



MANAGING PROFESSIONALISM IN TEACHER EDUCATION: ISSUES OF TEACHER IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT IN CAMEROON

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Abstract:

This paper explores different dimensions that interplay in the process of teacher identity development in the context of Cameroon. Since the concept of identity is multifaceted and its formation process is continuously changing, this work attempts to examine it from many dimensions. Firstly, from general perspective, secondly with emphasis on specific perspectives embodying personal, self, educational and professional identities that constitute, shape and influence the formation of teacher identity and thirdly, constraints that impede its development including their overall implication for schooling, learning and the entire education system. In order to explore, understand and appreciate this discourse on teacher identity formation which underlie the foundation and driving force in a national education system, this paper attempts to raise some questions. What is teacher identity and how is it formed? What is teacher identity in Cameroon context? What are the constraints in its formation process? How do the constraints impact on schooling/learning and the education system? Answers to these questions and some suggestions help to illuminate the phenomenon and its utility in both national and international perspectives.

Keywords: teacher education, teacher training, teacher identity development, teacher professional development, managing teaching professionalism

1. Introduction

Given the vital role the education sector plays in all areas of national life and its enhancement of individual and national developments, every nation, the world over, deploys enormous efforts towards a continuous restructuring of its school system in general and teacher education in particular. Thus, teacher education widely acknowledged to be the foundation and driving force for maintaining standard and enhancing quality in education, is usually prioritize in any national system striving to

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participate and compete effectively in the global economy. In this regard, some scholars emphasize that real important changes in education will come about only as teachers change (Combs, Blume, Newman and Wass, 1974; Tambo, 1995). As Zumwalt (1986) clearly explains, there can be no excellence in education without first-rate teachers. One can change the curriculum, buy more materials, refurbish the physical environments, lengthen the school day, but without good teachers, change will not produce the desired effect (Zumwalt, 1986 b, p. vii, cited by Tambo, 1995).

In this respect, teacher education, teaching professionalism and their effective organisational management are the groundwork for construction of teacher identity and the continuous process of its formation. The concept of identity is very useful for teachers because it represents a unique mark of an individual group, community or society with different characteristics and evolutionary routes but all converging towards one and the same thing and targeting one and the same goal.

The literature on teacher education reveals many scholarly papers written on the development of teacher identity with diverse approaches in different societies the world over. But a curious question is: why is more emphasis laid on the identity of practitioners in the teaching field than those of other professions? This question appeals to many answers: controversies inherited in the socio-historical developments in the field itself (a common characteristic in the evolution of any scientific discipline); ongoing universal debate on the professionalization of teaching (Dove 1986; Schon 1983 cited by Stuart 1997); destiny and logo of the profession being remotely controlled by outsiders (politicians and researchers) (Bond, Dworet, Kompf, 1996) whose imposing policies and theories often mismatch its daily practicalities; professional segmentation into specialisms (Esland, 1972); over demanding nature of the job which entails a wide range of skills that build up the teaching competence (Kang, 2008; Esland, 1972); questionable working conditions, career prospects, salary, autonomy and recognized teachers' status (ILO, 1983; UNESCO, 1983; Bond et al., 1996; Dove 1986) among other issues, have prompted teachers to quest for their rights, protection and more academic/professional developments opportunities that positively enhance their identity construction and career success. Teacher identity is, thus, a mark of difference (from others) for a nationally or internationally recognised group of practitioners whose unique aims are to constantly build and update their professional capacities targeting new educational challenges in the society.

According to Ingrid (1996), contrary to the common and conservative views about teaching which looks like the same from the surface (classroom, lessons, tasks, homework, grades and the like), there are qualitative changes beneath the surface (content of lessons, way of working, the relationship between teachers and pupils, the materials to work with and so on). Thus, the school teacher has become an agent of modernity because his practical tasks bring about changes among people, schools and societies. Teachers, therefore, have important functions in the modernisation of a society (Ingrid, 1996). That is why the aims, purpose and outcomes of schooling must be in line with societal changes. Reforms in schooling and school systems (whether targeting national or international goals), designed to meet changes in societal needs

must also redefine teachers tasks and competences. This requires continuous professional development and lifelong learning programmes for teachers. It deals with efficient handling of various issues that interplay in a continuum of knowledge and skills updating by teachers to meet the continuum of societal needs that constitute the object of teacher identity.

The above discourse reveals that the concept of teacher identity is complex, multidimensional, multilayered, multifaceted and dynamic in nature (Cooper & Olson, 1996). It changes its form constantly with time, space and experience (Dworet, 1996; Reynolds, 1996). It is also shaped by multiple identities (self, personal, educational and professional) (Franzak, 2002; Kauffman, 1990; Cote & Levine 2002; Esland, 1972; Kang, 2008; Lave and Wenger, 1991; Dworet, 1996; Cooper & Olson, 1996) and is influenced by many factors (historical, political, cultural, sociological, psychological and economic) (Cooper & Olson 1996) that may facilitate or inhibit its formation. The concept of teacher identity is subtle, perceptible and manipulative variable throughout the process of its construction and reconstruction.

In modern societies, the effects of globalisation on school reforms and school systems (Carnoy, 1999; Stuart, 1997) automatically shape teacher education, practice and identity. Following the socio-historical developments of global events and the increasingly mutable, transitory and complex nature of our contemporary societies driven by inter/cross-cultural exchanges, educational services have always been constantly restructured and segmented into specialties. They are either offered by: nationals, foreign professionals, volunteers, short term hired experts, colleagues in exchange programme; locally-based specialists in foreign language(s) or home-based bilingual, special or ordinary school teachers. In recent years, the status of learners has been changing too, with more adults including teachers continuously involved in lifelong learning (Katheryn, 2002, 2005; Lave & Wenger, 1991) either in the form of professional development training to acquire in-depth knowledge in a specific area of specialism or retention of higher qualification for better remuneration and better quality of life. All these issues are the central theme and prioritized forces surrounding the discourse on teacher identity and its formation in general.

Since teacher education is accountable for educational standard and quality in the education system, many key issues like training and lifelong learning of teachers, professionalization and management of teaching, teachers' beliefs, cultural and ethical values, policy, philosophy, working conditions, teachers' salary among others that underlie teachers' status and improve school system are raised and discussed. However, not all these factors are examined in detail because the focus of this paper is to explore key dimensions that interplay in the processes of teacher identity formation in the context of Cameroon.

In Cameroon like any other country in the world, teacher identity formation at primary and secondary levels is multifaceted, multi-layered and multi-dimensional. This includes the structural and functional organisation of the formation process and the provision of resources enhanced by shared responsibilities between the state of

Cameroon and its partners (local communities and foreign bodies) on the one hand, and teachers themselves and schools on the other hand.

Despite the efforts deployed by these protagonists to facilitate the process of teacher identity development, there are still many constraints on the way which create heavy negative impacts on schooling and education especially in the English speaking regions (the South West and North West regions) of Cameroon where there had been other non-educational (socio-economic and political) grievances. The state's neglect of these bulks of constraints led to primary and secondary teacher strikes alongside magistrate's strikes since 2016, which in turn, have resulted in a complicated political, linguistic and cultural imbroglio. This has led to the struggle for secession by the two English speaking regions (formerly referred to as Southern or West Cameroon) from the majority French speaking eight regions of the country.

In the course of exploring and describing key issues arising from Cameroon's (primary and secondary) teacher identity formation which is the foundation of educational standards and quality in the school system, this paper attempts to answer questions such as: what is identity and how is it formed? What is teacher identity in Cameroon context? What are the constraints in the process of teacher identity formation? How do the constraints impact on schooling/learning in particular and the school system in general?

2. Background to education and teacher education in Cameroon

2.1 Historical overview of the national education system

Historical development of the education system in Cameroon comprises two main eras notably the pre-independent and the post independent periods. The pre-independent era was managed by the religious bodies and colonial authorities. Religious bodies include the Christian missionaries who came to Cameroon through the South and South Western parts in 1884 and introduced Christian Education, and the Muslim Koranic education introduced in the North from neighbouring Islamic countries in late 19th century (Ihims, 2003). With the arrival of colonial powers namely the Germans (1884-1916) later replaced by the English (1916-1960) and the French (1916-1960) missionary bodies (Baptists, Roman Catholics, protestants or Basel/ Presbyterians) continued to run their own schools alongside the few ones set up by the colonial administrations. However, each of these school authorities had different interests, aims and goals that shape the curriculum content and teaching methods. On the one hand, while religious bodies were targeting evangelisation/biblical literacy (knowledge in reading and understanding of Biblical text and Christian literature) to possibly improve the lifestyle of the indigenous population, on the other hand, colonial administrators were training persons who could serve their private and public interests (like office clerks, translators/interpreters, domestic servants, among others) rather than the indigenes themselves (Ihims, 2003; Tchombe, 2005). Whatever were the original aims of the pre-independent education providers in Africa in general and Cameroon in particular, one of the advantages is that by independence in 1960, primary, secondary and tertiary

education systems including few teacher education programmes were already firmly institutionalised.

Historically, Cameroon was initially a German colony and so was her education system between 1884 following the German annexation of Kamerun till 1916 while World War I (WWI) was still in progress. The WWI started in 1914 and ended in 1918. Since Germany was declared aggressor and asked to pay war reparations by the Allied Powers, in the Paris Peace Conference-Treaty of Versailles of 1919, all German colonies in Africa including Kamerun, Togo and Namibia were also seized and redistributed to the French and English colonial powers. Unlike Togo that was handed to the French and Namibia handed to the British (administered as part of the British mandated territory of South Africa), Cameroon was partitioned between these two colonial powers. The British occupied the then West or Southern Cameroon (administered as part of the British mandated territory of Nigeria) while the French occupied the then East Cameroon (la République du Cameroun). This explains why the religious bodies alongside their respective colonial authorities took over control of Cameroon education in different space and time. This back drop accounts for the reason why since after independence of the Cameroons in 1960, federation plebiscite in 1961 and unity accord in 1972, each of them has maintained its unique colonially inherited educational and legal systems but one harmonised political, administrative and economic system. Thus, educationally, the 2 English speaking regions practising predominantly the English education system (with few Francophone schools) and the French speaking 8 regions overwhelmingly French education system (with few Anglophone schools) are what constitute the national education system in contemporary Cameroon.

2.2 Historical overview of teacher education

Teacher education in pre-independent Cameroon started in the Anglophone zone in 1923 through a school-based teacher training course and the Francophone zone in 1925. First School Leaving Certificate (FSLC) was a prerequisite and success in the official competitive exam were entry requirements into the three year Grade III certificate course whose first batch graduated in 1933. After three years training, successful candidates were permitted to teach for one year or so before proceeding to another two year Grade II training Course. For the Anglophones, this phase of training was offered only in Nigeria, then British colony to which Anglophone Cameroon was administered as part of a mandated territory. However, some candidates took four straight years to cover the entire grade III and Grade II course levels when it was later launched in Cameroon. A further development in teacher education programme was when the Grade II level was instituted in Government Teachers' Training College (GTTC) in Cameroon in 1945. Nonetheless, because of lack of resources like qualified teacher trainers, materials and finance, the training programmes were temporarily closed down between 1947 and 1950. When training activities were resumed later, all the three grade levels: III, II and I were offered and jointly run by the colonial government, private missionary bodies and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). In the Francophone

part of Cameroon, such endeavour was predominantly managed by the private agencies (Tchombe, 1997, 1998, 2000; Tchombe and Agbor 2005).

In the post-independent era, that is, after 1960, the pre-independent institutionalised education system has been maintained with a series of management and organisational reforms. An important development was the creation of the Higher Teacher Training College (HTTC) known in French as (Ecole Normale Supérieure-ENS) affiliated to the University of Yaoundé that established in 1961 by the Cameroon government in Cooperation with other international partners. Since its creation, the ENS Yaoundé and its then annexe in Bambili (University of Yaoundé I) was the only College of Education that was responsible for training of all general secondary school teachers to be integrated into the national civil service. It was not until during last decade that the HTTC Bambili was upgraded to an autonomous higher teacher training college and affiliated to the University of Bamenda. Similarly the recently created HTTC or ENS Maroua is affiliated to the University of Maroua. In another development, the Higher Technical Teacher Training College (HTTTC) commonly referred to in French as (Ecole Normale Supérieure d'Enseignement Technique-ENSET) was created in the University of Douala and recently the one in Kumba run by the University of Buea. So far, these are the only two major institutions that train technical industrial and vocational secondary school teachers of both Francophone and Anglophone educational backgrounds with different areas of specialities. However, other affiliates for post-primary (Rural Artisan College) technical teacher training are operating in some centres across the country. As for primary teacher training institutions, they have been created by the state at all divisional (county) levels nationwide (Tchombe, 1997, 1998, 2000; Tchombe and Agbor 2005).

2.2.1 Structural organisation of teacher training programs

The teacher education in Cameroon is divided into two main levels: Primary/nursery and secondary which is subdivided again into general secondary, technical secondary and post primary. In their study, Tambo and Tchombe (1997) identified eleven models: six within primary level and five at general secondary level training programs.

The six models within the primary level teacher program include: (1) 3 years grade I; (2) 2 years grade I; (3) 1 year grade I; (4) 3 years for private teachers training colleges in Anglophone Cameroon; (5) 2 years didactics program for teacher educators for primary Teacher Training colleges; (6) 2 years Science of Education programmes for Teacher educators for the primary education level (in-service training). At secondary level, there are first and second cycles that include: (1) 3 years initial training; (2) 4 years Bilingual pre-service training; (3) 2 years pre-service training for second cycle secondary education; (4) 2 years for teacher educators (in-service training) and (5) 2 years counselling program.

Selection criteria into each of these models is through competitive exams and entry qualifications are well specified by the national education forum of 1995 regulating teacher education and law No. 98/004/ of 14 April 1998 that specifies entry requirements for teacher training program (MINEDUC, 1998). The requirements

depend upon the course, course level and its duration. Candidates' entry qualification is between five papers or more in GCE Ordinary level (Brevet d'Etudes du premier Cycle-BEPC) or equivalent (City and Guilds or Certificat d'Aptitude Professionnel-CAP) and GCE Advanced level (Baccalaureate) or equivalent for primary school teachers. For all secondary school teachers, first degree (License) is the basic requirement prior to writing the competitive entrance exams into the training college. However, for some post-primary institutions and junior secondary schools, entry requirements into teaching training colleges may be GCE Advanced level plus some years of working experience.

All programs comprise the following components: General education; specialised subjects; professional studies; practicum and socio-cultural context knowledge (Tambo, 1995; Tchombe 1997, 1998, 2000) and technical/vocational studies for trainees in these specialities. Certification include certificates and under graduate diploma (Teachers Grades I, II and III) for the primary and Nursery school teachers and Undergraduate/postgraduate diplomas (DIPESS I, DIPEN I; DIPESS II and DIPEN II) respectively for general secondary school teachers and DIPIET/DIPET for post-primary or technical/vocational education teachers. However, the procedure and criteria for formal admission as well as the content and organisation of the general and technical teacher education programs differ considerably.

For the general education teachers, besides the formal model of initial teacher training route already mentioned at secondary level, there is another informal model route by which thousands of university graduates are sometimes recruited directly by the state without any formal professional teacher training. For example, there was 1980 massive recruitment of about 1500 graduates nationwide into teaching corps by the state. According to this scheme meant to solve the problem of shortage of teachers and create jobs, the graduates were recruited (after formal study of their application file by a committee of experts) to be teaching while pursuing their intensive in-service training program and to be finally recognised only after three years of satisfactory performance with the approval of National and Provincial Pedagogic Inspectors. This fast tract work-based training program was run by the state in cooperation with some international partners.

Unfortunately most of the teachers recruited in this manner over the years have remained contract workers who have never been permanently integrated into the civil service. This means that, unlike their counterparts who are state employees with a lot of benefits, they are not entitled to salaries commensurate to their labour output, certain allowances and many other facilities including pension (Tchombe, 1997, 1998, 2000). Since the teachers' trade unions are not adequately organised and strong to fight for their rights and entitlements, these are some of the underlying factors that orchestrated teachers' strikes since 2016 through 2019 which alongside lawyers strikes have destabilised schooling and the education system in the entire English speaking zone, that is, the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon.

In a nutshell, in Cameroon, primary teacher education program is the same and meant to train teachers in all subjects across the national curriculum. Secondary teacher education program includes specialisms in general (ordinary) education, technical education, vocational/commercial education, bilingual (English/French) education, primary teacher trainer education and guidance/counselling education.

3. Concept of identity from general perspective

This section answers the question: *“what is identity and how is it formed?”*

The concept of identity in the general sense is vast and its multiple meanings depend on the given place, time and experience. This overview explanation and meaning of the term “identity” in general gives an understanding on how multiple identities from diverse sources are interwoven to build up the unique “teacher identity” and to what extent they help to influence and shape its developmental process.

From general definition point of view, Collins (1991) reveals that the word “identity” bears the following meanings: (1) Your identity is who you are; (2) it is all the qualities, beliefs and ideas which make you feel that you belong to a group e.g. the identity of Black People, British people, Christians or a region with its own cultural identity like the North Americans (Canadians and US citizens); (3) Identity Cards (ID) your ID is a card that has your name, photograph, age, address, and other information on it. In some countries, you have to carry an ID or passport or driving license in order to proof who you are. National identity is the belief in membership or citizenship of a particular nation e.g. Namibian, Swedish, Chinese, Brazilian, Australian. However, in some countries where there is more than one “nation”, there is confusion e. g the case of Britishness may be English, Scottish, Welsh or Irish national identities respectively. Thus, the issue of identity for each individual as unique being or as a member of a given group/community is very important for every human being living in the human world. For example, being members of the teaching corps presupposes that their professional membership identity is evident in diverse disciplinary, regional, national and international associations.

Besides the generic definition of identity in general and teacher identity in particular, according to Leary and Tangney (2003), the notion may also be understood better when viewed from diversified philosophical, psychological, political, online, sociological and educational perspectives.

Philosophically, identity also known as sameness, is understood as whatever makes an entity definable and recognisable in terms of possessing a set of qualities and characteristics that distinguish it from entities of different types.

Psychological identity relates to self-image, that is, a person’s mental model of him or herself or self-esteem and individuality, e.g. gender identity which dictates to a significant degree how an individual view him or herself both as a person and in relation to other people. In Cognitive psychology, it refers to the capacity of self-reflection and awareness of self (Leary and Tangney, 2003).

Identity politics is a political action to advance the interest of members of a group whose members perceive themselves to be oppressed by virtue of a shared and marginalised identity (such as race, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation). The term has been used principally in the United States during the fight by many groups for their civil rights and status to be recognised e.g. the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) of the civil rights movements in the 1960's (Kauffman, 1990) among others.

Online identity is the one established and used by computer network users. It is also known as digital identity in computer science. This aspect is a dynamic instrument for communication that has, through its World Wide Web (www), facilitated contacts between different individuals and groups within global economic, educational, scientific and technological perspectives.

From sociological point of view, the focus is on "personal identity" and "self-identity". "personal identity" is one whereby the individual has some sort of comprehension of him/her self as a discrete, separate entity. This is a mark of difference by which others recognise and associate you with. This may be through individuation whereby the undifferentiated individual tends to become unique, or undergoes stages through which differentiated facets of a person's life tend to become a more indivisible whole. Meanwhile "self-identity", also known as selfhood, is the mirror image or impression about one-self in relation to his/her interaction with different social environments like family, school, professional, official, private environments, and the like.

Educational identity which is connected to those of the above academic disciplines applied to education studies, has to do with one's intellectual position vis-à-vis the given socio-cultural realities and socio-historical developments. It is a continuous struggle through lifelong learning by both learners aspiring to expand their intellectual capacity and established intellectuals. Teachers, for example, constantly do research in their daily activities in order to uphold educational standards while remaining updated with latest trends in educational issues in general and their areas of professional specialism in particular. Thus, on the whole, education has much to do with identity. According to Kang (2008), it takes the central role in personal and professional development, including the formation, maintenance, management and construction of the sense of self, the personal identity of a person living in the human world. Education, as socialization, takes a crucial part of the production and reproduction of particular identities and social roles. Education as cultivation of being, the human person, is also fundamentally important for individuals to have personal meaning of life and self-definition. As a continuum of interplay between the processes of teaching and learning, educational identity seeks to answer burning questions like: who am I?, where do I come from?, where will I go?, and how do I fit(or fit in)?, in the increasingly, transitory, pluralistic societies of the 21st century (Kang, 2008). The key issue here is that educational identity is best understood when defined in relation to other academic disciplines like politics, psychology, sociology, philosophy, computer science, Educational Technology among others applied to educational research, teacher

education and professional training that constitute important aspects of teacher identity building and development.

Professional identity is concerned with firstly, initial training and professional development programmes that entitles a practitioner to group membership (Dworet, 1996; Franzak, 2002) and secondly, effective management of professional responsibilities, that is, the way a teacher shares the task of pedagogic activities with school culture. In this regards, according to Esland (1972) and Schon (1983 cited by Stuart 1997), reflective practice which is scientifically-based knowledge of teaching may be objective and visible. This is about all that entails classroom task or the structuration of learning situations in a particular way: teacher's behaviours, method, technique, punishment, language, presentation of ideas and the like. Alternatively, it may be subjective and invisible as evident by meanings, intentions, preferences and assumptions which lie behind teachers' classroom actions. Thirdly, professional identity is also driven by historical, cultural, economical, legal and psychological factors as embodied in issues like teachers' status, working conditions, salary and pension, career prospects and above all, the ongoing universal debate on whether or not the teaching occupation is professionalized (ILO, 1983; UNESCO, 1983; Bond et al., 1996; Dove, 1986). So far, the Professional teaching activity has the greatest role to play in shaping and influencing teacher identity formation and development.

4. Teacher identity in Cameroon

This section answers the question: *what is teacher identity in Cameroon's Context?*

In Cameroon, just as anywhere else in the world, teacher identity is a complex entity. According to Cooper and Olson (1996), "Teacher Identity" constitutes multiple identities because it is multidimensional, multifaceted, multilayered and dynamic in nature (Cooper and Olson 1996). In this regard, within the Cameroon society, teacher identity encompasses the four major types of identities (already explicated above) namely self, personal, educational and professional identities and other factors like career prospects, teachers' salary among others (Dove, 1986; ILO, 1983; UNESCO, 1983) whose interplay constantly shape and influence the developmental process of the teacher identity.

Self-identity or selfhood image of teachers in Cameroon is commonly evident through the imprint socio-cultural, socio-economic, socio-linguistic backgrounds have on a teacher's interaction with people and students. For example, since women are continuously fighting for their rights, some female teachers are usually uncomfortable to teach in boys' schools and some parts of the country where female status is ethnoculturally undermined, likewise teachers from regionally or socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds posted to teach or recruited in urban schools. However, protected by the law, they usually work hard to overcome all odds, progress effectively while giving good impressions during interactions with students in school and classrooms, colleagues, parents and local education authorities within and without school settings.

Personal identity is a mark of uniqueness or an individual as opposed to group of individuals. In Cameroon, this aspect accounts for the diversity in teachers' characters and attitudes: while some teachers are too strict and stern, others are strict but flexible, yet others are too soft and weak. Due to many exigencies associated with their work, teachers in Cameroon have learnt to constantly adjust for better to improve their career output. The state gives additional incentives and sometimes promotion by appointment to posts of responsibility takes into accounts, among other issues, this value which every teacher works hard to attain, maintain or improve. Teachers are often encouraged to emulate their exemplary colleagues whose attitudes, performance and career achievements (through the moral and academic success of their pupils) remain the touch stone of professional expectations.

Educational identity in Cameroon is concerned with lifelong learning. Teachers are involved in the continuous process of studying, researching and gathering resources both online and from other textbooks useful for their professional practice like lesson notes/ classroom activities or academic knowledge for further education.

Professional identity in Cameroon involves activities of all teachers, both trainees still undertaking pre-service (initial training) in college of education or those receiving in-service training (professional development) while already in active service. However, there is a clear cut distinction between this group and the untrained (unqualified) teachers who may have both teaching and non-teaching professional aspirations and paths of development. Since their contribution in the teaching profession is indispensable and most of them still consider themselves as work-based teacher trainees, they are automatically part of the teacher identity discourse. Most of them are also allowed to register with the existing teacher professional associations of their specialism at local, regional or national levels.

Besides the above-examined aspects of teacher identity formation and development in Cameroon, issues like teachers' working conditions, salary, autonomy, status, career prospects and the professionalisation of teaching are still, like elsewhere in the world, highly contested. The reason is that while some of these impeding problems have been solved, others are being partly handled and many more are yet to be looked at. Thus, teacher identity (for the qualified and unqualified alike) in Cameroon can only be well understood and managed through the exploration of its diversified and multifaceted developmental stages that characterise its formation.

4.1 Teacher identity formation routes

This section is concerned with how teacher identity is built and continuously grows. On the whole, teacher identity is not a fixed status; rather it is a continuous development process (Cooper and Olson, 1996). Thus, Teacher identity formation is like a complex and long journey that entails: educational identity through lifelong learning (Kang, 2008; Katheryn, 2002; Lave & Wenger 1991); Professional identity through initial training and professional development (Franzak, 2002; Esland, 1972); personal identity and self-identity through interactions in school and social environments (Esland, 1972) with students, colleagues, school stakeholders as well as other influential forces (Dove,

1986) that shape and influence the identity either positively or negatively. All these aspects are interwoven in a complex and dynamic revolving network of actors and actions in a given space and time with the teacher as the central protagonist.

In this regard, professional identity for primary and secondary school teachers in Cameroon falls under two main categories, as Tambo (1995) rightly points out: those of the Formal Model route and the Non-Formal Model route to the teaching profession.

4.1.1 Formal formation route

For those of the formal model route, after enrolment at the teacher training institution, they undergo a variety of pre-service training activities during which they interact with university lecturers at the school of education, cooperating teachers or mentors in practising schools, student peers as well as students they are expected to teach. At this juncture, they start to assume responsibility in the form of authority over students they teach, assess, grade and direct their destiny. These contexts guide student teachers in constructing and reconstructing their professional portfolio which integrate theoretical knowledge and practice of learning and teaching and which also lead to professional certification. After formal completion of training and recruitment, while in active service, teachers still undergo in-service training in the form of professional development activities. These activities include participation in: induction ceremony of newly qualified teachers organised by the staff of the first station of service; general or departmental staff meetings; professional association seminars; seminars/conferences organised by provincial/national pedagogic inspectors of the Ministries of Basic Education and Secondary Education and university-based education researchers as well as enrolment in some undergraduate and postgraduate professional degree programs. A key aspect of teacher identity is professional association registration and membership which must be maintained by annual payment of membership fee. Constant participation in seminars and conferences organised or sponsored for professional development purpose by the Ministry of National education and/or its international partners is also mandatory to all teachers.

In addition to that, divisional and provincial pedagogic inspectors also conduct regular school inspections during which they observe and assess teachers' activities in classroom context, examine school log books, records and scores on their annual mark sheets after which they make useful remarks and recommendations on how teachers could improve their professional competence and classroom management techniques. On their part, the School Psychology and Guidance Counsellor Department also manages conflicts and mediate difficult issues between student and teachers, teachers and parents and also collaborates with the Discipline Department in educating teachers on how to manage children with learning difficulties, especially those with disruptive behaviours in classrooms and school grounds.

Another aspect of professional development is that some teachers enroll on courses at the university on full time, part time or distance learning basis which leads them to the acquisition of in-depth professional/academic knowledge and higher qualification. Through this means, many primary level teachers have succeeded in

obtaining Bachelor degree in Education while secondary teachers have earned Master and Doctorate degree certificates in Education.

4.1.2 Non-formal formation route

For teachers of the non-formal route model recruited in the 1980s, they pursued a different path to teaching. According to Tambo (1995), Yaoundé University graduates who were interested in teaching, after formal application, they were recruited by the Ministry of National Education (MINEDUC) and sent to the Provincial Delegation for Education who in-turn posted them to various school heads that had expressed their needs for teachers. Although they had not had any formal initial professional training that comprises theoretical knowledge and practice, their recruitment to teach the subject they majored in was as response to acute shortage of qualified teachers at the time. Thus, their work-based training activities which began while already in active service were more intensive than that of their counterparts from the Higher Teacher Training College (Ecole Normale Supérieure-ENS) Yaoundé.

At the level of schools, teachers of each academic department, both the qualified and unqualified work in collaboration under the guidance of the Head of Department (HOD). During end of month meetings, matters arising such as academic, social, cultural among others are discussed. Academic matters, for example, may include a review of all the challenges in classroom management, assessment, dealing with difficult children and the like encountered by some colleagues over the past weeks. Discussions may simply focus on: designing a harmonised formative assessment for upcoming exams for the various grades; a marking scheme for a test already administered; a brief presentation of an expose on latest research finding and its usefulness in their area of specialty. In handling these activities, cooperation is very instrumental in the personal, self, educational and professional development of all teachers. It is, therefore, one of the vital means in the formation of their professional portfolio and identity.

4.2 State cooperation with stakeholders in teacher education

The role of cooperating stakeholders, especially international partners too, namely the British Council, French, American and Canadian Cultural Centres, the international financial bodies (IMF, World Bank, African Development Bank), religious charity foundations and lay philanthropic NGOs, all play important parts in the process of development of teacher identity in Cameroon. The British Council and French Cultural centres have occasionally organised seminars in Cameroon to help teachers of English and French, Mathematics and science subjects to improve on their subject knowledge and teaching skills. They have also, through their home governments (Commonwealth and Francophonie) granted scholarships to Cameroonian teachers, especially to those of the fast track programme or the non-formally trained teachers recruited in the 1980s who later considered master degree programs in Britain (Tambo, 1995) or “maitrise” in France. Until 1992, the Cameroon, British and French governments used to jointly fund part of the bilingual (English/French) language / professional training programs in the

UK and France for teachers from HTTC (ENS) and students from the Faculties of Arts and Letters, University of Yaoundé I. Meanwhile since in the 60's the American government has been sending Peace Corps teachers to help solve the problem of shortage of science teachers. The Canadian government and other international philanthropic charity organisations have helped fund teaching oriented community development programmes in health, environmental and agricultural issues through which teachers became the target group to help propagate the new knowledge in schools and communities (RUDEA, 2008). International financial bodies namely the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF) have, although sometimes with controversial decisions along the line, through the Structural Adjustment Programme help the Cameroon government fund the training and recruitment of thousands of primary and nursery school teachers (Amin and Awung, 2005; Tchombe, 2005; Tamukong, 2004). Meanwhile religious bodies that historically initiated formal teacher education in Cameroon in the pre-independent era still have a stronghold and contribute highly in teacher training programs.

Generally, in order to attain its goals in national education program over the past decades, the Cameroon government has deployed much efforts through its participation in international education conferences and signing of many conventions: Addis Ababa conference (UNESCO, 1961), Jomtiem Declaration (UNESCO, 1990), Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994), Dakar frame work for action (UNESCO, 2000) among others. In addition, the state of Cameroon always allocates the highest amount, usually 18-20% of its annual budget to the Education Ministries (MINEDUC, 2004) with emphasis on teacher education. Although slowly, the decentralisation of the education system as enshrined in the 1996 constitution, stipulated in the 1995 Education Forum and 1998 School Guidelines law (Tchombe, 2005; Tambo, 1995; Tchombe, 1997, 1998, 2000; Tchombe & Agbor, 2005)) is gradually becoming a reality. However, the legal documents which are still being awaited to fully come into force are partly implemented as evident in the formation of school Management Board (Tamukong, 2004) and the creation of independent secondary examination boards namely Cameroon General Certificate of Education Examination Board-CGCEB and "L'Office de Bacalaureat" for Anglophone and Francophone Education Sub Systems respectively. This has also resulted in semi-empowerment of teachers who, through their trade unions at national and local levels, continue to table their grievances on issues of their status, salaries, protection among others to the government. All these aspects have been vital in helping to contribute, shape and influence the process of teacher identity formation in Cameroon. However, amidst multiple constraints, some of these unanswered grievances are now threatening the stability of the entire society as revealed in the subsequent sections.

4.3 Constraints to the process of teacher identity formation

This section answers the question, *what are the constraints in the formation of teacher identity?*

Constraints are barriers that impede the process of teacher identity formation. Such constraints may arise from different sources: inadequate resource provision or management; individual, institutional or administrative disorganisation and unfavourable historical, psychological, economic, cultural, legislative and social factors.

Of all constraints, the most outstanding one in Cameroon is that of inadequate resources (human, material and financial) (MINEDUC, 2004; Tamukong, 2004; Tchombe, 2005; Tambo, 1995) both in quality and quantity, and the inadequate management of the available ones. In this respect, the high shortage of qualified teachers, especially in private schools, has led to the recruitment of many unqualified teachers who teach many grades, different class levels, age ranges and subjects they have limited or no trained skills to teach. Besides that, the high class size average of 65 and teacher/pupil ratio of 1:65 (MINEDUC, 2004) make it difficult for teachers to teach and manage classroom activities effectively. Furthermore, they cannot dedicate sufficient time for reflective practice since most private schools hardly allocate enough fund for in-service training of their staff. In terms of material resources, the lack of basic school textbooks for students, manual guides and teaching aids for teachers and well stocked school library, especially in rural areas tend to frustrate the process of effective teaching for both motivated novice and experienced confident teachers. Such a situation downplays professional experience as well as the process of teacher career and identity development. In addition, since there is limited funding opportunities for in-service training of staff, most teachers are either unable or reluctant to bear the financial burden on seminars or professional development training programmes. There is also a disproportion for schools and teacher training institutions in favourable urban and unfavourable rural areas in terms of availability of resources like computers (hard and software), Information and Communication Technology (ICT) among other facilities for professional training activities. Consequently, teachers in some parts of the country lag behind their privileged colleagues who progress professionally within the global pace in line with standard and quality educational services expected of them.

There is too the challenge of inadequate planning and organisational management of human resources especially in the coordination of educational services with regard to input, process and output. While some schools in urban areas are overstaffed with less weekly workload (3-9 hours), many in rural areas are understaffed with a heavy task work of (25-30 hours) weekly. Moreover, in hundreds of primary schools, there are only few qualified teachers with many unqualified teachers while there are many qualified but unemployed teachers (RUDEA, 2008; Tamukong 2004; Amin & Awung, 2005) roaming the streets nationwide whose employability depends solely on the annual budget allocation for education and the decision of policy makers within the highly centralised education system.

Economically the employability of newly qualified teachers is sometimes dependent on funding negotiation between the government and its international partners such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank among others whose irregularities in agreements sometimes affect government's decisions. Such uncertainties about teachers' employability and salary structures that also influence

policy planning and regulate demand and supply of teachers are among the greatest barriers to the process of building and developing teacher identity in Cameroon.

Psychologically, newly qualified and recruited teachers often experience many challenges in the process of getting integrated into the public service and school system in Cameroon. (Tambo, 1995; Tamukong, 2004). This often results in late assumption of duty and stressful beginning of professional life, caused by the integration delay process of the highly bureaucratic and centralised system of the public service.

At individual level, new teachers in particular and some old ones in general soon discover that there is a mismatch between the theoretically acquired knowledge in pre-service training/post-training experiences and professional practicalities in school/classroom cultural contexts, curricular and extra-curricular activities and interpersonal relationship with colleagues, head teacher, students and parents. This occurs because most schools operate strictly on policy, social and educational programmes driven by school culture. Consequently a combination of academic, professional, managerial, creative and other range of skills are a prerequisite to full integration of teachers into the school system. Teachers' successful integration, which entails overcoming these challenges to attain career goals and proceed to identity formation, will depend upon the collaborative attitude of other school stakeholders with whom together they strive to uphold standard and quality education.

At the level of planning, management and organisation of teacher education, the selection criteria into pre-service or initial training course in Cameroon should be revisited and possibly restructured. A new format of entrance standard is required to meticulously screen candidates between those who actually desire the teaching career from adventurers who join the teaching occupation as the last career option because of the high rate of unemployment in the national labour market. The latter group usually group becomes reluctant to undertake any form of in-service training and even distracts their colleagues in their process of identity formation. In addition, the absence of administrative liaison between different segmentation in the school system impedes effective personnel functional development. For example, since special education awareness is not yet part of the national curriculum in all teachers training colleges in Cameroon, most teachers have problems in managing children with learning difficulties in classrooms. In addition, they cannot benefit from the expertise of their colleagues with special education knowledge and skills in special schools because both systems operate independently.

Language(s) of instruction namely English and French in Cameroon schools are foreign cultures and the contemporary school system is inherited from the former western (Christian/colonial)-based systems (Ihims, 2003). Despite the series of post-colonial school reforms and restructuring, the national school system does not actually reflect the imprints of Cameroon's cultural values, beliefs, civilisation and African ethno-psychology nor is it responsive to most individual and national developmental needs (Tchombe, 2005). The cultural script for teachers and their work place is deterministic because it disengages them from taking part in key decisions relevant to their profession and professional status. In this respect, all teachers are obliged to

develop their professional competence through foreign medium. Language (especially bilingual) teachers, are confused whether to promote their ethno/national culture in school/classroom activities which implies poor teaching of foreign languages or to promote foreign culture which is detrimental to the survival and progress of the national one. This dilemma of mandatory pedagogy in only foreign languages namely English and French in Cameroon's schools (Kouega, 2003) works at the detriment of national languages (Achimbe, 2006) and thus impedes teacher's mission to impart ethno-culturally-based knowledge. This form of national scholarship entrenched in foreign enculturation approach without mediation with ethno-cultures, partly downplays educational efficiency and constraints teacher identity development process.

In Cameroon, the history of teacher training and professional status is marked by a lot of constraints to the process of teacher identity development. From the political and legal perspective, the long awaited implementation of decentralisation of the national educational system as enshrined in the 1996 constitution, still contradictorily authorises the state, in the preamble sections a, b, c, to prescribe and impose the use of officially recommended textbooks, curriculum, syllabus, pedagogic activities and the like on all teachers and schools nationwide (Cameroon constitution, 1996). This gives little or no room for teachers to creativity or exploitation of other new horizons and discoveries to improve upon practice in their teaching profession.

On the whole, these constraints neither favour effective development of teacher identity nor positive learning outcomes for students.

4.4 Implication of teacher identity constraint for schooling and the school system

This section is a response to the question: *how does the constraints in teacher identity formation impact on schooling and school system?*

The constraints of effective development of teacher identity comprising of personal, self, educational and professional identities among other factors, has a lot of implications for pedagogic activities, student performance and educational outcome in schools and the entire school system in Cameroon. On the whole, since these constraints impede the adequate planning and organisation of the teaching profession and excellent teaching professional values, the teacher identity building and development process becomes blurred as reflected in the inadequate career output in some schools in particular and the entire national school system in general. Thus, the teachers' academic products, despite the outstanding results they may hold, are a mismatch to the calibre of man power required for a national labour force striving for the competitive global economy.

Due to lack of training and effective professional development, most unqualified teachers in private schools with heavily populated classrooms cannot effectively manage their classes. Consequently, their learners, especially those at the basic education level, hardly acquire basic literacy and numeracy skills expected of their age and grade range. These difficulties may become lifelong, if not remedied by a special teacher or a qualified and experienced ordinary teacher. Such learners, who have dyslexia (reading difficulty) unattended to during school life, may carry it over to

professional life. For example, if s/he is employed as an administrator to be reading and signing documents, out of fifty files tabled before him or her on daily basis, s/he may end up reading and signing only twenty or so while carrying the rest over to the next day or week. In this regard, such a situation affects both the individual service user's destiny as well as the rate of national economic output in terms administrative service delivery.

In addition, the failure to incorporate special and inclusive education components into initial teacher training and professional development programmes underlies some challenges. Without the knowledge and skills to manage children with learning difficulties and behavioural disorders, teachers often end up in anarchy and chaos with such students in mainstream schools. Parents sometimes take legal actions against teachers for deliberately excluding their children from participating in certain school activities on grounds of academic misfit or behavioural disorders.

With regard to quality of teacher trainee, the absence of strict selection procedure that fails to effectively scrutinise and screen candidates in terms of their desire, interest and what they actually want to bring to teaching, gives room to the training and recruitment of adventurers who move into the teaching career as an easy means into the labour market, especially into the civil service. Such categories of teachers are often reluctant to work. They dissuade other colleagues from pursuing professional development activities. Thus, such adventurers work purposely for their remuneration to sustain life rather than having true passion for the teaching profession. Consequently, they undermine the purpose of educational aims and goals which in turn frustrate the overall purpose of educational services to the society. This negative outlook of the entire educational enterprise, perpetuated by some irresponsible protagonists, often results in low quality, efficiency and standard of educational provision and performance in schools.

Since there is no specific budget allocated in most schools for in-service training, it becomes the will of each teacher whether to attend training seminars or not. Besides that, most professional development seminars are too short (1-2 days) while others are too generic for all teachers. Consequently, they fail to target specific or group training needs. Moreover, the lack of resources like computer hardware/software and other equipment for training institutions and the inequitable distribution of human resources between schools in rural and urban areas make many schools' and teachers' performance to lag behind the national standards and even wanting at global level.

Due to acute shortage of qualified teachers, the high percentage of unqualified teachers recruited to teach different age range and subjects across the curriculum especially in private schools and evening classes, thwart the purpose of teaching technical rationality. Those teachers have invented a teaching technique that is more "exam conscious teaching" rather than "curriculum oriented teaching" especially in the final year classes. In educational economics, they are considered educational product-oriented (focused on achievement and certification) rather than educational process-oriented (knowledge acquisition and scholarship). In this unprofessional approach, teaching is focused on reading and working on the past examination questions without

having covered the school syllabus. The outcome of such professional malpractices is degradation of education standard because student pass exams and obtain certificates without actually having acquired the knowledge and skills targeted as their educational objectives or learning outcomes.

Among other key issues of constraints include the highly centralised and bureaucratic systems that delay the socio-economic and institutional integration of newly qualified teachers, and the inequitable distribution of teachers' weekly workload between personnel serving in rural and urban schools. There is also the high rate of average class size of 60-80 and teacher student ratio 1:60-80 which often result in high rate of overall educational underperformance of schools in rural areas and school exclusion for learners in urban and semi urban areas. All these issues of negative outcomes emanate from the constraints of the aforementioned unfavourable factors in the process of building and developing teacher identity which consequently fail to regulate the teaching profession in the national system.

5. Prospects and suggestions

Despite the aforementioned barriers in staff training/development, resource generation/distribution, organisational management and other influential factors that inhibit the smooth formation and development of teacher identity in Cameroon, a fundamental groundwork has been laid. The Local School Board set up by schools and Local Authorities and the creation of both independent bodies like the Cameroon GCE Board and "Office de Baccalaureate" are some of the first steps to the process of decentralisation in Cameroon school system. International partners of both the public and private sectors are also creating much impact in exchange programmes with schools and teacher training institutions. In addition to that, there are professional development programs organised by the government agencies, teachers' unions including teachers' self-sponsored further professional training program in higher institutions. Higher institutions now also offer flexible degree programmes in teacher education on part time, full time or distance learning basis. There is also an introduction of the special education courses and disability awareness issues in some teacher education programs in some state and private universities namely the University of Buea (UB) and the Bamenda University of Science and Technology (BUST). Due to acute shortage of qualified teachers especially in private secondary schools, the government subsidizes the in-service training of their staff and sometimes makes provision to help train and supply teachers in some private schools.

Above all, local private bodies such as religious foundations, lay voluntary philanthropic services and international partners including cultural diplomatic representations, international Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and development agencies (UNDP, UNESCO, ILO, WHO, UNICEF, IMF, WORLD BANK among others) aforementioned in the body of the work, all have important role to play in cooperation with both the private or public sectors to enhance educational services alongside teacher education. Their partnership has been very indispensable in the

process of supporting teacher education and teacher identity formation in Cameroon's education system.

Considering the fact that parents and students scramble only for schools with dedicated staff, adequate organisational pattern of setting and high performance as evident in their annual ranking on the national academic league table, most schools now pay much attention to the quality of staff recruited and high quality management strategies. In addition, given the fact that effective staff training and development account for educational quality and efficiency which in turn enhances overall national development, the state of Cameroon prioritizes teacher education. This is evident in the creation of many primary teacher training institutions at divisional (county) levels and few secondary teacher training colleges affiliated to university institutions nationwide. Thus, all the aforementioned points are important steps taken by the state of Cameroon towards school and teacher autonomy that, in turn, support teacher identity formation and quality education.

Despite these few aspects of prospects, some suggestions advanced in this discursive paper may be useful for the management of professionalism in teacher education (pre-service and in-service training opportunities) that may enhance teacher identity formation and development.

Firstly, the school system should be decentralised, that is, the lever of power control in policy formulation and implementation should not remain in the hands of the hierarchy or central service (academic dictators), who may not even be educators. The share of power, exchange of opinions and cooperation among different levels of stakeholders is indispensable in enhancing continuous school improvement reforms including teacher education programs. Affinities sentiment

Secondly, schools as learning organisations, whether within public or private sector should be in the hands of educators (owned and/or run by educators) and managed by leaders equipped with educational administration knowledge and skills. This means that appointment to primary or secondary leadership post should be professionalised (adequate knowledge and skills in school governance and working experience) rather than politicised (political, tribal/ethnic/racial, religious, affective or any type of connections and sentiments). Only professional school leaders, equipped with analytical, critical, reflective, judgemental and problem solving ability tools, can adequately manage schools alongside issues of teacher professional and identity development. In this regard, Bostingl (1992) illuminates the issue by revealing that in the language of Total Quality Management (TQM), a true learning organisation optimizes its entire system-including processes and products by empowering everyone especially frontline workers-students and teachers in the case of schools- to continuously improve their work. This means that the mark of teacher identity reflects the practical ability to strive for continuous improvement in educational services in order to enhance quality, efficiency and performance within a given school organisation.

Thirdly, like aforementioned, unlike some of the unqualified teachers who are practically school product-oriented (exam-conscious teaching targeting only success/certification of their learners), most qualified teachers are practically both school process-oriented (curriculum oriented teaching targeting knowledge and skills acquisition of learners through planning, monitoring, adapting, assessing and reporting learning activities) and school product-oriented (success/certification of learners). As raised by this discursive paper, effective management of teacher education programs should equip all teachers with professional abilities on both educational product-oriented and educational process oriented service delivery, that is, the abilities to handle issues of learners' scholarship and certification that constitute educational objectives in any learning institution.

Finally, despite the growing shortage of manpower in the teaching labour force, quality assurance in the professionalization of teaching should not be compromised, that is, standards in teacher professional training and practical field work should be constantly upheld. Thus, stringent admission conditions should be imposed for entrance into pre- service training (formal formation route) and compulsory/strict supervised work-based in-service training (non-formal formation route) in order to uphold quality and efficiency in the training and performance of teachers. Teachers falling short of these procedures on annual reviews of status should have their practising license confiscated and also deregistered from their professional associations which constitute the mark of their teacher identity. Practitioners without the teacher identity and without intention to build and continuously develop their teacher identity could either be barred from the teaching profession or permitted to operate as unqualified with low status, salary, inadequate working condition among others or on secondment positions.

So far, these are some of the training and practical working procedures, if managed adequately, could enhance teacher identity formation and facilitate its continuous development in order to improve upon educational services for national development.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper has focused on what constitutes identity in general, teacher identity in particular, its formation and development stages in Cameroon. Constraints that impede teacher identity formation, their overall implication for schooling and school system and their overall prospects in Cameroon have also been discussed. However, it must be highlighted here that despite the abovementioned prospects, the way forward is difficult although not practically impossible due the ongoing teacher and lawyers strikes entrenched in political crisis. Thus, the issue of teacher identity in the Anglophone regions of the North West and South West in particular and the entire nation in general needs to be redressed. The official policy of decentralisation of the national education system, as enshrined in the national constitution of 1996, has become a theoretical utopian document. For close to two and a half decades, it is yet to be fully

implemented and many issues raised by the teachers' syndicate among other advocacy groups have been largely treated indifferently by the state. These, among other challenges raised together with their outcomes in the body of this paper constitute barriers to the teacher identity development in Cameroon. These issues coupled with other socioeconomic, linguistic, cultural and political grievances commonly referred to as the "Anglophone Problem" have plunged the nation into internal hostilities. It is now the responsibility of the state authorities to restore peace and justice in considering teacher status and identity formation process alongside other issues that have permeated the ongoing crisis. Teacher identity and its formation process can adequately be enhanced through effective pre-service/in-service training (initial training/professional development) programs, a continuum of reforms in teacher education as well as the full integration of teachers into the civil service or enable them to enjoy their professional entitlements while providing high quality and efficient educational services.

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