

Original Research Article

Widening Participation and the Provision of High Quality Teaching and Learning' in Higher Education Improvement Programmes: A Case Study of the University of Buea

Abstract

The Cameroon higher education (HE) system is sincerely stratified, with younger and mature students from more privileged backgrounds comprising the majority of student's from urban city population. Since independence considerable investment has been made to Widen Participation (WP) and provides High Quality Teaching and Learning (PHQTL) but attempts to evaluate these initiatives and demonstrate impact have presented a major challenge for the HE sector. The main objective of the study was to analyse internal stakeholder's effectiveness in the implementation of WP and the PHQTL in HE can ensure peace, security, welfare and prosperity of a nation. For study proposes one state university in the Anglophone region of Cameroon was taken and different faculties were included in the population. Four senior leaders, four middle leaders and four students were taken as the sample of the study. This qualitative study was conducted through the analysis of the focus group interview transcripts and ethical considerations are presented. The study proposes a typology to measure Widening Participation at all points of the student life-cycle. The new widening participation typology consists of raising aspirations, fair admission and retention, flexible progression, out-reach partners, vocational emphasis, flexible delivery and lifelong learning though groups have changed over time, and attention has shifted from recruitment and admission to retention, on-course support, and access to equitable career opportunities. The present study recommends a pyramid of measuring High Quality Teaching and Learning (HQTL) in Higher Education may be ranked and recognized at local, national and international level. Formalities for achieving widen participation and high quality teaching and learning include: Online learning will have major role; traditional mode still relevant, on the job training – could involve fee, education as a continuous long-term engagement, increased entrepreneurship possibilities, increase learning opportunity for people with disability. Teachers will be encouraged to become learning facilitators, and students will have more influence over their own learning. Tomorrow's classrooms will need to emphasise a mix of student engagement in learning, inquiry-based techniques, curiosity, imagination, and design thinking.

Key words: Widening participation, high quality teaching and learning, higher education improvement programme, Cameroon Universities

1. INTRODUCTION

Widening Participation (WP) and the Provision of High Quality Teaching and Learning (PHQTL) in Higher Education (HE) have been a crucial part of the Cameroon Ministry of Higher Education strategic aims for well over a decade, and the Widening Participation (WP) indicators for HE are improving [29, 6, 5, 47, 48, 19, 39, 40, 36, 37]. Yet inequality in HE for

socio-economically disadvantaged people remains a major policy challenge [29, 6, 5, 4736, 37, 38, 39, 30, 48, 49].

This study aims to investigate internal stakeholders' effectiveness in the implementation of WP and the PHQTL in the HE improvement programs in Cameroon. With this background in place, it analyses existing empirical evidence of internal stakeholders' effectiveness in the implementation of EA and PHQTL and where they have not been met except in the resource - rich cities in Cameroon like Yaounde, Douala, Buea, Bamenda and Maroua . Teachers will be encouraged to become learning facilitators, and students will have more influence over their own learning. Tomorrow's classrooms will need to emphasise a mix of student engagement in learning, inquiry-based techniques, curiosity, imagination, and design thinking [47, 19, 36, 37].

The outcomes of this study will aid the Ministry of Higher Education and Universities in Cameroon in assessing the progress of the WP improvement programmes and assuring the program's success. It is also hopes to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on the HE's effectiveness and improvement, especially in the implementation phase of EA and the PHQTL improvement programmes, theory and action, in local contexts and conditions. This will ensure practitioners in WP know and understand what works in context.

The literatures which inform this study are drawn from two bodies of literature. The first relating to policies are important because they help higher education establishments establish rules and procedures and create standards of quality for learning and safety, as well as expectations and accountability [7]. Without policy documents like Republic of Cameroon, [39, 40] and Presidency of the Republic of Cameroon, [36, 37], universities and the different ministries of education would lack the structure and function necessary to provide the educational needs of students. It is important to note that in Cameroon and many other developing countries WP in HE literature supporting universities improvement programmes are relative limited.

The second body of literature explores internal stakeholders' leadership effectiveness in implementing EA and the PHQTL in HE improvement programmes. The role of senior leaders,

middle managers and students' voice in an improvement initiative is seen as crucial by the WP researchers and the PHQTL improvement programs [36, 37, 39, 40, 29, 30, 3, 22, 23, 19, 5, 41, 32, 38, 21, 7]. Fullan [15] in his work on educational improvement reminds us of successful implementation patterns sustaining the improvement programme [14, 45, 41, 16]. A detailed and critical review of this is presented in the literature review. This study addresses three sets of research questions:

- ❑ What does the literature tell us about WP in the HE improvement programme?
- ❑ To what extent senior leadership team of the university of Buea perceived by internal stakeholders to be crucial in the implementation of WP and the PHQTL improvement programmes?
- ❑ What are the other important factors perceived by internal stakeholders in the university about the implementation of WP and PHQTL improvement programmes?

In this introduction, the study is first placed in context, providing a justification for the research; Secondly, the purpose, aims and research questions are presented including examples from a Higher Education Reforms in Cameroon. What will follow is the wider literature on the policy document supporting educational reforms in Cameroon, theoretical and conceptual frameworks on internal stakeholders' effectiveness in the implementation of WP and the PHQTL in the HE improvement programme in Cameroon. Thirdly, the research methodology traditions are outlined; fourthly, the analysis of the focus group interview transcripts and the ethical considerations are presented; finally, the findings and discussions of the data are discussed.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section reviewed sets of literature (see Introduction) which have contributed to our knowledge and understanding on widening participation (WP) and the Provision of High Quality Teaching and Learning (HQTL) in higher education (HE) improvement programmes by key international authors will be presented. A systematic literature search in the library and on the internet recorded in this study included policy reports, academic papers, journals, conference papers etc. The results of the search were categorised into subject area themes and uploaded into the repository.

2.1. Policy Reforms of Widening Participation (WP) and the Provision of High Quality Teaching and Learning (PHQTL)

After 60 years of independence, Cameroon's state universities are still overcrowded and students not getting what they bargain at the beginning of their admission for university study [5, 7]. According to Njeuma et al. [29], many reform objectives, were designed to address the challenge of providing quality education, such as giving universities more academic and management autonomy, providing more varied programmes (more professional and adapted to respond to the needs of the job market), and reducing unemployment among graduates, because the main university focused on classical liberal programmes compared to specialised professional and technical institutions selves [4, 39, 40, 36, 37]. Other important major challenges in higher education in Cameroon and across the globe are the escalation in its cost. Besides the tuition in private universities, students have to incur expenditure on hostel and mess (living costs), books, e-resources, and other incidental expenses [29]. The antiquated educational models, lack of qualified teachers, and stark differences in access to ICT across social classes – problems that educators have been dealing with for years – are suddenly out in the open [29, 30, 39, 40, 36, 37, 39]. These policies from the Presidency of the Republic of Cameroon [36, 37] identified commonly stated reasons for these observations are: enrollment of students in states universities, neglect of Cameroonian mother tongue, wastage of resources, quality of education, political interference, poor infrastructure and facilities, inadequate research, poor governance structure are some of the issues plaguing Cameroonian educational systems and schools [36, 37, 39, 49]. The above policies better outline an ongoing debate in Cameroon about higher education reforms, which provides general judgments about increasing participation and providing high-quality teaching and learning, goal achievement, good governance, public accountability, and contributing to citizens' trust in government [29, 36, 37, 39, 40].

2.2. Widening Participation (WP) in Higher Education Improvement Programmes

WP in HE or sometimes referred to Equal Access (EA) improvement programmes by their very nature, are government policies with specific references to WP and the PHQTL for education, employment or training for young men from disadvantaged or working class family backgrounds, later for young women, then mature women, and most recently for people with

disabilities, older people, internal displaced people (IDP's), and members of migrant groups [8, 29, 36, 37, 39, 40]. Widening participation in HE can refer to alternative flexible routes of HE in vocational, professional schools and university studies, to involve work-based learning, and different modes of study such as on-the job training, distance learning and part time HE routes, or acceptance of a wider range of qualifications, or by encouraging a broader range of student to apply [3, 8, 19, 22, 23, 29, 36, 37, 39, 40].

Widening participation strategy aims to address discrepancies in the take-up of higher education opportunities between different under-represented groups of students and staffs [29, 36, 37, 39, 40]. Gifted and talented academic staff and students from disadvantaged backgrounds, lower income households and other under-represented groups such as those with disability may face barriers to entry or succeed in higher education [8, 44]. A review of the 1993 and 2001 policies on EA, and PHQTL in HE shows that there is a more sophisticated approach in the whole student lifecycle in encouraging learners participation in HE. These initiatives extend from raising aspirations, through fair admission to retention, flexible progression, outreach partners, flexible delivery and lifelong learning [19, 22, 23, 29].

Robinson [41] reviewed with Bolton Institute, stressed that long term success required robust quality mechanisms and continual improvement between higher education ministry and university on widening participation to increase participation in each area and to address low rates of participation by students from lower socio-economic groups, low participation neighbourhoods and from individuals with disabilities [3, 5, 6, 19, 22, 23, 36, 37, 39, 40, 46, 47].

2.3. Provision of High Quality Teaching and Learning (PHQTL)

Purposeful learning in which learners are given the ability to effectively learn and retain skills and knowledge learned is what high-quality teaching and learning is all about. It is frequently linked to or founded on student satisfaction with the learning process. Education that is based on best practises and research-based pedagogy is defined as high-quality teaching and learning [29, 44]. Practically, high-quality teaching and learning involves the teacher drawing on a range of strategies that are closely matched to the learning objectives of the lesson (which, in turn, will match the particular learning needs of the students). Njeuma et al. [29] and Tchombe [44]

discuss about the following themes emerged as factors that affect the provision of quality education in universities namely: the teacher and teaching methods, educational content, teacher professional teaching qualification, learning environment, school management, teacher motivation, teaching and learning materials, school infrastructure and availability of solutions to the learning community problems [3, 5, 7].

In Europe, Science Position paper [42] recommends diverse teaching staff, student centred teaching, e-learning, changing conception of teaching, increasing diverse student body, knowledge economy and knowledge societies, tuition fees; changing the platform of education developments necessitate a practical response. The use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) based pedagogies for collaborative learning come under the aegis of flexibility [22, 23, 29] while the different HE policies provide a basis for an institutional model to support tutors in the implementation of e-learning portfolios [1, 22, 23].

WP in HE also required innovative leadership practices to ensure the PHQTL improvement programmes within HE encourage a broader range of students not just to apply and begin but to stay and to gain qualifications that meet HE expectations and the current job market [19, 22, 23, 29, 36, 37, 39, 40, 46, 47, 48]. Recent policies on WP in HE, argue there is now a more sophisticated approach considering the whole student lifecycle.

An evaluation of HEFCE's widening participation strategy, commissioned by HEFCE itself, suggested contemporary strategies such as the potential benefits from more universities with smaller class sizes of HE, pastoral provision, new and different kinds of academic course content, alternative pedagogies, and new forms of assessment as opposed to universities [5, 6, 22, 23, 32, 36, 37, 38]. While the Effective Learning Framework (ELF) of Ebot Ashu and QAA [5, 6, 38] provides a basis for an institutional model to support tutors in the implementation of Professional Development Programs (PDP) with e-portfolios. Whilst WP improvement initiative inevitably involves some form of organisation improvement Fullan and Stigelbauer, [14] suggest that lack of attention to the process of improvement is a major reason for its failure.

Figure 1: Model identified four broad phases in the improvement process: initiation, implementation, continuation and outcome.



Source: Fullan [12, 15, 18].

The implementation phase is said to be crucial and Fullan and Stigelbauer identified three of the major factors affecting implementation: characteristics of a university improvement programme, local characteristics and external factors (government and other agencies); different stakeholders in local areas, and governmental levels; characterizations of improvement to each stakeholder and the issues that each stakeholder should consider before committing a university improvement effort or rejecting it.

2.4. Internal Stakeholders Leadership Effectiveness in Implementing Widening Participation and the Provision of High Quality Teaching and Learning Improvement Programmes

Tikkanen et al. (2019) provide the framework for analysing internal stakeholders' leadership effectiveness in the implementation of WP in HE improvement programme. This plays an important role on how these factors are realized, hence providing a central determinant of reform success and what it doesn't [13]. It is presumed that strategies in educational leadership for achieving WP, PHQTL in HE (e.g. raising aspiration, fair admission and retention, professional emphasis. quality practical learning programme, capacity building, use of technology to achieve results of professionalization) [5, 6, 29, 39, 40, 46, 47]. These scholars are advocating for strategies that consist of top-down-bottom-up reform implementation strategies and collective proactive strategies of well-being and are crucial for universities in Africa development [11, 34]. Thus, Tikkanen et al. [45] imply that top-down-bottom-up implementation strategy, consisting of leadership for change management and knowledge sharing can promote school or university impact of WP, PHQTL in HE reform in terms of deep, long-lasting changes.

WP researchers have consistently stressed the importance of internal stakeholders' commitment to HE improvement programmes, and the form of professional development for HE institutions

scenarios [7, 8, 22, 23, 29, 32, 36, 37, 39, 40]. The WP improvement programmes reflects two groups of internal stakeholders' recommendations of the review.

2.4.1. Senior Leaders and Middle Manager Leadership

Republic of Cameroon [39, 40] and the Presidency of the Republic of Cameroon [36, 37] in their WP in HE studies with vocational training institutes, professional schools and universities in Cameroon have supplied information and guidance to support improvement programmes and staff development for HE in vocational institutes, professional schools and universities scenarios [5, 6, 7, 29, 30]. An analysis in these paper was dedicated to WP and PHQTL issues, scholarly activity and developing a research culture within HE universities improvement initiatives.

Cameroon government policies highlighted the difficulties and complexities of managing and reporting information/data for mixed economy institutions. It set out findings from vocational training institutes, professional schools and universities partnerships with the Minister of HE highlighting the need for robust quality mechanisms that lead to collective actions and meaningful improvement programmes [22, 23, 29, 36, 37, 39, 40]. This indicated the importance of developing WP and PHQTL within a university to better facilitate an improvement process.

2.4.2. Student Voice

Republic of Cameroon [38, 39] and Presidency of the Republic of Cameroon [36, 37] considered the distinctiveness of HE in universities from the students' perspective in Cameroon and encouraging learner participation involves information sharing, active collaboration, and other forms of communication and expression through which young people and adults enter into dialogue so that each other's views are taken into account and become consequential. In particular, the student experience was addressed within the sections; the context for HE in universities, curriculum development; and academic advice and support the student life-cycle [5, 6, 7].

Njeuma et al. [29] and Parry et al. [32] similarly investigated the similarities and differences between the experience of students studying within a university or college. The report considered extrinsic and intrinsic features, such as social life, costs, resources, administration and tutor accessibility [7, 8, 36, 37, 39, 40].

2.5. Summary

This literature review considered two major themes identified in the research questions. Some of the key issues which will be used to explore and explain my findings are as follows:

- The level of support for the implementation of WP in HE improvement programme.
- Debates surrounding the internal leadership effectiveness in implementing the EA and the PHQTL in HE improvement programmes.

In the next section, the research methods are considered in more detail, allowing a critical review of their appropriateness for the study.

3.0. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The aim of this section is to locate and justify the research approach and evaluative case study used. This will then justify my underlying conceptualisation of the research strategy chosen for this research. Finally, I will clarify my research method and give details of how I analysed the focus groups' interview transcripts, taking into account issues such as validity and ethics.

3.1. Research Approach

This evaluative case study utilises the humanistic knowledge domain as identified by Gunter and Ribbins, [20]. According to them, the humanistic approach seeks to gather policies, theories and concepts from the experience of those who interested in WP and the PHQTL. In this study, the experiences of university senior leaders, middle managers and students are sought to re-interpret the existing theoretical conceptual frameworks and to propose new themes constructed from the two bodies of literature.

Within the interpretive paradigm, I adopted an evaluative case study approach to investigate internal stakeholders' leadership effectiveness in the implementation of WP in HE improvement programmes [4, 7, 2, 8] and the provision of High Quality Teaching and Learning Improvement Programmes in Higher Education [8, 25, 26, 29, 44]. Such an approach emphasises subjectivity, description, interpretation and agency, detailing internal stakeholders' leadership effectiveness in implementing EA and the PHQTL improvement programmes in a university in Cameroon. The

evaluation form or category in this enquiry is impact evaluation, using the process-outcomes approach [31]. This study adopted a qualitative interpretive methodology, because it allows the researcher to get the data directly from the internal stakeholders themselves by sitting with each group and hearing their views, voices, perceptions and expectations in detail. This strategy contends that knowledge is subjective and truthful 'in a way that is faithful to the original as possible [2, p, 101].

This study combines the best features of an evaluative case study including review of research materials and transcribed focus group interviews records as an evaluative case study [4]. The conclusions reached, in the absence of quantifiable data, although subjective in nature, will be based on clear evidence emerging from the focus groups' interviews.

The technique used in this study is random sampling [2]. The approach of 'random sampling involves the selection' (*p.12*) of internal stakeholders from a larger group (university population) 'literally at random' (*p.12*) and each member of the population have a known, but possibly non-equal, chance of being included in the sample. In this study three focus groups were interviewed one comprising four senior leaders, four middle managers and another with four students in the case study university. The three groups were chosen to add validity to the data generated by means of respondent triangulation,

3.2. Instruments Data Collection

This study employs focus group interviews as a structured group process 'to explore attitudes and perceptions, feelings and ideas about widening participation and provision of high quality teaching and learning improvement programmes in higher education [2, 8]. The semi-structured focus group interview questions schedule for senior leaders and middle leaders and students guided the interview with the different university stakeholders [2, 8]. . However, flexibility was given to the senior leaders, middle managers and students to 'develop ideas and speak more widely on the issues raised [2, p. 167] in separate interview sessions. This method is preferred over quantitative enquiry using questionnaire in this study because this method will provide in-depth information and the university internal stakeholders will be able to express themselves more freely compared to the predetermined responses in the questionnaire method [6, 9].

3.3. Methods of Data Analysis

In this study data analysis was approached by cross-case analysis at first, and then treating each case on its own. The transcribed raw data from the focus group interviews was coded with numerical numbers to create data sets as recommended by Miles & Huberman [27]. This enabled the researcher to come up with relative manageable themes related to the research questions, and allowed preliminary analysis undertaken by the allocation of codes as indicated in Ebot Ashu [6]. For the interpretation of the results, transcribe focus group interviews' come with alphabetical codes were assigned to each Senior Leaders, Middle Leaders and Students as a descriptor for where the focus group interviews were collected; respondents were not referred to using their real names but were assigned an alpha-numerical code based on their numerical number. Senior leader C, line 68-69, Student D, line 399 – 402 or middle manager B, line 80 - 81 (cf. Ebot Ashu, [6]. The first code senior leaders C, line 68-69 identifies, focus group interview with Senior leaders, Utterance 68 to Utterance 69 or Student D, line 399 – 402 refers to focus group interview analysis from the University of Buea (UB students and Utterance 399 to Utterance 402 in the focus group interview transcript. Middle manager B, line 80 – 81 refers to focus group interview with middle manager B and Utterance 80 to Utterance 81.

3.4. Ethical Considerations

Informed consent was requested from all of the samples and their gatekeepers, who in this case were four senior leaders, four middle leaders, and four students. Senior leaders, middle managers, and students were all informed that audio recording would be utilised, but that their names would be protected and that the reporting would be done anonymously. The research guidelines of the Cameroon Ministry of Higher Education and the University of Buea were followed to ensure respect for each individual, knowledge, democratic ideals, the quality of educational research, and academic freedom.

4. FINDINGS

This section presents the findings, broken down into themes, based on qualitative data collected from the focus group interviews with a university internal stakeholder's inquiry in the form of process-outcome evaluation.

4.1. The Level of Support for the Implementation of Widening Participation in Higher Education improvement programmes

Findings from the focus groups seem to recognise that the two reforms in HE tenets are Widening Participation (WP) and the Provision of High Quality Teaching and Learning (PHQTL) improvement programmes 'assists more people from under-represented groups, particularly low socio-economic groups, to participate successfully in higher education (*Senior leader C, line 68-69*). The programmes engage with those in the work place, and support them to develop the richness of higher education learning and also allow us to develop the world class work force of tomorrow (*Student D, line 399 – 402*).

4.1.1. Promoting Widening Participation in HE

Responses from the internal stakeholders indicate that the leadership team involvement in supporting WP is very important and they are in partnership, with external stakeholders encouraging flexible routes into HE giving non-traditional students choice about different modes of study e.g. face to face teaching is very popular, on-the-job training, online learning, distant learning and 'part and part time studies must be encourage' (*middle manager B, line 80 - 81*). Education in university should 'varied into practice models' (*senior leader A, line 70*), and supporting learners gain admission in wide range of qualifications 'at different sought of levels' should be encourage (*middle manager C, line 247*).

Internal stakeholders noted that they 'assist marginalized communities, more people from under-represented groups, particularly low socio-economic groups and those not engaged in politics or secret religious sects; Cameroonians in the diaspora could engage with those in the work place, and support them to develop higher educational learning and promote the world class work force of tomorrow' (*senior leader B, line 30-34*).

4.2. Improvements in the Provision of High Quality Teaching and Learning

The findings from the focus groups interviews identify that the PHQTL improvement programme is an important WP tenet and the leadership team are providing the necessary support not just for ‘disabled students, or students from remote villages’ (*Student B, 397 – 398*) to apply and learn but also supporting the achievements of these ‘under privileged students’ (*line 398*), to successfully complete their awards in HE and gain suitable employment.

Responses from the internal stakeholders indicated the world of work, local access orientation, a basis for ‘flexible progression, vocational emphasis, flexible delivery, lifelong learning and a regional and local emphasis studies as the factors driving the improvement programmes’ (*senior leader B, 102-104*).

Other middle managers and senior leaders stressed that ‘teaching groups need to be smaller, say about thirty or fifty’ (*Middle manager D, line 228*), offered greater flexibility in the learning and included improved pastoral provision (*senior leader, A, line 34-35*). It can also include new and different kinds of ‘course content, alternative pedagogies, new form of assessment than frequent exams’ (*senior leader, B, line 86-87*). ‘ICT based pedagogies cover a range of learning contexts including e-learning in undergraduate and postgraduate degrees, approaches to e-portfolios, e-assessment projects and using software and mobile technologies to support learners in their different degree programmes’ (*middle leader, D, 140-142*).

4.3. Internal Stakeholder’s Leadership Effectiveness in Implementing Equal Access and the Provision of High Quality Learning Improvement Programmes

The findings from the senior leaders and middle managers interviews appreciate the distributed leadership effectiveness in involving internal and external stakeholders taking control of the sole factors that affect the implementation of the WP improvement programmes process.

4.3.1. Senior Leaders Consultation

Every senior leader talked about the Cameroon Ministry of Higher Education policy documents expand on these ideas of widening participation and the provision of high quality teaching and learning in HE is based on ‘three pillars: transformative professionalism, quality teaching to enable students retain knowledge and skills, quality tools for teaching and learning and quality

environment' (*senior leader, B, line 70-72*). EA and PHQTL are very important factor for the continuing growth of an educational system in both developing and developed countries (*senior leader, C, line 124-125*).

4.3.2. Middle Managers Consultation

The findings seem to suggest that middle managers are content with the information and guidance provided by internal and external stakeholders are 'extremely helpful in providing training to support services delivery. In some training programmes they highlighted the difficulties and complexities of managing and reporting information/assessment data for mixed economy institutions' (*middle manager D, line 59 - 62*).

The findings similarly point out that middle managers are struggling to develop an academic research culture within HE in delivering a wide range of Higher National Certificates and Diploma programmes, in addition to a range of specialist professional programmes and that this 'posed challenges for them to implement this programme adequately' (*Middle manager C, line 350 - 351*).

These findings on the other hand also suggest that middle managers seem to have confidence in the implementation process and they are very used to the different improvement programmes promoting HE within university.

4.3.3. Students Consultation

Student experience was a strong consideration within the context of WP improvement programmes. Curriculum development was recognised as strength, particularly for those pursuing professional programmes and those who want to study locally. Academic advice was expected to come via structured partnerships between universities and the Ministry of Higher Education in franchise or consortium arrangements. Some of the students claim that;

Most of our lecturers and middle managers have been very supportive providing academic support, skills development and career advice. They are enhancing student's capability in different subject's areas and in our employments (Student A, 453 – 455).

The findings suggest that whilst students feel a strong need to fit in HE programmes, they want the leadership team to support progression pathways and their achievements. Other students stressed about the motivating factor and one that has significant funding issues associated with resources. Finally, a recurring theme mentioned by many was the criticality of ideas on inclusive learning. Putting the learner first is the key.

5. Discussions of the Findings

Having summarised the themes and described the evidence in response to my research question, I will now relate these findings to the literature reviewed and theorise what impact these findings can potentially contribute to the deeper understanding of Widening Participation and the Provision of High Quality Teaching and Learning in Higher Education Improvement Programmes [3, 22, 23, 29, 32, 33, 36, 37, 39, 40].

5.1. The Level of Support for the Implementation of Widening Participation (WP) in Higher Education improvement programmes

The findings identified that in current political discourse, WP and the PHQTL improvement programmes are at the forefront of national debate on HE and there are moves to increase the number of disadvantaged students in HE, with the argument that in most African countries like Cameroon the knowledge society demands higher level skills in the labour force [3, 22, 23, 28, 29, 32, 33, 36, 37, 39, 40].

The findings are [22, 23, 29, 36, 37, 39, 40, 41], that long term success of the improvement programmes requires robust quality mechanisms in implementing the key features of promoting EA and PHQTL including raising aspirations, fair admission and orientation, a basis for flexible progression, outreach partners, vocational emphasis, flexible delivery and lifelong learning [18, 19, 46, 47].

Also confirmed in the findings was the research carried out by Njeuma et al. [29] and Parry et al. [39] which found smaller class sizes, pastoral services and action learning through action research to be beneficial and economical in teaching postgraduate students. Related contemporary strategies included the use of information technology based pedagogies, for

collaborative learning over a range of learning contexts including an emphasis on e-learning in Foundation degrees [5, 8, 22, 23, 29, 36, 37].

The findings seem to identify with Fullan [15, 18] with particular regards to the implementation phase of the improvement process, that the senior leaders and middle managers are well informed of the purpose of these initiatives. Also identified in the findings were the suggestions of Fullan and Stigelbauer, [14] that stakeholders' leadership effectiveness in implementing WP and PHQTL within HE in universities improvement programmes are important factors in achieving a successful improvement process. Three major factors affecting the implementation are identified:

- Policies and practices developed to promote HE in universities
- Leadership effectiveness in developing pedagogies that engage a diverse range of students more effectively, in both traditional and new subjects.
- Stakeholders' issues should be considered.

5.2. Internal Stakeholder's Leadership Effectiveness in Implementing Widen Participation and the Provision of High Quality Learning Improvement Programmes

The findings seem to agree with Fullan and Stigelbauer [14] about the need for robust quality mechanisms leading to collective actions and meaningful improvement programmes supporting stakeholders into HE and employment [22, 23, 24, 36, 37, 41]. The articulate responses from senior leaders and middle managers concur with the suggestions by the literature [6, 7, 21, 22, 23, 32] that transformational, distributed and sustainable leadership are indeed important determinants in developing HE in university approach where an inclusive approach supporting the targeted campaigns at specific groups and markets is much needed [7, 8, 10].

The findings accord with policy documents from the Presidency of the Republic of Cameroon [36, 37] and HEFCE [22, 23, 24] identifying scholarly activities for HE in university scenarios. Some suggestions were provided where further good practice and guidance would have been useful; teaching and learning strategies and implementation, curriculum content, course delivery, pedagogy and HE in university co-operative curriculum development [5, 6, 43]. Relative pitfalls were the expectations of senior leaders and middle managers, as researchers, implementing, and

evaluating a range of technologies to assist assessments and the delivery of programmes, with the aim to help learners develop [29, 35, 36, 38].

Expectations of student behaviour, levels of commitment, programme delivery and subjects differ between department and faculties (Parry et al., 2004). The university leadership team were providing individual academic advice and support of student lifecycle as recommended by the state [35, 36, 37, 39, 40]. These responses seem to suggest that resources are targeted so that each individual succeeds, with students receiving detailed feedback on how they are progressing.

Indications of social class processes are played out in the students' experiences via what can be termed an institutional effect. There may be greater differences in experience between higher institutions than within an individual university. Nevertheless, working class and middle class students may have different experiences even at the same university.

6. CONCLUSION

This report supports the need for further understanding of widening participation in HE improvement programmes which has become a dilemma for education and social researchers. These concepts change over time, but ideas about EA and the PHQTL in HE remain strongly entrenched. Notions of equal opportunity, diversity, incorporating disable students, refugees, care leavers, tribe plus wellbeing, religion, culture, social class and gender, are now frequently used in both policy and practice arenas when addressing questions of equal access, quality provision and the outcomes of education. The balance between equality and quality remains a dilemma for policy-makers.

6.1.

The Contributions of Knowledge

Figure 2: Typology to measure Equal Access or say Widening Participation at all points of the student life-cycle.

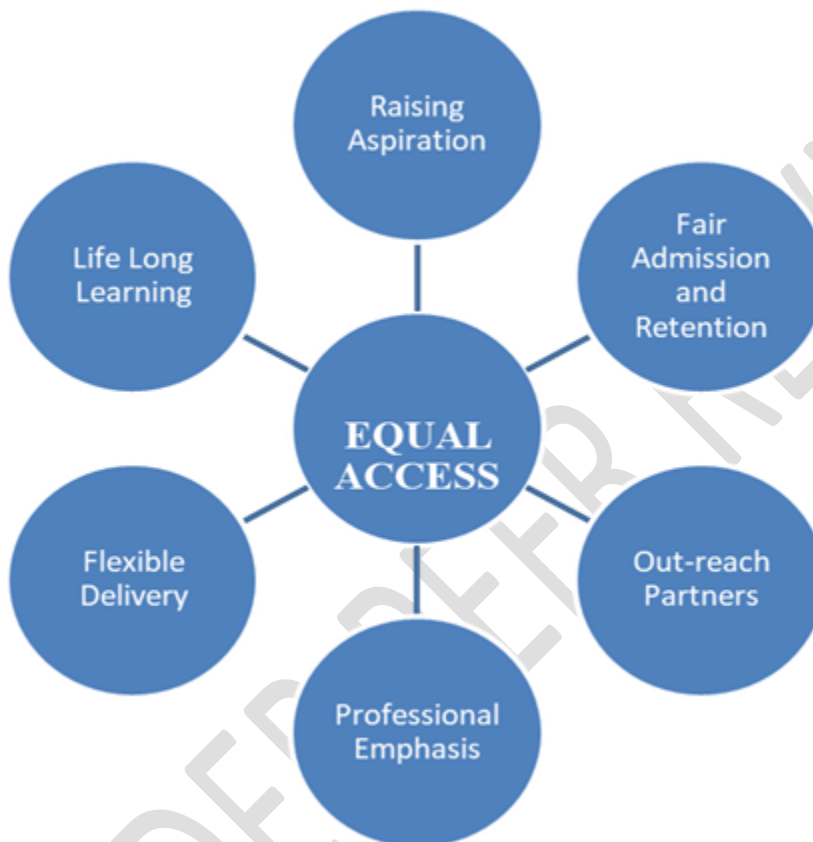


Figure 2 illustrates a typology for measuring success in widening participation within Higher Education Improvement Program

6.1.1. How the Contribution can be applied

Measuring success in widening participation is not simple. Firstly, what is to be measured is not always clear. At institutional levels the key points outlined in Figure 2 are raising aspirations, fair admission and retention, flexible progression, out-reach partners, vocational emphasis, flexible delivery and lifelong learning though groups have changed over time, and attention has

shifted from recruitment and admission to retention, on-course support, and access to equitable career opportunities.

6.2. Figure 3: A Conceptual Framework for High Quality Teaching and Learning (HQTL) in Higher Education

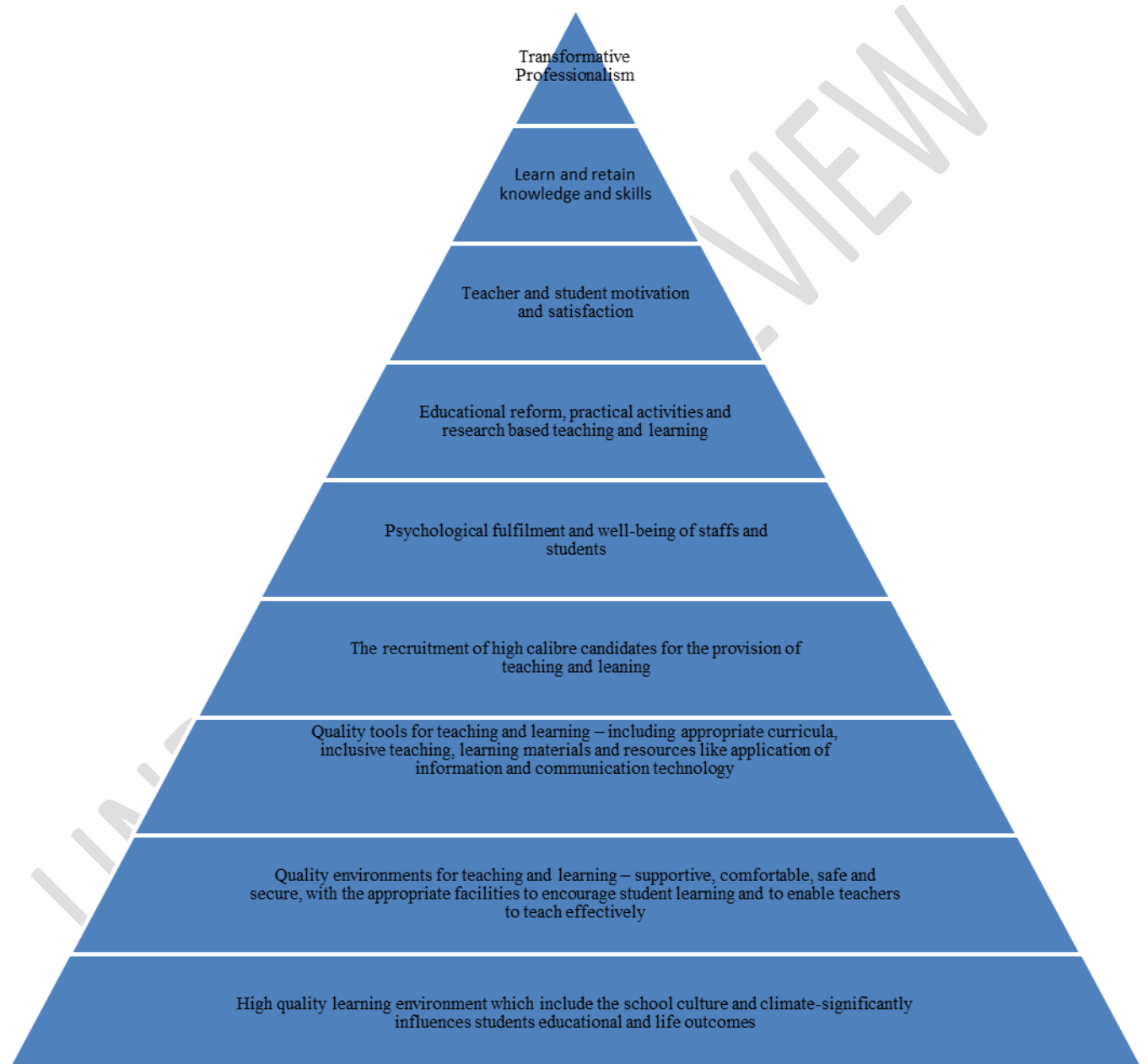


Figure 3 illustrates a Pyramid of measuring High Quality Teaching and Learning (HQTL) in Higher Education

6.2.1. How the Contribution can be applied

Recently, most universities stress on improving the quality of teaching and learning by measuring suggested indicators. Their ability to deliver High Quality Teaching and Learning (HQTL) needs relies on adequate human and financial resources, incentives and rewards efficiently deployed, with governments playing a crucial role in setting incentives, objectives and quality standards for the higher education system as a whole. Recommended future challenges in Higher Education & how to prepare developing countries Ministry of Higher Education like Cameroon for them in achieving widen participation and high quality teaching and learning include: Online learning will have major role; traditional mode still relevant, on the job training – could involve fee, education as a continuous long-term engagement, increased entrepreneurship possibilities, increase learning opportunity for people with disability. Teachers are encouraged to become facilitators of learning and students will have more control of their own learning journey. Classrooms of tomorrow need to focus on a combination of student engagement in learning, enquiry-based approaches, curiosity, imagination and design thinking

6.3. Suggestions for Further Research

- There may be interesting proposals to develop a local or national marketing and communication strategy to promote education and training across the full range of providers. The two WP tenets' approach suggested an inclusive approach supported by targeted campaigns at specific groups and markets, is much needed.
- The review of submitted materials also identified a number of issues in urgent need of future research, such as raising aspirations, fair admission and retention, flexible progression, out-reach partners, vocational emphasis, flexible delivery and lifelong learning examples.

6.4. Recommendations

This evaluative case study was conducted in the form of focus group interviews with university senior leaders, middle managers and students. This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge pertaining to the implementation phase of EA and the PHQTL improvement programmes theory and action in local contexts and conditions, and so provides practitioners in WP with 'what works' in context which they know and understand. This report concludes that in

order for WP improvement programme in HE within university provision to be successful, there needs to be greater regional collaboration between both HE and institutions, and that quality assurance mechanisms need to be standardised across institutions. Furthermore, stakeholders on these programmes need a greater time to reflect upon their activities and that the provision will be most effective where there is a critical mass of staff and students.

This report also concludes that clear strategic planning involving internal and external stakeholders is a factor in the relative effectiveness of partnerships, but that differences in the relative status of partners can become a source of tension. HE Ministry with university collaboration occurs in a variety of ways that can be categorised as preferred partner (for example the university of Buea linked to the University of Bamenda or University of Yaounde 1 in this evaluative case study, but sometimes a large mixed-economy universities with diverse HE links.

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