

Education Ratings in the Financing of Education and Conflicts in the North Western Federated Council of Wum Division, British Southern (West) Cameroons, 1952-1963

Protus Mbeum Tem
The University of Bamenda

Abstract

This paper examines the conflicts that arose because education rating was introduced in 1952 in the North Western Federated Council of Wum Division of British Southern Cameroons. These conflicts led to the abandonment of education rating in 1963 by the West Cameroon state of the Federal Republic of Cameroon. The government of Southern Cameroons had instituted education committees with the goal of improving the quality of education from junior to senior primary levels. It was also to produce the much needed experts that were to serve the colonial system. In spite of this laudable initiative, this policy encountered numerous problems and was discontinued eleven years after its introduction. The data used in this paper came mostly from archival documentation and a few published works related to education in the colonial and early post-independence epochs. The paper concludes that although it was a laudable effort meant to improve financing for education for service, it failed because of several reasons.

Keywords: *Education Ratings, Education Committee, Southern Cameroons, Wum Division*

Introduction

Colonial rule in Africa led to changes or transformation of the African indigenous educational system. The indigenous educational system manifested itself in many different ways. It involved the teaching of youths at home and in the society through personal interaction, communication and practical demonstrations. Through this, they acquired certain important societal values that made them responsible citizens, both as youths and adults. The educational system also laid emphasis on job orientation such as hunting, tapping, agriculture, blacksmithing, carving, farming and weaving among others. There was also a smooth transition from youth to adulthood through inter-generational interactions and a participatory approach to education (Ngong 2007). This participatory approach of the young and old was visible during ceremonies, sacrifices and other ritual activities. Intellectual development in traditional African societies was manifested in the recounting of local history, storytelling and riddles. In this way, the intellectual capacity or know how of the people was enhanced. Oral or practical assessment remained an important method of educating African people and once a person attained a certain level of education, he or she could marry and also be initiated into regulatory societies (Che 2007).

This kind of education, though important and relevant to the indigenous people, did not meet the man-power needs of the German and British colonial administrations in Cameroon. The Germans had ruled the territory from July 1884 to 1914 and were forced to relinquish her authority following the outbreak of the First World War and a condominium (joint administration) established by the French and British whose forces had expelled them from the colony. However, the joint Anglo-French administration was sabotaged by differences on the modalities of the application and execution of the condominium. This led to the division of the territory between the two powers in 1916 and this move was endorsed by the treaty of Versailles in 1919 and confirmed by the League of Nations in 1922 (Ngho,

2019). The area under study fell under British command until 1961 when the territory voted for reunification with the Cameroun Republic (former French colony and part of German Kamerun) and became the state of West Cameroon in that Union (Federation).

Both the Germans and British colonial authorities believed that formal education was the only solution to the chronic shortage of man-power for the colonial administration and the civil service. This was even more so for the British who needed administrators, security men and women, commercialists, plantation workers and teachers among others to boost their colonial administration. They thus trained the calibre of men and women who were to facilitate the socio-economic exploitation of their respective dominions in Africa and elsewhere in the world. Everything was done to initiate policies that would provide an enabling environment for education. For instance, though corporation between Christian Missions (who were very active in colonial education) and the colonial authorities was essential and cherished, the former (colonial administration) did not welcome the teaching of religion in schools when they discovered it to be an obstacle to educational schemes or objectives. This is evident in the words of G. S. Brown, Resident for the Cameroons, when he postulated that:

I think it is unfortunate this system has been introduced and recommend that it be stopped as soon as possible; otherwise the good class pagan's sons of chiefs and elders, who we want to educate will think that education is synonymous with Christianity and will have none of it. ... The whole future success of the native authority administration ... depends on our eventual obtaining educated chiefs and if every possible successor to the chief whom we sent to ... school for education is to be turned a Christian, our effort to obtain educated chiefs will end in failure, as no pagan community wishes to have a Christian chief Sb/f(1959)1, No. 651, Religious Instructions in Government and Native Administration Schools, 1959, 10-15, National Archives Buea (NAB).

Since the system of administration was based essentially on the Native Authority (NA), it was therefore not surprising for the British Resident to sound an alarm bell for the kind of education that was needed for the future traditional rulers of British Southern Cameroons.

Whether Brown was totally right in his assertion as to the reaction of the indigenous population to a Christian chief, one thing remains that the colonial authorities were more concerned with training the kind of man-power that would support the perpetuation of the colonial system. Although Christianity was viewed as also serving the colonial interest, the missions were not allowed to do whatever they wanted in the educational sector without the regulatory role of the colonial government. Chiefs' sons and other important non-Christians who commanded respect in society and held the baton of command or authority received protection from the colonial authorities. This was the case, for example, with the Bali Nyongha of the grasslands region who had since the days of the Germans collaborated with the colonial administration. In some areas, the British were cautious not to give Christian education a greater influence because this was likely to work against the entire colonial system and should therefore not be tolerated. This is a clear indication of the importance the colonial administration gave to education because it was going to advance their objectives of exploiting British Cameroonians to the benefit Britain. While the Germans opened schools in other regions of Kamerun, none of these was established in the region or administrative unit that was baptised the North West Federation Council (NWFC) by the British in 1948.

Before then, the first school was opened in the NWFC in 1926 in Njinikom. This was the initiative of the Roman Catholic Mission (RCM). It was only later that the British colonial authorities opened another school at Laikom, the traditional headquarters of the fonom of Kom. This school was managed by the native administration and patronised by the Fon of

Kom as the NA of the area. The fon saw this as a counter measure against the RCM converts whom he considered uncultured and disdainful of his authority. He encouraged Kom children to attend this school and provided clothes for them (Vries 1998). In spite of this laudable initiative of the Native Administration to have children educated in and around Laikom, enrolment remained very poor and by 1926, only seven children were enrolled in the school.

The British also encouraged the native administration or native authorities to establish more schools and by 1938 one was opened at Befang in the Wum area. Other schools were opened by the Missions in the NWFC area and by 1952 all areas of the major ethnic groups and administration, except Furu Awa, had schools to educate the population. The chronic lack of funds to run these schools necessitated the introduction of education rates in all the schools which were opened in the NWFC and this was paid by tax payers in the area. The British colonial administration considered this measure as indispensable in the accomplishment of its colonial policy of providing quality education for service within the colonial system and after independence. Little would they have imagined that the introduction of education rating would rather ignite serious conflicts between the different ethnic groups of the NWFC.

Setting

The people who constituted the NWFC are of diverse ethnic backgrounds. They are variously considered to be of diverse origins and these include people who are of the Junkun or Djumperi, Munchi, Tikari and Widikum extractions. Their various histories of migration indicate that they migrated into the area of study from different directions. The Tikar groups though sometimes contested include the populations of Bafmeng, Bamelo, Bu, Bum, Esu, Fungom, Furu, Kom, Kuk, Kung, Mashi, Menkap, Mbu, Mmen, Nser, Nyos, Saf, Sawe, Weh and Zhoa. Those of Widikum origin are the Beba-Befang collectivities, Esimbi and the Fang. Meanwhile, the Aghem are of the Munchi background although some of them have been traced to have moved away from Ndewum (Ndiowum) near Bafmeng where many groups are said to have migrated during the 18th century. Akum, Badji, Manjong and Izong are related to the Junkun in present day Nigeria and the Fulani came in from the Adamawa region of Nigeria, some of them as early as the 1930s. Meanwhile, Otui and Atong are neither related to their neighbours nor their origin is known as they are neither linked to the Munchi, Widikum, Fulani nor the Tikars.

When these groups migrated into the area, they formed separate polities but were brought together under the administration of the Kom and Wum District following the German arrival and control of this area in the first decade of the 20th century. When the Germans were forced to renounce their control of Kamerun, the British took over control of the area and instituted the Weh NA. This NA saw the merger of the Bum, Wum, Fungom and Beba, Befang and Esimbi villages into a single political entity. However, a few years later that is in 1927 the Fungom, Kom, Wum and Bum NAs were created. These four NAs were constituted into the NWFC in 1948 by the British colonial administration. Other federations created at the same time in the present day North West Region of Cameroon included; the North East, South West and South East Federations. These were the harbingers of the divisions that were eventually created out of the Bamenda Division which use to cover the entire surface area of the present day North West Region of Cameroon. The creation of the NWFC like other federations came with the introduction of education rating in 1952 which was sanctioned by the Education Ordinance of that year.

The 1952 Ordinance and Rational Education Ratings

The British established Education Committees in all the local government units/divisions of Southern Cameroons to ensure the attainment of their educational objectives in the territory. The educational activities of the territory were to be managed through these committees

based on the guidelines that were set out in the 1952 Education Ordinance. According to the specifications of the ordinance, the British colonial administration was expected to open new schools, develop junior and senior primary schools and advice on all aspects of education ratings and domestic sciences in the territory. The managerial problems of schools and loans were offered through these bodies (education committees) from government to local authorities and missionaries were also to be carefully handled (Tem 2005). All these led to the construction, equipping and proper management of schools in British Southern Cameroons.

It was therefore in keeping with these objectives set out in the Education Ordinance of 1952 that the NWFC Education Committee encouraged mission bodies to open schools in the area. Education here was mostly in the hands of the missions who saw this as the best means for them to use schools for effective evangelisation of young people for the church of the future. They easily reached out to the people and more catechumens were gotten for the churches (Chaw 1996: 6). Soon afterwards, the schools started facing serious financial problems and this necessitated the introduction of rates. In 1949 one year after the creation of the NWFC, two NA schools were in operation in Befang and Bu villages. The Befang School went up to standard four and that of Bu was a standard three school. These two schools had four and three teachers respectively. Between 1943 and 1946, the school in Weh was run in partnership with the Basel Mission. However, the Mission took over full control of the school later (Cb (1946)1, Annual Report, 1946, Bamenda Division, 13, NAB) and by 1954; the NA operated only the Befang School in the entire division.

The NA school in Bu had been closed in 1951 because of the poor enrolment of pupils. In 1950 for example, the enrolment in the school witnessed a sharp drop from thirty to seventeen pupils. This was because of increase in school fees. Other factors for poor enrolment in the NA School in Bu which was advanced by the District Officer (DO) for Wum Division in 1954 were the matrilineal system of inheritance which was waxing strong. Uncles were expected to sponsor their nephews in school who according to Bu custom and tradition were their heirs. One may however argue that the DO's position was a lame one considering that even in matrilineal systems fathers have the obligation to educate their children. Besides, following the statistics of pupils in Wum Division there were only one thousand seven hundred and sixty six children in 1950, an indication that there were other more important reasons for the low enrolment of pupils in the schools of the area (Ci (1949)1, No. 141, Annual Report Bamenda Province, 33, NAB). In actual fact, infrastructural problems and the lack of teachers contributed greatly to the closing down of the Bu NA School. This made the NWFC to redirect most of its resources to the the Befang School. Measures were also taken to open a school for Fulani children by the NWFC and in 1954 one was opened at Fujua in the Kom area.

In spite of this laudable initiative by the NWFC to provide education to the Fulani, the results were not encouraging because attendance in this school was very poor. There were only six pupils in the school; four Hausa and two Fulani. This was again moved to Bafmeng (Mme) on the advice of the Ardo'en (Cb (1954)1, Wum Divisional Annual Report, 1954, 17, NAB). The general problem of infrastructure, qualified teachers and enrolment became a great hindrance to the rapid development of the educational sector in the NWFC. The Befang School which was a standard four school had only one hundred and forty five pupils and only two certified and five uncertified teachers in 1954 (Ci (1950)3, No. WD. 159, Divisional Native Authority, UNO Reports, 32, NAB). Since enrolment in the Fulani school continued to dwindle, it was later closed down since this was not cost effective. Many of the schools also lacked basic infrastructure. All these problems combined contributed to the high illiteracy rate in the NWFC during the colonial and early post-independence years.

Other factors also contributed to the high level of illiteracy in the NWFC. The general lack of interest in western education was the paramount characteristic feature of the people of the area. This was accentuated by the fact that they resented corporal punishment. Some of them preferred to send orphans to school and not their own children. Women and orphans were defiled and the former were regarded as a people who could endure to suffer corporal punishment in schools. Because of this thinking at the time, children of notables, princes and princesses preferred basking themselves in the riches and luxuries of their palaces and looked upon education as good only for the downtrodden, slaves and commoners. The presence of children in school meant the forgoing of cultural activities at home. Some did not only refuse going to school but left soon after they had been enrolled (De Vries and Beh 2008).

Children were needed more at home than in conventional schools for economic activities such as tapping, hunting, fishing and farming. Mothers needed the girl child to assist at home without which, they would overwork themselves with little or no time for pleasure (Personal Communication with J. I. Annie, Benakuma, 2001). It was also a common believe that educated women were likely to become prostitutes rather than getting married, becoming responsible and giving birth to children (Ad (1948)22, No. 2461 B. Vol. II, Intelligence Report on Wum and Nso, 1948, 24, NAB). It was on the basis of this that very few girls were encouraged to go to school. Due to poverty, many of the people could not also pay fees. They were mostly involved in farming for the home and if at all very little for the market. With the absence of well trained personnel coupled with the worsening financial difficulties of the NWFC, support for the NA schools was irregular and inadequate.

Education Ratings and Discord in Payments

The problems analysed above contributed to the decision of the Wum Divisional NA Council to introduce education rates to assist the schools financially. This was, however, in line with the prescription of the Resident in Bamenda who called on all NAs in Southern Cameroon to grant subsidies to voluntary agencies' schools while also taking care of schools ran by them. Equality in the granting of these subsidies was to be the guiding principle since all the institutions (mission and NA) were engaged in the education of the people of the NFWC area. The pupils were also all tax payers' children. Hence, there was no need for any bias in the disbursement of subsidies to all schools, be they voluntary agency or NA run schools. The regional Board of Education was to oversee the implementation of the education rates. This was to be judiciously done and the board was also to ensure that there was strong corporation between NAs, voluntary agencies and education department. This was necessary for the success of the scheme. The different stakeholders were to see into it that more schools were opened and many more educational opportunities granted to children as much as this was possible (Sb (1951)1, No. V. 1680, Grants to Missions for Medical and Educational Purposes by Native Authority, 1951, 71, NAB; NAB, Ad (1922)24, No. 772/22, Wum Assessment Report, 35, NAB).

Money collected as rates was channeled to assist schools in the NWFC. Institutions were called upon to present their needs and on the basis of this that they were granted subsidies. An additional condition for support to school was that enrolment had to be high, failing which a school was not assisted financially. Averagely, forty pupils were needed in a class and at least 25 boys and 15 girls was the requirement for eligibility (Ja/g(1949)1, Bamenda North Western Federation, 179, NAB). The introduction of these rates was therefore necessary to encourage enrolment especially in Wum Division where this was very low when compared to other divisions in the Southern Cameroons. Table 1 shows the statistics for school enrolment in Southern Cameroons.

Table 1: Pupils Enrolment in Divisions of Southern Cameroons in 1963

| Division | Enrolment |
|----------|-----------|
| Bamenda | 33 558 |
| Kumba | 20 086 |
| Victoria | 15 415 |
| Mamfe | 14 625 |
| Nkambe | 6 306 |
| Wum | 5 169 |

Source: Ja/g (1957)1, No. WD1A/Vol. 4/1, Minutes of the Wum Divisional Meetings, 1957, 790, NAB.

From table 1, it can be deduced that Wum Division was the least scholarised in Southern Cameroons by 1963. The introduction of a scheme like the education rate was a welcome relieve because it would lessen the burden of fees on individual parents. The responsibility for education of children was to be borne by the whole community. This was because a small fee was charged for the financing of education in junior primary schools (Ja/g (1957)1, Minutes of Wum Divisional Meetings, 1957, 791, NAB). The introduction of education rating was therefore meant to augment grants from government and the fees charged by voluntary agencies in their schools. It is because of this that the NWFC started discussing in 1952 on levying rates that would take care of these commitments. The federal council also wanted to institute a universal rate. However, the entire process was characterised by conflict.

Disagreement over a universal education rate soon developed among the different geo-ethnic and administrative regions of Wum Division. The different areas rejected the call for a universal education rate and were not ready to pay money or subsidies to schools that did not benefit them directly. Some preferred doing so only in their own areas and to their schools directly. Others wanted such schools to be established in their areas first before they could begin the payment of any rates (Ci (1949)1, No. 141, Annual Report Bamenda Province, 1949, 50 and 51, 64, NAB.). Only Bum accepted to institute a rate of two shilling per rate payer and this went operational at once in 1952 (Ja/g (1950)1, No. 106, Annual Reports (Report of 1952), 56, NAB). Other areas followed the example of Bum and by 1953, a consensus had been reached and the NWFC proposed a universal rate of five shilling per rate payer and this was passed by a vote of thirty to eleven by the NWFC legislature (Ci (1949)1, Bamenda North Western Federation, 104, NAB).

This universal scheme however did not produce the desired results as it proved inadequate to meet the needs of the schools in the NWFC area. The legislators were of the strong opinion that once these schools were open and qualified for government's grants in aid; they would be taken over by government. In this way most of the expenses of the newly opened schools would be borne by government. This would therefore allow them divert their rates to the opening of new schools in order to meet the demands and aspirations of rate payers. However, this was not so as assurance from the government that once a school qualified for the grants, it will come in to assist did not materialise. Only schools already in the scheme were assured of government grants in aid (Ibid, 109). The five shilling rate instituted was still too small to cover the needs of the schools and school managers did what they could to defray the cost of education pending reimbursements from the federated council (Gc/h (1955)1, LG. 1845, Handing Over Notes, 1955, 20, NAB).

Some rate payers argued that if the education rate was paid, then there was supposed to be no fees charged for pupils from junior primary up to standard four. Again, if education was free, they argued that every village should have a school. This kind of thinking and impact was not forecasted when the 1953 rates were voted. In such a circumstance, there was need for the council to provide its own finances to solve the most urgent and unavoidable

problems arising from the educational sector. In order to reduce pressure, the abolition of fees from infant one to standard four was to be revisited and redressed. Free education would only be from infant one to standard two and standard three and four was retained in the school fee paying role (Ja/g (1949)1, North Western Federation, 110, NAB). In order to attain the objective of financing education, the DO for Wum Division called for an increase in these rates. In response, the education committee proposed 9:6, 8:7, 8, 6, 5 shillings for Kom, Beba-Befang/Esimbi, Fungom, Aghem and Bum areas respectively (Ci (1956)1, Annual Report, Wum Division, 7, NAB). Such rates were accepted by the areas concerned. The scrapping of the universal rate and the institution of new rates. This made it easy to persuade people to pay such money to take care of schools of their areas directly (Ibid.). Though the rates were accepted, neither the education committee nor the divisional administration was able to explain the disparity in the rates.

In 1957, a further proposed increase due to rise in the demand for educational expenditures or school needs was not welcome by the people of Fungom and Kom. They argued that this was too high and the Kom were not ready to pay even a dime. The people of Kom were very vocal in their rejection and stated that even if reduced to two penny, they would still not pay. They preferred an increase in tax even if this was done by one pound per tax payer (Ja/g (1958)2, Native Authority Meetings, 1958, 22, NAB). Esimbi also argued that taxation was already too high and any further increase in rates was to be an unbearable burden on them (Ja/b (1961)6, LG. 936, Esimbi Clan Council Minutes, 1961, 54 and 90, NAB.). They thus followed the example of Fungom and Kom in denouncing any increase in education rates. The negative reaction of the Esimbi, Fungom and Kom to the proposed increase in education rates made the other areas to eventually join in its denunciation and the scheme suffered a serious setback. It was also alleged that politicians who campaigned for membership into the House of Assembly promised the electorate that if they were elected, they would see into it that free education was offered to the pupils. The Education Officer accused politicians for the failure of the education rating scheme because of the vain promises they made to the population (Ci (1957)1, No. 195, Annual Reports, Wum Division, 1955, 1956, and 1957, 37, NAB).

In the midst of the apparent failure of the education rating, the DO for Wum Division and the Resident for Bamenda Province intervened to salvage the situation. They both advised that the education rate in force between 1953 and 1956 be maintained as a temporary measure. New educational expenditures for the 1957/58 academic year and the opening of new schools were suspended. For any school to receive assistance, the managers were called upon to make their requests in advance. This decision was taken because their demands always arrived the authorities late and made planning difficult and also exerted a lot of pressure on the NWFC. The amount that had been collected was only to be used for the 1956/57 academic year.

Following the prescriptions that were made, the Council had confidence that it would manage the affairs of the 1956/57 academic year. The year 1957 was however a difficult one for the NWFC because it was dominated by debates and the persuasion of the different councils that made up the NWFC to accept the new rates. These councils however turned down the request and the divisional council became powerless as its own decisions could not be implemented without the approval of the different clan or subordinate councils of the division. The education committee did all it could to convince the different clan council to see reason with its endeavours to no avail. These councils instead called for a reduction of the rates to an amount that would be acceptable by all.

Arguments were continuously raised in connection with the education rate. The member of the Southern Cameroon House of Assembly for the NWFC, Honourable L.A. Ning, for example argued that if not paid, it would be of serious consequence to the council

area and regions like Furu Nkang, Nser or better still areas across the Katsina River would never have schools. No school was found in the area and it was hoped that with the inception and payment of higher rates, children from this difficult and inaccessible area would also benefit. A rejection would spell doom for them because they would not be able to attend school, he opined (Ja/g (1958)2, Wum Divisional Native Authority, 7, NAB). However, as late as 1963 no school had been opened north of the Katsina River because of the lack of the necessary finances to do so.

The education committee which was keen on expanding education to the furthest parts of the NWFC stated unequivocally that any council area that not ready to support the education rate scheme should drop it. At the same time, it also warned that taxes would be increased to ward off the huge expenses. J. N. Jua,¹ who hailed from Wum Division also supported this view but for the fact that it should not be forced on those council areas that never wanted it (Ja/g (1958)2, Wum Divisional Native Authority, 7, NAB). He argued that an increase in fees was the best measure but did not support any council area opting out of the scheme. His argument was based on the premise that if one opted out; others would follow and this would mean a reduction of revenue from fees and rates. Following the debates that ensued, all clan council accepted the new rates except Kom that made it clear that they would never be part of such a scheme.

The reduction of the rates to 3:6 shillings, for the Bum council, 3shillings for Fungom, Kom and Beba-Befang and 2 shillings for the Aghem council was not even accepted by all. Kom preferred the payment of complete fees rather than rates. Led by Councillor Chia, members of the Kom council argued that it was the duty of parents to take care of their children's education. An unsuccessful attempt was made to convince Kom to be part of the scheme but its representatives in the NWFC stood firm. A delegation made up of the divisional administration, executive members and the Chairman of the NWFC visited the Kom Council to placate them into the scheme. They reiterated the importance of such a scheme and that if denounced, it would have a negative impact on the education of the young in the NWFC area. They implored on the Kom Council to accept the new rates. This trip proved futile because the Kom Council did not budge on their earlier position. Things were made worse when Esimbi joined Kom in denouncing the proposals of the NWFC. In the face of mounting opposition, the NWFC dropped the rates (Ibid. 10.).

Without these rates, voluntary agencies were affected because they depended heavily on the funds for the running of their schools. They also expected the council to grant subsidies whether the rates were collected or not (Ci (1957)3, No. 195, Annual Report Wum Division, 1955, 1956 and 1957, 370, NAB). The voluntary agency schools were uncomfortable with the fact that they had been assured of the disbursement of money by the council. Funds for these schools in Wum Division were drawn from the council's reserves for the year 1956/57 financial year. The disbursement of rates was also done in such a way that this was always in arrears. The voluntary agency schools expected that when paid it would go a long way to solve the problem temporary. Table 2 indicates amounts of arrears collected from the various council areas of the NWFC in the 1956/1957 academic year. While the council depended on arrears for the management of educational affairs of the area in the 1956/57 academic year, the 1957/58 year was to depend on outstanding arrears from 1953 to 1956. The Bum, Aghem, Fungom. Kom and Beba-Befang/Esimbi council areas owed 38:5, 149:11, 210:9, 241:9 and 1526:13 pounds respectively (Ci (1957)3, No. 195, Annual Report Wum Division, 1955, 1956 and 1957, 370, NAB).

¹ He was a member of the Wum Divisional Council and had just resigned to take up his new appointment as the Secretary of State for Social Services in the West Cameroon Government.

Table 2: Education Rates Arrears Collected for 1956/1957

| Council Area | Arrears Collected |
|---------------------|-------------------|
| Bum | 33:15:0d |
| Aghem | 103:6:0d |
| Fungom | 137:4:0d |
| Kom | 184:4:0d |
| Beba, Befang/Esimbi | 1320:13:0d |

Source: Ci (1957)3, No. 195, Annual Report Wum Division, 1955, 1956 and 1957, 370, NAB.

For funds to be provided for the 1958/59 academic year to all the schools of the NWFC, the education officer proposed reduced rates. At the same time, he called for the reinstatement of fees for the 1959/60 school year. He proposed seven shillings for Bum and Fungom and six for Aghem council areas. The rate for Kom and Beba-Befang and Esimbi was ten and eight shillings respectively. The Education Officer was hopeful that if these rates were effectively collected, 484, 550, 1491, 1319 and 2501 pounds would be raised from the Bum, Aghem, Fungom, Beba-Befang/Esimbi and Kom councils respectively. These amounts were enough to handle the educational needs of each of the six council areas of Wum Division for the 1958/59 (Ci (1957)3, No. 195, Annual Report Wum Division, 1955, 1956 and 1957, 370, NAB). The amount expected to be collected were only forecasts and it was hoped that these amounts would solve the educational problems of the division for that year but this was rejected. In a meeting on 3 December 1957 which consisted of school managers, members of the education committee, NA parent representatives and members of House of Assembly, no concrete decision was taken to that effect as members of this conclave disagreed.

Councilors and parents out rightly rejected the proposals aimed at reforming education in the division. They wanted the government to provide the total amount of 6406 pounds as projected by the education officer for 1958/59 year. Such a response from councilors and parents was not taken lightly by the officer who argued that if government had to pay for the entire cost of education in the division, this would set precedence in the country. Such a move would then have a heavy toll on the finances of the state. This was a rather sad incident in a division in Southern Cameroons which had the lowest literacy rate when compared to the other in the territory (Ibid. 70).

The education committee therefore had to rely on council's credit balance for education which was disbursed for the next two years, while other sources of funding were sought. There was therefore need for an intensive drive in the collection of all arrears owed the council for a successful disbursement. This exercise proved successful and provided the necessary finances though default in payments was experienced in the various clan councils and arrears were still outstanding in 1958/59 finance year as indicated on table 3.

Table 3: Amount Collected and Outstanding Arrears for 1958/59 Year

| Clan Areas | Amounts Collected | Amounts Outstanding |
|---------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| Aghem | 426:18:0d | 154:10:0d |
| Fungom | 1335:5:0d | 70:0:0d |
| Kom | 402:6:0d | 2208:15:0d |
| Bum | 287:6:0d | 47:0:0d |
| Beba – Befang | 32:8:0d | 806:16:0d |
| Esimbi | 0:8:0d | 44:0:0d |

Source: Sb/a (1959)10, No. LG.1970, Education and Executive Committee Minutes: Wum Divisional Council, 1959, 2, NAB.

When one combines the total outstanding rates for the year 1953-1958 it will be discovered that it was big enough to provide funding for education for the year 1959/1960. However, 1960 was a difficult year the NWFC as in the financing of education was inadequate.

Upon independence and the reunification of Cameroon in 1961², the education rating saga resurfaced again and the DO for Wum Division, education authorities, Finance and General Purpose Committees of the NWFC council worked very hard to persuade councilors into accepting education ratings as the best option of financing education and minimising problems faced by the sector. They thus proposed a reduction in rates and fees (Sb/a (1959)10, No. LG.1970, Education and Executive Committee Minutes: Wum Divisional Council, 1959, 3, NAB). This time around, not only Kom and Esimbi councils were stumbling blocks but the other clan council argued that taxation was already too high in the division and a reintroduction of rates would not be welcome by the population. Some clan council even argued that, it was unfair for new rates to be introduced when other others still owed arrears of the old rates. To them, it was logical for the pending arrears to be cleared before any move towards new rates would have been taken (Ja/g (1957)1, Minutes of Wum Divisional Meetings, 1957, 628, NAB). In spite of these objections, pressure mounted on the councilors yielded fruits and new rates were introduced in 1962. However, these rates were not universal and varied from one clan council to the other. In Esimbi Clan Council area for example, the new rate was 220 francs and in Fru Nkangkang, it stood at 500 francs. There was also the introduction of free education from infants one to four (NAB Esimbi Clan Council Minutes: 1961).

That notwithstanding, these new rates were eventually cancelled because of the educational harmonisation policies instituted by the federal government of Cameroon in 1963 (Lf/a(1965)1, F. 639, N. A. Estimates, 1965-66, Wum Central C., 1965, 5, NAB). Following the reorganisation of the educational sector in West Cameroon in 1963, education ratings were harmonised and a mandatory universal amount of 720 FRS introduced. Besides, school fees for the junior primary was abolished and only the last three classes paid school fees. This new harmonisation policy went operational in the 1964/1965 year. Each rate payer was expected to pay 2000 francs including the poll tax for each year (Ja/g(1964)1, No. 5544, Kom-Bum Council Committee Minutes of Meetings, 1964, 50; NAB; Gc/h (1955)1, No. LG. 1845, Handing Over Notes, Wum Division, 1960, 56, NAB). This new development came to redress the constant bickering over education ratings that rocked the the NWFC for over eleven years.

Conclusion

The paper examined the importance of education rating in the NWFC of Wum Division and conflicts that arose from such a venture between the clan councils and/with educational and authorities in that administrative unit between 1952 and 1963. The paper argues that in a bid to meet up with the man-power demands of the British colonial administration, education committees were set up in the Divisional Councils of the territory with the NWFC inclusive. These committees were charged with the responsibilities of providing for the infrastructural needs of schools, improving on the quality of personnel and encouraging indigenous adherence to western education. It was in line with these prescriptions that the NWFC introduced education ratings in Wum Division in 1952 but their endeavours were discords between the various clan councils of the division and with the divisional authorities of the division. Initially, a universal rate scheme instituted in 1953 was rejected as the NWFC

² Worth noting is the fact that Southern Cameroons reunified with French to form the Cameroon Federation upon independence. West Cameroon took the appellation West Cameroon and French Cameroon, East Cameroon.

preferred a system whereby each clan council's revenue from rates was spent only on schools within their vicinity. The rejection of a universal rate led to scrapping of scheme and varying rates adopted. Attempts at increasing the rates in order to meet up with increased educational demands and expenditures from 1957 intensified conflicts between the authorities and members of the NWFC who objected not only for the new rates but the entire exercise. This stalled relations between the NWFC and education department and the divisional administration between 1957 and 1961. In synergy with parents' pupils, members of the NWFC called on the government to take full responsibility in the funding of education in the division. Default on the payment of rates between 1953 and 1956 made matters worse. Some clan councils blatantly rejected any attempt at reintroducing of rates even at lower amount and would only adhere to it when defaulters had regularised their situations. However, new rates were reintroduced after 1961 but disbanded in 1963 when the federal government of Cameroon harmonised the educational sector in West Cameroon. Hence, the harmonisation of education ratings brought an end to constant discord witnessed between the various clan councils of the NWFC and government authorities between 1952 and 19563.

References

- Ad (1922)24, No. 772/22, Wum Assessment Report, 1922, NAB.
Ad (1948)22, No. 2461 B. Vol. II, Intelligence Report on Wum and Nso, 1948, NAB.
Cb (1946)1, Annual Report, 1946, Bamenda Division, 194,6 NAB.
Ci (1949)1, No. 141, Annual Report Bamenda Province, 1949, 50 and 51, 64, NAB.
Ci (1949)1, Bamenda North Western Federation, NAB.
Cb (1949)2, No. B. 2696, Annual Report, 1949, Bamenda Division, NAB.
Cb (1954)1, Wum Divisional Annual Report, 1954, NAB.
Chaw, T. C. "Thirty Years of Presbyterian Mission in Wum – Weh, 1960 – 1990," B.A. Long Essay, University of Buea, 1996.
Ci (1950)3, No. WD. 159, Divisional Native Authority, UNO Reports, NAB.
Ci (1956)1, Annual Report, Wum Division, NAB.
Ci (1957)1, No. 195, Annual Reports, Wum Division, 1955, 1956, and 1957, NAB.
Ci (1957)3, No. 195, Annual Report Wum Division, 1955, 1956 and 1957, NAB.
Gc/h (1955)1, No. LG. 1845, Handing Over Notes, Wum Division, 1960, NAB.
Ja/g(1949)1, Bamenda North Western Federation, 1949, NAB.
Ja/g (1950)1, No. 106, Annual Reports (Report of 1952), NAB.
Ja/g (1957)1, Minutes of Wum Divisional Meetings, 1957, NAB.
Ja/g (1958)2, Wum Divisional Native Authority, 1958, NAB.
Ja/g (1958)2, Native Authority Meetings, 1958, NAB.
Ja/b(961)6, LG. 963, Esimbi Clan Council Minutes, 1961, NAB.
Ja/g(1964)1, No. 5544, Kom-Bum Council Committee Minutes of Meetings, 1964, NAB;
Lf/a(1965)1, F. 639, N. A. Estimates, 1965-66, Wum Central C., 1965, NAB.
Ngoh, Victor Julius (2019). *Cameroon 1884-Present (2018): The History of the People*. Limbe: Design House.
Personal Communication with Akwa Mesele Kum, Wum, 10/10/2005. He was 80 years old at the time of interview.
Personal Communication with Beh Francis Beh, Menkaf, 31/10/2008. He is a former trader and farmer and was 71 years at the time of interview.
Personal Communication with Cheghe Ngong, Weh, 25/01/2007. He is a retired teacher and was 75 years old in 2007. He is now of late.
Personal Communication with J. I. Annie, Benakuma, 11/01/2001. He is former Mayor, teacher, scholarship recipient and was 71 years old at the time of interview.

- Personal Communication with Thomas Kah Che, Weh, 26/10/2007. He was a retired teacher and 70 years old at the time of Interview. He is now of late.
- Sb/f(1959)1, No. 651, Religious Instructions in Government and Native Administration Schools, 1959, NAB.
- Sb(1951)1, No. V. 1680, Grants to Missions for Medical and Educational Purposes by Native Authority, 1951, 71, NAB;
- Sb/a (1959)10, No. LG.1970, Education and Executive Committee Minutes: Wum Divisional Council, 1959, NAB.
- Tem, Protus Mbeum (2005), "The Establishment of the Native Authority Administration and Developments in Fungom Area, 1927-1972", MA Dissertation in History, the University of Yaounde 1.
- Vries J. De, (1998). *Catholic Mission. Colonial Government and Indigenous Response in Kom (Cameroon)*. Leiden: African Studies Centre.