

# CHAPTER 11

## THE EDUCATION SYSTEM OF CAMEROON

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The history of Cameroon is important in understanding the evolution of education system in this country. First the country was colonized by the Germans and after the First World War became a trustee for the League of Nations under the rule of British and French governments. This has led to development of a dual system of education that exist to the present.

Therefore the objectives of this chapter are to:

- Describe how the historical factors have shaped the system of education in Cameroon.
- Describe at least five major characteristics of the Cameroonian education system.
- Discuss the problem of language in the Cameroonian education system
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### BACKGROUND

The population of Cameroon is estimated at 15,803,220 inhabitants as of July 2001. With a surface area of 475,442 km<sup>2</sup>, it is bounded to the

west by Nigeria, to the northeast by Chad, to the east by Central African Republic and to the south by Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and Congo. There are ten administrative regions, two (2) of which are English-speaking and eight (8) French-speaking.

Historically, Cameroon was founded around 1472 by a Portuguese navigator called Fernando Po who arrived the Bight of Biafra, then sailed up the Wouri River situated in the Coastal region. The navigator was surprised to see shrimps in the river, and so baptized the river "Rio dos Camarões" (river of shrimps). This name which was to be associated to the country became "Kamerun" during the German colonial period and "Cameroon" or "Cameroun" during British and French colonial rule. In 1884, Germany colonized Cameroon. The signing of the Germano-Douala treaty in July 1884, whereby Cameroon became a German protectorate, marked this event. But with the defeat of Germany in 1916 during the First World War, Cameroon was divided between Britain and France, and administered first under the League of Nations mandate and later under the United Nations trusteeship. Britain got two discontinuous strips of land of about 90,000km<sup>2</sup> along the Nigerian border: the strip to the north was called "Northern British Cameroons" and that to the south was called "Southern British Cameroons". The French got the lion's share and administered it as an independent territory, whereas the British administered theirs from Lagos in Nigeria.

French Cameroon became independent on 1 January 1960. Then on 11 February 1960, British Southern Cameroon voted union with French Cameroon through a referendum. This association between the two entities was consolidated on 1 October 1961 through the Reunification of Cameroon and creation of a federation made up of two states called West Cameroon and East Cameroon. The federation survived till 20 May 1972 when a unitary State made up of seven (7) provinces was created. And later in 1984, the number of provinces was increased to ten (10) through a Presidential decree.

The educational system of Cameroon is very popular in Africa. The method of learning is different in the eastern and the western part of Cameroon. The educational system of East Cameroon followed the methods of French model and the West Cameroon's system was based on the British model. The English sub-system of Education follows the system of education that was operational in the English speaking part

