

The state school mapping policy and the reinforcement of social inequality:

*An analysis of the provision of basic education in
Cameroon.*

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Autumn 2012

Abstract

This study investigates on how the Cameroon basic education ministry pursues its school mapping policy in order to make basic education accessible to children of school going age. School mapping (carte scolaire) in this study refers to the plan adopted by the state for the distribution of schools within the country with the aim of ensuring equity in terms of access to both public and private educational establishments. To look at how this policy is implemented, urban and rural areas have been studied as separate entities in order to establish a comparative analysis with regards to the availability of school establishments and also variation in quality. This is because these two areas (urban and rural) have different characteristics that may necessitate different levels of involvement by the government and private providers.

Again, since education in Cameroon is decentralised with the central services of the Ministry of Basic Education (MINEDUB) playing the role of coordination and supervision of education, the study equally looks at the responsibilities of these central services especially the department charged with making available statistics on national coverage of the ministry. This is because it is through reports presented by this department that leads to government intervention in most cases. Apart from this, there has also been the devolution of power to the Regions (administrative units). In this light, the North West Region has been used as the main research site where through the coordination of the Regional Delegation of Basic Education (representing the central Ministry of Basic Education in the Region) other stakeholders have also been explored with regards to the school mapping policy.

Therefore, in carrying out this research, issues that have been examined include looking at whether the Cameroon basic education ministry has any formulated school mapping guidelines which orientate the government and other private providers in the creation and opening of primary school establishments. How have these guidelines or regulations been implemented at the ministerial and at the Regional level in order to make basic education accessible to areas with fewer schools? Findings indicate that the involvement of different actors in determining the site for the opening of new government and private schools and the lack of collaboration with the Regional Delegation of Basic Education have been contributing to the poor implementation of ministerial guidelines. This has made some areas to be under-served while others become over crowded with schools.

Dedications

A special dedication goes to all Parent Teacher Association (PTA) hired teachers who are committed to keeping most rural public schools functioning.

Acknowledgements

My deepest gratitude goes to the Almighty God for the health and inspiration which He granted me in the course of the production of this piece of work.

I am grateful to the University of Oslo more precisely the Faculty of Educational Research for the opportunity given me to study in this institution and my sincere thanks go as well to my supervisor Prof. Jon Lauglo for the orientation and constructive criticism he made to the study during the time I worked with him. My deep appreciations also go to the academic staff and the programme coordinator for the love and cooperation they exercised during the time we spent with them.

To my dear friends of CIE 2012 which we studied together, had shared experiences and ideas from our different countries in the course of the programme I say I remain so much indebted to you all.

My sincere thanks go equally to the participants who through their collaboration, I got new ideas and information. I say thank you for sparring your time in order to share with me your experiences thoughts.

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Abbreviations

CPDM	Cameroon People's Development Movement
GD	Government Delegate
IIEP	International Institute of Education and Planning
MINEDUB	Ministry of Basic Education
MINEDUC	Ministry of National Education
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
P	Politicians
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
RC	Regional Council
RD	Regional Delegate
RDBE	Regional Delegation of Basic Education
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

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CHAPTER 1: Background

1.1 Introduction

Like in many other countries, apart from state provision the private sector is very vibrant in Cameroon as far as basic education is concerned. This diversification of provision to an extent means that many more areas are supposed to have access to basic education. This can only be fulfilled if the government has a well drafted school distribution policy that is implemented successfully.

This brings in the idea of the issue of school location and access because the diversity of providers does not necessarily mean that the issue of access is fully addressed. This is because at the moment when there is an absence or a poor implementation of a regulatory mechanism concerning school mapping, there can arise the problem of insufficient access. School mapping in this context means a planning adopted in the creation and opening of schools.

If Cameroon's Ministry of Basic Education (MINEDUB) has laid down regulations governing the establishment and location of both government and private schools, are they implementing the set guidelines? Does the ministry give priority to the market forces when it comes to the provision of basic education? At this time when most countries are struggling to achieve Education For All, even if private providers respond to market forces, do public schools also have to do the same or do guidelines patterning to school location really exist? This study is based on the activities within the Cameroon Ministry of Basic Education which makes it necessary to contextualize the notion of basic education as used in this work.

According to (Kom Dorothee et al., 2000, p.103) basic education includes all the elementary knowledge that must be mastered by members of a community to ensure their own personnel development and that of the community. This would mean that basic education would involve both formal and informal education at the elementary level. This definition is partly in line with African traditional education. For instance, in Nigeria, Ghana, Tanzania, Malawi or elsewhere in Africa, traditional education of youngsters involves intellectual, physical and attitudinal training in order to develop fully into acceptable adults in the society and every member of the community had a hand in contributing to the educational upbringing of the child (Nsamenang and Tchombe, 2011). This was purely informal, informal in the sense that the members of the community start off by being given basic education through home training by their parents before moving out to the community level where they still acquire some informal skills coupled with formal education.

However, in this study, basic education will be limited to only formal education provided by both the state and the private providers which is supposed to be regulated the Cameroon's Ministry of Basic Education. Even though preschool (nursery school level) educational establishments also constitute part of basic education, they shall not be part of my investigation. The reason is because participation in these establishments which are equally run by the state and private bodies is not mandatory. Therefore, the notion of basic education in this study is limited just to primary education which in Cameroon runs from primaries 1 to 6 for both the English and French sub systems with the official school going age being 6 years of age. The age limit which is considered to be the age which the child should be completing the last grade is 14.

School mapping (*La carte scolaire*) is a plan for the distribution of school establishments nationwide. The main function of this plan is to ensure an equitable distribution of schools. In Cameroon as it may obtain in most countries, it (school mapping) is managed or regulated by the Ministry of Basic Education. It is generally understood that these regulations have to be followed both by government and private schools for quality and affordable basic education to the population living in both rural and urban areas. In effect, when we talk of school mapping, we imply a comparative analysis of the distribution of primary school establishments in the rural and urban areas in Cameroon. We shall also be looking at the extent of the Ministry of Basic Education's involvement in the overall distribution of schools in the two areas.

In this study, the reinforcement of inequalities refers to the perpetuation of unequal access to basic education in Cameroon by the different sections (urban and rural) of the population thereby making it almost impossible for the poor and children from low-income families mostly located in the rural areas to secure life opportunities through education. Equally, from the stand point of the human rights theory, emphasizes that profit should not be its ultimate goal. This is because education, which is considered as empowerment especially for the less privileged, seems not still accessed by most rural communities in Cameroon in an era characterized by the achievement of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in education.

In this period where there is the need to make education accessible to all no matter the area where the children find themselves, we need to matching these texts and prescriptions with the realities in the field. In this study, we shall be looking at two settings- rural and the urban areas, in relation to the provision of basic education. Since there seem to be a near absence of a regulatory mechanism which takes charge of the decision on school location, the rural areas tend to be ignored while there is over concentration of schools in the urban areas.

Cameroon is currently undergoing decentralisation of her administrative services. Education is indirectly affected by this process. According to the present dispensation (decentralisation), Regional

Delegates of Basic Education (RDBE) are supposed to receive reports from the Districts (Subdivisions) and Divisions where inspection missions are sent to these areas. Upon receipt of information from the inspection missions, the RDBE then send recommendations to the Central Ministry of Basic Education. This can be followed by the creation of an educational establishment in areas of great need. It is important to note that even though these Regions exercise a certain degree of autonomy; they are not of equal economic strength. Natural resources are unevenly distributed which makes for this difference of which the state is quite aware of the fact and Article 55(4) ensures the harmonious development of all the regional and local authorities on the basis of national solidarity, regional potentials and inter-regional balance (Constitution of the Republic of Cameroon, 2008, p.32)

On the other hand, there seem to a clash of functions between the education experts and the councils who are more empowered to take decisions concerning the provision of education in general in their various regions. The remarkable issue that stands out here is that the councillors apart of educational experts equally play a decisive role when it comes to school location because of the part they play in town planning within their respective municipalities. They are also partly responsible for the financing of schools. The degree of partiality of their decisions shall also be an area of concern for the present study.

In order to effectively tackle this subject, the issue of decentralisation does not have to be treated apart since decentralisation means the changing role and the emergence of new actors in the provision of education. Decentralization is starting off in a difficult educational context. There are inequalities in terms of educational supply; and the quality of education is weak with ...16% of teachers on temporary contracts and a teacher pupil ratio of 1 to 52. Recognized as one of the few countries to have a primary GER close to 100% in the 1980s, Cameroon has seen this rate decrease to 71% in 1995. According to the latest data available, in primary education, there is a considerable lack of classrooms; and only 80% of registered teachers were actually in service. Significant disparities exist between the provinces: Adamawa, the north and the far north have fewer teaching staff and fewer classrooms (UNESCO, 2005,p. 27). This is the basis upon which my investigation shall concentrate on. That is looking at what might be the real cause of this situation.

This UNESCO report gives a picture of the nature of the educational sector in Cameroon particularly basic education. Inequalities are not only visible between provinces- present day Regions, but are also very visible within these same Regions (e.g., between rural and urban areas). Also, it seems as if some of the Regions are not really working in favour of all their communities within the Regions.

This study is carried out in the Republic of Cameroon and more particularly in two different Regions (administrative units). These include Yaoundé which is the political capital. It is here that one find all the main ministries but my focus shall be the Ministry of Basic Education. Also, since my study deals with two contrasting settings, that is the urban and rural areas part of the research shall be

carried out in Yaoundé since this city harbours the central basic education ministry which is where all the internal organs (departments) of the ministry are found. Part of the research shall be carried out in some schools located in some urban neighbourhoods in Yaoundé.

The North West Region shall be my principal research site. It is also important to note that this region is predominantly English-speaking, but the medium of instruction in schools is both English and French just like Yaoundé which is predominantly French-speaking. Most of the research is to be carried out in schools where the main medium of instruction is English. Results from these two regions could be indicative of conditions in other parts of the country except in the northern part which by culture and economic activities appear to be set apart from other parts of the country.

1.2 Research Problem

It is over a decade since more than 160 countries met in Dakar and adopted the Dakar Framework for Action. In essence, it was all about the expansion of education opportunities to all children. Many of these countries have been struggling to meet the objectives of this framework of action and also to make sure it is met within the time frame. As a result of this, there has been a revision of most national education policies with the ultimate aim of ensuring access to education by all.

Cameroon as one of the participating countries to this international pledge including the Millennium Development Goals adopted by the United Nations Organisation (UNO) has committed herself to the universalisation of primary education. Basic education under the former Ministry of National Education may not have been given so much attention due to the fact that this ministry was so large comprising of basic, secondary, higher, vocational and physical education. As a result, there was a split of this ministry into different education ministries in 2004. The important thing here is that basic education as from this date had a separate ministry of its own. Since then, the decentralization of education services has been hastened with the new administrative Regions empowered in education matters affecting their areas. All these have been tailored to satisfying children in the rural and urban setups.

Despite this move, it appears more children cannot still have access to basic education owing to the lack of infrastructure in particular and other school inputs. This has resulted to inefficiencies witnessed in the basic education sector. More important is the fact that the school system continues to suffer from inefficiency witnessed in the repetition of classes, poor pass rates in official examinations with large differences in performance between urban and rural schools (Fonkeng, 2009, p.2).

This is because most areas particularly the rural areas may not be having access to educational establishments or if they may have at all, does the quality needs more to be desired? It is generally understood that in the Developing Countries, governments find it very difficult to provide education

facilities to their populations because of financial constraints especially. With the presence of the private sector, things have been facilitated to an extent. But the involvement of this public/private partnership in education provision does not necessarily mean that the problem of access is solved. In this situation, there is a need of an enforcement of the regulations or guidelines to make both public and private schools in mostly urban areas to set up schools in other areas as well. It is the role of the Central Ministry of Basic Education to follow the guidelines she has set to ensure that school establishments are not concentrated in areas such as the urban areas which are already flooded with educational establishments. It is also the role of this ministry to create more public schools in areas which seem to be under-served.

The problem here is whether these guidelines on school location do exist and if they do, are they fully or partially implemented by the Central Ministry of Basic Education. This is because just as there are well-served areas, in most cases the urban centers, there seem to be large disparities between the rural and urban setting in Cameroon which may be raising questions on the practicalities of the EFA campaign in Cameroon. This is because one needs to be careful when looking at the national coverage in terms of the availability of quality and well functioning schools as results of a small proportion of areas can easily mask the general situation in the country.

1.3 The Research Question

Is there any policy for the creation of primary schools in Cameroon, and what are its determinants?

1.3.1 Sub-questions

- What does the Cameroon education policy document and other official texts state with regard to the school mapping/location?
- What can influence the Central Ministry/Regional Delegation of Basic Education to intervene in the provision of education in both the rural and urban areas?
- To what extent can an efficient school mapping influence the education of children in the rural and urban areas?

1.4 Justification of Study

The extension of education opportunities to all children has been for some time a preoccupation of the Cameroon government since its ratification of the plan of action in 2000 which was followed by suppression of tuition fees in all government schools in 2002. The reason for which this study is based on basic education is because the foundation of education generally starts off with primary education and equally the Education For All (EFA) goals concentrates more on basic education with the Cameroon Ministry of Basic Education being charged with meeting of the objectives. Yet, there exists

a wide discrepancy between intentions and practice. Many education texts and other documents which indirectly or directly influence the provision of education all allude to the necessity of the extension of primary education opportunities to all.

In speeches of leaders and educationists, there is always much emphasis on the fact that opportunities for education should not be heavily influenced by where one is born. This is because if there exists a school mapping policy which is respected by the ministry, it is obvious that access to basic education even by the remotest parts of the country should not pose a problem because of the number of stakeholders involved in the provision of basic educational establishments. In some areas, the school infrastructure, teachers and other facilities necessary for pupils to get quality education exist. In others, there is the absence of most of these key inputs. Most serious, some schools merely exist in documents at the ministry. As a result of this, some communities barely struggle to kick start government created schools. This is sometimes carried out in make shifts where the quality is deplorable. It is believed that access to basic education should go side-by-side with quality and effectiveness.

It is hoped that with the study of the various determinants in the policy of the state's creation of schools in both the rural and urban areas, we will get to know how accessible basic education is to young Cameroonians as a whole. In this vein, it is believed that strategies on how to better handle it can then be revised by the Cameroon Ministry of Basic Education.

1.5 Research Purposes

The main purpose of this study is to explore the provision of basic education in Cameroon by the government and the private sector to both the rural and urban areas with the focus on school mapping. This is in order to investigate whether the government is actually regulating the creation and opening of primary school establishments in the urban and rural areas. This is to ensure that both areas have the opportunity of access to basic education facilities.

Education For All means access for all no matter the geographical location with more emphasis on areas with few schools. Therefore, this work is aimed at looking at the nature of provision in both urban and rural areas in order to find out which area needs more concentration. It is hoped that the results could lead to further investigation by the Cameroon Basic Education policy planners particularly the Department of Planning, Projects and Cooperation at the Ministry of Basic Education when they are about to create new schools in future.

1.6 Organisation of Work

This study consists of six chapters. Chapter one is an introduction to the study. It gives a general orientation as to the main concern of the work and the specific issues that need to be addressed in the

course of the work. Chapter two looks at a brief presentation of the area where the study is carried out with a focus on the context in relation to basic education. Chapter three reviews both literature on some countries and literature at the national level particularly on issues which are linked to the main theme in this study. The theoretical framework equally constitutes part of this chapter. It also shows the theoretical orientation adopted for the work. The fourth chapter presents the methodology that was adopted for the study. This methodology chapter shows how issues related to the work shall be investigated upon with regards to the preoccupations raised in chapter one. Chapter five presents the findings that came out from the field investigations and chapter six deals with discussion or the analysis of the findings which include the conclusion and it ends with references.

CHAPTER 2: Context of the study

This chapter opens with a brief presentation of Cameroon. It looks at the former Ministry of National Education (MINEDUC), the MINEDUB as a separate ministry and the level of cooperation between this ministry and its external structures. It equally highlights the main function of the department of Planning, Projects and Cooperation of the MINEDUB.

2.1 A Brief Presentation of Cameroon.

Cameroon as early as the 1840s first came into contact with British missionaries, who together with their mission works, began opening schools along the coastal towns. In 1884, Germany colonised the territory. During the period of German rule in Cameroon, both mission and government schools were opened nationwide. By the time of the outbreak of the First World War, much had been done by the Germans in the field of education. As from 1922, Cameroon was introduced to English and French as a result of the fact that she was mandated to Britain and France by the League of Nations (Tchombe). At independence, Cameroon adopted these two languages as her official languages. Therefore, at present Cameroon operates two education sub systems which stem from the legacies of colonialism despite the fact that it was Germany which had first officially colonised Cameroon. It has over 200 ethnic groups, nearly all of which identifying themselves with their own languages. Amongst all of these local languages, none is either a national language or a medium of instruction even though most of these languages are developed with a script and orthography. The two main languages of instruction are English and French.

Administratively, Cameroon has 10 Regions. Out of these 10 Regions, two are principally English-speaking and eight French-speaking. In all the Regions, both English and French are used as medium of instruction. The education system is fashioned in a way that there are purely French oriented schools, English medium schools and bilingual school. As a whole, the French language is more frequently used as a medium of communication.

The north is an area where Islamic education might be favoured above western education. Here too (Moore, 2006), the so-called Western schools are found but the attendance rate may be low due to some socio-cultural and administrative factors. The economy in the North also influences the rate of school attendance of children. Just like the Arid and Semi Arid Lands in Kenya, low rainfall and heavily reliance on pastoralism as a source of livelihood, makes some of the children together with their families to be on constant migration. Cultural factors also inhibit the school attendance of some of the children.

As in the 'ASAL' part of Kenya (Lauglo, 2004, p.25), nomadic pastoralist family will sometimes decide to send some children to school, but keep others at home to ensure sufficient availability of labour for looking after animals and protecting them against wild beasts, and to ensure that these children acquire the skills and toughness needed in the hard life of nomadic pastoralism. As a whole, the overall distribution of education facilities in some parts of the country particularly in the north, school attendance and completion rate may be influenced by the economic activities and the culture of the areas. The south which is the principal research site is more diverse with these constraining factors having little influence on the education of the child. The general distinction which holds for the entire country is the economic status of individual families. Some families may be financially capable of providing for the education of their children while others may not and in this instance, they will rely more on public schools which are cheaper and which therefore better facilitate access by the low-income families.

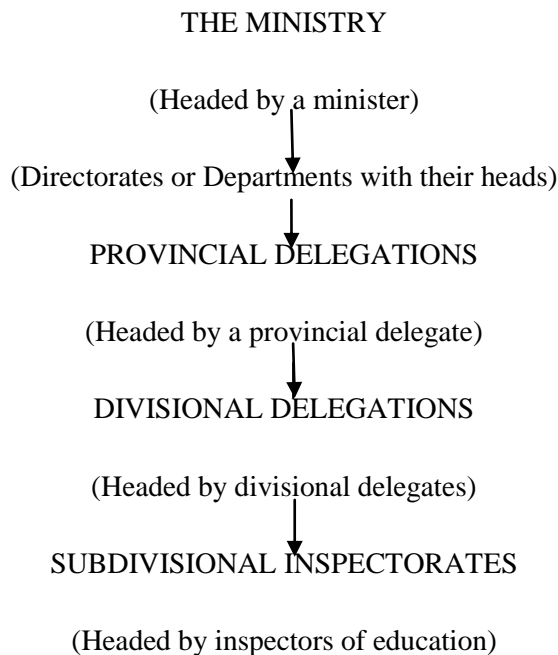
2.2 Basic Education under the former Ministry of National Education

The Ministry of National Education (MINEDUC) previously had departments such as the department of higher education, secondary, basic education and youths and sports. It was much centralised and decisions related to provision of education all emanated from the centre. Decision making was considered to be too slow as a result of the extensive nature of the ministry. Despite having representatives in the provinces, the flow of information was slowed by the general organisation of the ministry. This ministry was large and had much to do.

The Provincial Delegations of Education hardly participated in making decisions related to school site. The present structures under the basic education ministry existed but were not as active as they are now. Equally, some of them played a role different from what they play now. The provincial delegates controlled education matters in their respective provinces and also received recommendations from the divisional delegates. They dealt with issues related to basic education, secondary and higher education if at all some of the provinces had higher education institutions in their areas and they dealt directly with the Ministry of National Education.

Divisional Delegates of Education controlled education matters within the divisions and they were mostly concerned with basic and secondary schools. They were answerable to the provincial delegates. Reports from the sub divisional inspectorates of education were assembled and sent to the provincial delegates. Therefore, at the bottom were the sub divisional inspectorates of education which dealt directly with school head teachers. Figure 1 shows the way the former Ministry of National Education was structured for the delivery of educational needs nationwide.

Fig. 1 The organisational chain of authority in the former MINEDUC



Source: An adaptation from Taiti, (sd., p.3)

Following the presidential decree of 8 December 2004, the Ministry of National Education was dissolved which saw the creation of three ministries directly involved with education and other related ministries. These ministries include the Ministry of Higher Education, the Ministry of Secondary Education and the Ministry of Basic Education. The three other ministries which are partially related to education include; the Ministry of Scientific Research and Innovation, Employment and Vocational Training, and Youth (Hadidja Alim, 2011, p.1). What is presented above as ministries were former departments under the MINEDUC.

The creation of the basic education ministry came at a time when the general decentralisation and more particularly that of education management were going on. Since the adoption of the 1996 constitution which decentralised the administrative set up in Cameroon, no major steps had really been taken towards the reorganisation of the administration in general. Therefore, it was believed that the 2004 split and multiplication of the ministries was one of the first steps towards the reorganisation in line with decentralisation. In 2008, there was the transfer of competences from the centre to the Regions.

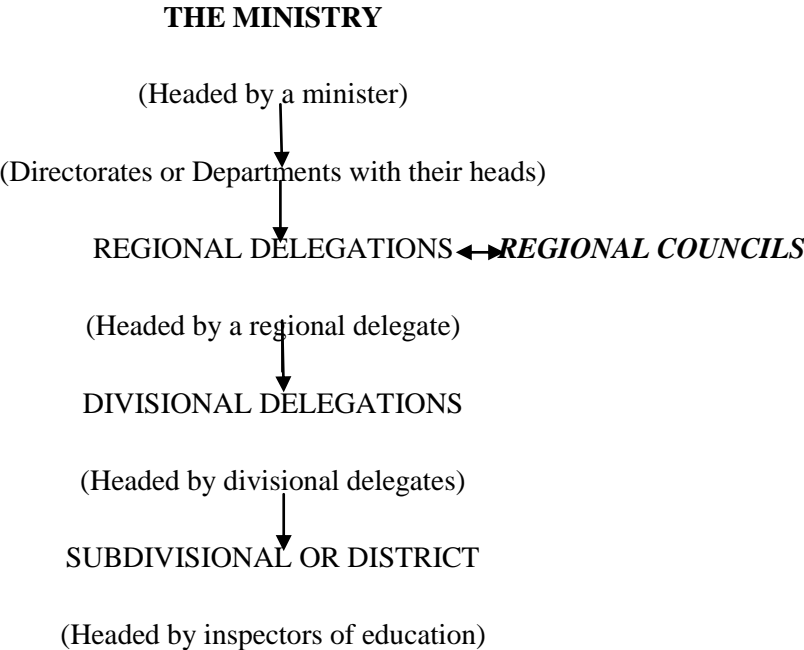
2.3 The Emergence of the Ministry of Basic Education

This is the structure which was created after the dissolution of the main ministry of education. It was created 8 December 2004 and was founded upon the very structures which had formerly been used. Officials particularly at the regional level are supposed to be more involved in decision making than in

the days of the MINEDUC. They are also partially involved in the management and financing of nursery and primary schools even though most decisions still come from the central Ministry of Basic Education. Also, the central ministry still remains the major financier of school projects.

Below, I will also like to present structure of the basic education ministry. As figure 2 shows the structure has remained almost unchanged but the functions of officials are assumed to have changed.

Fig. 2 Authority structure of the Ministry of Basic Education (MINEDUB)



Source: An adaptation from (Transparency International Cameroon, 2011, p.17).

Looking at the actors in this new dispensation, it can be noted that they have remained almost the same. Beginning at the regional level, it would be discovered that Councils are highly implicated in the political, economic and social management of the regions’ affaires. The regional councils are already in place with the mayor playing some of these roles in some of the councils. The mayors as head of the councils contribute financially in the running of schools. Apart of this, they contribute materially and they equally recommend to the MINEDUB on areas for the creation and opening of new schools within their municipalities.

The Regional Delegates work in close collaboration with the divisional delegations and the sub divisional or district inspectors of basic education. They have all the statistics of the number of schools within each municipality, division and sub division and district (Transparency International Cameroon, 2011). This makes the regional delegates better placed to know the needy areas when it

comes to provision of education within the region. They also disseminate didactic material that comes from the ministry to the various schools. As experts and with statistics at their disposal, they are supposed to be well placed when it comes to recommending to the MINEDUB on where new schools should be opened. This is because apart from them having the statistics, their representatives (divisional delegates and sub divisional inspectors of basic education) are constantly in the field which is different from the case of the councillors who may visit these areas occasionally. Within the regions, they are supposed to be consulted by the municipal mayors when projects on the opening of new schools are drawn. Since the municipalities also give out didactic materials to schools, these regional delegates are also supposed to be consulted as to which schools should be given priority.

My assessment of the functions of the mayors and the regional delegates of basic education indicates that there could likely be a clash of function between the mayors and the regional delegation of basic education. This is because both actors intervene in areas in which one party would have been given the right to intervene. Therefore, one is faced with a situation where the regional delegations of basic education together with councils deal directly with issues related to school location. In the course of the study, I shall investigate on whether there is friction or fluidity in the exercise of their functions because from all indications, one could expect a certain degree of duplication of functions by these two actors. If both or one of the above cases hold, I shall try to examine the extent to which the decisions are in line with the equitable distribution of educational establishments between the urban and rural areas. Equally, there exists a link between the regional councils (urban councils) and the rural areas (rural councils). This gives an opportunity to also investigate on whether the connection favours an equitable distribution of primary school establishments.

2.4 The Department of Planning, Projects and Cooperation of the Ministry of Basic Education

This is the department within the (MINEDUB) that is responsible for research of national coverage. This is done by making available information on the number of schools in specific areas of the country and the entire nation as a whole. By so doing, it influences decisions on project areas for government intervention because statistics which are collected by the regional delegations of education are filed to the MINEDUB through this department. It also provides information on areas that need more basic educational services and this information is supposed to be made available annually. This implies that when the government wants to open new public schools, it is this department which furnishes statistics which are used as basis for the opening of these schools no matter the area where the school is about to be opened. According to (Lontsie-Keune, 2005, p.309), this department is organised as follows in order to perform its task. Its major responsibility is;

the adoption of a strategy for the strengthening of the planning structure which include:

- Elaborating the school mapping of Cameroon.
- Regularly assemble the statistics for annual publication.
- Introduce statistics lessons in the training programmes of teachers.
- The regular production of statistics according to the different administrative units: schools, subdivisions, divisions and regions within the entire territory.

It is assumed that at all time, the basic education ministry is supposed to be aware of the field information when it comes to coverage nationwide. This is because through the collaboration between the subdivision and the divisions, statistics are assembled and sent to the regions which then ensure the transmission of these statistics to the central ministry.

The ministry has also laid down some guidelines to be followed by private operators about to open new schools. These guidelines are in two sections to be respected by prospective operators be it in the urban or rural areas. Section one has to do with the creation. Conditions contained in this section include the following;

- An application addressed to the regional delegate of basic education which is then sent to the minister of Basic Education.
- A certificate of non conviction of not more than three months old.
- A technical assessment document which include an assessment of the foundations of buildings and buildings to be constructed by the proprietor.
- The land certificate upon which the would be school shall be constructed.

These are the preliminary conditions which are supposed to be fulfilled by the prospective private proprietors of basic educational establishments. When these documents are assembled, they are deposited at the regional delegation of basic education for transmission to the MINEDUB. After this stage, the authorisation for the opening may be granted or rejected by the minister of basic education. Once the above conditions are fulfilled, the minister grants the authorisation of the opening of the school establishment. These conditions are contained in section two of the general guidelines. The operator then documents the following;

- An application.
- A certified copy of building permit.
- An organisation membership card showing adhesion to a private teachers' organisation.
- A list of both administrative and teaching staff.
- A separate bank account different form the personal account of the proprietor containing an amount equivalent of not less than three months' salary of the personnel in the school establishment.
- A list of didactic material approved by the minister.

This is the procedure from the creation to the opening of a private school establishment. It is also worth noting that the procedure may differ slightly when it comes to the case of government schools but the conditions are almost the same. These are conditions put in place by the basic education ministry. At the regional level, in addition to these conditions, the councils may impose other conditions which are still in line with the ones listed above since they are also involved in issues related to school location. Since the different regional councils may have their own regulations related to school mapping, in subsequent chapters, I shall investigate on those of the councils in the North West Region which is my main research site. These additional conditions at the regional level would depend on the number of schools and the extent to which they address the issue of access.

These guidelines from the MINEDUB address many issues when it comes to the quality of input such as the learning environment, teacher quality and the efficient management of the school in general. But these regulations may fall short of addressing the aspects of access for the areas which may be witnessing a shortage of primary school establishments. This is because when these conditions are met by a prospective proprietor, he may open his school wherever he wants even if it means opening the school just a few steps from an already existing private school or government school while other areas suffer from acute shortages. The particular group of schools which have to fully respect these guidelines are for profit or private proprietary schools. With faith-based schools, the case may be different because are regulated by their boards of administration.

It is arguably understood that a majority of these private operators who run for profit provision would always invest where they hope to maximise their profits. As a result of this, they will always like to concentrate in urban areas where they hope to get the available population that can pay the tuitions in these schools. Again if the government abandon these large urban towns to the private providers, it would be failing to meet the obligations which she has ratified in international education conventions of free primary education. Therefore, we are faced with a situation where the government must open government schools in these urban centres in order to meet up with the Dakar EFA goals.

Another issue which it is hoped to investigate is the extent of the government's determination in making government primary schools available in the rural areas and the extent to which she has created a favourable environment within the rural areas which may equally attract private provision there. This is because in 2010, a total of 3510396 pupils were enrolled into primary school (Annuaire Statistique du MINEDUB, 2010, p.113). This figure was over public, private and the informal basic education centres nationwide. Among this student population enrolled in primary schools, 938242 were enrolled in schools located in the urban areas and 2564394 were enrolled in primary schools located in rural areas. When it comes to infrastructure, a total of 2949 school establishments are located in urban areas while 11306 are found in the rural areas (Annuaire Statistique du MINEDUB, 2010, p.177). Considering these figures, one may believe that there is already some level of planning

in the distribution of schools between the urban and rural areas given that there are more schools set up in the rural than in urban areas. These are only statistics which do not necessarily reflect the field situation. Equally, when it comes to the situation in the different regions, there may also be variations. Also, in the course of the study, I will endeavour to define what is meant by a rural area in the Cameroonian context.

CHAPTER 3: Literature review, the Theoretical and conceptual framework.

This chapter addresses three aspects of this study. The first part consists of a review of works related to the present study. Both international literature and literature specifically literature based on Cameroon are reviewed. The second main section of the chapter is focused on the theory adopted for the study.

3.1 Government's involvement in the equitable distribution of schools in some other countries.

Quite much has been published on governments' role in regulating the creation and opening of schools. It will be important to review some key international scholarly works which address this issue.

Some literature tackles the issue of governments' role in widening the provision of education thereby making it more accessible to under-served sections of the population. To be more precise, I am concerned with the Cameroon government's role in regulating the creation and opening of schools which is directly linked to school mapping policy. To an extent, school mapping may ensure an even distribution of schools within the communities. The distribution of educational opportunities plays a key role in shaping wider human development prospects. Within countries, governments and people increasingly recognize that unequal opportunities of education are linked to inequities in income health and wider life chances (UNESCO, 2009, p.26). According to this UNESCO report, these disparities in the provision educational establishments are remarkably widespread challenges within and between countries. This does not mean that these challenges are hard to overcome. The role of regulation is important in reducing the severity of this problem.

While in almost all members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) this is no longer an issue of much concern, in Sub-Saharan Africa, the issue is still of much concern. Partly as a result of limited access to educational establishment by children, at age 7 just 40% are in primary school whereas in the OECD, almost all children of the same age group are in primary school (UNESCO, 2009). It is worth noting that other social, political and economic reasons also may explain the uneven distribution of educational opportunities within these developing countries as noted by Transparency International Cameroon (2011,p.38). These are issues that have been tackled within the OECD countries.

One issue associated with the state's regulatory role in the provision of educational establishments has been the decentralisation of administrative services which most countries have been adopting. Hill and Roskam (2009) have highlighted some of the problems that may arise from

the decentralisation of educational services. Decentralisation may lead to a situation where actors who may not be education experts, suddenly find themselves at the centre of decision making process that is directly related to education. An example here is the mayors who apart from lacking expertise may politicise the provision process and thereby cause conflicts. This is what Chile experienced under the military junta headed by General Augusto Pinochet from 1973-1989. What stands out here is that the mayors and educational experts play a decisive role when it comes to school location and municipalities are also partly responsible for the financing of schools. It equally seems that in most countries, these decentralisation measures have been influenced by some forces which are not really felt with the same strength for both the rural and urban areas. A study carried out in Nigeria (O. Ikoya and V. Ikoya, 2005) looks at the level of involvement of local officials in the process and management of educational decentralisation. It highlights some variations between the rural and urban areas.

Srivastava and Walford (2007) have covered issues related to the involvement of private provision and the widening of access. This study focuses on Nigeria where the inability of the state to provide adequate infrastructural facilities to cope with the very rapid rate of expansion in student enrolment is a major source of crisis in the education system. They have discussed the role of the private sector in making basic education accessible to the growing number of pupil population in Nigeria in recent times. They have also disagreed on the extent of influence of government regulation on private provision.

Under normal circumstances the Nigerian government would have increased the education infrastructure to accommodate the rising number of children and youth. Since the government could not provide a solution to this problem, there was a multiplication of private schools in order to absorb this population. This was what was witnessed in Nigeria in the 1990s as a result of a full implementation of the fee free education programme. In Nigeria just like in many Sub-Saharan African countries, this issue of a rise in the number of fee paying private schools has persisted until date. Again, this leads one to reflect on whether the private sector which has been contributing to the achievement of Education For All has been regulated or not. Regulation in this case goes beyond the various conditions put in place for the creation and opening of schools, that is input conditions. In most cases, these input regulations exist but those which concern school location particularly within the major urban cities are hardly there or may be there but poorly implemented. Guidelines favouring the expansion beyond these urban areas hardly exist or they may be there but not strictly implemented. According to some opinion, the forces of supply and demand should be left to determine who operates where.

As pointed out by Srivastava and Walford (2007), in Nigeria the process of gaining approval is supposed to start prior to the establishment of a school, starting with an inspection of the site and plans of the proposed school. In reality, the process often starts after the school is already operating

especially for the case of most individually owned schools. The guidelines set by the state are mostly related to issues of school inputs, with no explicit specifications for pro-poor service delivery that could have treated the issue of school location as a matter of concern. The point is that if these school input guidelines were preceded by other guidelines which are specifically on where (school location) the school should be created, then it could influence to an extent educational access by areas particularly the rural areas which in most cases have limited public and private school establishments or may have enough of these public primary schools which are not functional. In an era in which governments have declared their willingness to make basic education accessible to all such guidelines on school location could have an impact on achieving this goal. While some countries may be struggling to make basic education accessible with few schools available, others may be struggling to do same not as a result of lack of schools but as a result of poor implementation of guidelines on school location or simply poor management of existing school mapping. In the latter case, a result may be inequality particularly between the rural and urban areas and even access concentration of schools in the urban areas.

Other opinion may suggest that this concentration of schools in one area is not principally because of a lack of regulation. They suggest that this mostly occur because of the proliferation of so many unrecognised schools which have mushroomed in most densely populated urban neighbourhood (Belfield and Levin, 2002). For instance, in countries like India, Nigeria and others, this is a common phenomenon. But still, most of these schools operate and the ministries of education know of their existence or for the case of Nigeria it is as a result of the corruption characteristic of the ministry (Srivastava and Walford, 2007). Therefore, as a result of the long and at times complicated administrative procedure involved in registering the school under the Nigerian ministry of education for the school to be recognised, corruption easily take place.

In India, there is also the need for a school location planning policy which may lead to an improvement in access for the areas with limited educational establishments. The major problem here is not the limited number of schools available but how to make the available schools spread rationally in the whole country. The International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP), (UNESCO, 1999), carried out a study in Lok Jumbish, India with the aim of making basic education accessible to the Lok Jumbish area. In this report, some prerequisite conditions that may lead to an efficient school mapping policy have also been examined involving the component steps in school mapping process.

3.1.1 An overview of National Literature

Literature from within Cameroon shows that there are sections in policy documents related to the provision of education by the state and the private sector. Concerning school location, there are conditions or guidelines set by the ministry of basic education to be respected by both the public and

private sectors when schools are about to be opened. The question is whether these conditions are actually put in practice or not. MINEDUC (1998) has laid down the guidelines for the creation, opening and running of government and private educational establishments. If in the process of opening government schools, this issue of the existence of private schools in particular location is taken into consideration, new schools would then be opened in needy areas. The problem of the availability of educational establishments in the rural areas would pose no major concern. My interest here is narrowed down to just where (school location) the school is actually created. Issues of school input may come after this stage of school location.

The government has constantly laid more emphasis first on school input aspect rather than starting with the area where the school has to be created. In effect, school location choices generate all sorts of controversies (Transparency International Cameroon, 2011). According to reports by Transparency International, networks and connections largely influence the choice of school location. This international organisation refers to some agents and their role in determining the choice of school location by the Ministry of Basic Education. It also raises questions as to why the MINEDUB may have laws governing the provision which it cannot implement. This means that in rural areas where they may not have very influential local elite, politicians or business men to wield much influence or lobby for government a school, the area may be bound remain under-served. The Bureau d'Etude GRADEMAP (2008), sponsored by the Commonwealth Education Fund has explored issues related to the supply of schools to the urban and rural areas and it states that the EFA campaign may always be elusive to a certain class of people or regions.

School location thus makes a big difference when it comes to reducing the margin of access between the rural and urban areas and in achieving the EFA agenda. It just does not suffice for the state to provide or ensure that quality basic education is provided to a handful of children living in particular areas. The guidelines put in place for the creation and opening of schools do not address this issue of school location. Rather, they concentrate on quality related issues whereas quality and access should go side by side. Also, the incentives given by the MINEDUB to private schools seem not to encourage prospective private operators to set up schools in the rural areas. Ensuring that children residing in the urban areas have access to quality education is the responsibility of the state just as ensuring the access of children within the rural setting.

Lontsie-Keune (2005), from a study of government assembled texts related to education, he acknowledges the limitations in the provision of basic education in the country as a whole but attributes the lack of schools in some of these areas especially the Northern part of the country to the culture of these areas and the climate. This lack of schools is as a result of the general lack of interest in Western education by most Northerners and also due to the fact that most teachers posted there are usually unwilling to take up service. As a result, the few make-shift schools created there are not always functioning. He equally presents the situation of provision of basic education in large urban towns of Yaounde, Douala, Bafoussam, Ebolowa and others and maintains that there has been so

much concentration of school establishments in these urban centres which contrasts with the situation in the rural areas. He notes however that the under scholarisation of particularly the rural areas is partly as a result of lack of other social amenities that may encourage the creation and opening of schools. This may be an argument also used by the ministry of basic education for not opening schools in some of these rural areas; but it is still the duty of the ministry to create an enabling environment that may attract prospective school proprietors into the rural areas. These all show the lapses in school mapping policy within the basic education ministry.

This produces an adverse effect on school progression and retention rate of children especially those who may find themselves in places suffering from the acute shortage of schools. This has made mission schools to be more actively involved in provision in the rural areas in their effort to fill the gap, according to (Tenikue, 2010) who has undertaken a detailed study of the contribution of faith-based schools in ensuring an expanded supply of basic education in Cameroon. Even though these schools receive subventions from the state, a majority of them still impose fees which may not be affordable the ordinary parents in the rural areas.

Another issue related to the general distribution of schools has been corruption that characterises the basic education ministry. The decentralisation of educational services means that the number of officials responsible for delivery has increased. Also, the follow up mechanism in the days of a centralised system has been weakened. Most decisions that are taken at the ministerial level end up being implemented partially from the Regional, Divisional or the District level where those responsible exploit the decisions for their personal interests (Transparency International Cameroon, 2011).

According to Kamga (2008), the difference witnessed in school attendance rate between the rural and urban areas in Cameroon does not only rests at the level of child labour and the biases against the education of the girl child that are common in the rural setting. Basing on the Cameroon national household report of 2007, he states that there are other influences which include the lack of schools in the rural areas. These are among other issues he explores. In some of these rural areas where there is limited number of schools, most parents would prefer to delay sending their children to school at the normal school age of 6 which is the age when the child is expected to start school. This delay is probably as a result of the long distances some of the children have to cover in order to get to school. This would always make parents to get their children involved in child labour for the time being until the children are old enough to cover these long distances. By so doing, children in the rural areas finally end up by starting school very late (Kamga, 2008).

The 2009/2010 Statistical yearbook (2010), an annual publication of the Department of Planning, Projects and Cooperation of the Ministry of Basic Education, presents an update of the total number of pre-primary (nursery) and primary schools available in each region of the country. This is always done with the aid of Regional Delegates, Divisional Delegates and Inspectorates of basic education. These yearly reports also spell out the role of these education officials from the Regional to

the District level. The manner in which the report is prepared and presented each year gives the impression that the basic education ministry has the available information from the field when different Regional reports are compiled. It equally gives the impression that this ministry has updated information of the situation particularly within the rural areas. Yet there seem to be lots of deficiencies in these rural areas.

Against the backdrop of some of these deficiencies, Backiny-Yetna and Wodon (2009) assess the extent to which private and faith-based schools have extended their supply of basic education covering both the rural and the urban areas. They note that the problem of insufficient access for a great number of the rural children still exists because of the high fees charged by these private schools. This is because even though the government gives subsidies to these schools, they are so insignificant in influencing the high fees which these establishments charge in order to cover their running costs. Fees prevent a greater margin of the children from gaining access partly because of these fees are too high for parents to afford them. When it comes to government schools, they are fee free in theory; but in reality parents are charged Parent Teacher Association (PTA) levies that are described as generally quite expensive Transparency International Cameroon (2011). Therefore, we might be faced with a situation where the schools may be available in some parts of the rural areas but children cannot attend. On the other hand, the government schools which in most of these rural areas are still partly left in the hands of the parents when it comes to financing the running cost and might therefore not still be fully accessible to the children in need of schooling.

As concerns the situation of EFA in Cameroon, Bipoupout (2007) assesses the extent to which the EFA goals have been met in Cameroon. He looks at the school performance in the urban and rural areas and attributes some of the deficiencies to the limited access particularly in the rural areas. In line with this, he equally looks at the repetition rates in both urban and rural schools and the means by which these short-comings could be reduced nationally.

The overall impression from the studies that have been reviewed above show that when it comes to the issue of access to educational establishments by children, the government has adopted policies that seem to favour certain margins of children found in certain geographical areas. It has been so because of government's concentration on mostly input related issues which are associated with quality. Issues related to school location (access) have not been given much consideration as well. Therefore, the implications of the studies indicate that more has to be done towards making education accessible. This may be achieved through a redefinition of education policies on school location.

3.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study will use the social reproduction theory. This theory stems from Bourdieu, a French writer who wrote extensively on it. His works show how the transmission of cultural codes and practices of members of a particular class (the rich and upper class) is made possible through structures and institutions that are created by the state system. This analysis starts from the basic structure of the society which is the family and then moves to other institutions and agencies where the idea is upheld and maintained. By so doing, the structure of class relationship is kept intact. Therefore, it becomes difficult for members of another class which in this case are powerless financially to attempt an alteration of the status quo.

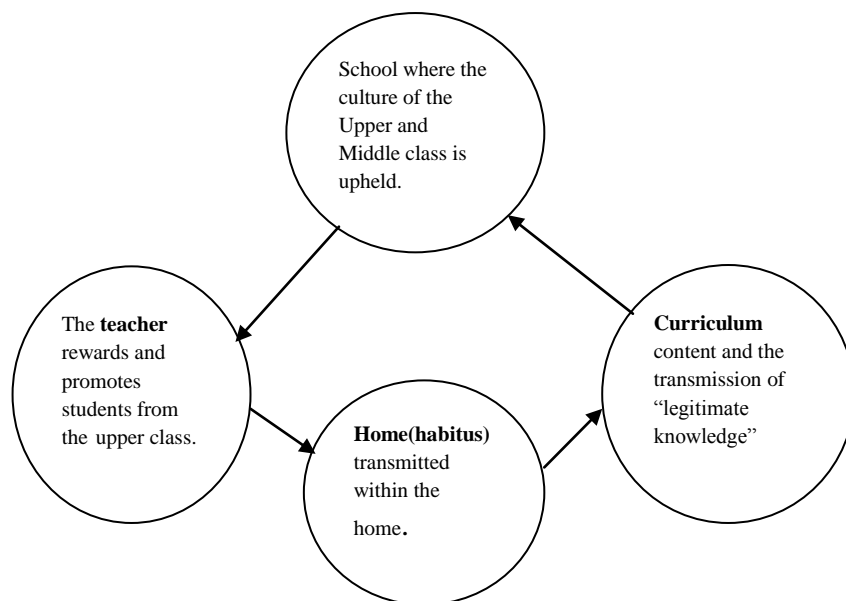
This is carried out through education for education becomes the best medium through which values are transmitted. Education in the sense in which Bourdieu uses it has to do with the learning of cultural habits and the inclusion of these cultural habits in the curriculum. In this way, it becomes difficult to forget these values. Every institutionalized educational system owes the specific characteristics of its structure and functioning to the fact that, by the means proper to the institution, it has to produce and reproduce the institutional conditions whose existence and persistence (self-reproduction of the system) are necessary both to the exercise of its essential function of inculcation and the fulfillment of its function of reproducing a culture arbitrary which it does not produce (cultural reproduction), the reproduction of which contributes to the reproduction of the relations between the groups or classes (social reproduction) (Bourdieu, 1990). Therefore, this is Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital in the social reproduction theory. This theory in essence tends to look at the most hidden and most specific function of the educational system that consists in hiding its objective function that is, masking the objective truth of its relationship to the structure of class relationship (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 208).

It is evident that this theory draws more from the nature of the French society especially during Bourdieu's time. The structured aristocracy in the 20th Century France is portrayed in the theory. Also, if one has to look at today's French society, it will be discovered that so much change would have occurred. This is because the ideas were based on what characterized the society during Bourdieu's time. Equally, Bourdieu only limited himself to the agents he stated to have been responsible for the transmission of ideas associated with the theory. Faced with these and with the alteration of the class structure coupled with the changing role of the state, other authors have come up with publications which take a critical look at Bourdieu's concepts.

Some of these works have not only been limited to Bourdieu's concepts but have attempted to analyze this theory from other dimensions especially when it comes to the structure of the society and the agents involved in the theory. It is also important to note that from Bourdieu's work, the mechanism argued to perpetuate and reproduce structured social inequalities in society is based on the effective transmission of family-based parental endowments to the offspring. Parents endow their

children with physical, human, social and especially cultural capital whose transmissions create inequalities in children’s educational and occupational attainment. According to Tzanakis (2011), Bourdieu argues that schools and teachers aid and abet this family-based reproduction process by rewarding possession of elite cultural capital in students and by setting up elitist standards rigged to favour upper and middle class children and exclude others.

Fig.3 A diagrammatic representation of agents of social reproduction from Bourdieu’s work.



Source: Author’s adaptation from Bourdieu’s conception.

Above is a diagrammatic representation of the different agents involved in the social reproduction theory as presented by Bourdieu . Cultural capital is seen as legitimated by the way the society is structured. This process starts first from the home environment then to the school where agents (teacher and curriculum) necessitate the transmission of codes associated with the upper and middle class of the society. The content of the curriculum can be made in a way that it transmits certain values. According to Kubow and Fossum (2007), the general purpose of schooling comprises some of the manifest functions of the curriculum, while the way the curriculum is legitimated, stratified and used to protect some people’s interest constitute some of the more latent function of the curriculum. **Legitimate knowledge** is associated with the ideological dominance by the powerful groups over the less the less powerful ones in the society and how these ideological messages are communicated through educational curriculum and practices. This shows that the dominance of one class over the other or others goes above cultural imposition through the curriculum. The state also can be viewed as an agent in the process through the way it manages the allocation of resources.

As some scholars such as Collins (2009) and Tzanakis (2011) have pointed even though they vary in opinion as regards the confirmation of some of these agents in large scale quantitative research, it is clear that these agents have a great impact on class relations. But this is not the focus of the present study. This is because the above analysis strongly ties with the structure of the French society and also the agent of social reproduction which I intend to use is not included in the above diagram.

Thus from the above, Bourdieu takes a three dimensional approach in analysing the whole issue of social reproduction where it begins from the parental level, then to schools and teachers where the educational process of differential elimination takes place at the detriment of the poor. This assumes that the educational system functions in a reproductive way. Instead of it mediating the differences that exist in the class relations, it legitimises the inequality between these classes.

In addition, Collins (2009) and Tzanakis (2011), have attempted a critic of Bourdieu's ideas in cultural reproduction. Above all, Bourdieu was writing about the French society which at his time was highly stratified. They have proven that social reproduction in education goes beyond the agents which Bourdieu concentrated and stressed on. Indeed, social reproduction may still occur *without* the mechanisms that Bourdieu has suggested as central. Inequalities may persist even when schools become more open and inclusive (Tzanakis, 2011). In another way, I am struggling to look at other instances where social reproduction in education can be perpetuated apart from the instance noted in Bourdieu's works. Therefore, there is the need to explore other instances.

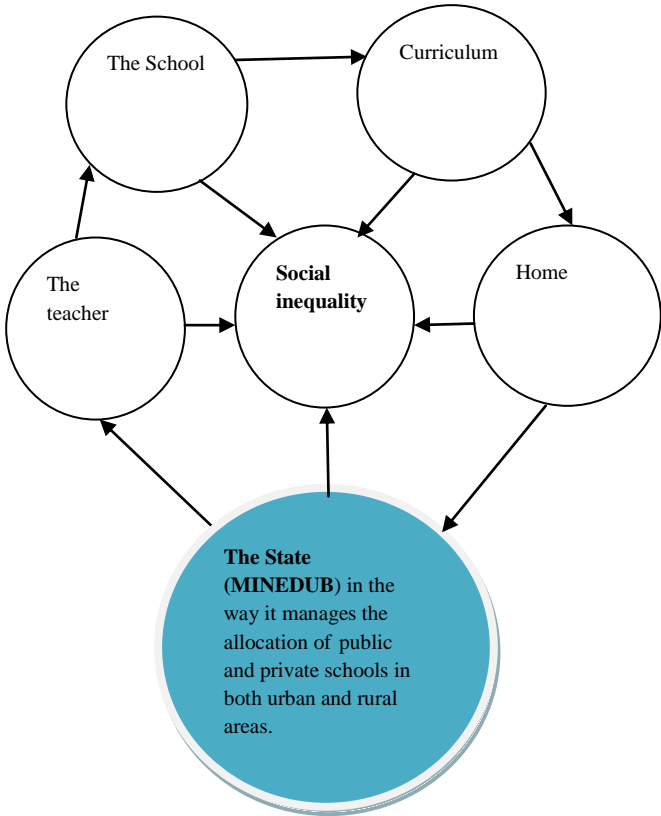
Collins (2009) explores the influence of other agents in social reproduction than the ones mentioned above. He presents the school as an agent where ideological domination is achieved through the inculcation of knowledge in a class-differentiated manner thereby preparing one class for their dominant or dominated places in the economy and society. This is what he calls economic domination. Here, he uses the school as a separate agent and not just as a place where there is the interaction of other agents resulting in the maintenance of a social structure. Apart from this, he equally makes mention of linguistic reproduction which are all agents involved in social reproduction. Generally, Collins (2009) is more concerned with the role of agency rather than the structure of the society in social reproduction. This indicates that there are several levels through which one could look at the different agencies involved this theory.

The present study asserts that the way state manages the supply of basic education establishments in Cameroon, aids in creating a situation where the rich and those who can afford for to live in the urban cities may always remain the privileged. On the other hand, those who live in the rural areas where there is an acute shortage of these basic education establishments may be condemned for secondary roles in the society in future.

In this study, I shall not examine the parental, teacher or the curriculum role of social reproduction. Rather, taking into consideration the Cameroonian context and the way the state regulates the supply of basic education to the different sectors of the society, I shall be examining the extent to which the structure of power relationship is kept intact by the state through the school

mapping policy it pursues. In essence, this study sets out to investigate the extent to which the state is also a mechanism for the reproduction of social inequality apart from the parental influences (habitus or cultural hegemony), the teacher and the curriculum.

Figure 4: Agents of Social Reproduction theory including the focus of the present study (highlighted here)



Source: Author’s conception.

In this model, the influence of the home, the school, curriculum and the teacher are acknowledged as agencies responsible for the production of social inequality, but these influences are not the focus of the present study. This does not mean that these agencies are not important as well. The stress is rather on the state represented by the basic education ministry (MINEDUB) in the way it manages the opening of school establishments in the rural and urban areas. Education plays an important role when it comes to changing one’s situation. Apart from this intrinsic importance, education has a range of instrumental roles that it can play. For the present purposes, I will focus on two dimensions: the personal versus collective and the economic versus the non-economic. The instrumental personal economic role of education is that it can help a person to find a job, to be less vulnerable in the labour market, be better informed as a consumer, to be more informed on economic opportunities and so

forth. Assuming that the education provided is of minimally accepted quality, its role is crucial with respect to people's standard of living, and their ability to protect themselves and their families from poverty and destruction (Robeyens, 2006). This is the role played by education and in order to balance up or make for equilibrium, education is a major determining factor.

In essence, I am looking at the distribution of primary school establishments in the urban and rural areas. The focus here is not only on the actual infrastructure but rather on both the infrastructure and inputs for instance staffing, didactic materials and others. The Cameroonian basic education system is fashioned in a way that both the urban and rural schools write the same end of course certificate examination even though the conditions under which these primary school students are prepared grossly vary. The provision of basic education in Cameroon is under the direct supervision of the state (MINEDUB), reason for which the state school mapping policy is investigated upon.

3.3 Clarification of Concepts

In order to effectively analyze the issues related to the present study, some clarification of concepts used in the work needs to be done.

School mapping

School mapping (*carte scolaire*) or school location planning is a plan for the creation and opening of schools which ensures that all areas are provided with educational establishments. UNESCO (1999) defines school mapping as a set of techniques and procedures used to plan the demand for schools at the local level and to decide on the location of future schools and the means to be allocated at the institutional level. It is evident that the issue of school mapping has to do with making education accessible to especially to remote areas. The aim of this school location policy is to ensure that there is an equitable coverage of the population in terms of the provision of schools.

My study focuses on the school location plan of the basic education ministry in Cameroon particularly between the urban and rural areas. Therefore in this context, I shall be looking at the extent to which the Cameroon basic education ministry's school location plan has adopted rules that make the provision of basic education to be spread to every areas in the country no matter the geographical location. This is because in the context characterized by nations' strife to achieve EFA, it is important that governments through their ministries of education should equally extend the supply of basic education to all children.

Basic Education

According to Kom Dorotheé et al (2000, p.103) basic education includes all the elementary knowledge that must be mastered by members of a community to ensure their own personnel

development and that of the community. This would mean that basic education would involve both formal and informal education at the elementary level. This definition is more articulated towards the African traditional education system which was more informal. In Nigeria, Ghana, Tanzania, Malawi or elsewhere in Africa for instance, traditional education of youngsters involves intellectual, physical and attitudinal training in order to develop fully into acceptable adults in the society and every member of the community had a hand in contributing to the educational upbringing of the child (Nsamenang and Tchombe, 2011). The definition by these authors is a concept of basic education which has to do with the upbringing of the child in a purely traditional African way and it is more related to informal education. This is because it has to do with the training of young members of the community which starts off with home training by their parents before they move out to the community level where they still acquire some informal skills through encounters with other groups or members of different communities.

The Jomtien declaration considers basic education as the sum of all the minimum knowledge, expertise, social skills, and awareness one needs in order to develop as an individual, to fulfil one's potential to the utmost, and to take one's place as an individual and as a member of a local, national, and international community, within a changing context (ERNWACA et al, 2002). This definition involves pre-school formal and informal education. This is not the focus of our study. It equally involves an aspect of formal basic education above the pre-school level. This partly ties with my conception of basic education. This is because basic education in the context of my study is limited to formal education provided by both the state and the private provider which is supposed to be regulated the Cameroon's Ministry of Basic Education. In Cameroon, the basic education ministry is involved in the running of both nursery and primary schools but again, my interest will be on primary schools.

Therefore, in this work, basic education shall be interchangeably used to refer to primary education as well. The reason for which nursery schools are not a point of interest for me is because they deal with the pre-primary school programmes. These programmes entail preparing the child for primary school. The participation of children in these nursery schools is not mandatory. Some of the nursery schools are simply day care centres where children are kept to be taken care of when their parents leaving for their work places. Also these nursery schools are not fee free and are not fully integrated in the EFA programme. In addition the Cameroon constitution and UNESCO texts ratified by Cameroon state the role of the government in ensuring access to basic education to all which does not include nursery schools. The MINEDUB school going age for free primary education is between 6-14 years old (2009/2010 Statistical Yearbook, 2011). The duration for the primary school programme in Cameroon is 6 which is supposed to be spent from Primary 1 up to Primary 6 where the pupil is expected to complete after having passed the First School Leaving Certificate examination.

The Urban/Rural areas

An urban area in the context which it is used has certain characteristics peculiar to the Cameroonian setting. These are areas of high concentration of most social facilities and where most private operators carry out their businesses. They are equally the administrative headquarters and the seat of Regional administrative departments. It is also here that a majority of public servants and influential business men live and carry out their activities. These areas also have larger concentration of populations. Therefore, in Cameroon a village is not necessarily a rural area. This is because most of the towns and cities are located within a number of villages.

As a consequence, schools are also opened here in large numbers partly in response to the large population concentrations. Just as public primary schools are opened in these urban cities, private proprietary and faith-based schools are also opened to compete with each other and to make money in the case of for profit schools. A close look at the manner in which schools are opened here may not really indicate that the basic education ministry regulates the opening of these establishments. This is because of the extent of the concentration of schools. Schools are opened very close to each other in a way that moving from one school to another can be a matter of just few steps. This results in a situation where one may find the pupil population in most of the schools so small because of their proximity to each other.

On the contrary, rural areas are locations which are situated further away from towns and cities. They have less social facilities in relation to what is available in towns and cities which make up the urban areas. In most cases, they lack electricity; good water supply well constructed roads, good modern schools and so on. Here equally, the main income generating activities are agriculture, hunting and trading. There is also the acute shortage of educational establishments. Public primary schools are few and in cases where they may be present, they may be hardly functional like those found in urban areas. Private schools are hardly opened in these rural areas partly because of the lack of some social amenities that may attract the teaching staff, the high cost of construction resulting from the poor state of roads which can be used to transport building material among other factors. The gap between one school and another is often very wide making children in most cases to cover very long distances in order to get to schools. Finally, this is an area mostly inhabited by low income families.

Social inequality

Social inequality as used in this study relates to the narrowing of life chances resulting from uneven distribution of basic educational establishments in two major administrative settings (urban and rural areas) in Cameroon. According to UNESCO (2009), the distribution of educational opportunity plays

a key role in shaping human development prospects. Within countries, governments and people increasingly recognise that unequal opportunities for education are linked to inequalities in income, health and wider life chances. The point here is that education plays a vital role in empowering individuals and communities. Once this opportunity is not given to the population, there is bound to be inequality between the different sections of the population.

Basic education is a key determinant in favouring or disfavouring a particular section of the society. This means that when individuals do not get basic education which is considered to be the foundation upon which their future survival in the society is laid, there is bound to be the persistence of inequality.

Chapter 4: METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research Strategy and Design

Research strategy or approach is the orientation which the researcher pursues in the conduct of his research. This orientation can either be qualitative or quantitative. It is important because it represents a useful means of classifying different methods of social research and because it is a useful umbrella for a range of issues concerned with the practice of social research. There are a number of different dimensions to this issue. For one thing, choices of research strategy, design or method have to be dovetailed with the specific research question being investigated (Bryman, 2008). The nature and issues which are investigated upon in the social research may determine the type of approach to be adopted. According to Charles (1998), all research can be differentiated on the basis of whether its methodology produces mostly numerical data (scores and measurements) or mostly verbal data (verbal descriptions and opinions). Research that relies on verbal data is called qualitative research, while research that relies on numerical data is called quantitative research.

Lancy (1992) views quantitative research as a research methodology that grows and expands much like new limbs on a mighty oak tree where it is possible to connect to every little twig, eventually, to a single trunk while qualitative research closely resembles a “mixed forest” than the “mighty oak” of quantitative research. In other words, qualitative research can be likened to a situation where a researcher in a football pitch during an encounter between two opposing teams describes the colours of the jerseys of the referees and that which the different teams put on, the general organisation of the pitch, the activities of the spectators and so on. On the other hand, in quantitative research may be interested in specific analysis of just an item in the pitch. For instance the four referees can be a subject of interest for the researcher. He may be interested in issues related to vigilance during the football encounter. Here he will be paying attention to the number of faults committed by the players and which were spotted out by these referees, the number red and yellow cards awarded and so on. Therefore, from the above description of the research strategies, it is evident that qualitative research deals more with descriptive words while quantitative research deals rather with quantification or numbers.

Another option related to social research approach is that the researcher may adopt both the qualitative and quantitative approaches in the conduct of a single research project. This is known as the mixed method research. This term is widely used nowadays to refer to research that combines methods associated with both quantitative and qualitative research (Bryman, 2008). This means that despite the differences which exist between them, they are not totally incompatible. They can still be

successfully blended together in social research studies depending on the nature of issues related to the study.

Since my work deals with the supply of basic education in both the rural and urban areas by the public and private sectors and the extent to which the basic education ministry uses regulations to influence the school location (school mapping). This made me to adopt the qualitative strategy. The choice of the qualitative approach made it possible to use the instruments associated with it that facilitate interaction with informants and probing the informants to express their opinions during interviews.

In addition to the interviews, I used observation as another minor method to collect the data. After conducting interviews with informants, I also had to observe the two settings (urban and rural) in order to confirm some of the issues raised by the informants and also to take a comparative view of the two situations.

A research design provides a framework for the collection and analysis of data. A choice of research design reflects decisions about the priority being given to a range of dimensions of the research process (Bryman, 2008). This means that the research design adopted for a given study is always correlated to the issues that the said study addresses. In my work, I adopted the comparative design. This design comprises of studying two contrasting cases using different or identical methods. In the context of quantitative research, the study may involve two or more cases in which for instance, research is undertaken in the first case and then the same research is still taken in the second case using different or identical methods in order to find out patterns of association and dissimilarities between both cases. Cases worth comparing here may include structures of organisations, nations, schools, institutions, customs, traditions, value systems, life styles, language and so on may be compared using the same research instruments either to carry out secondary analysis of national data or conduct new empirical work. In my study, I took a comparative analysis of the supply of basic education establishments in the urban and rural areas and the extent to which the basic education ministry influenced school location through regulation. The aim may be to seek explanations for similarities and differences or to gain a greater awareness and deeper understanding of social reality in different national contexts (Bryman, 2008).

4.2 Methods of Data Collection and Instruments

In this study, interviews were used as the principal method of data collection. Documents were equally consulted as a supplementary method of data collection. This section presents these methods.

4.2.1 Interviews

Interviews were used as the main instrument of collecting data in the field. An interview is an interactive discussion between two or more persons on a related issue or topic. According to Kvale

(1996) as quoted in (Chen, 2000), an interview is an interaction of views between two or more people on a topic of mutual interest. There are several forms of interview for instance, a job interview, media interviews, social work interviews, police interview, appraisal interview and research interviews (Bryman, 2008). Cohen et al (2011) present an interview as a constructed and usually planned event rather than any naturally occurring situation which demands that the researcher needs to be more purposeful. In this case, I will like to look at an interview more from an academic research perspective. This is because the purpose of this particular type of interview is to test or develop hypothesis; to gather data as in surveys or experimental situations and to sample respondents' opinion (Cohen et al, 2011, p. 411).

Therefore, an interview in social research involves questioning and listening with a purpose. This enables the participants to express their views on how they interpret the world in which they live and also to express how they regard situations on their own point of view (Cohen, 2000). In the course of data collection, I used the semi-structured interview to obtain data from my respondents. This had to do with the drafting of open questions. In open questions, respondents are asked questions in which they can reply however they wish (Bryman, 2008). These types of questions were designed for all the different groups of my respondents. In order to ensure a certain degree of variation of ideas, interviews were conducted with a multiple of respondents. These respondents varied in terms of their positions and settings in which they found themselves. The groups included school proprietors, those representing organisations, administrators who are indirectly implicated in education and education officials. Respondents from these different groups expressed their views related to I raised.

4.2.2 Interview Guide

The interview guide is mostly associated with semi-structured interviews. Cohen et al (2011) describes an interview guide as a specified outline of topics and issues to be covered which the interviewer decides the sequence and working of the questions in the course of the interview. In this sense therefore, an interview guide serves as a guide during the interview and ensures that basically the same information is obtained from a number of informants. Questions contained in this interview guide were basically open questions. I preferred to design open questions because I did not want my respondents to be restricted on the choices of their answers. Also, I thought that by adopting these types of questions, my respondents in some cases may talk about some important issues I may have forgotten or ignored in the drafting of my questions. On the other hand, I witnessed one main disadvantage with this type of questions. Respondents in most case talked for so long and even deviated from some of the main issues. Despite this, I was always keen and would politely bring back the respondents to the questions I was interested in and made them to understand that we could still go

back to some of the out of topic issues one the interview was over. This is how I got rid of deviation from my questions by the respondents. Cohen et al (2011) assesses the strength this type of interview a means of increasing the comprehensiveness of the data and equally a means of making the data collection process systemic for each respondent. By so doing, interviews remain fairly conversational and situational. Despite this, he also cautions on the short-comings of this type of interview as some important and salient topics may be inadvertently omitted. Also, the interviewer in the course of the exercise might have the problem of flexibility in sequencing and wording of some of the questions which might affect responses thereby reducing comparability.

To ensure that respondents answer the research questions during the interviews completely, different interview guides were designed for my different groups of respondents. The aim of this was to get people giving ideas on issues which directly concerned them and which they were versed in as well. Five different interview guides were developed for the five different groups of informants. All the five different interview guides were prepared in a similar fashion even though they contained different items but they all basically ensured a comprehensive coverage of regulation and access related issues. Generally, the guiding questions were prepared in a way to allow open-ended responses from the informants and in instances where issues were not sufficiently explained or rapped in ambiguities, prompts were used to follow up the initial questions. Even though this made some of the interviews to be long and time consuming, it was necessary because at the end, the main issues were always touched by the respondents.

But interviews and more especially when it is a semi-structured interview has got some short-comings. There is the problem of meaning. The interviewer and the respondent may not be sharing the same meaning and hence may imply different things in their use of words (Bryman, 2008). Instances where either the respondents or I gave different meanings to each other's words occurred during interviews. Where there was doubt or where the respondents gave different meanings to words which were different in the context which they were used, I always recalled their attention for clarification.

4.2.3 Document Analysis

As presented above, it was necessary to complement the data obtained from interviews with data from documents. According to Cohen (2011), documents are records of events and processes that may be produced by individuals or groups. Documents related to government regulations on the creation and opening of both government and private schools were consulted. Also, documents about provision and access together with statistics related to specific settings were obtained. In this way, the documents were official documents both from the state particularly from the MINEDUB and the National Institute of Statistics and official documents from private NGOs. More of these documents were equally obtained from visual outputs such as the internet.

4.2.4 Observation

Apart from interviews and document analysis, I also did an observation of the two settings which I was interested in. I visited and observed in the course of my interviews the urban and rural areas in order to see the overall distribution of schools within these settings with more attention on issues like the distance between one school and another, the distances children cover in order to get to school and the school environment in general. This helped in drawing some of the distinctions between schools in the urban and rural areas.

4.3 Ethical Considerations

Dealing with human subjects in research at times can be quite challenging. This requires the researcher to strike a balance between the demand placed on them as professional scientists in pursuit of truth, and their subjects' rights and values potentially threatened by the research (Cohen, 2000). The fact that I was dealing with human subjects in my study, I was obliged to respect their rights, and privacy as well as other personal issues. In order to conform to acceptable ethical standards, I formally requested for permission from my research subjects and related institutions before embarking on the main study. I first sought permission from the Ministry of Basic Education. In possession of this permit from the ministry, I thereafter sought permission from the Regional Delegation of Basic Education which gave me access to the divisions and sub divisions within this Region where I carried out my study. From an individual basis, my participants were informed on the nature and the purpose of my research prior to the interviews so that in case they had a different view related to this study, they could freely withdraw their participations.

Furthermore, I guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity to my research subjects. Later on in my work, the names of those participants who did not want their identities to be disclosed would be replaced by pseudo names. The aim of concealing their names was to maintain confidentiality. The essence of anonymity is that information provided by participants should in no way reveal their identity (Cohen et al., 2011) Finally as a token of appreciation to my informants, I sent some of them letters of appreciation and promised sending to some of them a copy of my thesis once I was done with it.

4.4 Data collection procedure

Once in the field, permission was sought from the gatekeepers at the entrances of most of the public offices and buildings. Permission was granted without any problems since I had all the necessary documents that they required and since I had taken earlier appointments with those concerned which also facilitated the tasks. With this, I set on my data collection journey, moving from one informant to

another, conducting the interviews. I interviewed one informant at a time because that gave freedom to informants to express one's feelings, thoughts, and intentions, without being heard by others. Before the start of each interview, the subjects were once more reminded of the purpose of the study. All confidentiality and anonymity were assured to the informants to avoid harming them

I recorded the interview sessions with a tape recorder but I had to seek permission first from the respondents. Recording with the aid of a tape recorder later eased my work and also reduced the tendency of me selecting data that might have favoured a certain degree of biases.

4.5 Limitations of the study

The findings from this study apply only to the Cameroon Ministry of Basic Education which is one of the three ministries directly involved in education. Findings from the North West Region which is one of the ten regions that make up the entire country are particularly applied to that Region especially when it comes to the issue of decentralisation. This Region was my principal research site and the rate at which decentralisation of education has been going on is different from what obtains elsewhere in other Regions. In effect, even though the results cannot be generalized to apply to the entire country, they can also be used to understand the issues that surround the provision of public and private primary schools in Cameroon.

4.6 Challenges met during data collection

The present study was undertaken in the months of September and October. This was the presidential election period in Cameroon. It was a period generally characterised by fear, mistrust, political campaign rallies by public officials and so on. In order for me to get access to regional delegations and possibly divisional delegations and sub divisional inspectorates, I needed authorisations from the central ministry to the regional delegation. Equally, I needed to get in contact with some informants I had earlier contacted from this same ministry.

Before the elections, most administrators had deserted their offices in order to go out for campaigns. Therefore, there were some difficulties in obtaining the authorisation, getting in touch with some key informants and also getting access to some administrative documents from the ministry and the National Institute of Statistics all located in Yaoundé. After the elections, it took close to a month for the results to be proclaimed. During this period, there were wide speculations on the acceptance election results once these results they would be proclaimed. This made some workers to use it as a pretext to again stay off from their job sites. This retarded the progress of my work given the fact that I was working within a time frame. Despite this, I kept on calling some of the informants in order to remind them of our rendezvous.

As concerns my main research site that is the North West Region, some of my informants rescheduled our interview at least once. One group of my respondents (school proprietors) in the urban areas were in most cases unwilling to give information at initial contacts. I later realised that some did so because of the fear of too much exposure of their schools since some of the schools did not have the authorisation to operate. Under these circumstances, I always took time to explain to them the purpose of my research, where I came from and to give them enough guarantees of the confidentiality of the information they would provide. Also, within the external services (more particularly the regional and divisional delegations) of Basic Education, some of the officials were so suspicious of my motive. Some took me for a spy from the central ministry because as they observed, they had been used to people who come from the central ministry with hidden purposes and only go afterwards to report on them. In order to instil some trust in me, I presented to them the authorisation from the ministry, the research authorisation from the University of Oslo and also explained to them the main purpose of my research.

The resources I had at my disposal for my research were limited. Shuttling from Yaoundé to the North West Region and then from the regional headquarter (Bamenda) to other divisional and sub divisional levels entailed so much expenses to cover transport and accommodation costs. This was a research undertaken with my own personal means. This made me not to cover the areas as widely as I had wished. Despite this, I made use with what I had in hand to obtain the most needed information.

4.7 Organization and analysis of data

Firstly, the interview files in my tape recorder with the respondents who had opted for the confidentiality of their personal information were coded with pseudonyms to maintain anonymity and thus to mask the identities of the informants. Transcription of the interviews then followed. After transcribing, I classified my assembled data from all the different informants into themes and categories. With the data at disposal, categorization was the only option I had for organising and make meaning of the information. I read through all the transcribed data, several times before I started organising it.

I then adopted labels which were matched with the different colours used to highlight the texts. The labels were matched to the colour markers that highlighted different categories. Differentiated categorized data were highlighted by different colour markers for easier identification and interpretations when needed. This process also aided the organisation of the data into categories. The highlighted segments also led to identification of patterns within the data as well as differences within and across the categories, from the responses given by the informants.

After the categorization of the data, development of the themes supervened. I chose to develop descriptive themes from the summaries of my transcribed data.

4.8 Population, sample and sampling procedure

The population consists of the universe of units from which the sample is to be collected (Bryman, 2008). In my study, the population from which my informants were drawn was the urban and rural populations of the North West Region of Cameroon and part of the urban population of Yaounde, the capital city. The selection of my research subjects was purposive since I needed to get those informants with the knowledge on the functioning of the basic education ministry particularly those handling issues of school location, those running private schools and those indirectly related to issues of school location. These consisted of education officials, proprietors of private school, administrators within the municipalities and representatives of NGOs that are involved in the provision of basic education. The main site of the study was chosen due to its accessibility and availability of the intended participants.

CHAPTER 5: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

This chapter presents findings from data collected in the field. The study which explores the state school location policy is aimed at investigating the extent to which this policy of school location is applied in both urban and rural areas in relation to equity of access. The data collected were based on this main question:

Is there any policy for the creation of primary schools in Cameroon, and what are its determinants?
From this main question, other sub questions were adopted which include;

- What does the Cameroon education policy document and other official texts state with regard to the school mapping/location?
- What can influence the Central Ministry/Regional Delegation of Basic Education to intervene in the provision of education in both the rural and urban areas?
- To what extent can an efficient school mapping influence the education of children in the rural and urban areas?

The above questions were used as a guide in the process of data collection and consequently the choice of informants. The research subjects were classified into four principal groups. These include the school proprietors, representatives of an NGO involved in the provision of basic education, municipal administrators at the Regional level and education officials from the central Ministry of Basic Education to the external representatives at the Regional level. In this light, the data shall be presented under the above groups and from it, some themes shall be derived. Also, informants have been presented as anonymous. The aim of this has been to protect their identities.

5.1 Officials working with the Ministry of Basic Education

This is a group which consists of respondents who are employed under the Ministry of Basic Education. Within the Cameroon basic education ministry there are employees who work under the central services and there are others that work at the external services. In the central services, the workers are resident in Yaoundé, have their offices in Yaoundé and work at the different departments that constitute the ministry itself. Therefore, my reference to the central services of the MINEDUB means that the workers are permanently based in Yaoundé and work in the MINEDUB structure that is located in Yaoundé.

As concerns the latter, who are in the external services of this same ministry, they can be likened to the branches that connect to the main trunk of a whole tree. These external services consist of Regional Delegations, Division Delegations and Sub divisional Inspectorates of Basic Education. These services are all headed by officials who are directly responsible to the central Ministry of Basic Education.

I will like to start by presenting the findings from the only participant I got from the central ministry. In relation to my study which is aimed at investigating the school mapping policy of the state and its determinants, I had to seek the services of a specialised department within the MINEDUB. This department is known as the Department of Planning, Projects and Cooperation. As seen in chapter one, it is this department which is responsible for making available statistical data of the whole country through its collaboration with the Regional delegations. Therefore, I shall be dealing in the first place with Ali Ngam

Ali Ngam

He is in his mid thirties and an inspector at the Department of Planning, Projects and Cooperation and one of the few I met at the ministry who was willing and interested to participate in the interview. He originates from the North of Cameroon. This is the most populated part of the country which would be estimated to have the highest number of young children likely to be enrolled in primary schools. This part of the country is inhabited predominantly by Muslims and they depend mostly on cattle rearing as a source of livelihood. Other information related to this part of the country has been presented in Chapter Two, on the context of study. I present this brief background information of this participant to indicate that some of the issues he will be alluding to in the course of the interview need to be viewed from the perspective of someone who personally knows the real situation of that part of the country.

According to him, the Cameroon education policy document adopted soon after 1998 did not address certain specific issues. The reorganisation of the ministries had not yet occurred at the time. Since the creation of the MINEDUB in 2004, there has been the need to address some of these issues particularly related to the basic education ministry. *“The statistics are always available but it seems as if the Cameroon government (MINEDUB) does not really have some guidelines which govern the creation of primary schools in general”*. He supports his argument by advancing two major points.

Firstly, he makes mention of the fact that in some areas in the North of the country, the government has in the past years made considerable effort at building schools, equipping them and sending teachers there but it seems as if this has yielded very little partly because this part of the country is principally Muslim dominated. Sometimes, parents are reluctant to send their children to these schools in preference to Islamic education which hardly follows the normal school programme.

Thus, to him culture is a hindrance to the participation of children in public primary schools and thereby influencing the overall process of expanding provisions. This is not only peculiar to the northern part of Cameroon because there are some Regions in the southern part as well which contain communities that practise Islam. These regions include the Southern, Western and the North West Region which is my main research site.

Secondly, he says that the decentralisation of services within the ministry means that the Regional delegations of basic education are supposed to be more implicated in the process of allocation and creation of schools between the rural and urban areas. This is because they have a better picture of how these areas are, in addition to what statistics show for example other infrastructural facilities that are complementary to primary schools. This includes roads, water supply, and electricity and so on because a well functioning school will possibly depend on these facilities.

In addition, he mentioned that the lack of an official and reliable population statistics might make some Regions or areas within the Region to manipulate population figures by swelling them with the hope of getting more educational establishments. The MINEDUB would have been collaborating with the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralisation (MINATD) in order to get real population figures. Such figures have not been produced because since 1976, there has been no published population census in Cameroon. The most recent population census was in 2004 but the results have never been published. As a result of this, most of government activities that need statistics have been greatly hampered since MINATD only furnishes population estimates. This he says has obstructed government intervention not only in the education ministry but in other ministries which rely on population figures as one of the basis of their actions.

This interview with Ali Ngam raised two major issues: the impact of the community's culture on the government agenda when it comes to the creation and opening of primary schools in certain areas in the country; and that in his opinion, the Regions rather than the central ministry have to play a major role in relation to the decision of the actual school location.

Nfor Amougou

Nfor Amougou who works at the North West Regional Delegation of Basic Education located in Bamenda, the regional headquarter. He is one of the persons responsible for School Mapping, Guidance Counselling and Extra-curricular Activities. He is aged 44. His main responsibilities are;

- To collaborate with the Divisional delegations in issues of school location.
- Assemble statistical reports on the number of schools per Division and per sub division prior to the start of the academic year.

- Ensure that primary schools within the Region have guidance counsellors so as to promote collaboration between the schools and parents and to orientate the pupils in academic and future career choices.
- Ensures the smooth functioning and organization of extra-curricular activities especially the national sporting activities for primary schools.
- Finally, he presents his reports to the Regional Delegate of Basic Education.

My interview with him focused on issues related to school mapping. As concerns the issue of the overall distribution of primary schools within this Region, he presented documents and statistics outlining the distribution of schools in both urban and rural areas. Going by these statistics, he makes mention of the large coverage by government provisions in both urban and rural areas with the government playing a more active role in the rural areas through the creation of primary schools in an endeavour to close the rural/urban divide when it comes to provision.

Interestingly, these statistics were official. However, almost everywhere, there appear to be a gap between official policy and records on the one hand and what obtains in the field. The fact that government records show that public schools have been created in these rural areas does not necessarily mean that these schools are functioning normally. When I make mention of this issue, he declares: *“In these rural areas where there are few or no government employed teachers, the communities through the PTAs recruit the teachers”*. In this light, it will be interesting to know the conditions under which public schools in the rural areas operate. It is very true that the government has created schools in rural areas but we may be interested in knowing whether these schools function on government’s account, the communities’ or they function at all. It is very common to see cases where the MINEDUB issues decrees creating schools just on paper. Elsewhere like in the urban areas, these decrees of creation are followed by the building of structures and subsequently the transfer of government teachers to the said schools. In a majority of the rural areas, it appears as if once the schools are created, they are forgotten instantly by the government because one can hardly understand that in many rural areas, government schools are identified by their signposts indicating their names.

In different countries in parts of Africa and other parts of the world, communities take the initiative first. In Cameroon, this happens as well. This is not the point I am looking at. I am presenting a situation which is the reverse of community initiative. This does not mean that communities in Cameroon simply sit and wait for the government to build schools for them as there are many communities in the country where they have led the initiative to build schools and at a certain level probably because of financial difficulties lobby for the to take over the full control of the schools. The point here is when the government realises that a community lacks primary school establishments and decides to create one or two government schools in that community through a ministerial decree which hardly function like those in the urban settings. In this case, the government

together with support from the community struggle to put in place the infrastructure and other inputs in order to make the school to start functioning as early as possible. This state and community partnership is what decentralisation in education was meant to support. This happen not to be the case because in Cameroon, one is faced with a situation where the government takes the initiative first through the issuing of decrees of creation and exits the scene immediately after this process leaving everything in the hands of the communities for periods spanning up to ten year before coming in again fully. The problem here is that not all communities are economically viable to hire teachers.

According to my opinion, most government schools usually become operational only through the initiative of the communities. These communities in order to kick start these schools, provide make shift buildings for the beginning and then hire PTA teachers for some period. Government response in most cases is very slow so that a few government teachers may only begin to be sent to the schools about three to four years after the issuing of the decree. After this period, the government may begin to finance partly the building of one or two classrooms.

He equally said that in situations where most of these government schools in the rural areas are not functioning well, personal connections seem to be one of the causes. Teachers use their personal connections to some high ranking state officials to influence transfer decisions from the ministry and give all sorts of reasons in order to avoid going to take up service in the schools found in the rural areas. This he said has been a worrying concern for the North West Regional Delegation of Basic Education. He alluded to cases where some of the transferred teachers use the influence of their 'well placed' husbands or relatives to turn down the transfer decisions to rural locations while it is very common to find two or three teachers per class in urban government schools. He continued by saying that some of the teachers even give different sorts of 'funny' reasons which might not be true such as having to take care of their husbands who are AIDS patients and live on drug and who need constant medical checkups and that these services are only available in towns. Others come with equally very complicated stories just to avoid going to the rural areas. He thought that about 90% of these reasons are false.

Such events indirectly influences school location to the disadvantage of the rural areas because even though some rural communities recruit teachers on their own in order to make up for the lack of state provided teachers, their payment of these teachers may not be regular which may result in quitting of service by the PTA pay roll teachers. In such cases, the school ceases to function normally and the school may be closed down.

With regards to the MINEDUB regulating the setting up of schools in areas where there are already sufficient schools, he said "*Education is becoming a business and as in any other business, you must go to where you will probably get your customers*". This is true for private proprietary schools given that a majority of these schools which operate in this Region largely depend on the

tuition fees paid by parents to make the school functioning. They depend on this tuition fees for teachers' salaries, for the maintenance of the school infrastructure, other minor expenses and also the proprietors of these schools depend on them as a source of livelihood. I presented to him the case where private schools are repeatedly opened just some few meters from government schools or are separated from other private schools by some few meters by other private school despite that the North West Regional Delegation of Basic Education had set the distance from one school to another to be 10 kilo meters. An example of a violation of this regulation was common in one neighbourhood called Ntamulung which is just one of the so many neighbourhoods in the urban settlement of Bamenda where it is easy for one to find such a sinario.

The response he gave was that they at the delegation were quite aware of the situation but that in most cases, they could not offer much remedy to it. This was because as he put it:

“We have been struggling to put an end to the anarchy that characterizes the opening of schools but it seems as if it is above us. Whenever we object the opening of schools both private and public in certain places, by the next moment, we find schools being opened there with orders from Yaoundé. When Yaoundé speaks, we have nothing to say again.”

Therefore, in his opinion it is the central ministry which allows things to function in this way by ignoring the recommendations from the regional delegations at times. His view would imply that despite the official take off of the decentralization process in Cameroon since 2008, power still needs to be devolved to the Regional representatives to a greater extent.

Another interesting remark he made is that the involvement of the municipal councillors in education has influenced the way schools are distributed between the rural and urban areas and within the jurisdiction of different urban councils. He said that most mayors within the urban council areas have tend to create schools in order to compensate and reward their party officials who usually vote the mayors into office. By so doing, one might find primary schools being opened where other schools exist nearby. Since the principles of democracy demand the one has the free will to make his or her own choice, not all can vote for a single party or candidate. In this light, most people are always victimized which equally influences ministerial decisions Therefore, the politicization of decisions influences the choice of school location.

Again, another issue related to the provision of schools by the state is the devolution of power to Regional authorities. Nfor Amougou notes that while previously the budget allocations for the financing of educational establishments were sent to the finance department of the delegation of basic education that is no longer the case. Such funds are now sent directly to the councils who on their own decide on the priority areas and how the budget should be spent. He thought that it would be better if there had been collaboration of all the mayors with the delegation of basic education on some key

issues such as the provision of didactic material (commonly known in Cameroon as “the minimum package”).

It is at the basic education ministry that they define what should constitute the package of didactic material and when they are to be distributed to the different Regions according to their various needs, taking into consideration such aspects as the school location. Not all that is prioritised as didactic materials can actually be used in the different schools. For instance, if in a said academic year schools were to be given a computer each, it is very obvious that in some areas a computer would not be the priority for the moment. Most of the rural areas lack electricity and if the cost of one computer instead could be converted into boxes of chalk, wall charts or desks, it would serve the children better. Even if this is actually converted which is a good idea, it may still raise the issue of quality because children in this school will not be able to do the practical part of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) He stated that when projects like this “minimum package” come up, they finally end up only in the urban schools partly because there is that lack of collaboration. He said: *“Some of these mayors concert with us when it comes to the distribution of the minimum package while others do not, and that is the beginning of another problem.”*

He equally sees the proliferation of unauthorized/unrecognised schools in the urban areas as tilting the supply balance in favour of the urban areas as a result of the market forces. He declared that some of the private schools just go operational without following the creation procedures set by the basic education ministry (See Chapter Two for the procedures on the creation). This, he added, has aggravated the anarchy that characterises the opening of schools in the urban settings. He said that whenever these schools are asked by the delegation to regularise their situation, the proprietors make promises which they never respect, and that some even go to the extent of bribing in order to remain unrecognized.

Thus, the term unrecognized as used here does not mean that the ministry or the delegation of basic education is not aware of such schools. In most cases, the delegation is aware of their existence but they are not found on the ministry’s records and have not followed the normal procedures of creation and opening of schools as demanded by ministerial procedures.

Fri

She is one of the two teachers who teach the primary 6 class in a government practising school located in the Bamenda II council. Near to this government school is another government school and a number of private schools are around. Her age appears to be between 40 and 50. It was during break launch break that she could grant me audience for us to have an interview.

The first issue we talked about is the manner in which schools are opened in this area. She made mention of the poor organisation that characterise the opening of schools within the council area. She said that the opening of school, both government and private schools is carried out in a way which makes her doubt if feasibility studies have been actually carried out prior to the opening of most of the schools. In fact, when I first interviewed the Chief of Service for School Mapping, Guidance Counselling and Extra-curricular Activities at the Regional Delegation of Basic Education North West, he also lamented with regard to this problem. She observed that this poor organisation had led to schools being created in swampy locations which are dangerous to the children who attend those schools.

Also, schools are so close to each other that she doubts that they really respect the prescriptions laid by the delegation on the distance between the schools. She makes a remark resembling what Ali Ngam, the informant at the Regional Delegation of Basic Education said: *“When it comes to school location, the authorities at the Regional Delegation for basic Education say they are powerless... They say people just go to Yaoundé and come back with authorisations from the ministry. They never make feasibility studies before authorising the creation of such schools.”* The situation here seems to be complicated because the ministry has set some regulations or guidelines on school location to be respected when new schools be they public or private are about to be created but it is still in this same ministry where the guidelines are violated the most. The result is that few areas become over crowded with schools while more areas become under-served.

She also made mention of the availability of a computer handed over to the school by the council. This computer serves a population of close to 500 pupils. Anyone hearing of the presence of a single computer may believe that it is used to store the school’s records. It is rather surprising that this lone computer is use to teach the close to 500 pupils ICTs subject. She talked also of the regular visits of the delegate of basic education. She said that the council usually gives them money to cover part of the running cost of the school while the PTA contributes a certain amount to make up for the running cost depending on the projects ear-marked for an academic year. As concerns the renovation works on the buildings, she said there is support from the council even though this support is usually slow to come and at times irregular.

Sanga

Faced with this situation, I had to move to a local government school of which the headmaster was available for an interview with me. He wished that his identity should be kept in confidence. **Sanga** is his pseudonym. He was in his late forties and had been head teacher of this school for four years. This is one of the few government schools in this area. The school was half completed and lacked some basic facilities to make up a comfortable learning environment. Most of the classes

lacked doors and windows, the desks being barely of average quality the floors not cemented, there was no electricity available despite the fact that electricity had been installed in the village. Above all, there were no signs of teaching being carried on in the school.

Though it was just the beginning of the second month into the school year, there seemed to be so many children playing outside when it was supposed to be time for serious classes. I was made to understand that the teachers were still to take up service. He said out of the total staff of about six, just two are government teachers even though they were supposed to be four government teachers. Therefore, this government school had just recruited five teachers on its PTA pay roll. As concerns the population of pupils, at the time the number stood at 274 pupils and registration was still going on. He estimated that by the end of the school year, the school population would be close to 400. Asked about the contributions parents were expected to make to cover some of the projects and the payment of the PTA hired teachers, the head teacher said it ranged between 3000 FRS to 5000 FRS depending on whether the pupil was new or not and also depending on the projects ear-marked before the start of the school year. This amount is approximately between USD 6 to 12 and most of the parents found it difficult to afford. This situation seems to contrast with that of urban schools where the amount of PTA levies paid by parent is very low as compared to what parents in rural schools pay. This can be explained by the fact that staffing and infrastructure which demand so much financial contribution from parents seem not to be the major problems in most urban schools. In rural schools, parents must do this in order to keep the schools functioning.

This partly explains the poor state of infrastructure in the school and more especially the general environment. From the explanation the head teacher gives, it is very evident that a majority of the contributions came from the PTA. Therefore, it is possible they might have been waiting for the PTA money to be paid so as to start some construction works in the school.

The next issue had to do with what is usually received from the council in order to support some of the projects in the school. This he said it is a serious matter. He declared that most of what usually comes from the council is very insignificant for covering any serious project and most often it comes late and it is not regular. As concerns the minimum package (of didactic material) which the Regional Delegate and the representative of one of the government schools had earlier made mention of, he said this is usually some few boxes of chalk which hardly last for even a term of the school year.

With this picture painted by the headmaster, I also asked to know if reports had been sent to the ministry and the council related to the situation in which the school finds itself. He said that all the statistics are sent annually to the Divisional Delegation of basic education as demanded but wondered if they actually get to the right quarters.

My next target was to reach some private schools. The only private school I could find was a nursery school. But despite the fact that nursery schools fall within the Ministry of Basic Education, they are what are known as pre-school institutions and children are not obliged to attend as they are only used to prepare children for primary schools. Equally no certificates are obtained at the end of the programmes and they do not also fall within the free primary education programme.

5.1.1 Summary regarding MINEDUB participants.

These participants were all of the public service which may have influenced their views. The statistics which might be used as the basis of government intervention are made available to the Department of Planning, Projects and Cooperation. The central ministry does not appear to rely much on statistics from this department in order to intervene in concrete cases of decisions about school location. Neither do ministry-issued guidelines seem to exert much influence. This is because of other factors which include the role of politicians, corruption within the MINEDUB and the involvement of the local councils in the process coupled with the lack of any trustworthy population statistics. These factors influence the decisions on individual cases of school location within the basic education ministry.

With reference to the social reproduction theory as seen in Chapter Three, we are faced with a situation where the government seems not to be addressing the issue of provision in an equitable manner for both the urban/rural areas. This issue becomes more problematic when students in the rural and urban areas who probably have had different degrees of preparation (teacher quality, learning environment) sit in for the same end of course examination which is the First School leaving Certificate and Common Entrance exams. It is at this initial stage that the process of selection or classification begins for the young pupils. This is because in the latter part of their lives, student who had the opportunity of attending better off schools achieve better outcomes and consequently become more competitive than those educated under different and less favourable conditions.

5.2 The Councils

As seen earlier in Chapter 1, with the exception of Yaoundé, the administrative headquarter and of Douala, the economic capital, all other regions have a single city council which comprise of urban councils. Thus, a city council in the Cameroonian context will mean an assembly of urban councils. Therefore, during my study, I targeted the Bamenda I and Bamenda II councils. However, obtaining access to informants was very difficult. These councils within the North West Regional Council have been relatively been more active as compared to other Regional Councils within the country. These councils like a majority of the councils are located in the regional capital (Bamenda) where there is the concentration of most of the facilities.

Ngum

In Bamenda II Council, I met a representative from one of the departments after several attempts to get in touch with the secretariat had failed. Again access was made hard because this was a period when the results of the presidential elections were being awaited and the political atmosphere was tense. A representative from one of the departments finally was very willing to grant me a brief interview but stressed on confidentiality. I adopt a pseudonym **Ngum**, for him.

He said that the North West Region was already fully part of the decentralisation drive even though power still needed to be fully transferred to the Region as stipulated by the 1996 constitution. He talked of council partly financing some project in schools and the provision of some didactic materials. Asked if issues such the state of the infrastructure and the location (urban/rural) were taken into consideration when the council wanted to intervene in a school, he said all these things are taken into account. He equally said there seem to be harmony when it comes to the council's relation with the Regional Delegation of Basic Education, but for the fact that the basic education delegation sometimes accuses the council of undermining Delegation's role as a consultative body when it comes to basic education matters. When I made mention of the fact that some primary schools might have been created arbitrarily within their council area while other places especially the rural areas lack schools, he said it is a vice they have been combating.

He raised the issue of the role of the Government Delegate within the councils. Government Delegates are representatives of the central government within the councils (CEFAM et al., 2004). He said they at times have a very strong influence on the council's decisions, even on decisions that may influence the site of a school.

5.2.1 Comments on the role of councils

Findings from participants from this group of participants show that before decentralisation, they were directly involved in issues related to the actual location of schools. The transfer of certain specified powers (or competences) to the Regions indirectly mean an involvement of Regional Councils which act like the Regional governments. Through the mayors, these Regional councils recommend to the MINEDUB areas which need schools. They equally complement in the dispatch of didactic materials to schools. Information from the Regional Delegation seen earlier indicates that rather than the Councils recommending to the Basic Education Delegation, they will prefer to bypass the ministry's representative at the Regional level and deal directly with the centre. This leads to a situation where relations between the Regional Delegation of Basic Education and the Regional Council may not be cordial which may have an impact on school location within the Region.

Within these councils are Government Delegates who are appointed by presidential decrees. They represent the central government and their functions happen to be overlapping with those of the mayors. They indirectly have a role to play in matters of school location. Some opinion believes that the Government Delegate's role within the council is not genuine because instead of this authority reporting on the activities of the council, they turn to take active part in the implementation of some of the Council's projects. This is most often interpreted as a move by the party in power to influence projects that will always satisfy areas which militate in the party and also to punish areas of opposition.

5.3 Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in the Basic Education Sector

In Cameroon, NGOs involved in the provision of education and more specifically basic education include some religious organisations, international NGOs, and community initiative groups. In the course of my research, I chose to deal with one religious organisation. The reason for my choice of is that among the other NGOs is that they have a wider national coverage than others. Also, their expressed intension for the involvement in the provision of education is not really for profit. They are strongly driven more by humanitarian and religious motives and profit may be secondary. My participant here is one of the persons charged with overseeing the proper functioning of education within this religious organisation. For reasons of confidentiality, I shall use Ebang as his pseudonym.

Ebang

He explained to me how the organisation is set up with the role of secretariats of education at the national level, regional and at the community level in order to facilitate the provision of education. The more local secretariats gather data related to the number of pupils, the teaching staff, and the number of school establishments which in turn transmitted to the national secretariat. When it comes to the issue of the school establishments, he said they fulfill the conditions in government regulations and undergo the procedures that all private schools need to undergo before they are authorised to open. He said that even though they may have the power to decide on the actual location of a school to some extent, they are strictly guided by these regulations and procedures prescribed by the state. When it comes to the actual rules governing or regulating provision in both urban and rural areas, he said this was a big political issue. *"I can liken the creation and opening of government schools in Cameroon to a political gift by the Cameroon Peoples Democratic Movement (CPDM) where this party which has been in power through very doubtful means treat people who are not in line with its opinion as losers of everything. On the other hand, the supporters enjoy all the benefits."* What I gather from his opinion is that pressure is brought to bear on his organisation by some communities with few government schools or where the government schools hardly function normally. These communities

more often were those with a high concentration of members of the said organisation since it had members in almost every community.

In terms of the overall coverage by this organisation, he said it is quite satisfactory in mostly urban areas because there are enough schools in these areas set up by the state and by other private providers. He made mention of the fact that pressure to establish and extend provision usually comes from the rural areas because few government and private proprietary schools are available in these areas. This pressure usually does not come only from their fellow Christians but from the community as a whole. This pressure usually concerns health facilities as well. Faith-based NGOs in addition also open hospitals, small health posts and churches in both urban and rural areas.

State subvention may influence school attendance particularly in the rural areas since it may indirectly have an impact on the tuition fees paid by parents. He said that state subvention is most often irregular and at times insignificant making parents bear most of the cost burden. The tuition fees usually set at different levels between the urban and rural areas because of the disparity in income levels. This means for instance that if a primary 2 pupil attending this organisation's school in an urban area pays 10000 FRS which is approximately USD 20, it would be lower in a rural area.

He argues that the irregularity in the way state subvention is given, reduces its lowering impact on fees. Since they hire very qualified teachers which they are expected to pay them which mean that if the subventions were that significant, it would have been covering part of the salaries of the teachers which might indirectly reduce the actual amount paid by the pupils for both the urban and rural areas. It is worthy to make mention of what these state subsidies usually comprise of. They may include boxes of chalk, packets of pencils and pens, some office materials and other small items.

Bob

The next participant who was willing to grant me an interview under this same organisation was Bob He is the headmaster in one of the rural schools in Fundong Sub Division. The school has 387 pupils and in a location meant to facilitate ease of access for pupils. This locality has fewer government primary schools. The student population of other government schools is not as high as one would have expected partly because of the unwillingness of teachers to take up service in this area.

He talked of the fees which parents keep complaining of it being so high. He said there is always some moderation depending in the income level of the inhabitants of the area in question. He said government subsidies could have led to appreciably reduced fees but that they now are of insignificant magnitude relative to the operating costs. Given the economic situation of the country, parents see the fees they charge as expensive.

He said the organisation for sometime has been suffering from the problem of lack of teachers particularly in the rural areas and that the government campaign to recruit teachers from the private sector has drastically affected them adversely by attracting away teachers from their school.

I also spoke with a participant representing this same organisation from an urban school in the North West Region. He mentioned the same issues the others had earlier talked about. He added, however, that in the urban areas staffing is not a problem and the general working conditions are better.

5.3.1 Comments on group participants

Participants from this group gave the impression that their schools are equipped and organised to provide education in both urban and rural areas. Also, they have sought to extend their services in both urban and rural areas. They refer to government subsidies as having had limited impact in reducing the cost of their services which especially parents in the rural see as being too high as compared to their levels of income. They appeared to be motivated by humanitarian considerations by extending their establishments in both urban and rural areas even though in areas where they were present, they also had some followers (church members).

5.4 Private Proprietary

This is a group made up of individuals engaged in the provision of basic education. Most of these individuals open their schools with the hope of generating some profit. Even though the schools are individually owned, there is an organisation (The Secular Education Agency) which most of these schools are members. Most recognised schools are encouraged to join this organisation even though membership is not mandatory. In the North West Region, I was also interested in knowing how this organisation functions and its views as regards to the choice of site of schools. I spoke to Mbong who was delegated by the Regional Secretary to grant me an interview. He was head of one of the departments responsible for the running of this organisation.

Mbong

He referred to the guidelines put in place by the government which is supposed to be respected by proprietors prior to the opening of their schools as mere formalities. He said this is always followed by a team each from the Regional of Secretariat Secular Education Agency representing the association of private providers and from the Regional Delegation of Basic Education representing the MINEDUB for the feasibility study of the site of the school. After the investigation of this team, a joint report is sent to the minister of Basic Education for the authorisation to open the school if at all

the report indicate that the guidelines set by the ministry have been respected. Concerning this matter, he said he doubts if this recommendation is usually taken into consideration. This is because some of the schools do not respect these guidelines particularly regarding the distance between schools.

He said the distribution of privately owned schools between urban and rural areas within the Region, is 78:41 that that this ratio involves both primary and secondary schools since it is difficult to separate the two as some proprietors run school establishments that comprises pre-nursery to secondary sections in the same premises. These types of school establishments are known as school complexes. Therefore, if one has to narrow this down just to primary schools only, the ration for rural areas will be drastically reduced.

The reasons he advances for the high concentration of this type of provision are that apart from profit, there is always the better availability of teachers in towns. In urban areas, there are more people who have stable and better income which enables them to pay the tuition fees of their children with ease. He also mentioned of the relatively cheap cost of transportation of construction material in the urban areas and that the poor nature of most roads in rural areas drives up transportation costs and discourages proprietors from opening schools there. He also made mention of the high population density in the urban areas which encourages the setting up of for profit educational establishments. He strongly believed that the urban concentration of these schools has helped in reducing to an extent the rate of unemployment which is high in the urban areas even though at the detriment of young children who cannot attend school elsewhere partly because of shortage of the teaching staff.

Ngono

She is a female proprietor of a school complex. She owns a school establishment in Yaoundé made up of three sections (nursery, primary and secondary sections) all in the same premises. She says that her reasons for opening her school in this urban settlement are that this is where she permanently lives works. She is a teacher by profession in the public service and was still in active service. In addition, she said that a school in the urban area yields better dividends and it is here that parents can better afford for the tuition. She points to the constant availability of teachers despite the mass recruitment of teachers from the private sector into the public service. She does not raise a contrary opinion in relation to what the others say concerning issues such as subsidies.

5.4.1 Summary of group participants.

The major issue that stands out from findings from this group of participants is that profit is usually the driving force behind their involvement in the provision of education. It is because of this reason that they will always like to open their schools where they hope to derive the maximum possible.

profit. Equally, the issue of poor implementation of the guidelines and the procedure leading to the creation and opening of schools has been acknowledged in this sector.

Most private proprietors driven by the quest for profit would like to set up their schools in most populated urban areas. Findings indicate that there were no incentive measures put in place by the government in order to attract these private providers to the rural areas. This issue of incentives appears to be quite difficult for the government because even the government schools that were created in these areas were not functioning normally partly because of financial and managerial problems.

The above findings have therefore made me to derive some major themes from them. These include;

- The corruption characteristic of the basic education ministry.
- Personality connections.
- The politicisation of location of educational establishments.
- The lack of political will.
- Cultural influences.

In the next chapter, I shall develop these themes with evidence drawn from the findings and other related literature.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This chapter analyses the data presented in the previous chapter. This is done in relation to the questions raised in chapter one. These analyses are presented in line with the issues that were also mentioned in the theoretical framework.

The main question that guided my inquiry was whether the state had a school mapping policy that guided it in the process of creation and opening of primary schools. If actually this policy existed, the next issue was to look at its impact in the distribution of primary school establishments in the urban and rural areas with the main research site being the North West Region of Cameroon. The Guidelines for Education in Cameroon (1998) which even until 2011 was still used as the bases for government policy states that the state lays down conditions for the creation, opening and running of government and private educational establishments and controls them at the same time. It goes further to state that the state that the MINEDUB is responsible for the drawing up and updating the school mapping of the entire nation.

The role of the ministry as the main coordinator of both public and private schools was more evident when it came to issues related to school inputs. This included staffing, ensuring the respect of the curriculum stipulated by the ministry and the inspection school infrastructure. Here, more of my main concern was with issues related to school mapping/location. With regards to what was reported at the level of the Ministry of Basic Education, there existed a department that is the Department of Planning, Projects and Cooperation that generally coordinated the creation and opening of schools. It was observed that private schools could practically locate wherever they wanted especially if they had fulfilled the procedure for creation and certified the ministerial standards for construction and equipment of schools. On the other hand, I was faced with a situation where the government was fully involved in matters of school location for public schools. This would have been good in shifting the balance of provision in favour of giving more priority to areas of limited school but was again, this happened not to be the case. This was because of the part played by other actors in influencing ministerial decisions which made the situation to remain almost unchanged.

According to a representative from the Department of Planning, Projects and Cooperation, the statistics they used in order to allocate schools to different areas were those transmitted to the central ministry from the regional delegations of basic education. These statistics included the total number of both private and public schools found in different urban and rural areas. Findings indicated that the collaboration between the regional delegates and other administrative units like the Divisional Delegations and the sub Divisional inspectorates was fluid which made it possible for the Department of Planning, Projects and Cooperation to have an update of coverage in this Region at all times.

When it came to the relations between the Region as a whole and the MINEDUB, there appeared to be some problems. This is because findings showed that coordinating basic education activities at the Regional level, the role of the North West Regional Delegation of Basic Education was not really felt on the ground. This could be explained by the fact that other actors either collaborated with the central ministry directly or indirectly. This indicates that the involvement of different actors at this level had an impact on ministerial decisions.

With regards to private schools, there was not really some level of coordination since the private providers simply had to follow the guidelines and procedures set by the MINEDUB when it came to the creation and opening of schools even though an organization of private schools existed. In private proprietary schools, each individual owner managed his own school. This was logical to an extent since the prime motive for most of those who run these schools was to make profit and no profit oriented business would survive where there are no customers.

On the other hand, the government could have used this opportunity to make the schools in the under-served rural areas more effective since most of these individually owned schools were found to be crowded in the urban towns. With the faith-based schools, the situation was different from that of the individually owned (private proprietary) schools. The faith-based schools had an organisation which struggled to ensure that schools were opened in more under-served rural areas. Therefore, it was realised that faith-based schools adopted a more pro-poor manner of delivery as opposed to the individually owned schools.

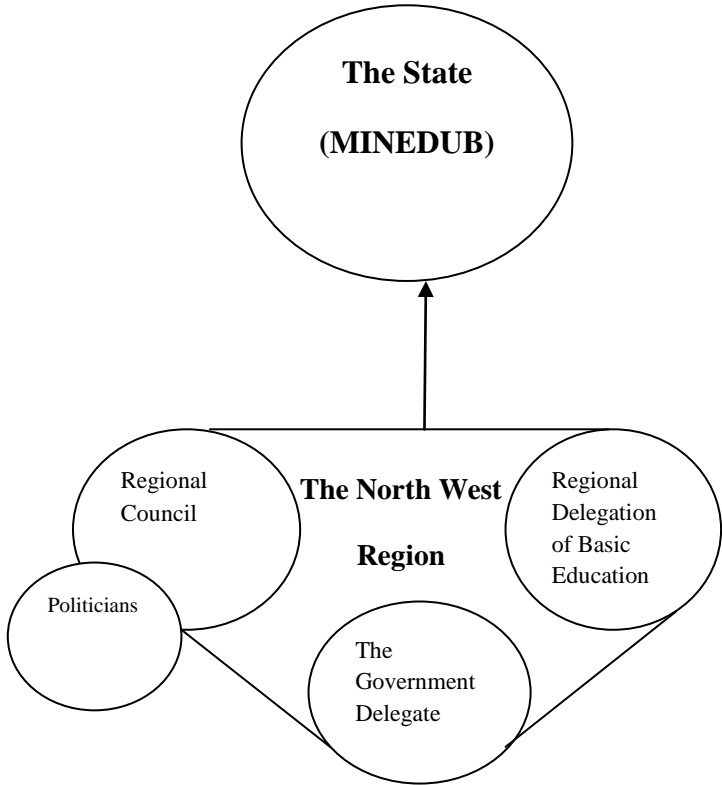
Apart from the North West Regional Delegation of Basic Education, other actors who collaborated directly or indirectly with the central MINEDUB were the North West Regional Council and the Government Delegate in charge of the council. The new dispensation of administrative decentralisation included deconcentration of administrative services which directly affected the provision of basic education. This was a process that became operational since 2008. This new administrative arrangement meant that power was to be devolved from the central services to the Regional Councils and with the centre partly playing a supervisory role. The decentralisation process equally affected the way the state intervened in other social and administrative services including basic education. The centre was not to be fully involved in projects as it had formerly been, as exemplified by the way it has been working and how it affects the delivery of basic education in the North West Region.

Findings indicated that, these administrative changes led to the involvement of three independent actors in education matters. These actors collaborated on an independent basis with the MINEDUB. On one hand, the North West Regional Delegation of Basic Education and the North West Regional Council collaborated directly with the MINEDUB. On the other hand, the Government Delegate in charge of the North West Regional Council and a small sub-group composed of politicians (councilors) and top ranking administrative personnel from within and out of the council who

collaborated indirectly with the MINEDUB. In some administrative departments, the involvement of these actors who had an indirect link with the ministry was viewed as a necessity. In others, it was seen as a means to hijack of all functions by the ruling party the Cameroon Peoples Development Movement (CPDM) since some opinion held that most of these top ranking offices were occupied by militants by the ruling party. Others also saw it a necessary apparatus to check the council against excesses and install accountability and good governance within the regional administration. These actors included;

- The regional councils.
- The regional delegations of basic education.
- The government delegates in charge of activities within the regional councils and
- The politicians.

Figure 5: Actors within the North West Regional Administration and the MINEDUB.



Source: author’s conception

Councilors in the North West Regional Council are usually the elected representatives of the different council areas. Their collaboration with the basic education ministry was supposed to be in financial

matters that is, taking care of the financial aspect of the schools. According to findings, partial funds that came from the central ministry were transferred to the Regional Council directly. The funds are usually allocated following what the council might have drafted in proposed projects to the ministry as the estimated amount needed for the functioning of schools in a given school year. Some opinion holds that most of these councilors even though they are elected representatives of the population give more privilege to party activities than communal activities which they are called upon to perform. But still within the Regional Council, there was the influence of another group of actors (the politicians). These politicians who were in some cases councilors who probably got elected through the promises they made to the populations.

Other personalities not serving in the councils were also observed as constituting part of this group. They indirectly influenced the choices of school location which was most often not motivated by the needs of the areas. Their influence on the ministry's decisions to create schools was mostly motivated by the desire to fulfill their election promises and to win further support from the population. My impression is that their intervention has not always been in good faith. This is because this exercise is seen as some sort of political compensation since party politics had so much effect on the provision social facilities and basic education in particular. For instance, if one has to compare Bamenda I and Bamenda II council areas in relation to the availability of well equipped and functioning primary schools, gross differences will be witnessed. One of these council areas has more representatives from the ruling party than the other which makes government response to their needs to be easily met.

Other top ranking civil servants who at times were serving in or out of the region also used their positions to lobby for schools to be created in their own areas. For instance, it was reported that these same group of persons also used their positions to influence transfer decisions from the MINEDUB. This mostly occurred when teachers were unwilling to take up service in the remote rural areas. It was realised that this adversely affected government schools in the rural areas in that teaching was not effective or it led to a situation where the PTA had to raise extra funds to hire teachers a scenario not very different from what obtained in privately run schools. This situation of public primary schools located in the rural areas was found to be in stark contrast to what obtained in most urban primary schools. Even though there was the suppression of tuition fees in all state primary schools since February 2002, public primary school establishments located in the rural areas seem not to be benefiting from this as well.

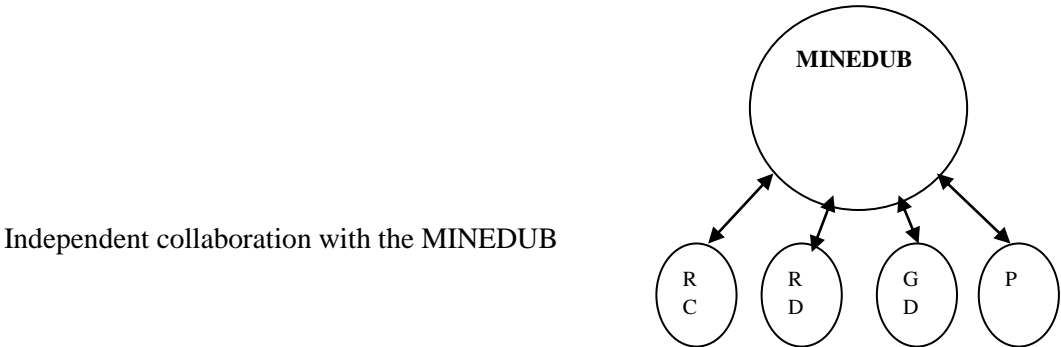
Another actor was the North West Regional Delegation of Basic Education. This is the direct representative of the MINEDUB in the Region. Unlike the council which had the financial power, this structure was more associated with expertise when it came to basic education matters within the Region. They had the statistics of the number of both public and private primary schools in every area

within the Region. This made it possible for them to know the neediest areas. But this does not necessarily mean that other actors cannot also know the under-served areas. In my view, it would have been better for a more coordinated intervention and collaboration from the MINEDUB through its collaboration with the council and the government delegate. Findings indicated little collaboration between the North West Regional Delegation and the other actors within the Regional administration.

In addition, there was the Government Delegate in charge of the council in the North West Region. This was a function based on appointment by presidential decrees. His main function was to check excesses of the councilors in the course of the exercise of their functions. His involvement on education matters reportedly arose from his activities related to the ministry of Town Planning and Rural Development. Both the representatives from the North West Regional Delegation of Basic Education and the Regional Council made mention of partiality in the exercise of his functions.

It would have been desirable if the involvement of these three main actors in basic education matters, had served to make school establishments accessible to all especially the rural areas. This happened not to have been the case because there were reported misunderstandings among these actors with each of them trying to make its own separate dealings with the MINEDUB. They could have adopted a method of participation where the Regional Delegation of Basic Education would be responsible for expertise since they were mostly the original education experts. The Council could have been in charge of financing the projects even though the central ministry still played this function partially. It was observed that funds were channeled through the Councils and not through the Regional Delegation as it had formerly been. The Government Delegate could have been playing the role of a general supervisor. Rather, the current situation is one where the government policy aimed at making basic education accessibly to all seems to have been failing even when it has not yet reached the implementation level. This happened to have resulted from the involvement of many independent networks. This can be presented diagrammatically as follows;

Fig. 6 Relations with the MINEDUB.



Source: author's conception

The figure above presents the current situation where each of the actors within the North West Regional administration deals with the MINEDUB on an individual basis. Below the MINEDUB as indicated by the arrows are the different actors depicted by the following abbreviations; (RC) standing for the Regional Council, (RD) for the Regional Delegation of Basic Education, (GD) Government Delegate and (P) for the politicians. The MINEDUB at the central level might still be playing its role properly but the problems might be coming from the divergence of actors within the Region. This presents a situation where one does not really figure out who is responsible for what. In such cases, resources and projects may either be wasted or channeled to areas which probably do not need such additional resources. The collaboration between the MINEDUB and the North West Region was not so strong. This could hold for other Regions within the country and if so probably would adversely affect government's policy to make education accessible to all. From the findings, several reasons were identified to be the causes of this lack of fluidity in its relationship with the MINEDUB.

6.1 Features of Actors' Dealings with the MINEDUB in Relation to the Provision of Basic Education.

6.1.1 The Politicisation of the Distribution of Primary Schools

This is a situation where the government fails in its responsibility as the main provider of the basic needs of the population because of party politics considerations. It was reported that the ruling party merely opened schools in some places as a means of compensating the population for their allegiance to it. Most of the densely populated areas are big urban towns. In these urban areas, the rate of political activism is often very high as opposed to the rural areas. One of the participants described the opening of schools as a political gift from the CPDM government. The population which needed these school establishments rarely got them if they have opposing views with the present party in power. A modern democracy, state functions in a way that it takes care of the needs of all its citizens no matter their party lines. In other terms, I am referring to the civic duty of the state to the citizens. According to a report by *Transparency international Cameroon* writing about the interference of politics in educational matters:

Politicians and businessmen are among those most often cited among the four groups of persons likely to influence the running of state primary schools. In effect, school location choices generate all sorts of controversies. For instance, the decision to set up a school in a given area is not always based on the needs of the local population,

but rather on the goodwill of politicians, businessmen and local officials in the area (Transparency International Cameroon, 2011, p.26).

In their dealings, politicians and other influential persons hardly took into account the interests of the populations but were mostly driven by personal and party interest. Cameroon having adopted education policies that are supposed to target the poor who are mostly found in remote rural areas and in some urban slums, the politicisation of the supply of basic education has seriously neglected this very section of the population.

6.2 Corruption of officials within the MINEDUB

This point was highlighted by some of the participants in this study. Mostly they reported cases of corruption that went on between the MINEDUB and some school owners. They reported that it all starts at the point of creation of mostly private schools. Instead of using the normal administrative procedure of depositing their files to the North West Regional Delegation of Basic Education for preliminary scrutiny, proprietors bypassed the services at the Regional level in order to deal directly with the centre that is the MINEDUB. Also in instances where the Regional Delegation had to reject a proposal for lack of conformity to Regional regulations, or to the ministerial prescriptions, some of the proprietors simply went directly to the centre in order to negotiate. One such case concerned the required distance stipulated by the RD that was to separate one school from another, be it public or private. This distance was 10 kilometers according to the regulations of the North West Regional Delegation but when these proprietors went to the central ministry, they simply came back with autorisations to open schools which hardly respected the stated required minimum distance.

Probably, such regulations would if observed have limited the concentration of school establishments in one area, and caused some private operators to extend the supply of schools to the rural areas. Ignoring this rule was also cited when it came to the opening of some government primary schools especially those lobbied for by politicians. UNESCO (2009) sees this issue of corruption as a matter which should be a key government concern because it penalises efficiency, erodes equity and makes the burden fall disproportionately on the poor. Since a greater proportion of the poor reside mostly in the slums and rural areas, where provision of school establishments is in short supply and not so much monitored by the ministry like those schools located in the cities and urban areas, there is always a high degree of the poor being affected by corruption. According to *Transparency International Cameroon* (2011) corruption is rife in the management of school funds especially at the level of divisional delegations and sub divisional inspectorates. The effect is likely to favour a particular section of the population at the expense of others in access to quality education which was supposed to be free. Such a distortion is in line with social reproduction theory. According to Collins

(2009), the nature of the relationship between the state and the school is that the state perpetuates elements of ideological dominance in the way it manages the offer of some particular subjects in schools to a certain class of the population thereby preparing them for dominated places in the economy in future. In the Cameroonian situation, the school location policy serves as an agent favouring the children of a particular class at the expense of those who are more disadvantaged, in poor rural areas and in urban slums.

My findings also suggest that it would not suffice for the government just to open schools in the rural areas, because personal connections or networks also reportedly have had a strong influence on the effectiveness and functioning of rural government schools. There were cases where teachers used their personal connections with other top ranking public official such as the Governor, the Senior Divisional Officer or the Divisional Officer who happened to be family members or close friends to change or divert transfer decisions by the ministry. This mostly occurred when teachers were to be transferred to the public schools in the rural areas. Cases of such diversion of transfer decisions, caused teachers instead to become crowded in urban public schools some of which might have 2-3 teachers per class while in some rural primary school, one teacher taught about 2-3 classes and where the PTA often would need to hire teachers from locally raised funds. This was because of the lack of teachers being posted in these areas. At times, the quality of some of the teachers was barely manageable in order to keep the school functioning.

In the 2009/2010 academic year the overall national enrollment rate for primary schools stood at 3510396 pupils. Among this population, 938242 were attending schools located in the urban areas and 2564394 were attending primary schools located in the rural areas (Annuaire Statistique du MINEDUB 2009/2010, 2010, pp. 113-115). Looking at these statistics, one may be caused to believe that the issue of access to basic education establishments needed not be an issue of concern to the Cameroonian basic education ministry because of the high access rate in the rural areas. There seem to be some reservation in relation to these statistics and whether high access rate can be taken for efficient management. This is because of the limited knowledge on the actual number of school-aged children not just in the rural areas but in the entire country. Consequently, the statistics may not necessarily reflect the true picture of what obtains in the field. This is because many deficiencies were witnessed from the opening to the actual functioning of some of the schools. For instance, it was reported by some of the informants that some of the public schools which officially have opened may go for as many as 8 to 10 years before the government contributes in the building of classrooms and transfers government teachers into these schools. And some of those posted in needy locations may not be willing to remain there. The impression is that most of the public schools registered in the records of MINEDUB as functioning schools were either in make-shifts or in temporary structures with mostly the communities hiring the teachers.

In the North West Region, statistics showed that a total of 1805 schools existed including public and private schools, serving unknown population of school aged children which (*Annuaire*

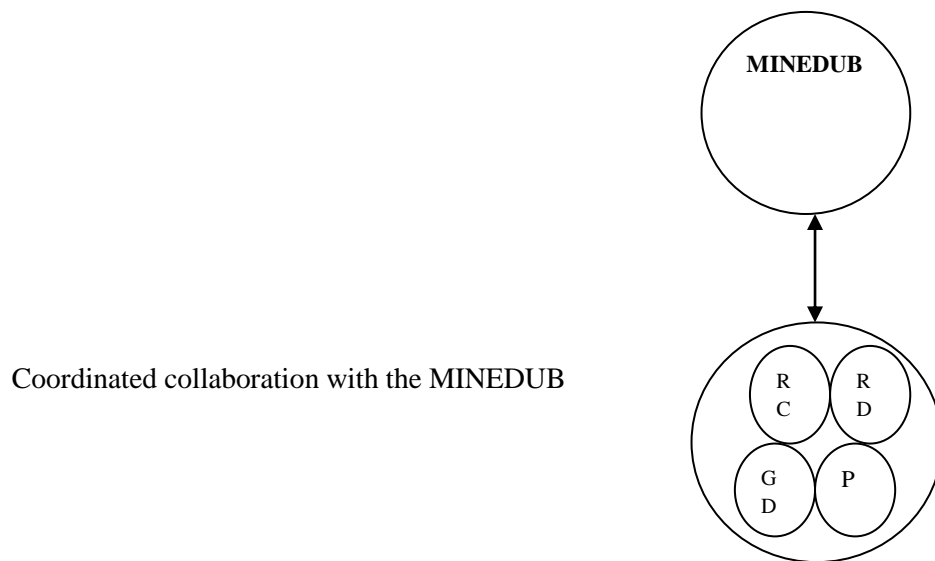
Statistique du MINEDUB 2009/2010). Out of this number, 187 schools were located in the urban areas and 1618 schools were serving the rural population. This number was just that of registered schools. From my observation, the number of schools found in most of the urban settlements in this Region could be twice that contained in official statistics partly because some of the schools were not registered. Possibly, the number of schools opened in the rural areas could on the face value be seen as 'sufficient', but some of these schools as has been noted were not really functioning properly particularly the government schools because of the reasons which have been explained above.

6.3 Lack of a follow up mechanism resulting from a lack of coordination the actors.

As in any other Region in the country, the appointment of the Government Delegate in charge of the North West Regional council was meant to monitor the implementation of government policies and also to check on the other stakeholders involved in the administration of the Region. It was reported that this institution was involved in a tussle with the basic education delegation and with the council on issues of school location. At the central ministry and at the North West Regional Delegation of Basic Education, emphasis was placed on the gathering of statistics but the implementation of policies based on these statistics was quite slow and inefficient. With regard to the distribution of didactic materials, some irregularities were reported. This again had an impact on the functioning of schools located in the rural areas.

There was a lack of coordination between the MINEDUB through the RD and the RC. Following the decentralisation of the basic education ministry, the functions of dispersing funds and the didactic materials were supposed to be transferred to the council but it was reported that the North West Delegation of Basic Education still retained part of the right to distribute the didactic materials. In these circumstances, most of the didactic materials were not distributed properly or in cases where they were well dished out, they hardly reached the targeted schools especially from the Divisional level and below.

Fig: 7 An organised dealing of actors with the MINEDUB



Source: author's conception

Fig. 4 depicts the MINEDUB dealing with the North West Region in a bloc where the RC, RD, GD and P are more coordinated. In this case, the different actors play their functions in a way that the Regional Council takes charge of the funds and part of the didactic materials that come from the MINEDUB, the Regional Delegation of Basic Education with the collaboration from other actors brings together statistical information and also ensures a fair distribution of part of the didactic materials from the central ministry. My view is that these are the main actors in educational matters. This does not mean that the Government Delegate and politicians may have nothing to offer in issues of school location. They may play a collaborative role within the Region. By so doing, when the North West Region wants to send in proposals to the MINEDUB with regards to school location it should be done through the Regional Delegation. The reason for such an idea is that resources may be more focused and evenly spread. This is because when the actors deal with the MINEDUB on an individual basis, a situation may occur where two or more actors concentrate on a particular area. Equally, resources may be more planned which may lead to a better follow up mechanism. In addition, this may reduce corruption risks since it may be easy to track where and to whom the resources have been channeled. Even though misunderstandings may occur among the actors, it may not affect the delivery like in the situation where they deal with the MINEDUB independently.

Apart from these factors reported to have influenced the distribution of primary school establishments between the urban and rural areas, other problems not directly linked to the MINEDUB were observed to have hindered the overall distribution of primary schools. This included the lack of official population statistics. In fact, since the last population census in 1976 in Cameroon, no other one has ever been carried out. The figures from the one carried out in 2004 have never been released.

This has had an impact in government and other projects including education as the population of most areas are usually based on estimates.

Tenikue (2010) makes mention of sufficient provision of primary schools in both urban and rural areas and sees instead the distribution of secondary school establishments as being the major problem. But that view is not based on reliable population figures, only on estimates. The population estimates used to make the case for opening schools may be inaccurate and may apply not to even three out of the ten Regions that make up the entire country.

Another issue which was raised at the central ministry relates to the cultural practices of some communities which did not favour the opening of government primary schools in some areas. It was reported this was more common in the predominantly Muslim Northern part of the country. It is argued that these Muslims usually give more priority to Arabic/Koranic schools which they run by themselves usually in private homes and in other small make-shift facilities. In these types of schools, they hardly follow the primary school curriculum prescribed by the state. Some of these schools (Arabic/Koranic) are religious schools but different from the Christian religious schools mentioned in earlier chapters in that they hardly follow the primary school curriculum. This makes them not to benefit from state subsidies like other religious schools which follow the state curriculum. In this case when the state opens public primary schools in the North which follow the same curriculum as any other state primary school elsewhere in the country, most parents are usually reluctant sending their children there because of fear of too much copying of Western values by their children. Muslims also constitute part of the population of the North West Region. It was observed in the Old Town neighbourhood, Sabga and other localities in the North West Region where there was a concentration of the Muslim population this problem was partially resolved with the creation of Anglo-Arabic primary schools. These schools had another curriculum which they followed alongside the state curriculum.

6.4 Chapter summary

In this chapter, it has been seen how the MINEDUB at the central level coordinated the creation and opening of primary schools. Through its collaboration with the North West Region, it was realised that in addition to the general regulations that came from the central ministry, the North West Region had its own specific regulations aimed at ensuring an equitable distribution of primary schools within the urban council areas which could have positively affected the overall distribution of schools in the urban and rural areas. From the analysis of findings, it was seen how the involvement of different actors in the process leading to the creation and opening of primary schools had a strong impact on the distribution of the way primary schools were distributed between the urban and rural areas. This was

because the intervention of some of the actors sometimes led to both the regulations from the central ministry and from the North West Region being poorly implemented.

From the analysis of issues linked to the actors' involvement in school location matters, my personal impression is that if these different actors within the North West Region could be united and collaborative, intervention from the MINEDUB could be more equitable and pro poor driven rather than what was observed.

Conclusion

This study was aimed at investigating the extent to which the Cameroon basic education school mapping policy could contribute in creating a system where a particular section of the society is not favoured in the process of creation and opening of primary schools. In order to successfully investigate into this issue, there was the need to find out if the MINEDUB actually had any policy for the creation of primary schools in the country as a whole. Findings indicated that the ministry worked in line with such a policy since and even had a department responsible for ensuring the equitable distribution of schools nationwide. This department was known as the Department of Planning, Projects and Cooperation. Also, the different Regions of the country through their Regional Delegations of Basic Education set their own guidelines when it came to issues of school location. These regulations as in the case of the North West Region which was my main research site did not differ so much from the ministerial regulations. After looking at the way the MINEDUB was structured in relation to making basic education accessible to all, it was seen how through the collaboration with the North West Delegation of Basic Education. The North West Regional Delegation of Basic Education on its part collaborated with the different Divisional Delegations and Sub divisional Inspectorates of Basic Education within the Region in order to obtain statistics which were supposed to be used as a basis for identifying areas where primary schools were needed most.

With the involvement of the MINEDUB from the central level up to the sub divisional level, it was hoped to see a certain degree of efficiency in the distribution of primary schools in the urban and rural areas. Despite this, in the course of the study of the North West Region, some deficiencies were witnessed from the creation to the running of the schools. These deficiencies included corruption of the MINEDUB official by prospective private operators during the processing of files, the use of party politics in rewarding or punishing populations which either supported or opposed the party in power when faced with the distribution of public schools, the lack of follow up mechanisms and others. In this case, it was common to see some areas that were adequately served and others which suffered from acute shortages in terms of access to primary school establishments.

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