

.Research Article

Curriculum Policy Implementation in Cameroon Education System Insights from Theories of Policy Change

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Abstract:

This study takes as its point of departure the assumption that policy implementation is a complex process that cannot be fully understood without analysis of the complexities, tensions, conflicts, perceptions and dilemmas related to those engaged in the implementation. In curriculum, theories are used to provide explanations for practice that help to facilitate the creation and implementation of the curriculum. They also provide justifications that enable school practitioners to articulate the reasons for their actions and therefore help to assist the understanding of what has been created. Theories also criticize the outcome or that which has been created and implemented. It is therefore necessary to develop a fundamental understanding of curriculum theory by providing the tools necessary when analyzing curriculum endeavors. This study has adopted four theories to provide an understanding of Educational policies in Cameroon. It reviews the different theoretical perspectives relating to factors that impact on policy implementation and provide insights on trends in the approaches to curriculum policy implementation practices.

Keywords: Curriculum Implementation, Advocacy Coalition, Rationalist, Political, Policy Change, Conservative, Evolutionary, Revolutionary, Cameroon Education System...

Introduction and Problem:

Implementation research in the 1970s claimed that implementation was the missing link between policy intent and policy outcomes. Although there have been efforts to show that this boundary does not exist, implementation research is considered to have hit a dead end. The ‘missing link’ discourse is still being used and referred to, both in research and in practice. Public policy literature lacks policy analysis frameworks that study policy processes holistically. Using a theory of change approach, this paper proposes a dynamic curriculum policy analysis framework that looks at policy change context, social networks between policy actors, actors’ beliefs, influences, and their interactions with institutions; in an effort to understand how policy change processes affect implementation, and consequently curriculum policy outcomes.

The meaning of theory has been used differently by different authors. However, it is generally accepted that a theory performs the functions of organized description, explanation, and prediction. Nixon (2004) holds that theory is shaped by practice and must be understood in terms of the relation between practice and thinking. A good theory provides a framework for analysis of actions. It provides an efficient method for field development and it provides a clear explanation for the pragmatic world. Planned curriculum change occurs regularly in education systems all over the world. For example, with the political change brought about by independence in Cameroon, a complete change in curriculum policy was called for in the education system. The new curriculum was expected to embrace new objectives and teaching and learning approaches. These curricula are

often well designed with very laudable aims, however, most often times, the attention and energies of the policy makers are focused on the what and not the how of the desired curriculum change (Rogan and Aldous, 2004) and consequently leading to failed attempts in the process of implementation. In fact, Hess (2013) draws attention to how decision makers tend to focus their efforts on formulating the policy, with little or no follow-up on how to make the policy take effect in education. He posits that “in education, there is often a vast distance between policy and practice” (Hess, 2013.p.5); educational policies seem to be developed with little consideration for the practical mechanisms necessary to their implementation. Questions such as “do teachers have the skills to teach this new curriculum?” are often overlooked. Ornstein and Hunkins(2009) speaking about the role of curriculum implementation claim that a curriculum however well designed must be implemented if it is to make any impact or if students are to attain its goal and objectives. In this regard, the study brings forth discussions on three theoretical models to policy implementation while arguing that an understanding of these curriculum implementation theories will aid in bringing about new curricula into practice in Cameroon education system. These include the Advocacy Coalition Framework and two theoretical perspectives (rational and political) in policy change. Furthermore, the conservative evolutionary and revolutionary trends in approaches to curriculum policy implementation are discussed

The Rationalist Approach:

The Rationalist approach to policy implementation was advanced by Pressman and Wildavsky (1973). However, the development of the framework can be traced back to the 1940s. It is firmly grounded in functionalism and the sociology of regulation. This framework assumes that policy making is a rational process involving decision making which can operate linearly through different stages (De Clercq, 1997; Fataar, 1999; Kruss, 1997). Policies are viewed as “blue prints which exist prior to action, and are implemented on the external world through a controlled process which is assumed to be a consensual one” (Kruss, 1997).

The rationalist approach perceives policy-making as a process that occurs in stages. Scholars use various terms to label the policy cycle. May and Wildavsky (1978), and Badat (1991) termed it “policy cycle”, Sabatier (1991; 2005) has termed it “stages heuristic”, while Nakamura (1987) termed it the “textbook method”. These theorists depict policy making as a process that is divided into a series of sequential steps. The first stage is agenda-setting, which involves stipulating policy priorities. The second stage is policy formulation. The third and fourth stages involve policy adoption and policy implementation. In stage five, policy is evaluated to determine the success of policy implementation. The rationalist framework advocates the top-bottom approach to policy implementation. This model assumes that policy implementation is a linear process that is characterized by a hierarchically ordered set of events, which can be centrally controlled (Cerych& Sabatier, 1986; Mazmanian & Sabatier, 1981; 1983; 1989; Pressman & Wildavsky, 1973; Sabatier, 1986; Van Meter & Van Horn, 1975). In this model, policy process is divided into sequential steps, each of which is treated as functionally distinct (Badat, 1991; Christie, 2008; Fataar, 1999; Maharaj, 2005; Sehoole, 2002; Sabatier, 2005). This linear depiction of the policy-making process suggests that the stages occur separately. A policy usually proposes a vision to achieve, sets goals to meet, and may even spell out the means to reach them. In such a case, top-down implementation often refers to the process of executing what the policy mandates, to reach the goals stated and with the means outlined in the policy statutes (Cairney, 2013)

This implies that decisions will flow from decision makers at the top to grassroots implementers at the bottom. In the Cameroon education system, the structure in the flow of policy implementation starts from the centre at the ministry; is diffused to the regional offices through divisional and sub divisional levels, to the schools and classrooms. The essence of the rationalist framework is captured by Colebatch (2002) who views the rationalist approach as a vertical dimension of policy. Policy implementation viewed from this perspective is regarded as the “rational administrative activity of a political neutral bureaucracy whose actions are directed at the achievement of the policy

objectives or directives of the politicians” (De Clercq, 1997). This view separates implementation from formulation, suggesting a separation between theory and practice (Badat, 1991; Fataar, 1999; Mazmanian & Sabatier, 1981; 1983; 1989; Sabatier, 1986). In the Cameroon education system, curriculum policies have been formulated such as the 1998 education law to guide teaching and learning in schools are considered to be at the stage of policy formulation- a theory. The desirable outcomes from the laws can only be achieved when successful implementation takes place- the practice. Supporters of this linear view describe implementation as the execution of policy objectives. One example of this interpretation can be found in Hayes’ (2001) description of policy implementation as a composition of organized activities by government directed towards the achievement of goals and objectives stipulated in the policy. Corroborated by Sabatier and Mazmanian (1989), these theorists define implementation as “the carrying out of a basic policy decision, usually made in statute”. With regard to methods of policy analysis, this framework provides a hierarchical model of policy analysis as well as the analytical tools for actors to use to regulate, measure, and control the policy processes.

The policy implementation that is planned in line with this model follows sequential steps such as:

- Establishing implementation structures;
- Designing a programme that incorporates task sequences and clear statements of objectives;
- Developing performance standards;
- Building in monitoring and control devices to ensure that the programme proceeds as intended.

Implementation analysis that is located in this model tends to focus on factors that appear to centralize control and that are easily manipulated by policy makers. These factors include funding formulae, organizational structures, authority relationships among administrative units and administrative control (Elmore, 1980). An earlier study by Van Meter and Van Horn (1975) provides an example of top-down thinking. In their model of how to analyze the implementation process, variables such as policy standards and

objectives and policy resources are regarded as critical. However, many authors have criticized this rational approach to policy implementation. Sabatier (2005) advanced the following arguments against dividing the policy cycle into stages:

- Separation of stages is not really a causal theory since it never identifies a setoff causal drivers that govern the process within and across stages. Instead, work within each stage has tended to develop on its own, almost totally oblivious to research and other stages.
- The proposed sequence of stages is often descriptively inaccurate. For example evaluations of existing programmes affect agenda setting and policy formulation/legitimizing as bureaucrats attempt to implement vague legislation
- The stages heuristic has a very legalistic, top-down bias in which the focus is typically on the passage and implementation of a major piece of legislation. This neglects the interaction of the implementation and evaluation of numerous pieces of legislation, especially as there is no feedback of information to the centre or from the bottom to the top. Whereas actors at the bottom have practical experiences which would have been beneficial to improving policy.
- The assumption of a single cycle focused around a major piece of legislation oversimplifies the usual process of multiple, interacting cycles involving numerous policy proposals at multiple levels of government.

Some of the critics argue that the policy process cannot be put into a linear sequence, and that the rationalist approach is likely to distort people’s understanding of what actually happens in the policy process (Bowe & Ball, 1992; Christie, 2008; Fataar, 1999; 2006; Gornitzka, Kyvik, & Stensaker, 2005; McLaughlin, 1998; Sabatier, 2005). The approach sees implementation as a highly iterative process, and a fully-fledged component of policymaking. It is considered top-down to the extent that it focuses mostly on central government’s leadership, and on administrative performance overall. Barber (2015) argues that Effective implementation from this standpoint is implementation that “get things

done”, i.e. that achieves the government’s goals. The approach’s lack of consideration for issues other than its administrative performance has been condemned by critiques. They argue that whereas implementing education policies talks to teachers, school leaders and students and their parents in the first place, top-bottom does not necessarily consider ways of collaborating with these key stakeholders (Devarajan, 2013). Additionally, the policy cycle approaches have been criticised for ignoring the complex interrelations between the various stages, and the role individual actors may play at several steps of the process (Werner and Wegrich, 2006). Pressman and Wildavsky (1973) were the first implementation analysts to indicate that the outcomes of even the best supported policy initiatives depend eventually on what happens when the individual implementers throughout the policy system interpret the policy (McLaughlin, 1987).

The Political Approach:

The political framework by contrast to the rationalist approach, seeks to understand the policy process from a different perspective. The political perspective acknowledges the contested nature of policy and the need to understand the political nature of the policy process (Barret & Fudge, 1981). It is critical of the notion that “implementation is a matter of automatically following a fixed policy text and putting legislation into practice” (Bowe & Ball, 1992: 12). Ball (1987; 1993; 1994; 1997) contends that policy meanings are shaped by conditions on the ground as well as by the willingness and commitment of the grassroots implementers to implement policy. In other words, this framework recognizes the interaction between policy texts and implementation in practice. Fataar (1999) describes this position as an attempt to expose the political and ideological dimensions embedded in policy. The political approach advocates the bottom-top approach as have been emphasized by Berman (1980), Hjern and Porter (1981), Hjern (1982), Hjern and Hull (1982), Hull and Hjern (1987), Elmore (1980), and Lipsky (1978). They suggest a model that starts from the bottom of implementation. The bottom-up approach of Hanf, Hjern and Porter (1978) starts by mapping the network of actors in the actual field where

implementation is to take place and asks them about their goals, strategies, activities, and contact persons. This, according to Sabatier (2005), provides a vehicle for moving from the actors at the bottom to policy makers at the top. Bottom-up approaches see implementation as a “process of interaction and negotiation, taking place over time, between those seeking to put policy into effect and those upon whom action depends” (Barrett and Fudge, 1981). One of the key proponents of this approach is Elmore (1980). He argues for “backward mapping” approach as an alternative to “forward mapping”. Elmore challenges the assumptions of the top-down approach on the grounds that they are an inappropriate way of describing real life policy implementation. Further illustrations of such an approach are found in the work of bottom-up scholars, such as Berman (1978; 1980); Hjern and Porter (1981); Hjern (1982); Hjern and Hull (1982); Hull and Hjern (1987); and Lipsky (1978). Their point of departure is dismissive of illusions of central control. They argue that a more realistic understanding of implementation can be gained by looking at the policy from the view of the target implementers and the service providers. These theorists argue that successful implementation depends more on the skills of local implementers than upon efforts of central government officials. Matland (1995. p. 148) notes that: At the macro-implementation level, centrally located actors devise a government programmed. At the micro-implementation level, local organizations react to the macro-level plans, develop their own programmers and implement them. The main contribution of bottom-up approaches to curriculum policy implementation is the normative stand which they hold that what matters is not how policy makers at the top get their will executed but the reactions of those on the ground at the end of the line whose reactions shape the implementation process, and the policy itself (Lipsky, 2010). Lipsky explains that the real question in policy implementation is how to support civil servants who in the context of the study are the education corps of Cameroon so they do not have to resort to routines that help them meet the pressure but decrease the quality of their service to end users of the policy considered to be the students and teachers. Highlighting another important contribution of bottom-up

approach as the role of politics in implementation, Barret and Fudge (1981) insist on the continuous negotiations that take place throughout the policy process. They argued that compromising and getting actors on board with the policy does not stop with the formulation, which makes implementation just the continuation of political debates. However, while bottom-up approach is regarded as a useful starting point for identifying actors involved in the policy arena, and while bottom-up scholars bring new knowledge on the power relations down the policy-making process, they do not provide clear responses on how to tackle the challenges they identify. Sabatier (2005) argues that it needs to be related through an explicit theory to social, economic and legal factors which structure the perceptions, resources and participation of actors. Criticism has been levelled at the bottom-up approach for underestimating the role of the policy objectives (Gornitzka, 2005; Matland, 1995; Sabatier, 2005). It is argued that in a democratic system, policy control should be exercised by central actors whose mandates come from their accountability to their voters (Matland, 1995). The bottom-up approach views policy implementation as an integral part of the policy making process and regards policy formulation and implementation as interactive processes (Barrett & Fudge, 1981; Bowe & Ball, 1992; Dyer, 1999; Elmore, 1980; Fataar, 2006; Fullan, 1982; Lowry, 1992; McLaughlin, 1998). Based on the arguments advanced by the proponents of the above mentioned approaches, it is evident that each has its positive and negative sides. The study takes an eclectic stand on policy implementation by advocating the adoption of the best practices in both approaches. This view is supported by the Advocacy Coalition Framework as discussed below.

The Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF):

The Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) Theory was developed by Paul A. Sabatier (1988) and later used by Sabatier and Jenkin-Smith (1991) to understand changes in policy process (Ike, 2009). Sabatier and Jenkin-Smith hold that the political process can be affected from various angles. These angles include not only what goes on in the central government (rationalist

approach), but also what goes on in the state and local governments (political approach). It specifies that there are sets of core ideas about causation and value in public policy; these coalitions or sets of core ideas form because certain interests are linked to them. It is possible to map these networks of actors within a policy sector. 'Change comes from the ability of these ideas to adapt, ranging around a whole series of operational questions and what works in any one time or place' (John, 2003). Policy change occurs through interactions between wide external changes or shocks to the political system and the success of the ideas in the coalitions, which may cause actors in the advocacy coalition to shift coalitions. The ACF was originally designed to explain the political behaviour of actors in the policy process. The study adopted this theory because it discusses important factors that ought to be considered in the process of curriculum implementation. The ACF was developed to study complex enduring policy processes involving multiple actors (Bethany Stich and Chad Miller, 2010). Attempts at applying these could be relevant to the implementation of curriculum policies in Cameroon where the educational system is characterized by a coalition of many actors working towards the achievement of defined goals. These actors are learners, teachers, head teachers, school administrators, and ministries of education, parents and the community. This framework is an attempt to combine the best features of top-down and bottom-up approaches to policy implementation as advocated respectively by the rational and the political approaches in studying the implementation of curriculum policy (Sabatier, 1998; 2005). The theory assumes that for policy implementation to be successful, the organization must integrate a top-down as advocated by the rationalist approach and bottom-up as advocated by the political approach to policy implementation, and a commitment to incorporate technical information into understanding the policy process (Heck, 2004). The theory further explains the role of different actors involved in policy implementation. It starts from the premise that the most useful unit of analysis for understanding policy change is a policy subsystem whose actors are from a variety of public and private organizations involved with

the policy implementation (Sabatier, 2005). The framework assumes that these subsystems can be grouped into a number of coalitions, which consists of interest groups, politicians, agency officials and intellectuals who share common beliefs. It argues that “actors perceive the world through a set of beliefs that filters information consistent with pre-existing beliefs” (Sabatier, 2005). In an attempt to implement policy, these coalitions might use conflicting strategies which could create tensions. These tensions are then mediated by “policy brokers” to find compromise. The end product of this process would be policy outputs. The Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) also assumes that there are stable and dynamic variables which affect the constraints and resources of subsystem actors. The stable variables include basic distribution of natural resources, the basic socio-cultural values and social structure (Sabatier, 2005). There are also dynamic factors, including changes in socio-economic conditions and systems which provide principal sources (funding and resources) for change. Sabatier and Jenkins-smith highlighted five premises that constitute the framework as explained below

Information Technical:

Policy makers and implementers require technical information concerning the magnitude and facets of the issues (problems and solutions) its causes and probable impacts of various solutions. For example, implementing a new curriculum at the school level mostly implies changing schools and teachers’ practices, their beliefs, and the materials used. On the other hand, a policy introducing new school funding formulas requires the education hierarchy and principals to change the way individual schools and local education systems are managed and funded (OECD, 2017). Fullan and Pomfret (1977) had earlier stated that for effective implementation to take place, all involved in this process must be educated about the worth of the new programme and its related components such as new content area or new type of student materials that will impact on the process. Heck (2004) asserts that, actors often desire the information about the severity of a problem and the probable benefits and costs associated with particular solutions before beginning implementation. He further states that

with increasing need for accountability, there is the growing need for various types of technical policy analyses that address important policy problems that are of concerned to educators. The Advocacy Coalition Framework contends that the availability and use of technical information can be important parts of the policy development process, including the strategies that group use to influence the agenda setting and the implementation process. The framework emphasizes policy-oriented learning within policy subsystems, which is the process of using information to increase understanding in order to achieve policy objectives (Mawhinney, 1993).

Policy Subsystems:

The second premise concerns the most useful unit of analysis for understanding policy change. According to Sabatier and Jenkins-smith (1999), a policy subsystem consist of individuals from a variety of public and private organizations who are actively concerned with a policy problem or issue, such as educational reform agencies, departments of education or schools, and who regularly seek to influence policy in that domain. In the context of Cameroon, an example would be the stakeholders concerned with education such as the ministries of education, the regional and divisional delegations of education, head teachers and principals, teachers, students, parents and the community. Because the policy process within any particular domain is sufficiently complex in terms of the laws and regulations, particular problems on the agenda, and the factors that affect development and implementation, individuals must specialize if they are going to have an influence (Sabatier&Jenkins-Smith,1999).Those intending to influence educational policy on a regular basis will have to become familiar with the various private and professional groups, legislators and committee that occupy the subsystems. Heck (2004) corroborates this view by stating that policy subsystems may be either existing or emerging out of a new issue or situation. Subsystems may also interact, or overlap, with each other in some situations. He continues that, one of the challenges in describing a policy subsystem is that it is often not clear whether groups that interact within a policy domain across levels of government may constitute one advocacy

coalition or whether they separate into different policy subsystem by levels of government. However, previous case studies carried out by Mazzoni&Clugston, (1987) and Wong &Rollow(1990), on the development and implementation of educational policy changes, have consistently found that there is seldom a single dominant reform programmer or group at the operational level. Rather, actors within a particular policy domain are likely to initiate a number of actions within different levels of governments in pursuing their own goals.

Coalition of Actors Within Subsystems:

The third premise is that policy subsystems are comprised of a considerable number of groups including administrative agencies, legislative committees, interest groups, journalists, policy analysts, and researchers who regularly generate, disseminate and evaluate policy ideas. The framework suggests that these coalitions are relatively stable over lengthy periods of time (a decade).Although policy making normally subsides within a particular subsystem, it is also the case that as conflict on a particular policy issue may widen, actors at other levels of government can all become active in policy formulation and implementation within the same subsystem or in different subsystems simultaneously. This has the effect of socializing the conflict and making it visible to a wider audience. Ornstein and Hunkins (2009) suggest that cooperation between all involved with programmed implementation must occur if it is to be successful. While teachers are considered the experts in the process, other participants in curriculum development need to cooperate as well. Those who favour learner-centred designs want to involve the students in the curriculum development and implementation process by incorporating their ideas about how to test or if possible modify the new programmer. Those who advocate reform in the school wish to involve community members in the development and implementation of programmers, while other minority groups will request to be involved in the process in order to ensure that their views are represented (Fantini, 1985).

Policies Incorporate Implicit Theories About How To Achieve Goals:

A fourth premise is that policies and programmers generated through interaction incorporate beliefs and theories about how to achieve policy objectives. Belief systems according to Ike (2009) are sets of policies and goals (core aspects, programmers), including ways to achieve the goals (secondary aspects). He continues that one of the things that determine a belief system is found in Herbert Simon's idea of satisfying. Satisfying uphold human beings as limited in their reasoning. Therefore, to deal with problems, one needs to develop alternative problem solution. Policy process is made up of many belief systems. Through satisfying, the Cameroon Educational system has come up with several curriculum reform policies to solve the educational problems in the school system. Theories can be very powerful in informing education reform strategies. However, Fullan (2007) is of the opinion that having a theory in use is not good enough in itself. The people involved must also push themselves to the next level to make their theory of action explicit as it relates to the specific assumptions and linkages that connect strategy to desired outcome. These belief systems involve value priorities, perceptions of causal relations, the magnitude of the policy problem, and the efficacy of various policy instruments. The core belief systems of coalitions are likely to persist overtime. However, strategies and implementing strategies to achieve these beliefs are likely to change overtime. Fullan (2007) contended that changes in beliefs are usually more difficult. They challenge the core values held by individuals regarding the purpose of education. He further explains that beliefs are often not explicit, discussed, or understood, but rather are buried at the level of unstated assumptions. He however emphasized that changes in beliefs and understanding are the foundations of achieving lasting reforms. According(www.organistionalresearch.com/.../pathwysforchange6theories) individuals have core beliefs about policy areas, including a problem's seriousness, its causes, society's ability to solve the problem and promising solutions for addressing it. Policy change happens through coordinated activity among individuals with the same policy beliefs.

Change Process:

A fifth premise concerns the relationship between policy action and institutional change. According to True, Jones, & Baumgartner, (1999) changes in policy activity can occur in policymaking as public understanding of existing problems change, even if most of the time governmental programmers continue as they have previously done. They noted that, when issues are defined during public discourse in different ways, and when they rise and fall in the public agenda, existing policies can either be reinforced or questioned. Reinforcement tends to create support for small changes only (incrementalism), whereas constant questioning creates opportunities for dramatic changes in policy outcome. Given the complex mix of actors, their belief systems and changing external events, policy change is likely to take a decade or so (Sabatier & Jenkins-smith, 1999). Keith Leithwood (1982) considers implementation as a process involving the reduction of differences between existing practices and practices suggested by innovators or change agents. It occurs in stages, and it takes a long time to win people over to an innovation. Although policy makers often work in arenas that require fast action and quick results, policy changes generally require much longer time frames to achieve (Louis & Miles, 1991; Mort & Cornell, 1941; Tyack & Cuban, 1995) Ornstein and Hunkins (2009) argue that people want to change, yet they are also afraid of change, especially if it comes quickly or if they feel they have little control or influence over it. They concluded that, the world of teachers do not allow for much receptivity to change because they easily become accustomed to their status quo and prefer to make modifications in new behavior in small and gradual steps. Teachers need time to try out the new programmer to be implemented. They need time to reflect on new goals and objectives, to consider new contents and learning experiences and to try out new tasks. They need time to map out their tactics for meeting the challenges of the new programmers, and they need time to talk to colleagues (Joyce, Hersh & Mckibbin, 1983). They further state that, teachers can handle new programmers if the changes demanded in their attitudes, behaviors and knowledge are to be attained in manageable increments. This suggests the importance of

maintaining coalition overtime that is committed to curriculum policy outcomes. The ACF was ideally suited to the study of policy implementation in that curriculum implementation involves multiple agencies and level of governments and is driven by coalition of diverse stakeholders. Additionally, policy implementation is driven by technical and analytic knowledge and finally that the core beliefs of coalitions generally are both deeply held and fundamentally incommensurable. The use of the Advocacy Coalition Framework helps to provide explanation on the ideas of implementation and most especially on the key variables to be considered in the change process. It described effective approaches to managing change which are based on combining and balancing factors that do not apparently go together as well as understanding the processes required for policy implementation.

Trends In Policy Change:

Change is normal and continual and it takes various directions at various rates and at multiple levels of social life. Some people argue that change maybe one of the most constant parts of our environment (Segall, Dasen, Barry and Poortinga, 1990). Yet while every society is undoubtedly in some state of flux all the time, most of these changes are relatively small and gradual, some however are relatively rapid. In the following paragraphs a review of the conservative, evolutionary and revolutionary trends in policy change are reviewed as a means to provide explanations to findings made in the study.

Conservative Theory:

Propounded by Edmund Burke, conservatism is a political ideology that is concerned with protecting the status-quo of a state. According to O'Hara (2011) conservatism is a survey that captures the essence of a creed that so often decries change but has proven remarkably adept at surviving it. Conservatists are often engaged with the politics of nostalgia (Jan-Werner Muller, 2006). They are less interested in putting forth a political doctrine than in expressing a disposition. O'Hara (2011) argues that, conservatism is a nostalgic backward glance that allows conservatives to see more clearly. Jost, Glaser,

Kruglanski and Sulloway (2003) also contend that conservatives are less concerned with equality, more comfortable in maintaining the status-quo, more likely to show favoritism for high status or advantaged groups over low status or disadvantaged groups to the extent that their system justifying attitudes are characterized by resistance to change and tolerance for inequality. Using a multi-dimensional approach to understanding conservatism, Muller (2006) proposed four dimensions of conservatism which he termed sociological, methodological, dispositional and philosophical conservatism. Conservatism from a sociological dimension is simply the ideology or the specific political programmer of a particular social group trying to hold onto its privileges. He contends that this kind of conservatism originates from the period in history when the European aristocracy started defending itself against the rising bourgeoisie and subsequently against mass democracy. He further argues that, the precondition for sociological conservatism is some distinct threat to an existing social order. It is about, an active defense; a resistance to change that threatens an existing status-quo (Muller, 2006). The second dimension is the methodological conservatism also known as prudential particulars. It is a claim about the nature and the process of change. While not suggesting that they ought to be no change at all or a commitment in favor of pure “stationeries” or a highly selective commitment to “Yell Stop” (Muller, 2006, P. 362), methodological conservatism, argues that reforms are necessary from time to time, but they ought to work carefully or even cautiously to improve what is already there. This means that change should be incremental and should take place in steps. Burke (1993) admits that “a state without the means of some change is without the means of its conservation (P. 21). It is about a carefully managed process of change, or put differently of rendering safe the change that is desirable and in many cases inevitable. The third dimension of conservatism as seen by Muller is the dispositional or aesthetic conservatism. He holds that central to this dimension are two presumptions; on the one hand is the presumption in favor of the past or sometimes even a peculiar vision of the present, and on the other hand a presumption in favor of a particular or the

concrete. These dispositions give rise to stances of nostalgia. In describing the dispositional conservatism, Oakeshott (1991) pointed out that: to be conservative, then is to prefer the familiar to the unknown, to prefer the tried to the untried, fact to mystery, the actual to the possible, the limited to the unbounded, the limited to the near to the distant, the sufficient to the superabundant, the convenient to the perfect, present laughter to utopian bliss (P. 408). The fourth dimension according to Muller (2006) is the philosophical. Also called the anthropological, this stance implies a commitment to realizing a set of substantive values, irrespective of whether these values are already instantiated in the present. This means that for philosophical conservatives, the primary question is not about what the past suggests, or how or by which proven method, these values should be implemented. The question deals with what sets of values should be considered. They are primarily interested in the importance of hierarchical relationships, or some more or less naturalized conception of inequality. Burke (1955) examined the relationship between conservatism and schooling in terms of the role of the school, the nature of the curriculum, and the role of the teacher. The school, in the conservative ideology, is a repository of cultural values. It is an agency for transmitting the cultural heritage and values from the mature to the culturally immature, thus preserving them for future generations. The school’s role is to unite the individual with the heritage and to instil a sense of belonging to the group whose traditions are manifested in the institution. In addition to its general role as an agency for transmitting and perpetuating the cultural heritage, the school also aids other institutions by identifying the future elite and providing the education appropriate to its destiny as a leadership group. The education of leadership elite can take place either through special schools established solely for the task, or by tracking or streaming, which places those who display leadership potential in special classes within a comprehensive setting. Whatever the mode, there is an appropriate preparation for the elite. It should be noted that this leadership elite is to exhibit both character and intellectual acumen. For conservatives, the curriculum transmits the general culture to all and also

provides appropriate education to the various straits of the society. It includes the generally accepted basic skills found in most school programmer – reading, writing and arithmetic. In addition, loyalty to and membership in the community, often the nation-state is developed by a selective use of the literature to exemplify significant cultural themes. History, too, is a core subject for providing a perspective into the evolution of the culture and its heritage. Fine arts, music, and dance are also used to expose students to the cultural heritage.(Mike & Moore, 1995). Defined and prescribed cultural values are used to shape behaviour or character to conform to traditional norms or to national character. Whatever possible, conservatives prefer to integrate character formation or development within a religious context. Secondary and higher education continues to cultivate intellectual discipline through the study of subjects such as the native language, classical and foreign languages, mathematics, history, literature and science. Often, conservative educators identify a core of prescribed studies designed for all students to ensure the uniform transmittal of the cultural heritage. The teacher in the Conservative educational setting is an agent of transmitting the cultural heritage to children and youth so that they can incorporate it into their intellectual outlooks and characters. Such teachers should be people who cherish the cultural heritage, who know it well and who reflect in their personalities and behaviour the culture's traditional values. Like the idealist teacher, they are character models that students can imitate. While they may use educational technology to transmit the tradition more effectively, conservative teachers are neither agents seeking to change or reconstruct society, nor do such teachers encourage cultural alternatives and diversity. In a world that has grown increasingly unstable because of social and technological change, incessant mobility and moral relativism, conservative teachers use the school as a stabilizing agency. Their task is to maintain the cultural heritage as a repository of the enduring achievements of the human race by introducing it to the young so that they can absorb it and perpetuate it. (Henrie,) Stressing continuity rather than change, conservatives emphasize the power of the cultural tradition to shape knowledge,

character and values. Seeing human beings as unequal in abilities and capacity, conservatism views the good society as one that is organized hierarchically. Education, based on the conservative ideology, is primarily a process of cultural transmission and preservation. Indeed, it is part of the cultural continuum that exists between the generations. Conservative curriculum policy is resistance to change in curriculum practice. Those who support it are nostalgic about the colonial curriculum and seek to maintain it, sometimes for what they refer to as maintaining standards.

Evolutionary Theory:

Evolution refers to a slow progress; a gradual incremental and cumulative progress which is a counterpoint to revolution. It can refer to maturation and movement towards 'advancement' or to 'directionless movement' in which we make no reference to the 'the idea of progress' without considering the possibility of regress (Sementelli, 2007.pp 743–5; Steinmo, 2010. p 20). It can refer to natural selection, describing the 'blind' adaptation by species to their environment, artificial selection, describing the ability of 'entrepreneurs' to learn and innovate as they adapt to their environment, or a process in which actors adapt to and help create their environment (Kerr, 2002. p. 336; 2003. p. 120, Kay, 2003. p. 108, Room, 2012). It can describe 'pure mutations', perhaps equivalent to major policy change, or 'phyletic transformations', equivalent to incremental change (Durant and Diehl, 1989 p. 195). It can be used as a metaphor or a description of reality (Curry, 2003; Kay, 2003. pp. 105, 119, 125; Lewis and Steinmo, 2008.p 33). Finally, it can refer to the role of individuals, the population as a whole and/or the role of its environment. Evolution in policy studies is used frequently to describe policy change. Lewis and Steinmo, (2010) portray 'evolutionary theory' as the solution to a wide range of unresolved debates on endogenous and exogenous change, the nature of institutions, rational choice and norms, and structure and agency. The notion of evolution came into social science from Charles Darwin's (1809 -1882) theory of biological evolution which stated that species of organisms have evolved from simpler organisms through the

process of variation, and natural selection. Proposed by August Comte (1798-1857), Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) and Spencer (1820-1903), the basic assumption of this theory is that change is a characteristic feature of human society, the present observed condition of the society presumed to be the result of change in the past. It also holds that change results from operations of forces within the society or culture. Cairney (2013) suggests that evolution in public policy could be used to describe the following processes:

- The cumulative, long-term development of policy solutions.
- Major disruptions in the way that policy makers think about, and try to solve, policy problems.
- The maintenance or radical reform of policy-making institutions.
- Emergent behavior within complex systems.
- The trial-and-error strategies adopted by actors, such as policy entrepreneurs, when adapting to their environment.
- The coming together of multiple factors to create the conditions for major policy change.

Evolutionary theories are also based on the assumption that society gradually change from simple beginnings into even more complex forms. According to the evolutionary theorists, social change means progress towards something better. They see change as positive and beneficial. To them the evolutionary process implied that societies would necessarily reach new and higher levels of civilization. Mondal Puja in an article published on <http://www.yourarticlelibrary.com> accessed on 23/12/2015, summarized the following assumptions of evolutionary theory.

- That change is inevitable and natural
- That change is gradual and continuous
- That change is sequential and in certain stages
- That all successive stages of change, are higher over preceding stages, thus evolution is progressive
- That forces of change are inherent in the object
- That stages of change are non-reversible
- That the direction of change is from simple to complex, from homogeneity to heterogeneity,

from undifferentiated to the differentiated in form and function.

- That all societies pass through same stages of development.

According to Kingdon (1984, 1995), the policy process consists of three separate streams – problems (agenda setting), policies (ideas or solutions) and politics (receptivity to solutions) – and major policy change may only occur when they come together during a brief ‘window of opportunity’. The problem stream provides the potential for major policy-making disruptions and non-incremental change when there are lurches of attention, often caused by a combination of novelty (including ‘focusing events’) and latent interest (Kingdon, 1984. p 103; Durant and Diehl, 1989; Birkland, 1997; Cairney, 2012. pp.187–8, 234; Cairney et al, 2012.p. 222). This shift of attention is a necessary but insufficient condition for major change. Change also requires that a feasible policy solution exists – and solutions cannot be produced at short notice. They often develop over years or decades. To deal with this disconnect between attention and the time it takes to produce solutions, communities of policy specialists develop proposals in anticipation of problems (Kingdon, 1984, pp 122–4). Kingdon describes the time and effort it takes for feasible policy solutions to develop; they whirl around in the ‘policy primeval soup’, proposed by one actor then ‘softened up’ by many participants to ‘recombine familiar elements’ and change their ‘technical feasibility’, ‘value acceptability’ or anticipated costs (1984: 138–46; 1995: 226–7). ‘Evolution’ describes the slow progress of an idea towards acceptability within the policy community. It is complete when policy makers are receptive to the solution and have the motive and opportunity to adopt it (Kingdon, 1995, pp. 165–6; Lieberman, 2002). Policy changes, but only when new solutions are made more consistent with existing practices. The role of policy entrepreneurs is important but limited: they are the well-informed and well-connected insiders who provide the knowledge and tenacity to help bring the ‘streams’ together – but as ‘surfers waiting for the big wave’ rather than people who control policy processes (Kingdon, 1995, 225; 1984, p. 173; Lustick, 2011, p. 204). Baumgartner and Jones (1993, pp. 35–7) explained that policy monopolies exist in

subsystems when some actors are able to create or maintain institutions whose rules reflect a particular policy image. They advocate the importance of creating multiple 'venues' with the potential for the losers in policy disputes in one venue to challenge the status quo and seek more sympathetic audiences in others. These challenges are possible when groups pursue new policy images and try to encourage greater attention and participation in other venues. The success of such challenges is significant in number, but rare as a proportion of government activity, because policy makers must ignore most issues. They also exhibit 'selective attention' – when their existing view of how the world works, and should work, limits further the problems to which they pay attention and the solutions they are willing to consider. Change often requires a critical mass of attention and pressure to overcome the conservatism of decision makers and to shift their attention from competing problems (Jones & Baumgartner, 2005, pp. 19–20, 48–51). With regard to the study, evolutionary curriculum policy is a gradual and continuous change in curriculum practice. Advocates of this theory, belief that change takes time because people become accustomed to the status quo and prefer to make modifications in new behavior in small and gradual steps.

Revolutionary Theory:

According to the revolutionary theory advocated by Karl Max, social change is a build-up accumulated tension which leads to a revolutionary eruption that is sudden, rapid and initiated by members of the society. "We live in an age of unprecedented change and transformation in which nearly every aspect of modern life is affected by the rapidity and irreversibility of such changes" (Chia, 1999.p.209). More and more organizations are under an increasing pressure to respond to even more dramatic changes in order to remain viable, profitable or attractive to stakeholders (Kanter,Stein&Jick 1992, D'Aveni 1995, Nadler 1998). Thus the ability to cope with such radically, i.e. discontinuous changing context, is a key variable for success, performance and growth (Greenwood &Hinings 1996, Brown & Eisenhardt 1998, Nadler &Shaw 1995). This therefore means that organizational discontinuity

is a major challenge in present organizational practice. Revolutionary change could come about as a result of legislative changes such as the passage of a new statute, of judicial changes stemming from court decisions and the common law, or regulatory rule changes enacted by regulatory agencies and of constitutional rule changes that alter the rules by which other rules are made. Revolutionary change is a radical type of change characterized by a specific phenomenon of behavioral dynamics noticeable in sudden changes in the variables of an entity. Usually the alterations culminate in a clear break with the previous development. Within this break, in the path of regular development, entirely new qualities arise. Such novelties cannot be desired from the former states of the entity changed by them.(Nadler and Tushman, 1995). Another characteristic of radical change or discontinuity as discussed by Strebel (1990) is that it consists of rapid progress, and devastating decline. Ansoff (1979) contended that revolutionary change can be highly dynamic and turbulent as well. Revolutionary theorists believe that individuals and groups with conflicting interests are bound to be at conflict. In Cameroon, since the colonialists and the educated Cameroonian elites had mutually different interests, they were bound to experience conflict and the victory of the new class introduced a new historical period. Such a historical period for curriculum policy in Cameroon is the post-colonial period which was expected to experience revolutionary change in curriculum policy.

A Proposed Framework On Curriculum Policy Implementation:

As illustrated in this paper, implementation is a multidirectional process entailing continuous interaction between policy makers, the public, and implementers –such as administrations at different levels, independent organizations and those working in schools (principals, teachers, etc.). In this process, we have seen that there are a range of determinants that hold across education systems and schools' policies in developed and emerging countries. Acknowledging the effect these determinants have on the implementation process is crucial if policymakers want education policies to be implemented effectively and reach the classrooms. A narrow definition of education

policy implementation could strictly refer to the strategy outlining how to effectively bring about change in education –but it is not enough. In fact, for the policy to be effectively implemented, it is important that all determinant be taken into consideration and aligned throughout the policy process. For this purpose, we have grouped the determinants in four dimensions and defined a framework that suggests that for effective curriculum policy implementation, there needs to be:

- a) **Smart Policy Design:** a policy that is well justified, and offers a logical and feasible solution to the curriculum policy problem will determine to a great extent whether it can be implemented and how. For instance, if a new curriculum requires the use of high technology equipment which schools cannot afford, the policy may fail to be implemented unless some budget is available at the national or local level.
- b) **Inclusive Stakeholder Engagement:** Whether and how key stakeholders are recognized and included in the implementation process is crucial to its effectiveness. For example, engaging teachers, students, parents, employers and relevant stakeholders, in discussions early on in the policy process will have long-term benefits.
- c) **A Conducive Institutional, Policy And Societal Context:** An effective policy implementation process recognizes the influence of the existing policy environment, the educational governance and institutional settings and external context. Implementation is more likely to take effect when context is acknowledged.
- d) **A Coherent Implementation Strategy to Reach Schools:** The strategy outlines concrete measures that bring all the determinants together in a coherent manner to make the policy operational at the school level.

The coherent curriculum implementation strategy is surrounded by the determinants that influence and shape the process. It is a central tool to stir the curriculum implementation process, but a well-designed strategy is not sufficient to guarantee effective implementation. While

presenting a framework that is directed to curriculum policy makers, it is important to keep in mind that implementing curriculum policy is multidirectional. The process is piloted by a group of actors close with or mandated by policy makers to reach specific objectives, but it can be influenced by actors at various points of the education system, such as schools, parents, local or regional education authorities. It must also be noted that curriculum policy implementation always needs to be contextualized: the process' features vary because it is embedded in the structures of a given education system at a given time, with particular actors, and around a specific educational policy. The central role of context shows that 'there is no one-size-fits-all model' for implementing education policy. One must thus pay attention to the specificity of the curriculum policy, stakeholders and local context to analyze or make recommendations about the process. Yet a common framework can help to structure the analysis, and guide the curriculum implementation process. With a generic framework, we hope to provide a tool that helps identify and analyse the determinants of success in education policy implementation.

This framework is proposed for curriculum implementation as it could be used as a starting point for analysis and support in the process of launching and implementing a curriculum policy to ensure it reaches schools. The argument is based on the fact that policy change goes hand in hand with policy implementation. Passing policies does not necessarily mean that the desired outcomes are achieved as policy implementation plays an important part of the process. Numerous scholars have come up with a list of conditions that ought to be present in order to facilitate successful implementation. However, challenges remain as the situational context as well as beliefs and priorities of implementing agents differ across policy areas and systems. Therefore, no 'one-size-fits-all' solutions exist. It is important to realise that there is diversity in implementation research and hence researchers should not look for one common theory. Instead, it should be sufficient to develop partial theories, which mix and match the most convincing elements of different theories, depending on the policy area and context. It is evident that both policy-making and implementation are composed

of multiple layers, (be it institutional, local, regional, state, or local) which points to the complexity of this research and practice (Gornitzka, Kogan and Amaral 2005).

Conclusion:

The paper attempted to provide insight on curriculum policy implementation based on prescriptions of theories of changed. The choice of the theories used for the study provided practical implementation tips in accordance to contribution made by earlier authors in the field of curriculum implementation. Basically, these theories helped in the identification and understanding of policy implementation strategies. They provided relative understanding as to the successes, failures and prospect in each Endeavour in line with theoretical principles and made recommendations for future practices regarding policy implementation for a better education system. The political approach advocated that policies should be initiated and controlled from the top. In Cameroon curriculum policies are initiated by the government centrally and sent for implementation in the regions. The control from the centre is to ensure that all stakeholders are involved and are accountable. However the rational approach held that these policies should be initiated from the stakeholders to the government to ensure participation and representation. In consideration of the strength of the approaches discussed, the study takes an eclectic stand on policy implementation by advocating the adoption of the best practices in both approaches. The essence is based on the argument that the degree of success of curriculum implementation depends on the scope to which several factors are considered in the process. Reforms can be good but their implementation may be inhibited by the way they are delivered. Finally, the three conceptions of policy change theories identified in the study as conservative, evolutionary, and revolutionary can be used to describe the trends in the implementation of curriculum policy in Cameroon from the pre-colonial period to present. This can be traced from the introduction of schooling in Cameroon, through the colonial period when the first education law of 1907 was enacted to the 1998 Law providing guidelines for education in Cameroon.

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