

Promoting Effective Institutional Governance in Cameroon Higher Education: A Governance Equalizer Perspective

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Abstract : The increasing quest for efficiency, accountability, and transparency has led to the implementation of massive governance reforms among higher education systems worldwide. This is causing many changes in the governance of higher education institutions. Governments over the world are trying to adopt business-like organizational strategies to enhance the performance of higher education institutions. This study explores the changes that have taken place in the Cameroonian higher education sector. It also attempts to draw a picture of the likely future of higher education governance and the actions to be taken for the promotion of institutional effectiveness among higher education institutions. The “governance equalizer” is used as an analytical tool to this end. It covers the five dimensions of the New Public Management (NPM), namely: state regulation, stakeholder guidance, academic self-governance, managerial self-governance, and competition. Qualitative data are used, including semi-structured interviews with key informants at the organizational level and other academic stakeholders, documents and archival data from the university and from the ministry of higher education. It has been found that state regulation among higher education institutions in Cameroon is excessively high, causing the institutional autonomy to be very low, especially at the level of financial management, staffing and promotion, and other internal administrative affairs; at the level of stakeholder guidance there is a higher degree of stakeholders consideration in the academic and research activities among universities, though the government’s interest to keep its hands in most management activities is still high; academic self-governance is also very weak as the assignment of academics is done more on the basis of political considerations than competence; there is no real managerial self-governance among higher education institutions due to the lack of institutional capacity and insufficient autonomy at the level of decision making; there is a plan to promote competition among universities but a real competitive environment is not yet put into place. The study concludes that the government’s policy should make state control more relaxed and concentrate on steering and supervision. As well, real institutional autonomy, professional competence building for top management and stakeholder participation should be considered to guarantee competition and institutional effectiveness.

Keywords : Cameroon higher education, effective institutional governance, governance equalizer, institutional autonomy, institutional effectiveness

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