani (2009) who carried out a study on the changing university governance paradigms in the Middle East and North Africa with findings revealing that several administrative changes in addition to pedagogy were mentioned by the participant’s sample for the study. Equally, our study ties in with that of McRoy & Gibbs (2009) who carried out a study on leading change in Higher Education within the UK, and findings revealed that market needs, segment, strategic planning, and organizational structure are administrative changes needed in Higher Education within the UK. The table below depicts major changes administrators expect in the university administrative policy as reported by administrators

**Table 3: Administrators’ Opinion on Expected Changes in Administrative Policy**

Themes	Quotations
<b>Electing of administrators</b>	<p>“Universities administration should be elected not appointment”</p> <p>“Universities administration from the range of Dean and directors should be elected and not appointed”</p> <p>‘Elective positions for HOD, Deans, Directors, Registrar and Vice Chancellors”</p> <p>‘University authorities should be voted into power and not by appointments”</p>
<b>Full autonomy to recruit staff</b>	<p>“Universities should be given full autonomy to recruit her personals and its administrators should be elected”</p> <p>‘University administration should be given full authority for the recruitment of lectures”</p>
<b>Admission policy</b>	<p>“Admission policy should be looked into again because students at times are taken into program they don't like”</p> <p>‘The university administrative system has to improve on it admission policy system”</p>

Based on changes expected at the level of administrative policy many of them like the lecturers said administrators be elected and not appointed “Universities administration from the range of Dean and directors should be elected and not appointed.” Others said full autonomy be given to the University to recruit personnel and admission policies should change “Universities should be given full autonomy to recruit her personals and its administrators should be elected and Admission policy should be reexamined because students at times are taken into programs they don't like.” Gearing policies to achieve social goals is only one step towards enhancing relevance in higher education and producing good outcomes for individuals and society. To be fully effective, policies need to be internalised by institutions and incorporated into their strategies and activities. To deliver relevant education, institutions need to understand how to position themselves in a way that responds to stakeholders’ needs and expectations. By involving students and families, alumni, social partners, such as employers and unions, and other members of society in the planning, delivery and evaluation of education, institutions are better able to identify what is relevant to their beneficiaries and tailor their activities accordingly.

Furthermore, Duderstadt & Womack (2003) said organizational politics, coalition building, and the differential power of both leaders and constituents play a much greater role in higher education to ensure sustainability. Recent changes towards greater institutional autonomy are seen even in many countries and this calls for a change in our universities administration to be autonomous in nature, to exercise their administrative freedom in determining what type of academic programmes should be taught; how they should be taught, who should teach them and who is admissible to study in the academic programmes,

while pursuing quality and relevant education (Usman, 2014). The professionalisation of academic programmes by the administration is another administrative change that many of the lecturers and administrators did call for.

A change in administrative policy is believed to bring more innovation and partnership building which is based on the commitment to innovation. Even though the Modernization theory has been criticized for its Eurocentric perspective, the increasing interconnectedness of global economies, cultures, and societies development had creates the need for the contextualization of the Modernization theory to local realities. By this, we expect our educational administrators and policymakers to initiate changes in the administration that will help to better contextualise our higher education programmes, curriculum, and courses as well as in other domains to help in the enhancement of its relevance. In every educational institution, the administrative system is the backbone that guides and directs pedagogy, research, and use of resources. It is evident that where the Cameroon economy is today in terms of economic and political-social transformation is not the same as where it was 10 to 15 years behind. A look at Rostow's model reveals that, most African countries and especially Cameroon can be situated at the "Pre-conditions to take-off" stage (which is critical for change and transition to the take-off stage), where one of its characteristics is enhanced relevance in education and the acquisition of high-level skills and professionalization.

### **Change in Administrative Skills and the Enhancement of Relevance in Higher Education**



The table below presents lecturers' opinion on change in administrative skills and the enhancement of relevance in higher education.

**Table 4: Lecturers Opinion on Change in Administrative Skills and the Enhancement of Relevance in Higher Education**

Statements	Stretched				Collapsed	
	SA	A	D	SD	SA/A	D/SD
The institution uses digitalized admission processes such as online admission**	767 (44.6%)	696 (40.5%)	106 (6.2%)	149 (8.7%)	1463 (85.2%)	255 (14.8%)
University lecturers have the authority to determine course content in their area of specialty.	667 (38.8%)	709 (41.3%)	196 (11.4%)	146 (8.5%)	1376 (80.1%)	342 (19.9%)
There exists digitalized financial process in the university**	360 (21.0%)	852 (49.6%)	303 (17.6%)	202 (11.8%)	1212 (70.6%)	505 (29.4%)
There exist digitalized record keeping and management in my institution such as E-documentary**	254 (14.8%)	844 (49.1%)	469 (27.3%)	151 (8.8%)	1098 (63.9%)	620 (36.1%)
There exists digitalized file treatment in my institution**	298 (17.3%)	678 (39.5%)	537 (31.3%)	205 (11.9%)	976 (56.8%)	742 (43.2%)
<b>Multiple Responses Set (MRS)</b>	<b>2346</b> <b>(27.3%)</b>	<b>3779</b> <b>(44.0%)</b>	<b>1611</b> <b>(18.8%)</b>	<b>853</b> <b>(9.9%)</b>	<b>6125</b> <b>(71.3%)</b>	<b>2464</b> <b>(28.7%)</b>

**\*\*Items with coding reversed during calculation of MRS n=1718**

In majority of the lecturers (71.3%) agreed that there is a need for change in administrative skills to enhance relevance of Higher Education. One of the major requirement presented by lecturers (85.2%) is the need for universities to digitalized the admission processes. Lecturers (80.1%) also agreed that University lecturers need to have the authority to determine course content in their area of specialty. In addition, Universities should digitalize their financial process for better admiration (70.6%). Such as digitalized record keeping and E-documentary in their institution (63.9%) and digitalized file treatment requirement (56.8%). Duderstadt & Womack, (2003) indicated that several other factors permit higher education to work toward the enhancement of relevance in systems which are integral to the nature and purpose of higher education. These factors include higher education leadership and governance structures, pedagogic, perceptual change,

administrative, diverse stakeholders and constituents of higher education, and institutional culture. Doh, (2012) the objectives of HE which are 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.

**Changes Lecturers Expect in the University Administrative Skills**

Based on changes in administrative skills lecturers expect, digitalization of administrative processes. “There are excessive delays in the treatment of files (students/staff because of the use of analog process system as such Systematic digitization, E-documentary

and digitalized record keeping should be in place” and “Set up a digitized system so that everything is accessible to the parties concerned.” The findings of our study tie with that of Abdelghani (2009) who carried out a study on the changing university governance paradigms in the Middle East and North Africa with findings revealing that several administrative changes in addition to pedagogy were mentioned by the participant’s sample for the study. Equally, our study also ties in with that of McRoy & Gibbs (2009) who carried out a study on leading change in Higher Education within the UK, and findings revealed that market needs, segment, strategic planning, and organizational structure are administrative changes needed in Higher Education within the UK.

Another point frequently mentioned is the organisation of skill seminars to boost the acquisition of administrative skills to ensure good management, teachers’ monitoring and effective operations stating that “the organization of training and pedagogic seminars and administrators in higher education”, “a mastery of good management and a high sense of sociability, transparency and accountability” while ensuring “rigorous monitoring of teachers' careers and promote administrative excellence” for “the proper functioning of the departments.” Law No. 005 of 16 April 2001 to Guide Higher Education Article 3 states that, the State shall grant the Higher Education realm a national priority status and it shall organize and supervise Higher Education. Meaning that for relevance of HE to be improved and sustained, there will be a change in its administrative procedure from a centralized to a decentralized system of administration in HE whereby, the state university authorities will be able to organize and supervise the activities of private universities with limited or no direct control from the ministry. Like lecturers, university administrators

equally expect changes in administrative skills that can bring about relevance in HE

### **Administrators Opinion on Expected Changes in administrative skills**

Based on changes the administrators expect in the University administration, many of them said administrators should be trained to effectively do their job as some said “Workshop should be organized to educate university administration given the fact that they are not trained” and “I expect in-depth in-service training for university administration to be able to meet the present day challenges of HE”. Ihsan (2018) holds that in-service training is one of the most essential fields of education to achieve relevance, competency in the branch, keeping neutral in the evaluation of activities, maintaining positive connection in relationships, analyzing institutional factors via top-level cognitive strategies. In-service training programs beings about integrate on-the-job training, consultancy and skill acquisition in the organization at the end of the day. In-service training helps people reach new and up-to-date information and teach them how to use new knowledge (O’Dwyer & Atli, 2015).

Other administrative changes are appointments based on competence and meritocracy and decentralization in powers for the effective running of establishments as captured in some of their statements “there should be innovation at the level of the administration by bringing in competent personal’, “more competent staff should be recruited by the administration”, “the university administration should be completely digitalized and the administrator should be computer literate to manage them not bringing people who are computer illiterates” and “computerizes university governance system.” Mehrzad (2021) point out that

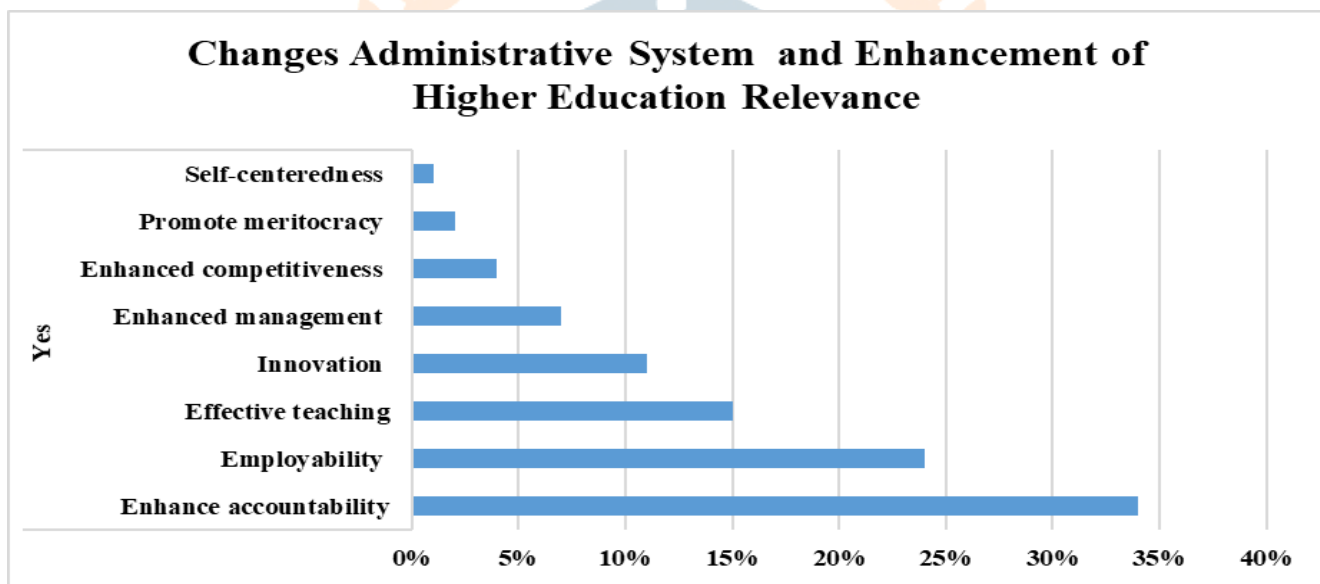


any organization recruiting and retaining top talents to stay focused and effective is in part cultivating meritocracies. This implies that when the best individuals are hired and promoted solely based on their talent; there are higher chances of creativity and therefore success within the organization. Subsequently, formal frameworks have been for guaranteeing that workers are judged exclusively by their efforts, skills, abilities, and performances by progressive-minded organizations with little regard to sex, race, or nationality. Implementing performance reward systems, executives, for instance, take major

steps to demonstrate their sense of duty concerning meritocracy.

When asked if a changes in university administrative system would enhance higher education relevance, administrators' opinion, all of them (100%) in their opinion said a changes in university administrative system would enhance higher education relevance raising a number of issues. The figure below depicts the outcome of changes in university administrative system on the enhance higher education relevance changes as reported by administrators.

Figure 2: Administrators Opinion If Changes in University Administrative System Would Enhance Higher Education Relevance



Furthermore, many of the administrators said change in administrative system will enhance higher education relevance in that it will enhance accountability of administrators and improved on graduates employability, categorically stating that “I believe that if Universities administration from the range of Dean and directors are elected and not appointed they well adequately be accountability in the implementation of

politics am at enhance the relevance of HE”, “Yes, I think changes in the university administration can enhance the relevance of the higher education system in Cameroon. The system should be able to graduate more people into the job market” and “Universities will have the opportunity to implement an effective education policy for the employment of its students.” Huisman (2019) indicated that accountability has changed the landscape in higher education,



particularly the governance relationships between key stakeholders (especially government and its agencies) and higher education institutions. The role of quality assurance and performance indicators (in relation to relevance) has been emphasized as the main tools of contemporary governments.

Also other administrators said change in administrative system will promote effective teaching, bring innovation into the system, and enhance management. Categorically stating “Better management of the education system”, “Yes: it will help in running the administrative duties with little or no stress”, “Yes, because if the teachers are stable the programs will be completed on time and the students will be followed” Other administrators said change in administrative system will promote meritocracy and will enhance the competitiveness of the University internationally. “Meritocracy should be the order of the day in the day to day running of our universities’ and “No, because the system needs to be discarded, self-interest needs

to be eradicated”. Arzu & Aydın (2021) opine that meritocracy is supposed to constitute an array of processes of a university including student admission, assessment, and recruiting university staff. At this point, recruiting the most proper individuals through meritocracy in terms of their quality for each position in higher education is fundamental to accomplish real excellence. Moreover, the practices violating meritocracy are not found acceptable in a university that aspires to excellence and relevance (Montes López, & O’Connor, 2019). When universities deviate from their formal organizational procedures, transparency, and meritocracy, the space leading the decisions to be made based on in-group favoritism, networks, or personal initiatives and this may harm the merit process of finding quality management staff.

**Verification of Hypothesis: There is no significant relationship between administrative change and the enhancement of relevance in Public Higher Education system.**

**Table 5: Relationship between Administrative Change and the Enhancement of Relevance in State Universities**

		Administrative changes	Enhancement of higher education relevance	Explanatory power of relationship in terms of percentage (Nagelkerke statistics)
Spearman's rho	R-value	1	.207**	32.9%
	p-value	.	.000	(0.329)
	N	1718	1718	

**\*\*.** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The hypothetical statistics showed that there is a significant, positive and moderate relationship between administrative change and the enhancement of relevance in state Universities (R- value 0.207\*\*, p-value < 0.001 < 0.05). The positive sign of the correlation value implies that changes in administration will contribute to the enhancement of higher education relevance and this is supported with an explanatory power of 32.9% (Nagelkerke statistics=

0.329). Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected while the alternative that states there is a significant relationship between administrative change and the enhancement of relevance in Public Higher Education system was accepted. Razaq (2012) holds that for relevance in HE to be upheld to meet the changing need of the society attention should be on administrative change and a change in policy. These forces also bring about the need for educational change. In educational

institutions, changes are imposed from outside or motivated by internal pressure. The ultimate goal of

change is to make practice better or more effective in the work.

**Table 6: Regression Estimating the Unit of Effect of Administrative Change on Enhancement of Higher Education Relevance**

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t-test	p-value
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	22.416	.491		45.679	.000
Administrative changes	.204	.023	.207	8.783	.000
R (Multiple coefficient determination value)			.207		
R-square			.043		
Adjusted R Square			.042		
Std. Error of the Estimate			3.837		
<b>ANOVA<sup>a</sup></b>					
F- test value			77.144		
P-value			.000		

**a. Dependent variable: Enhancement of higher education relevance**

**b. Predictors: (Constant): Administrative changes**

In overall, statistics from the regression analysis showed that a unit of improvement in administration results in 0.207 increase in enhancement of higher education relevance at a significant level of 0.000. The variability explained by the model was significant (F- test value =77.144, p-value 0.000). The total variability explain by the model is 4.3% (R= 0.043) while 95.7% was not explain. This implies that aside changes administration; there are other factors that could also contribute immensely the enhancement of higher education relevance not captured by the model.

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

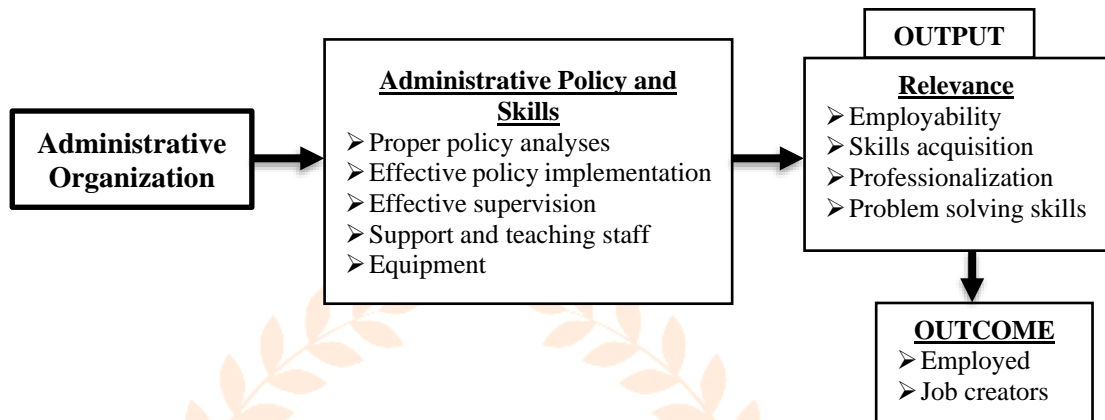
Based on the findings, the need to improve on the relevance of HE is very important in this fast changing and growing world. Indicating that to better enhance the relevance of HE, changing innovations in administrative policies and skills will significant ensure the enhancement of higher education relevance. As

Fullan (2007) indicates in his theory of educational change along with the modernization theory, our higher education institutions have to keep evolving to meet up the drastic and constant changes in global trends. Higher education contributes more to a country's economic growth, development, and manpower production than any other level of education. Therefore, it is imperative that changes proposed in administrative policy and skills should be seen into, adopted, and put into effective implementation. In essence, change of administrative policy and skills will enable the enhancement of relevance in state higher education system.

It is generally recommended that, for the enhancement of relevance in state higher education system in Cameroon orientation services should be organized before admission to enable students understand and make correct choices. This can be achieved if the proposed model is adopted.



Figure 3: Proposed model



Sours: Researcher 2023

- Specifically, in line with change in administrative policy, most administrative positions should be elective for a given term of office in order to enable efficiency. Elective positions for HOD, Deans, Directors, Registrar and Vice Chancellors
- In line with change in administrative skills, there should be innovation at the level of the administration by bringing in competent personal who will bring about the desired change to better enhance the relevance of HE.

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