Research Article

GOOD GOVERNANCE IN SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION AND EDUCATIONAL OUTCOME: INSIGHTS FROM SELECTED PRE-TERTIARY EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN THE ANGLOPHONE REGIONS OF CAMEROON

Prosper Mbelle Mekolle

Senior Lecturer of Educational Administration, Planning and Policy, Faculty of Education, University of Buea, Cameroon

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, educational systems worldwide have faced growing pressure to prepare young people to contribute meaningfully to personal well-being and societal progress. However, persistent disparities in educational outcomes and youth behaviour across Cameroon's Anglophone regions have raised concerns about the effectiveness of school governance, highlighting the need for research into administrative practices with potential to drive improvement. Anchored in Equity Theory, this study focused on three governance dimensions: equity practices, service quality, and stakeholder engagement. A mixed-methods descriptive-correlational design was employed, using a structured questionnaire, semi-structured interview guide, and document analysis checklist. Schools and participants were selected through purposive and proportionate sampling techniques. Of the original 500 teachers, 30 principals, and 30 PTA presidents from 30 government secondary schools in Fako and Mezam Divisions, data were retained from 219 teachers, 13 principals, and 13 PTA presidents across 13 schools that met a 65% minimum threshold on governance and educational outcome standards. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, Chi-square tests, and Pearson correlation via SPSS Version 25.0, while qualitative data were subjected to thematic and content analysis. Teachers reported commendable practices supporting equity, quality, and stakeholder engagement, including fair admission, targeted learner support, well-maintained facilities, professional staff, inclusive decision-making, and regular PTA meetings. Results showed a high mean score for educational outcomes (M = 4.03, SD = 0.63), significantly associated with equity (r = .582, p < .01), service quality (r = .621, p < .01), and stakeholder engagement (r = .556, p < .01). Documentary records supported these findings, with GCE pass rates averaging 79.2%, attendance and completion at 84%, over 70% proficiency in literacy and numeracy, and satisfactory student moral behaviour. Qualitative themes included inclusive resource allocation, infrastructure improvement, professional support, and participatory leadership. The study concludes that schools embedding fairness, quality, and inclusive governance significantly enhance learner outcomes and institutional resilience. It recommends targeted support for disadvantaged youths, investment in infrastructure and teacher development, and the promotion of participatory governance to improve outcomes in the study area and similar contexts.

INTRODUCTION

Education is a cornerstone for individual and societal development; it constitutes a powerful means for the social and economic emancipation of disadvantaged individuals and social groups. The effectiveness of an educational system is often gauged through its outcomes, which encompass both academic achievement and broader societal impacts. In many developing countries, attaining higher levels of educational outcomes is often hampered by various challenges such as inadequate resources, poor infrastructure, and socio-political instability (World Bank, 2018a).

In the Anglophone regions of Cameroon, ongoing political unrest has significantly impacted the educational landscape, with grave implications to individual and societal progress. Several factors contribute to a school system's ability to achieve strong educational outcomes. The literature identifies key explanatory elements, including teacher competence, curriculum rigour, a supportive learning environment (West et al., 2016), strong leadership (Leithwood et al., 2004), and adequate physical resources. The quality of these elements is largely determined by the governance structures that prevail within an educational system. As a result, good governance has emerged as a fundamental component in enhancing the effectiveness of education systems. It involves organisational management

practices that are people-focused, results-driven and which serves the greatest good of all. Research shows that good governance is associated with improved educational outcomes, including enhanced student performance and increased satisfaction among stakeholders (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2015).

Despite offering significant potentials, there exists a huge knowledge gap on the use of good governance in educational administration in Cameroon and studies that come closer to the topic have focused almost exclusively on immediate school outputs, overlooking the true important long-term aspects of education on the lives of individuals. This study bridges this gap by investigating the use of good governance in the administration of pre-tertiary educational institutions and how this determines educational outcome in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon. Focus is on equity, service quality, and stakeholder engagement—topical issues reflected in Goal 4 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDGs) to which sufficient attention must be paid when appraising children's educational outcomes in any region.

While these principles are vital in realizing an educational environment that is accessible, fair, and conducive to quality learning, it is important to ensure that this conceptual focus is not misconstrued as undermining the relevance of other essential parameters of good governance, such as transparency and accountability, which although not constituting main variables of this study have been given implicit attention in the paper. Aim is to provide insights into the potential for good governance to enhance overall educational quality and outcome in the region and in contexts marked by socio-political challenges.

Background of the Study

Country Context and the Educational Landscape in Anglophone Cameroon

Cameroon is a lower-middle-income country located in Central Africa. The country has a population of over 27.9 million and ranks among the most ethnically and culturally diverse nations in Africa, with more than 250 ethnic groups and languages represented. Over 60% of the population falls within the age group of 0-24 years, which represents a significant demographic that requires robust educational services to support their development and integration into the society. A significant portion of the population—approximately 39%—lives below the international poverty line. In some regions, this figure rises to over 70% (OCHA, 2024). Agriculture constitutes the primary economic activity, employing 62% of the labour force. The unemployment rate among the economically active population was 3.7% in 2023, largely due to sluggish economic growth. Also, the inflation rate is high, reaching 7.4% in 2023 (African Development Bank Group, 2024), making it challenging for many households to meet their basic needs and support their children's educational requirements.

Cameroon has a unique dual-medium education system shaped by its colonial heritage and bicultural nature. These include the French-speaking sub-system, predominant in the majority of the eight Francophone regions and influenced by French educational traditions, and an English-speaking sub-system, primarily found in the two minority Anglophone regions of the North West and South West, which follows the British educational model. This dual legacy has enriched the educational landscape with diverse opportunities and has contributed significantly in the promotion of bilingualism and multiculturalism, giving the country a distinct advantage among its neighbours. However, the potential gains in educational outcomes resulting from this arrangement have not been fully realised. Resources are insufficient to effectively support both systems and are unequally distributed, with the English-speaking sub-system at a disadvantage.

The inadequacy and lack of fairness in resource allocation has greatly undermined access and quality of education, especially in rural areas. Schools in remote areas primarily rely on community teachers, who often lack the skills necessary for effective teaching. As a result, many children continue to experience learning poverty, meaning they are unable to read and comprehend a short, age-appropriate text by age 10. The World Bank (2022) estimates that 72% of children in Cameroon at late primary age are not proficient in reading, and 70% do not achieve the minimum proficiency level (MPL) in reading at the end of primary school—mainly due to poor learning. Gender disparities persist, with girls facing significant obstacles stemming from cultural beliefs, poverty, early marriage, pregnancy and lack of hygiene management facilities in schools. Statistics for secondary education for example indicate the existence of a gender gap of 6% at that level, with the situation favouring boys; only 42.5% of girls go through secondary education (United Nations Population Fund-UNFPA News, 2023).

Further constituting a strong barrier to access is the rising cost of schooling. Mekolle (2019) provides information on household expenditures for key educational items based on textual review and survey data collected from a number of secondary schools in Anglophone Cameroon. The data shows that during the 2018/2019 academic year, households spent an average of 90,500 FCFA per child in Form Five at government secondary schools (for general education), and 113,000 FCFA for a child at the same grade in government technical secondary schools. These amounts covered registration fees, Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) levies, textbooks, and General Certificate of Education (GCE) examination registration charges. However, they did not include expenditures on other essential school materials and education items, such as uniforms, exercise books, school bags, transport fares, healthcare, meals, and accommodation rents. For faith-based secondary schools, households spent an average of 433,000 FCFA per child in Form Five during the same period. The amount was spread across various schooling items, including registration fees, tuition, boarding and meals, internal examination fees, textbooks, FENASCO dues, special subject practical, and GCE examination registration charges. Today, a number of items have been added to the list of demands made by schools and the cost of school materials have increased, making education more unaffordable for many households. This situation has compelled many parents to seek for apprenticeship and other none-educational alternatives for their children.

The Anglophone regions of Cameroon have experienced ongoing social and political unrest since 2017, stemming from long-standing grievances related to perceived exclusion and the management of education and legal systems. Key immediate issues include claims that the government assigns native French speakers who often lack strong English proficiency to teach in Anglophone schools, as well as the use of French in courts and official documentation. The conflict has greatly affected education in the region, leaving children vulnerable to idleness and various protection risks, including arbitrary arrest and detention, child marriage, juvenile delinquency, violence, abuse, recruitment into armed groups, and substance use. Statistics indicate that as of September 2023, out of 6,970 schools in the North West and South West regions, 2,875 (41%) were non-functional. In January 2024, the approximate number of children affected by the closure of schools stood at 246,354 (Cameroon Education Cluster, 2024). Besides its impact on education, the conflict has led to widespread displacement, increased poverty, and significant loss of trust in governmental institutions. An uncertain atmosphere continues to

characterise the region, with bleak prospect for continuous education and for a bright future for many children.

The government of Cameroon, along with its international development partners, has implemented several measures to improve access, equity, and quality of education in the country. Among these initiatives is the implementation of the Education and Training Sector Strategy, from 2013 to 2020 (Republic of Cameroon, 2013), as well as the Cameroon Education Reform Support Project for basic education, implemented from 2018 to 2022. This project, launched by the World Bank, further aimed to increase accountability at the school level and strengthen institutional capacity and management. It covered the entire country, with a special focus on the most disadvantaged areas, including the Anglophone regions (World Bank, 2018b).

In 2022, the Ministry of Basic Education adopted the ICT Policy and Strategic Framework for Basic Education aimed to incorporate information and communication technology into the education system to improve the quality of teaching and learning, and overall educational outcome (Ministry of Basic Education, 2022). The growing emphasis on decentralisation, as outlined in Mekolle (2024) has granted schools greater autonomy in decision-making processes. Educational institutions now enjoy increased control over budgets, curriculum implementation, and teacher recruitment, within the framework of established guidelines. Meanwhile, security measures have also been stepped up in the Anglophone regions, with troops deployed to guard critical educational infrastructure and ensure safe learning environments for students.

Through these initiatives, the government has ensured a more equitable allocation of educational resources, equipping many schools with technological and inclusive devices to enhance the quality of services and the participation of children with special needs. Decentralisation policies have also significantly empowered school administrators and created fertile grounds for the involvement of teachers, parents, students, local authorities and other community stakeholders in educational management. These measures hold promise, but notable challenges remain, which necessitates collective efforts to unlock the full potential of the education system to empower all Cameroonian children to thrive in a globalised world. Good governance offers significant opportunities to harness these efforts.

Statement of the Problem

In today's complex societies, governments are expected to take advantage of education to equip children with the skills and knowledge necessary to adapt effectively to their environments and positively contribute to global efforts aimed at achieving a better world for all. The outcome of educational efforts should be well-rounded individuals who are not only academically proficient but also culturally aware, socially responsible and committed to civic engagement, societal peace and prosperity. In essence, investments in education should be returned with lifelong learners who are prepared to navigate an ever-changing world and make positive impacts on both local and global scales.

In the Anglophone regions of Cameroon, however, despite government efforts, learning processes continues to fall short in empowering children to lead meaningful lives in an increasingly challenging context. Many children, especially in remote areas are out of school and dropout rates are high, mainly due to insecurity and the financial difficulties associated with enrolling children in schools in relatively safer locations. Besides, a significant number of school leavers exhibit learning poverty and an inability to effectively demonstrate the skills and competencies relevant to their educational levels (World Bank, 2022). This situation has left many Anglophone youths ill-suited for the workforce and for

continued education at higher levels, leading them to adopt harmful coping mechanisms such as prostitution, illegal cross-border trade, kidnapping for ransom, and enlistment in non-state armed groups.

Poor educational outcome is associated with dire repercussions; disenfranchised youths increasingly turn to radical ideologies or engage in civil disobedience, perpetuating cycles of violence and instability. The urgency to address these issues is paramount, as the current trajectory not only jeopardises the future of the youth in the Anglophone regions but also poses a threat to social cohesion and peace in the larger context of Cameroonian society. This study brings to light the understanding necessary to tackle this problem.

Study Objectives

This study sought to determine the interplay of good governance practices in the administration of pre-tertiary education establishments and the extent to which these practices predict desired educational outcomes in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon. Specifically, the study set out to:

1. Verify the extent to which school administrators integrate equity practices in pre-tertiary education institutions and how these relate to educational outcome.
2. Assess the degree to which school administrators prioritise service quality in pre-tertiary education institutions and its influence on educational outcome.
3. Determine the level of stakeholder engagement in the administration of pre-tertiary education institutions and its relationship with educational outcome.

Hypotheses

1. Administrative consideration for equity in pre-tertiary education institutions does not significantly enhance educational outcome.
2. Considerations for service quality in pre-tertiary education institutions does not significantly predict educational outcome.
3. There is no significant relationship between stakeholder engagement in the administration of pre-tertiary education institutions and educational outcome.

Justification of the Study

This study is justified on the basis of education as a human right and the need for social justice in education. International legal instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 26) (United Nations, 1948) and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (Article 17) (Organization of African Unity, 1981) provides for education as a basic human right. In Cameroon, this principle is enshrined in the country's constitution and reinforced through national legislation, underscoring the state's responsibility to ensure access to quality education for all its citizens. Also, Goal 4 of the SDGs (United Nations, 2015) emphasizes the provision of inclusive and equitable quality education, as well as lifelong learning opportunities for all. This highlights the need for social justice in education, which demands that all children, regardless of background or circumstance, have equal access to educational opportunities that enable them to reach their full potential. However, the reality faced by many children in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon starkly contrast with these ideals, presenting a moral and ethical issue which makes it imperative for research efforts to be directed toward finding sustainable solutions.

Besides, Cameroon faces the pressing need for national unity and integration of its diverse linguistic and cultural groups which it hopes to achieve by 2035, as part of its long-term development

vision (Republic of Cameroon, 2009). The Anglophone regions, historically underserved and now experiencing ongoing crises, have become a significant focal point in the quest for national cohesion. Education constitutes a powerful tool for promoting social integration and shared national identity, but the prevailing disparities in educational outcomes in the Anglophone regions undermines the potential of education to unite and transform the society as envisioned by the country's development framework. Effective governance in school administration that prioritises

quality education and the holistic development of students could enhance educational outcome and, by extension, social stability, unity and cohesion. Tailoring research and shedding light to enhance comprehension of the subject is imperative.

Finally, the study is justified by the need for evidence-based policy recommendations that can inform educational reforms in Cameroon. With a growing body of research on governance and educational outcomes in other parts of the world, it is essential to develop a localized understanding of how governance in the

Figure 1: The link between good governance in school administration and educational outcome
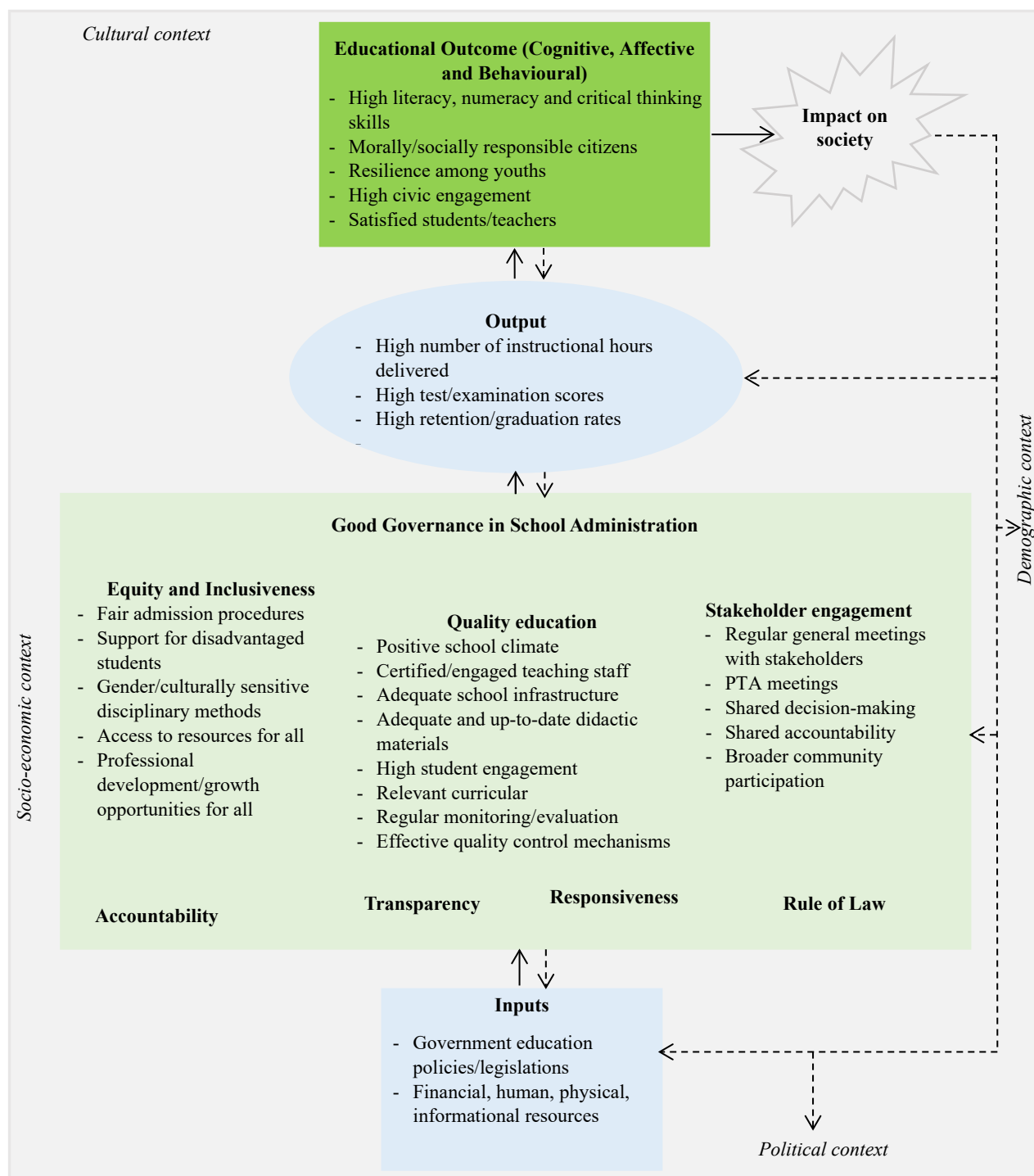
Source: Adapted from OECD (2019)

Anglophone regions of Cameroon affects educational outcomes. This research will provide insights into the role of school leadership, administration, and policy implementation in improving learning outcomes, thereby contributing to the development of a more robust, inclusive, and responsive education system that serves the needs of all children, particularly those in marginalized and conflict-affected areas.

Conceptual Review

What is Good Governance and why is it Essential in School Administration?

Enhancing school systems and ensuring meaningful short and long-term impacts on students' lives largely depend on the quality of leadership exercised by school administrators. Educational administration, which involves guiding human efforts and systematically managing educational resources to achieve established goals, functions as the backbone of an effective school system. It orchestrates the seamless coordination of resources, personnel, and strategies to grow an enriching learning environment for all students (Hallinger & Heck, 2010). Without strong administrative leadership, schools may struggle to achieve optimal results, even when provided with adequate financial and material resources (Inyang, 2020). School administrators, particularly principals, play a pivotal role in decision-making, especially ensuring discipline, maximising resource utilisation, and setting high performance expectations for both teachers and students.

In this regard, good governance is critical in school administration as it strengthens institutional capacity and ensures efficiency in decision-making and leadership practices. Good governance is the responsible exercise of power and the effective management of institutions, systems, or nations in a way that upholds human rights, adheres to ethical principles, and prioritises the achievement of the common good. Kadir (2019, p.2) sees it as *"An act by which political process translates to the will of the people into public policies by establishing rules that will give room for efficient delivery of services to all citizens of the country."* Effective governance practices equally prioritise the needs and well-being of all citizens or stakeholders of an institution; it ensures that desirable outcomes are not only promptly achieved but that their impact can be sustained over a long period of time.

Good governance at any level of organisational management hinges on the observance of a number of principles, including transparency, accountability, stakeholder engagement, equity and inclusiveness, high-quality service delivery, adherence to rule of law, effectiveness, and responsiveness. The appropriate integration of these principles in governance processes vis-à-vis the specific needs and contextual realities nurture a system that achieve goals efficiently and sustainably (Mekolle, 2024; UNDP, 1997). Particularly relevant for schools operating in contexts marked by socio-political crises or inequality is a commitment to equity and inclusiveness, quality education, and active stakeholder engagement—all of which play critical roles in restoring trust and shaping educational outcomes. Figure 1 illustrates this relationship.

Equity refers to the fair allocation of resources, opportunities, and support, while inclusiveness focuses on policies and practices that embrace diversity and address the individual needs of all students. An equitable and inclusive education system ensures that all learners, regardless of gender, geographic or ethnic background, or socioeconomic status, have equal access to education and opportunities for a successful future. Governance policies that uphold these values addresses the needs of schools in crisis-affected areas and ensures that disadvantaged groups, such as girls or internally displaced children are not left behind. Goal is

to enable every child to participate fully in the educational process (UNESCO, 2017a).

At the school-based level, equity and inclusiveness aim to close achievement gaps and address disparities in educational outcomes through targeted interventions such as remedial instruction, personalised learning approaches, and support services. Schools upholding these values also develop gender-and culturally sensitive policies, establish support frameworks for children with special needs, and allocate resources equitably to benefit all learners. Such practices create a level playing field where all children can thrive and reach their full developmental potential. In addition, they contribute to the achievement of broader societal goals, including social cohesion and national progress (UNESCO. 2017b). School systems that fail to uphold these principles risk perpetuating cycles of marginalization and exacerbating societal divisions.

Quality education, intrinsically linked to good governance in school administration, encompasses several elements, including the nature of the school climate—measured through student and teacher perceptions of safety, inclusivity, and support systems that foster a positive learning environment; teacher quality—assessed through the percentage of certified teachers and ongoing professional development hours; school infrastructure—evaluated by the student-to-teacher ratio and the availability of learning resources such as textbooks and computers; and student engagement—tracked by attendance rates and participation in curricular and co-curricular activities that address the holistic development of the child and societal needs. These indicators collectively provide a comprehensive picture of a school's commitment to high-quality education and effective governance (UNESCO, 2016).

The importance of quality education in determining an individual's life chances and contributions to the society cannot be overemphasized. Quality education promotes creativity and ensures the acquisition of foundational literacy and numeracy skills, as well as analytical, problem-solving, and other high-level cognitive, interpersonal, and social skills. The result is high student academic performance, measured by standardized test scores and graduation rates, and an improved ability of citizens to lead healthy, fulfilled lives, make informed decisions, and respond effectively to local and global challenges (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2020).

Education stakeholders are individuals, groups, or organizations that have a vested interest in the planning, implementation, governance, and outcomes of an education system. Education stakeholders contribute to and are affected by educational policies, decisions, and practices at various levels, from local to national and even global contexts. In the context of public schools, the literature identifies primary stakeholders as students, parents, teachers, non-teaching staff, and local communities (Birdthistle et al., 2007; Nishimura, 2017; Ramos et al., 2023). Effective school governance requires that school officials actively involve these entities in decision-making processes to identify and prioritise key education skills issues, and to ensure that policies are informed by diverse perspectives and grounded in practical realities (OECD, 2024).

Involving stakeholders in school governance creates a sense of ownership and accountability, both of which are essential for the sustainability of educational initiatives. The literature features several studies that examine various categories of education stakeholders at the school level, with a general consensus highlighting the positive impact of stakeholder engagement on both school functioning and student outcomes. For example, Mitra (2004) found that giving students a voice in school-related matters contributes to the development of key competencies such

as leadership, teamwork, and interpersonal communication. Sarafidou and Chatziioannidis (2013) observed that teacher participation in decision-making processes enhances job satisfaction and strengthens teachers' sense of self-efficacy. Similarly, Henderson and Mapp (2002), in a synthesis of multiple studies, demonstrated the positive influence of family and community engagement on student achievement. When parents and local communities are actively involved, they are better positioned to advocate for improved educational resources, support teachers, and contribute to maintaining a positive and productive learning environment.

Educational Outcome – a Gauge for Education System's Effectiveness

Educational outcomes serve as a lens through which the success or failure of education systems can be objectively assessed. They not only reflect the academic progress of learners but also speak to the effectiveness of governance structures, institutional practices, and resource management within schools. As Fullan (2007) points out, education systems should not be evaluated merely by academic achievement, but by their ability to produce individuals who contribute meaningfully to economic progress and societal cohesion.

Educational outcomes refer to the culmination of the concrete learning gains that students are expected to exhibit during or after undergoing structured educational experiences. They embody the ultimate results of the learning process. Spady (1994) defines outcomes as *"clear learning results that we want students to demonstrate at the end of significant learning experiences,"* highlighting that these are not abstract aspirations, but measurable and observable competencies.

Several types of educational outcomes have been discussed in the literature (Spady, 1994; Hattie, 2009). This paper conveys three domains of educational outcomes which are especially central to the current discourse on education governance: cognitive, affective, and behavioural. Cognitive outcomes encompass foundational academic competencies, such as literacy, numeracy, critical thinking, and problem-solving which are central to lifelong learning and employability and which form the bedrock of a functional and progressive education system. In many countries, these are often assessed through standardised assessments such as the Cameroon General Certificate of Education (GCE). Good governance practices in schools such as fair teacher recruitment, equitable resource allocation, and inclusive leadership play a pivotal role in shaping the learning environment that promotes cognitive development (Leithwood et al., 2004).

While the cognitive domain ensures academic readiness, affective outcomes shape the values, attitudes, and emotional capacities necessary for social interaction and democratic participation. These include empathy, genuineness, respect for diversity, ethical responsibility, emotional regulation, perseverance, self-awareness, and a sense of belonging (Hattie, 2009), often measured through teacher rating scales, peer assessment, etc. In recent years, marked by social fragmentation, rising intolerance, and conflict, education systems around the world have increasingly focused on promoting these outcomes by operating school environments that nurture empathetic, resilient, and socially responsible citizens. Nussbaum (2010) argues that affective education focused on emotional intelligence, moral reasoning, and intercultural understanding is vital for the health of democratic societies.

The behavioural domain of educational outcomes encompasses the observable actions, life choices, and long-term trajectories that learners pursue as a result of their schooling. It extends beyond academic achievement to include school completion, transition to higher education or vocational training, employability, civic participation, and personal conduct. Behavioural outcomes also reflect learners' preparedness for civic life and their capacity to demonstrate resilience in the face of adversity. Dewey (1916) emphasized that education should prepare individuals for participatory citizenship—a goal that demands inclusive, values-based schooling environments capable of nurturing these broader competencies.

From the foregoing, it is useful to understand educational outcomes as a holistic reflection of the strengths and effectiveness of an education system. The significance embedded in the various domains of educational outcomes underscores the need for educational leaders and stakeholders to adopt multidimensional frameworks for assessing these outcomes. Such approach is essential for guiding reforms that promote equity, inclusion, and quality learning, ensuring that no child is left behind.

Theoretical Review

This study is grounded on Adams' (1963) Equity Theory which provides a social-psychological explanation of how fairness perceptions influence individual motivation and behaviour within organizations. The theory posits that individuals evaluate their relationships by comparing the ratio of their inputs (such as effort, time, experience, and commitment) to the outcomes they receive (such as recognition, influence, or rewards) relative to others in similar roles or contexts. When individuals perceive inequity, reflected in either being under-rewarded or over-rewarded, they experience psychological tension and are motivated to restore balance, including through protests as is often the case with the under-rewarded (Jost et al., 2008; Wakslak et al., 2007).

In the context of this study, Equity Theory supposes that when school leaders ensure equitable access to resources, fair participation in decision-making and inclusive treatment of all stakeholders, they uphold the principles of distributive and procedural justice, which enhance both morale and overall educational outcome (Greenberg, 1987; Folger & Konovsky, 1989). For example, equitable quality resource allocation to rural or crisis-affected schools, or the inclusion of underrepresented voices in decisions, signals respect and recognition, which motivate stakeholders to contribute more meaningfully to school goals and societal wellbeing. Conversely, when teachers, parents and students perceive that governance mechanisms appear biased, unresponsive, or exclusionary, they may reduce their engagement, lower their performance, or lose trust in the institution, which negatively affect educational outcomes. Equity Theory, in this light, not only supports the conceptualisation of good governance as fairness-driven but also reinforces the idea that perceived justice within school systems is fundamental to achieving quality education, cohesive school communities and improved learner performance.

Empirical Review

The empirical review examines previous studies that have explored the relationship between governance and educational outcomes in various contexts. In Cameroon, Mekolle (2024) identifies serious governance challenges within the educational sector, including inequitable resource distribution, corruption, and a lack of accountability, which have severely impeded the realization of quality educational outcomes and point to an urgent need for administrative reforms grounded in good governance principles.

Mukhopadhyay and Das (2021) investigated the influence of governance indicators on primary school completion rates across thirty-four sub-Saharan African countries. Using cross-country regression analyses, their study demonstrated a significant

positive relationship between governance quality and school completion rates, implying that variations in primary education outcomes in SSA are largely attributable to differences in governance practices, particularly those that enhance institutional accountability and service delivery.

Li (2024) focused on educational equity as a dimension of governance and its influence on access to higher education through educator interviews and a review of global and local literature. The study found that factors such as resource distribution, family background, and education policies significantly affect access to higher education. Educational equity emerged as essential not only for individual development but also as a measure of broader social justice. The study recommended strategic measures to enhance equity and expand access to higher education opportunities.

Sidharth and Khan (2025) examined the impact of state-level governance quality on educational outcomes in BRICS countries over a decade. Using the Worldwide Governance Indicators and a random effects model, they found that regulatory quality and government effectiveness were strongly correlated with metrics such as tertiary enrollment, employability, and competitiveness. Similarly, Hanushek and Woessmann (2020) showed that educational quality is far more critical to individual and national development than years of schooling alone. When quality was added to a base model, the explained variance in GDP per capita across 31 countries rose from 33% to 73%, rendering the effect of schooling duration largely insignificant.

Ramos et al. (2023) examined the impact of stakeholder engagement on academic performance in over 40,000 Brazilian public schools. The study revealed that sustained engagement of key stakeholders, particularly teachers, students and parents resulted in significant improvements in student performance. Schools that actively involved all stakeholder categories saw up to a 45% increase in achievement scores.

These studies collectively underscore the importance of strong governance structures in advancing education systems, particularly in emerging economies. However, despite these valuable insights, notable research gaps remain. Many studies focus on broad national or regional analyses, with limited empirical attention to governance practices at the school level, particularly in conflict-affected or underserved regions like Anglophone Cameroon. Furthermore, few studies integrate multiple governance indicators within a single analytical framework. This study fills these gaps by examining how good governance principles are operationalised in the administration of pre-tertiary education institutions in Anglophone Cameroon and the extent to which these practices influence educational outcomes.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive survey design within a mixed-methods research framework, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. The use of a mixed-methods approach enabled the triangulation of data from different sources, which strengthened the validity and credibility of the findings (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

Area of the Study

This study was conducted in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon, which comprise the North West and South West Regions. Contextual issues and the educational landscape of these regions were highlighted earlier in this paper. Specifically, the

research was carried out in Mezam Division in the North West Region and Fako Division in the South West Region. The study was not intended to generalise findings across the entire Anglophone region, but rather to generate in-depth insights into the relationship between governance practices and educational outcomes, and to explore best practices that promote effective school governance. Notwithstanding, these divisions were purposively selected based on their representativeness of the Anglophone educational subsystem, administrative diversity, and socio-political significance within Cameroon's decentralisation framework.

Fako Division, which hosts the South West regional capital (Buea), is home to several mission-critical administrative institutions and a diverse range of secondary schools. Likewise, Mezam Division, home to Bamenda, the regional capital of the North West Region was selected due to its strategic role in the Anglophone education system and the presence of a significant concentration of experienced educators and administrators. Both divisions have been at the forefront of governance and educational reforms and maintain relatively stable access to educational infrastructure, making them well-suited for investigating the implementation of good governance practices in education.

Due to ongoing security challenges associated with the Anglophone crisis, the selection of these divisions also took into account logistical feasibility and the safety of the research team. Only areas within Mezam and Fako that were considered reasonably accessible and secure were included in the fieldwork, in accordance with ethical research protocols and institutional guidelines. This approach ensured both the physical safety of the research team and the ethical protection of participants involved in the study.

Population, Sample and Sampling Techniques

The study population comprised all public (government-owned) secondary schools in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon, along with their key stakeholders—principals, teachers, and Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) leaders. A total sample of 570 respondents was purposively and proportionately drawn from the 28 government secondary schools in Fako Division and the 86 public secondary schools in Mezam Division, based on the 2024/2025 academic year statistics provided by the respective Divisional Delegations of Secondary Education. The sample was distributed as follows: 500 teachers, 30 principals, and 30 PTA presidents.

The purposive sampling technique was employed to ensure that only individuals with direct involvement in school governance practices were selected. Inclusion criteria included a minimum of three years of service in the school system, demonstrable familiarity with school administrative processes and outcomes, and active participation in governance-related activities at the time of the study. The exclusive focus on government schools is justified by their central role in the implementation of national education policies and decentralisation reforms. These schools provide an appropriate context for examining the relationship between governance practices and educational outcomes, particularly within the framework of state-led educational development in Cameroon.

Instruments for Data Collection

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled *"School Governance and Educational Outcomes Questionnaire"*, semi-structured interview guides, and a document analysis checklist—all developed by the researcher. The questionnaire, administered to teachers, was organised according to the study objectives and featured Likert-scale items for quantitative

assessment. The questionnaire was divided into two parts. Part one collected the respondents' demographic information, while Part two, divided into four sections addressed the research objectives. Section A focused on equity, assessing perceptions of fairness and inclusiveness in student admissions, differentiated support for learners, gender-sensitive and responsive disciplinary practices, and equitable access to professional development for teachers. Section B addressed quality, with items evaluating supportive learning environments, safe and well-maintained facilities, timely and honest feedback, staff professionalism, use of student-centered approaches and monitoring of teaching and learning. Section C examined stakeholder involvement, focusing on regularity of stakeholder meetings, PTA engagement, inclusive decision-making, community participation, and shared accountability. These sections used a four-point Likert scale ranging from *Strongly Agree* to *Strongly Disagree*. Section D assessed educational outcomes in the cognitive, affective, and behavioural domains through measures such as performance in GCE examinations (for literacy, numeracy and critical thinking skills), attendance and completion rates (for resilience among youths), moral behaviour standards, quality of peer interaction, sense of civic responsibility and levels of satisfaction among students and teachers. This section employed a five-point rating scale ranging from *Very Poor (0–29%)* to *Excellent (90–100%).*

The interview guides, administered to school principals and PTA presidents, were semi-structured to generate deeper insights into governance practices and their impact on school performance. Lastly, the document analysis checklist was used to review school records, including language and math test scores of students in the first cycle, GCE examination results, students' character portfolios, disciplinary records, and completion and graduation data, to provide objective evidence of educational outcomes.

Validation of Instruments

To ensure content validity, the research instruments were reviewed by experts in educational governance policy analysis, and research methodology, who evaluated their relevance and alignment with study objectives. This process helped to refine the wording, structure, and focus of the items, ensuring that they accurately reflected the constructs under investigation (Haynes et al., 1995). Construct validity was supported by linking questionnaire items to key theoretical concepts of school governance (equity, quality and stakeholder engagement), and educational outcome based on literature and the study's conceptual framework.

A pilot study with 30 respondents tested clarity and usability, leading to refinements. The internal consistency of the questionnaire was confirmed using Cronbach's Alpha, which yielded a high reliability score of 0.82, indicating that the items were consistently measuring the intended constructs (Cronbach, 1951; Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). This statistical measure confirmed the degree to which the items within the questionnaire were consistent in measuring the same underlying constructs

Data Selection and Analysis

To ensure the relevance of participating schools to the study's objectives, data analysis was conducted in two phases. In the initial phase, all completed questionnaires, interview recordings, and document analysis checklists from the sampled schools were screened to determine which schools met the minimum criteria for inclusion in the final analysis. For each school, composite scores were generated across all study variables, and average performance levels were estimated. Schools that fell below a 65% threshold across the studied governance and outcome indicators

were excluded from the main analysis. In the end, 13 schools were retained for full analysis; 5 from Fako Division and 8 from Mezam Division, yielding a total of 219 valid teacher questionnaires, 13 principal interviews, 13 PTA president interviews, and a corresponding number of documentary analysis checklists. For anonymity and ease of reference, the retained schools were randomly assigned alphabetical codes ranging from School A to School M. Data from these sources formed the basis for the second phase of analysis.

The retained quantitative data were analysed using SPSS Version 25.0. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarise teacher responses across the various governance and outcome variables. Inferential statistics, specifically Chi-square tests and Pearson correlation coefficients, were applied to examine relationships between governance indicators and educational outcomes. The level of statistical significance was set at $p < .05$, in line with conventional standards in educational and social science research (Field, 2018). Any *p*-value below this threshold was interpreted as statistically significant, indicating a meaningful association between governance practices and observed educational outcomes.

Qualitative data from interviews were analysed using thematic analysis, following the Braun and Clarke (2006) six-step framework. This involved familiarising with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report. Documentary evidence was analysed through content analysis, involving the identification of themes, patterns, and frequencies across key institutional documents. These included attendance logs, examination performance reports, disciplinary records, and school improvement plans. The aim was to extract evidence relevant to the study's governance indicators and outcome dimensions.

To enhance the validity and richness of the findings, methodological triangulation was employed across the three data sources: questionnaires, interviews, and document reviews. This triangulation allowed for the convergence of findings and provided a more comprehensive understanding of the interplay between governance practices and educational outcomes. The study adhered strictly to ethical research standards. Informed consent was obtained from all participants; confidentiality and anonymity were assured, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any stage without penalty.

Findings

This section presents the results of the study in alignment with its three core objectives and study variables; educational outcome, considerations for equity, service quality and stakeholder engagement. The schools retained for analysis exhibited broadly similar trends across many of the educational outcome indicators. Consequently, findings related to these outcomes, based on both questionnaire responses and documentary analyses are presented first in a general overview. Thereafter, findings related to each governance principle are presented under their respective research objectives. For each objective, the presentation begins with quantitative findings from the teacher questionnaires (N = 219), followed by hypothesis test, then qualitative insights from interviews with school leaders (N = 13) and PTA representatives (N = 13), and finally conclusion based on evidence from the various sources.

Educational Outcomes of the Retained Pre-tertiary Education Institutions

Questionnaire responses and documentary analysis revealed that the retained schools demonstrated generally strong

educational outcomes in the cognitive, affective and behavioural domains and across key indicators. According to teacher responses, the mean score for educational outcome was 4.03 with a standard deviation of 0.63, reflecting a high and relatively consistent perception of performance among teachers. These quantitative findings were supported by documentary evidence showing that GCE Advanced Level pass rates averaged 79.2%, completion rates stood at 81%, and student attendance rates reached as high as 87%. In addition, assessment of language and mathematics test scores indicated that student surpassed 70% proficiency levels in literacy and numeracy in most classrooms. Student moral behaviour looked satisfactory, with fewer recorded incidents of misconduct and increased participation in school elections, clubs and co-curricular activities. Teachers also reported higher levels of job satisfaction and a stronger sense of institutional support, suggesting positive working conditions and improved governance responsiveness in the retained schools.

Research Objective 1: To verify the extent to which school administrators integrate equity practices in pre-tertiary education institutions and how these relate to educational outcome

With respect to consideration for equity in school administration, the data showed that teachers generally perceived their schools as making strong efforts to promote fairness and inclusion. The mean score for equity-related items was 4.15 (SD = 0.61), indicating strong agreement that schools are implementing equitable practices. These included fair admission procedures, support for disadvantaged learners, gender-sensitive disciplinary strategies, and equal access to training opportunities. Teachers acknowledged that schools had taken deliberate steps to reduce inequality, particularly for girls and conflict-affected learners. These responses suggest that equity is not only recognised as a guiding principle but actively practiced in these schools. Table 1 presents descriptive and inferential statistics on teachers' perceptions of educational outcomes and equity practices.

Table 1: Teachers' Perceptions of Educational Outcomes and Equity Practices (N = 219)

Variable	Mean	SD	Pearson r	χ^2 (df=4)	p-value
Educational Outcome	4.03	0.63			
Equity in Administration	4.15	0.61	.582**	45.63	<.001

(**p < .01)

The data in Table 1 indicate that teachers perceived both educational outcomes and equity practices positively, with mean scores of 4.03 and 4.15 respectively. The Pearson correlation coefficient (r = .582, *p* < .01) demonstrates a statistically significant and moderately strong positive relationship between equity in school administration and educational outcomes. The Chi-square statistic (χ^2 = 45.63, *p* < .001) further confirms the strength of the association. Based on these findings, the null hypothesis stating that administrative consideration for equity does not significantly enhance educational outcomes is rejected. The results suggest that schools perceived to uphold equitable administrative practices tend to perform better across key educational indicators, including student attendance, academic achievement, learner retention, and teacher satisfaction.

Qualitative findings from interviews with school principals and PTA presidents further illustrated how equity is operationalised in school settings. Three key themes emerged from the data analysis: support for vulnerable and underserved learners, inclusive access regardless of socioeconomic status, and

school–community collaboration to bridge equity gaps. One principal (School D) explained, "*We prioritise girl-child retention and support internally displaced learners through a number of scholarship schemes. These measures help reduce dropout.*" A PTA president in School F remarked, "*Even if a child is late with fees, we advocate for them to stay in school. In these challenging times, our goal is to make education accessible regardless of background.*" This perspective was echoed by several PTA presidents. A principal in School B highlighted that some parents find it challenging to provide didactic materials for their children, and noted, "*We work with NGOs and churches to support such children so they are not left behind.*"

The findings above converge on the conclusion that observance of equity in school administration significantly determines educational outcomes. Schools that adopt policies promoting fairness and inclusion witness higher student attendance and participation in school activities, high completion rate, improved proficiency in literacy and numeracy, better academic performance and good student behaviour. Teacher and student satisfaction also increase in environments perceived as equitable.

Research Objective 2: To assess the degree to which school administrators prioritise service quality in pre-tertiary education institutions and its influence on educational outcome

In terms of service quality, teachers' responses indicated generally positive assessments. The mean score was 3.91 (SD = 0.72), reflecting agreement that their schools provided supportive learning environments, safe and well-maintained facilities, timely feedback, and professional staff. While variation existed depending on location and resources, many teachers agreed that school management prioritised clean classrooms, accessible facilities, functional libraries, and availability of teaching aids. Staff professionalism and regular monitoring were also cited as key indicators of perceived service quality.

Table 2: Descriptive and Inferential Statistics on Teachers' Perceptions of Educational Outcomes and Service Quality (N = 219)

Variable	Mean	SD	Pearson r	χ^2 (df=4)	p-value
Educational Outcome	4.03	0.63			
Service Quality in Education	3.91	0.72	.621**	49.87	<.001

(**p < .01)

Table 2 provides statistical evidence of a strong association between the variables under investigation. The mean score for service quality (M = 3.91, SD = 0.72) and educational outcome (M = 4.03, SD = 0.63) reflects favourable teacher evaluations of both constructs. The Pearson correlation coefficient (r = .621, *p* < .01) indicates a strong and statistically significant positive relationship between service quality and educational performance. This is further supported by the Chi-square value (χ^2 = 49.87, *p* < .001), which confirms the existence of a significant association. In light of these findings, the null hypothesis stating that considerations for service quality do not significantly predict educational outcomes is rejected. The results indicates that improved infrastructure, availability of instructional materials, ongoing teacher training, and student welfare services are critical contributors to enhanced educational outcomes.

The interview data echoed these findings, with the following themes emerging: infrastructure improvement, teacher

professional support, and access to water and sanitation. A principal in School A recounted, *"Since we rehabilitated the computer lab, students now look forward to practicals. Their interest in Computer Science has increased, and our results are evident."* Another principal recognised that teacher motivation is tied to basic working conditions and noted, *"We organise in-house training and try to maintain a professional climate even with scarce resources."* A principal in School M explained that the lack of toilets and water had especially affected girls, but after community support helped them install a borehole, *"attendance improved significantly."* This view was shared by a PTA president in the same school, who stated that they monitored hygiene regularly, acknowledging *"the health importance of having clean toilets and handwashing stations."* Similarly, a PTA president (School C) observed, *"We recently mobilised funds to repair a leaking classroom roof that previously caused discomfort to children when it rained."*

Overall, the findings demonstrate that service quality is a critical driver of educational success. From infrastructure and materials to teacher competence and student support, quality services enhance academic outcome; it increases attendance and performance in examinations, support discipline, and increase satisfaction among both students and staff.

Research Objective 3: To determine the level of stakeholder engagement in the administration of pre-tertiary education institutions and its relationship with educational outcome

Regarding stakeholder engagement, teachers' responses reflected moderate to high involvement of parents, teachers, and community leaders in school governance. The mean score was 3.78 (SD = 0.74), indicating that while not universal, stakeholder participation was regularly practiced through PTA meetings, shared decision-making, and transparent planning. Table 3 provides descriptive and inferential statistics on teachers' perceptions of educational outcomes and stakeholder engagement.

Table 3: Teachers' Perceptions of Educational Outcomes and Stakeholder Engagement (N = 219)

Variable	Mean	SD	Pearson r	χ^2 (df=4)	p-value
Educational Outcome	4.03	0.63			
Stakeholder Engagement in Administration	3.78	0.74	.556**	39.25	<.001

(**$p < .01$)

As shown in Table 3, the mean score for stakeholder engagement was 3.78 (SD = 0.74), while educational outcomes were rated at 4.03 (SD = 0.63). The correlation coefficient (r = .556, $p < .01$) indicates a moderate but statistically significant positive relationship between participatory governance and student performance. The Chi-square statistic (χ^2 = 39.25, $p < .001$) further confirms that stakeholder engagement has a significant influence on educational outcomes, including student discipline, completion, and overall school cohesion. Based on these findings, the null hypothesis is rejected. The results implies that meaningful stakeholder engagement, through inclusive decision-making, regular PTA involvement, and shared accountability, contributes to enhanced educational outcomes in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon.

Insights from school leaders reinforced the quantitative results. Parental involvement in academic planning, community participation in school discipline and decisions, and shared ownership and accountability were the three main themes that emerged from the analysis. A principal in School E stated, *"We involve parents in designing term projects, as we believe that students take school more seriously when parents are active."* Another one observed, *"Parents and community leaders attend our disciplinary committee meetings; I think this has contributed to the reduction in behavioural issues among students."* A PTA president (School G) commented, *"I feel that the school shares most of the things with us; because of this, we parents are willing to contribute, not just money, but time, ideas, and labour."* A counterpart in another school (J) added, *"The school involves us in budgeting and even hiring decisions. It makes us feel responsible for the success of the school."* These testimonies point to a governance culture rooted in trust, transparency, and shared responsibility, where collaboration between school and community leads to improved school functioning and student outcomes.

The convergence of quantitative, qualitative, and documentary data supports a strong conclusion: stakeholder engagement contributes meaningfully to positive educational outcomes. Through increased ownership, collaboration, and community oversight, schools promote environments where students and teachers are more likely to succeed.

Across all three research objectives, findings from the structured questionnaire, interviews, and documentary analysis consistently point to the positive influence of good governance on educational outcomes. Equity, service quality, and stakeholder engagement each contribute meaningfully to school effectiveness, particularly in terms of standardised performance, attendance and participation, completion, discipline, proficiency in literacy and numeracy, good quality interactions and satisfaction among students and teachers. Evidently, schools that institutionalise good governance principles perform better across cognitive, affective and behavioural indicators of educational success.

Discussion

The study found a significant and positive correlation between equity-driven administrative practices and educational outcomes. It reaffirms the foundational role of fairness and inclusion in shaping effective and resilient learning environments. With a mean equity score of 4.15 and a correlation coefficient of r = .582 ($p < .01$), the data point to the effectiveness of administrative practices such as fair admissions, targeted support for vulnerable learners, and equal access to professional development opportunities for teachers in promoting school success. These practices directly align with Equity Theory (Adams, 1963), which argues that perceived fairness enhances motivation and engagement among institutional actors.

Qualitative data reinforced these findings: a principal in School D cited "scholarship schemes for internally displaced learners" as essential to preventing dropout, while PTA presidents in Schools B and F described negotiating flexible fee arrangements to keep disadvantaged children enrolled. Such proactive measures reflect a growing culture of inclusion and social justice in schools operating under duress. Empirical evidence by Li (2024) further corroborates this, showing that systemic equity promotes access, academic continuity, and long-term life chances. It not only improves cognitive outcomes, but also nurtures a sense of belonging and hope among learners.

The findings also indicated that service quality in educational delivery significantly predicts improved outcomes, evidenced by a Pearson correlation of r = .621 ($p < .01$) and a mean score of 3.91 for quality-related variables. Teachers consistently reported that supportive learning environments, adequate and safe infrastructure, and access to didactic materials contributed meaningfully to student performance, completion, and overall satisfaction. Service quality input and process variables which

converge to shape learner engagement and outcome were observed to be actively prioritised in the studied schools.

School A reported increased student engagement following the rehabilitation of a computer lab, while respondents from School M, credited improved attendance, especially for girls, to the installation of a borehole and improved toilet facilities. These actions reflect the application of Institutional Effectiveness Theory, which posits that organizations perform best when contextual constraints are recognised and addressed through proactive, innovative, adaptive, and quality-focused strategies (Cameron, 1986). The findings further reinforce those of Hanushek and Woessmann (2020) which shows that long-term educational and economic benefits depend not on school access alone, but on the quality of experiences provided within schools.

A moderate but statistically significant relationship between stakeholder engagement and educational outcomes was also established ($r = .556$, $p < .01$), with a mean stakeholder score of 3.78, reflecting varied but meaningful levels of community involvement in school governance. Teachers acknowledged that PTA meetings, shared decision-making, and inclusive school planning were regularly practised, though with some variability across schools. Qualitative findings expanded on these dynamics. In School J, a PTA president noted that "the school involves us in budgeting and even hiring decisions," a practice which enhances transparency and trust. A principal in School E explained how involving parents in project planning boosted learner commitment and discipline.

These findings are supported by the Participatory Governance paradigm which asserts that collaborative decision-making leads to better policy relevance and desired outcomes (Donahue & Zeckhauser, 2011). In contexts like the one studied, stakeholder engagement serves a dual role: it not only strengthens institutional outcomes, but also restores social trust. Studies by Henderson and Mapp (2002) and Ramos et al. (2023) further validate this, showing that schools with high levels of stakeholder collaboration demonstrate better academic achievement and student conduct. Furthermore, the findings highlight the role of PTAs not only as financial contributors but as community watchdogs, cultural brokers, and co-educators whose engagement adds legitimacy and coherence to school governance.

Taken together, the findings reveal that equity, service quality, and stakeholder engagement are not isolated governance principles but interdependent drivers of educational success. This convergence was evident across data sources: documentary analysis showed that the retained schools achieved GCE pass rates of 79.2%, attendance rates of 87%, and completion rates of 81%, while interviews and questionnaire responses affirmed a shared commitment to governance best practices. The interplay of these governance principles in realising desired outcome reflects the governance framework which advises that the appropriate integration of good governance basics in administrative processes, aligned with the specific needs and contextual realities cultivate a system that achieve goals efficiently and sustainably (Mekolle, 2024; UNDP, 1997). In light of these findings, placing sustained emphasis on the governance principles of interest across schools in the Anglophone regions would not only strengthen learning and improve educational outcomes but also contribute meaningfully to psychosocial recovery and long-term community resilience.

Conclusion

This study set out to examine the interplay of good governance practices in the administration of pre-tertiary education establishments and the extent to which these practices predict desired educational outcomes in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon. The findings revealed that equity, service quality,

and stakeholder engagement are not only individually significant but collectively constitute a synergistic framework that enhances school effectiveness. Schools that prioritise fairness in access, uphold quality service delivery, and promote inclusive participation among parents, teachers, and community members tend to achieve stronger student outcomes across cognitive, affective, and behavioural domains. These outcomes were evident in high GCE pass rates, improved student attendance, positive moral behaviour among students, increased participation in school activities, strong completion rates, and high levels of stakeholder satisfaction in the retained sampled schools. The results demonstrate that good governance practices when carefully contextualised and consistently implemented hold strong potential to transform educational institutions and support societal resilience, even in regions affected by systemic challenges such as poverty, displacement, and armed conflict.

Beyond improving academic indicators, the study reinforces the view that effective governance must serve a broader societal function. Echoing Fullan's (2007) argument, the findings highlight the need for educational reform that transcends test scores to cultivate holistic learner outcomes such as resilience, moral reasoning, and civic responsibility. In fragile contexts like the North West and South West regions, where youth are exposed to instability and trauma, schools must become safe and empowering spaces that nurture both academic potential and emotional well-being. The integration of good governance into educational administration is thus not only a policy imperative but a strategic necessity for promoting peace, rebuilding trust, and securing the future of the region's children. Schools that institutionalise these governance principles contribute meaningfully to national development by preparing learners who are not just knowledgeable, but responsible, empathetic, and engaged citizens.

Recommendation

These recommendations offer concrete, actionable strategies for enhancing educational outcomes through school leadership, administration, and policy frameworks that prioritise the principles of equity, service quality, and stakeholder engagement. Each recommendation responds directly to the key findings of the study and reflects the broader goal of developing a robust, inclusive, and responsive education system in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon and similar settings.

First, educational authorities and school leaders should institutionalise policies that promote fairness, inclusion, and targeted support for vulnerable learners. This includes ensuring non-discriminatory admission practices, and, where possible providing academic and material support to girls, children with disabilities, and internally displaced learners. Gender-sensitive disciplinary approaches should also be standard practice. For example, schools can adopt flexible payment schemes or scholarship programmes funded through community contributions and school-led income-generating activities to support learners facing economic hardship. At the policy level, ministries of education should address disparities in teacher recruitment and deployment by prioritising the placement of qualified teachers in under-resourced and conflict-affected areas. To ensure sustainability, equity principles should be integrated into school improvement plans, including those related to teacher professional development and growth. This should be regularly monitored by education oversight committees, and supported by periodic equity audits to track compliance and identify gaps in implementation.

Improving educational outcomes requires consistent investment in school infrastructure and teaching resources, particularly in rural and conflict-affected communities. School

administrations, through bodies like SMBs and PTAs should prioritise the rehabilitation of infrastructure, provision of functional WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) facilities, and procurement of up-to-date teaching and learning materials. This holds potential to increase learners' interest and participation, particularly in girls. Teacher support systems should also be strengthened through regular in-service training, mentorship programmes, and classroom monitoring mechanisms to ensure high instructional quality. Quality assurance frameworks should include an appropriate blend of tools for internal performance reviews (e.g., lesson observations, peer reviews, student feedback surveys, and teacher self-evaluation reports) and external supervision (e.g., scheduled inspections by education inspectors, divisional-level performance audits, and compliance monitoring visits), encouraging schools to self-assess and continuously improve their service delivery. The government should fully support school administration with the resources to adapt such initiatives to their specific contexts.

The study confirmed that stakeholder engagement is key to sustaining educational progress and restoring institutional trust in fragile contexts. To this end, schools should formalise or revitalise structures for regular and inclusive participation of parents, teachers, students, and community members in school governance. This can include revitalising Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs), establishing student representative councils, and convening school-community planning forums. Involving stakeholders in budgeting, discipline management, and project design would help build local ownership of education, boost student attendance, discipline, transparency, and resource mobilisation. Ministries of Education should provide guidelines and training to support participatory governance at the school level, and local councils should facilitate community involvement through decentralised education management platforms.

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