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PERFORMANCE-BASED FUNDING MECHANISMS IN THE CAMEROONIAN  
HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM: CASE OF THE STAFF DEVELOPMENT  
GRANT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BUEA

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## ABSTRACT

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Observing that most developed countries are increasingly shifting towards some form of performance-based funding (PBF) of higher education, this study sought to identify and examine how similar funding mechanisms were being implemented in Cameroon. In an overview of the higher education landscape in Cameroon, a funding scheme called *Staff Development Grant (SDG)* was identified at the University of Buea which seemed to possess most of the features of PBF. A qualitative research approach was used with the SDG as the case study. The related policy documents and empirical data were analysed to examine the degree to which the SDG conformed to performance-based funding and how its objectives were met. A semi-structured questionnaire was administered to the staff of that university, then the contents of the policy documents and responses from the questionnaire were analysed qualitatively.

The results of the study reveal that the SDG had several features which qualified it to be classified as a performance-based funding scheme and that it was a valuable instrument in enhancing the responsiveness and productivity of the academic staff. Besides objectives like an increased volume of publications, indication of minimal research productivity and promotion which were met, the data reveal that the SDG spurred a culture of creativity, innovativeness and team spirit in the academic corps of the university. The study conveys the message for the possibilities of similar schemes to be explored with other objectives of the higher education system or institutions in Cameroon. Such performance-based funding schemes would likely enhance other institutional or system's objectives and thereby contribute to improve the quality, efficiency and responsiveness of the institutions. Future researchers, consultants, managers and policy-makers in Cameroon and hopefully other countries in similar developing national contexts could explore the extent to which such performance schemes could be designed to facilitate or drive other objectives or expectations from higher education.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Art.	Article
AL:	Assistant Lecturer
AP:	Associate Professor
BAC	Baccalauréat
CCIU:	Comité Consultatif des Institutions Universitaires (National Consultative Committee for Interuniversity Institutions)
CA	Conseil d'Administration (University Council/Board of Directors)
EURYDICE:	Information Network on Education in Europe
G.C.E	General Certificate of Education
HE:	Higher education
HEI:	Higher Education Institution
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
L	Lecturer
LMD:	Licence, Mastère, Doctorat (Equivalence of Bachelor, Master, Ph.D)
MINESUP:	Ministère de L'Enseignement Supérieur/Ministry of Higher Education
OECD:	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PBF:	Performance-based funding
PCA :	Président du Conseil d'Administration/Chairperson of the University Council
Ph.D:	Doctor of Philosophy
P	Professor
RAE	Research Assessment Exercice
SDG	Staff Development Grant
SDP	Staff Development Plan
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
UB	University of Buea
UC	University Council
UNAC	Universiade Académiques (University Brains Trust)

# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background

This study was carried out on the funding of higher education in Cameroon. Viewing that funding and the efficiency of its allocation has become a crucial issue in higher education today, this researcher was interested in some of the recent developments that are taking place in the funding of higher education. The interest was based on the observable advent of new challenges, demands and expectations from higher education in recent years which are affecting the funding of higher education. Amongst some of such new challenges is the general phenomenon of shrinking funding as exacerbated by factors like changing demographics, rising supply costs, diversity, and the multiplicity of goals.

Also, there is globalisation which seems to have brought new pressures to various higher education systems. For instance, there are pressures for higher systems to provide more quality education and research, high-ranking and attractive institutions for hubs of innovation and for the competitiveness of nations. At the same time, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are more than ever before called upon to prove or improve their contributions to local, national and regional development. HEIs are bound to be more accountable with respect to the above new missions and objectives and especially with the use of funds. Pursuant to the multiplicity of the challenges and demands, governments and funding agencies are increasingly becoming more strategic, cost and efficiency-conscious as well as result-oriented in the funding of higher education. One of such new developments has been the prominence and observable shift from the traditional pattern of block funding which was simply based on expenditures to new forms of performance-oriented funding (PBF).

This researcher sought to examine if such policy shifts to mechanisms like PBF are also taking place in Cameroon. Cameroon is a developing Sub-Saharan African country situated in the Gulf of Guinea between Central and West Africa in the armpit of the African map. At first sight, the name and concept of PBF seemed to be inexistent in Cameroon as most of the funding policy documents that were preliminarily reviewed indicated that the funding pattern was a mixture of “line item” and “lump sum” funding (see Jongbloed, 2003). From that perspective, the funding of the system could be seen to be dominantly based on the traditional approaches as above. However, an overview of the higher education landscape in Cameroon indicated that there were certain performance-related



funding schemes which might have occasionally existed or were being practiced by default without having been normatively laid down as a policy concept. At the institutional level, a funding scheme called *Staff Development Grant* (SDG) was identified at the University of Buea which seemed to possess most of the features of performance-based funding. This SDG had been introduced in 2001 to enhance the research productivity, upward mobility and competitiveness of academic staff at the time the University of Buea was in dire need. For instance; a majority of the staff were still holders of Master's degrees or junior academics within the lowest academic ranks of the system. As at 1998, five years after the creation of the university, only 1% of the teaching staff were Full "Professors", 8% as "Associate Professors", 34% as "Lecturers" and 45% as "Assistant Lecturers" and 12% as "Instructors" (Njeuma et al., 1999 p.15).

It was envisaged that these low profiles of the academic staff was going to have a tremendous impact on the quality of teaching, particularly in graduate programmes and research activities. The teaching staff needed capacity building in the use of the new information and communication technologies, modern teaching aids and to be involved in outreach activities. Each year: 1. a block amount was earmarked from the University's budget as the "SDG" and the application period scheduled 2. Academic staff had to present evidence of their initiatives towards the above objectives and then competed for the SDG 3. The proposals were examined by a committee and decisions made on their eligibility 4. Contracts were signed between the university and the staff before the funds were disbursed 5. The staff had to submit their reports to the SDG administration which were also a precondition for future award (SDG Guidelines, 2000).

At the national (system) level, the researcher identified two performance-related schemes or programmes: the *Programme de Mobilité* (Mobility Grant) and the "*Universiade Académiques*" (University Brains Trust) at the Cameroon Ministry of Higher Education (MINESUP). With this Mobility Grant, the Ministry annually sets aside a block amount to sponsor the movements of university teachers, researchers and postgraduate students between the national universities and to and from foreign universities for teaching and research missions (Mobility Programme, 2009 edition)<sup>1</sup>. On an annual basis, there is call for applications for the Mobility Grant at the Ministry of Higher Education from staff of the seven State Universities and it is comprised of ten categories or sub-schemes. For instance; the mobility grants are meant for teachers to move around to teach or do research in another national university, for capacity-building, "to" foreign Universities, "from"

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<sup>1</sup> Original French Version: Programme de Mobilité Académique

foreign Universities, postgraduate students going “towards” their supervisors, teachers, researchers, student and support staff going “to” another university/institution for governance-related activities etc (ibid). The “University Brain Trust” (*Universiades Académiques*; UNAC) is also an annual programme being sponsored by the Cameroon Ministry of Higher Education to reward and promote intellectual excellence (performance) with regards to economic relevance amongst students of all the Cameroonian universities and it has its special fund (MINESUP, 2008).

Although the above system schemes could be seen as valuable initiatives to facilitate the teaching and research missions of the higher education system and thereby lead to their efficiency, the SDG was found to be more similar to the practice of performance-based funding in developed countries because of the reasons that follow. The emphasis on “competition” as the operational dynamic for award of the SDG gave it the flavour of performance-based funding. The use of contracts (No. 4 above) in the SDG reinforces the notion of obligation for results and accountability as it is the case with PBF. The obligations for reports on the execution of the projects and equally as proxies for future award rendered it more closely similar to the practice of performance-based funding.

On the other hand, the above features were not seen to be sufficiently articulated in the “Mobility Programme” or the UNAC. Also, although competition is strongly articulated in the UNAC it could not be seen to be a sustainable funding program as its financing was simply driven by the necessity to cover its related expenditures. In other words, it is the programme which determines the necessity to earmark a separate fund to cover the related expenses of the competition and not vice-versa. Hence the UNAC could not be considered as a funding policy design. Viewing the weaknesses with the above two system schemes, the researcher chose to carry out the study on the Staff Development Grant at the University of Buea, the institutional level. However, it should be noted that the SDG was a specific initiative of the University of Buea and not a system-wide scheme for Cameroonian Universities.

## 1.2 The Higher Education System in Cameroon

The educational system in Cameroon owes its origin to its latest European colonial background as a former French and British Colony. Consequently, the system is dominantly a hybrid of the French and British educational systems and thus, it is perceived as a “Bicultural’ system of education. At the previous (primary and secondary school) levels, there is a clear cut policy distinction or division into two educational sub-systems (Tchombe, 2001, p.11): the Francophone subsystem (approximately 70% for 8 regions) and the Anglophone subsystem (about 30% for the 2 Anglophone regions)<sup>2</sup>.

The history of higher education in Cameroon began with the creation of the National University Complex to its transition to the Federal University of Yaoundé in 1962. Although earlier attempts pointed to the idea of integrating the two subsystems at the higher education level, the experience revealed the significance and persistence of the previous educational traditions of the students from the two subsystems which reflected in the teaching-learning process with impact on the quality of education (Njeuma et al., 1999; Doh, 2007, p.29-30). This was the case with the “Bilingual” University of Yaoundé where the traditions were for instance; to reflect on linguistic issues (serious problem of language balance), methodological and curricular issues. Such cultural significance rendered the teaching and learning process cumbersome especially when the teacher was likely to have only a ‘monocultural’ experience (Doh, 2007, p.3). During the 1993 University Reforms in Cameroon, the above issues were taken into consideration. Two universities were consequently conceived solely in monocultural traditions as per Decree No.92/074 of 13<sup>th</sup> April 1992; the Universities of Ngaoundere and Buea in the Francophone and Anglo-Saxon traditions respectively.

In terms of size, the higher education system is composed of 7 State Universities and a private sector of over 34 institutions (as at 2003; Njeuma 2003). Although there have been several deliberate policies to harmonise or cross substitute elements of the two higher education traditions, the inherited traditions of the two sub-systems reflect or dominate on various aspects. For example: institutional and governance structures, degree structures and credit systems, methodologies and curricular issues and sometimes on perspectives on funding. As at 2007, the student population in Cameroon was 120.000; 108.000 in the State Universities and 12.000 in the Private institutions,

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<sup>2</sup> In terms of population: Although there are eight Francophone regions, the two Anglophone regions remain some of the most educated in the country. There is also the recent trend about parents from the Francophone regions wanting to send their children to English-speaking schools (see Njeuma et al 1991; case of UB). This estimates to about 30 % for the Anglophones, though having 2 regions.

with the University of Yaoundé having about 33.000 students (Ministère de L'Enseignement Supérieur [MINESUP], 2007). Recent trends indicate that the annual student population growth could be estimated at around 10% which puts the government into problems of insufficient funding, infrastructure, quality decline etc.

Currently, the HE system operates within the framework of the 1993 reforms. Before these reforms, there was only one university-the then University of Yaoundé. Due to congestion (30 years after its creation) this university had 40.000 students in a campus meant for 5000 students (Njeuma et al., 1999:4). With funding problems and quality decline in the University of Yaoundé, the government between 1992 and 1993 initiated a vast reform of the HE system. The reforms were contained in several Presidential Decrees. Amongst the major decrees were: Decrees Number: 92/074 of 13<sup>th</sup> April 1992, 93/026 of 19<sup>th</sup> January 1993, 93/034 of 19<sup>th</sup> January 1993, 93/027 of 19<sup>th</sup> January 1993 and 93/032 of 19<sup>th</sup> January 1993. The objectives addressed by these decrees included amongst others: a) to encourage the participation of the different stakeholders in the management and financing of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), b) Enhance autonomy in academic, administrative and management issues, c) professionalisation of the higher education system d) de-concentration and decentralisation, and e) to increase inter-university and international co-operation. A principal feature of the reforms was that it granted autonomy to universities to generate extra funds for projects.

The Cameroon higher education system presents a 'unitary' structure of 7 state universities (Doh, 2007, p.20). Although the HEIs are independent (have a considerable degree of autonomy), they are centrally administered by the Ministry of Higher Education to which they are accountable. Before the reforms, the structure of the Cameroon HE system was dominantly French-patterned. The pre-1993 higher education system in Cameroon consisted of the main university with several university-level institutions, professional/technical schools, institutes and centres which were separated from or were simply attached to the main university as autonomous establishments. Based on the reforms, these disparate institutions were incorporated into the main universities thus shaping the unitary structure that exists today. Within this University-dominated or Unitary structure, the professional and technological components of the programme offerings is estimated at about 13.17% and the rest being the traditional university disciplines (MINESUP, 2008). This calls for concern in terms of the relevance to employment, technological developments and the global labour market and which is a major concern in the government's agenda.

The Ministry of Higher Education (MINESUP<sup>3</sup>) is the patron governance structure for the seven state universities and it is in charge of formulating policies for both the state and the emerging private sector in Cameroon. The ministry is headed by a Minister who is assisted by a Secretary General, backed by General Inspectorate with various Inspectors for Academics and Service Control as well as Directors of department as per Decree No.2005/142 of 29 April 2005. Universities are headed by Rectors or Vice-Chancellors in the French and Anglo-Saxon Universities respectively. They are assisted by Vice Rectors and Deputy Vice-Chancellors respectively.

In addition to the Rectorates or Vice-Chancellery are the offices of the Secretaries General or Registrar for the Francophone and Anglo-Saxon Universities respectively who are in charge of routine administrative matters in the Central Administration of the universities. The Secretaries General or Registrar are statutory secretaries to the various decision-making organs of the Universities such as the Committee of Deans and Directors, Senate and the University Councils. Also, there are Directors who head various services in the Central Administration of the Universities and Deans and Directors for the faculties, schools and institutes. In the basic units of the universities are Heads of Department and Programme Coordinators. The University has a governing council presided over by the '*President du Conseil de l'Administration*' (Chairman of the University Council). In this council, the presidency of the country, the ministries of higher education, finance, public service, planning and labour are represented (MINESUP, 2005)

In Cameroon, French and English are the two languages of instruction in higher education. Both languages are used in the Bilingual Universities for teaching and learning depending on the first language of the teacher or student. Only French or English is used in the monolingual Francophone or Anglo-Saxon Universities, respectively. Admission into the university is based on the two high school qualifications from the two subsystems – the Baccalauréat (BAC) and the General Certificate of Education (G.C.E) Advanced Level for French and English-speaking high school graduates, respectively. Other requirements include language proficiency and relevance of high school subjects to the intended fields of study. Admission into professional and technical university centres, schools and institutes are based on very selective entrance examinations (Njeuma et al, 1999, p. 5).

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<sup>3</sup>Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieure(French acronym for Ministry of Higher Education)

The higher education system in Cameroon is comprised of two degree structures according to the French and Anglo-Saxon (or Anglo-American) systems. Before 2008, the French or Francophone degree structure had several incomparable levels or cycles to the Anglophone structure. Given the quest for mobility between the national universities and the pressures of globalisation with increased teacher, researcher and student mobility and the international quest for degree comparability and transparency, the two degree structures were harmonised according to the Bachelor, Master and Doctoral structure. Today, the Francophone degree structure is generally called the *LMD* system (of Licence, Master and Doctoral cycles of 3+2+3 years each). The current structure has been rendered equal or more comparable to BMD structure (of Bachelor, Master and Doctoral cycles) which existed in the Anglophone system. This new and comparable degree structure went operational from 2008.

### **1.3 The Funding of Higher Education in Cameroon**

With a focus on the state sector of seven Universities, the funding of the higher education in Cameroon is regulated by the Presidential decrees of the 1993 University Reforms (ibid) then amended by Decree No. 2005/383 of 17 October 2005. Until 1973, the financing of higher education in Cameroon was borne by the French and Cameroonian government. Then, from 1973 up until the 1993 reforms, it was funded solely by the Cameroonian government. The emerging private sector is entirely financed with fees from their students and respective corporations and agencies.

Of relevance to the subject of this thesis are the core features of the 1993 reforms where the newly-created universities were: granted autonomy in their financial management, to broaden their financial bases, outsource funding from external or community stakeholders and to be able to provide basic infrastructures from some of their own finances. The reforms granted autonomy and authority for the universities to take initiatives to motivate and improve the teaching, study and living conditions of staff and students through better remunerations and to enhance staff promotion. The SDG at University of BUEA (UB) which was meant to improve the chances of its staff in building teaching and scientific capacities and gaining promotion suggests one of such examples. With the financial autonomy, there are even provisions that the universities can take decisions to remunerate staff for services that are deemed to be of supplementary or exemplary nature, in addition to their statutory salaries from the state, for example; through the award of bonuses.

For the first time, a token amount of 50.000 FCFA was introduced as registration fee to be paid by the students (as immediate beneficiaries of the education). Until 1993, there was no involvement of external stakeholders in the financing of higher education in Cameroon. In addition to the free tuition before 1993, the students received non reimbursable bursaries with numerous welfare benefits such as free meals and housing as government incentives to spur access. By 1993, it was becoming clear that it would be difficult for the government to continue bearing the entire cost of the higher education amidst the 1990 crises because the student enrolments had multiplied several folds; from 529 in 1962 to 44.000 in 1992 in the lone University of Yaoundé which had been constructed for 5000 students (Njeuma et al., 1999, p.8). Consequently, such benefits had to be stopped and paradoxically the payment of registration fees was introduced. The abrupt introduction of tuition fees bred discontent and continues to be a subject of family debates as Cameroonians had been used to free tuition. The 1993 reforms implicitly authorized universities to involve directly with the local, regional and international communities.

Although the 1993 reforms granted autonomy in financial management, the Universities have to conform to (sometimes very strict) government regulations in terms of preparation, composition, nomenclature, structure of the budget, composition of expenses and modalities for the execution as laid down by Decree No.2005/383 of 17 October 2005. The explanations for these strong government regulations on financial matters in the Cameroonian Universities are two folds: First the Universities' budget (as per Article 8 of the above decree) are stated to be "public", state or government resources (the tax payers' money). The second reason is the continuous government scepticism on the likelihood of excesses due to autonomy and its consequences (e.g. misappropriation) as well as the concern for value for money. Such strong regulations are equally based on previous experiences. Njeuma et al., (1999, p.8) observed that before the 1993 reforms, the budget priorities of the Cameroonian higher education system were almost completely distorted. For instance 46% of the budget of the pre-1993 University of Yaoundé (1991) was spent on staff salaries; 43% for student bursaries, feeding and lodging; and just 9% for teaching and research.

The above translates that student welfare was of higher priority than the fundamental missions of the University: teaching, research and contributions to national development. The above authors also cited situations of mismanagement and misappropriation that were noted in some of the universities. It is due to such experiences that despite the autonomy, there would seem to be several disguised manners in which the government remains "interventionist" on financial management of

the Universities. The decrees prescribe that the budgets be prepared and executed in a specific format or nomenclature in terms of the purpose, destination and economic rationale.

The universities' budgets are composed of estimates of the required financial resources and their purposes which then determine their nature and the amount needed to run the university (Art. 2.1). The budget is voted for a period of one year by the University Council (UC) or *Conseil d'Administration* (CA)<sup>4</sup>, and then approved by the Prime Minister with the Consent of the Ministry of Finance (ibid). Although the UC or CAs which are headed either by the Pro-chancellor or PCA<sup>5</sup> is the supreme decision-making organ on university's budgetary issues, the leading vote holders of the Universities are the Vice-Chancellor or the Rectors, respectively. The Rectors or Vice-Chancellors are expected to render accounts and submit annual administrative reports on the execution of the budget to the superior organs concerned with state finances.

The University's financial resources are composed of: contributions from the state and/or subvention, contribution from regional council, Fees from students, resources generated by the university itself or from cooperation ventures, gifts and loans. The sum of the resources are distributed for common services of the university and the University establishments (Faculties, Schools and down to departments (Art 10 & 11). The above decree stipulates that 65% of the funds from the state be allocated for the general university's services and 35% for the faculty/school. The reverse holds for the distribution of fees, 65% of which goes to the faculty/school (generator of the resources) and 35% to the common service of the university. The decree spells out that the funds generated from the other universities' (autonomous) activities such as cooperation, loans, gifts should be used according to the terms and purpose for which they are acquired. The rationale for the larger proportion which to be allocated for the university's activities (as per the decree) is attributed to the multiplicity of institutional level activities such as strategic planning, investment, infrastructure, staff salaries, registration, cultural and leisure activities, national and international travel and activities, academic and para-academic activities (symposia, conferences, seminars etc).

In the faculties/schools, the budget is meant for the smooth functioning of the basic units, light maintenance of infrastructure and equipment, organization of teaching and exams, research allowances, travel, extra teaching hours and interfaculty/school cooperation as per the decree (ibid). Some of the novelties that have recently occurred in the higher education funding policy in

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<sup>4</sup> UC for Anglo-saxon and Francophone Universities respectively.

<sup>5</sup> Président du Conseil D'Administration (President of the CA)



Cameroon is the devolution of some financial authority from the university level to the Faculty and Department Heads. Article 27 (2) of the 2005 decree prescribes delegation of signature to the heads of the University establishments (Faculties & Schools) with limits on the amounts for which they can commit the budgets. In certain cases, state subventions which are destined to some university establishments with specific government and professional missions are credited directly into the accounts of the establishments. This is the case with establishments like the Faculties of Medicine and some of the Professional Schools.

### **1. 3.1 Strengths of the Higher Education Funding Policy in Cameroon**

The strengths of the funding policy in Cameroon could be attributed to the benefits of the 1993 reforms, the extent to which their objectives have been met as well as the experiences and practices. The major strength lies in the fact that the reforms have enabled the universities to improve upon or contribute to strengthen their financial bases. It would be contended that enormous resources are acquired from non-state sources. Statistics from the Ministry of Higher Education in Cameroon indicate that government expenditure on the universities is about 65% and 80% to the entire HE sub-sector. This is contrary to the pre-1993 trends whereby the financing of higher education in Cameroon was completely borne by the state. Given that the annual budget range of the University of Buea is usually between 2 billion and 2.5 billion CFA Francs and about 550 million from about 11000 students (50.000F/student), it implies that the university raises about 20% of its annual budget from student fees which is substantial. It goes in similar magnitude in the other 6 state Universities which were created following the 1993 reforms.

The above translates that success in both access and financial sustainability accompanied the reforms. The reforms authorized universities to generate funds from non-government sources, national and international communities. Statistics from the 2006/2007 research activities of the University of Buea indicate that the sum total of 513,596,771 FCFA was raised from external research funding, which accounts for about 20 % of its total budget (2006/2007 annual Report:14). The third advantage from the funding system lies in the incentives the 1993 reforms created for the Universities to improve interaction with the external national and international environment to which the notion of autonomy may be attributed.

Although the University's interaction can be explained by resource-dependency theory (as per Gornitzka et al., 1999), it could be contended that such interactions are accompanied by a utilitarian dimension of the higher education. This is because by interacting with the external actors, the universities equally help in solving societal problems. An analyses from the list of projects submitted for the SDG, as per the various decisions suggested that a good number were joint projects with societal actors. Also, the list of activities and amounts on research funding at the UB indicated a total of 11 grants which were won from international foundations to solve societal problems like malaria, geo-hazards, peaceful application of nuclear techniques etc (ibid).

However, certain weaknesses could be observed from the list of projects with external research funds which indicate the need for improvements to render the university more active, proactive and to enable her increase the acquisition of external funds and in her diversity in solving societal problems. All the projects can be seen to have been sponsored from international foundations or foreign partners. This indicates that the university's networking with its immediate local or regional environment and institutions is limited. The regional, local and national partners and institutions could equally provide funding to the universities for societal problem-solving and even their partners' business interests. The table of projects equally indicates that the activities with general funding were grossly skewed towards particular disciplines; the physical, life and health sciences. This indicates that the other disciplinary areas of the university (about 70%) are stagnant or less active. Drawing from the 2006/2007 annual report (p.14) there was only one project, a "higher education capacity-building" project from a non-science faculty. The above suggests that the university's resources and interaction with the communities would be improved if creativity and entrepreneurialism is stimulated in the other faculties and departments.

### **1.3.2 Weaknesses of the Higher Education Funding Policy in Cameroon**

The universities' funding policies in Cameroon are equally marred by several weaknesses, most of which can be attributed to procedures and government interventions as follows:

Although autonomy in the financial management of the Universities is emphasized in the 1993 reform decrees and as amended by that of 2005, it is observed that there are several strategies by which financial management of universities continues to be dominantly steered by the government in various disguised ways. The above reflects in terms of the numerous government instances that exist in or on the Universities in terms of financial matters. Amongst them are: 1. The Council or

*Conseil D'Administration* as the supreme organ on the Universities' budgets, with a Pro-Chancellor or President and with the current experience that they are usually appointed from political circles as external patrons of the university. . 2. Financial Controllers. The Financial Controller is equally from the external environment of the University; the Ministry of Finance. In the Universities, all decisions on financial matters are subjected to the approval of the Financial Controller. Similarly, the Accounting and Stores officers are appointed from the Ministry of Finance. All of these instances and officials are in the Universities to ensure complete compliance to the state's administrative and financial regulations.

The major weaknesses of the above government practices lies in the fact that financial management in the universities complies to the same administrative and financial procedures like in the other public sectors and bureaucracies. The university is a peculiar institution to other organizations like bureaucratic or business institutions. Most scholars (Clark, 1983, p.234-235; Birnbaum, 1988, p.239-240; Mintzberg, 1989, p.269) assert that the university is a professional, expert, bottom-heavy institution partly because of the peculiarity of the material (knowledge) with which it operates and its technologies (teaching and research). The university thus operates better on norms which are proper to its complexities and peculiarities.

The use of the same financial rules and procedures as in other bureaucratic institutions increases the likelihood of the occurrence of conflicts of authority and values. Such differences are likely to lead to constant tensions on procedures and values between the university (academic) managers as vote holders and the Financial Controllers, Accounting and Stores officers. The use of bureaucratic and the same public regulations and procedures is observed in the Cameroonian Universities to often slow down the Universities' activities sometimes leading to waste and paradoxically, inefficiency. Worth citing is the example whereby perishable reagents which are imported from abroad may remain lying at the air or sea port and perish before they are cleared due to delays in administrative procedures to disburse funds.

The government administrative and financial management procedures are also known to impede the consumption of the credits. For instance a good proportion of the government's subventions are hardly consumed before the financial year ends. These delays occur both from the government and the university's side. There may be very stringent procedures to disburse the government subventions which have to go through the Ministry of Finance before they are disbursed to universities. Secondly, there are also the internal government regulations in universities. The

Academic Managers and university staff may also find discomfort with the several accountability and auditing mechanisms and procedures, form-filling and increasing regularization of expenditures which are tantamount to distract them. Finally, some academics point to the usual discrepancies between the academic year (calendar) and the financial year which impede the activities of the universities.

## **1.4 Research Problem, Objectives, Significance and Summary of Methodology**

### **1.4.1. Statement of the Research Problem**

Observably, shrinking funding, increases in expectations, demands for accountability and efficiency seem to be general phenomena in higher education today. These phenomena occur amidst increases in student demand for higher education along with increases in its supply costs. Consequently, sponsors of higher education have become more strategic and cost-conscious in the funding of higher education. There seems to a general drift in most developed countries towards some form of performance-oriented mechanisms in the funding of higher education (see OECD, 1990; Eurydice, 2008). Viewing that the developments in the direction of performance-based funding are mostly taking place in the developed countries, it would be necessary to examine through this case study, how HEIs in developing countries are adapting funding to the above phenomena. This study on the Staff Development Grant presents the peculiarity and perceptions on enhancing performance through funding in a developing context.

### **1.4.2 Objectives of the Study**

This study is meant to bring to the lime light the concept of performance-based funding which still seems to be unknown in the Cameroon higher education (HE) policy context but which may be occasionally practiced by default without official status or legitimacy as a policy instrument. The case of the Staff Development and Mobility Grants and the University Brains Trust at the University of Buea and the Ministry of Higher education in Cameroon suggest. The objective is to articulate the importance of such schemes in enhancing the attainment of the missions and objectives of higher education systems in the country's context. It is hoped that the study can stimulate policy reflections and research which could lead to the development of the concept and its

practices in the country's context. According to the researcher, such schemes can be perceived especially from the policy and management perspective as enhancing mechanisms to the objectives, missions and expectations from higher education. The issues raised in the case study equally buttress the above standpoint and responds to the motive behind the study.. That is; the observation on the prominence of PBF in developed countries (ibid).

The Staff Development Grant (SDG) is employed as the starting point for analyzing and demonstrating the level and context of PBF in the Cameroonian higher education. The study seeks to address the research question: *How is Performance-Based Funding mechanism reflected in the Staff Development Grant at the University of Buea?* Through this research question, the researcher focuses on examining i) how the concept of Performance based funding (PBF) portrayed in t higher education literature is reflected in the SDG. ii) How the SDG was implemented in terms of its peculiarities, practices and procedures and iii) the extent to which the objectives of the SDG were met, its successes, weaknesses and how it can be improved.

### **1.4.3 Summary of the Methodology**

The study focused on the Staff Development Grant (SDG) as an institutional level approach to performance-based funding. The empirical part consisted of identifying the features of performance-based funding in the SDG and then an evaluation of the degree to which its objectives were met. The study was guided by one research question: *'How is Performance-based Funding Staff Development Grant at the University of Buea?'* Given that performance-based funding still seems to be an unknown policy concept in the Cameroonian higher education context, this research question was necessary to examine how the SDG reflected performance-based funding as well as its peculiarities in terms of conception and implementation. A qualitative research method was employed was employed for the study, implying that the data collection and analyses were essentially qualitative.

The instruments for data collection included a semi-structured questionnaire (as the main source of the empirical data), phone interviews, policy document reviews and e-mail communications. The target population for the study included grantees of the SDG and administrators who were involved in the conception and implementation and non-grantees who were knowledgeable about the SDG. The objective was to obtain the opinions of these respondents on the SDG in terms of its

procedures, rationale, objectives, success, achievements and challenges. Based on the lists of (70) grantees which were available to the researcher, fifty (50) questionnaires were distributed to grantees, administrators of the SDG and non-grantees and thirty-two (32) were retrieved. The sample (people who participated) was based on a non-probability convenience sample. That is; the sample was comprised of those who were available and willing to be interviewed and/or to complete the questionnaire, at the time the study. Altogether, the researcher had phone discussions or e-mail communications with eight (8) respondents, two of whom were staff of the ministry and six from the University of Buea. It was a case study research on the Staff Development Grant at the University of Buea.

#### **1.4.4 Significance of the Study**

At a time when all over the world, higher education is facing several challenges with shrinking funding, there is the need for more strategic planning, accountability, efficiency and cost effectiveness in the allocation and use of funds for and within HEIs. Performance-based funding could be very significant in improving the responsiveness of HEIs to some specific and urgent needs, objectives and expectations from higher education. The study can constitute a starting point for further research on how PBF can be implemented in Cameroon HE, its potential benefits and challenges. Using the SDG as an example of funding by results, the study could serve as an indicator to policy makers in Cameroon on how such schemes could be conceived at the system level and for other universities. This could be done in consideration of the strides made by the SDG and difficulties encountered. This study could also serve as a guide in funding decisions in Cameroon and similar contexts. Such result-oriented schemes could improve the efficiency, quality and relevance of higher education in the context. The study also serves as a tool for identifying the advantages and disadvantages associated with PBF in general.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK**

In this chapter, the researcher analyzes performance-based funding from a general perspective with regards to the literatures in higher education studies and research. The objective is to build an analytical framework for the study and to be able to compare the SDG (empirical data) with PBF. The chapter begins with a summary of the Staff Development Grant. The traditional practice in the funding of higher education in most countries has been allocating a greater share of the overall funding on the basis of inputs. By tailoring funding to outputs or results, PBF represents a break from the foregoing approach. Tying funding to results departs from traditional considerations in higher education (HE) of line expenditures and inflationary increases (Thorn, Holm-Nielson & Jeppesen, 2004, p.6).

The financial austerity faced by HEIs as a result of exponential increase in the demands for HE amidst rising supply costs have led governments and other funding authorities to resort to new forms of funding for HE. Performance based funding as one of these new mechanisms has been backed by several arguments like “accountability”, “efficiency” and “value for money” (Jongbloed & Vossenteyn 2001, p.1). The shift towards PBF has however not been uniform among all the countries where it has been practiced. There have been different approaches (performance set asides and funding formulas, contracts and negotiations and funding or payment for results) as well as different ways of measuring performance (Hauptman, 2005, p.8).

### **2.1 The Staff Development Grant at the University of Buea**

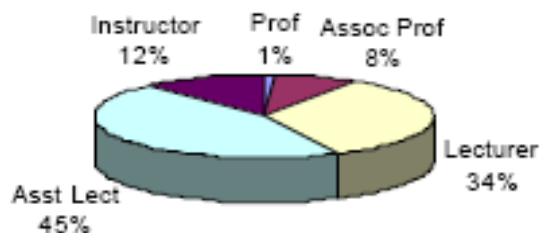
The Staff Development Grant (SDG) was a brain child of the Staff Development Plan (SDP) of the University of Buea. The latter as the name implies, was a proposal or document from the Academic office of the university which laid down the guidelines and objectives for the initiation of the SDG. Staff development or vertical academic mobility had been a major preoccupation of the University of Buea since its inception in 1993. Before submission of this proposal (SDP) to the University of Buea (UB) Senate in 2000, a general assessment was made in the university’s faculties to determine the need for upward (academic) mobility, reasons for stagnancy, and obstacles to teaching and research productivity. For example; there seemed to be insufficient state of the art, little or no

knowledge of the new information and communication technologies (ICT) and teaching aids, low publication rate by the academics, the absence of outreach and scientific activities etc (ibid). The results revealed that staff development was not being given sufficient attention and finances.

It was a matter of urgency because the university was perceived not to be competitive or responsive enough to national requirements and international standards. Extra incentives were needed to spur and enhance the competitiveness and productivity of the teaching staff more especially with respect to research. For instance, in view of meeting international standards, it had become a system's requirement prescribed by the Ministry of Higher Education (MINESUP) in Cameroon that all the teaching staff should hold terminal degrees. By 2000 a good number of the teaching staff at UB did not hold doctoral qualifications. These qualifications constituted one of the main requirements to supervise Master's thesis and Doctoral dissertations, and also for promotion to the different ranks of the system. For instance, in Cameroon, the promotion of a university teaching staff that is recruited at the entry point without a doctoral qualification as "*Assistant Lecturer*" (AL) is limited only to the second lowest of the four teaching ranks in the HE system. The career of that newly-recruited academic staff can only end at the level of "*Lecturer*" (L) (from AL to L) and "never" to *Associate Professor* or *Professor*.

In a situation where many of the UB teaching staff did not hold doctoral qualifications at the time, it implied that they were to end at the level of the (first-two) teaching ranks without prospects or accreditation to teach or supervise in the higher cycles of the university. The production of Master's and Doctorate degrees was also to be affected. In addition to doctoral qualifications, the teaching staff had to meet other requirements for promotion. Their promotion necessitated publications and demonstration of other outreach and scientific activities in order to compete with their colleagues of the other universities and contribute in enlarging the national publication data base to enable the national system become internationally competitive. Before the initiation of the Staff Development Grant, most of the teaching staff were still at the lower echelons of the promotion ladder. The chart (in the next page) presents the 1997/1998 situation of the teaching staff at UB, two years before the SDG.





**Figure 1: 1997/1998 Situation of Teaching Staff at the University of Buea (Njeuma et al., 1999, p. 12)**

According to the Figure 1, 91 percent of the academic staff were still at the entry or lower levels (instructor, assistant lecturer and lecturer) of the academic ranks and only 9 percent at the higher ranks. Although the promotion requirements were being prescribed from the top, the Ministry of Higher Education as can be seen from Arrêté No. 04/MINESUP/DFO of 27 November 1995 and emphasised by Arrêté No.01/0090/MINESUP of 29 October 2001, there was no system instrument or financial incentive to spur the implementation of the policy at the university level. Consequently, the University of Buea had to take special dispositions to accelerate the competitiveness and productivity of its academic staff.

It is against the above backdrop that it was proposed that staff development be redefined and prioritized at UB. The creation of a separate budget head on staff development was submitted to the 18<sup>th</sup> Senate of the University of Buea as per the Staff Development Plan from the Academic Office of the university. The proposal received the approval of the university’s Senate and its implementation went operational during the following year (2001). In summary, the UB administration had been concerned about the academic productivity and upward mobility of its staff and their effects on the quality of teaching.

### **2.1.1 Objectives of the Staff Development Grant and its Strategies**

The objectives of the Staff Development Grant and the corresponding strategies as per the “Staff Development Plan” (SDP) which was presented to the 18<sup>th</sup> Senate of UB in 2000 are summarised in the page that follow. It would be observed that the different objectives determined the different categories of sub grants which constituted the SDG:

**2.1.1a. Capability Strengthening:** One of the main objectives of the SDG was to strengthen the capability of the university to offer training in diverse fields that are relevant to national development and the labour market. As such, the strategies below were envisaged to drive this objective.

i.) *Computer literacy programme.* This programme was to take the form of workshops that were to be funded from the SDG under the auspices of the university's Department of Computer Science.

ii.) *Workshops on University teaching methods:* Workshops were to be organised by the university's Faculty of Education on teaching methods and strategies. The SDP also suggested that speakers or experts from other universities be occasionally invited to give lectures or presentations.

ii.) *Research Methodology Training:* The SDP made provision for departments or research groups to be able to apply for grants to organise workshops or seminars on research methodology. Funding for such seminars and invitation of experts was to come from the Staff Development budget.

iv.) *Academic discussions or seminars.* They were to be organised by research groups or the departments. Applications should state cost estimates, speakers and topics of discussion.

v.) *Innovation and Leadership Grants:* This grant was meant for senior staff in the ranks of *Associate Professors* and *Professors* who wished to organise and start research group projects within which junior staff could train for doctoral qualifications. It entailed applying for start off funds, stating the names of at least two staff members who will undertake all or part of their PhD training within the research group.

### **2.1.1b. Vertical Academic Mobility (Promotion of Academic Staff)**

The objective was to improve the capability of the staff to gain upward academic mobility. This objective had emerged from the observation that vertical academic mobility was being hindered by the inability of the staff to publish in peer reviewed journals. The maximum amount which was to be awarded per article was specified in Staff Development Plan.

i.) *Publication Grant:* Through this grant, it was proposed that academic staff could apply for funds to cover page charges for publication of articles in academic journals that were acceptable by the C.C.I.U. Such applications were to be accompanied by proof or entire copy of the manuscript,

letter of acceptance of article with editor's letterhead, invoice with full information on how to pay directly to the publisher.

ii.) *Textbook or Monograph Publication Grant*: Loans were to be given to authors to facilitate publishing. Repayment was to be done by sharing the proceeds from the sales between the university and the author.

iii.) *Travel Grant*: It was proposed through this grant that provision be made for academic staff to apply for grants to visit other university/research institute to carry out all or part of their work and to attend conferences or seminars. The application was to include a work plan and letter of invitation from the host institution.

#### **2.1.1c. Create Dynamic Intellectual Environment which Favours Creativity and Excellence**

i.) *UB publication Prize*: This prize was to be awarded to individuals or research groups which succeeded to publish high quality works in high impact journals. Competitors were expected to submit applications with a brief statement on the impact of their work. Third parties could equally nominate individuals or groups for the prize. Decisions to award the funds were to be made by the Vice Chancellor (VC) based on the recommendation of a jury which was to be set up by the VC.

ii.) *PhD Training Grants*: This grant was meant for academic staff who were registered for PhD at the University of Buea to apply for a waiver for all or part of their fees. The candidates were expected to have successfully completed a semester of their studies. The waiver was to be granted for one year, renewable for a maximum of 3 years depending on the progress of the candidate. Similarly, staff who were registered for PhD in other institutions within the country could equally apply for grants to subsidise their travel and registration costs. However no full sponsorship for PhD training was available under the SDG.

## 2.2 The Policy Context of the Staff Development Grant

This section situates the Staff Development Grant at the University of Buea in the general policy context of higher education in Cameroon and the institutional context of the University of Buea. The initiative to set aside a block sum for performance-based allocation at UB was in conformity with several policy instruments whose objectives overlap at the various instances (levels) of the higher education system. The objectives were either general or specific and at institutional and system (even regional or global) levels. Amongst the policy instruments within which the Staff Development Grant was situated are:

- i.) The 1993 University reforms whereby the six newly-created state universities in Cameroon were granted financial autonomy. The 1993 reforms granted authority to the universities to take such institutional-level initiatives that would enhance some of their objectives that were deemed urgent. Two of the 1993 reform instruments (decrees) granted financial autonomy to the University of Buea amongst which were: Article 1 of Decree No.93/027 of 19 January 1993 stipulating common conditions applicable to the six state universities and as reemphasized by Article 1b of Decree No. 93/034 of 19 January 1993 to organize the University of Buea. Although funds for the Universities (about 80%) came as block grants (as “Investment and “Running” budget), the University of Buea was empowered by the decrees to take such university level initiatives.
- ii.) The Staff Development Grant also responded to one of the major concerns of the University of Buea Strategic Plan wherein staff development was deemed as an urgent priority and as recommended by the Faculties and Departments in their Staff Development Plan. The SDG could be seen as part of the long term plan to improve and sustain the quality of teaching and research as well as the involvement of the academic staff in out reach activities as the University had been created just eight years before.

It could also be said that the SDG was even meant to respond to the general rationale of the reforms whereby authority and financial autonomy were granted to the universities such that they could be able to “seek external sources of funding” and by implication, improving their interactions with the external socio-economic and cultural environment. Drawing from the SDG decisions, some of the projects involved partnership with external actors and some with external funding. In such cases, the application for SDG was simply meant to facilitate

the operation of the joint projects. This could imply that the SDG was meant to render the staff more proactively involved with external partners or out reach activities and to develop an entrepreneurial culture as one of the overlapping objectives of the higher education system.

iii.)The Staff Development Grant was consistent with the system's general recruitment and promotion policies which employ bases on scientific productivity through publications as an indicator of teaching competence. At the system level, there are certain minimum and , stringent rules and standards to certify and ascertain teaching competences and capacity for research supervision (see Arrêté No.045/MINESUP/DFO of 27 November 1995). These promotion policies stipulate research competence as being complementary to the teaching function which should be proven in terms of publication (s). Amongst some of the recruitment and promotion criteria which are regulated by the above Arrêté (to which are added administrative and pedagogic reports) are:

The requirements that an academic staff who is recruited at the entry point as "*Assistant Lecturer (AL)*" with a terminal degree (PhD or Doctorat D'état) should have published "one article" in a peer reviewed journal *plus* one year of teaching experience before being promoted to the rank of "*Lecturer*". If the AL does not possess a terminal degree (as above), he/she is expected to publish two articles and have two years of teaching experience. One of the above terminal degrees is mandatory for promotion to the next rank of "*Associate Professor*" (AP) and to the final rank of "*Professor*". This implies that if a candidate (teaching staff) were promoted to the second rank as "*Lecturer*" and was not a holder of one of the terminal degrees (PhD or Doctorat d' Etat), he/she will "never" be promoted to the next rank of AP or P. The criteria for such promotions to the rank of AP are: the doctoral qualification, publications from the dissertation, 6 years of teaching experience, supervision of at least 4 Master's theses, 6 publications (or one book plus 3 publications). Promotion to the final rank of *Professor* (P) is based on supervision of at least two Doctoral Dissertations plus one book and three articles and 4 years of experience as AP<sup>6</sup>.

Given that a good proportion of the academic staff were junior staff and without terminal degrees, there was the necessity for urgent measures to improve their competences. As at 1998, only 1% & 8 % of the teaching staff were Professors and & Associate Professors, respectively. The observed

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<sup>6</sup> English interpretation of Arrêté No.045/MINESUP/DFO of 27 November 1995 amending previous dispositions and stipulating f conditions for recruitment and promotion in Cameroonian Universities.

inertia in scientific and outreach activities to meet such promotion criteria had been identified by the Faculties and Departments of UB to result from inadequate financial means. Also because the promotion of academic staff in Cameroonian Universities takes place through a joint National Inter-University Consultative Board (CCIU)<sup>7</sup>, it implied that. This translates that the University of Buea had to take urgent measures to render its academic staff competitive with colleagues of the other State Universities. Besides, some of the research-based criteria for promotion in Cameroon are meant to conform to a set of regional and international standards, for instance, as set by the African and Malagasy Council for Higher Education for the 17 Central African countries (CAMES<sup>8</sup>), of which Cameroon is member. It therefore implies that the Staff Development Grant was therefore going to be an institutional financial tool to enhance responses to such regional and international requirements for quality.

iv.) Above all, the SDG conformed to the primary objectives or expectation from higher education as laid down by Law No.005 of 16 January 2001 on the orientation of higher education in Cameroon. The principal objectives of the higher education system as per the first Chapter (Article 6) of the above law are: *“the search for excellence in all areas of scientific knowledge, the promotion of culture, social progress and the formation of manpower for national development as well as the reinforcement of national consciousness and ethics. In addition, there is the promotion of democracy, its culture as well as bilingualism (ibid).*

Also, the decisions to reinforce the capacity of the staff at UB were going to be consistent with the exigencies from the new global framework within which higher education operates. Globalisation seems to be equally putting pressures for the teaching and research staff in Cameroon to be more competent and qualified. With globalization, the expectations and objectives of the higher education system in Cameroon have increased as can be observed in the recent emphases on improving the professional and technical components of the higher education system, the necessity for quality assurance mechanisms and reinforcing staff's adaptation to the cutting edge technologies (MINESUP 2008). One of the major facets of the Staff Development Grant had been computer (data processing) and ICT training which was subcontracted to a private firm and made mandatory to all the teaching staff, at the time most of them were still lacking these skills.

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<sup>7</sup> French Version: Comité Consultatif des Institutions Universitaires.

<sup>8</sup> French Acronym for Conseil Africain et Malgache pour l'Enseignement Supérieur.

## **2.3 Performance-Based Funding (PBF) in Higher Education**

This section develops a conceptual framework for the study. It attempts to summarise various conceptualisations on performance-based funding (PBF) in higher education as a framework for analysing the Staff Development Grant.

### **2.3.1 Arguments and rationale on Performance-Based funding in HE**

The drift towards performance based funding in higher education can be explained by the general phenomenon of shrinking funding as exacerbated by factors like massification, rising cost, diversity, multiplicity of goals and expectations from higher education. Consequently, governments and other funding agencies are increasingly becoming more strategic, cost and efficiency- conscious as well as result-oriented in the funding of higher education. The above can be evident in the area of research funding which is stupendously cost intensive.

Various scholars have identified efficiency, accountability and the quest for quality in HE as the primary objectives and main justifications for PBF (Frølich, 2008, p.5, 12; Jongbloed & Vossensteyn, 2001, p.3; Burke & Modarresi, 2000, p.2; Dumont 1980, p.6). The budgetary constraints, together with policy makers' ongoing interest in accountability, and programmatic outcomes lead to a renewed interest in the uses and implications of performance-based budgeting, i.e. allocating resources to institutions according to their achievement on previously established goals, objectives and outcomes etc (see Layzell, 1998, p.1). The argument concerning accountability is equally evident in the policy documents of some countries applying PBF approaches. A case in point is Finland which emphasises the importance of reporting the attainment of such objectives and outcomes to the ministry (see Ministry of Education [MINEDU], 2001 p.7). Taylor and Taylor contends that a competitive atmosphere can be created by establishing tied grants, i.e. performance-based funding schemes. According to Geuna and Martin, (2003b, p.295) PBF is perceived to enhance efficiency in a short period of time and may also improve accountability.

Performance based funding in higher education can also be explained to have accompanied the advent of new managerialism or the new public management in higher education (Politt, 1993; 2004) which introduce the use of private sector tools in the management of universities and obligation of results with regards to the use of incentives. Francis & Hauptman (1999, p.268 in Daye 2005, p.1) regard performance based funding as reflecting “a growing fascination in market

models of resource allocation”. From a coordination perspective, result-based funding seems to be a follow-up to the observed shifts in state steering of higher education to autonomous institutions in the recent decades. For example ‘reinvention of government (Peters, 2001; Osborne & Gaebler, 1992), ‘state supervisory model’ (De Boer & Godegebuure, 2003; Maassen & van Vught, 1994) and more closely, to the ‘evaluative state’ (Peters, 2001; Neave, 1998). The forgoing argument may be explained by the Principal-agent theory whereby the state devolves authority and autonomy to the institutions and performance based funding becomes one of the means for the universities to remain accountable to the state (see Thorn et al., 2004:7).

The opinions of various HE scholars (example; Gornitzka et al., 2004; Kivistö, 2007) corroborate those of Trow (1996, p.310) who posits that new result-oriented mechanisms like the performance based-funding portrays the absence or dwindling trust in higher education by the state. Drawing from Kivistö’s reference to Schmidtlein (2004, p.264), much of such mechanisms like performance based funding of higher education today

‘...appear to result from doubts about efficient allocation of resources and effective cost commitment; from the lack of trust and confidence between the government and university officials; from suspicions about the accuracy and relevance of data provided; and from lack of confidence in the traditional decentralized, loosely coupled, institutional governance processes that are common within organizations comprised of professional employees’ (Kivistö, 2007: 1).

According to Gornitzka et al. (2004, p.3) such performance-oriented funding mechanisms signal the lack of trust and the change in the terms of the contract between the government and higher education which was simply a ‘social contract’ or a ‘gentleman’s’ agreement and now to more formalized procedures and mechanisms to ensure results. Daye (2005, p.1) perceives PBF as part of a relatively new relationship with the state. The informational perspective of the assertion by Kivistö (ibid) underpins those of Maassen (2000) where the assurance for results through mechanisms like performance funding are meant to litigate the information asymmetry between the government and the universities on performances of, and in universities. One of the most important factors for and circumstance to performance-based funding in higher education is the new global environment of higher education or globalization which reinforces the search for quality, competitiveness and efficiency. Sörlin (2007) observes that sweeping reforms through new mechanisms like performance-based funding is caused by the pressures of globalization to provide high-ranking, attractive institutions for hubs of innovation and competitiveness in knowledge-based economies.



### **2.3.2 Definitions and/or Perceptions on Performance-based funding in HE**

Performance-based funding has been perceived by scholars in varying ways. However, such variations seldom deviate from the basic concept of PBF which entails funding on the basis of ability to produce visible or assessable results. Burke and Minassians (2002a) define performance funding as public funding which is tied directly to the performance of tertiary institutions on the basis of one or more predefined indicators. The above authors identify the difference between performance funding and performance informed budgeting. The latter allows policy makers and administrators to consider institutional achievement on performance indicators as determining factors in resource allocation (ibid). Frølich (2008, p.28) holds that PBF link funding to what is being called the new social contract for research.

Other scholars observe that PBF is triggered by the push to demonstrate that society is receiving value for money as part of this new social contract. This may be the case of curiosity-driven research which is increasingly being made accountable (Demeritt, 2000). Related to this perception of PBF is Dumont's assertion that an important correlate of the growing concern on public accountability is the increasing attention being afforded to performance funding by a variety of interested parties (Dumont, 1980, p.1). Orr, Jaeger & Schwarzenberger (2007 p.1) perceive PBF as an aspect of a central theme in the various approaches to new public management (NPM); emulation of the market through state induced competition. They go on to argue that basing funding allocation on comparative performance is one way of setting an incentive for competitive practice.

Other authors have observed performance-based budgeting to entail allocating resources to institutions according to their achievement of previously-established goals, objectives and outcomes (Layzell, 1998, p.1). Using the example of contracts which is one of its instruments, Gornitzka et al., (2004) argue that PBF is a disguised form of steering higher education. This is affirmed by other scholarly observations that it is an instrument for measuring or guiding the achievement of specific objectives within the institutions' (Eurydice, 2008, p.57). In this case, performance-based funding becomes the use of financial incentives as one of the instruments to induce measure and guide the achievements of specific objectives in higher education. Liefner's research evidence indicates that PBF produces incentives to work hard as well as to concentrate on fields in which the scholars' expertise is well known (Liefner, 2003, p.13).

Daye (Daye 2005, p.3) asserts that PBF is a state engineered Darwinian Theory of *survival of the fittest*. Daye observes that by withholding monies from one university and awarding to another, the state is rendering the already strong institution stronger and weakening the weaker institution by not giving it additional funding as well. Such perceptions may constitute some of the major criticisms of PBF.

### **2.3.3 Approaches or Models of PBF**

#### **2.3.3a. Performance Set Asides**

In this approach, a portion of the recurrent budget is set aside to be allocated on the basis of certain performance measures. The percentage of the budget which is set aside varies from less than 5% in some cases and to nearly 100% of the recurrent funding. The number of performance indicators could be single or multiple (as much as twelve in some countries). These indicators or performance measures are typically decided upon through government-institution (or sponsor-agent) negotiations (Hauptman, 2005, p.11; Thorn et al., 2004). This approach promotes competition with the percentage of the overall funding to be set aside. It is advised that some caution has to be exercised in the use of too many indicators (ibid). South Africa sets aside 89% of its core budget for teaching, research and other activities based on multiple performance measures (Frølich, 2008, p.5; Hauptman 2005, p.10; Thorn et al., 2004, p.14).

With the South African case block grants for public HE are divided into categories reflecting research, teaching, and specific institutional issues. The Ministry of Education then publishes an annual statement which determines how performance criteria will be calculated and weighted and then providing clarity to institutions on how they will be evaluated and ensuring some flexibility in the use of the pre-selected indicators (Thorn et al., 2004, p.14). Hauptman (2005, p.11) observes that more than a dozen states in the U.S have used performance set asides for close to two decades today e.g. Tennessee and South Carolina, some German states, Japan, the Netherlands, Sweden and New Zealand.

### **2.3.3b Performance Contracts and Negotiations**

Some of the known procedures or instruments for performance-based funding are “contracts” and “negotiations” whereby governments enter into agreements or contracts with institutions to set both system and specific institutional performance objectives. These contracts include explicit evaluation criteria, which are periodically negotiated between the state or supervising agency and HEIs (Thorn et al., 2004, p.11). Performance contracts define strategic objectives to be achieved by the university. Such contracts are usually regulatory instruments than legally binding documents but “reciprocal commitments” which serve as a reference for decision making (Thorn et al., 2004, p.15). Evaluation criteria also result from the negotiation procedure. A portion of the overall funding may be based on whether institutions meet the terms of the contracts in which case, they are prospectively funded or reviewed and addressed retrospectively.

Performance contracts are the most regulatory form of PBF though relatively difficult to enforce or use for incentives (ibid). Examples of developed countries that use performance contracts include: France, Denmark, Finland and Colorado (U.S.). Although some countries do not explicitly state the connection between contracts and funding, most scholars observe that they equally reinforce funding decisions (see for instance Gornitzka, 2004 in the case of Denmark). For instance; contracts may at times be more punitive than being incentives as failure to achieve agreed upon goals may entail reduction of funding (Hauptman, 2005, p.9).

Finland prioritizes consultation in the contract negotiation phase through intensive budget dialogue involving lower management levels as well as regular reporting. Prior to contract negotiations, universities send in their proposals with the activity and finance plan for a three-year period. This is followed by a consultation where the ministry and universities identify targets and evaluation criteria (Höltta & Rekila, 2003). Performance contracts usually reflect the core funding, performance-funding and funding for specific initiatives. Core funding remains stable during the three year period while performance funding is linked to results on a number of agreed-upon indicators. To calculate the amount of performance funding, target figures are multiplied by field-specific cost factors, which are also agreed upon for the three-year period (ibid). French universities receive personnel grants from the central ministry. This is laid down in contracts which are not legal but regarded as a set of mutual and formal engagements between public authorities and the universities. Allocations are based on a Four-year Development Plan and research evaluation. Research units of universities equally receive funds from the major national research organizations

on the basis of contracts (mostly four-year) (Jongbloed & Vossensteyn, 2001, p.9; Chevallier, 1989, p.70-72; Thorn et al., 2004, p.15; Frølich, 2008, p.21).

### **2.3.3c. Payment for Results and Funding Formulae**

“Funding Formulae” is one of the mechanisms by which the state allocates funding for higher education. Funding formulae could be related to the traditional mode of state funding of HE based on actual costs incurred by HEIs, hence it is not usually performance-oriented. However, some funding formulae employ performance indicators as the basis of funding- hence they are performance based funding formulae. Some countries use performance measures to determine eligibility for all or part of the formula funding for their recurrent expenses. Another form of paying for results is when governments or funding authorities pay institutions for each student enrolled or graduates in certain fields of study or for specific required skills as well as for number of credits earned by students each year (number of students who pass exams) (Hauptman, 2005,p.13). A case in point is the Danish taximeter model which uses a simple output criterion to determine the level of funding for HEIs. For each student who passes an exam, an amount of money is paid to the institution (Thorn et al., 2004, p.12; Frølich, 2008, p. 25; Jongbloed & Vossensteyn, 2001,p.9) Formula-based funding is usually non-competitive and makes use of predetermined formula (an agreed set of criteria for allocating resources).

As at 2001, France used the number of students enrolled as the basis for calculating funding. All programmes were categorised in a grid that acted as a weighting device to determine the standard costs per student. The funds that universities received were tied to the level and type of program in which the student was enrolled (Jongbloed & Vossenteyn 2001, p.9; Thorn et al., 2004, p.11- 12). The Dutch funding system rewards student degree completion which is allocated based on a two-year average of the number of graduates. However, a fixed budget for the entire HE system is decided upon before determining the distribution among universities (CPH& CHEPS 2001 in Thorn et al., 2001, p.13; Jongbloed & Vossensteyn, 2001, p.10). The Argentine Model is meant to bridge gaps between the real budget needs in ideal quality and efficiency conditions and the actual budget allocated on the basis of historical criteria. The model matches the estimated minimum resources which are necessary to finance current level of scientific, academic and administrative criteria. As at 2001 the model only comprised about 4% of the public budget for higher education. It is applied to increases on public subsidies for tertiary education (World Bank, 2003b).

Funding for results appears to be the most market-oriented approach but there is the danger of creating incentives which will reduce quality. Other countries which have made use of funding formulae and/or payment for results include the U.K., the Netherlands, Colorado (U.S.A.) (Hauptman, 2005, p.14). As at 2001, most US states had adopted performance measures primarily for accountability needs or informing students about HE; they did not yet use them for funding decisions. South Carolina was the only state where the legislature expressed the intention to allocate 100% of state HE funding on the basis of institutional performance-based specific indicators (Jongbloed & Vossensteyn, 2001, p.13). Some states in Germany have experimented with funding formulae and allocate a small part of the non-personnel funds on the basis of output indicators like number of graduates, number of doctorates and volume of research grants from research foundations (Jongbloed & Vossensteyn, 2001, p.10; Orr et al., 2007, p.7).

The literature reveals that these approaches to PBF are not mutually exclusive as most countries employ a mixture of two or more approaches and some characteristics can be found in more than one approach. The above categorisation was chosen for the convenience of this study. However it is worth mentioning that other categorisations may exist based on procedures, number of indicators. Jongbloed & Vossensteyn (2001, p.2) talk of negotiations-based approach, formula-based approach and a combination of formulae and negotiations. The foregoing corroborates Frølich's categorisation (Frølich, 2008, p.21). Thorn et al., (2004, p.11) categorise indicators as follows: system wide fixed set of indicators (simple criteria and multiple criteria systems) and fixed term performance contracts. The German case divides PBF into indicator-based, project-based, mission-based and discretionary incremental funding (Orr et al., 2007, p.9-10).

## **2.4 Performance Indicators in Higher Education**

Recently, it has been observed that various countries are increasingly allocating funds to HEIs on the basis of performance indicators. Drawing from the literatures on PBF, the indicators usually fall within two categories: input/output or quantitative/qualitative indicators. Performance indicators can serve to heighten pressure on academics to invest greater efforts in activities which are measured and rewarded by indicators (Taylor & Taylor 2003, p.78). The above authors agree that motivation by extrinsic monetary rewards will inspire staff to work harder or more efficiently if they expect their behaviour to result in desired outcomes, in this case receipt of extrinsic rewards.

Thorn et al., (2004, p.8) posit that identifying indicators is the heart of designing a performance-based funding scheme. Thorn corroborates Burke's assertion that "what gets measured is often what gets valued and what gets funded is even more prized" (Burke, 2001a)

The development of performance indicators is ultimately based on the need for accountability (Layzell, 1998, p.2) especially because HEIs are dealing with a material which is invisible-knowledge (Clark, 1983, p.6). Performance indicators are meant to reduce the information asymmetry between the state or funding body and HEIs. HEIs are professional organisations and it is not easy for an outsider (State) to understand what is happening within the institution or measure performance. Performance indicators are therefore meant to serve as a measure of what HEIs achieve. Jongbloed and Vossensteyn (2001, p.3) assert that the market in which universities operate is very imperfect, hence there is the need for a number of different indicators to approximate the many dimensions of HE output in terms of quantity and quality. Atkinson-Grosjean & Grosjean, (2000) assert that even though there is no single, agreed-upon definition of performance indicators, the one developed by Cave, Hanney, and Kogan (1991,p.24) is still applicable whereby a performance indicator is defined as "an authoritative measure-usually in quantitative form of an attribute or activity of a higher education institution". The measure may be ordinal or cardinal, absolute or comparative. It thus includes both the mechanical applications of formulae (where the latter are imbued with value or interpretative judgments) and such informal and subjective procedures as peer evaluation or reputation rankings" (ibid).

#### **2.4.1 Types of Performance Indicators in Higher Education**

Input-based indicators refer to the resources which are used and/or activities carried out by HEIs. They are the human, financial and physical resources used to run programmes, activities and services. Examples include the number of students enrolled, funding and staffing (Jongbloed & Vossensteyn 2001, p.2; Thorn et al., 2000, p.9). Inputs could be either quantitative (countable or can be given numerical value) or qualitative (which are given any numerical value but assessed qualitatively).

These refer to indicators that relate to the institutions' performance in terms of teaching and research. Output-based indicators reflect quantity of products (Thorn et al., 2004, p.9; Jongbloed, 2001, p.2). Some examples include number of credits accumulated by students, number of research

publications or patents and licenses issued, number of graduates or degrees produced, number of students who pass exams. Some authors mention that they are outputs (outcomes) which lie a bit further away from the university's sphere of control and which are related to the quality and societal impact of HE products. Example; learning results, job placements, users' satisfaction or success of HEIs in generating additional incomes from contract activities (Thorn et al.,2004, p.9; Jongbloed & Vossensteyn, 2001, p.3).

Processes relate to the ways in which inputs are acquired and how results are delivered. They are internal to an HEI and include teaching methods, the use of technology and procurements. Process indicators can be useful proxies for performance when output or outcomes cannot be defined with clarity (Thorn et al., 2004, p.9). Jongbloed & Vossensteyn (2001, p.3) refer to them as throughputs.

#### **2.4.2 The Pros and Cons of some Performance Indicators in HE**

Most scholars express caution on the issue of measuring performance of HEIs. As earlier mentioned, higher education deals with a material which is neither visible nor quantifiable (knowledge). There is also the issue of disciplinary differences. Johnes (1996, p.19) asserts that HEIs are multi-product firms with diverse objectives, inputs and outputs upon which there is overall lack of agreement. This implies that performance indicators inherently have a major shortcoming-that of being unable to actually measure performance especially in terms of quality and even quantity. Some scholars argue that if the ultimate mission of higher education is to generate value in terms of increased human capital, then the ideal way of measuring performance should be an indication of the increase in knowledge and skills incorporated in students. It will be clear that such a measure is non-existent (Jongbloed & Vossensteyn, 2001, p.3). Research output indicators have a similar shortcoming-for instance number of research publications does not indicate the impact, originality or magnitude of research performance (ibid).

In addition, some indicators present the risk of encouraging HEIs to lower standards in order to meet performance demands. It may promote a "more is better" mentality (Taylor & Taylor 2003, p.74). Institutions could decide to artificially increase pass rates to get more funds for number of credits earned, number of graduates or number of students who pass exams to the detriment of quality. Academics may be tempted to turn out a large volume of mediocre publications to meet performance requirements (Thorn et al., 2004, p.12; Frølich, 2008, p.15; Layzell, 1998, p.4; Orr,

2007, p.18). There is also the danger of policy makers wanting to use too many indicators with the intention of providing a more complete picture of institutional performance. This could result in very minimal importance of individual indicators as well as increase the risk of conflicting goals and results. Against the foregoing, some authors suggest that the following should be considered when choosing performance indicators:

- ❖ The identification and selection of performance indicators should involve all of the institution's key stakeholders and those at the operational units (Layzell, 1998, p.4). For performance indicators to have an impact on individual academics they must first be adopted by HEIs and incorporated into internal policies of the departments (Taylor & Taylor, 2003,p.72).This is true for the UK where the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) has encouraged HEIs to take a rigorous approach in developing their own research strategies.
- ❖ Indicators should embody both qualitative and quantitative aspects of performance to avoid some of the shortcomings mentioned earlier to be associated with measuring performance in higher education (Jongbloed & Vossensteyn, 2001; Layzell, 1998, p.4).
- ❖ Indicators would be most effective when they mirror the government's strategy for change (Thorn et al., 2004, p.8). According to Thorn, a strategy implies the movement of the sector from its current stage to a desirable but uncertain future.
- ❖ More is not necessarily better-most policymakers may fall prey to the desire to use too many indicators with the intention of providing a more complete picture of performance. The result of too many indicators is twofold. First the more the indicators, the less important anyone of those indicators becomes and vice-versa. Minimising the number of indicators is prioritising and ensuring that performance indicators are viewed as important. Secondly, as indicators and goals are added, there is the risk of goals conflicts and results (Layzell, 1998, p.3).

## **2.5 Criticisms and unintended Outcomes of PBF in Higher Education**

Despite its increasing prominence as a means of steering higher education with results or attaining various objectives in higher education, performance-based funding has attracted several criticisms. Performance based funding of higher education is blamed for reinforcing in universities and higher education systems, a Darwinian theory of '*survival of the fittest*' (Daye, 2005, p.5) where



“seemingly” more performing institutions, individuals, units are being reinforced through financial incentives to perform higher to the detriment of the less performing ones. The foregoing may be related to the criticisms that some missions of the university are being unintentionally left to creep for themselves. A case in point is the unintended negative impacts of the attention being paid to research on teaching and also of the adverse impacts that prioritizing applied research through performance funding may have on fundamental or basic research (see Eurydice, 2008). Ylijöki’s study on the changing ideals and practices at the University of Tampere, Finland ascribes much of the growing ‘academic capitalism’ (as per Slaughter and Leslie, 1997; Daye, 2005) and some of its adverse effects to new mechanisms like performance based funding (Ylijöki, 2003). In the foregoing trend of thinking, if institutions, units and academics that are deemed to be more performing and productive are being reinforced with financial incentives, it implies that those that are deemed to be less performing are less funded and by implication, penalized. Daye expresses this point in the following questions:

“Is it not reasonable to assume that if monies are withheld from one university and awarded to another, governments are really engineering a state controlled Darwinian Theory of survival of the fittest? Will not penalised universities become weaker while rewarded universities become stronger? Will not awards and/accolades generate more awarded monies and accolades for former recipients” (ibid).

Some of the above issues to which the emerging and unintended negative theory of “survival of the fittest” may be attributed result from the differences between universities as well as disciplines (e.g. differences between applied disciplines and fundamental theoretical disciplines). This leads to difficulties in developing indicators for performance-based funding. According to Molas-Gallart et al. (2002), to develop common indicators for universities with disciplines is like ‘comparing pear and apple’ because each university is a product of its own social, economic and intellectual development and finds its own balance between teaching, research and a wide range of its activities. Daye (2005, p.1) posits that due to its divergent objectives and methods, PBF remains a controversial issue in academic circles. State capitals encourage external accountability and institutional improvement whereas academics fixate on its perplexing problems of conception and implementation. The author further agrees with Francis & Hampton (1999) and Burke and Modaresi (2000) that many within universities wish to retain a certain level of autonomy to fulfil programme goals.

## **CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY**

This chapter describes the procedures and instruments which were used in the collection and analysis of the empirical data in the study. It describes the population, sample, and the delimitation of the study as well as the ways the reliability and validity of the research findings were ascertained. The chapter equally presents the background of the respondents. This includes: the age groups, academic disciplines, academic ranks, duties (administrative and/or academic) and gender. Also, there is a summary of the themes (analytical framework) which were used for the data collection and analyses. A qualitative approach was employed in the collection and analysis of the data. This approach was deemed suitable for the topic as it was related to a concept which seemed to be unknown in the higher education system in Cameroon, though it might have occasionally existed or was being practiced by default.

### **3.1 Research Design**

The Staff Development Grant at the University of Buea was employed as the case study. The researcher acknowledges that choosing one scheme in a single university may not be significant in revealing all the differences that may exist between the universities and how they employ performance-based funding (PBF) approaches. For instance, performance-related funding at the system level is different in terms allocation criteria, performance indicators and rationale. There could equally be differences in PBF approaches between Francophone and Anglophone subsystems. This is related to one of the standard criticisms with case study research which is that their findings are seldom generalizable. As per Lukka & Kasanen (1995) case study findings may be generalized to some extent-if not contextually, then theoretically or analytically. Hence the inability to generalise may be undermined by the thoroughness of empirical data analysis and theoretical generalisations.

If theoretical generalisations may be made on the basis of structural similarity and logical reasoning, then the findings of this study may also be replicable for similar structural contexts, (the state universities in Cameroon), provided that those contexts (institutions) are supported by plausible arguments (see Hillebrand et al., 2001). An alternative here would have been to do a multiple case study or cross sectional research of at least two universities; say one Francophone

university, one Anglo-Saxon university in order to incorporate both subsystems of the Cameroon HE systems and limit the failure and to recognise the peculiarity of the approaches between the subsystem. Such an approach would require a bigger population and sample and by implication more data which would require more time and resources to analyse. It would have been more likely to discover variations between the subsystems (see Bryman, 2004, p.51-52).

However, due to limited resources (time and finances) the researcher chose the Staff Development Grant at the University of Buea. The choice was also the best case because it provides a suitable context for the research question to be answered. The limitation previously alluded to is related to the big question with most case study research may fail to answer. That is; how a single case can be possibly be representative so that it can yield findings that can be applied more generally to other cases? (Bryman, 2004, p.51). However, given that no other of such scheme exist at the institutional level in the Cameroon higher education system, the SDG may be seen as a unique case (Bryman, 2004:51) in the funding of HE in Cameroon.

### **3.2 Delimitation and Limitations of the Study**

The study is limited to state universities in Cameroon. This is based on the fact that the researcher is more familiar with state than private universities. In addition, the former has more accessible information than the latter hence the choice enabled relatively quicker access to information given the limited time frame for the study. The study is based on an institutional level funding scheme for higher education in Cameroon. To this end, an institutional level approach to funding by performance was chosen as the case. The study was targeted at the academic staff of the University of Buea, the only English university in Cameroon.

The Staff Development Grant was an institutional initiative of the University of Buea. Hence, the researcher found it a unique but representative case. Unique because it was initiated and implemented only by the university and representative because it could serve as the starting point for institutional level approaches to performance-based funding in the other Cameroonian state universities and others in similar developing contexts. Relatively more familiarity with the University of Buea was considered as it facilitated the collection of empirical data and appropriate documents for the study. Familiarity did not limit the objectivity of the study but was seen as valuable opportunity in enhancing the reliability and validity of findings.

It would be acknowledged that the distribution and collection of the questionnaire in the absence of the researcher may have affected the response rate and the type and quality of the responses which might have given. For instance, some respondents could have been sceptical about completing a questionnaire that was delivered by a third party, the Research Assistant (see 3.2). The time frame for the completion of the study was a major limitation to the study as it influenced most of the decisions taken by the researcher (e.g. method of data collection, when to start and end the data collection, size of the sample, etc).

### **3.3 Data Collection**

The core of the empirical part of this study was based on the questionnaire which was administered to staff (recipients of the Staff Development Grant) at the University of Buea, then interviews and review of related policy documents. The information was acquired first through some informal phone discussions and e-mail communications with administrators and staff of the University of Buea and the Cameroon ministry of Higher Education. Policy documents related to the funding of Cameroon higher education ([www.minesup.gov.cm](http://www.minesup.gov.cm)) as well as the SDG guidelines, decisions with list of grantees and specific projects which had been funded were major sources of information.

The empirical phase included data collection whereby semi-structured questionnaire were administered. The questionnaire consisted of six open questions and nine closed or directed questions which were formulated based on the themes from the review of literature on performance-based funding. Due to limited time and financial resources to enable the researcher to go to the field, the researcher employed and paid a research assistant (graduate of the University of Buea) to distribute the questionnaire at the university of Buea. Fifty (50) questionnaires in hard copies were distributed and thirty-two (32) were retrieved and sent to the researcher via post. This implies a 64% response rate. The distribution and retrieving of the questionnaire took about one month. The researcher did follow-up of some respondents when they had received the questionnaire through phone calls and e-mails to complete the questionnaire or find out if there was any difficulties in the exercise. Follow-up was meant to maximise the response rate and meet the deadline for the completion of the study.

### 3.4 Population and Sample of the Study

The population of this study consisted of the following groups: Grantees of the Staff Development Grant (SDG) since its inception in 2001. This group formed the core of the study population because they were considered to have a more complete picture of the SDG. The grantees had one or more of the following experiences with the SDG: conception, implementation, applying for the grant, evaluation and selection, project execution and reporting. 78% of the respondents had received the SDG one or more times. The sample equally included some Administrators and support staff of the University of Buea who were non grantees of the SDG but were considered to be knowledgeable on the scheme. For instance; it was advised in one of the preliminary phone discussions which preceded the questionnaire that there would be some support staff especially of the Central Administration who would be more conversant with the conception and procedures of the SDG than some of the grantees. Some of them had been exposed in one way or the other to the SDG in terms of its conception, procedures and membership in the selection committees. Also there were staff who had applied for the Staff Development Grant but had never been awarded and who were willing to participate in the study. This group was included because it was considered that they would have direct or indirect experiences on the SDG.

It is worth mentioning that the above two groups are not mutually exclusive e.g. a grantee could be both an administrator and academic staff especially as the higher education administration in Cameroon is dominantly composed of the “*Academic Oligarchy*” (Doh 2007:18) whereby the administrators are also academic staff. Given the nature of the population (university staff with different schedules and willingness to complete the questionnaire), it was practically impossible for the researcher to choose and stick to a clear cut sample. However, with the data that the researcher could get (decisions stating the names of grantees for some years-70 grantees), it was deemed more appropriate and convenient to distribute 50 questionnaires to the two groups of the population mentioned above. The sample was therefore a convenience sample (Bryman, 2004, p.100); the questionnaire were given to grantees and non-grantees who were available at the time of the distribution and were willing to complete the questionnaires. However, the sample for the phone interviews and e-mails was a result of both purposive and snowball sampling (ibid).

### **3.5 Background of the Respondents and Data Analysis**

The respondents were aged 35-60+years old with 72% being between 35-40years, 19% between 45-55years and 9% between 55-60+years.81% were male and 19% were female. In terms of academic titles the respondents were as follows: 69% were lecturers, 9% were professors, 10% were senior lecturers and 12% were assistant lecturers. There were 25% of the respondents who held administrative positions alongside their academic duties, 69% were solely academics and 6% were solely administrators.

By academic disciplines, 59% of the respondents came from the Arts, Humanities and Social Science disciplines and 41% from Physical and Natural sciences. The researcher also had informal e-mail and phone discussions/interview with:

- Two staff of the ministry and one university administrator was reached by phone to discuss on the funding of higher education in Cameroon and the funding policy that could be related to the SDG.
- Two University Administrators (during the pre and post data collection period) to discuss on the background and successes of the SDG and funding of Cameroonian higher education.
- Two respondents (both academic & administrative staff and one who was simply an academic staff) were contacted for phone discussions as follow-up to issues raised in the questionnaire in order to get clarifications and more detailed responses
- Two non-respondents (both academic staff) were contacted for phone discussions concerning some issues in the questionnaire.

In all, 8 people contributed to the information used in this study by phone and/or e-mail one or more times.

The empirical data was analysed using qualitative content analysis (Bryman, 2004, p.188-189). The approach was exploratory/descriptive of the SDG within the framework of performance-based funding. Content analysis was done by extracting words or themes from the empirical data and policy documents based on the literature review (ibid). The researcher presents and analyzes the data along the themes that were raised in the literature review.

The above will be followed by a discussion on the results and conclusions, recommendations from the data analysis as well as recommendations for future research.

### **3.6 Reliability and Validity of the Study**

Reliability and validity are usually associated with quantitative research but they are also used in qualitative research though with a different approach (Brock-Utne, 1996, p.605-621; Cohen et al., 2000).The term trustworthiness has been used by various scholars to depict validity and reliability in qualitative research (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Patton (2001:247) in Golafshani (2003, p.7) asserts that triangulation strengthens a study by combining methods: several kinds of methods or data. In qualitative research, the idea of discovering truth through measures of reliability and validity is replaced by the idea of trustworthiness which is “defensible” and thus establishing confidence in the findings (Johnson 1997, p.282; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The trustworthiness of the study was ensured by a triangulation of methods (pre and post data collection phone discussions and e-mails for clarification and information when needed, review of related system and institution level policy documents).This triangulation of methods served to complement the self-completion of the questionnaire in the absence of the researcher, hence minimising the weaknesses associated with that instrument as the core of the data collection. For instance, the phone discussions/interviews with some of the university’s administrators and staff provided further clarifications on the Staff Development Grant and were also useful in formulating the research questions and the design of the questionnaire.

## **CHAPTER 4: PERCEPTION OF PERFORMANCE-BASED FUNDING IN THE STAFF DEVELOPMENT GRANT**

This chapter presents the empirical data that was collected and used for the study. Basically, this empirical phase of the study consisted of the questionnaires which were distributed to the staff of the University of Buea. However, a small scale e-mail communication, phone discussions or interviews preceded and/or followed the administration and collection of the questionnaire. The objective was to obtain further clarifications on the scheme or some of the responses from the questionnaire. The analyses would equally be complemented by emerging issues from the document reviews and the institutional and national policy context which framed the Staff Development Grant. The analyses are made in accordance with the structure which was developed in Chapter 2 and with a special attention to the correspondence between SDG practices and international experiences with PBF reflected in higher education literature.

The questionnaire was meant to enable the researcher have a thorough grasp of the objectives and rationale of the Staff Development Grant. Secondly, to examine how the scheme conformed to some Performance-based Funding models in other countries where it has already been a policy practice. The examination or analyses on the conformity of the SDG was based on literature review on PBF in higher education with regards to arguments or rationale, perceptions and definitions, approaches and models, measurement indicators and their pros and cons as well as the challenges in their implementation. The data also includes the suggestions of the respondents on how the SDG can be improved or how such schemes could be conceived and efficiently implemented. The questionnaire also sought to inquire the extent to which the objectives of the Staff Development Grant were met especially in terms of effects on grantees' careers. The data would be presented according to the themes that follow below. Each section presents the results and then followed by analysis and conclusions.

### **4.1 Objectives, Rationale or Arguments on the Staff Development Grant**

While the first section of this study presents the objectives and rationale of the Staff Development Grant as normatively laid down in its related policy documents, it was necessary to obtain the policy makers' and staff opinions on the scheme. This was in view of reinforcing the researcher's



stance on the difference between the SDG as a policy initiative and the implementation as well as the reasons, background, context and perceptions/definitions. From another perspective, it was necessary to find out if all the actors (University Policymakers/administrators and staff) understood the objectives and rationale of the SDG. The responses on the above themes (question 1) can be summarized based on the data from the questionnaire. The rationales for the Staff Development Grant, as understood by the respondents were as follows:

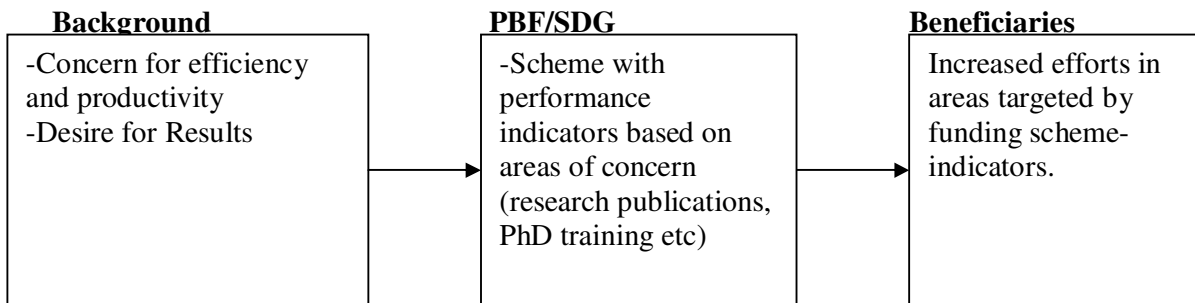
- To enable the staff to carry out research to improve their teaching competences and skills, strengthen their capacity and improve the quality of the teaching and university's services.
- The SDG was meant to enable the staff to publish more, gain promotion and thus become more competitive within the national and international higher education context. That is; improve the output of the staff and stimulate research as part of their teaching capabilities in the University
- To improve staff competence by encouraging research productivity
- To build capacities of the staff of the university because most of them were still in the junior ranks and to facilitate their upward mobility. The SDG was meant to build the staff capacity in research as part of the university's Staff Development programme.
- To build the human resource base of the university. In other words, build the manpower base of the university as the university was relatively young.

The most recurring view which reflects the views of both the policy makers and academic staff is that the SDG was as an incentive to “promote” “facilitate” “initiate”, “encourage” “assist” academic staff of the University towards “research”. Viewing the urgency of the above objectives, the policy makers deemed it necessary to initiate a scheme where some block amount of money would be set aside towards the accomplishment of the above objectives and related ones.

The phone conversations with one principal administrator and one staff of the university's academic office equally confirmed that the SDG was initiated as a result of concerns about the productivity and development or vertical mobility of academic staff. It was expressed that despite the normal research allowance included in the staff salaries, research productivity was very low. This was also related to the significantly low number of staff with terminal degrees. Such concerns and the

ensuing SDG buttress the conceptualisation that performance leads the state or funding agency to resort to funding by performance to ensure efficiency and accountability. According to Taylor and Taylor (2003, p.78) performance indicators can serve to heighten pressure on academics to invest greater efforts in activities measured and rewarded by indicators. The above authors agree that motivation by extrinsic monetary rewards will inspire staff to work harder or more efficiently if they expect their behaviour to result in desired outcomes, in this case receipt of extrinsic rewards. The SDG was meant to spur the academics and inspire them to work harder or put more effort on activities rewarded by the SDG (e.g. research, publication, promotion, cooperation).

The staff or grantees had to prove their ability on the above objectives by writing proposals, acquiring funding and then reporting back to the university administration. The initiation of the SDG, despite the existence of research allowance signalled the dwindling trust between the administration and potential beneficiaries (staff) on the judicious use of the research allowance funds. Research funding on the basis of a social contract or gentleman’s agreement was replaced by a more formalized approach to funding (see Gornitzka et al., 2004, p.3; Kivistö, 2007). The administration did not trust that the staff will deliver the promised results in the absence of contracts and accountability reports. The literature holds that PBF can enhance efficiency and accountability (Geuna and Martin, 2003b, p.295). The SDG was to formalize and facilitate the staff development through the different types of grants. It therefore introduced control or steering especially of research



**Figure 2: The conceptual background of the Staff Development Grant**

The background of the Staff Development Grant or reasons behind its conception and implementation reveal that improved efficiency, accountability, and quality of academic staff was behind its prime objectives and justifications (see Frølich,2008, p.5, 12; Jongbloed & Vossensteyn,

2001, p.3; Burke & Modaresi, 2000,p.2). Respondents agreed that the SDG was meant to render the staff more accountable especially on the research funds.

Taylor & Taylor (ibid) equally posit that a competitive atmosphere can be created by establishing tied grants (PBF schemes). According to the respondents; the SDG was an instrument to induce competition and competitiveness in the university. The importance of accountability in the SDG is evident in the signing of contracts before receiving the funds and the submission of reports on previous projects as a prerequisite or precondition for the award of subsequent grants. According to one respondent, the contract was a proof that the staff had received the money as well as commitment to deliver the promised results. That novelty was different from the pre-SDG situation where research allowance was simply included in staff's salaries with no provision for accountability on how the funds are used.

The reports on the completion of previous projects were also going to build trust between the administration and the grantees and serve as indicators for subsequent successes. Instead of simply giving them money with the understanding that it will be used for what it is intended, the academic staff had to follow the formal application, evaluation and selection procedures before receiving the SDG. According to one respondent ( who was both an academic and administrative staff), 'if a grantee failed to execute the project for which he/she was awarded a grant he/she was supposed to return the funds. The SDG seems to address the issue of information asymmetry as well (Kivistö, 2007; Maassen, 2000). This problem is minimized by the signing of contracts and exigency for reports. It appears that the administrators-principal used contracts to make sure that the agents-grantees will do what they promise and report back as required.

## **4.2 Performance based funding as Depicted by the Staff Development Grant**

In response to the question as to how the Staff Development Grant's funds were acquired, a majority of the respondents (81%) asserted that 'a portion of the University's budget was set aside and allocated on the basis of performance criteria'. As per the discussions with two administrators who were involved in the conception of the SDG, it was necessary that once the funds are annually set aside, calls for proposals would be made from the Central Administration for the academic staff to tender their projects towards the accomplishment of the aforementioned objectives of the SDG.

The approach to PBF as depicted by the SDG falls with the framework the approach termed “performance set asides” whereby a portion of the university’s budget was set aside to be allocated on the basis of performance criteria. The percentage of the university’s budget set aside for the SDG varied from year to year depending on the entire University’s budget or the availability of funds. The budget for the SDG was drawn from the university’s autonomous budget. Those to be awarded the SDGs were selected on the basis of proposals which were to be related to the activities or sub grants within the SDG (see SDG Guidelines). The indicators of performance included: completion of research projects, publications, promotions among others. The policy documents of the SDG as well as empirical data revealed that the SDG used multiple performance indicators (see Hauptman, 2005, p.11; Thorn et al., 2004, p.11).

The empirical data also suggest that some of the indicators were most important measures of performance-completed project(s), publications and promotion or vertical academic mobility. The SDG seemed to be closer to the South African model of PBF where block grants for public higher education are divided into categories reflecting research, teaching and other activities. But, the focus of the SDG was more on research and other activities related to staff development. Teaching was not directly addressed by the SDG as it could not be easily measured but the assumption and strategy was that enhancing the staff research capacity which would be indicated by publications would improve the quality of teaching.

The signing of contracts before receiving the project funds was evident in the SDG. Unlike the Finnish model, the SDG contracts did not include evaluation criteria (see Thorn et al.,2004,p. 11). According to two respondents, the contracts were legally binding and not just reciprocal commitments or references for decision-making as is the case with the Finnish and French performance contracts (Chevallier, 1989, p.70-72; Jongbloed & Vossensteyn, 2001, p.9; Thorn et al., 2004, p.15). The contracts could be used as proof of the grantee’s indebtedness to the university whereby, if a grantee failed to deliver the results and did not refund the money within a certain time frame that was determined by the administration. The respondents further stated that the university could follow legal procedures for refund of the money. However, the data also revealed that failure to complete a project and application for additional funding had to be accompanied by a report of the progress of the work and reasons for applying for additional funds.

On the question as to how the achievement of promised results influenced the eligibility for subsequent awards (see the Appendix), the respondents stated that success in a given project

facilitates subsequent award of the SDG and improve the eligibility prospects for future grants. If the SDG was given to a staff to conduct research, the staff was bound to present evidence that the grant was properly used by attaching receipts of all expenditures incurred. Respondents also stated that failure to deliver promised results or partial accomplishment deterred the grantee from receiving future grants. Notwithstanding, grantees with uncompleted SDG projects could still be granted subsequent grants if they showed proof of the need for additional resources to complete the project and accountability on the previous grant. Success or completion increased the possibility for receiving subsequent SDGs. Failure to deliver results implicitly meant forfeiting eligibility for award of the SDG. Such practice could be identified with the Finnish performance contracts where delivering the promised results is important as one of the preconditions to receive future funding and failure to deliver could mean forfeiting additional funding. Like with grantees of the SDG, higher education institutions which perform better stand better chances of getting future performance-based funding.

### **4.3 Perceptions or Definitions of the Staff Development Grant**

With regards to the respondents' perception/definition of the SDG, 34% of the respondents held that the Staff Development Grant was an instrument to induce the staff to become more 'competitive'. 31% held that it was meant to render the staff more 'accountable' in application for and use of research funds. Other perceptions that were expressed included amongst others that the SDG was 'a means of controlling research and teaching productivity'. In response to the question on the possibility of equal chances for staff from all disciplines to be awarded the SDG (see Appendix), 34% of the respondents stated that the SDG favoured or discriminated against some disciplines. The 34% held that discrimination or favour could be based on the feasibility and relative facility to do research and publish in some areas than others. 16% of the respondents argued that such discrimination or favouritism could be based on the volume of a publication. 28% were on the basis that results cannot be easily produced in some areas within the same time frame and 16% on the basis that societal impacts are not easily visible in all disciplinary areas.

In response to the sub question on whether eliminating the grounds for discrimination or favouritism on the above bases would lead to equal opportunity for award of the SDG (see Appendix), some respondents held that such a scheme is not objective in that it is subject to the bias. They argued that such bias may result from the fact that the final funding decisions are made

by the administration and does not involve the academics. According to some respondents, academics from specific disciplines should decide on what to fund since they are the experts. According to this school of thought, the academics who are involved in the evaluation and selection of proposals are not necessarily experts in all the disciplines where proposals come from.

One academic staff also involved in administration stated that if the grounds for discrimination or favouritism in some disciplines were addressed, then all staff would have equal opportunity to benefit from the SDG. Some responses however revealed that the reality is characterized by differences which will still cloud the decision making process. In this light a phone discussion with an academic staff pointed to the fact that the number of staff who applies from the different faculties is influenced by the disciplinary background of the principal administrators and those involved in the committee which studies and approves the proposals. In this respondent's words, *"If the Vice-Chancellor's disciplinary background is from faculty (A), then that faculty gets most proposals approved for funding. Most of its staff apply since they assume they are more likely to be granted funding."* This respondent further asserted that *"senior colleagues are more likely to use SDG as a way of rewarding their favourites and punishing those whom they consider the bad guys"*

However some respondents held that in the absence of discrimination or favouritism in the implementation of the SDG, everyone will be seen as contributing to the growth of the institution. From the foregoing, it can be concluded the SDG could have been marred by failure to address the peculiarities of disciplines and disciplinary differences as well as subjectivity which could be based on backgrounds or personal relationships thus influencing the decision-making process. The researcher would highly agree with the recommendation that the implementation of the SDG should be the responsibility of faculties and departments with specific selection criteria set. Another way of mitigating such subjectivity could be to include representatives of all the disciplines from which the proposals are received in the evaluation and selection committees of the SDG at the Central Administration. This approach would give room for negotiation in the decision-making process and reduce subjectivity in the final funding decisions.

Most respondents perceived the SDG as an instrument for competition within the University of Buea. According to Orr et al. (2007, p.1) performance-based funding is emulating the market by inducing competition. Some respondents also held that that the SDG was meant to render staff more accountable for research funds in accordance with Frølich (2008, p.28); Dumont (1980, p.1);

Demeritt (2000). The perception of the SDG as a means of controlling research corroborates those of Gornitzka et al. (1999) that PBF is a disguised form of steering higher education.

Daye's perception of PBF as a state-engineered *Darwinian Theory of survival of the fittest* finds its expression in the responses concerning equal opportunity for all staff from all academic disciplines to benefit from the SDG (Daye, 2005, p.3). The responses revealed that some disciplines were favoured or discriminated against by the indicators of performance employed by the SDG. Hence some received more or less grants depending on whether they were fit in terms of possessing the appropriate indicators which were used. The researcher observed from the available list of grantees (including names, purpose and faculty of the grantees) that most grantees were from the physical and natural sciences. A phone discussion with one of the respondents revealed that these disciplines had an edge over other disciplines because it was relatively easier to carry out research and publish within a shorter timeframe and produce results whose impacts were easily visible. Another indication that the SDG seemed to engineer a situation of 'survival of the fittest' within the university is the fact that the completion of a research project/initiative greatly influenced or increased the eligibility for future award of the SDG. In Daye's thinking (ibid), penalized disciplines become weaker while rewarded disciplines become stronger as awards generate more awards for grantees.

#### **4.4 Types of Performance Indicators Used in the SDG**

On Question 5 (see Appendix) which was related to the instruments for measuring the performances of the grantees, 72% of the respondents held that the completion of the projects and publications or the dissemination of the findings was an indication of performance. 31% of the respondents asserted that promotion as a result of the publications or higher academic degrees were indicative of the performance. Each of the 12% of the respondents held that the impact of the findings and number of research publications were used as proxies for performance. Other indicators included outreach and co-operation activities and an improved computer literacy. On the sub question on the level of the importance of the performance measures (ibid), 44% of the respondents were of the opinion that the completion of the projects and publishing was the most important indicator of performance. 35% of the respondents held that promotions were most important and 16% were of the view that the impact of the research findings was the most important performance indicator. Also, 16% held that the number of publications was the most important indicator of a grantee's performance.

According to the respondents, the SDG employed output indicators which were both qualitative (promotion, impact of research publications or findings, outreach and cooperation activities) and quantitative (completed research projects, number of publications). However, the completion of the research project(s), promotion and publications were said to be the most important indicators of performance used by the SDG. Seemingly, the SDG did not use any input indicators as measures of performance. The SDG may have paid sufficient attention to the impact of research findings as only 12% of the respondents saw it as a proxy for performance. This can be related to a standard criticism of PBF schemes which usually focus on quantity than quality where the SDG focused more on completing of projects and publications but did not assess the magnitude and significance of the work that had been done. However, the SDG employed some degree of peer review as project proposals usually went through the department to the faculty and then the central administration for review. The difference is that the final decision for approval was the central administration's prerogative. The SDG addressed the impacts of the projects in that there was a special sub grant for publication of high quality work in high impact international journals. But the responses from some of the respondents revealed that the focus on impact was minimal as the number of UB publication prizes which were granted each year was too small and most of the nominees were usually not selected.

#### **4.5 The Pros and cons of the Performance Indicators in the SDG**

The data (questionnaire responses, phone interview with an administrator and academic staff) revealed that that despite the focus on numbers, the quality of output was ensured by some sort of a review process which is guaranteed by the various governance levels of the faculty and the University. It was said that the reports were first submitted to the Head of Department to be forwarded to the Dean (faculty level) who then submitted to the Central Administration with his /her own comments. It is assumed that the passage of the reports through the above instances provided some form of review or quality control to the projects that were undertaken with the SDG. However some respondents found a drawback with the above because the Central Administration which had the final say seemed to focus more on finances- the conformity of the reports to the administrative or financial procedures than the content of the work carried. That is; the reports often went up to the Central Administration in the form of regularisation of expenditures with receipts attached than technical or expert assessment. The goal was seemingly to ensure returns on all the



money disbursed and not the impact of the project. The researcher views this approach to be related to the information asymmetry between higher education as a bottom-heavy, expert or professional institution and its administrator and sponsors. There is the tendency that administrators who can obviously not be experts in all the fields choose what to measure and can be measured in circumstance that require accountability as was the case with the administrators and grantees of the SDG..

The SDG seems to have paid no attention to disciplinary differences in the choice of the indicators. For instance; the completion of projects and publications were seen by respondents as favouring or disfavouring some staff/disciplines against others. Johnes (1996, p.19); Jongbloed & Vossensteyn (2001, p.3) hold that the ideal way of measuring performance should embody the impact, originality and magnitude of performance: an area where performance-funding with the use of indicators usually fall short of, as could be depicted by the SDG. For instance, to assert that performance has been achieved by a completed research project or publication does not determine how the results are useful. Publishing an article/book and eventually gaining promotion relates to increased volume of publications and number of promotions through an improved academic grade but the question of ‘who reads or makes use of the publication?’ is ignored.

The respondents equally saw contracts as a means of ensuring that the work would be done effectively and efficiently-hence that was seen to an extent, as part of the quality assurance strategy. Publishing in peer reviewed journals was also seen as an indicator of quality by the SDG’s administrators. Promotions depending on number of publications could encourage a ‘more is better’ mentality among academic staff (see Taylor & Taylor, 2003, p.74). They could be tempted to turn out a large number of mediocre publications to meet promotion requirements (see Thorn et al., 2004, p.12; Frølich, 2008, p.15; Layzell, 1998, p.4; Orr et al., 2007, p.18). However, this drawback was minimized by the SDG in the sense that it stressed on the recognition of publications in peer reviewed journals as indication of the quality of the work.

#### **4.6 Opinions on the Challenges of the Staff Development Grant**

On the challenges faced in the implementation of the SDG, 31% of the respondents held that the SDG faced challenges in ensuring equal opportunity for staff from all disciplines. Some respondents added that staff from some disciplines failed to conceive attractive projects and could not benefit

from the SDG. 38% agreed that there were challenges in ensuring the quality of the output and 31% on measuring the performance of grantees.

The quality of the work/projects which carried out with the SDG was assured by ensuring that the previous works are completed and reported before receipt of subsequent grants. The signing of contracts was also seen by respondents as a means of ensuring quality. Quality was equally ensured by input from colleagues/peers in the discipline. For instance the head of department who was obviously to be an expert in the project field and the Dean “academic” managers (as reviewers) who usually gave their comments, suggestions and criticisms on the proposal. Publication in peer reviewed journals was specially addressed by the sub grant titled ‘UB publication prize’ (see Summary on the SDG in chapter 2).

Most respondents cited the phenomenon of insufficient funds as a major challenge for the SDG. In a phone interview with a faculty level administrator, it was stated that most of the proposals were not entirely funded. This compromised the completion of those projects. It was also observed that the grants could usually cover only publication costs and could not finance PhD studies especially when they had to be undertaken abroad. In this regard, the respondents suggested that the budget of the SDG be increased in that way, the impact of the SDG could increase or become more easily assessable.

The SDG is also observed to have faced challenges in ensuring equal opportunity for all staff to benefit from the scheme. An academic staff and administrator stated in an interview that funding decisions also depended on the disciplinary backgrounds of the administrators who were involved in the evaluation of the proposals. In the words of this respondent, *“it depends on which faculty the VC comes from. If the VC comes from the Faculty of (A) then the faculty of (A) receives the highest number of staff development grants.”* This implies that some faculties or departments had greater opportunity than others on the basis of their relation to the central administration. The above respondent also added that the situation made some staff to have a negative perception of the whole procedure of the SDG and therefore preferred not to even apply.

Also related to the foregoing challenge is the fact that most of the respondents did not feel that the academic staff were sufficiently involved in the conception and implementation of the SDG despite the fact that they were represented in committees set up in the faculties and central administration. Some respondents stated that they were represented in the conception phase but had very little say

in the implementation. Another challenge to the SDG (according to the respondents) was that its objectives were not sufficiently specific. For instance it targeted publications but did not state which disciplines or academic categories they had to come from and for what purpose except “for promotion” which were for individual career benefits. Also some of the objectives of the SDG seemed to be very fluid and thus unclear to some of the academic staff. The fluidity could be seen in some of the terms which described the objectives of the SDG such as “research. productivity”, “capacity-building” and “building a dynamic intellectual environment”. The SDG therefore failed to produce research findings which were related to specific goals but catered for individual promotion requirements without considering the impact and relevance of the publications except as above.

## **CHAPTER 5: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STAFF DEVELOPMENT GRANT**

This chapter presents and analyses the data on specific aspects of the SDG, specific grants, opinions on the importance and indispensability of the SDG in the initiation of projects and the respondents' proposals for its improvements. In the last two sections of the chapter, the research makes an evaluation of the successes and weaknesses of the SDG. That evaluation combines or takes into account some documentary evidences, the successes or weaknesses with regards to the performance-based funding literatures and the views of the respondents.

### **5.1 Grant Recipients**

Question four (4) of the questionnaire was related to the different categories of the SDG (see Appendix), the number of times the respondents had applied for and received the grants as well as the level of success with the project for which the grant was intended. Question 4 (ibid) was also meant to find out the significance and indispensability of the SDG to the project initiation of the respondents'. (Table 1-1.2) present the responses.

**Table 1: Receipt of Specific Grants by Respondents**

<b>Grant Type</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>	<b>Number of Times Received</b>
<b>Leadership</b>	2(6.67%)	8(11%)
<b>Academic Seminar</b>	1(3.33%)	3(4%)
<b>Workshop</b>	1(3.33%)	5(7%)
<b>Publication</b>	8(26.67%)	22(30%)
<b>PhD Training</b>	10(33.33%)	15(21%)
<b>Travel</b>	2(6.67%)	7(10%)
<b>Computer Training</b>	6(20%)	12(17%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>30(100%)</b>	<b>72(100%)</b>

As mentioned in chapter 3, fifty (50) questionnaires were distributed and 32 were retrieved. Table 1 presents the number of respondents (30) who had been awarded the SDG one or more times. Two of

the respondents had never been awarded the SDG. It is worth mentioning that some respondents seem to have received specific grants several times. For instance two respondents had received Leadership grants eight times (see Table 1). This could be explained by the limited number of academic staff with terminal degrees or professorial ranks at the time the SDG was initiated. As mentioned in chapter 2, leadership grants were meant for senior staff to lead and mentor junior staff in research groups as the latter train for PhD qualifications. The same explanation could be applied to academic seminars which were to be organised by such research groups or by the departments. Workshops were to be tailored towards enhancing teaching methods and were to be organised by the University's faculty of education. This explains why 1(one) respondent had received 5(five) workshop grants. Also, it required a number of publications to gain promotion hence the reason why 8(eight) of the respondents had received 22 publication grants. As for computer training grants it was possible to receive the grant more than once as its implementation involved workshops and were the handled by a single department: the department of computer science.

Table 2 presents the number of projects which would have been initiated even if a scheme like the Staff Development Grant did not exist (the SDG was dispensable for such projects). It equally presents the number of projects which would never have been initiated in the absence of the SDG (the SDG was indispensable for such projects).

**Table 2: The Indispensability of the Staff Development Grant for the Initiation of Projects**

<b>Grant Type</b>	<b>Number Received</b> (percentage of total number received grants)	<b>SDG Dispensable</b> (percentage of the number the specific grant received)	<b>SDG Indispensable</b> (percentage of the number of the specific grant received)
<b>Computer Training</b>	12	9(75%)	3(25%)
<b>PhD Training</b>	15	6(40%)	9(60%)
<b>Publication</b>	22	8(36%)	14(64%)
<b>Travel</b>	7	2(29%)	5(71%)
<b>Leadership</b>	8	2(25%)	6(75%)
<b>Workshop</b>	5	1(20%)	4(80%)
<b>Academic Seminar</b>	3	0(0%)	3(100%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>28(39%)</b>	<b>44(61%)</b>

**Table 3: Number of Completed and Uncompleted SDG-Related Projects**

<b>Grant Type</b>	<b>Number Received</b> (percentage of total number received grants)	<b>Completed Projects</b> (percentage of the number the specific grant received)	<b>Uncompleted Projects</b> (percentage of the number the specific grant received)
<b>Academic Seminar</b>	3	3(100%)	0(0%)
<b>Workshop</b>	5	5(100%)	0(0%)
<b>Computer Training</b>	12	11(92%)	1(8%)
<b>Publication</b>	22	20(91%)	2(9%)
<b>Travel</b>	7	6(86%)	1(14%)
<b>PhD Training</b>	15	10(67%)	5(33%)
<b>Leadership</b>	8	5(62.5%)	3(37.5%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>60(83%)</b>	<b>12(17%)</b>

Table 3 presents the number of projects for which the SDG was received and completed as well as projects which were not completed. As can be seen from table 1.1, 30% of the grants were for publication and 21% for PhD training. This can be explained by the fact that a good number of the academic staff were recruited with a masters' degree and then obtained the terminal degrees and promotion while on the job. This should be an explanation for the high percentage of grants awarded towards the above two schemes.

It can equally be observed from table 1.2 that the highest percentages of uncompleted projects were for leadership grants (37.5%). Leadership grants were mainly meant for senior academic staff to lead junior staff in undertaking group research projects. By implication, a project could only be deemed completed when all the staff in the group must have completed their individual work, say PhD training. According to the data, 67% of PhD training projects were went uncompleted and thus implying that most leadership grants which were related to the projects were uncompleted. Some respondents also stated that the SDG could enable publications but was insufficient to sponsor PhD studies. This could be another explanation for the high non-completion rates. Another reason would be based on the fact that the percentage of the academic staff at the Professorial ranks (Associate Professor and Professor) was too low (1%) to initiate group projects under the leadership grant as the criteria stipulated that the groups should be headed by the senior academics. The low percentage was tantamount to affect applications for the leadership grant.

From table 1.1, it can also be observed that 75% of those who had received computer training grants would have undertaken the training even if there was no grant for computer training. Computer literacy was seen by individuals as beneficial, given the growing importance of the information and communication technologies both for career and non career activities. On the other hand, all those who had received grants for academic seminars as well as 80% of those who had received grants for workshops stated that they would not have organised seminars in the absence of the SDG. None of the projects for these two categories were uncompleted (see Table 1.2). It would be more strategic for the university to invest more for academic seminars, workshops and other grants but reduce allocations for computer training grants because individuals would undergo training even in the absence of funding from the university. Such a strategy would mitigate the problem of insufficient funds and increase success rate. Besides enhancing the success rate, a more focus on academic seminars, workshops (on university teaching methods as per the SDG guidelines) will complement the SDG as it will simultaneously be targeting teaching alongside research performance. This would render the SDG free from the criticisms which were associated with most of the PBF schemes. That is; the fact that it focused more on research with respect to individual career mobility of the staff and little or no attention being paid to teaching.

However, it is also evident from Table 1.1 that the SDG was necessary and successful because only 39% of the projects undertaken would have been initiated without the SDG and 83% of the grantees had completed their work. A major reason for the SDG was to improve research productivity and hence promotion. 91% of those who received grants for this objective had completed their work. That was an indication that requirements for promotion were being met and the SDG could maintain its focus on research productivity.

## 5.2 Opinion on the degree of Success of the Staff Development Grant

This subsection presents the opinions of the respondents on the success rate on the SDG according to the different age groups, categories and academic disciplines.

**Table 4: Opinion by Age Groups**

Age Group (years)	Objective <sup>9</sup>	Objective 1(%)	Objective2 (%)	Objective 3(%)
	Level of Success			
<b>35-40</b>	VS	0	4.3	0
	S	52	78	35
	N	13	0	43.5
	VUS	9	4.3	0
	US	17	9	17.4
	NA	9	4.3	4.3
<b>Total</b>		<b>100 (N=23)</b>	<b>100 (N=23)</b>	<b>100 (N=23)</b>
<b>45-55</b>	VS	17	17	0
	S	33	33	33
	N	17	17	33
	VUS	17	0	17
	US	17	17	17
	NA	0	17	0
<b>Total</b>		<b>100 (N=6)</b>	<b>100 (N=6)</b>	<b>100 (N=6)</b>
<b>55-60</b>	VS	33	100	0
	S	66	0	0
	N	0	0	66
	VUS	0	0	33
	US	0	0	0
	NA	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>		<b>100 (N=3)</b>	<b>100 (N=3)</b>	<b>100 (N=3)</b>

KEY: VS-Very Successful, S-Successful, N- Neither Successful nor Unsuccessful, VUS-Very Unsuccessful, US-Unsuccessful, NA-No Answer

<sup>9</sup> Objective 1-Capability strengthening of the university to be able to offer training in disciplines relevant to national development and the labour market.

Objective 2-Vertical Academic Mobility(Promotion):Enhance capability for academic staff to gain vertical mobility or promotion

Objective 3- Creation of a Dynamic Intellectual Environment for Creativity and Excellence (see the Staff Development Grant in Chapter 2).



According to a majority of the respondents in the 35-40 years age group (which was 52% and 78% respectively), “capability strengthening” and “promotion” had been the most successfully-attained objectives of the SDG (See Table 2). A good percentage (44.5%) was neutral about the objective on the “creation of a dynamic intellectual environment for creativity and excellence”. Most grantees of this age group were those whose capability strengthening and vertical academic mobility were targeted. Most academic staff in this age group were usually at an early or entry stage of their academic career and were more likely to have been in the age group which applied more for the SDG for projects that were to enable them build capacities for upward mobility and improve their competence. From the data, it was this age group that had received the greatest portion of the grants that were related to those two objectives (e.g. through publication grants, travel grants, and research methodology training grants) and which explains their high assessment level on the successes of the SDG. Their inability to rate the success on the “creation of a dynamic intellectual environment for creativity and excellence” could be attributed to the fluidity of that objective as well.

Most of the respondents in the 45-55 years age group (33%) held that the SDG was equally successful in meeting its objectives. However they also expressed a high level of neutrality to the objective on the ‘creation of a dynamic intellectual environment for creativity and excellence’. From the researcher’s point of view, objective 3 seemed quite broad and fluid which may have led to the grantees’ uncertainty about the successes of the SDG on that objective. The 45-55 years age group held that the SDG had been very successful in enhancing “vertical academic mobility/promotion and was successful in strengthening the capabilities” of its beneficiaries. However they expressed a high level of neutrality on how successful the SDG can be in the creation of a dynamic intellectual environment for creativity and excellence. Objective 2 (Vertical Academic Mobility/Promotion) seems to have been the most successfully met objective. This objective 2 was relatively the most clear and easily measurable objective of the SDG. Hence the grantees could easily rate its level of attainment.

Table 4 equally reveals that the relatively young respondents (of the 35-40 years age group) saw the SDG as successful in meeting its objectives. This may be a result of the younger grantees seeing in the SDG, an opportunity to study for higher degrees, publish and/or gain promotions. Of all the age groups, the 45-55 years age group and the 55-60 years age group seemed more confident in rating the success of the SDG. Most of them rated it as having been very successful. This is especially true of promotions whereby 100% of those in the 55-60 age group rated the SDG as having been very successful. It could be concluded that the younger staff were at a relatively early stage of their

academic career and had more expectations and hence were more critical or keen on the failures of the SDG than older respondents who were at higher levels of their careers. The assertiveness of the older respondents in rating the success of the SDG could equally be attributed to the fact that most staff in this age group were directly or indirectly involved in the conception and implementation of the SDG and stood a better chance to rate its success. However none of the respondents rated the SDG as very successful in “creating a dynamic intellectual environment for creativity and excellence”. This again calls for policy makers to set clear strategies for this objective and improve their focus on its achievement.

**Table 5: Opinion on Level of Success According to Category**

Category	Objective <sup>10</sup>	Objective 1 (%)	Objective 2(%)	Objective 3 (%)
	Level of Success			
<b>Academic Staff</b>	VS	4.5	18.2	0
	S	59.1	68.2	36.4
	N	13.7	0	45.5
	VUS	9.1	4.5	9.1
	US	9.1	4.5	4.5
	NA	4.5	4.5	4.5
<b>Total</b>		<b>22(100)</b>	<b>22(100)</b>	<b>22(100)</b>
<b>Administrative Staff</b>	VS	50	0	0
	S	0	50	50
	N	50	50	0
	VUS	0	0	0
	US	0	0	50
	NA	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>		<b>2(100)</b>	<b>2(100)</b>	<b>2(100)</b>
<b>Both Academic and Administrative Staff</b>	VS	0	12.5	0
	S	37.5	50	12.5
	N	0	0	50
	VUS	12.5	0	0
	US	37.5	25	37.5
	NA	12.5	12.5	0
<b>Total</b>		<b>8(100)</b>	<b>8(100)</b>	<b>8(100)</b>

KEY: VS-Very Successful, S-Successful, N- Neither Successful nor Unsuccessful, VUS-Very Unsuccessful, US-Unsuccessful, NA-No Answer

<sup>10</sup> Objective 1-Capability strengthening to offer training that is relevant to national development and the labour market. Objective 2-Vertical Mobility: Enhance capability for academic staff to gain vertical mobility or promotion. Objective 3-Creation of a Dynamic Intellectual Environment for Creativity and Excellence (see Chapter 2)

Based on table 5 in the preceding page, most of the academic staff rated the SDG as successful in all its objectives (59.1%, 68.2% and 36.4% respectively). This could be explained by the fact this staff at the lowest ranks of the university were the major targeted academics staff in the SDG. It is more likely that as academic staff, they had benefited from the SDG or had colleagues who had used the SDG to improve their competence and career. They were well placed to assess the success of the SDG. With regards to the “strengthening of capacity” most of the staff saw the SDG as successful probably because all categories of the staff had benefited from one or more of the grants related to this objective (e.g. computer literacy, workshops, academic discussions and seminars amongst others). The grants for this objective were relatively less biased as any staff could benefit from them.

68.2% of the academic staff rated the SDG as successful in “enhancing vertical mobility” through publications and travel grants. This could be attributed to their relatively greater prospect for benefiting from publication and travel grants. They were those academic staff who did not have to carry on administrative duties alongside their teaching and research and could easily publish as opposed to respondents who were administrators or both administrators and academics. 50% of the administrative staff rated the SDG as successful in enhancing promotion; the remaining 50% who were neutral could be a result of the same explanation.

As concerns “creating a dynamic intellectual environment for creativity and excellence”, 50% of the administrative staff viewed the SDG as successful but most of the other categories of staff (50% and 45.5%) could not rate the success of the SDG in meeting this objective. This difference could be a result of different perceptions of the success rate between those who were involved in academics and those who were solely administrators. The administrators may be rating success in terms of the number of PhD training grants that were awarded and number of applications for the UB publication prize (many applications meant many publications in renowned international journals). Those involved in academics on the other hand could be measuring success not just on the number of PhD training grants and applications for the publication prize but on how much the PhD training grants actually sponsored PhD studies and how many publication prizes were awarded. As some respondents stated, PhD training grants could not sponsor the studies entirely and UB publication prize awards were limited in number.

**Table 6: Opinion on the Level of Success According to Academic Disciplines**

Group of Disciplines	Objective <sup>11</sup>	Objective 1(%)	Objective 2(%)	Objective 3(%)
	Level of Success			
Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences	VS	0	21	0
	S	48	59	42.2
	N	16	0	21
	VUS	10	5	10.5
	US	21	10	21
	NA	5	5	5.3
<b>Total</b>		<b>100 (N=19)</b>	<b>100 (N=19)</b>	<b>100 (N=19)</b>
Physical & Natural Sciences	VS	15	8	0
	S	53	69	15
	N	8	8	77
	VUS	8	0	0
	US	8	7	8
	NA	8	8	0
<b>Total</b>		<b>100 (N=13)</b>	<b>100 (N=13)</b>	<b>100 (N=13)</b>

**KEY:** VS-Very Successful, S-Successful, N- Neither Successful nor Unsuccessful, VUS-Very Unsuccessful, US-Unsuccessful, NA-No Answer

Most respondents from the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (48%) declared the SDG as having been successful in “strengthening capacity” as opposed to 52% from the physical and natural sciences. The difference between the opinions on the success rate (4%) was not very much. This could be due to the fact that the strategy for strengthening capacity were relatively less biased (Computer literacy programme, Workshop on teach methods, academic seminar) between different disciplinary groups. Hence both disciplinary groups had equal opportunities to benefit and could rate the SDG as successful. Up to 15% of the respondents from the physical and natural sciences

<sup>11</sup> Objective 1-Capability Strengthening of the University to be able to offer training in various fields relevant to national development and the labour market

Objective 2-Vertical Mobility (Promotion): Enhance capability for academic staff to gain vertical mobility or promotion  
Objective 3- Creation of Dynamic Intellectual Environment for Creativity and Excellence.(see the Staff Development Grant in Chapter 2).

rated the SDG as very successful in strengthening capability. This could be as a result of their having benefited more from innovation and leadership grants or for group research which were relatively less easy for respondents from the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences with a less opportunity to benefit from such grants. The relative ease to conduct group research and produce visible results in the physical and natural sciences lent them the higher chance of benefiting from the leadership & innovation grants.

As concerns “vertical mobility” through publications and travel grants, 69% of respondents from the physical and natural sciences saw the SDG as having been successful while 59% from other disciplines saw the SDG as having been successful in “facilitating promotions’. The disparity between the opinions on the success of the SDG can be attributed to the previously mentioned difference in opportunity to benefit from the SDG. According to the SDG guidelines, this objective had to be attained through publication and travel grants. The former was implicitly biased in favour of the physical and natural sciences where it is relatively easier (time, volume of publication, immediate visibility of research findings) to conduct research and/or publish.

42.2% of the respondents from the arts, humanities, and social sciences saw the SDG as having been successful in “creating a dynamic intellectual environment for creativity and excellence” through PhD training grants and the UB publication prize (SDG guidelines, p.4). This could be due to the fact that there were more beneficiaries of PhD training related grants. It is less probable that the higher rating on the above objective is due to the receipt of the UB publication prize because some respondents stated that the number of publication prizes to be awarded year were limited, so many staff never benefited from it. This could be an explanation for the 77% of respondents from the physical and natural sciences not being able to rate the success level of objective 3.

Some respondents stated that the SDG could only enable publications but could not fund PhD studies entirely. So if UB publication prizes were few and PhD training grants were insufficient then they were more likely unsuccessful strategies of creating a dynamic intellectual environment for creativity and excellence. However, the limited number of publication prizes could spur the staff to work harder and be more competitive by publishing in renowned journals. It could also be argued that the publication prizes and PhD training could not sufficiently achieve a dynamic environment for creativity and excellence. The policy makers could include grants for research projects which were directly related to issues like: national or regional needs, improvement of the university,

cooperation within and with other universities through outreach activities. At the same time the number of publication prizes and funding for PhD training could be increased.

### **5.3 Relationship with the National Policy and Involvement of Academic Staff**

Thorn et al., (2004, p.8) posits that performance indicators are most effective when they mirror the government's strategy for change. According to Thorn et al.,(ibid), a strategy implies the movement of the sector from its current stage to a desirable but uncertain future. Niven (2002), adds that such indicators should ideally reflect the aspects of the higher education sector that if improved are presumed to result in the achievement of general higher education goals

In addition to the policy documents which had been reviewed and which determined the policy framework or context under which the Staff Development Grant operated (see chapter 2), the researcher sought to find out in the empirical phase of the study, the respondents' opinions on the relationship between the SDG and the general higher education policy in Cameroon. According to the respondents, the SDG was related to the Cameroon Higher education policy on research and academic staff productivity in that it addressed promotion and research productivity. Respondents also asserted that the SDG was related to the basic missions of higher education (teaching, research and outreach). According to the respondents, the SDG was directly related to the national policy through the policy assumption that research activity improves the competences and capacity of the staff; by implication, it improves teaching competences and the quality of education. In addition, such policy assumptions are built on the belief that results of research help to improve the society.

Some scholars recommend that all the key stakeholders of the institution and the operational units should be involved in the conception and implementation of PBF schemes (Thorn et al., 2004, p.19; Layzell, 1998, p.4). In this respect, the researcher sought to find out, the respondents' opinions on the involvement of the academic staff in the conception and implementation of the SDG. Some respondents asserted that although the academic staff gave their proposals they were not involved in the selection process. However the policy documents and some other responses revealed that the academic staff were represented in committees which were set up at the faculty and the central administration and thus they contributed by giving their proposals, irrespective of whether the final decisions were taken by the central administration or not. One of the respondents revealed that some of the academic staff did not feel themselves to be part of the SDG because their disciplines were

not represented in the conception committees. The foregoing implies that the operational units had little contribution in the conception and implementation of the SDG. For performance indicators to have an impact on individual academics, they must first be adopted by HEIs and incorporated into internal policies of departments (Taylor & Taylor, 2003, p.72). It may be recommended that in future the grant should be allocated to faculties and then departments as block sums. The department should be allowed to decide what to fund with how much. The role of the central administration should be to ensure the general criteria for award of the SDG be followed by departments which should be able to be accountable to the administration; in which case the administration would be playing more of a supervisory than a controlling role. Some respondents held that funding decisions were biased on the bases of personal relations, disciplinary background of principal administrators and disciplinary differences. The proposed approach could reduce such bias and even enhance competition between faculties and departments.

Despite the dominating views that the academic staff or basic units were not involved in the conception and administration of the SDG, the university's governance structure (as per the review of the documents) in Cameroon or UB have traditionally assured that the interest of the academics are represented in most or all instances of decision-making. This could be seen in the conception and administration of the Staff Development Grant as well and thus can minimise the assertions on the non involvement of the academic staff in the SDG.

The fact that the University administration is dominantly composed of the academic Oligarchy (as per Clark 1983; Doh 2007, p.18) where the administrators double as the academics indicates that the academics should have been involved in more or less disguised manner and their interests commensurately represented. Secondly, the document titled "Staff Development Plan" which was submitted to the 18<sup>th</sup> Senate of the University of Buea in 2000 had been conceived based on the assessment of the staff development needs from the faculties or basic needs (ibid). The Plan was submitted, studied and endorsed by the University Senate which is the core organ of the university in terms of decisions on academic or academics' matters and which is the organ where academic representation dominates. One of the respondent who was both a Principal Officer and academic staff stated in addition that several subcommittees were often constituted at the Central Administration with the mandate to study the application files for the SDG and make recommendations and these central subcommittees was usually composed of some staff from the basic units. The respondent added that the final decisions to award the SDG were usually based on the recommendations of the above review sub-committees.

## 5.4 The Success of the SDG as per the Empirical Data (all respondents)

The table below presents the respondents' overall assessment of the success rate of the SDG in its objectives

**Table 7: Success of the SDG in its Objectives**

Objective <sup>12</sup>	Objective 1	Objective 2	Objective 3
<b>Level of Success</b>			
Very Successful	2 (6%)	5(16%)	0(0%)
Successful	16 (50%)	20(62%)	10(31%)
Neither Successful nor Unsuccessful	4 (12%)	1(3%)	14(44%)
Very Unsuccessful	3(10%)	1(3%)	2(6%)
Unsuccessful	5 (16%)	3(10%)	5(16%)
No Answer	2 (6%)	2(6%)	1(3%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>32 (100%)</b>	<b>32(100%)</b>	<b>32(100%)</b>

Table 1 reveals that the highest level of neutrality (neither successful nor unsuccessful) about the success of the SDG in attaining objectives was expressed with regards to creation of a dynamic intellectual environment for creativity and excellence. In one of the interviews with an academic staff it was revealed that the objectives of the staff development grant were not understood by most of the staff. In his words, *“what was on paper was not what we perceived. We saw it as an opportunity to earn extra money especially for research, publish and gain promotion since the normal research allowance is very insufficient. I would not know whether the SDG met its specific objectives or not”*.

The fact that most respondents could not rate the success of the SDG in creating a dynamic intellectual environment for creativity and excellence seems to be a result of unclear objectives usually associated with PBF schemes. It may also be an indication of low level of involvement of the grantees in the implementation of the SDG. This creates a need for the administration to set clear objectives and increase the involvement of grantees in the implementation of the SDG. A feasible approach would be to identify visible indicators for objectives to facilitate assessment of success both by beneficiaries and the policy makers. This would enable the grantees to better

<sup>12</sup> Objective 1-Capability Strengthening of the University to offer training in various fields relevant to national development and the labour market  
Objective 2-Vertical Mobility (Promotion):Enable vertical mobility or promotion through (research) productivity.  
Objective 3-Creation of Dynamic Intellectual Environment for Creativity and Excellence



appreciate the contribution of the scheme. The data also revealed that 21% of the grants which had been received were for PhD training and 67% of those who received this grant had (see Table 1) completed their studies. The SDG policy documents stated that PhD training grant is one of the strategies for creating a dynamic intellectual environment which favours creativity and excellence (see SDG Guidelines, 2000, p.4). Hence the SDG seems to have been successful in achieving this objective with regards to PhD training even though the respondents could not rate the level of success.

## 5.5 Documentary Evidence on the Achievements of the SDG

Irrespective of the seemingly contradictory nature of the academics' opinions on the successes of the Staff Development Grant, certain indicators and evidences exist to validate the researcher's assertion that the SDG was a successful initiative. These indicators lend clarity to the fact that most of its targeted objectives have been met overtime or are in progress. In this respect, it will be important to examine such successes with respect to one of the major strategic objectives which was to "improve research productivity" of the academics by providing incentives for them to "publish" and be promoted. Although there would seem to be other factors like better management and other policy initiatives which should have contributed to some of the improvements, the symbolic importance of the Staff Development Grant cannot be minimised viewing the current profile of the academic staff at the university of Buea, 6 years from when the SDG was initiated and the rate of promotion today. Such progress can be attested by a comparison between two periods; one preceding the SDG and the period after the SDG as seen on the table below:

**Table 8: The 1997/1998 and 2006/2007 staff situation at UB**

No.	Academic Rank	1997/1998 (%)	2006/2007 (%)
1.	Professor (P)	1	6.1
2.	Associate Professor (AP)	8	6.1
3.	Lecturer (L)	34	46
4.	Assistant Lecturers (AL)	45	32.9
5.	Instructor	12	9.4

**Source: Njeuma et al., (1999, p. 12) and University of Buea 2006/2007 Annual Report (p.7)**

From Table 8 in the preceding page, it can be observed that the number of staff at the highest rank (P) increased by 5.1% which is a significant indication of improvement in quality according to

criteria set for the higher education system in Cameroon. In the second senior rank (AP) there is a drop by 1.9% probably because some of the staff in that rank (AP) should have moved up to the first senior rank, which still indicates improvement. Promotion to the first rank goes along with the number of doctorate degrees as part of the quality assurance policy since according to the policy; they cannot be promoted to those two senior ranks without terminal degrees. That promotion is indicative of the increase in the number of Ph.Ds as well. The number of staff in the third rank (L) increased by 12% which will indicate a drop in the number at the lowest ranks and thus a mark of their productivity and upward mobility. Finally, the percentage of staff at the lowest statutory rank (AL) dropped by 12.1% which indicates improvement in the career mobility, research productivity and promotion which were the basic objectives of the Staff Development Grant.

Also, unlike in the 1997/1998 period where a majority of the academic staff did not hold terminal (doctorate) degrees (Njeuma et al., 1999, p.12), 146 of the 243 Staff at UB, (representing about 60%) are holders of Doctorate Degrees (ibid). The number and promotion rate of UB teachers would have significantly improved as well. Of the 45 files that were forwarded to the Promotion board in the 2006/2007 academic year, 25 representing 55% were promoted to higher grades (2006/2007 Annual Report, UB). The promotion would equally imply that they met the criteria one of which is publications or research productivity.

The above situation (see Table 6) indicates that the stagnancy or inertia which might have existed in the academic corps before had been broken thanks to the various policy initiatives that have been undertaken at the University of Buea within the last 6 to 7 years amongst which the Staff Development Grant. Worth reiterating is the fact that a good number of the responses indicated that the SDG contributed in the publications and which should have been part of the indicators which were used for their promotion and from which one can deduce as having contributed to the quality of the education as per the underlying policy assumption. On the strength of the above, one can assert that the Staff Development Grant spurred research and productivity of academic staff, improved competence through capacity strengthening and promotions which in turn should have improved the quality of their teaching as had been assumed. The degree to which such publications and research productivity improve the quality of teaching is a subject of another research.

## **5.6 Weaknesses of the SDG and Suggestions for Improvement**

Although the SDG possessed a good number of identifiable characteristics of performance-based funding in higher education, it can be seen to have been carried along with several weaknesses and thus a ‘weak’ performance-based funding scheme. These weaknesses would be based on the benign and experimental stage of the scheme. But then, it constitutes a valid experiment for other similar institutional, national and regional context of higher education.

On the one hand, the objectives were too limited as they were simply tailored towards the individual career mobility of the academic staff, their promotion. On the other, the objectives were seemingly too general which could easily give the impression that they were vague. For instance, to have specified “research output” to be indicated by “publications” to increase possibilities of “staff promotion” could easily give the impression that “anything” that resulted in the name or form of publication was acceptable. In this regard, it was weak in the sense that it was geared towards “numbers”, volume of publication with little attention on quality and relevance. The respondents’ scepticisms on quality assurance in the SDG suggest the above as well. Some respondents suggested that in future, specific areas of interest or topics directly linked to the country’s needs with respect to higher education (even if it were institutional) should be stated. Proposals for funding should be linked to the topics or areas of interest. In this sense, the SDG would be more strategic while at the same time enabling staff to meet individual career development or promotion requirements.

The SDG could be seen to have been too resource-dependent, finance-constrained and too limited to specific amounts of funds with the consequence that it limited the ability of the staff to pursue the objectives or broaden the scope of their projects. Such resource dependency could as well affect the academic freedom or autonomy of the project staff, a phenomenon which is not new with performance-based funding. As suggested by some of the responses, the projects were constrained by the amount of money allocated, whatever the project required to be efficient or effectively accomplished. A major concern for the respondents was the insufficiency of the SDG funds and resulting uncompleted projects. As evident from Table 1 above, up to 75% of those who had received grants for computer training said they would have undertaken the training even if there was no scheme like the SDG. A first step to solving the funding insufficiency would be to reduce funding for computer training and increase funding for initiatives which are less likely to be

undertaken without funding from the university e.g. academic seminars, workshops and travel grants (see table 1).

Another means of increasing the funding for the SDG could be to create links between the university and industries or international organisations. These could represent the external stakeholders of the university in the conception and implementation process of such schemes as well as bring in additional funding. In return they could negotiate with the university on which types of research or activities they need from the university. The university would thus be getting additional funding while attaining its objectives related to research productivity and vertical mobility. The university would equally be seen as being relevant, proactive and reactive vis-à-vis its environment. Related to the foregoing is the selection and application of research results. Research results which are related to improvement of the university's activities or can be directly beneficial to the society should not end at being published but should be implemented.

Some respondents held that the SDG can be improved by including auxiliary staff. The researcher strongly recommends that the SDG and any such schemes should consider including auxiliary staff especially as a good number of them today possess Bachelor or Master's degrees with greater prospects and time to attain the terminal levels of academic qualification. Given that higher education institutions in Cameroon still suffer from inadequate teaching capacity, auxiliary staff would have the opportunity to study for higher degrees and/or progress to teaching staff. They would go to increase the teaching capacity of the university without having to recruit new staff with accompanying financial implications.

The SDG seems to have focused more on research as is the case with most PBF schemes and probably because of the more prospects for the visibility of its results than other missions of the universities such as teaching and societal impacts (service). Although the strategies for strengthening capability (computer literacy, workshop on teaching methods, research methodology training and academic seminars) could improve teaching, the data revealed that the assessment of performance was focused mostly on completion of research projects and publications. According to Burke (2001a) what gets measured is what gets valued. The SDG would have a more holistic approach if it focuses on teaching-related indicators in the same way as on research-related indicators.

## **CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This chapter constitutes the final analyses and assertions on the link between the empirical data (the Staff Development Grant at the University of Buea, Cameroon) and the literatures on Performance-based funding in higher education. The chapter evaluates the extent to which the SDG qualified as a Performance based-funding scheme. It thus addresses and summarises the answers to the only research question which was “*How is performance-based funding reflected in the Staff Development Grant at the University of Buea?*” The next section provides a synthesis on the weaknesses and challenges in the conception and implementation of the SDG as per the empirical data and documentary evidences as well as the missing links with the literature. That synthesis is then followed by an analysis on the extent to which the SDG was successful in meeting its objectives. Based on the analyses, some recommendations are made for the design and improvements on such schemes as well as for future research.

### **6.1. The Staff Development Grant as a Performance-based Funding Scheme**

An examination of the conformity of the Staff Development Grant to Performance-based funding in higher education would be facilitated if viewed from a “conceptual” and “practical” perspective. First of all, the data in the preceding two chapters reveal that some conceptual similarities would have existed in terms of goals, rationale or factors behind the conception of the Staff Development Grant (see figure 2). Secondly, there would seem to have been similarities in terms of procedures, strategies, implementation, features or characteristics.

#### **6.1.1 Conceptual Similarities of the SDG to Performance-based Funding**

In terms of the rationale or factors behind its conception, it was observed from the empirical data and the related policy documents that the SDG was conceived against the backdrop of concerns for accountability, efficiency, results, value for the research funds and staff productivity. In this respect, it can be concluded that it was aimed at providing incentives to speed, induce or spur “performance”. Most of the literatures on performance-based funding in higher education converge on the basic notions that concerns for efficiency, accountability and improvements on performance or productivity have usually been the main rationale of performance-based funding (Frølich, 2008, p.5, 12; Jongbloed & Vossensteyn, 2001, p.3; Burke & Modaressi, 2000, p.2). The conception of

the SDG had been triggered by the concerns on the part of the UB's administration that staff development or vertical mobility was problematic and thus an urgent objective because it was going to affect several aspects (performance) of the university such as; research productivity, quality of teaching and promotion. The staff were seen to be dormant in research and the academic profile of the university was low. Extra incentives through a separate funding scheme were envisaged to drive the above objectives or speed solutions to some of the concerns.

The notion of lack of trust and which is related to that of information asymmetry and the obligation for results which usually underlie mechanisms like performance-based funding as per some authors (Kivistö, 2007; Maassen, 2000) deserves some emphases. There had been research allowance which was directly earned in the academics' salaries. With the urgency of the objective and the obligations for results, the administration deemed it necessary to earmark a separate fund for staff development which would go along with more stringent and goal-oriented rules and procedures. Amongst are: the proof of initiated projects (proposals), the use of a market mechanism (competition), the signing of contracts, proof of previously-accomplished projects before award of subsequent SDGs. Grantees were bound to conceive projects and show proof of the feasibility and their abilities to carry out the projects in view of convincing the administration. They competed with other candidates for the SDG. The eligibility of the projects was examined by committees which were set by the administration. Once the award decisions were made, the grantees had to sign contracts with the administration on the use of the funds and the accomplishment of the objectives. Upon execution and completion, the grantees had to present reports on the projects funded by the SDG which also served as proxies for future award. The administrators-principal used contracts to make sure that the agents-grantees will do what they promise and report back as required.

The submission of proposals and reports on the success of the projects in themselves was an aspect of the accountability of the individuals (academics) or the research groups and by implication contribute towards a more accountable academic organisation. It is observed that the SDG was tantamount to build trust and minimise the information asymmetry between the administration and the academics on the performance of the academics (especially in research). The assertion can be stretched up to the level of the government (sponsor) which provided the university's budget from where the SDG fund was drawn in that the information could be easily provided to the government on the performance of the academics or the institution as a whole. Thus, it will equally serve the government's request for accountability.

### **6.1.2 Practical Similarities of the SDG to Performance-Based Funding**

In terms of features or characteristics, the Staff Development Grant can be seen to have been similar to Performance based funding in several ways.

One of the main approaches to allocation in Performance based funding is that in which a portion of the recurrent budget is set aside to be allocated on the basis of performance criteria termed “performance set aside” (Hauptman, 2005, p.11; Thorn et al., 2004). The empirical data attests to the fact that the Staff Development Grant was a block amount from the autonomous budget of the University of Buea to be allocated on the basis of performance or results. This implies that the SDG was closely related to “performance set asides”.

The notion of competition in the SDG deserves some emphases as the operational dynamics of performance based funding or its characteristics. Grantees of the SDG were selected on the strength of their proposals as they competed with their colleagues (see SDG Guidelines). The underlying assumptions with the competitive bases on which such funds are usually allocated is that competition reinforces efficiency (performance)-the best is selected or as signals on the feasibility of the results. By the same token, a competitive atmosphere can usually be established with tied grants like PBF (Taylor and Taylor, p.78).

The conformity of the SDG to performance-based funding can also be assessed in terms of the use of “indicators” which is one of the characteristics of PBF. It was found out from the empirical data that certain criteria were established in the SDG to measure the performance of the academics or if the staff development objectives were being met. The identification of performance indicators is usually at the heart of designing a performance-based funding scheme and these indicators serve to heighten pressures on academics to invest greater efforts in activities which are measured and rewarded by indicators (Thorn et al., 2004, p.8; Taylor & Taylor 2003, p.78). Indicators of such performance in the Staff Development Grant included amongst others: the completion of research projects, publications and promotions. Also, the use of reports of previous projects as proxies for future projects was also indicative of performance. This leads to the assertion that the SDG employed what is termed in the higher education literature as “multiple performance indicators” (see Hauptman, 2005, p.11; Thorn et al., 2004, p.11) which were dominantly “out-put based” (Chapter 2). The importance of output indicators is premised on the assumption that current results

provide clues of action in the past and that work carried out predicts or becomes visible in future' (Tammilehto, 2005 p.5).

One of the main instruments of performance based funding schemes to induce commitment is the use of “contracts” between the principal and the agent. The empirical data and review of the documents pointed to the prominence of “contracts” as part of the main procedures of the Staff Development Grant. Performance contracts define strategic objectives to be achieved by the agent be it the University (with government) or the individual/group vis-à-vis the university administration. The literatures reveal that although some countries do not explicitly state the connection between contracts and funding, they usually reinforce funding decisions. In the case of the Staff Development Grant, the contracts were legally binding.

Accountability as one of the main rationale of PBF and which is related to efficiency implies that there must be feedback from the agents to the principal sponsor to enable the principal appreciate the degree to which the tasks are being accomplished for future action. In the study, the importance of reports on the projects which were to be carried out with the SDG was strongly articulated. The reports conveyed the message on the results of the projects and it could be found that failure to deliver results implicitly meant forfeiting eligibility for award of the SDG.

On the grounds of the above conceptual and practical similarities, it can be asserted that the Staff Development Grant at the University of Buea, Cameroon was a performance-based funding scheme. If that assertion is admitted, then it can be concluded without fear of contradiction that the SDG typifies the efforts of a developing Sub-Saharan African University in the management of the scarce financial incentives to spur (research) productivity, efficiency, accountability and quality. As such, it is representative and can constitute an example worth emulating (experimenting with) by other universities in similar contexts.



## **6.2 Summary of the Weaknesses, Challenges & Missing Links with the Literature**

The conception and implementation of the Staff Development Grant did not go without weaknesses, challenges and missing links with the literatures. Some of such challenges and weaknesses could be attributed to the nature of performance-based funding schemes, the benign and experimental stage of the scheme and the developing context of the university and its national environment. As a matter of fact, it can be observed as per the previous chapters that such similarities of the Staff Development Grant to PBF extend even to its consequence as it is always the case with PBF. For instance; the unintended outcomes of engineering a “theory of survival of the fittest” or “academic capitalism” as some disciplines and disciplinary backgrounds of some academics were tantamount to be favoured or discriminated against. Those who were awarded and performed well could be awarded further and those who were not awarded or performed less could easily forfeit their eligibility. The marginalisation of teaching could be observed in the SDG as it was too skewed towards research and the individual career mobility of the academic staff.

As per the data, the SDG faced further challenges such as the fluidity of some of the objectives, bias in funding decisions, disciplinary differences, non involvement of other stakeholders of higher education and insufficient and irregular funding which led to uncompleted projects. There was lack of adequate quality assurance mechanism in the SDG and it was characterised by weak indicators. For instance; the use of “publications” did not necessarily mean quality. Since most of the decisions (as per the data) were taken from the central administration and the “number” of publications was considered to be indicative of the performance, it was tantamount to creating ‘a more is better’ mentality among the academics. Unlike in some other countries or following the literatures, the “contracts” in the SDG did not include assessment criteria and the reports were merely characterised by regularisation of expenses and which constitute some of the missing link with the literatures. Also, the SDG was too limited in its objectives.

### 6.3 The ‘Performance’ of the Staff Development Grant

The similarities of the SDG to Performance-based funding as per the preceding chapters exist in terms of its goal-related advantages of performance, quality and efficiency in meeting its objectives. This begs the question on the extent to which the objectives of the SDG were met. A comparative analysis on the current profile of the academic staff at the University of Buea as against previous trends (the pre-SDG era) indicated that the Staff Development Grant was a successful initiative and is still in progress. Two interrelated objectives of the several objectives of the SDG provides evidence on the successes of the SDG: “vertical upward mobility” or “the strengthening of research capabilities”.

Unlike in the 1997/1998 situation where up to 45% of the teaching staff were still *Assistant Lecturers* and 12% as instructors and which implied 57% of the academic staff at the lowest rank, only 33% of the Staff today is at this lowest rank. The percentage of the staff at the most senior rank (Professor) has increased by 5.1% over a period of 5 to 6 years which is significant (see Table 3). The 24% drop in the percentage of the staff at the lowest ranks indicate a significant progress in the vertical upward mobility and quality of the teaching staff as the upward mobility was expected to come through greater research and scientific productivity of the staff. This example illustrates that the SDG has been largely successful in spurring performance and productivity. The number of academic staff, the rate of promotion today at the University of Buea and the increases in the number of terminal degrees attest to the success (efficiency) of the Staff Development Grant.

Above all, as small as the budget or grants were, as numerous as the challenges and weaknesses could have been in the conception, implementation and procedures (as stated by some of the respondents), the symbolic importance and the culture which the SDG induced at the University of Buea cannot be minimised. Such symbolic importance could be reiterated where it could be seen that it enabled the staff to be more creative, imaginative, proactive and innovative. The SDG also improved interactions with the community.

The above two assertions can be attested in some of the responses whereby it was pointed out that some of the grantees’ projects which received funding from the Staff Development fund could hardly have been thought about or initiated if such funding opportunities did not exist. Team spirit and social capital which is a fundamental necessity for an engaging and successful academic organisation can be deduced from the initiative as some of the projects were carried out in groups

involving senior and junior academics (as per some of the award decisions on the SDG). Also some of the projects involved other external stakeholders with external funding, in which case the funds which were applied from the SDG were simply meant to supplement the external funds or cover the cost of running the joint projects on the part of the university. Such symbolism and cultures at the University of Buea should be seen to be very essential and fundamental for the development of the university and its sustainability.

#### **6.4 Recommendations for Future Research**

It would be interesting to do a similar study on higher education in Cameroon at the system level. A system-level study will present a more complete result on Cameroon's approach to performance-based funding. In this light a study may be conducted on how to conceive and implement a system level performance-based funding model to cover all the state universities as exist in other countries where PBF is being used. It would be observed that the Staff Development Grant was skewed towards the individual career profiles of the academic staff, which is simply a limited objective of the UB and of the national system. It would be necessary to examine the extent to which performance can be spurred with incentives to meet other national objectives of the national system. The conception of such a system-level scheme might entail identifying and constituting a checklist of the system's objectives, assessing the urgency of some of the objectives and the means and ways by which they can be enhanced with financial incentives. In this regard, it would be necessary to recall some of the national objectives and expectations on higher education in Cameroon. .

Besides the general objectives laid down in Law No.005 of 16 January 2001 "the search for excellence in all areas of scientific knowledge, the promotion of culture, social progress and the formation of manpower for national development and reinforcement of national consciousness and ethics are": 1. the promotion of democracy and bilingualism as well as their its cultures.(ibid). 2. Using higher education as part of the adaptation strategies and processes in the era of globalisation. Globalisation and the knowledge economy would seem to be putting pressures for all higher education systems to adapt and in the case of Cameroon, bridging the existing developmental gap which is being exacerbated by such phenomena. 3. Professionalisation 4. Adaptation to the cutting-edge technologies. 5. The higher education system which is bestowed the responsibility as one of the key sectors for poverty alleviation (MINESUP, 2007). One would assert that if the type of performance-based ideas with the use of block grants is extended to other objectives of the system, the system would become more efficient and performing.

The final (thesis writing) phase of this research project coincided with the historic creation in Cameroon, of a “Special fund for university research” as per Presidential Decree No.2009/121 of 8 April 2009 to which the subject on performance-based funding may be highly relevant. The recent policy innovation in Cameroon signals a dramatic and steady progress towards greater efficiency especially in an area like research where inertia and stagnancy in African higher education and its development is partially attributed. “Setting aside” a special (system) fund for research in itself is a characteristic of performance-based funding as was the case with the SDG at the University of Buea. The extent to which performance or efficiency could be targeted or achieved with the use of such funds remains a challenge for policy makers, managers and researchers. Future researchers and policymakers could explore the practices of performance-based funding to enhance efficiency with the use of such funds and similar schemes.

As would be the case with Performance-based funding, one can describe the SDG to depict a scheme or relationship between the university administration and the academic staff (Principal and agent) as one where the administration declared 1. *“This is the earmarked sum for A or B objective (as partitioned), show me the proof of what you can do to meet the objectives and I will provide the means for it to be done”* and 2. *If you do it and proof that you did it well, you will get more money to do more”* (Quote from an interviewee).

The researcher deduces from the above quote that the SDG was conceived with the strategy or calculation that the incentives would spur initiatives, success in the initiatives would yield greater performance and quality because of the actors’ (academics’) motivations by the incentives. Such strategies or calculations may be based on the assumption in performance-based funding that the incentives as well as indicators serve to heighten the motivation and pressure on the academics to invest greater efforts (see Taylor & Taylor 2003, p.78). The end result would be that of increasing returns in terms of performance from the financial incentives that are deployed for the tasks. The above quote suggests that if the SDG-related concepts were extended to other objectives, they would yield more positive results. For instance, if the academics were told to design projects that could directly benefit society. An example worth citing is that of a cure for a disease, with competition between faculty members of different departments of all the universities. Even if it meant providing just basic research to pharmaceutical companies, the origin of such discoveries should have come from the university. The same goes with employment which implies relevance (with the industrial world or world of work) and which is a major concern of the higher education

system in Cameroon. It could be observed from some of the decisions awarding the SDG that it did not only include publication which was meant for the individual career mobility of the teachers but some of the related publication projects could entail solving some of the societal problems or connection with the universities' external environment which ended up with the publication. The social capital or networking that would have resulted through the use of the Staff Development incentives translates that the SDG-related concepts would be useful in enhancing the relationship between the university and its external environment or the relevance of the universities missions and activities with its society.

There would also seem to be the necessity for diversity. That is; the necessity for diverse schemes that reflect the missions of the various structures and secondly diversity in terms of the various models of performance based funding schemes which reflect the national context. The Staff Development Grant seems to have been adapted to its own history-the peculiar history of the University of Buea in Cameroon. In terms of this diversity the institution or system might reflect on initiating student-based or institution-based schemes to spur performance. Institutions and university establishments could be asked to provide proof of their ability to speed up the accomplishment of some of the system's objectives and they compete for funding, than simply receiving block grants on general bases. Another area of research which could follow from this study is a study is on how to extend the idea of the SDG to other state universities while taking into consideration the unique features of individual institutions and disciplines in the identification of performance indicators. A study on how to extend the idea of the SDG could be the first step to the conception and implementation of across-the-board approaches to performance based funding.

Also, it is worth asserting that the Staff Development Grant was peculiar funding mechanism which can be representative of universities in similar contexts. As such, the performance-based practices, principles and results can be generalised and tested in other countries' universities' in similar developing context or Sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries in dire quest for efficiency in higher education and with a multiplicity of objectives and expectations. We would observe that the expectations on higher education systems in SSA countries have been increased into two folds which include the "old" perennial problematic country contexts within which higher education operates in most of the countries and the new "new" challenges (World Bank 2000).

It is equally observed in the introduction of this piece of work that performance based funding of HE is dominantly a Western or Developed countries' funding mechanism as its prominence and

spread in developed and industrialised countries suggest (Eurydice,2008; OECD,1990). Considering the results and conclusion that the Staff Development Grant exhibited most of the characteristics of PBF as the literature on PBF reveal, it would be incumbent on researchers, policy-makers and consultants for developing countries especially other Sub-Saharan African countries to explore the possibilities and extent to which such performance-based schemes can enhance some of the objectives.

However, it would be important to bear in mind the necessity for caution with regards to contexts and indicators as the Staff Development Grant at the UB was framed by its own historical, policy, evolutionary and environmental context. Studies and policy attempts that seek to test the possibilities and efficiency of such performance-based schemes in enhancing the various objectives of the higher education or universities in similar country context would certainly yield interesting results and perhaps lead to their peculiar types and models of performance based funding with their peculiarity of results and challenges. The argument on the peculiarity of the models and types of performance-based funding can be attributed to the observable developmental differences between nations because there would obviously be differences in the higher education objectives, expectations and priorities.

This study on the practices, operations and results on the Staff Development Grant as a performance-based funding mechanism conveys the message to researchers, policy makers and managers of higher education in Cameroon, the Sub-Saharan African region, Africa and other countries in similar contexts that there is a necessity for mechanisms that could improve the efficiency and quality of their HE than flat policies. As much as there is the necessity to address objectives which require enormous financial resources like increasing access and expanding the systems, this researcher posits the necessity for such policies to be balanced with quality driven schemes as above to enhance and speed up the attainment of some of the objectives. From its inception, the higher education system has been an “elitist” and selective system, filtering or screening from the society and based on the performance. As much as egalitarian principles are taken into consideration for the funding of higher education, there is the necessity for quality, relevance and efficiency which in this researcher’s opinion can be contributed to by such performance-based principles as was the case with the Staff Development Grant at the University of Buea

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# APPENDIX: QUESTIONNAIRE

## Request for Completion of Questionnaire

Dear Sir/Madam,

My Name is Bilola Theresia Samfoga Doh, a Cameroonian and graduate of the University of Buea. I am currently doing research for my Master's thesis in Higher Education Policy and Management at the University of Tampere, Finland. My research is on performance-based funding of higher education. The Staff Development Grant (SDG) which was instituted at the University of Buea, Cameroon was identified to possess features of performance-based funding.

This questionnaire is directed to grantees of the SDG, administrators and staff who were directly or indirectly involved in the conception and implementation of the SDG and who would like to state their opinions. The information that would be obtained from this questionnaire remains *anonymous* and will be used for *research purposes only*. The estimated time needed to complete this questionnaire is 20-25 minutes. Thank you very much for accepting to participate in this study. Your responses are invaluable. Please contact me by email: [bilola.samfoga-doh@uta.fi](mailto:bilola.samfoga-doh@uta.fi), if you have any questions or would like to elaborate on any of the questions or issues raised in the questionnaire.

**A. Background (Please Tick (✓) the appropriate category or write where required)**

- i. Age a. 20-34..... b. 35-40..... c. 45-55..... d. 55-60..... e. Above 60.....
- ii. Gender a. Male..... b. Female.....
- iii. In which of these categories do you belong?.
  - a. Academic staff..... b. Principal officer (administration)..... c. Both.....
- iv. Academic Title (e.g. assistant lecturer, professor, etc).....
- v. Specialty or discipline (e.g. history, biochemistry, etc).....

**B. Questionnaire:**

*Please tick (✓) one or more options in multiple choice questions and write answers for the open questions in the spaces provided.*

- 1. In your opinion why was the SDG initiated?
  
- 2.) Which of the following describes how the budget for the SDG is acquired?
  - a.) A portion of the university's budget is set aside and allocated on the basis of performance criteria.....
  
  - b.) A result of negotiation between the state and the university and the signing of a contract with specific objectives and criteria for evaluating results within a set timeframe.....

- c.) Funds directly pay for results (number of publications, number of graduates, and number of students enrolled).....
- 3. Which of the following describes your perception of the SDG? Please tick (✓)
  - a.) A means of controlling research and teaching productivity.....
  - b.) Creates indication of the societal impacts/benefits from the university’s activities (teaching, research and services to the community) .....
  - c.) Induces academic staff to become more competitive.....
  - d.) An instrument for accountability on how funds for research are spent.....
  - e.) Reinforcement of productive staff.....
  - f.) Other

14. Please use number (1,2,...) for the number of times and write where appropriate

Type of Grant	No of times applied for	No of times received	Could you have initiated the proposal if there was no scheme like the SDG for potential funding? yes/no	How successful were you with the said initiative/project?(e.g. completed, uncompleted, etc)
<b>Leadership</b>				
<b>Academic Seminar</b>				
<b>Workshop</b>				
<b>Publication</b>				
<b>PhD training</b>				
<b>Travel</b>				
<b>Computer Training</b>				

- 5.) i How does the SDG measure a grantee’s productivity?
  - a.) Completion of research project and publication.....
  - b.) Academic promotion (e.g. through acquisition of further training/education or through publication(s).....
  - c.) Impact of research publication or findings.....
  - d.) Number of publications or patents and licenses.....
  - e.) Outreach and cooperation activities (e.g. seminars, conferences and workshops participated in).....
  - f.) Improved computer literacy.....
  - g.) Others .....
- ii) Which of the above is considered most important in measuring how efficient a grantee has used the funds? (Please write a, b, c, etc).....
- iii) How did achievement of promised result (s) influence a grantee’s eligibility for award of SDG in subsequent application(s)?
- 6. In which of the following has the SDG faced challenges in its implementation and how?
  - a.) Measuring productivity of grantees (success in proposed activity on which the SDG is used)

- b.) Ensuring the quality of output (e.g. publications)
  - c.) Ensuring equal opportunity for staff from any discipline to benefit from the SDG
7. How were academic staff involved in the conception of the SDG?
  8. How was the SDG related to the national higher education policy in Cameroon? (e.g. teaching and research productivity, student supervision, promotion etc).
  9. How was the quality of the work/projects carried out with funds from the SDG assured?
  10. If given the opportunity, how would you design a scheme similar to the SDG for higher education in Cameroon as a whole? (What will you consider and which new aspects would you add especially after your experience with the SDG?)
  11. a) Do you think a scheme like the SDG can favour or discriminate against some disciplines? (**Please tick**).Disciplines in which:
    - i . It is easier or not to conduct research and publish.....
    - ii Volume of publication materials can affect award of the SDG.....
    - iii. It is easy/difficult to produce results on a short term bases.....
    - iv. Impacts on the society easily or do not easily gain visibility .....
    - iv. Other
  - b) Can schemes like the SDG ensure equal opportunity for award when: all the academic staff are motivated, financial incentives are available, disciplinary differences are reflected in the rules and procedures of the scheme? Please tick: a. Yes..... b. No..... c. Both (Yes & No)..... (**Please explain below**):



12. What was the impact of the project carried out with the SDG on your career goals and overall objectives set by SDG?
- a. Promotion (e.g. from associate professor to professor)
  - b. Obtained a higher academic degree than the one you had before (e.g. from Master's degree to PhD).
  - c. Academic achievements (e.g. publication, award...)
  - d. Capacity strengthening (e.g. computer training, seminar, conference etc)
  - e. Other
13. How successful has the SDG been in meeting its objectives? Tick (✓)
- i. Capacity strengthening
    - a. very successful....
    - b. successful.....
    - c. neither successful nor unsuccessful.....
    - d. very unsuccessful.....
    - e. unsuccessful.....
  - ii. Vertical Academic Mobility/Promotion
    - a. very successful.....
    - b. successful.....
    - c. neither successful nor unsuccessful.....
    - d. very unsuccessful...
    - e. unsuccessful.....
  - iii. Creation of a dynamic intellectual environment for creativity and excellence.
    - a. very successful.....
    - b. successful.....
    - c. neither successful nor unsuccessful.....
    - d. very unsuccessful.....
    - e. unsuccessful.....
14. Which aspects of the SDG would you improve if given the opportunity? Tick (✓)
- a. Application Procedure.....
  - b. Assessment of results or productivity.....
  - c. Involvement of departments in the conception & implementation.....
  - e. Other
15. Which other types of activities in UB could be improved through performance-based schemes like the SDG?

Please state below (on extra space) if you have any comments.