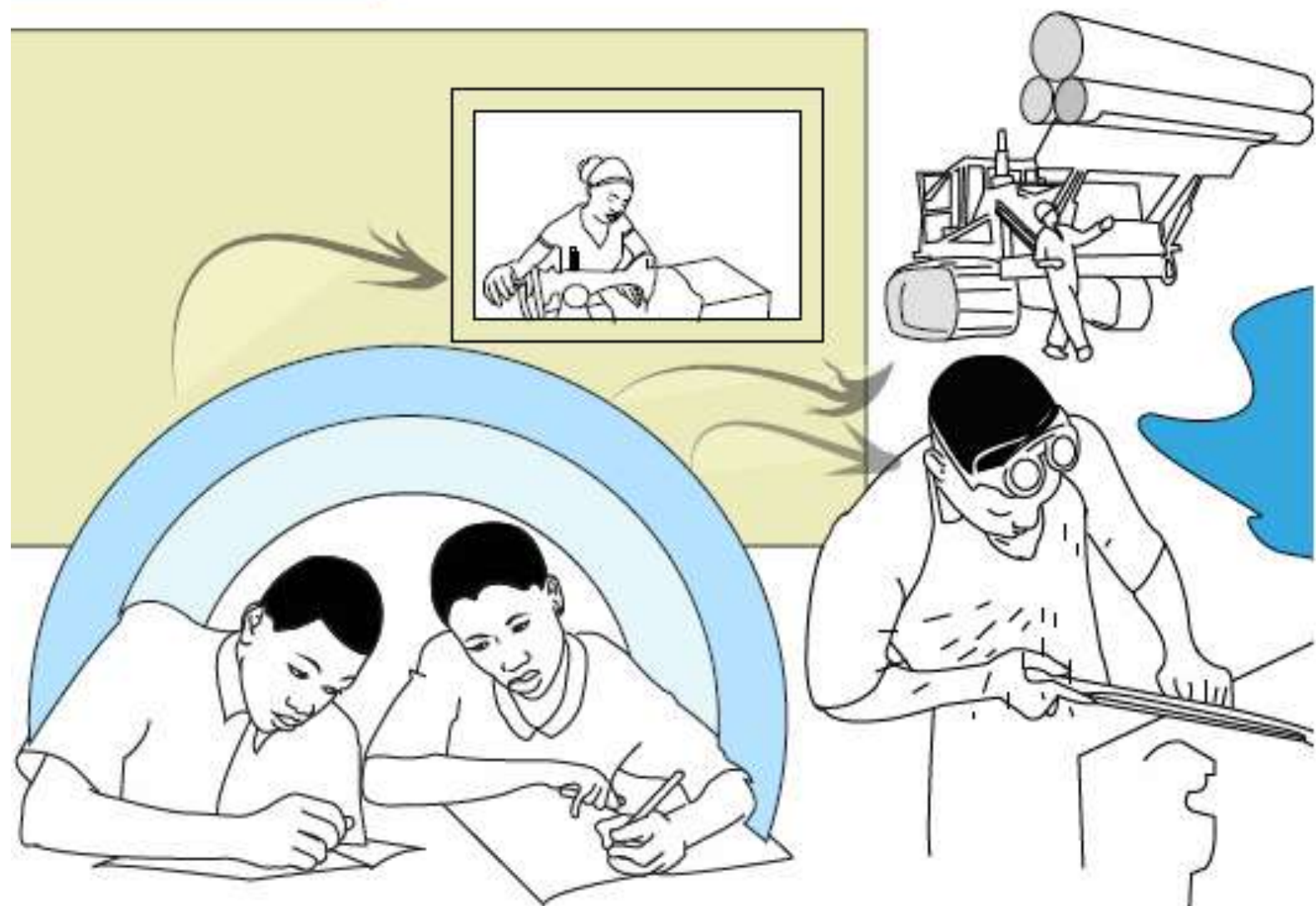


THE VOICE OF YOUTH

ON EDUCATION SECTOR
REFORM FOR YOUTH EMPLOYMENT



POLICY PAPER BY

CAMYOSFOP



CAMYOSFOP

**FRIEDRICH
EBERT
STIFTUNG**

Policy Paper:

Voice of Youth on Education Sector Reform for Youth Employment

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Site : <http://www.fes-kamerun.org>

ISBN : 978-9956-739-00-6

- also available in French -

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FOREWORD

The acuteness of youth unemployment in Cameroon (2010 stat) officially stands at 33%. It is a source of enormous debate that has triggered a good number of public policy reforms since the 1990s to roll back the surging trend. Despite the continual reorganization of key governmental departments especially during the appointment of members of government after the December 08, 2004 presidential election that set up the Ministry of Youth Affairs and the Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training, it is worth noting that very minute inroads have been achieved in stepping down surging youth unemployment in Cameroon.

According to the 2010 census trends, the population of Cameroon grows by 2.5% annually while the average GDP growth since 2000 is around 3.5% - a clear indication that the economic growth rate is not strong enough to absorb a constant surging population. The Cameroonian economy bounced back in 2012, stimulated by the recovery in the oil sector and strong domestic demand, which was in turn driven by investments in infrastructure. This economic bounce back has not been translated into significant reduction in youth unemployment.

The policy paper on “voice of youth on education sector reform and the job market” primarily seeks to answer the question of: **how do we equip youths to better fit into the job market?** As a response to this question, we should note that education is an overlapping Millennium Development Goal (MDG) that if well tailored to the job market has the potential to accelerate the attainment of the MDGs, and the much desired post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) propagated by international development partners today. This paper highlights the intricate link between the education sector reform and the job market by the mere logic that: reforming the education system without concurrently creating new jobs through adequate economic transformation is basically building seeds for social dissension. This policy paper explores the possibility of how we can better equip youths to fit into the job market and as well as to be self-employed. Reforming the education sector without a concurrent structural transformation of the Cameroonian economy to create new jobs will not lead to any decline in the surging youth unemployment trend. The limited engagement to build the entrepreneurial capacity of young people to create self-employment is a job-killer for a developing country like Cameroon whose private sector is predominantly made of Small and Medium Size Enterprises (SMEs) and a huge informal sector. Building the entrepreneurial capacity of young people is ensuring competitiveness for Cameroonian SMEs, and will equally ease the transition from informal to formal sector.

Failure to build the value chain of the Cameroonian economy in key sectors like agriculture, mining tourism and logging deprives million of Cameroonian youths from accessing decent employment. Developing Cameroon’s economic value chain in sectors like agriculture, mining, tourism and logging will create new jobs and increased economic growth for Cameroon. In essence, this policy paper explains the relation between educational reforms, youth unemployment and the job market through an in-depth survey around these issues.

The purpose of this assignment was geared towards gathering objective feedback from key stakeholders (youths, teachers, employers and civil society actors) regarding the true situation of educational reforms and youth unemployment in order to foster sustainable and inclusive economic growth that can genuinely be translated into economic emergence as spelt out in the Vision 2035 Paper for Cameroon.

It is against this backdrop that the Cameroon Youths and Students' Forum Peace (CAMYOSFOP) in partnership with the Friedrich Ebert Foundation (FES) decided to carry out a survey among key stakeholders on the education sector and youth employment. The intent of the survey is to know what went wrong and what is required that can guarantee employment on a sustainable and inclusive manner for the youths of Cameroon. A total of 356 Respondents (211 males and 142 females, 3 not responding) ranging in age from 16 to 36 and above were consulted. The analysis of responses will constitute CAMYOSFOP's contribution to this public debate. This policy paper has been segmented into five key sections as follows:

- The synoptic overview;
- Key policy papers regarding these issues;
- Analyses from the survey regarding major outcomes;
- Proposed recommendations;
- Perspectives.

This policy paper comes to add to two previous CAMYOSFOP papers on the debate, namely: *Youth Unemployment and Migration (2010)*; and *Agriculture and Vocational Training as Gateway to Youth Employment in Cameroon (2012)*, both funded by FES. Apart from these policy papers, the CAMYOSFOP/FES partnership that dates back to 2006 has also credited us with some of the following workshops funded by FES: University Youth Participation in Elections (May 23–25, 2007); Cameroonian Youth and Vision (MDGs) 2015 (November 24–26, 2008); Cameroonian Youth and the Phenomenon of Migration and Unemployment in the 21st Century (August 10-12, 2009); the Cameroon National Youth Council and the Management of Youth Councils (May 26–28, 2010); Cameroonian Youth and the emergence of Cameroon (February 02–03, 2011); and *Agriculture and Vocational Training as Entry Points to Youth Employment in Cameroon (July 07–09, 2011)*.

On the basis of the above visible outcomes of our partnership with FES, on behalf of the Board and Staff of CAMYOSFOP, I wish to heartily thank Dr Denis Tull, FES Resident Representative, his predecessors and their entire team for this fruitful cooperation and for their interest on youth development. For the production of this policy paper, I am indebted to Mr. Charles Linjap, Independent Development Consultant and the Executive Manager of Investment Watch (I-Watch), Professor Verkijika G. Fanzo, Mr. Richard Ndi, the Executive Director of the Ecumenical Service for Peace (SeP) and Ms. Francisca Amaa, the statistician who sorted out the survey data. Their expertise and time were invaluable in the realization of this policy paper. The insight of the participants of the validation workshop of this paper on November 21 – 22, 2013 is invaluable.

On this basis, I wish to extend my sincere gratitude to Pedagogic Inspectors, Youth organizations and trade unions present during this validation meeting. It is also my wish to say thank you to Her Majesty, Madam Christine Andela, President of the Platform of Cameroon Civil Society Organizations (PLANOSCAM) for her testimonies and role in enhancing the various education reforms in Cameroon. Finally, the entire process this project would not have been possible without the contribution of CAMYOSFOP staff. I wish therefore to recognize the efforts of CAMYOSFOP staff and the other surveyors that administered the survey questionnaire in the six regions that were earmarked for the project.

While hoping that this paper is going to be the true *Voice of the Youth in Fuelling Economic Growth by Overhauling the Cameroonian Educational System for Youth Employment*, we do not doubt the fact that the government will make good use of the paper as a working document on the current educational reforms as a springboard for youth employment and the achievement of Vision 2035.

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ACRONYMS:

AfDB:	African Development Bank
CSO:	Civil Society Organizations
GDP:	Gross Domestic Product
GCE:	General Certificate of Education
FES:	Friedrich Ebert Stiftung
GESp:	Growth and Employment Strategy Paper
IT:	Information Technology
NEA:	Net External Assets
NEF:	National Employment Fund
PLANOSCAM:	National Platform of Civil Society Organizations in Cameroon.
PRSP:	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
YNSAP:	The Youth National Strategic Action Plan
SMIG:	Minimum Guaranteed Inter-occupational Wage

1.) SYNOPTIC OVERVIEW OF THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM FROM 1960 TO DATE

Since independence and reunification (1960 and 1961) to date, Cameroon engaged in sustaining two contrasting educational sub-systems (Francophone and Anglophone) inherited from the colonial past that have triggered limited reforms. While the Francophone sub-system of elementary schooling lasted seven years, the Anglophone lasted eight until 1965 when it was reduced to seven before both were reduced to six years recently (2008). Each reduction of duration was followed by reforms on the curricula to accommodate the essentials.

At the secondary level, both sub-systems up to high school lasted seven years, the Francophone divided into four of junior for the “Brevet Certificat” and three of senior for the “Baccalauréat”, while the Anglophone sub-system was divided into the first five years for the West African School Certificate (WASC) and two years of high school for the Cambridge School Certificate (CSC). In 1965 the Anglophone sub-system switched to the University of London General Certificate of Education (GCE) Ordinary Level (O/L) for junior and Advanced Level (A/L) for high school graduates. Both sub-systems offered secondary technical education that ended with “Baccalauréat Technique” after seven years in the Francophone and Secondary Technical Certificate after five years in the Anglophone sub-system. The duration in secondary-high school in both sub-systems has been maintained at seven years. In 1993, a major step was taken to nationalize education by creating the Cameroonian Baccalauréat and GCE Boards that have taken major steps to reform secondary-high school graduation examinations.

Secondary and high school graduates with Baccalauréat or GCE qualified for admission into universities abroad until 1962, those with O/L in the Anglophone sub-system doing a year or two more than those with A/L.

Tertiary education began in Cameroon in 1962 when the Federal University was opened in Yaounde until 1972 when it became the University of Yaounde and began to offer graduate courses for the award of “Diplôme d’Etude Supérieur” (DES). By the end of the 1970s the Masters program was added as an equivalent of the French 3rd cycle doctoral degree (Doctorat de Troisième Cycle), followed by the state doctoral degree (Doctorat d’Etat) – two advanced degrees that were restricted to members of the academic staff. In 1995 the DES was changed to *Maitrise* and the Masters to the 3rd Cycle Doctoral program and the DEA (Diplôme d’Etude Approfondie) replaced the 3rd cycle doctoral program as requisite for admission into the Doctorat d’Etat/PhD program. In 2005 the present universal structure of Bachelor, Master, Doctorat/PhD (BMD, or LMD in French) was adopted to replace the *Maitrise*, DEA and Doctorat D’Etat. Each change was accompanied by reforms in the existing course program.

Since 1993 many state and private universities have been engaged in tangible reforms that are now offering more and more new professional and technical courses and producing qualified graduates for the job markets. The professions include studies in catering and tourism, journalism, translation, interpretation,

agriculture, health and medical sciences. Students with such qualifications are recruited faster than those with general degrees.

The aim of Western education in Cameroon from inception was and has always been to prepare the beneficiary for work - providing graduates with the basic skills for various occupations. Until one or two decades into independence, graduates from elementary schools were easily employed as probationary school teachers, messengers or clerks in councils, foremen in plantations, overseers in public works, catechists in churches, translators in administration, mail distributors, and much more. Those who were admitted into post-elementary institutions (secondary schools, teacher training colleges, medical institutions to train as nurses and midwives, clerical schools, police and military schools) were absorbed faster into the public and private job market than others.

In Cameroon the two sub-systems of education inherited from colonial masters were designed for literacy and for people to occupy public service positions. They are now outdated but unfortunately still live on despite current local and global exigencies in the job market. In addition reforms undertaken thus far have been more structural than content-oriented. There is a strong feeling also that these structural reforms have not been backed by the will and capacity to implement them. The different levels of education – basic, secondary and tertiary work in isolation – no inter connection among them, which calls to question the worth of the different reforms as concerted national policy on education.

But since the mid-1980s, the issue of unemployment in Cameroon surfaced and became really severe in the 1990s as a result of the unprecedented economic crisis that hit the country hard and lasted into the second decade of the new millennium. Because of it, workers began to be retrenched in both the public and private services before they reached retirement ages, and university graduates could not find employment even in some positions that were earlier filled by elementary school graduates. The official unemployment rate among the young since 2010 is 33% and under-employment at over 90 % (source 2011: Ministry of Employment and Vocational training). It would have been worse if many did not take to private agriculture that has generally been shunned by school leavers. Many taxi and motor-bike transporters in the big cities presently are secondary and university graduates who cannot find other employment.

Many questions need to be asked about the terrible employment situation among the youth in Cameroon today. What went wrong that young graduates from schools and universities cannot find gainful jobs? Is it that the educational system is no longer adequate to prepare youths for the job market in order for them to seize employment opportunities? Or is the problem rather the failure to create jobs or the explosion in the number of graduates from various institutions of learning? Now that the government is contemplating educational reforms in both the elementary and secondary school syllabuses in both sub-systems, what should be reformed to roll back youth unemployment? What can be done to bring graduates at various levels to create jobs? What contribution can the youth who are victims of unemployment make to the changes that are contemplated?

2.) CAMEROON'S HUMAN DEVELOPMENT OUTLOOK

2.1. CAMEROON'S ECONOMIC PROSPECTS AND LIMITATIONS

The rebound in the economy initiated following the 2008/09 financial crisis continued in 2012, with growth estimated at 4.9%, versus 4.1% in 2011(Source: African Development Bank). Supported by higher oil production and strong domestic demand tied to the launch of large infrastructure projects, this positive performance should continue over the next few years. In 2012, budgetary policy remained expansive with increased investment spending and spending on subsidies. According to estimates, the budget balance should remain in deficit, at 3.5% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), compared to a deficit of 2.7% in 2011(Source: African development Bank).

With a 32.6% share of exports, oil remains the main export. Estimates based on 2012 first-quarter performances indicate that several external balances will remain in deficit. The debt level remains manageable, with a ratio of public debt stock/ GDP of around 16.7 % (Source: African development Bank). Cameroon has abundant natural resources. However, revenues obtained from the exploitation of these resources, and from oil in particular, have not been sufficiently channelled into structural investments in infrastructure and the productive sectors. The decline of the agricultural and forestry sectors in the country's economic structure over the past decade attests to this. Recently, the State has undertaken steps aimed at reviving the productive sectors, particularly by strengthening infrastructure. While efforts to maintain macroeconomic stability are continued, poor governance persists and impedes the optimal use of public resources for the country's socio-economic development.

The employment situation in Cameroon is characterized by a low rate of unemployment of 4.4 % (the GESP) in the strict sense of the term, whereas in its broad meaning, which better reflects the Cameroonian context, unemployment stands at about 13 % (the GESP). According to our survey more than 50% of respondents defined unemployment as a **“situation where people have acquired qualification but do not have jobs”** If this be the case, then true unemployment data can be gathered from the number of qualified Cameroonians without decent jobs. Thus far the National Institute for Statistics do not collect data to this effect. The official rate of unemployment in Cameroon does not however reflect under-employment which stands at 76% (the GESP). This situation developed concurrently with a huge increase of the informal sector which employs about 90 per cent of the employed labor force, which is in Cameroon estimated at about eight million people with less than two hundred thousand working in the public sector, about eight hundred thousand in the formal private sector and the rest in the informal sector, including those in the rural areas (the GESP).

Upon analyzing the underemployment situation in Cameroon, we can infer that invisible underemployment which comprises employed labor force earning a wage lower than the minimum guaranteed inter-occupational wage (SMIG), accounts for 65% of the active population, while visible underemployment (11%) concerns the people working involuntarily less than the allowed weekly duration of 40 hours per week (the GESP).

Cameroon economy is still highly dependent on commodities exportation with very minute transformation of locally produced raw materials making it difficult to create jobs through the development of the entire value chain of key sectors such as agriculture, mining and tourism. Failure to grow the value chain of key economic sectors will further aggravate the current situation of youth unemployment which is seemingly growing at an annual rate of 3% per year (the GESP). It is worth acknowledging that more than 60% of Cameroon's population is very youthful within the age bracket of 0-24 years; out of a total population of 20,129,878 according to the July 2012 estimate from the Ministry of the Economy, Plan and Regional Development (MINEPAT) as attested by the table below.

Cameroon's population age groups:

0-14 years: 40.3% (male 4,091,453/female 4,018,699)
15-24 years: 20.4% (male 2,075,965/female 2,033,803)
25-54 years: 31.6% (male 3,217,360/female 3,149,334)
55-64 years: 4.3% (male 409,011/female 455,327)
65 years and over: 3.4% (male 310,129/female 368,797)
(2012 estimate from MINEPAT)

In addition, the civil society is a promising sector that has a huge potential to create tens of thousands of jobs within the development sector if accompanied by the Government of Cameroon. Since the 1990s to date, bilateral, multilateral, international Non Governmental Organizations, international development agencies as well as local Civil Society Organizations have created a number of permanent and temporal jobs for Cameroonians which if harnessed by the Cameroonian government can get a long way to enhance the overall human development index of Cameroon. The civil society equally has a strong role in shaping public policies that affects grassroots populations which if well tailored can lead to transformative policies that change lives.

2.2. ANALYSING KEY POLICY PAPERS THAT ALIGN WITH THE EDUCATION SECTOR REFORMS FOR YOUTH EMPLOYMENT IN CAMEROON.

Since 2008, the Cameroonian government in active collaboration with domestic and international development partners has demonstrated a vigorous drive to alleviate extreme poverty by rolling back unemployment in Cameroon. The Cameroonian government has undertaken a continuum of public policy reforms to roll back the surging trend of youth unemployment. It is against this background that the Youth National Strategic Action Plan (YNSAP) under the mandate of the Ministry of Youth Affairs in 2008 was proclaimed. This was followed suit in 2010 by the proclamation of the Growth and Employment Strategy Paper (GESP) under the coordination of the Ministry of Economy, Planning and Regional Development (MINEPAT). Appraising the implementation of these two policy papers with respect to fighting youth unemployment in the country is highly crucial at this juncture.

Prior to the adoption of the recent education and employment related policy reforms in the late 2000s, the government undertook other public policy reforms in order to roll back youth unemployment. For instance, the National Employment Fund (NEF) was created in the early 1990s through a presidential decree as a public establishment endowed with the mandate to fight youth unemployment in Cameroon. Every corporate entity operating in Cameroon is obliged through fiscal means to contribute 1% of its turnover to

the NEF as a sustainability mechanism for the NEF. In a similar manner, the government on December 08, 2004, created the Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training to encourage job creation for youths as well as a specific ministry for youths (Ministry of Youth Affairs). With a stronger drive to alleviate extreme poverty, Cameroon conceived the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) in the year 2000, which achieved very minute inroads in terms of poverty reduction by the end of 2005. To date, Cameroon has embarked on the Human Labour Intensive Approach dubbed HIMMO for all major investment projects since 2005 as a leeway to curb youth unemployment.

Despite the existence of several public policy reforms and papers regarding unemployment in Cameroon, we will limit our analysis on two policy papers: the Youth National Strategic Action Plan (YNSAP) and the Growth and Employment Strategy Paper (GESP).

2.2.1. THE YOUTH NATIONAL STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN (YNSAP)

It is worth recalling that the youth national action plan was triggered by the Ministerial Council Meeting of 2005 during which President Biya strongly recommended that youths should be integrated as a key government priority for his 2004-2011 mandate. This recommendation was preceded by the creation of the Ministry of Youth Affairs in 2004. This recommendation was translated into action by 2006 when UNICEF and UNFPA accepted to fund the policy paper on the “**Youth National Strategic Action Plan**” (YNSAP). By 2007, the lead consultant engaged the participatory process in order to identify key priorities for the YNSAP. By the end of 2008, the pledge to “reform the Cameroonian educational system” marked as program number 1 on page 71 was top on the list of identified priorities. The second priority outcome sought to address the “national action plan for youth employment” on page 71 of this same policy paper.

Concerning the reforming of the Cameroonian educational system, the youth strategic policy paper seeks to achieve the following prime goals:

- Ameliorate the performance of educational and professional training institutions for improved training of youths.
- Promote an adequate link between education and employment
- In terms of strategic objective, the national youth strategic paper seeks to enhance the efficacy of the Cameroonian educational system. It was therefore critical to fix specific objectives thus:
- Increase the overall youth enrolment and performance within the educational system.
- Improve on the mentorship and internship for youth trainees in both schools and apprenticeship milieu.

This action plan has a clear-cut logical framework with results, indicators, sources of data and responsible actors. In terms of the progress achieved thus far, government through the Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training since 2008 has made modest inroads in creating additional professional colleges and

apprenticeship centres in order to reduce youth unemployment which stands at 33% (National Census report of 2010).

By inference, the high rate of youth unemployment simply indicates the fact that the 4.5% Cameroon economic growth rate witnessed since 2011 has not been translated into gainful employment for youths. Considering the second priority of the YNSAP - **“ensuring decent jobs and self-employment for youths”** - we can conclude that the nexus between adequate educational reforms and job creation has to be taken seriously because very minute inroads have been achieved thus far. The Cameroonian government needs to translate this youth strategic policy paper into concrete actions that can adequately fit youths into the job market.

2.2.2. THE GROWTH AND EMPLOYMENT STRATEGY PAPER (GESP)

Appraising Cameroon’s human development progress and setbacks regarding key policy papers aligning with education sector reform is imperative in terms of incorporating them into this study. Cameroonian authorities used the participatory approach in designing the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) in April 2003. The revision of the PRSP was geared towards correcting the irregularities or weaknesses identified during successive evaluations of the paper's implementation, and during participatory consultations in March 2008. The process of revising the strategy resulted in the Growth and Employment Strategy Paper (GESP) and confirmed the option of involving people at the grassroots using the participatory approach. It has been the wish of the people that whatever strategy adopted should form part of a long-term development vision supplemented with multi-year development programmes. This recommendation has been considered with the formulation by the authorities of a development vision to be realized by 2035 and as well as the adoption of a new financial regime in December 2007(the GESP) dubbed the results-based programme budgets.

The GESP is the vision policy paper on Cameroon’s development publicly proclaimed by in 2010 by the Ministry of Economy, Planning and Regional Development (MINEPAT) that seeks to make Cameroon an emerging economy by 2035. It is worth acknowledging that the GSEP on page 73 highlights the key educational issues affecting the Cameroonian education system thus:

- About 22 per cent of children aged between 36 and 59 months attend a preschool establishment with the highest percentage in Yaoundé (54 per cent) and Douala (44 per cent). This is 2 per cent in the North and 5 per cent in the Far North.
- The crude primary school enrolment ratio stands at 80 percent of which 82 per cent are boys and 77 per cent girls.
- The primary school completion rate stands at 23 per cent of which 36 per cent are in the urban area and 10 per cent in the rural area.
- As regards secondary school, the crude enrolment ratio is 38 per cent with an average of 10 per cent in the northern part of the country.

- Higher education is on its part confronted with serious teacher shortage and academic infrastructure inadequacy to accommodate large numbers of students from the secondary schools.

Concerning education and vocational training reforms embellished within the GESP; in the general human development framework and in order to provide the nation's human resources with the skills necessary for building an emerging Cameroonian economy by 2035, the Government intends to lay special emphasis on the training of human capital through sustained implementation of the Education Sector Strategy. The reforms envisaged in this strategy and updated with regard to Vision 2035 objectives should culminate, after the GESP implementation, in an education and training system having the following:

- a) quality basic education covering the primary level and the first cycle of the secondary level accessible to the greatest number of children aged from 6 to 15 years and helping to raise the average level of education to that coherent with the vision of an emerging Cameroon by 2035;
- b) quality second cycle secondary education based on a dynamic balance between general and technical education in preparation for higher studies in priority professional fields of studies for the development of an economy geared towards Growth and employment strategy paper 2010/2020
- c) vocational training based on a modernized and significantly strengthened system for imparting a solid package of knowledge centred on the mastery of skills required on the job market and preparing the beneficiaries for job creation, to students leaving the first and second cycle of general secondary education;
- d) university education with a professional focus;
- e) extended continuous training coupled with a system of developing learning through experience;
- f) and real mastery of student enrolment which is indispensable for ensuring quality education through defining a system of regulating transparent and credible flows, strengthening the educational career counselling system and increasing the salary scale for technical professions.

The second component of the Government's employment creation policy will be hinged on developing a support mechanism targeting self-employment, from which it expects a significant contribution to the reduction of underemployment and a shift from the informal sector to the formal sector. The government has set as objective to drastically reduce the size of the informal sector to bring it to an insignificant level by the year 2035. By 2020, visible underemployment should be reduced by 50 per cent. Self employment will be encouraged with the determination to accompany the development of sectors that can be catalysts of growth, especially in agricultural, handicrafts and service activities.

In the rural areas, in line with the policy for the development of medium-scale and large-scale agricultural undertakings, incentives will be allowed to facilitate the establishment of youth and graduates of higher institutions to be involved in agriculture by:

- a) by providing training in large-scale agricultural project design;
- b) facilitating access to loans;
- c) facilitating access to modern farm inputs;
- d) And facilitating access to land.

Start-up programmes with an initial objective to create more than **15 000 self-employment jobs for youth are in the pipeline**. Furthermore, the implementation of some major investment projects particularly aimed at structuring regional development will often lead to the development of related activities from which nearby communities could benefit. Thus, specific training, depending on the type of project, will be developed to facilitate the integration of these populations in the said activities. Local development programmes will also be introduced by the State and local and regional authorities to amplify the positive impact of these projects on local development and create several jobs in rural areas.

As for receiving and accompanying jobseekers, a first priority will be to strengthen the employment orientation service by making the National Employment Fund (NEF) work in close collaboration with other public structures, with a view to setting up employment agencies in all the divisions of the country and provide them with qualified human resources capable of giving an attentive and personal ear to jobseekers in order to draw up a good personal professional statement for a successful employment orientation.

In terms of shortcomings from the aforementioned public policy papers, we came out with following:

- The existing government policies on employment have never been evaluated (be it conducting a process or mid-term evaluation for each program) as to ensure whether the earmarked objectives have been attained or not.
- Major job-creating programs as mentioned in key public policy documents are slowly implemented and in most cases do not attain its earmarked strategic objectives.
- The key programs do have not a clearly defined Detail Implementation Plan (DIP), nor a defined timeline with expected outputs with well defined reference benchmarks from the outset. In a situation where there are benchmarks, the “how” is never well defined within these public policy papers.

For example the GESP is not ambitious enough in terms of creating new jobs by building the value chain of the Cameroonian economy. Creating, 15,000 jobs in self-employment options is not capable of significantly reducing the surging youth unemployment trend in Cameroon. It is pretty obvious that if the government does not inject substantial amounts of its national income resources to handle these issues alongside a rigorous project planning, and Monitoring and Evaluation(M&E) mechanisms; then Cameroon runs the risk of not ever attaining economic emergence by 2035. Besides this overall appraisal of policy papers regarding education sector reforms for employment in Cameroon, it was absolutely necessary to conduct this complementary survey in order to gather feedback as to make sustainable recommendations for the future.

3.) ANALYSES FROM THE SURVEY REGARDING MAJOR OUTCOMES

In a bid to have a comprehensive and holistic insight regarding issues related to educational reforms, unemployment and the job market in Cameroon, the research team undertook a survey in the month of August 2013. The survey utilized questionnaires (annexed hereto) administered across 356 respondents in order to gather feedback from youths (59.4% of the respondents) from the age group 16-35 years, and from employers and teachers of the age 36 years and above (41.6% of the respondents). The sample of respondents was selected in a hybrid and democratic manner from six regions including both urban and rural settings in Cameroon (Centre, East, Littoral, North West, South West and the Far North) so as to gather the most objective feedback regarding the issues. The respondents we gathered feedback from were categorized in terms of sex, age, and professional status thus:

Sex

	Frequency	Valid Percent
Male	211	59,8
Female	142	40,2
Total	353	100,0

Age

	Frequency	Valid Percent
16-20	27	7,6
21-26	10	19,8
27-35	109	30,8
36 and above	148	41,8
Total	354	100,0

Profession

	Frequency	Valid Percent
Pupil	21	6,4
Teacher	128	39,1
Entrepreneur	45	13,8
Unemployed job seekers	105	32,1
Others	28	8,6
Total	327	100,0

In this regard, we segmented the survey into three major sections in order to gather feedback regarding education sector reforms with respect to expectations of the job market from the respondents. The prime goal of this survey was to gather data on education sector reform for youth employment in Cameroon. The first segment was focused on the overall appraisal of the education sector reform. The second segment was based on the issue of unemployment and its ramifications. The third segment was geared towards gathering feedback on job-market expectations. The respondents were required to respond to both closed and open questions on the questionnaire structured upon utilizing multiple choice and open question formats.

3.1 THE EDUCATION SECTOR REFORM FOR YOUTH EMPLOYMENT IN CAMEROON

This segment concentrates on aspects relating to the trends of educational reforms and respective sources, quality of education, adapting the educational system for youth employment, factors that affect the quality of education, building skills and competences within the reform process, among others.

3.1.1 REFORMING THE EDUCATION SECTOR FOR YOUTH EMPLOYMENT IN CAMEROON

Question: Thus far, government reforms carried out in the education sector in Cameroon can be qualified as:

In terms of educational reforms, an overwhelming 89% of respondents said they were not satisfied with the educational reforms that have thus far been undertaken regarding youth employment. It is worth noting that government engineered educational reforms in the country to date have not met the exigencies of the modern job market. By inference, the Cameroonian government needs to accelerate educational reforms across all levels (primary through university) in order to fit into the job market. To give but one example, it is very common today in Cameroon that most schools do not provide rigorous computer literacy skills to their students. Even though most schools have at least one computer training facility, these Information Technology (IT) facilities are inadequate in terms of the number of available computers and trainers, in addition to the fact that most of them are under-equipped with old refurbished computers that have outlived their usefulness and amortization span. There is greater need today in Cameroon to invest on computer literacy and skills at all levels of education in order to broaden the employment chances of youths.

Another promising sector for youth employment is reforming the education sector to suit the desired economic transformation to build and enhance the agricultural value chain from production into commercialisation. Reforming the education sector to enhance the process of building the capacity of Cameroonian youths on agriculture related professions such as food processing engineers, agricultural technicians, agronomic engineers, and much more will accelerate the process of transforming the Cameroonian agriculture value chain. It will also act as a game changer in terms of creating self-employment opportunities for youths within the agricultural sector.

Question: How do you appreciate the reforms that have been introduced in the education sector regarding youth employment?

A possible reason why the educational reforms have not been adequate enough for youth employment is because according to nearly all the respondents (97%) the reforms undertaken thus far were not inclusive of all stakeholders (key government ministries, private sector employers, Civil Society Organizations,

youths, teachers, publishers, research institutes and more). The reforms thus far have been the concern of the particular Ministry alone (Ministry of Basic Education, Ministry of Secondary Education and Ministry of Higher Education) without the involvement of other stakeholders, without effort to harmonize the curriculum with those of related Ministries (Basic, Secondary and Higher Education), and without involving other interested ministries that would normally make an input into the changes like Youth Affairs, Sports and Infrastructure, Agriculture, Small and Medium Size Enterprises, Scientific Research and Innovations, and Health. Reforming to make education adequate enough for youth employment in Cameroon requires that the lead Ministry should consult with all stakeholders and have their inputs incorporated prior to the consultation proper.

All stakeholders including key government ministries in charge of education, private sector employers, teachers, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and youths should be engaged in the process of overhauling the Cameroonian educational system. The process of discussing and formulating policy reforms should be open and inclusive of all organized segments of society.

3.1.2 ASSESSMENT OF THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

Question: How do you assess the education that was offered to you? Or what do you suggest for education to be job-market oriented?

According to the survey, only 22% of respondents are satisfied with the Cameroonian educational system. It clearly infers that there is greater need to reform the education sector especially ensuring that professional and technical education is given priority in the contemplated ongoing reforms. We highly appreciate the initiative of new state and private universities in the country to professionalize and provide the youth with the necessary skills and competences for employment, and we also urge the older established institutions also at lower educational levels to undertake reforms in the same direction. Today it is very common to hear that the Ministry of Higher Education has undertaken a series of reforms to integrate professional degrees into the university degree programmes; that it has even gone as far as harmonizing the Anglo-Saxon and French university degree programmes into one common Bachelor, Masters, and Doctorate (BMD) degrees. Professional degree programmes entails that students learn both general and specialized courses within their degree program as to prepare them for the job market.

We strongly recommend that government reinvigorates the educational system by creating new vocational colleges (training of technicians) that can permit youths to easily fit into the job market. A recent example is the creation of the agricultural technical vocational college at Yabassi, Littoral region in order to build human resources that can transform Cameroon's agriculture into a modern second generation agricultural production value chain, that is from production through transformation to commercialisation.

With regards to educational reforms, more than half of respondents attested that educational reforms should be focused on professional education (learning both general and specialized courses) and must be tailored to meet the needs of the country with the exigencies of the job market. The greatest need of the country, of course, is education that guarantees development and youth employment. These needs cannot be adequately addressed without empowering educational institutions and private and public enterprises to create jobs for trained manpower. There are many areas of job opportunity in Cameroon that government should target in the reforms, including among others, management sciences, engineering, agriculture, teaching, health, various live and natural sciences, and research. Many who are presently employed in these positions are overwhelmingly expatriates. This anti-national situation can only stop when education begins to provide youth with skills required to fill such positions. The opinion of the youth should not be neglected in the entire educational reform process.

3.1.3 FACTORS THAT AFFECT THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

What do you think should be reformed in the educational system today?

Concerning factors that affected the quality of education in Cameroon thus far, 27% of the respondents said that the content of the educational curriculum is the principal factor that negatively affects the quality of education alongside other factors such as lack of adequate school infrastructure (18%), the quality of teachers (16%) and the student classroom ratio (15%). Other influences of lesser concern are the assessment system that leaves much to be desired (7%), availability of textbooks (7%) and duration of cycles of learning (6%).

It is proper at this point to observe that the factor related to quality of teachers is of prime importance and deserves an in-depth analysis. The selection of candidates into the teacher training and other professional institutions in Cameroon from the early 1990s onwards was accompanied by high levels of corruption. An unprecedented number of unqualified candidates entered the institutions with the support of god-fathers in the administration who recklessly promoted their family and tribe's people. Many who are in the profession today are there for monetary reasons and lack the basic level of motivation and qualities of a good teacher.

According to the national consultation workshop organized to validate the findings of the survey, 100% of the participants affirmed that “quality education” should be a response to the expectations of the job market thus:

- Educational reforms should create a REALISTIC balance between theory and practice;
- There is need to heavily invest on QUALITY ADEQUATE INFRASTRUCTURE, that includes spacious classrooms, energy, offices, laboratories, workshops , hygiene and sanitation facilities, and portable water facilities, as critical for overall students’ academic excellence.
- Institutionalize an operational check and balance services to ensure strict respect for public property in schools in order to sustain school infrastructures and assets for the long-run.
- Emphasize on the acquisition of new knowledge, the building of professional skills and the breeding of citizens with integrity.
- Ensure career orientation services are operational in ALL educational establishments with qualified personnel helping learners to make informed choices about the future career.
- Contextualize education in local communities to have a correlation with local natural resources and socio-economic reality of a given community;
- DEPOLITICISE school administrators as well as foster transparent and accountable governance in educational establishments.
- Build social housing facilities especially for teachers posted into remote rural communities in order to guarantee their regular presence on their posted job sides according the school calendar and their respective job schedules.
- The Government should develop a SINGLE NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY DOCUMENT that will be utilized to conduct oversight for all programs.
- Strengthen and scale up existing two years of Higher National Diploma courses (HND) dubbed BTS in French for both private and public Institutions of Higher Learning as to prepare the youth for both the job market and self-employment.
- Ensure that the on-going Bachelors-Masters-Doctorate dubbed BMD/LMD reforms across universities should incorporate modern teaching and evaluation methods with updated curriculum, modern laboratories for practical exercises and placement of students with companies for internships.
- The Cameroonian education system should not be based on just recycling knowledge rather it should encourage creativity and problem solving skills that fit into our context.
- Ensure sustainability in public resource management with A STRONG POLITICAL WILL to hold irresponsible school managers accountable.
- There is need ensure that quality educational reforms must be widely publicised and all education stakeholders consulted so as to check indignation and revolt, and to make sure it is a collegial consensual initiative.

The prerequisite for integrating a priority reform into educational establishments is by ensuring that access to basic services is effectively devolved to local municipal councils. The ongoing decentralization process since 2010 has transferred the construction of classrooms into the hands of mayors without a parallel transfer of human, material and logistic resources to run schools. It makes difficult to run certain

schools on a regular basis. For instance, some schools lack government funded teachers and solely rely on teachers hired by Parents' Teachers Association (PTA) which makes it difficult for poor village-owned schools to hire their own teachers.

Failure to devolve key educational services to local municipal councils hampers the overall service delivery within the education sector.

3.1.4. BUILDING SKILLS AND COMPETENCES WITHIN THE EDUCATIONAL REFORM PROCESS

Question: What personal skills or competences should educational reforms seek to promote?

Concerning the building of skills and competences, a quarter of the respondents said reforms should foster management skills (human, material and financial resources), in order to improve the overall governance system. The ability to listen to collaborators and work with them as a team is another competence that the reforms should seek to promote. It is pretty obvious that sound management skills are vital for all situations in life, be it under an organizational situation or under a self-employment situation.

It is highly essential to equip young people with the necessary skills to guarantee high performance in their future workplaces.

Question: What should be emphasized when reforming the school, college, higher education and professional institution curricula?

Concerning the question about the priority areas in order for educational reforms to foster youth employment, 23% of respondents said reforms should be focused on science, technology, vocational (skill building programs) and computer literacy programs. This is consistent with other answers in the sample, namely that professional education is the gateway to youth employment. Almost 1/3 of respondents mention that, internships, field studies and practical work should be based on real work life exigencies and not disconnected from what people are experiencing on a daily basis. There is greater need today to invest additional financial resources on the building of state-of-the-art science and technological laboratories within educational institutions as to foster practical lessons for students in order to ease their recruitment into the job market.

3.2. THE UNEMPLOYMENT-EDUCATION NEXUS

3.2.1 THE NOTION OF UNEMPLOYMENT

Question: What do you understand by unemployment?

The survey carried a special segment to gather feedback from respondents regarding their perception and understanding of the complex notion of unemployment. More than half of the respondents see unemployment as a “situation where people have acquired qualification but do not have jobs”. This perception can be attributed to the fact that a good number of youths today are holders of certificates without a gainful employment.

In Cameroon today, young graduates have more general certificates than professional ones, which make it difficult for employers to hire them under an open vacancy positions. Even the few job vacancies that are announced on major media outlets compel few Cameroonians youths to actually apply which can be attributed to the number of required past experience (most often 5 years plus), the qualification and the competitiveness of the entire process. This confirms why there is the surging youth unemployment trend today, reaching a rate of 33% in 2010 (Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training). According to statistics from the Ministry of Youth Affairs, about 11% of youths aged 15 -29 years are unemployed and this situation is worse in the urban areas. Worse still, the underemployment rate for qualified youths leaving school aged 15-19 years and 20-24 years is 94% and 84% respectively. Douala and Yaoundé have the highest rates of youth unemployment of any city in the country (Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training). Against this backdrop, the government through the Ministry of Youth Affairs has designed specific programs to solve youth unemployment, which were funded mostly by the Heavily Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) Initiative for which Cameroon qualified in March 2005. All attempts to reduce youth unemployment have achieved very minute inroads in Cameroon since 2005. It is imperative that the educational system be reformed to accommodate both professional and general courses so as to prepare young people for the job.

3.2.2. UNEMPLOYMENT AND ITS RAMIFICATIONS IN CAMEROON

Question: What are the causes of unemployment in Cameroon?

Today youth unemployment in Cameroon may be at its highest level ever. It is pretty obvious that, the unprecedented economic crises the country suffered in the 1990s was the root cause of youth unemployment as the government had to retrench many workers within the public service to sustain the overall debt burden of the country. Since then, the situation of youth unemployment is constantly on the upsurge. **The result of this survey shows 24 % of the respondents affirm that one of the major causes of youth unemployment is the fact that there are few available jobs in the market compared to the number of job seekers.** Meanwhile, 18 % of the respondents attest that youths lack professional skills permitting

them to find access to the job market, especially first time job seekers. This relates directly to the Cameroonian educational system that focuses more on general education rather than professional education. It is therefore absolutely necessary to overhaul the educational system in order to make it relatively more job market oriented. Educational reforms should be oriented towards skill and professional development in order to catch up with the labour demands of the job market.

3.2.3 UNEMPLOYMENT AND AFFECTED SOCIAL CATEGORIES

Question: Which segments of the youths are most affected by it?

With regards to the segment of the youths most affected by unemployment, a quarter of the respondents agree that both skilled male and female youths are almost equally affected by unemployment. Unlike popular views and opinions, which generally express a gender bias in unemployment, the survey rather portrays a fairly balanced gender situation for male and female folks alike. It is also evident from the survey results that the most active population with the potential to accelerate economic growth is the unemployed youths. Although a number of educational reforms have been undertaken by the government from the 1990s to date, it would be important to assess the efficiency of the educational system to groom future workers for the job market. In the late 1970s all school leavers obtained jobs immediately after leaving school. Today, the story is totally different as young people leave school in their numbers and yet do not have jobs to guarantee their livelihood. Government should create an enabling environment for the promotion of the private sector, in particular private investments that are conducive to create jobs through transformation of the value chains as the mining, agriculture, tourism sectors, etc. It goes without saying that reforms in education coupled with improved business climate will go a long way to ameliorate the overall situation of youth unemployment in Cameroon.

3.2.4 THE CONSEQUENCES OF UNEMPLOYMENT

Question: What are the consequences of youth unemployment on the society?

The study suggests that the country's economic growth is negatively affected by youth unemployment as confirmed by 23% of the respondents. The survey further demonstrates that 17% of respondents think that the high crime rates in Cameroon today is a reflection of the surging youth unemployment. The issue of highway robbery, which is extremely common in the northern regions, constitutes a permanent threat to human lives when travelling to that part of Cameroon. We also note the growing phenomenon of scammers commonly known as 419, which like other forms of delinquency, are an outcome of youth unemployment. Fresh thinking is therefore needed in seeking measures that will harness the potential of youths in enhancing economic growth in Cameroon.

The country's economic growth is affected negatively as the results of the survey clearly show: 23 % of the respondents attest that one of the major consequences of youth unemployment on the society is its negative affect on economic growth.

3.3 THE EXPECTATIONS OF THE JOB MARKET

3.3.1 EMPLOYERS' ASSESSMENT OF FIRST TIME JOB SEEKERS

Question: As an employer, what do you look for in the applicant?

The segment on job market provides an in-depth analysis of the feedback from the survey provided by employers regarding the process of hiring first time job seekers in Cameroon. To begin with, employers identified several factors they perceive to be critical for first time job seekers to comply to and that failure to do so cut the applicant off the job market. For example, 29% of employers think that the numbers of years of professional experience acquired as well as the educational background of the applicant as by far the most important qualification.

It is pretty obvious today that a vast majority of qualified graduates with an officially recognized certificate do not necessarily get hired because of lack of a demonstrable professional experience in the past. In most cases first time job seekers are expected by employers to compete for job positions that require three-to-five years of professional experience. This constitutes a barrier for first time job seekers to ever achieve a gainful employment without provable job experience in the past. It is therefore critical for educational reform to develop programs that enable employers to create special internship and recruitment programs for first time job seekers in order to include them in the overall development process of Cameroon. The government can incentivise the process of on-the-job-training providing tax waivers and subsidies to employers. For example the government can provide a minimal reduction in corporate tax for all employers who practice this approach for first time job seekers.

3.3.2 EMPLOYERS AND REQUIRED QUALIFICATION

Question: In terms of education, when you are in the process of hiring a job seeker what do you actually look for in the applicant?

Further to this survey, we discovered that many employers are not even interested in post-graduate certificates when it comes to hiring applicants. **According to the survey, 46% of employers declared that they are very much interested in a particular skill or competence required to do a job as well as the number of years trained in a particular profession.**

Somewhat surprisingly only 1% of employers said a Master's degree is important when it comes to hiring applicants within their organizations. It is therefore important to reform the educational system to suit the job market especially by ensuring that students learn specific professional skills within their entire course

programs. For instance, first degree students reading biochemistry should acquire first class training on biomedical laboratory analysis in order to fit into the job market. Students reading the social sciences including sociology, economics, psychology and history should take a professional course on management in order to fit into the job market.

To date there is a gradual shift into professional university degree programs but there is need to undertake a study or an inventory regarding major job opportunities across the 10 regions of Cameroon in order to better adjust ongoing university reforms. The career orientation service of each educational institution should be well developed to better counsel students on their career choices.

3.3.3 EMPLOYMENT AND THE REQUIRED QUALIFICATIONS

Question: When you seek to fill open positions, do you normally find the right person with the qualifications you look for?

Concerning the hiring of employees via vacancy announcements, 43% of employers affirmed that they seldom find the right person when they launch open vacancy positions. Most of the time, they are obliged to hire someone with the intention to train the person during three months of probation period which requires that the company assigns a mentor-supervisor to the new recruit thereby overloading the employer.

It is necessary to design a bill on job placement for all undergraduate programs as to allow university students to achieve direct skills that are valued by prospective employers.

3.3.4 IMPEDIMENTS ENCOUNTERED DURING THE HIRING PROCESS

Question: What are the greatest obstacles for your business to find the employees you look for?

More than a 1/4 of employers said that few applicants meet minimum standards for effective recruitment, buttressed by 23% who attest that a good number of candidates lack the required qualification to do the posted job. A further 12% of employers said they lack the necessary channels to announce open vacancy positions, which does not preclude the fact that even those who are aware of the vacancy announcement are not well qualified for the job. In addition, a good number of youths are interested in white collar jobs (office jobs) without knowing what it takes to have one, according to 13% of the employers. **This kind of students' thinking is a true reflection of the Cameroonian societal values which makes students to prefer white collar jobs at the detriment of practical jobs in the agricultural and manufacturing sector.** This suggests that educational reforms in Cameroon should be accompanied by basic modules on job hiring procedures as well as the professional requirements of each profession. The awareness of students, parents and the entire society needs to be raised on the importance of all jobs context of a modern and competitive economy.

3.3.5 REDUCING YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT THROUGH EDUCATION REFORMS

Question: What do you think should be done to reform the Cameroonian educational system (curricula and educational governance) in order to reduce youth unemployment?

In terms of reforming the educational system to match the job market, 24% of employers say the government should create more specialized professional university degree programs in order to meet up with the constantly changing job market. In a similar manner, 19% say it is equally important for the government to equip young people with more professional and practical skills in order to generate self-employment opportunities for youths. To date the ratio of general secondary schools to technical vocational colleges stands at 80%, of which 20% led to more than 33% of youth unemployment today (Source: 2010 Cameroon’s census population report). It is worth noting that the few technical vocational colleges that exist are under-equipped and do not have sustainable maintenance resources to efficiently run practical work that constitute about 60% of the course load. What counts is not just creating more vocational colleges over general ones; rather it is to ensure that all newly created vocational colleges have sustainability mechanisms to maintain their workshops as well as to procure spare parts for worn-out items.

3.3.6 DIFFICULTIES CONFRONTED WHILE APPLYING FOR A JOB

Question: As a first timer job seeker, what are the difficulties confronted when you apply for a job?

Concerning feedback gathered from first time job seekers, 36% of respondents say limited professional experience constitutes a great obstacle that inhibits them from ever acquiring a first time gainful employment. This view mirrors the opinions of employers, which emphasized professional experience as a key prerequisite for recruitment. Thus it could be argued that it is critical for first time job seekers to undergo a series of internships in order to acquire the necessary professional experience needed to compete in the job market.

In addition, the linguistic barrier is another impediment for job seekers, as affirmed by 13% of respondents. It is therefore critical to institutionalize effective bilingual courses for all degree programs in Cameroon. It is also necessary to foster effective bilingualism across all levels of the educational system in order to prepare young people for the job market.

Institutionalizing job placement in Cameroon will go a long way to resolve these issues and will even grant the necessary professional competence to first time job seekers.

Furthermore, 9% of job seekers confirmed they have been victims of sexual harassment, without consideration of sexual orientation. According to the Cameroonian law, sexual harassment is criminalized irrespective of the gender and it is therefore important to file a complaint for all cases of sexual harassment. It is very necessary to teach young people about their fundamental human rights as citizens especially in the workplace which makes it crucial to institutionalize human rights as a subject in the new curricula. A good number of young girls in the country have been victims and do not know the necessary legal recourse to resort to in case of sexual harassment. Sexual harassment of any form is forbidden by the Cameroonian penal code.

Closely related to this is the fact that women suffer more than men from gender discrimination. Roughly 8% of first time job seekers said some employers prefer a particular gender because of the nature of the job. Employers in Cameroon are not comfortable hiring females because of the labour law that grants maternity leave and allowance to mothers. In terms of human rights, employers ought to know that women deserve special status in the workplace in terms of maternity and reproductive health rights. We should ensure that all hiring processes should be gender friendly.

3.3.7 FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION CONFRONTED BY FIRST TIME JOB SEEKERS

Question: What forms of discrimination do you face as a first time job seeker?

In terms of discrimination, 38% of first time job seekers affirmed that tribalism is a major factor of elimination for first time job applicants. Although it is true that fighting tribalism is difficult, there is the possibility to build an anti-discrimination law based on a quota system whereby all employers are expected to have diverse workforces for the sake of greater performance, as attested by the experience of multinationals like Shell, Guinness, and MTN. It is pretty obvious that the more diverse a company, the more performing the staff by virtue of the fact that every worker will want to prove a kind talent, which automatically enhances the creative performance of the company. This is perhaps the reason why the top most competitive 200 private companies in Cameroon in 2006 were all foreign-owned, as attested by a study conducted by GTZ in 2006 regarding “private sector competitiveness in Cameroon”.

In a similar manner 22% of first time job seekers affirmed that institutionalized bribery constitutes a major obstacle for first time job seekers and this practice is common for both public and private employers. Bribery is criminalized in Cameroon but it takes place in a discreet manner and at times the whole interview panel is involved with bribery but under the discreet facilitation of one mediator. It is highly necessary to fight this kind of corruption by subjugating candidates to undertake a test that is validated by independent assessors who do not know themselves and will never meet to deliberate as a panel.

3.3.8 EMPLOYERS' EXPECTATIONS CONCERNING FIRST TIME JOB SEEKERS

Question: What are the expectations of employers for first time job seekers?

Our survey results suggest that employers prefer experience over academic degrees as affirmed by 26% of employers within this study who prefer sound professional experience as against 23% that require qualification from applicants that are seeking employment.

3.3.9 SUPPORT FROM THE NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT FUND

Question: Have you ever received the support of the National employment fund?

Question: Do you know what the National employment fund does?

Almost 93% of respondents affirmed they have heard about the National Employment Fund (NEF) - a public institution endowed with 1% of the turnover of every company operating in Cameroon to fight unemployment in the country. This is a practical example of a Public-Private partnership framework set up by the government to fight unemployment in Cameroon. But to our dismay, only 7.5% of respondents said they have ever received funding from the NEF which means that since this institution came into existence in the early 1990s, very little impact has been created amongst unemployed youths in the country. There is need for the NEF to enhance its mission by creating programs that foster self-employment opportunities for Cameroonian youths especially.

Besides the aforementioned issues, there is limited sharing of information regarding the functioning of the NEF and other institutions for employment, further worsened by a lack of collaboration between institutions of similar objectives. In addition there is equally poor management and lack of transparency within public institutions in charge of youth employment in Cameroon. There is equally greater need to build a strong communication campaign on all existing employment programs in Cameroon as well as good governance practices with the NEF playing a central coordination role. Civil Society Organizations working for youths can equally play a greater role in dissemination information on job vacancies in Cameroon.

3.3.10 THE NECESSITY TO BUILD SKILLS FOR THE JOB MARKET

Question: According to you, is the Cameroonian educational system (Primary to University) adequate to train youths to compete for jobs within the global market?

Concerning the training of youths for the job market, more than half of the respondents say that the educational system (primary through university) in Cameroon is not adequate enough to produce

qualified youths for the job market. As aforementioned, it is therefore necessary to match new educational reforms with the changing job market such as ensuring that each degree program is accompanied by specialized courses as to guarantee professional competence for the trainees. Another critical issue is that there is limited public-private partnership encouraging internship for students in the private sector in order to build specific professional skills required by employers. It is absolutely necessary that the Cameroonian government should institutionalize a public-private partnership framework for internship of Cameroonian students as to prepare them for the job market.

One of the weaknesses of the Cameroonian education system is that it does not teach entrepreneurship education as subject matter in schools making difficult to prepare youths for self-employment. Against this backdrop, we are suggesting that entrepreneurial education should be institutionalized in schools.

4. Recommendations for the education sector reform for youth employment in Cameroon:

In a bid to provide sustainable solutions to the aforementioned issues raised within the content of this policy paper, we are suggesting the following recommendations to advocate for education reforms for youth employment in Cameroon:

- Reinvigorate the Cameroonian educational system by creating more professional and vocational colleges that will equip youths with vital professional skills to fit into the job market as well as enable them create self-employment jobs. The government is making valuable efforts to create technical vocational colleges like the agricultural technical vocational college of Yabassi in Douala, but this process needs to speed up, so that such colleges are built in all the ten regions of Cameroon, not only on agriculture, but also on ICT, mining, tourism, etc. A well thought Public-Private Partnership can help to finance such investments.
- Invest additional financial resources on the building of state-of-the-art science and technology laboratories as well as workshops within institutions as to foster sustainable practical lessons for students in order to ease their recruitment into the job market. The partnership between universities of developing and developed countries should be fostered for the transfer of technology and teaching staff. The management of state universities should be tasked to look for such opportunities where they exist, in support of government efforts to upgrade university laboratories.
- Enhance the mission of the National Employment Fund (NEF) to design programs that foster self-employment opportunities for Cameroonian youths especially. Initiatives such as the partnership recently signed between the NEF and the French company in charge of building the second Wouri-bridge in the Littoral region are encouraging and need to be fostered. According to this partnership, the NEF is responsible for recruiting the labour force necessary for the construction of the Wouri-bridge. The Government should encourage such partnerships with other enterprises to reinvigorate the work of the NEF.

- It is absolutely necessary that the Cameroonian government should institutionalize a public-private partnership framework for internship of Cameroonian students as to prepare them for the job market. A system of tax waivers and other incentives should be put in place for private companies that are willing to offer opportunities of internships to graduate students; and this information should be duly communicated to all companies operating in Cameroon.
- Strengthen existing institutions like the National labour Observatory Pool and the National Institute for Statistics (NIS) to track and update data on the unemployment situation specifying the effects on each social category. The NIS or the Observatory Pool could use volunteers from universities to carry out such studies on a regular basis. While assisting the NIS to compile such data, these students will at the same time acquire necessary competencies that can be needed when applying for jobs elsewhere.
- There is equally greater need to build a strong communication campaign on all existing employment programs in Cameroon as well as good governance practices with the NEF playing a central coordination role. Civil Society Organizations working for youths can equally play a greater role in dissemination of information on job vacancies in Cameroon. Therefore, the NEF could use CSOs as partners in local areas where the NEF staff is not well represented. This partnership will help the NEF to inform the population in remote areas on the work of NEF and on vacancies at the NEF level.
- We are suggesting that entrepreneurial education should be institutionalized in schools. There are some steps made in this direction in state universities with courses offered on how to manage projects, but the content is wanting! A specific curriculum should be developed, starting from primary education to universities on how to develop entrepreneurship capacities and be self-employed. An adequate banking system should also be put in place that can lend money to graduate students with eligible projects. This banking system should be accompanied by a coaching system to assist eligible junior entrepreneurs throughout the first three years of their projects with adequate technical and managerial assistance.

5. PERSPECTIVES:

Our policy paper will be used within the following circumstances:

- As an advocacy and lobbying instrument especially for the forthcoming national Education Forum in order to trigger critical reforms as to roll back youth unemployment in Cameroon.
- As a baseline for future studies within this domain, especially conducting inventory for all existing job opportunities as to provide proper career orientation for youths.
- As a development and academic source for future publications within this domain.
- As reference toolkit for reforming the NEF and other pro-youth employment programs in Cameroon.

ANNEXES:

SOURCES:

- Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training.
- Ministry of Youth Affairs and Civic Education
- Ministry of the Economy, Planning and Regional Development.
- The Growth and Employment Strategy Paper.
- The national Youth Strategic Action Plan.
- The Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper:
- The 2010 Census Trends of Cameroon.
- African Development Bank (AfDB).

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE SURVEY:

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Sex

- Male
- Female

Age

- 16-20
- 21-26
- 27-35
- 36 and above

Profession

- Pupil
- Teacher
- Entrepreneur
- Unemployed job seekers
- Other.....

Status

- Single
- Married
- Divorced

Affiliation/membership in associations

- Teacher' s syndicates
- Youth Association
- Parent teacher association
- Pedagogic inspector
- No affiliation
- Others.....

Qualification

- Primary certificate
- Secondary certificate
- High school certificate
- University certificate
- Other.....

PART ONE: QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

A. *Educationist in the past:*

1. Thus far government reforms carried out in the educational system in Cameroon can be qualified as :

- adequate for the employment of the youth
- inadequate as guarantee for youth employment
- Not professional enough in non-professional schools
- All the stakeholders were consulted before the reforms were adopted
- The decision to reform was that of the Ministries concerned
- Many Ministries of education exists without harmonization of the curriculum
- I do not know anything about previous reforms of the educational system
- Others.....

2. Only for teachers: How do you appreciate the reforms that have been introduced in the education sector regarding youth employment?

- adequate
- inadequate
- Not in line with the jobs in the market
- Just good enough for literacy and not for work
- Collaborative work of the proprietor and the teacher to prepare learner for work
- Not good enough for employment beyond unskilled labour
- Others.....

3. Only for students: How do you assess the education that was offered to you?

- Good enough for employment
- Not good enough for employment
- Good only for self-employment
- Requiring further training before good enough for work
- Good enough for academics but not for employment
- Don't know
- Not specialized for available jobs

- Others.....

B. *How do teachers consider present-day reformers?*

4. **What do you think should be reformed in the educational system today?**

- It should be professional
- Be in line with the needs of the country
- Be undertaken by professionals, not office holders
- Be more technical and less academic
- Have the input of the youth into whatever is being offered
- Be solid and general for any job opportunity that arises
- Provide opportunity for self-employment
- Be determined by the government

C) *Issues raised*

5. **Which of the following factors affect the quality of education most?**

- The content of the curriculum
- Student classroom ratio
- Duration of cycles
- Availability of text books
- Lack of appropriate infrastructure
- Hygiene and sanitation
- Quality of teachers
- Assessment systems
- Quality of learners in terms of knowledge acquisition

6: **What personal skills or competences should educational reforms seek to promote?**

- Management skills (human, material, financial)
- Developing team-working and communication skills
- Developing listening and decision making competences
- Building competences in time and task management
- Ability to adapt local technology in solving local problems
- Ability to master the information and communication technologies (ICT)
- Ability to be self-employed
- Strengthening civic education in schools
- Others?.....

7. **What should be emphasized when reforming the school, college, higher education and professional institution curricula?**

- Course contents should build capacities to think.
- More emphasis should be placed on science, technology, vocational and computer studies
- Field studies, internships, industrial-education and practical work should be on real life and professionalized situations
- Decentralizing educational management to meet local needs
- Awarding scholarships and/or loans to exceptional and needy students.
- Establishing alternative forms of affordable education options at all levels
- Others?.....

PART TWO: QUESTIONS CONCERNING UNEMPLOYMENT

8. **What do you understand by unemployment?**

- People have acquired qualification and do not have jobs
- People do not have acquired qualification and do not have jobs
- There are more people than the number of jobs that exist
- People are paid wages lower than their qualification
- The inability of skill, semi-skilled to fit themselves in the job market
- The inability of unskilled to fit themselves in the job market
- Lack of a functional skills
- Others.....

9. What are the causes of unemployment in Cameroon?

- Lack of professional skills
- General education dominates over other vocational and technical education
- Limited employment opportunities
- Limited professional orientation and counselling at an early stage in life
- Public service mentality
- Limited creative/ entrepreneurial spirit
- Limited incentives by the government to trigger private sector growth
- Rapid population growth
- None of the above
- You can only find jobs when you know someone who can help you
- Others.....

10. Which segments of the youths are most affected by it?

- Skilled Male youths
- Skilled Female youths
- Skilled youths with disabilities
- Semi skilled male youths
- Semi skilled female youths
- Semi skilled youths with disabilities
- Unskilled male youths
- Unskilled female youths
- Unskilled youths with disabilities

11. What are the consequences of youth unemployment on the society?

- It negatively affects economic growth
- Criminality
- Alarming alcoholism
- Drug trafficking
- Sex workers and banditry
- Undesired pregnancies
- Social unrest/upheavals
- High rate of school drop outs
- Increased poverty
- High level of youth migration in foreign countries
- Brain drain
- Others.....

12. The national action plan for youth employment focuses on decentralisation, governance, professional training, volunteerism, professional orientation, integration of the Diaspora youths and the move from the informal sector to the formal sector. Do you think this strategy/approach is pertinent to solve the problem of youth unemployment?

- Explain.....

13. The national youth action plan focuses on socio-economic insertion and initiation into the professional fields. What is your appreciation of these two key axis as strategies to youth employment and why?

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PART THREE: QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE JOB MARKET

14. As an employer, what do you look for in the applicant?

- Professional experience (number of years)
- Educational background with respect to the job offer
- Salary proposed by the candidate
- Mastery of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)
- Resilience on the job-side (capacity to adapt to a new workplace)
- Professional Certificate
- Physical attributes
- Letters of recommendations
- None of the above
- Secondary/High School Certificate
- Others.....

15. In terms of education, when you are in the process of hiring a job seeker what do you actually look for in the applicants?

- Number of years trained in a particular profession/skill/competence
- A particular skill/competence in a required domain
- On-the-job training acquired in the past
- Master's degree
- Bachelor's Degree
- Higher National Diploma (HND)
- Professional Secondary/High School certificates (Technical GCE, Technical BAC, etc.)
- Apprenticeship diploma from a specialized training center
- None of the above
- Others.....

16. When you seek to fill open positions, do you normally find the right persons with the qualifications you look for?

- Yes
- Rarely
- Hardly ever

17. What are the greatest obstacles for your business to find the employees you look for?

- Insufficient information to make it known that we have open positions
- Too few applications that meet minimum standards
- A lack of qualification by applicants
- Youths are lazy and not willing to work hard enough
- Applicants want far higher salaries than I can pay
- Youths prefer office jobs
- There are no public institutions that serve as job brokers

18. What do you think should be done to reform the Cameroonian educational system (curricula and educational governance) in order to reduce youth unemployment?

- Create more technical vocational colleges/schools than general secondary schools
- create more specialized professional university degrees than general degrees
- Create more Higher Institutes of learning capable of providing High National Diplomas (HND) within specialized domains
- Create more specialized apprenticeship institutions for professional training
- Integrate professional aspects into the entire educational curricula from elementary through university
- Regularly review the educational governance system every five years
- None above
- Others.....

19. From your experience, what are the lapses you find in youth employees you work with?

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PART FOUR: QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE JOB SEEKERS

20. As a first timer job seeker, what are the difficulties confronted when you apply for a job?

- Limited experience
- Limited competence (Not best fit for the job)
- Required qualification (educational level)
- Sexual harassment
- Linguistic barrier(Bilingualism)
- Disability
- Training not relevant to job requirement
- Others.....

21. What forms of discrimination do you face as a first time job seeker?

- Sex discrimination
- Tribalism
- Sexual harassment
- Race
- Nationality
- Religion
- Language
- Disability
- Physical Attribute
- Institutionalized bribery
- Others.....

22. What are the expectations of employers for first time job seekers?

- Sound Experience
- High level of motivation
- Required qualification
- Sound morality
- Obligation for performance/results
- Physical attributes
- A good team player
- Love for the organizational mandate and vision

28. Please do you have any suggestions and recommendations concerning the education system reforms in Cameroon?

- Others.....

23. Have you ever received the support of the National employment fund?

- Yes
- No
- I do not know the National employment fund

24. Do you know what the National employment fund do??

- Provide trainings
- Provide placement for internships and on the job training
- Link job seekers to employment opportunities
- Provide micro-loans for self-employment opportunities
- Disseminate information on job opportunities
- Others.....

25. According to you, is the Cameroonian educational system (Primary to University) adequate to training youths to compete for jobs within the global job market?

- Yes
- No **26. If No, explain:**

27. What are the greatest obstacles for youths finding a job?

- Political and administrative Corruption
- The educational system
- The labour market is inadequate
- Youths are not well prepared by the school system
- Teachers in schools are not doing a good job
- Corruption when applying for a job
- Others.....