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Rethinking University Engagement to address Local Priority Needs within the
context of Community Development: a Case Study

By

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Thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

The context of the work of universities, in Cameroon is one of high levels of poverty, scarcities and uncertain and fragile economies. Yet, the actual and potential role of universities in such a context, in relation to its civic responsibilities, remains unclear. The research offers a case study of one particular university, in a predominantly rural area of the country; and using qualitative enquiry methods, it engaged, dialogically, with diverse samples of people living in the area, and those working in the university. The aim was to build a systematic understanding of how people construct the existing and potential role of the university, and what might be required to meet their aspirations and desires in more developed and dialogical ways. Based on interviews, focus groups, observations and documents reviewed, specific methodologies by which the university's contribution to community development can be enhanced, with particular emphasis on community-based service learning, but also community-based research and community-based adult education was to be articulated.

This research found that although the community has priority needs, and the university's engagement can fundamentally be a force for community transformation, it seldom consist of objectives and processes aimed at addressing these needs due to lack of interconnections within the university and between the university and the local community. This thesis therefore argues that by complementing the university's engagement activities in the community with interconnections with the community but also within the university, uneven power relations and communication gaps existing within the university and between the university and different segments of the local community which had hitherto limited the university's engagement from addressing local needs can be mitigated. It also maintains that through commitment to engagement and embracing a collaborative form; broadening participation; adopting relevant channels to ascertain community ideas and needs; operating accessible community centres; researching local concerns such as water supply, agricultural systems and electricity generation and customising educational programmes to demonstrate local and global relevance, the interconnected university can be epitomised. Furthermore, through interconnections within its community, as well as with the wider community and its concerns, the university can be seen not only as an agent of community development but also fostering mutually beneficial engagement.

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Acronyms

A/CE	Adult/Continuing Education
BAC	Baccalaureate
BC	Before Christ
CAB	Community Advisory Board
CBR	Community-based Research
CCCU	Canterbury Christ Church University
CDC	Cameroon Development Corporation
CDP	Communal Development Plan
CIG	Common Initiative Group
ESREA	European Society for Research on the Education of Adults
FR	Fieldwork Report
GCE	General Certificate of Education
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GRA	Government Residential Area
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HPD	Help People Develop
IAE	Institut de l'Administration des Entreprises
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IDRC	International Development Research Centre
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NIUS	National Institute for University Studies
OD	Open Day
OL	Opinion Leaders
PA	Parents' Association
PB	Professional Bodies
QDA	Qualitative Data Analysis

RT	Research Tool
SB	Suggestions Box
SL	Service Learning
SONARA	Societe Nationale de Raffinage
SS	Students and Staff
SYNES	Syndicat des Enseignants du Supérieur
THM	Town Hall Meeting
TM	The Media,
TMG	Tribal Meeting Group
TR	Traditional Ruler
UBSU	University of Buea Student Union
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
VC	Vice-Chancellor
WEA	Workers' Education Association
WSS	Workshops, Symposiums and Seminars

Acknowledgement

Six years ago, the thought and possibility of me doing a PhD was inconceivable. Available resources and support seemed to be beyond reach. At the age of 15, first born of three siblings, my mum, who became a widow at the tender age of about 24, cornered me and explained about the financial difficulties she was facing. She suggested that I drop from formal education, which was expensive, and learn a trade. Shortly after the incident, she passed on before I could even sit the GCE ordinary level. As destiny would have it, I went on to obtain the GCE Ordinary and Advance level certificates, a bachelor degree, and an MA. Yet, the journey was not without almost insurmountable hurdles such as that at some point; I had to learn how to mend plastic containers in order to make a living, while preparing for my GCE A' level examination.

Doing a bachelor degree would not have been possible as a full time student as I had to both work and study and I am grateful to the University of Buea for having given me that opportunity. Interestingly, while I worked at the university as a support staff and long before I could start studying for a Master degree, I remember a colleague who was fond of addressing me as “Doctor”. Well, it was a good title but there was no immediate prospect of making it real. Then quite suddenly afterwards, the University of Nottingham awarded me a scholarship to do an MA. The entire journey from my home city to the University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus was a journey of faith but I made it through and eventually obtained the MA and I am thankful to the University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus for setting the stage for my PhD. Prior to concluding my MA, I started nursing the ambition for a PhD programme and applied to some universities for admission. I made many applications, which included the University of Nottingham and the University of Birmingham, but destiny wanted me to be at Canterbury Christ Church University as they provided the funding without which the PhD would be a forgone opportunity. I am deeply grateful to Canterbury Christ Church University for funding my PhD.

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CHAPTER 1

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Personal Motivation

Living in the municipality of Buea in Cameroon for a period of about thirteen years was not just a life I had to live alone but with loved ones and other members of the community. It was about trekking the dusty roads; being patient with constant power cuts; witnessing the rationing of potable water; absorbing the scourging heat and just hoping life would get better for me and others. As I lived and witnessed the challenges I and other inhabitants were going through, I desired change. Similar to the thought pattern of most Cameroonian youths, I conceived deep within me that making advances in formal education would guarantee a better life in the future and service in the community. Therefore, I sought opportunities to advance my studies which eventually yielded admission and funding unto a PhD programme. In conceiving a research topic for the PhD, it was obvious to me that it had to be about the university and the local community. This binary idea to carry out research on the university and the local community was underscored by my familiarity with the university milieu and the local community context I was willing to investigate and the need for community transformation.

1.2 Research Aims

This research seeks to build a systematic understanding of how people construct the existing and potential role of the university, and what might be required to meet their aspirations and desires in more developed and dialogical ways. Based on interviews, focus groups and observations, specific methodologies by which the university's contribution to community development can be enhanced, with particular emphasis on community-based service learning, but also community-based research and community-based adult education was to be articulated. I am therefore hopeful that the outcome of this research and the dissemination of its findings will not only contribute to the knowledge economy but also foster the crafting of relevant policies and guide processes that may enable the university serve local community needs in more realistic and sustainable ways and the community might reciprocate to address the university's concerns or complement its capacity.

1.3 Thesis Statement

Within the context of a university's service mission also referred to as 'third mission' (Inman and Schuetze, 2010), African universities can be considered to carry the potential that can foster community as well as national development (Coleman, 1994; Teferra and Altbach, 2004; Sawyerr, 2004; Preece et al., 2012). The push for development in Africa has been informed by the need to contribute to sustainable development and improve the wellbeing of citizens or residents, especially those residing

in rural areas where poverty, illiteracy, inequality and other social ills abound (Mosha, 1986; Bloom, Canning and Chan, 2005). Although the Millennium Development Goals were established as development targets for different sectors of the society such as education, health, gender and the economy, Preece et al., (2012) suggests that the architects of these goals failed to identify the role of universities in achieving these targets. Notwithstanding, this thesis presents evidence to support the fact that higher education has the potential to address local needs and enhance community development.

Whilst many African universities including the University of Buea in Cameroon have a mandate to enhance the socio-economic development of the wider community, “voices” from the community are scarcely captured in their development agenda (Sawyer, 2004; Taal, 2011) within the context of outreach and community engagement. They can be seen overwhelmingly separated from the majority who are poor and in need of a better social life. Taal (2011) asserts that they continue to perpetuate their ‘ivory tower’ with the masses having limited access. Given this context, a question arises: how can a university pull down its “ivory tower” and work towards meeting the developmental needs of its surrounding communities?

Barnett (2011) underscores the emergence of an ‘ecological university’ which has both the position and the responsibility to care about and for the world. Whilst Barnett further asserts that the ecological university’s care for the world is engendered by global concerns such as: poverty, illiteracy and gender imbalance, this thesis argues that without dialogue with the community to ascertain and address priority needs, these concerns may not be met to the satisfaction of ordinary citizens of the community such as the less educated and rural women who are involved in subsistence farming. It can be maintained that a local university’s developmental mission may be satisfactorily realised for the greater good of the local community and sustained when it is backed by policies and processes aimed at articulating a place of influence for community voices. Given that Barnett (ibid) also maintains that the ecological university acts in collective interests, this thesis also argues that collective interests can be constructed when collective voices participate in framing the objectives of a university’s engagement for instance. Referring to collective voices, it is worth noting that this is not limited to voices from the local community which include voices of the poor and the less privileged, but also voices from the university which include voices of students, support staff and academics.

To corroborate the need for collective voices, Mohrman (2010) asserts that there are some missions universities simply cannot accomplish alone. From this perspective, it can be underscored that universities need to listen to and work with different partners in their attempt to play a transformational role in local communities. Apart from universities collaborating or working together with partners in residential communities, universities need to address the subject of “voice”. For instance, questions need to be asked on: who has a voice when a university engages in a local community? Who has an influential voice? Does the pattern of influence matter? (Lasker and Guidry, 2009). Whilst several

authors have underscored the need for university and community collaboration (Thompson, Story and Butler 2002; Stuart, 2002; Mayfield, Hellwig and Banks, 1999) or community support (Sawyer, 2004) in the realisation of a university's mission in residential communities, there is no clear emphasis on the significance of having 'community voices' involve in designing an agenda that contains specific areas of interest to situations where the community can also take ownership and the implications that may arise.

In this light, there is need for universities with an engagement mission to move away from imposing an agenda on communities to working with them to articulate one. It could be rightly said a university does best when it listens to 'community voices', as well as voices within itself to ascertain development choices and this can engender collective participation and wellbeing which are features of community development. By 'collective wellbeing', this thesis highlights strong social and economic bonds of support amongst local community and university members irrespective of diversity. These strong bonds of support also underlie the Ubuntu spirit in Africa where sharing, respect, caring and solidarity is the norm within inhabitants of residential localities (Hailey, 2008). Given that the university at the centre of this thesis can also be construed as being part of the wider community where it is based, it can be argued that it can also exhibit an Ubuntu spirit of care and solidarity towards the needs and concerns of the surrounding community and the surrounding community can also exhibit an Ubuntu spirit of care and solidarity towards the needs and concerns of the university within a framework of interconnections.

1.4 Thesis Structure

The thesis has been structured into the following chapters. Chapter one presents a general introduction of the entire thesis. Chapter two is concerned with the subject of the university and its mission in local communities. The concept of the university from a historical perspective, till current times and the evolution of its mission over the years are expatiated. It culminates with an exploration of the African university context and the situation of the university in Cameroon. Chapter three presents the research process and methodological choices. Given that this research was a journey, the chapter uncovered an overview of the nature of the research process before expounding on the nature and reason for the choice of a qualitative research design; an interpretive case study approach; a contextual base of the municipality of Buea in Cameroon, the varying sampling types adopted, the mix of methods used, data analytical tool employed and ethical issues addressed. It also explained the subject of my role as a researcher and how I was able to access different contexts for rich data, as well as measures taken to ensure trustworthiness and rigour.

Chapter four is concerned with the ideologies underneath the concept of community development which inform this research. Given that community development is made up of two words, that is, "community" and "development", this chapter amplified each term before addressing the meaning and context of community development within the framework of this research. The chapter also identified and

discussed the subject of “Ubuntu” within the context of African communities. It culminates with a review of the significance of ‘community voices’ and indigenous knowledge to community development. Chapter five went on to present the notion of university engagement in local communities. The intention here is to identify potential avenues through which the university can foster community development which is a key theme in this thesis. Community-based service learning, community-based research and community-based adult education which are potential dimensions of a university’s engagement are discussed.

Chapter six which is first of two chapters on “voices from the community” sets out to present an analysis of interviews and focus group discussion which were conducted with eighteen local community participants most of whom were farmers with very limited formal education, as well as a few representatives from the business sector and non-governmental organisations. The chapter uncovers the different themes which stood out in the research data in an attempt to inductively generate meanings to address the subject of the university’s engagement and local community development. Whilst Chapter six on voices from the community revealed participants’ perception on the role of the university and how different dimensions of a university’s engagement could be revamped to address community concerns, Chapter seven proceeded to analyse other segments of the research data. Drawing on participants’ responses, this chapter suggests that members of the local community are aware of the challenges the community is facing, as well as the university’s potential to address them. However, there is a need to narrow existing power gaps between the university and the community in order to facilitate communication and dialogue between both parties for mutually beneficial engagements.

Chapter eight presents analysis of interviews and focus group discussion conducted with thirteen participants drawn from the university. The first section addressed a diverse view expressed by participants on the role of the university within the local community. This is followed by analysis of participants’ opinions on the nature of community-based adult education, community-based research and community-based service learning activities driven by the university in the community. Whilst Chapters six, seven and eight were concerned with the analysis of the interviews and focus group discussions conducted with community and university participants and respective findings, Chapter nine brings out general findings from a summative and comparative perspective. Though some of the contents of this chapter sound as repetition of what have been presented before in previous chapters, the intention here is to encapsulate the stand out points and key findings in a succinct and concise manner. The chapter concluded the thesis with implication of findings for the State, the community and the idea of the university. It argues conclusively that the university can fundamentally be regarded as a force for community transformation through interconnections. Given the need to mitigate the uneven power relations and communication gaps existing within the university and between the university and the local community and engender community development, the university can prioritise its engagement; adopt relevant channels to ascertain community needs; foster a collaborative form of

engagement that broadens participation for community-based service learning for instance; operate accessible community centres; research local concerns such as water supply, road network, agricultural systems and electricity generation; combine theory with more practical insights; and as well as customise its educational programmes to reveal local and global relevance. Through interconnections within itself and the local community, the university can be seen not only as being able to address local needs and promote community development but also being able to foster mutually beneficial engagement.

1.5 Research Questions

In an attempt to provide guidance and facilitate the enquiry process, the following research questions were reached at:

- 1) What understandings of the role of the university and its responsibilities do a range of community members have, as evident in their narratives, including university staff and students?
- 2) How can the university engage dialogically with the community to address local needs?
- 3) What implications can the case study on the University of Buea and the Municipality of Buea in Cameroon have on the community, the State and the idea of the university?

CHAPTER 2

THE UNIVERSITY AND ITS MISSION IN THE 21ST CENTURY

2.1 Introduction

Given that this thesis is concerned with the subject of the university and its involvement in local community development, it is important to address the general idea of the university. In this light, this chapter sets out to expatiate on the concept of the university from a historical perspective, till current times, as well as the evolution of its mission. It then moved on to discuss the African university context and culminates on the situation of the university in Cameroon.

2.2 What is the university?

Vastly considered a product of the Middle Age (Haskins, 1957; Pelikan, 1992), the word ‘university’ emanated from its early designation – Stadium generale which denotes “a school of universal learning” (Tristram, 1952, p. 56). It can be construed as a common ground where teachers and learners from different cultural, geographical and academic backgrounds converge for the purposes of knowledge discovery, creation, acquisition, impartation and dissemination. The perception of the university as an academic hub is evident in many parts of the world where university campuses could be seen hosting several thousands of students and academics from different geographical locations and academic disciplines. And as one of its core practices, the university awards certificates of recognition to deserving members.

However, great teachers like Socrates handed out no diplomas as contemporary universities do and Haskin (1957) asserts that it was only in the 12th and 13th century did the world start to experience organised forms of education with all its accompanying structures of faculties, colleges, examinations and academic degrees. Even though modern universities can be considered lineal descendants of medieval Paris and Bologna (ibid), the earliest universities did not have many of the facilities contemporary universities have such as libraries, the internet and laboratories of their own. Many of today’s universities can be seen as

a protected space in which various forms of useful preparation for life are undertaken in a setting and manner which encourages the students to understand the contingency of any particular packet of knowledge and its interrelations with other, different forms of knowledge (Collini, 2012, p. 56).

Although it can be agreed that contemporary universities revolve around the theme of knowledge, the changing nature of the world and its innovations in technology undermines the concepts of “protected

spaces” (ibid) identified with some university types such as the virtual and open universities (Barnett, 2011) which operate within diverse geographical spaces.

Given its changing nature over the years, it can be rightly argued that the university has proliferated into different institutional types (Schuetze, 2010; Barnett, 2011). An inexhaustible list of institutional types under the canopy of the university exists. Some of these include: the digital university, the ‘open’ university, the mega university, the service university, the virtual university, the global university, the developmental university, the capitalist university, the scientific university, the theatrical university, the therapeutic university, the metaphysical university, the civic university and the ecological university (Barnett, 2013, p. 67-70) with each having a unique structure and model of operation. Given these multiplicities of institutional types, the concept of the university therefore presents a complex argument on what the university is and represents today. Jarvis (2001) asserts that

it was relatively easy to provide meaning to the term ‘university’ when universities were defined in law or when the term was used only to refer to those educational institutions in the UK that had been granted a royal charter (2001, p. 142).

In some States, the legislation defines a university as an institution of higher learning which is part of a higher educational system (Mbah, 2012). In many Western countries such as the USA, a greater range of institutions later called themselves universities though these were not really elite institutions, following a shift from ‘elite’ to ‘mass’ education (Shuetze, 1996). Furthermore, some States such as the USA, had no clear difference between Higher Education and Further Education. Nevertheless, the idea of the university has always resonated with the concept of “higher realisation”. Julius Nyerere buttressed this by maintaining that

a university is an institution of higher learning, a place where people’s minds are trained for clear thinking, for independent thinking, for analysis, and for problem solving at the highest level (Nyerere, 1970, in Mosha, 1986, p. 114).

In many nations, universities continue to be regarded as an integral part of Higher Education which fosters higher learning. In Cameroon for instance, Higher Education consist of institutions that engage in the education of students who have completed High School and have passed the General Certificate of Education Advance level (GCE A’Level) or the Baccalaureat (BAC) examinations of the Anglophone and French speaking parts of Cameroon (Ngu and Kwankam, 1992). Even though Higher Educational systems in many nations are not limited to universities but also include polytechnics and a wide range of other colleges that promote learning and training at a higher level, universities have been seen at the foci of higher learning.

Given that contemporary universities are so diverse in the way they function, the subject of education can no longer be seen as its only driving force. Hence, the incessant recognition of the university as an educational institution is problematic. Barnett (2011) rightly argues that

a university is a complex entity which is far from exhausted by talk of 'higher education'. Many other academic and developmental activities other than higher education are to be found within it. And this complexity grows (2011, p.3).

With regards to the growing complexity surrounding the university, it can be posited that from their earliest times some institutions and communities have established universities for their own end (Jarvis, 2001) and this end may not be restricted to education but can embody other intentions of the founders or owners. Irrespective of the array of university types and the different purposes they serve, Collini (2012) maintains that the modern university possesses the following four minimum characteristics:

- 1) It provides some form of post-secondary-school education, where 'education' signals something more than professional training.
- 2) It furthers some form of advanced scholarship or research whose character is not dictated by the need to solve immediate practical problems.
- 3) These activities are pursued in more than just one single discipline or very tightly defined cluster of disciplines.
- 4) It enjoys some form of institutional autonomy as far as its intellectual activities are concerned. (2012, p. 7)

Whilst these are minimum features, the complexity within the university is on the rise. Given this rise, it is increasingly difficult to assign a specific definition to the university which will address the wide range of institutional differences represented by it. Some of these institutional differences will be addressed in the following sub section on the changing nature of the university.

2.3 The changing nature of the university

Four university types could be said to have emerged over the past decades, namely: the metaphysical university, the scientific university, the entrepreneurial university and the bureaucratic university (Barnett, 2011). According to Barnett (2011), the metaphysical university was the earliest type which lasted for two thousand years or more and was centred on man's desire to acquire knowledge that will enable him assume the state of a pure human being. This desire was nurtured by exploring man's relationship with God, the universe, the State and the Spirit. It expounded Bible Studies, Law and Medicine in the name of God (Jarvis, 2001) and was thought to generate pure knowledge that provides freedom from ignorance and illusion so that one could see the world better. Hence, the idea of the university which underlies the discourses in many early universities constitutes the wholeness of knowledge which cannot be distinct from knowledge about GOD and other forms of knowledge (Newman, 1960).

Barnett (2011) maintains that this earliest university type did not last and had to pave the way for the scientific university which was perhaps the first form of university to emerge after the dissolution of

the metaphysical university and had initial presence in the USA and Germany. Although it can be said that research was at the core of this university, different classifications of research universities abound today such as: research led universities; research informed and teaching led universities; and teaching led universities with little research capacity (Nixon, 2011).

Following the scientific university, Barnett (2011) maintains that the entrepreneurial university came into existence and this is not limited to universities seeking to grow their financial capital but also their intellectual capital and striving to manage the risk that comes with the process of seeking growth. It is worth arguing that both intellectual and financial capitals intertwine; the acquisition of financial capital can buttress intellectual capital and creating an appropriate knowledge (intellectual) base can enhance financial capital as well. However, universities seeking to grow their financial and as well as their intellectual capitals have led to least profitable staffs sacked and unprofitable branches closed (Nixon, 2011). In the United Kingdom for instance, the notion of universities seeking profitability and being run as corporations was ignited at the beginning of the 1980s by the right-wing monetarist government which abolished academic tenure and funding levels of universities were decreased, forcing them to be market oriented and competitive (Jarvis, 2001). This resulted in academic leaders being transformed into managerial experts and many of the traditional universities taking a more corporate form with financial reports taking a prominent place on the agenda of periodic meetings (Nixon, 2011). Nevertheless, it can be ascertained that universities operating within the likeness of a business entity enhances their accountability, productivity and measurable proficiency (Collini, 2012).

Whilst it can be argued that universities need to stay competitive in areas such as research so as to attract funding, being driven exclusively by quest for financial profitability at the expense of intellectual profitability can pose a moral and ethical concern for the university with a mandated civic responsibility to serve the national, as well as the local community. Apart from the business resemblance many contemporary universities have assumed, Barnett (2011) maintains that they are increasingly becoming bureaucratic, which is evidenced by widespread complaints by academics over the administrative hustles they are subjected to. This tends to hamper the smooth functioning of institutional processes and retard staff progress.

Away from the university types propounded by Barnett (2011), there are other changes that have affected the university environment within the past decades. These changes are not limited to a shift in status, student clientele and form of knowledge. The onset of modernity ushered in liberalisation into the university institution which hitherto was dominated by the church and powerful clerics to serve their ends (Jarvis, 2001). The intellectual power of the church was undermined and a new social order which emphasised amongst other things reason, rationality, science, empiricism and universalism was inaugurated (ibid). Similar to the change from the metaphysical university to the scientific university expounded by Barnett (2011), the change brought about by liberalisation was not limited to the sciences

as in the case with the ‘scientific university’ but incorporated other facets of scholarship such as arts and the social sciences.

The university has also witnessed change in its student clientele over the years. Jarvis (2001) asserts that whilst early universities accepted a small percentage of school leavers and trained them for elite positions in the society and many who went on to postgraduate studies and research were destined to occupy elite positions amongst academic staff, the beginning of the knowledge economy witnessed a transformation with industries and commerce demanding a higher level of education from prospective recruits. And as State subsidies to universities fell, it led to a change within the market place of learning with universities targeting fee paying students and their employers, enabling them to be flexible and assigning competitive fees (ibid). Whilst fee paying students generate the much needed funds to operate universities or subsidise its running cost in western societies, the scenario in many African States is different. In Africa, several universities are still heavily relying on government subsidies (Preece et al., 2012) such as the University of Buea in Cameroon where students are required to pay just an annual registration due (Njeuma et al., 1999). It can be argued that this difference is due to variation in economic capacity of individuals and their respective nations.

In addition, in these changes, a shift in forms of knowledge can also be identified. Whilst early western universities were known for their teaching and scholarships, the era of enlightenment and industrial revolution placed more emphasis on empirical knowledge discovered through scientific methods (Jarvis, 2001). However, it can be maintained that the strength of empirical knowledge within the framework of research varies from one university to another. There are universities today maintaining a primary focus on teaching and scholarship although these are informed by research outcomes elsewhere. In addition to the changing form of knowledge, Jarvis identified other changes that can be found within the university’s trajectory such as: the changing venue of research with research today increasingly being conducted away from the universities; the changing nature of delivery of programmes with distance education and virtual methods gaining more popularity as opposed to the traditional face-to-face teaching methods utilised by traditional academics, and the changing role of the academic with the role of the teacher redefined as a facilitator of learning. It can however be argued that lecturers continue to play diverse roles in universities such as mentoring, counselling and face-to-face tutorials.

Further to the changes identified by Jarvis, the following table elucidates some major forces that have shaped the framework of the university in past and recent times:

Table 2.1: Forces that have shaped the framework of the university

Major forces that influenced higher education half a century ago	Major forces influencing higher education today
The building of mass higher education system was initiated	Maturing era for mass education systems
Higher education was seen largely as a public good	Higher education is increasingly been seen as a private good
Higher education was seen as an extension of national culture with limited adoption of international higher education models	Growing international adoption and integration of educational practices and models and higher education is seen as an extension of globalization
Was designed to offer national and regional markets for undergraduate students and to maintain institutional prestige	Expanding international and supranational market for undergraduate students and institutional prestige
Exhibited high institutional autonomy and limited accountability measure	Eroding institutional autonomy and increasing accountability measures
Government was seen as partner with the university	Government is seen as adversary within the university community
Submitted to national accreditation and quality review	Possible international accreditation and quality review
Ran traditional pedagogy and had limited technological adoptions	Growing technological adoption and pedagogical change
Greatly relied on government subsidies	Declining government subsidies and rising student fees
Maintain small for-profit sectors	Growing for-profit sectors
Witnessed the burgeoning of a scientific community	Established and renown scientific community
Had limits on cross-national knowledge sharing and communication	Expanding international network of knowledge sharing and communications.

Source: adapted from Collini, 2012, p. 14-15

Even though the effect to which these forces have shaped or still shaping the higher education sector and university vary from one region of the world to another, they however present a clearer picture of the western world context while the scenario in a continent like Africa trails behind. Looking at the past and current changes affecting the university, one may ask: what does the future hold for the university community?

2.4 The university of the future

Barnett (2011) anticipated the emergence of four university types, namely: the liquid university, the therapeutic university, the authentic university and the ecological university. According to him, the liquid university which is flexible, amoeba-like in nature and always on the move but interacting with its environment, and can assimilate, accommodate new ideas and venture into new subjects is already with us. Given its amoeba-like analogy, this university type is flexible and has the ability to accommodate an increasingly changing world within its structure and mission. But Jarvis (2001) argued that

not all changes are necessarily good and universities do not merely exist to respond to the pressure of social change, even though they are being increasingly forced into this position (2001, p. 13).

Therefore, it can be advised that the liquid university, instead of absorbing and assimilating new ideas on its path, should critically engage with a changing world by consistently choosing from a range of new ideas and manifestations that which constitute useful knowledge and avenues that falls within its mission and objectives.

Apart from the emergence of the liquid university, Barnett (2011) also asserts that the therapeutic university whose stronghold lies in providing 'care' for human beings such as its staff and students in the midst of an increasingly uncertain world is also already with us. Whilst several universities continue to engage in fierce competition and the commercialisation of knowledge (Jarvis, 2001), it prompts one to ask: how well can a university cater for the welfare of its scholars and staff? Does being a therapeutic university set the limit of care of members within the context of achieving institutional objectives? Are there limits to which the university can assume care for its members? Barnett further proceeded to expatiate on the rise of the authentic university which would overcome the challenges that contemporary circumstances present. He argued that its authenticity is defined within the context of having a sense of its practical possibilities and those that form part of a global community of universities adhering to the specific values and principles for which it wishes to be known. Given that authenticity is a heavily contested word subject to different contextual scrutiny, the idea of an authentic university can be said to adhere to a bounded authenticity which could be found wanting when placed on a different standard. Furthermore, the non-existence of an intrinsic and legal meaning to the term "university" (ibid), may not prevent an institution from calling itself a university and subsequently claim authenticity in its own right.

In addition to the liquid university, the therapeutic university and the authentic university, Barnett (2011) maintains that the time has come for the ecological university which according to him encompasses other envisaged university types. It has an ethical and global resonance which does not only make it a network university but also take its networks seriously. Barnett argued that the ecological

university can take different forms and shapes; it has a civic responsibility, as well as engages in the community – it engages in research that tackles both global and local concerns. Other features of the ecological university as propounded by Barnett includes its unfolding nature within multiple ecologies sustained by an understanding of its situation; it has an interest in wellbeing of many ecologies; it has a conscience that cares for the world and it utilises its resources to serve the world (Barnett, 2013). Given its responsibilities toward the wider environment, Barnett asserts that the ecological university acts in collective interests (Barnett, 2011). The potential of a university to act within the framework of seeking collective interests underlines the nature of this research which captured voices from different sectors of the local community and the university to ascertain how well a local university's engagement can advance community development. From the university's changing nature, this thesis will now proceed to review its changing mission in the following sub section.

2.5 The university and its changing mission

Similar to the difficulties already discussed in attempting to develop a clear definition of the university, there is an equal complexity surrounding its mission in the 21st century. However, it can be maintained that

the primary, and oldest, function is the education of students, providing both the foundations of culture and civilisation, and the preparation for professional life and leadership roles through advanced forms of education (Elliot et al., 1996, p. 62).

The traditional role of the university assuming a civilising mission within societies has since its inception been challenged by many authors in the face of the neoliberal notion of universities having a key role in the production and marketing of knowledge (Barnett, 2011; Nixon, 2011; Jarvis, 2001; Hart, Maddison and Wolff, 2007) and as well as contributing to economic prosperity (Collini, 2012). Within the university's framework today, it can be posited that many activities take place (Barnett, 2011) in addition to the "cultivation of the intellect" (Newman, 1960, p. XIII). Over the years, universities have added to their education and civilising missions, research, outreach, marketing, enterprising and developmental missions just to name a few (Collini, 2012; Inman and Schuetze, 2010; Elliot et al., 1996). The outreach mission of universities within the United Kingdom for instance, found expression in the 19th century idea of the Oxford and Cambridge Extension movements which reached out to communities and large towns such as Nottingham to conduct evening classes for working men and give lectures to the more educated in the same localities (Thornton and Stephens, 1977). McIlroy and Spencer (1988) further noted that many other institutions such as the Victoria University in Leeds, Liverpool and Manchester soon got their own university extension programmes and extramural education such that by 1875, lectures were being held in a hundred centres nationally and which prompted the creation of a syndicate for local lectures.

Benn and Fieldhouse (1996) maintained that the reality was not the same after the Second World War as almost all universities had established extramural departments which were not confined to serving a particular sector of the society such as the working class. Furthermore, as the concept of ‘working class’ became more problematic, many extramural departments and adult educators have turned to other special community types such as the educationally disadvantaged and socially deprived (McIlroy and Spencer, 1988). Although the notion of extramural activities and extension movements were rooted in some early universities in Britain, they soon found expression in universities beyond the shores of Britain. As Britain colonised several African countries, there was a subsequent transfer of the models of university extension programmes and adult education from British universities into some of the university colleges in British West Africa (Tagoe, 2012). This transfer of models of extramural activities, extension programmes and adult education from British universities to British colonies in Africa was part of an effort by three commissions¹ to develop adult education in British West Africa (ibid). More on the subject of adult education has been discussed in Chapter five on “University Engagement”.

There have also been significant growths in the emphasis of university outreach (Inman and Schuetze, 2010) amongst contemporary universities. This has led to a proliferation of terminologies in an attempt to highlight the civic responsibility of the university which is not limited to an extramural education. From service to outreach and to partnership, and more recently to engagement (Bruns, et al., 2003; Abramson et al., 1996; Hart, Maddison and Wolff, 2007; Inman and Schuetze, 2010), these terms have been used to iterate the university’s mission in the community from different perspectives. Whilst it can be argued that the emphasis should not be on the choice of terminology but on the impact of service to ordinary citizens, the right terminology can give the university the required focus and impetus to execute its mission in the community. From this perspective, this thesis identifies with the term “engagement” and it argues that community engagement differs from other forms of university involvement in local communities by its goal and the context of the relationship the university seeks to build.

Given that this thesis is situated within the African context, it will now move on to discuss the subject of the university within Africa.

2.6 African university in perspective

Only a handful of publications in existence have been able to present traces on the evolution of African universities (Sawyer, 2004; Teferra and Altbach, 2004; Bloom et al., 2005). The continent’s historical account of slavery, colonisation, missionary interventions, post-colonialism, external influences of

¹ The Asquith Commission on Higher Education in the Colonial Territories, the Elliot Commission and the Bradley Committee - Tagoe, 2012, p. 185.

globalisation and imposed developmental discourses, create a complex and disruptive scenario for African universities (Preece et al., 2012).

2.6.1 The history of African universities

It can be maintained that the presence of university education in Africa is essentially a postcolonial phenomenon (Sawyerr, 2004; Teferra and Altbach, 2004), with exception to North Africa due to its different history and South Africa due to its own special circumstances of resources and history (Sawyerr, 2004). Egypt's Al-Azhar, established as a major seat of Islamic learning is the oldest university still in existence in the world (Teferra and Altbach, 2004), founded as a cradle for knowledge and learning within the Islamic world. Ajayi, Goma and Johnson (1996, p.5) assert that in pre-colonial era, the roots of the university as a community of scholars found expression in the Alexandria Museum and Library in Egypt during the third century BC. The early traces of community of scholars in Northern Africa further spread to other areas as Muslims moved to other parts of Africa. This gravitation from the north to other regions of Africa was however disrupted by the European slave traders who instituted western forms of education to serve the interest of slave trade, followed by western missionaries who set up educational systems to serve the interest of spreading Christianity and eventually colonisation (ibid). An example of the outcome of western missionaries' influence on the educational system in Africa is the Fourah Bay College which was founded in Sierra Leone in 1826. During the colonial era, the British Advisory Committee on Education concern with educational structures in the colonies, established formal educational systems in 1923 and this included a few university colleges intended to serve the administrative needs of the colonial powers (Preece et al., 2012). Whilst Britain asserts their influence over the educational systems in British colonies, it was a similar situation in French colonies where France extended the system of French universities to their colonies (ibid).

By 1960, only eighteen out of the forty-eight countries that make up the sub-Saharan Africa had universities (Sawyerr, 2004) which suggest that many of the universities were serving more than one country (Preece et al., 2012). The reason for the few universities can be attributed to the fact that many colonial powers feared the consequence of widespread access to higher education and as such, they were interested in training only a limited number of Africans to assist in administrative duties in the colonies (Teferra and Altbach, 2004). Although Africa can lay claim of an ancient academic tradition, the traditional learning centres which were at the forefronts of higher learning in Africa have since disappeared or were destroyed by colonial influence (ibid). Following independence, most African countries made it a target to establish at least one national university (Mosha, 1986). The continent of Africa with fifty-four countries currently has about 300 universities and as per international standards; the continent stands as the least developed within higher education institutions of the world and enrolment (Teferra and Altbach, 2004). Following the emergence of African universities, one may ask: what is the mission of these universities?

2.6.2 The mission of African universities

Despite the timid and restricted start, several universities sprung up in Africa following independence and were faced with the immediate mission of providing a labour force that would serve the Independent States (Eisemon and Salmi, 1993). Apart from having a mission to provide a labour force to serve the respective independent States, newly established African universities were also charged to play a leading role in addressing the continent's outstanding problems of poverty, low production, hunger, unemployment, diseases, illiteracy (Mosha, 1986; Sawyerr, 2004), and as well as close the development gap between them and the developed world (Sawyerr, 2004). Despite taking over from their respective colonial regimes, disappointment started settling in by early 1970s as the developmental situation of most African countries started deteriorating rapidly irrespective of the high investment in higher education (ibid). The initial focus on university supplying a labour force to serve the developing economies soon gave way to the need to focus explicitly on the developmental concerns facing the continent and its residential communities.

Although generalisation in Africa is difficult to make due to the tremendous diversity in quality, capacity, orientation and governance structure of each State and university (Gyimah-Brempong, Paddison and Mitiku, 2006; Eisemon and Salmi, 1993), it is important to ascertain the common theme of 'development' that has shaped most African universities recently. For instance, an excerpt from the mission statement of the University of Ghana reads: "our mission is to develop world class human resources and capacities to meet national development needs..."². This is also similar to an excerpt from the mission statement of the University of Buea in Cameroon which maintains that "the university is dedicated to the continuous quest for excellence in research, the promotion of moral and human values, and service to the community"³. Furthermore, a former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, asserts that "the university must be a primary tool for Africa's development in the new century" (Annan in United Nations Information Service (2000), cited by Bloom, Canning and Chan, 2005, p.4).

Underneath these assertions stands the idea of a developmentally oriented university. But one may ask: what is a developmentally oriented university? From Sawyerr (2004), it could be maintained that it is "a university whose work and mission would be directed toward specific developmental goals" (2004, p.36). This further prompts one to ask questions such as: what are developmental goals? How are they articulated or identified? Similar to the concept of the ecological university, it could be argued that a developmentally oriented university is one which generates knowledge and engages in activities with the intent of helping to improve the living condition of the citizenry (Barnett, 2011). It is about tackling issues of concern to ordinary people of a given local community that might be useful in alleviating suffering or deprivation, and according to Barnett, this is consistent with the tenets of the ecological

² Source: <http://www.ug.edu.gh/index1.php?linkid=243&sublinkid=68>

³ Source: <http://ubuea.cm/about/vision-and-mission/>

university (ibid). It can be argued that the liberal ideology of universities pursuing knowledge for its own sake is not enough to address the developmental concerns of people residing in a community. African universities should therefore be mindful of the needs of the society (Ngara, 1995) and seek creative ways to address them.

The notion of African universities participating in local and national development is not without fundamental concerns such as the tolerable and feasible limits of its developmental mission given that the university has got other traditional and contemporary missions such as research and teaching (Coleman, 1994). Notwithstanding, it can be maintained that research, teaching and other missions of contemporary African universities can be tilted to boost local and national developmental drives.

2.6.3 Challenges faced by African universities

The initial mission of African universities after independence was not going to be without challenges. Many countries inherited poor infrastructures from colonial regimes; some colonial regimes had divided and ruled African nations in ways that had fuelled division and tribal rivalries rather than support harmony; the newly constituted governments after independence were keen to take ownership of their institutions even without adequate managerial capacity; the language of instruction in most universities is the language of the colonisers and in some cases, local languages that were being used in higher institutions of learning were replaced by the language of the coloniser; and the curricula of universities in Africa were restricted and designed to serve the objectives of the colonisers at minimal costs (Preece et al., 2012, Teferra and Altbach, 2004). Apart from the challenges African universities faced in their respective States following independence, they continue to face other challenges today which hamper their smooth functioning and ability to address some of the problems facing the continent and its local communities today.

The much centralised system in which many of the universities operate poses a challenge against academic freedom. State owned universities dominate in Africa and the involvement of the government in university affairs is the norm (Teferra and Altbach, 2004). Given that most African States wanted to take ownership of their university institutions after independence, they rendered them parastatals (Preece, et al., 2012) and maintained a grip over their operations through appointed officials at the helm of the institutions. In most Anglophone countries or segments of Africa, the Vice-Chancellor has the executive power and the chain of power moves from the Vice-Chancellor to the deputy Vice-Chancellors, and then to the deans/directors and then to the departmental heads/heads of divisions. In countries such as Benin, Tanzania, Madagascar and Cameroon, the government supervises many aspects of the operations of universities and consequently restricts their autonomy, politicises them and subjects the learning experiences to respond to political objectives (Bloom, Canning and Chan, 2005; Taal, 2011). Given that several African governments are not tolerant to divergent views, criticism, unconventional ideas, nonconformity and freedom of expression (Teferra and Altbach, 2004, Sawyerr,

2004), many African universities can be seen fostering the modus operandi of their respective governments evident by vehement opposition to views which are contrary to those of management, stiffening of free speech and restricting the activities of student and staff activism/unionism. Due to the very centralised policies that govern some of the nations and universities; it makes it challenging for academic members of staff to respond to global and local demands and changes in knowledge, technology and the labour market.

African universities are also in a state of financial crisis (Taal, 2011; Sawyerr, 2004). Although university institutions everywhere, including those in western nations face financial challenges, the gravity of these challenges is more prominent in Africa than elsewhere (Teferra and Altbach, 2004). This difference can be attributed to many reasons. The economic problems faced by many African countries make it a challenge to provide increasing funds to higher education; the fiscal climate and condition brought by global funding agencies such as International Monetary Fund and World Bank sometimes make it difficult to allocate funds to specific sectors; the increasing difficulty for students to afford the tuition rate necessary to meet recurrent expenditures at the university places the university at a position of financial lack and the inappropriate allocation of available financial resources due to poor prioritisation renders the university insufficiently funded (ibid). Lack of adequate financial allocation to universities can also be attributed to other pressing problems the respective States are facing such as the HIV/Aids pandemic, rising poverty levels and the needs to build infrastructures to support local developments (Taal, 2011). The decline or lack of funds to run African universities have resulted in their stagnation, improper maintenance of facilities, poor remunerations, lack of morale and motivation amongst staff, brain drain and poor teaching, research and outreach quality (Taal, 2011; Sawyerr, 2004; Teferra and Altbach, 2004).

There is also the problem of limited access. Taking the cue from the colonial era when university education was meant for a selected few, African universities have still not been able to overcome the colonial legacy that restricts university education to a few and could still be seen conspicuously alienated from the masses. The few who enrol into the university are predominantly from urban areas (Taal, 2011). This is primarily because most universities in Africa are concentrated in urban areas and capital cities rather than rural areas, which makes it difficult for students from rural areas to access higher education due to distance and the challenges inherent in separating from loved ones in an attempt to move to a university location. Furthermore, the challenge of limited access to higher education in Africa is also compounded by the fact that very few members of the public can afford the cost of university education irrespective of the limited registration/tuition rate charged per student. An average African lives on less than £1 a day and affording the cost of higher education could be seen as a difficult task. Another reason for lack of access into higher education in Africa is inadequate infrastructure to lodge the increasing and unprecedented demand for access from the many students who are competing in each academic year for the few available places (Teferra and Altbach, 2004). With few universities

that are understaffed (Sawyer, 2004), African universities can only afford to recruit the numbers of students they are able to manage within the limits of their infrastructure, staffing and budget.

Gender imbalance is also a challenge many universities in Africa are facing today (Teferra and Altbach, 2004) despite their statutory position of equal opportunity and participation for both men and women. Given that the African society is a male dominated society and men tend to possess more power and financial resources than their female counterparts, men maintain a greater chance of enrolling at the university, as well as exercising control over who gets to enrol at the university from a family perspective. Stereotypes that depict women as objects to be groomed exclusively for marriage and childbirth still persist in many African societies despite the influence of globalisation and the rise in female emancipation. Taal (2011) maintains that women are still greatly and generally under-represented in many African universities at the level of student enrolment, academic staff and administrative personnel. Given this challenge, this thesis argues that African universities can institute conscious and deliberate plans of action to resolve the issue of gender imbalance by ensuring that all forms of gender discrimination in recruitment and enrolment are recognised and addressed.

African universities lag behind other universities in other parts of the world in the usage and maximisation of information and communication technology (ICT) to enhance teaching and learning. Whilst the internet age has led to many universities adapting and adopting web design tools and systems to manage their increasing sizes, programmes and activities, some African universities do not even have a running website through which the rest of the world can get to know the university and browse through the list of programmes and services being offered at the university. Many academic staff of African universities do not have regular connections to the internet where they can have access to e-journals and a wide range of data bases to aid their research and publications. Teferra and Altbach (2004) maintain that

tracking frontiers of knowledge is crucial for research and development. Having access to indicators of the knowledge frontiers, such as journals, periodicals, and databases, is a major prerequisite to undertaking viable, sustainable, and meaningful research (2004, p. 38).

The lack of acquaintance with the electronic and ICT age which now drives many global economies and brings higher education research, publications and other innovations to the lime light can be construed as one of the reasons many African universities are unable to compete with their counterparts worldwide and make meaningful contributions to global advancement. Currently, many African universities still rely heavily on face to face learning (Taal, 2011) while the growing availability of ICT worldwide is fostering the acquisition of knowledge anywhere and through other forms. Furthermore, embracing the current trend of ICTs in the world have the potential to engender accessibility of African universities by its masses, foster gender balance and promote the university's involvement in national and global dialogue. Away from the global and African university contexts, what is the situation of the

university in Cameroon? Whilst the situation of the university in Cameroon is a subset of the university situation in Africa and shares similar characteristics with other universities in the continent, the following section will present the university situation in Cameroon.

2.7 The evolution of university in Cameroon

Prior to independence in 1960, Cameroon had no university and many Cameroonians went abroad for university studies, though such studies was poorly adapted to meet the needs of the Africa continent in general and Cameroon in particular (Njeuma et al., 1999). After independence, Cameroon faced an immediate need for trained senior civil servants who would fill some of the positions that had hitherto been occupied by colonial personnel.

The government of Cameroon saw the need to provide an institution of higher learning or university that would be suitable to meet the intellectual and professional needs of the growing population and particularly those in civil service. Given this need, a university complex also referred to as the National Institute for University Studies (NIUS)⁴ was created in 1961 (ibid) with the aid of the French government. Whilst NIUS was intended to build the capacity of Cameroonians for civil service, it also ran degree programmes in Law, Education, Economic and Arts. One year after its creation, NIUS evolved and was transformed into the Federal University of Cameroon with an organisational structure comprising of faculties, schools, departments, centres and institutes with each having a specific mandate.

The Federal University of Cameroon was later renamed the University of Yaoundé and had as urgent goal to meet the needs of the nation and predominantly in the areas of teaching and public administration (Ngu and Kwankam, 1992). Following its creation, the Faculty of Law and Economics and Higher Teachers' Training College were the first institutional structures within it and this was followed by the Faculties of Science and Arts, and professional schools (ibid). By 1973, many establishments had been created as extensions of the University of Yaoundé and amongst these were the University Centre for Health Sciences (CUSS) created in 1969; The Institute of Management also referred to as Institut de l'Administration des Entreprises (IAE) created in 1969; the International School of Journalism established in 1970; the Institute of International Relations opened in 1971 and the National Advance School of Engineering also established in 1971. The creation of these professional affiliated institutions of the University of Yaoundé was intended to build the human capability needed to tackle the needs of public service and development.

Njeuma et al., (1999) maintained that while the period from 1962 – 1967 saw the establishment of general educational structures in the form of faculties, the period following 1967 was dedicated to

⁴ Also known as "Institut National d'Etudes Universitaires" in French.

creating professional and technological schools. This therefore depicts that at the foundation of Cameroon's higher education system, there are two types, namely: the professional and technical education and the fundamental (general) education systems.

Despite its mission, the University of Yaoundé and its many affiliated institutions were unable to meet the growing needs of the public service. The increasing demand for higher education and massive enrolment of students into the faculties supported by a lack of a selective/screening method and a generous welfare system where students were provided with paid bursaries, subsidised meals, accommodation and no tuition fees, witnessed a huge number of graduates who could not all be employed.

The following table reveals the figures of student enrolment at the University of Yaoundé from 1962 – 1984.

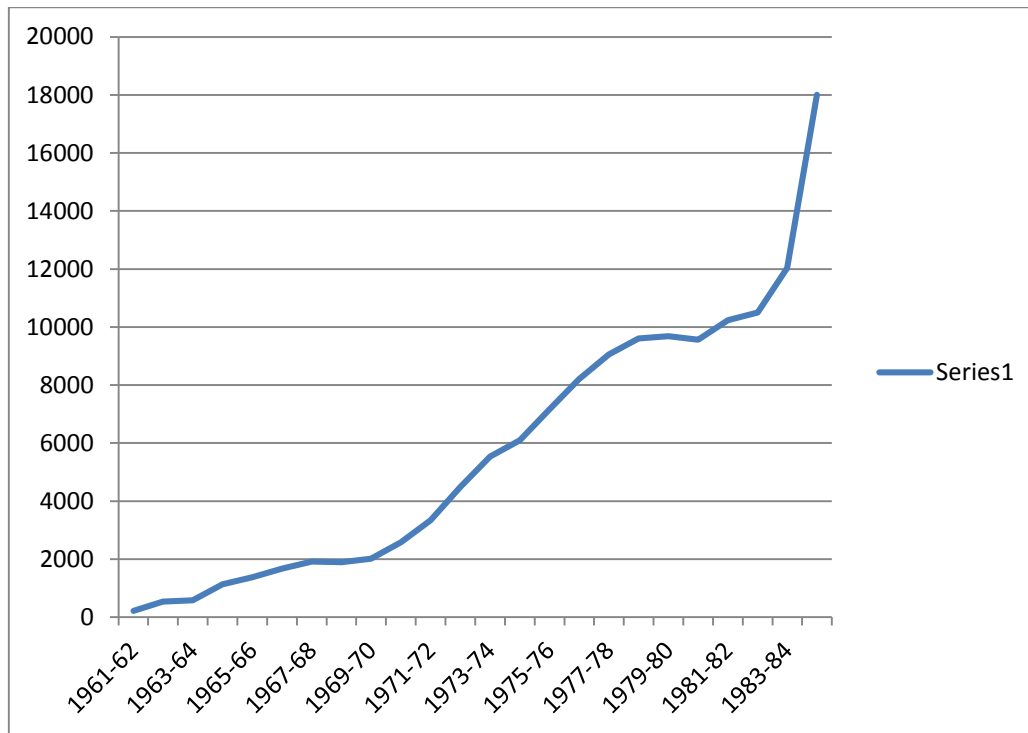
Table 2.2: Figures of student enrolment at the University of Yaoundé from 1962 – 1984

1961-62	1962-63	1963-64	1964-65	1965-66	1966-67	1967-68	1968-69
213	539	577	1,129	1,369	1,677	1,913	1,896
1969-70	1970-71	1971-72	1972-73	1973-74	1974-75	1975-76	1976-77
2,011	2,575	3,334	4,484	5,533	6,098	7,169	8,200
1977-78	1978-79	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85
9,057	9,602	9,687	9,562	10,231	10,494	12,031	18,000

Source: Njeuma et al., 1999, p. 3

The growth in student enrolment at the University of Yaoundé from 1962 – 1984 can also be represented graphically as follow:

Figure 2.1: Graphical display of student enrolment at the University of Yaoundé from 1962 – 1984



Source: Njeuma et al., 1999, p. 3

The great effort made by the government to establish professional schools were not sending out enough graduates to fill positions in civil services and the private sectors. Only few prospective university students tend to enrol in professional and technical schools, while the majority preferred the general education system (ibid). The early situation of higher education in Cameroon raised two fundamental questions vis-à-vis the need to provide manpower to serve the nation: 1) What is an appropriate way for handling the increasing demand for university education? 2) How can student enrolment into professional and technical schools be boosted.

Crisis at the University of Yaoundé was further exacerbated by the fact that growth in student population as a result of the welfare benefits the State was providing university students did not experience a corresponding growth in learning infrastructures, staff population, equipment and tools. The student-teacher ratio became increasingly unbearable and staff voiced their dissatisfaction with the increasing pressure to cope with the swelling numbers of students. Given these scenarios, the government had to step in with some reforms.

2.7.1 Higher education reforms in Cameroon

With the University of Yaoundé still the lone university and struggling to cope with the increasing demand for higher education evident by the overcrowded nature of lecture halls, laboratories and insufficient equipment and tools; high student-teacher ratios and the inadequate nature of the existing library to meet the need of the growing student population (Ngwana, 2003), four university centres were created in 1977 in different locations within the nation and assigned precise educational mandates. These centres were:

- Buea University Centre created as a centre for languages, translation, interpretation and the arts.
- Douala University Centre created as a centre for business studies and to train teachers of technical education
- Dschang University Centre created as a centre for agricultural sciences
- Ngaoundere University Centre created as a centre for food science and technology

Whilst it was intended that these centres would help to decongest the University of Yaoundé's main campus at the nation's headquarters in Yaoundé, their very specialised nature contributed little as student numbers in Yaoundé continue to swell. The Buea University Centre which was built to lodge up to 2,000 students accommodated only 60 students in 1991 whereas the University of Yaoundé initially designed to host 5,000 students had an enrolment of about 45,000 students within the same year (Njeuma et al., 1999). Given the escalating need to decongest and decentralise the University of Yaoundé which also felt within a period Cameroon was gravitating towards political liberalisation, dissident voices called for the government to rescue the situation at the University of Yaoundé by creating other universities. At this moment, Anglophones also started clamouring for the creation of an Anglo-Saxon university to be based in the English speaking part of Cameroon and which would be structured and fashioned to follow the tradition of English universities. Apart from the need to decongest the University of Yaoundé, the demand for an Anglo-Saxon university in the English speaking part of Cameroon can be attributed to the fact that English-speaking students felt increasingly marginalised at the University of Yaoundé (Ngwana, 2003) where most of the lectures were conducted in French which made them susceptible to failure in examinations.

The government succumbed to public demands and announced the creation of an Anglo-Saxon university in Buea and a francophone university in Ngaoundere in May 1991 and this was followed by a presidential decree No. 92/074 of 13 April 1992 to authenticate the announcement (Njeuma et al., 1999). The content of the decree upgraded the Buea and Ngaoundere University centres into full-fledged universities. Given that these newly created universities were not going to sufficiently address the need to decongest the University of Yaoundé, the government proceeded the following year (1993) to unveil a comprehensive package which transformed the remaining previously established university centres

into full-fledged universities. This meant that the Douala University centre became the University of Douala and Dschang University centre became the University of Dschang. Another facet of the reforms of 1993 was the splitting of the University of Yaoundé in the nation's capital into the University of Yaoundé I and the University of Yaoundé II. This brought to total, six State Universities. In addition to decongesting the University of Yaoundé, the university reforms of 1993 also had as goal the professionalisation of higher education with an intention to produce graduates with the capacity needed by the private sector and the public service. Drawing on Njeuma et al., (1999), the following objectives were set to be met by the reforms:

- Reduction of the over-crowdedness at the University of Yaoundé through the creation of six fully established Universities.
- Each university should have a mission geared towards the overall perspective of fostering national development.
- All Cameroonians should be provided with equal opportunities of obtaining university education. This was going to be supported by the universities being geographically located apart from each other to give greater opportunity of accessibility to prospective students in their regions and as well as make provision for common programmes in the different universities.
- University programmes should be more varied, professionally oriented and should respond to the needs of the job market. Not only should this help graduates to find jobs in the private or public sector but also help them create jobs.
- Optimise the usage of existing infrastructures, equipment and services, especially those which were under-utilised at previous university centres.
- Widen and render university financing and management more inclusive. The community and different stakeholders should be invited to participate in University management and income generation
- Introduce a modest and more substantial registration rate of 50,000 FCFA⁵ from the initial amount of 3,300FCFA
- Assign Universities improved academic and management autonomy through the provision of finances and basic infrastructure
- Revitalise and enhance co-operation between universities in the nation as well as foster international co-operation
- Provide better remuneration to motivate staff, improve their working conditions and enhance student learning experiences
- Create an enabling environment for excellent teaching and research.

⁵ This would be equivalent to about £65, calculated as per the exchange rate on the 02nd May 2014

Whilst the reforms of 1993 aimed at addressing the subjects of accessibility, diversity, quality, market needs, capacity building, national development, funding and co-operation, Cameroon universities still face the challenges of irregular and limited funding; lack of accountability and transparency in management; very centralised systems of governance; lack of adequately and professionally trained university administrators; too much politics and partisan sentiments; lots of bureaucratic procedures; insufficient liberalisation of revenue sources; lack of specific instruments for continuous evaluation and performance appraisal; inadequate resources, infrastructures and facilities; tokenised outreach programmes and high rate of graduate unemployment.

As at now, Cameroon has eight State universities. The newest of these is the University of Bamenda⁶ which was created following a Presidential decree in 2010. Cameroon has also witnessed a rise in the number of private universities that came into being following the liberalisation of the higher education sector.

2.8 Conclusion

Whilst it is not an easy task to define the university and its mission in the 21st century given the proliferation of universities and their missions across the globe, the university at the centre of the case study within this thesis (that is, the University of Buea) can be accorded a contextual definition as an institution of higher learning situated within a geographical locality in Cameroon but with a mission that extends beyond the immediate environment where it is located. An elaborated account on the University of Buea is found within the next chapter on the “research process and methodology” and precisely the section on “contextual background”. Drawing on the ethos of the ecological university which highlights subjects of “care” and “collectiveness”, it can be argued that the University of Buea can serve the developmental need of the residential ecology (also referred to as the local community) where it is located. Considering the ecological university’s ability to care or exercise concern for the world by serving multiple ecologies such as local communities, this thesis ascertains that a local university with a developmental mission can incorporate features of the ecological university within its engagement activities and reach out to address local community needs, as well as benefit from the local community’s potential to address some of its needs within a framework of reciprocity and shared existence. But one could ask: how can a university inspired by the ethos of an ecological university capture the collective interests of a local community where it is found? What are the benefits of listening to voices from a diverse range of people?

By aiming to foster community development; the University of Buea could capture a diverse range of voices within itself and from members of the local community and from these, ascertain priority needs of the residential ecology it has a mandate to serve and construct processes and methods within its

⁶ <http://www.unibda.net/>

engagement which can enable it to appropriately address the needs irrespective of common challenges faced by universities in Cameroon and Africa as presented in this chapter.

The need to address the subject of the university's engagement and how it could address priority needs of a local community within the context of community development falls within the objective of the subsequent chapters that make up this thesis.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH PROCESS AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In this research, there was a main part of field work and a preliminary part. I recruited 31 participants during the main part of fieldwork; 20 participants were interviewed, and 11 took part in two focus group discussions. However, prior to the main part of fieldwork, I also carried out a preliminary outreach during which I familiarised myself with the research context and spoke with a few individuals. Research participants were drawn from disparate backgrounds with many of them involved in subsistence farming and residing in very remote locations characterised by lack of potable water, dilapidated infrastructures, poor medical facilities and unpaved roads. In addition to the interviews and focus group discussions, I also kept a diary, perused relevant documents and carried out an observation of university students involve in agricultural training. The sample size, selection techniques and methods adopted in this research have been amplified in subsequent sections of this chapter.

The need to carry out a successful piece of research warrants the researcher to think about a suitable philosophical worldview assumption he/she brings into the study, the strategy of enquiry and the specific procedure of research that would transform the approach into practice (Creswell, 2009). However, given that this research was a journey, this chapter will present an overview of the nature of the research process before expounding on the nature and reason for the choice of a qualitative research design; an interpretive case study approach; a contextual based of the municipality of Buea in Cameroon, the varying sampling types adopted, the mix of methods used, data analytical tools employed and ethical issues addressed. This chapter clarifies that this research took side with the interpretivist research approach which primarily holds that knowledge is socially constructed and there are multiple realities out there which can be captured by more than one method. This approach is consistent throughout this research which employed semi-structured interviews and focus-group discussions to capture the voices of participants drawn from disparate backgrounds to address the subject of a university's engagement in a residential community and how this could be modelled to address local priority needs, as well as contribute towards community development. Given that this research is an empirical study which was carried out within a geographical location in Cameroon I had previously lived in, for a period of over seven years, this chapter also addresses the subject of personal motivation and my connection to the study area. The insider/outsider dichotomy and how I negotiated entrance into the different settings to collect data are also addressed. The chapter culminates with a conclusion which prepares the reader for the next session.

The recursive and cyclic nature of the research process was also informed by moments of reflexivity in solitude, during research development programmes, seminars and conferences attended. Solitary moments captured my thoughts on the way the research was unfolding, critical reflection on the different stages of the process, and scrutinising my role as a researcher. Whilst I reflected on which methodology would best suit this research, I conceived it would be appropriate to adopt a qualitative methodology.

3.3 A qualitative study

In identifying this research, I choose to call it a qualitative study. I made a deliberate choice to adopt a qualitative approach in an attempt to give participants such as ordinary people of a residential community an opportunity to have their voices heard. I believe employing conventional quantitative methods to this research would inhibit the intention of giving participants the latitude to have their ideas heard. But what is qualitative study?

According to Holliday (2007), qualitative research can be best identified by its distinct features from quantitative research. In this regard, it can be maintained that qualitative research is predominantly concerned with text and meaning construction and unlike quantitative research; qualitative research opposes positivism and the notion that there is a simple relationship between our perception of the world and the world in which we live. Although some disadvantages to qualitative research abound such as the lack of replicability and the inability to apply traditional concepts of validity and reliability (Langdrige and Hagger-Johnson, 2009), it poses several advantages over quantitative research such as the recognition of the subjective elements of the research process; it is not limited to one perspective on different social subjects and often generates unexpected insights through the open-ended nature of enquiries. These support my choice of it over a quantitative research approach. Given that qualitative study is a broad field, there is need to narrow down to the specific research paradigm underlining this research.

3.4 The Research Paradigm

Engaging in research can be considered a systematic enquiry process whereby data is collected, analysed and then interpreted in some ways in an attempt to understand, predict, inform or bring about some change (Burn, 1997; Merten, 2005). The exact nature of research is influenced by the researcher's worldview or paradigm. Mackenzie and Knipe (2006) argued that

it is the choice of paradigm that sets down the intent, motivation and expectations for the research. Without nominating a paradigm as the first step, there is no basis of subsequent choices regarding methodology, methods, literature or research design (2006, p.2).

A research paradigm therefore sets the proceeding of the entire research. It can be defined as a basic belief or worldview about perceived reality and knowledge that provides the researcher with a brought spectrum or tool through which the world is viewed (Merten, 2007) and the enquiry process of a research project guided. In the current world where there are discrepancies of knowledge and perception, an extensive list of research paradigms exist, amongst these are: The positivist research paradigm, the interpretivist research paradigm, the constructivist research paradigm, the pragmatic research paradigm and the transformative paradigm (Mackenzie and Knipe, 2006) with each presenting a unique worldview and investigative process as follows:

Table 3.1 Features of different research paradigms

Paradigm	Methods (primarily)	Data collection tools (examples)
Positivist/ Postpositivist	Quantitative methods are primarily used even though qualitative methods can also be used.	Experiments, tests, scales
Interpretivist/ Constructivist	Qualitative methods predominantly used although quantitative methods may also be utilised.	Interviews, observations, document reviews, visual data analysis
Transformative	Mixed methods. However, qualitative or quantitative methods could be used.	Diverse range of tools can be used – data collection needs to avoid discrimination. Such as: sexism, racism, and homophobia.
Pragmatic	Qualitative and/or quantitative methods may be employed. Methods are matched to the specific questions and purpose of the research.	May include tools from both positivist and interpretivist paradigms. Such as: Interviews,

Source: Adapted from Mackenzie and Knipe, 2006, p. 4

With multiple research paradigms in existence, I shall now move on to amplify on the interpretivist research paradigm as the prism through which this research was guided.

3.4.1 Choice of the interpretive research paradigm

Given that this research relied heavily on the views of participants in generating rich data in their natural environments, I argued that the interpretivist's position is very essential and consistent with it. As a research project whose intention was to draw meanings from opinions of participants drawn from different segments of a local community on a university's engagement, the adoption of the interpretivist research approach was considered to be most useful. But what is the interpretivist research approach? Before clarifying what I meant by the interpretivist research approach, it is important for me to elucidate

what interpretivism is. In this regard, interpretivism can be referred to as a term which depicts a contrasting position to positivism. Drawn from the theological concept of hermeneutics, interpretivism is preoccupied with the theory and method of interpreting human actions (Bryman, 2012). The interpretivist research approach can thus be defined as an approach which

captures the actual meanings and interpretations that actors subjectively ascribe to phenomena in order to describe and explain their behavior... It attempts to embrace the complex and dynamic quality of the social world and allows the researcher to view a social research problem holistically, get close to the participants, enter their realities, and interpret their perceptions as appropriate (Leitch, Hill & Harrison, 2010).

This definition succinctly captures and articulates the nature of the enquiry process in this thesis. Similar to the characteristic features of the interpretivist research paradigm, I went to the field, maintained relationships with participants in their natural settings, captured their voices, observed their activities and drew meanings from all these to address the subject of the research. The interpretivist research paradigm is underlined by the following characteristics:

Table 3.2: Characteristics of the interpretivist research paradigm

Characteristic of interpretivist research paradigm	
Ontology (what's out there to know about?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There are multiple realities - Meanings and beliefs guide actions - Social and political realities are encountered through our interpretation of them - Reality is an inter-subjective construction of the shared human perception and cognitive apparatus
Epistemology (what can we know about it?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Understanding is vital to the explanation of social and political phenomena - Knowledge claims are subjective and socially constructed - Understanding entails establishing the beliefs and meanings which inform actions/practices
Methodology (how might we acquire that knowledge)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interviews, documents, observations are some of the sources of data - Textual analysis and the analysis of social practices as texts is vital for the understanding and explanation

Source: Adapted from Hay, 2011, p. 169

Given that voices from a local community can be authoritative, critical or therapeutic in nature (Hadfield and Haw, 2001) and each can be deemed relevant in different contexts, this research captured voices

from different sources in order to holistically address the subject of the university and its engagement vis-à-vis community development. Apart from the interpretivist research paradigm which dominantly informed this project, this research also captured elements of the transformative research paradigm. Defined as a framework of belief systems that seek to engage members of culturally diverse groups (such as the university and its surrounding community) with a focus on promoting inclusion, belonging and social justice (Mertens, 2009; 2011), it can be argued that the transformative research paradigm is a useful worldview that enhances philosophical assumptions and guides methodological choices for research approaches within the fringes of critical theory, human rights, feminism and participation. Whilst it focuses on the tensions that may arise when unequal power relations (for instance between a university and its surrounding community) infiltrates a research context that addresses intransigent social problems (Greene, 2007, Mertens, 2009) such as poverty, illiteracy, disease and the need for development, this research addresses a fundamental need to access the poor, the less educated, and to give voice to the voiceless (Ashby, 2012). As such, remote locations were visited, dialogue with participants were conducted in the language they would best understand such as the usage of Pidgin English and more women were recruited for the focus groups. It can be argued that effective community participation in a research project is predicated on democratic values, respect of human rights and power amelioration which has the potential to remove dichotomies of “the oppressed and the oppressor” such that constructive dialogues can instigate the emergence of shared visions and aspiration (Freire, 1970) by the participants. Silver, Weitzman and Brecher (2002) also assert that

in setting social policy agendas, two groups can be influential. The first is experts on the nature of the problems, the alternative solutions, and their costs and effectiveness; the second is “the community”, that is, residents of an area, or those who suffer the consequences of the problem (2002, p. 362).

Although this research captured voices from the local community, as well as the university, it can be maintained that tensions could arise in the community when the university disagrees with the community or imposes an agenda and process of development on the local community. On this basis, this research also explored how existing power gaps can be ameliorated such that the local community can also have a say within the framework of a university’s engagement and processes aimed at improving the living conditions of the citizenry. In addition to the research paradigm, this research adopted an interpretive case study approach.

3.5 A single interpretive case study approach

A case study research approach is one that explores an issue through one or multiple cases within a bounded system (Creswell, 2006). According to Yin (2009), it “investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (2009, 18). It can be further clarified that case study research is primarily divided into two types. There is an intrinsic case study which is not taken because

the case represents other cases or it illustrates a particular phenomenon taking place in other cases but because the case's peculiarity and ordinariness is of interest (Stake, 1994). In this regard, the researcher is not informed or influenced by other curiosity so as to provide space to the case to reveal its story and generate its findings. In contrast, the instrumental or representative case study represents other cases and provides insight into the popular. In an instrumental case study, the case is of secondary interest as it provides a supportive role in facilitating the researcher's understanding of a wider concept or issue (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). As in other instrumental case studies, the case in this research which is also a single bounded system has been looked at in depth and its context scrutinised to provide insight into an understanding of the general context (Stake, 1994) of the university's engagement and its potential contribution to community development. Whilst this research examined the context of a single university in a given locality, this was designed to be a representative of similar contexts in different parts of the world.

Further, I maintained that it was preferable for me to address a single case as it would lead to an in-depth and detailed exploration of the case rather than addressing multiple cases which would have suffered from limited time and shallow exploration of each case (Yin, 2009). Creswell (2006) asserts that "the study of more than one case dilutes the overall analysis; the more cases an individual studies, the less the depth in any single case" (2006, p. 76). It is therefore on the basis of the need for an in-depth investigation of a representative but also instrumental case that a single case study was chosen.

3.6 Contextual Background

This research focused on a developing world context and specifically on a municipality in Cameroon. Given that there are certain criteria as illustrated below a research setting should meet, the contextual setting of this research was carefully chosen with the intention that it would be a sufficiently bounded system that would provide rich data. My choice of research site was guided by the following criteria for contextual setting:

Table 3.3 Criteria for contextual setting

Criteria	Detail
1) The setting must have a sense of boundedness	Time, place, culture
2) The setting should provide a variety of relevant, interconnected data	People to watch or interview, artefacts
3) It should be sufficiently small	Logistically and conceptually manageable
4) There should be access	For the researcher to take whatever role that is necessary to collect data

Source: Holliday, 2007, p.34

Furthermore, my choice of the research context was directed to ensure that I did not adopt a context which would pose limitations to the enquiry process and an obstacle to achieving a reliable and trustworthy data.

3.6.1 Cameroon in perspective

The primary country of focus in this research is Cameroon. As a nation, Cameroon is one of fifty-four sovereign States that makes up the African Union. Cameroon formerly became a Federal Republic on October 1st 1961 by the unification of two former colonies of France and Britain respectively. Prior to this, Cameroon was a German colony until 1916 which later witnessed the defeat of the Germans by a combination of French and British forces. As a result of this defeat, France and Britain jointly ruled Cameroon under the mandate of the League of Nation with France controlling four-fifths of the country and Britain one-fifth. French Cameroon later gained its independence from France in 1960; in 1961 a part of the British administered Cameroon reunited with French Cameroon to give birth to a Federal Republic. The Federal Republic of Cameroon which later became the United Republic of Cameroon was further named the Republic of Cameroon following Paul Biya's ascension to power in 1982. He stripped off regional autonomies and instituted a centralised presidential system of government with power hugely concentrated in the national capital Yaoundé. As a result of past colonial administration by the French and British, a united and an independent Cameroon inherited a bilingual and bi-cultural system which influenced Cameroon's educational system and paved the way for socio-political changes in conformity with French and British institutions. The present Republic of Cameroon consists of ten regions under the leadership of ten regional governors appointed by a Presidential decree. Cameroon has a population size of 21.70 million in 2012 and a life expectancy at birth of 55 years⁷. Based on

⁷ Source: <http://data.worldbank.org/country/cameroon> (accessed: 07/05/2014)

World Bank information, the educational situation of Cameroon is highlighted by the following statistical facts as at 2014:

- While access to basic education has improved considerably in Cameroon, with primary completion rates jumping from 53% in 2001 to 80% in 2011, academic performance in Cameroon has nonetheless declined. As at 2010, 49% of Cameroonian children in the third year of primary school struggled to read, while 27% could not read at all.
- While the primary completion rate in urban areas is 91%, the rural completion rate is only 68%. In addition, the adult illiteracy rate is three times higher in rural areas (57%) than in urban areas (17%).
- The enrolment rate for rural girls is just 65%, compared to 79% for boys. Furthermore, while virtually all children from the most prosperous families complete primary school, only 40% of children from the poorest quintile complete this level.
- Although public expenditure on education increased rapidly between 2001 and 2003, rising from 1.9% to 3.3% of GDP, it has since remained stagnant and is currently well below the regional average of 4.3%⁸.

(Source: World Bank)

The economic ambition of Cameroon is underpinned by its vision 2035⁹. This vision which was crafted in 2009 and is a working document of the Cameroon government maintains an overall objective of enabling Cameroon to become an emerging country over the next 25-30 years. In this light, the vision highlights medium-term objectives of (1) alleviating poverty, (2) ensuring Cameroon becomes a middle income country, (3) ensuring Cameroon is placed on the trajectory of becoming a newly industrialised country and (4) consolidating the nation's democracy and unity while respecting its diversity. Whilst varying measures have to be taken to realise these objectives, Souleymane Coulibaly, who is a World Bank lead economist for Central Africa maintained that "although the Cameroonian economy has been growing at a fairly decent rate of between 3 and 5% per year for the past decade, at this pace the country will not be able to achieve the target set by the government in its Vision 2035 working document,"¹⁰. The World Bank report of April 24, 2014¹¹ noted the need for the Cameroonian government to 1) improve the quality of primary education as primary education provides a significant opportunity for the population to participate in economic production and growth processes, 2) enhance the fight against corruption and enhance transparency in the allocation and management of the State Budget, 3) improve data collection, so that there can be better monitoring of services and 4) increase budget allocation to education as a whole. Given that this research is concerned with the place of the university in local

⁸ Source: <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/cameroon/publication/cameroon-economic-update-reexamining-sources-of-growth-the-quality-of-basic-education> (accessed: 07/05/2014).

⁹ Source: <http://minepat.gov.cm/dgpat/index.php/planification/productions/vision-2035>

¹⁰ Source: <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/cameroon/publication/cameroon-economic-update-reexamining-sources-of-growth-the-quality-of-basic-education>

¹¹ Source: <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/cameroon/publication/cameroon-economic-update-reexamining-sources-of-growth-the-quality-of-basic-education> (Accessed: 07/05/2014)

community development, it is anticipated that its findings could also contribute towards the realisation of the country's vision 2035.

3.6.2 The municipality of Buea

The site of this research was the municipality of Buea which is classified a Rural Council by the government of Cameroon. The municipality is situated in the South West Region which is one of two English Speaking regions of Cameroon. Created on the 29th of June 1977, Buea Rural Council is a highly complex community caught between a blend of urban, semi-urban, rural and traditional settings. The municipality is made up of eighty-five villages spread across a surface area of 870 Sq.km with a total estimated population of above 200,000 inhabitants. The principal ethnic group in the municipality is Bakweri with a majority of them residing in the villages. The urban but cosmopolitan setting within the municipality is the town of Buea. Buea, is a small town located at the foot of Mount Cameroon, which is the highest mountain in West and Central Africa. Historically, it was the capital of German Kamerun during German colonial rule. It later became capital of Southern Cameroon under British colonial rule, the capital of the Federated State of West Cameroon, and now regional capital of the South West Region¹².

The majority of the inhabitants rely on agriculture (small scale farming) as a source of livelihood. English and French are two official languages used for general interaction while “pidgin” is the lingua franca. It is worth noting that the government of Cameroon carved out administrative units into villages, towns, cities, municipalities, divisions and regions. A different municipality and perhaps in the French speaking part of Cameroon could have been chosen for this research but was decided against due to the language barrier and the potential additional costs of securing translations.

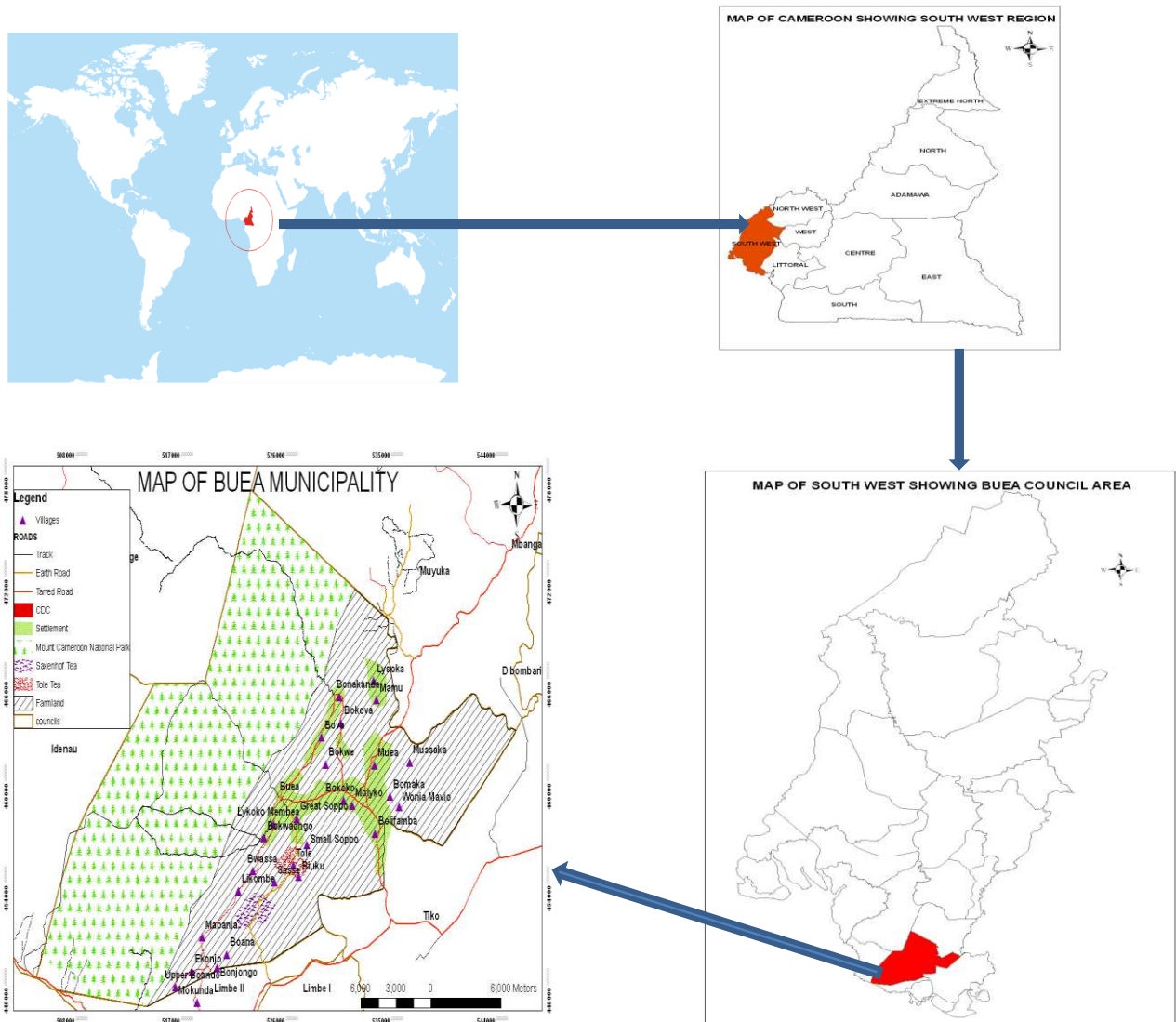
Given that the government of Cameroon classifies the municipality of Buea as a Rural Council, the sampling frame of this research was intentionally skewed towards a Rural Council. The reason for choice of a Rural Council rather than an Urban Council is owed to the fact that the majority of the African population reside in rural areas¹³. As I grappled with the concept of community development in this research, I argue that because the demographic structure of Africa is predominantly rural rather than urban, being involved in Africa's development largely suggests being involved in rural development. Therefore, it makes a lot of sense situating the context of this research within a predominantly rural area. The Municipality of Buea can be identified on the world map as follows:

¹² Source: <http://ubuea.cm/about/the-town-of-buea/>

¹³ Source:

<http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/PopDistribUrbanization/PopulationDistributionUrbanization.pdf>

Figure 3.2: Illustration of the Municipality of Buea



Source: Personal illustration

In addition to the municipality of Buea which forms the bounded system I investigated, I also explored the State owned university within it called the University of Buea.

3.6.3 The University of Buea

The University of Buea was created in 1993. As per the 2011 annual report, the university has a student enrolment of over 16,000, 316 academic Staff and 600 support staff. The University offers 116 programmes of which 40 are Bachelors, 42 Masters and 32 PhDs spread across 7 faculties, 1 school and 1 college. The following picture presents a sectional view of the university:

Figure 3.3: A sectional view of the University of Buea.



Source: The university's online resources

Since its inception, the university has had four Vice-Chancellors appointed by the President of the Republic for an unspecified duration. A Vice-Chancellor is expected to be loyal to the ideologies of the government in power and his/her appointment can last for barely one year as the case with the second Vice-Chancellor of the institution. Despite the university being the main focus of higher education in the South West region of Cameroon, it continues to struggle with students' unrest as evident by numerous strikes. Within the past ten years, there have been more than ten students' strikes with some of these leading to deaths, arrests, detentions and massive destruction of university properties. Students have generally presented reasons for striking such as the need for more courses to be offered during resit examinations, improvement of the quality of food served at the student restaurant; and the non-interference of university management in the daily running of their union (UBSU)¹⁴.

Apart from periodic student unrests, there have also been strike actions by academic and support staff. The university management and the lecturers' syndicate called SYNES¹⁵ sometimes cast blame on each other for hampering the smooth functioning of the institution. Despite the economic, management and infrastructural crisis facing the university, the University of Buea, fondly referred to as "the place to be", claimed to be making major academic incursions in the world as it pursues its mission of providing opportunities for quality education through teaching and research in an environment that is conducive

¹⁴ UBSU stands for University of Buea Students Union.

¹⁵ SYNES is an acronym in French which stands for "Syndicat des Enseignants du Supérieur"

to such pursuits and in ways that respond to market forces¹⁶. In an attempt to strengthen its ties with other universities and be part of global academic discourses, the university is a member of the Association of Commonwealth Universities and the Association of African Universities.

3.6.4 The insider/outsider dichotomy and my role as a researcher

Taking a position on whether I should approach the research context as an insider or an outsider proved to be complicated. As someone who was schooled and worked in the municipality of Buea for several years, I got into the field as an insider. This is because I lived the life of an inhabitant of the community and I am familiar with the daily plight of an ordinary community member. Furthermore, a majority of the colleagues I worked with at the university including the Vice-Chancellor I met at the time of fieldwork were still members of the university. As an insider, I had privileged access to the research context and easily related with some of the ideas participants articulated or muttered in the course of the enquiry process (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). For instance, I could easily relate with participants' concerns on intermittent power cuts and the rationing of potable water in the community as I had witnessed and experienced them. However, as an insider, I had to take steps to make the familiar strange (Delamont, 2003). That is, I had to be careful not to articulate participants' voices on their behalf or conclude their utterances or ascribe meanings too soon to their responses due to my familiarisation with perspectives but make a deliberate attempt to let participants have control of their ideas, draw their own conclusions and allow meanings to emerge naturally from the data. However, in some cases dealing with participants from very remote locations I am not very familiar with, I tried to encourage them to articulate their experiences by sharing my own experience or affirm some of their experiences by asserting I too had experienced what they have experienced. By doing this, I took steps to ensure that my power-laden identity of a doctoral student from a British university would not come to the fore.

It can be difficult from an emic perspective not to identify with participants' views which are consistent with the researcher's experiences and this may lead to being sympathetic with participants' accounts. It can also be maintained that the insider/outsider dichotomy tends to overlook other dimensions of subjectivity and identities inherent in postmodernism (Griffiths, 1998). For instance, I consider myself as an insider from the standpoint of a former employee of the university and resident of the community but from the perspective of a researcher who has come from overseas, I can be considered an outsider because I am not abreast with current happenings at the university and its surrounding community. Whilst members of the university would still consider me an insider given that the university is part of a global research framework, members of the external community would be less likely to identify me as such as I was not known before as a researcher and furthermore, I came from overseas, and notably a western nation. It is worth noting that in Cameroon, visitors from western nations are regarded to be

¹⁶ Source: <http://ubuea.cm/about/>

part of a higher social class and treated with some reverence. Given these complexities, I negotiated my role and position as a researcher by maximising both the insider and the outsider perspectives to the benefit of the entire research process and this was enhanced by constantly identifying and explaining the aims/nature of my research to the participants after gaining appropriate entrance into the various settings. Furthermore, some interviews were conducted in a language relevant to the participants. For instance, Pidgin, which is a lingua franca and a local variation of English was occasionally used to avoid questions being misunderstood by participants if asked in standard English, and especially when dealing with participants from very remote locations, and who have had very limited or no formal education. Moreover, the interview guide used in my research was occasionally modified to be relevant to some groups of participants.

3.6.5 Negotiating entrance into the field

The research process consisted of two phases of fieldwork. The preliminary phase which was rudimentary ran from the 19th of December 2011 – 2nd of January 2012. It was exploratory in nature and designed to lay the foundation for a more thorough data collection in the second phase. This first outing also enabled me to familiarise myself once more with the municipality of Buea I had left two years ago for further studies. It enabled me to build relationships which would help me in the next and decisive phase of fieldwork. For instance, a participant I met during the preliminary phase hosted me during the second (main) phase of fieldwork. Whilst the second (main) phase of fieldwork, which ran from the 25th of March to the 1st of June 2013, revisited the nature of collaborations between the university and the community which was explored during the preliminary phase, it also went on to explore the developmental potential inherent in the university's engagement. The fieldwork took me into different natural settings.

Entry into villages

All the villages in the municipality of Buea are led by traditional councils headed by local chiefs. Whilst it is possible to visit a village without paying a courtesy call at the chief's palace, and more especially if your visit is informal and does not warrant the attention of the chief, in the most part, it is customary for the chief to be aware of any research that will be carried out in his village. Given that some of the villages in the municipality of Buea are closed communities¹⁷ and places I have never been to, I had to be accompanied on one occasion by a field assistant who was an indigene of one of the villages and on a different occasion, I was accompanied by a field assistant who was not an indigene of the village I wanted to visit but had maintained contacts with some of the villagers. These field assistants I invited to be part of this research were friends I had known over the years prior to my travel overseas for further studies. They were happy to facilitate my outings to the villages. Their involvement helped to ease the

¹⁷ By closed communities, I am referring to remote locations with limited access

tension that would have arisen between me and village participants who would have considered me a stranger and exhibited traits of lack of willingness to engage in the enquiry process. The following picture illustrates one of the villages visited called Bonakanda.

Figure 3.4: A cross section of the village of Bonakanda



Source: fieldwork photos

The field assistants introduced me to the participants before I could introduce myself and the purpose of my visit. Furthermore, I had to also introduce myself in an appropriate manner to the villagers so as to gain their confidence, which included identifying myself as someone who had lived in the municipality of Buea for several years and explaining that the research I was conducting had the potential to enhance the village and improve the living conditions of inhabitants of the municipality.

Entry into the University

At the centre of this research is the University of Buea. I needed to recruit and interview members of different segments of the university. The segments identified were the students, the support staff and the academic staff. In order to recruit members of the university, the gate keeper's consent had to be secured. Given that the gate keeper has the power to approve or disapprove my entry (Punch, 1994), I had to make a formal application to the gate keeper who was the Vice-Chancellor, highlighting the significance of the research and my intention to recruit university participants for one-to-one interviews and focus group discussion. Knowing that the authorisation had been verbally granted for me to carry out an enquiry process at the university and it was only a matter of bureaucratic process for a signed hard copy to be handed to me, I started interviewing university participants before the hardcopy was

handed to me. Although the application process took several days, the gate keeper's written authorisation was finally issued.

Accessing groups

Two focus group discussions took place within the main phase of my fieldwork and the process of accessing each of these groups was different even though they both shared a common phenomenon of having someone who assisted me in forming the groups. With regards to the students' group, I was assisted by a course coordinator at the university who opted to help by selecting willing students from her department with varying backgrounds. We agreed on a particular date the focus group discussions would take place and she informed the willing students. It should be noted that the students were not pressured or coerced into participation.

With respect to the focus group made up of community (non-university) members, the head of a non-governmental organisation (NGO) I had interviewed directed me to the leader of another NGO who works with some villagers, and was able to assist with identifying and setting up a group of farmers for the discussions. In addition to recruiting members for the focus group, the head of the NGO also featured in the discussions and her presence helped in boosting the morale, confidence, and participation of the villagers.

Accessing *individuals'* spaces

Building relationships, attending meetings, socialising, and making phone calls were some of the primary methods I adopted in accessing individuals and families. Whereas the preliminary phase of my fieldwork accorded me limited time to get to know and interact with university and community members, the second/main phase of my fieldwork which lasted for close to three months enhanced my contacts with a wider range of persons. Meeting and talking with community members at local markets, worship centres and by the road sides, created a forum for me to build relationships and friendships which yielded opportunities for me to talk about my research, and schedule appointments for interview. In the process of talking about the subject of my research and the need to recruit participants who are willing to be interviewed, I generally had a favourable reply. What also enhanced my ability to access individuals/families and have successful interviews and discussions was a role play (demonstration) session I had with my supervisors prior to departure to the field. This role play was intended to help me get acquainted with what I might face when I get to the field and how I could handle different scenarios of participant reaction. In the course of the role play, one of my supervisors acted as a participant, the other acted as an observer and I was the interviewer. After the exercise, we had some remarks and I was able to retain some useful lessons which accompanied me to the field such as 1) performing an effective introduction or ice-breaker which would set the stage for an interview, 2) giving participants enough

time to talk without frequent interruption, 3) skilful probing of participants' views and giving them opportunities for elaboration and 4) proper time management.

Accessing an observable space

I conducted a primary observation during my fieldwork and this took place at the demonstration farm of the faculty of agriculture of the University of Buea. Given that I had already secured the gate keeper's authorisation which called for all members of the university to collaborate with this research, it was easy for me to get the Dean of the Faculty of Agriculture's consent to be onsite at the faculty's farm and observe the students as they engaged in farm practice. I also had approval from the Dean to bring in a tomato farmer from the community to observe the students and engage with them.

3.7 Sampling methods used

Given that the municipality of Buea is not a homogenous society due to the continuous influx of students, families and individuals from different parts of the country to take advantage of its higher education, suitable climate and the diversity of its population, different sampling methods were used to recruit participants from disparate backgrounds. The 31 participants recruited during the second but extended phase of fieldwork came from different villages, occupational backgrounds, economic standings, genders, marital status, educational levels and age groups.

Purposive sampling

In qualitative research, many researchers recruit participants whom they deem to be knowledgeable or to have experience of the phenomenon to be investigated (Creswell, 2009). However, it can also be argued that recruiting participants based on a perception of them being knowledgeable or having the required experience may pose a bias that will skew the findings of the research to favour the researcher's choices, and consequently could render the research process less robust. Although purposive sampling is not the only technique used in recruiting participants in this research, I maintained that it was essential for me to recruit participants I considered could give vital information relevant to the subject of my enquiry (Merrill and West, 2009). Many of the participants under this category were contacted early and an appointment scheduled. Based on the circumstance of protocol, responsibility and tight work schedule which surrounded some of the participants, I wrote formally to explain the subject of my research and the issues that would be discussed within the enquiry process. This was supported by a letter I obtained from the university introducing me to the participants.

Opportunistic sampling

Opportunistic sampling can be defined as "taking advantage of situations to interview individuals, through luck, chance, the right word being said, or because people offer themselves" (Miles and Huberman, 1994 cited in Merril and West, 2009, p. 107). Given that research is also about seizing

opportunities that carry the potential for rich data and making the most out of it (Holliday, 2007), I was able to seize some opportunities I perceived would provide rich data. A case in point is that of a former colleague I met at the university on the 24th of April 2013. Whilst the original intention was just to visit a former colleague and have an informal conversation with him, it soon became obvious to me that he could become one of my interviewees as he expressed interest in the subject area of this research and was willing to be interviewed. Any sampling method chosen carries the risk that it could have a negative impact on the reliability of the data. In this particular instance, the decision to use opportunistic sampling carried the risk that a disproportionate number of respondents who were willing to be involved in the research also had particular vested interests in the research subject, or even had particular grievances against the university or the community which they were keen to express. The usage of a number of sampling methods in addition to opportunistic sampling enabled me to minimise this risk. I also worked hard to ensure that my sample included a wide range of cross-section of the community and the university.

Snowball sample

Snowball sampling represents participants recruited by asking other participants or members of the community/university if they are knowledgeable of persons, friends, colleagues or members of family who might be willing to be interviewed (Merrill and West, 2009; Langdridge and Hagger-Johnson, 2009). Apart from asking participants or community/university members to recommend someone who may be willing to be interviewed, I experienced participants or members of the community who voluntarily requested that I interview someone. This was because at some point of gaining understanding of the context of this research, some participants felt they knew someone who could provide reasonable information on the subject of the enquiry. A case in point is that of a member of staff I met at the university who, after gaining some understanding of the research subject, requested that I interview a number of staff because of their involvement in community-based projects.

3.8 A mix of Methods

A single interpretive case-study research design will typically utilise multiple ways of collecting data (Mackenzie and Knipe, 2006). Yin (2009) maintains that there are six types of sources of evidence in a case study which are: documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant observation and physical artefacts (2009, p. 100). Even though the list is quite extensive, I had to make a decision as to which methods can best serve the context and design of this research. Furthermore, there is a need to differentiate between the source of data and the methods adopted to generate the data. Mason (2002) asserts that one's data source is the place or system one believes data can be generated from whereas the methods are the strategies needed to get this done. I shall now proceed to discuss the methods used in this research to extract data from respective sources.

3.8.1 Semi-structured interviews

Even though conducting interviews is one of the most widely utilised methods in a qualitative research enquiry (Bryman, 2012; Yin, 2009), I maintained its usefulness within the framework of inductively generating meanings from the voices of participants as evident by my research context. Unlike structured interviews which entails strict adherence to an interview schedule by an interviewer and ensuring that all interviewees are administered the same context of questioning (Bryman, 2012), semi structured interviews which are interactive and open-ended in nature (Yin, 2009) were used. During my fieldwork, willing members of the university and the community participated in one-to-one semi-structured interviews and these were friendly and non-threatening. Creswell (2009) noted that the more open-ended the questioning, the better, as the researcher listens carefully to what the participant says. The choice of semi-structured interview approach was also due to the fact that it allows the interviewer opportunities for probing beyond the structured predetermined questions, affording the research not only more space for clarifications and elaboration, but also enabling a more flexible collection of rich qualitative data. Given the context of this research which captured the voices of participants from the municipality of Buea, including the poor, the less educated, as well as members from the business sector and non-governmental organisations, semi-structured interviews gave interviewees the room and latitude to air their views with very limited interruption by the researcher.

As participants became engaged with me in an atmosphere of dialogue, openness and frankness during the semi-structured interview sessions, reflexivity on the part of the participants was enhanced and some were able to articulate how useful the enquiry process had been to them – a case in point is that of a community participant who noted that the process had opened her eyes. The flexible nature of the enquiry process also brought about a new awareness on the part of some of the participants.

3.8.2 Focus group discussions

Apart from the one-to-one semi-structured interviews, my fieldwork also included two focus group discussions. The nature of the focus group discussions was such that I coordinated the discussions by initiating open ended questions and stirred a conversation around them, mobilising each member of the group to take active part (Bryman, 2012; Yin, 2009). One of the focus groups involved a group of rural community participants and the other a group of students from the university. Six participants, made up of four women and two men, most of whom are not educated to the level of secondary education and are depending on subsistence farming as a source of livelihood, took part in the focus group discussions with community members while five students comprising of three females and two males in the last year of their undergraduate studies at the university took part in the focus group discussions with university members. From the onset, I conceived that it would be good to have at most six persons in each focus group discussion. I reasoned that limiting the number to a maximum of six rather than having a larger group would give every member of the focus group an opportunity to share their views rather

than having a larger group that could be dominated by fewer voices. The focus groups were also intentionally skewed to have more females than men. The intention was to give the female members a voice given that the society in which they live is male dominated. This is evident by the fact that within the municipality of Buea, there was no female traditional ruler; amongst Vice-Chancellors of State Universities, there was only one female Vice-Chancellor; there was no single female regional Governor and men also formed the majority in Parliament, the Senate and the Government. Given the dominance of men in decision making processes in the country, women tend to be shy when underrepresented in discussion forums. Therefore, it was intentionally conceived to have more women representatives in the focus groups. However, it does not always hold that the greater the number of women in a group the louder their voice as few men can still dominate discussions. In this case, I made sure I always refer to less vocal female participants to get their opinions on the subjects being discussed.

The following table reveals the participants who took part in interviews and focus group discussions during fieldwork from the 25th of March to the 1st of June 2013:

Table 3.4: A descriptive analysis of participants at the main phase of fieldwork

No	Date	Sampling type	Participant	Code	Sex	Age range	Education	Occupation	Village	Marital status	Dependents
1	02/04/2013	Opportunistic	Martha	CM 1	Female	31-40	BSc	Business	Molyko	Married	2
2	02/04/2013	Opportunistic	Paul	UM 2	Male	21-30	GCE A'L	Student	Molyko	Single	-
3	04/04/2013	Snowball	Joseph	UM 3	Male	31-40	PhD	Lecturer	Bomaka	Married	4
4	04/04/2013	Opportunistic	Marcus	UM 4	Male	31-40	BSc	Admin Staff	Bakweri town	Married	3
5	06/04/2013	Opportunistic	Agnes	CM 3	Female	51-60	Class six	Business	Bokwai	Divorce	2
6	10/04/2013	Snowball	Stephen	UM 5	Male	41-50	PhD	Lecturer	Bonduma	Married	6
7	12/04/2013	Snowball	Pauline	UFG 1	Female	21-30	GCE A'L	Student	Molyko	Single	-
8	12/04/2013	Snowball	Catherine	UFG 2	Female	21-30	GCE A'L	Student	Molyko	Single	-
9	12/04/2013	Snowball	Susan	UFG 3	Female	21-30	GCE A'L	Student	Molyko	Single	-
10	12/04/2013	Snowball	Gregory	UFG 4	Male	21-30	GCE A'L	Student	Bowango	Single	-
11	12/04/2013	Snowball	Lucas	UFG 5	Male	21-30	GCE A'L	Student	Molyko	Single	-
12	16/04/2013	Purposive	John	UM 7	Male	41-50	PhD	Lecturer	GRA	Married	3
13	17/04/2013	Purposive	Eric	UM 6	Male	41-50	MA	Lecturer	Bokwango	Married	7
14	18/04/2013	Purposive	Clement	CM 7	Male	51-60	Diploma	Business	Clerk's quarter	Married	3
15	18/04/2013	Snowball	Philemon	UM 8	Male	41-50	Diploma	Admin Staff	Bolifamba	Married	3
16	19/04/2013	Opportunistic	Sophie	UM 1	Female	21-30	GCE A'L	Student	Molyko	Married	5
17	22/04/2013	Opportunistic	Joan	CM 4	Female	51-60	MA	NGO	Bulu	Married	6
18	15/04/2013	Opportunistic	Margaret	CM 2	Female	41-50	MA	Medical scie	Bolifamba	Married	12
19	26/04/2013	Snowball	Martin	CM 6	Male	31-40	GCE A'L	Farming	Molyko	Married	7
20	27/04/2013	Purposive	Cornelius	CM 9	Male	51-60	PhD	NGO	Molyko	Married	5
21	28/04/2013	opportunistic	Gregory	CM 10	Male	51-60	MA	Civil Servant	Wokoi	Married	5
22	03/05/2013	Snowball	Docas	CFG 1	Female	31-40	FSLC	Farming	Bokuva	Married	4
23	03/05/2013	Snowball	Elizabeth	CFG 2	Female	41-50	Diploma	Development	Bokuva	Married	6
24	03/05/2013	Snowball	Loveline	CFG 3	Female	51-60	FSLC	Farming	Bokuva	Widow	5
25	03/05/2013	Snowball	Grace	CFG 4	Female	51-60	FSLC	Farming	Bokuva	Widow	7
26	03/05/2013	Snowball	Alain	CFG 5	Male	41-50	FSLC	Farming	Bokuva	Married	4
27	03/05/2013	Snowball	Elvis	CFG 6	Male	51-60	FSLC	Farming	Bokuva	Married	6
28	05/05/2013	opportunistic	Helen	CM 5	Female	51-60	Class six	Farming	Bokwai - New L	Married	26
29	06/05/2013	Purposive	Alfred	CM 8	Male	51-60	Diploma	Clergy	Great soppo	Married	6
30	10/05/2013	Snowball	Sherley	CF	Male	51-60	FSLC	Farming	Bonakanda	Married	8
31	10/05/2013	Opportunistic	Peter	CM 11	Male	71-80	Standard six	retired	Bokwai	Married	10

Source: Fieldwork

The table above has been sorted in ascending order of the dates the respective interviews and focus group discussions took place. In addition to other displayed variables, participants have been assigned pseudonyms as well as coded to identify the context of participation. For instance, “CM1” represents “community member 1”, “UM1” represents “university member 1”, “CFG 1” represents “community focus group participant 1”, “UFG1” represents “university focus group participant 1” and “CF” represents a “community family”. The table also contains the educational attainment of each participant such as a Bachelor of Science Degree (BSc), a General Certificate of Education – Advance Level (GCE A’L), a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), a Master of Arts (MA) and a First School Leaving Certificate (FSLC) obtained after completion of primary school. A few community participants had no formal educational certificate like those who ended in class six of the primary school which comprises of seven stages (classes) or “standard six” as referred to in a previous educational system. Furthermore, two community participants who had completed studies at the University of Buea can be acknowledged. These community members came into the enquiry process from an insider context of their past experience as students of the university.

In the analysis, when a participant is quoted, the name is often followed by the sex, the age range, the village where the participant resides and the date of the interview or focus group discussion such as “Margaret, female, 41-50, Bolifamba, 15-04-2013”. In addition to the participants at the main phase of fieldwork, the preliminary phase recorded interviews that were made with the following participants:

Table 3.5: A presentation of relevant participants at the preliminary phase of fieldwork

Participant	Village	Description
Magnus	GRA	A university administrator
Constance	Molyko	Head of a Non-governmental organisation working with rural women
Johnson	Bonduma	Head of a Non-governmental organisation promoting computer literacy
Linus	Wokoko	A village Chief
Timothy	Muea	A village Chief

Source: Fieldwork

3.8.3 Direct observation

Observation has a long tradition in social science research (Yin, 2009). Whilst several types abound such as structured observation, systematic observation, participant observation, non-participant observation, unstructured observation, simple observation and contrived observation (Bryman, 2012, p. 273), the one central to this research is naturalistic field or direct observation which is not subjected to the constraint of control. Unlike controlled and structured observations, this type of observation involves the studying of people in their natural environment (Langdrige and Hagger-Johnson, 2009).

Yin (2009) argued that because case study takes place in a natural setting, it creates an opportunity for direct observation of the case. Naturalistic field observations have their advantages, as well as their disadvantages as indicated below:

Table 3.6 Advantages and disadvantages of naturalistic field observation

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater ecological validity • Realistic, spontaneously occurring behaviour • Useful where it is not possible to observe participants in a laboratory • Behaviour should be less subject to the demand characteristics of the setting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More difficult to conduct • Difficult for observers to be unobtrusive • Extraneous variables poorly controlled • Greater potential for observer bias • Replication may be difficult • Use of recording equipment may be difficult

Source: Langdridge and Hagger-Johnson, 2009, p. 77

Whilst the advantages of using a naturalistic or direct observation accounts for the reason it was adopted, the corresponding limitations of using this observational method were negated by other tools used for data collection and data from other sources. Given that direct observation can be made during a field visit (Yin, 2009), I observed some farm practice sessions of the Faculty of Agriculture, as well as brought a community member to also observe one of such sessions as already noted. The community member who was a tomato farmer was taken to observe how the students were being trained in tomato farming. After a moment of observation lasting for about forty minutes, the community observer was prompted to say 1) what he observed was customary practice in the community, 2) what he observed which was/were not customary practice in the community, 3) what he observed which could be a take-away to enhance his farming practice and 4) what contributions he could make to enhance the university's training of future tomato farmers. His inputs which formed part of the analytical work of the data collected in this research have been discussed in a subsequent chapter. Given that the main occupation of the inhabitants of the municipality of Buea is farming, it was relevant for this research to incorporate the observation of some farm activities of the Faculty of Agriculture of the University of Buea. The intention was to capture data which could be used alongside other data from different sources to construct meanings that would address the subject of the university and its potential to enhance community development. The following photo illustrates a farming activity of the Faculty of Agriculture of the University of Buea observed in the field:

Figure 3.5: A demonstration at the university's Faculty of Agriculture farm



Source: Fieldwork photos

In addition to the aforementioned methods used in this research, this research also perused some documents. Even though it is a common phenomenon to identify a document as a piece of written text in hard or soft copy, Prior (2003) argued that photographs, videos, drawings, paintings and monuments can also be referred to as document in some context or another. However, the use of document in this research pays attention to written text which could take the form of letters, email correspondence, diaries, memoranda, agenda, minutes of meetings, reports, announcements, administrative documents, records, articles, notes and calendars (Yin, 2009). Particularly, the documents perused include the University of Buea's strategic plan of 2007 – 2015 and Buea Communal Development Plan of 2012.

3.9 Data Analysis

The enquiry process of this research would not have been completed without a thorough analysis of the various data. The analysis of data helps to bring coherence and understanding to the different data types in an attempt to make sense of captured information (Merrill and West, 2009). The process which was time consuming involved transcription, cross checking of the different data, coding, summarising content, looking for patterns, themes, variances and inductively making sense of the data (Boyatzis, 1998; Bryman, 2012; Langdridge and Hagger-Johnson, 2009). The analysis of data in this research was dominantly informed by a thematic analysis approach (Boyatzis, 1998; Attride-Stirling, 2001). According to Boyatzis (1998), thematic analysis is a process that can be used in most qualitative

methods. It can be defined as an analytical process which “enables scholars, observers, or practitioners to use a wide variety of types of information in a systematic manner that increases their accuracy or sensitivity in understanding and interpreting observations about people, events, situations, and organisations” (ibid, p. 5).

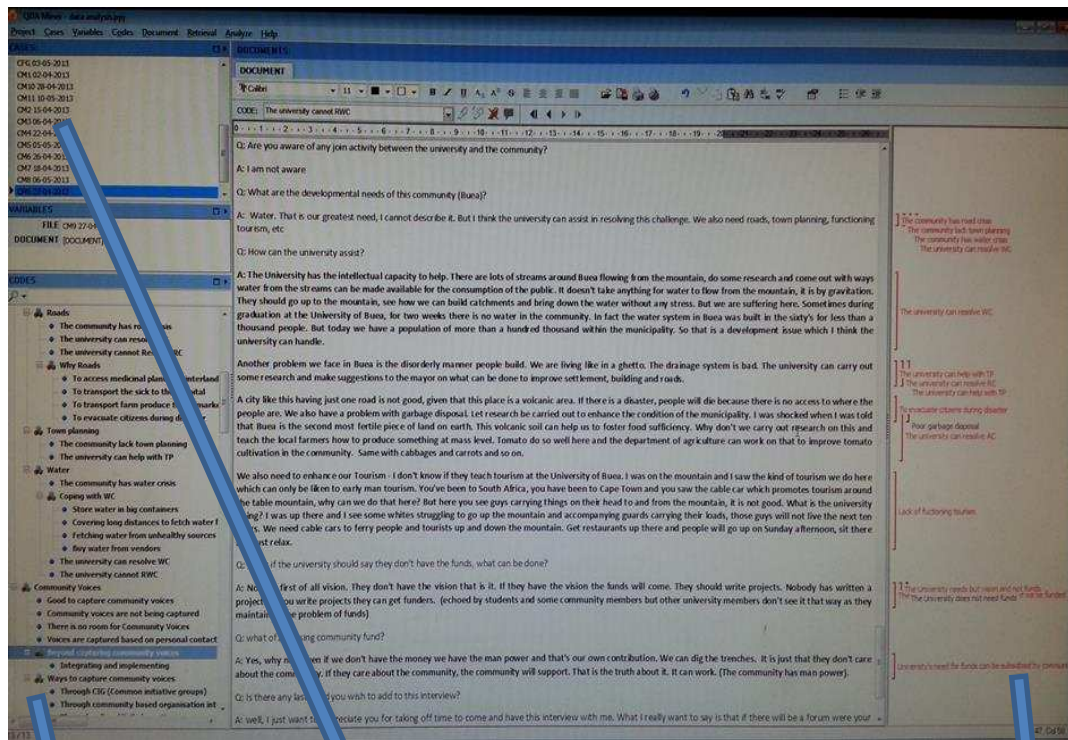
This approach entails the identification of themes or patterns within data, coding the themes or patterns, combining similar or the same themes or pattern and cataloguing the themes or patterns in order to arrive at meaningful findings (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Aronson, 1994). Given that the approach to enquiry used in this research is an interpretive qualitative study, I maintained that using thematic analysis to make meaning out of the data collected from multiple sources is appropriate. In the process of making the most out of a thematic analytical approach, I did the following:

- Transcribed all the recorded interviews, proof read them to make sure the transcriptions were consistent with the recordings.
- Identified themes in each interview.
- Catalogued themes into sub themes.
- Built arguments to justify the findings.

The analysis of the research data was facilitated by the usage of a software (QDA Miner). The user friendly nature and potential of the software to assist coding and analysis of textual data made it very useful and relevant in the analysis process when compared to the strenuous exercise of doing it manually. In order to adequately comprehend the lines of thought expressed by the interviewees in their responses, and as well as interpret and draw meanings from them, themes were generated from the data. Whilst there are different ways themes can be identified and sorted out from research data such as through repetitions, similarities, differences, transitions, indigenous typologies and linguistic connectors (Ryan, 2003), the identification of themes within the analysis was data driven (Wolcott, 1994). Being data driven in the analysis of participants’ responses meant that the researcher stayed as close to the data as possible and allowed the data to speak irrespective of differences in opinion expressed by separate participants. Furthermore, being data driven in the analysis meant that the transcribed interviews or focus group discussions were not subjected to a predetermined theory or any form of bias.

The following picture is a representation of the front view of one of the interviews (cases) analysed in QDA Miner.

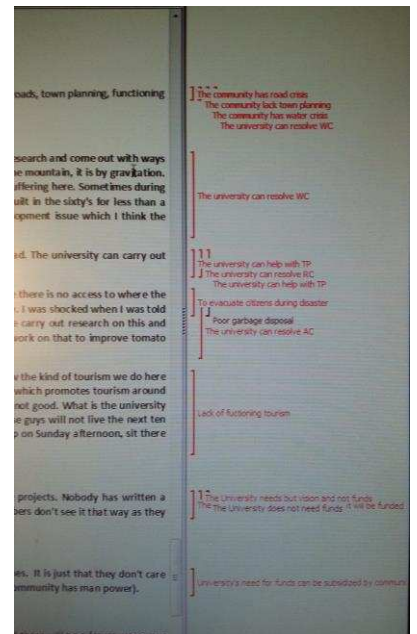
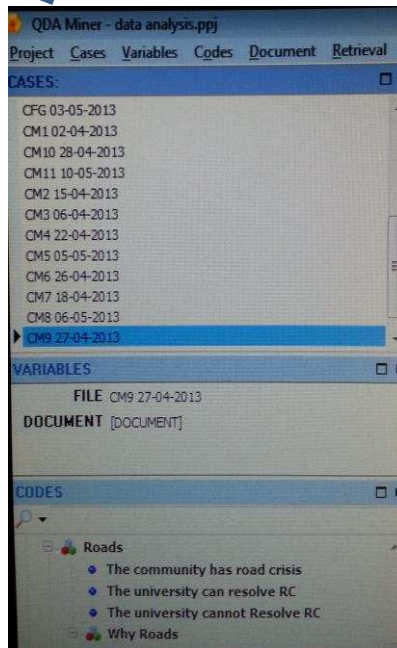
Figure 3.6: A demonstration of data analysis in QDA Miner



2

1

3



Source: Data analysis process

The analysis process began with the importation of all transcribed interviews and discussions into QDA Miner as illustrated in “1” above. After importation, I carefully read through the data and identified themes and sub-themes also known as “codes” in QDA Miner as illustrated in “2” above. In addition to the codes being outlined in a special bar on the left-hand side of the data, themes can also be identified on the right-hand side as shown in “3” above. Different forms of descriptive analysis can then follow the process of identifying themes.

Given that this research was also underpinned by the interpretivist research paradigm, the analysis of data also drew on the principle of hermeneutic circle to understand the macro complexity of the case study. From the micro understanding and meaning derived from the associate parts of the analysis, their interconnections, relationships, appropriate findings and conclusions were arrived at. According to Klein and Myers (1999), the hermeneutic circle highlights the fact that the “the whole” and the “parts” are intertwined and should be given a liberal and broad interpretation. By interpreting each segment or part of an interview to obtain a holistic understanding of a case, the holistic understanding can also offer an understanding of its integral parts.

Whilst the transcribed interviews and focus group discussions are integral parts of the analysis process, so too are the process of the interviews and discussions, as well as the quality of the interactions between the researcher and the participants. In the most part, participants in the enquiry process were generally supportive and enthusiastic with their participation and more especially as the subject of the research resonated with the community’s welfare and their daily lives. Many participants created spaces for interviews and some facilitated the putting together of focus groups for discussions. A former colleague of mine helped to set up his office by bringing in more chairs and vacating the premises so that I could have a focus group discussion with selected students without intrusion. Some university and community members were happy to recommend others who could provide relevant information with respect to the subject of the enquiry and some went on talking even after we both felt the interview session has ended. Working in a context of rampant power failure was challenging, yet some participants were not perturbed by sudden darkness and just kept on talking in anticipation of a return of electricity. The enquiry process was also an eye opener to some who felt, hitherto, they never knew the university had a service mission. A few participants at the university who were hesitant to be interviewed possibly for fear of losing their position, had to be assured of their anonymity in this thesis and shown the gatekeeper’s consent. Whilst it may not be feasible to write down all the experiences during fieldwork here, the analysis will occasionally draw on the diary entries (appendix 1) which constituted the process of data collection, the power dynamics, and the quality of the interactions between participants and the researcher. Although the analysis of data concentrated on the second (main) phase of fieldwork due to its robust and refined nature, it also drew on the interviews conducted during the preliminary phase.

The following table illustrates the community participants whose voices were quoted under the different themes in chapters six and seven.

Table 3.7: A representation of community participants at the main phase of field work whose voices were quoted in the analysis chapters

Themes	Directly quoted community voices from the main phase of fieldwork
University for intellectual and personal development	Margaret, female, 41-50
University for capacity building and employment	Agnes, female, 51-60; Docas, female, 31-40; Helen, female, 51-60
Benefits of adult education	Martha, female, 31-40; Cornelius, male, 51-60; Agnes, female, 51-60; Sherley, male, 51-60
Revamping adult education	Martha, female, 31-40; Alfred, male, 51-60
Benefits of community-based research	Margaret, female, 41-50; Cornelius, male, 51-60; Martha, female, 31-40
Revisiting community-based research for lasting benefits	Gregory, male, 51-6
Community-based service learning acknowledged	Margaret, female, 41-50; Elvis, male, 51-60; Cornelius, male, 51-60
Benefits of service learning	Elizabeth, female, 41-50; Joan, female, 51-60; Cornelius, male, 51-60; Elizabeth, female, 41-50; Martha, female, 31-40; Gregory, male, 51-60
Enhancing service learning for lasting benefits	Margaret, female, 41-50; Sherley, male, 51-60; Cornelius, male, 51-60; Martin, male, 31-40; Elizabeth, female, 41-50; Martha, female, 31-40
Limited access to potable water as a community crisis	Sherley, male, 51-60; Elizabeth, female, 41-50; Martin, male, 31-40; Cornelius, male, 51-60; Martha, female, 31-40; Margaret, female, 41-50; Agnes, female, 51-60; Alfred, male, 51-60; Helen, female, 51-60
Poor access to electricity supply as a community crisis	Martha, female, 31-40
Deplorable and inadequate roads as a community crisis	Margaret, female, 41-50; Cornelius, male, 51-60
Inadequate agricultural performance as a community crisis	Elizabeth, female, 41-50; Elvis, male, 51-60
Graduate unemployment as a community crisis	Sherley, male, 51-60; Margaret, female, 41-50; Helen, female, 51-60

The university as an agent of change	Cornelius, male, 51-60
Moving from active to interconnected presence	Alfred, male, 51-60
Leveraging the university's technological competence and resources	Martha, female, 31-40
Envisioning the university as a gateway to employment	Gregory, male, 51-60; Martin, male, 31-40
The need for communication	Joan, female, 51-60
Abating the university's 'superiority complex'	Elizabeth, female, 41-50; Joan, female, 51-60; Cornelius, male, 51-60; Agnes, female, 51-60
Building the community's confidence and overcoming 'inferiority complex'	Peter, male, 71-80; Margaret, female, 41-50; Joan, female, 51-60; Helen, female, 51-60
The imperative of a university to capture community voices	Elizabeth, female, 41-50; Peter, male, 71-80; Joan, female, 51-60; Clement, male, 51-60
Creating opportunities for community voices	Margaret, female, 41-50; Joan, female, 51-60; Helen, female, 51-60
Recognising and adopting strategic partnerships and links for community voices	Margaret, female, 41-50; Joan, female, 51-60; Cornelius, male, 51-60; Clement, male, 51-60; Gregory, male, 51-60; Agnes, female, 51-60; Alfred, male, 51-60; Elizabeth, female, 41-50; Martha, female, 31-40

Source: data analysis

Although it was not intended to quote each participant in the analysis chapters of this thesis, a significant number such as 15 out of the 18 community participants were quoted to illustrate the various themes identified. In some occasions, where more than one participant articulated a similar idea or the same theme, only one was chosen to illustrate the idea or theme. In other instances, more than one quotation from the same participant was used to illustrate different aspects of a theme. Similarly, where there were differences of opinion expressed by participants on the same theme, more than one participant's voice was cited to illustrate the difference.

3.10 Ethical considerations

The ethical considerations were intended to enable an appropriate execution of the different approaches to enquiry I have used. Ethical principles of equality, confidentiality, anonymity, respect, justice, beneficence, consent, honesty and transparency (Langdridge and Hagger-Johnson, 2009) underlined my

data collection and analytical processes. My fieldwork outings were duly approved by the Ethics committee of the Faculty of Education of Canterbury Christ Church University which reviewed my plans of action and was satisfied that they were in line with the ethical requirement of the university. I ensured that I had permission of access into the University of Buea to conduct interviews with university members, and informed written consents were obtained from participants who opted to be interviewed. Anonymity of participants was guaranteed and participants were informed they had the right to withdraw from the enquiry process at any time. Furthermore, my role as a member of the Faculty of Education Ethics Committee within a period of two years during which I attended meetings and participated in reviewing applications for ethics clearance from other researchers and academics enabled me to be more acquainted with ethical issues.

However, despite the ethical measures taken, these were not without challenges. Some of the challenges included the rigorous process of obtaining some participants' consent. A case in point is that of a local chief who initially refused to be interviewed and requested time to seek the advice of his traditional council. Though it took a considerable length of time for him to get back to me, he eventually did and was interviewed. Some participants came into the enquiry process with a negative experience from previous interviews. One participant noted that a publication that followed his interview with a researcher had a misrepresentation of what he said and as a result of that he was not confident granting another interview. Another participant maintained that he was once interviewed by a researcher, but the said researcher disappeared and never came back to thank him and consequently, he did not feel motivated to participate in my enquiry process. Given these scenarios, I had to assure the participants of my unreserved willingness to comply with their ethical demands of honesty and gratitude.

3.10.1 Trustworthiness and rigour

Trustworthiness and rigour in the context of this research is constructed within elements of validity and reliability. Whilst validity may be defined as one's ability to measure or investigate the thing one intended to measure or investigate; reliability has to do with stability of what one is measuring or investigating (Langdridge and Hagger-Johnson, 2009). Given that this research is a qualitative research which dwells on the premises of existence of multiple realities and construction of truth, the way a positivist would demonstrate validity and reliability are not commensurate to the context of this research. Despite the intricacies surrounding qualitative research, and the multiple ways trustworthiness and rigour in qualitative research can be attained (Cho and Trent, 2006; Denzin and Lincoln, 2011), I chose to identify the following ones which are relevant to this research:

Thick description

Due to the complexities surrounding the contextual base of this research and the need to interpret and construct meanings from multiple voices and sources, I saw the need to embark on a thorough

description of every phase of the enquiry process. It can be argued that reliability of research may be ascertained if the reader is able to audit the events and acknowledge the actions, reflections and influences of the researcher (Koch, 2006). The narration and descriptive account presented in this thesis provides the basis for better understanding of the enquiry process (Geertz, 1973). Thick description also entails showing the workings at every stage of the research process (Holidays, 2007) and giving detailed explanations where necessary on how I got to the different phases of the process such that a non-expert in my field of research could understand the research context and appreciate the meanings constructed from the data.

Member check

With respect to member check, participants validate the transcribed interviews which result from their responses (Creswell, 2009). Participants would do so by either agreeing with the content of the transcribed interview or raise an objection. On an occasion, a participant was given the opportunity to read through the soft copy of her transcribed interview. Whilst the process of a participant cross-checking a soft copy of her transcribed responses can be problematic in that he/she can carry out changes on the document without letting the researcher know, in the case of this research, I kept a close watch and the participant would inform me of any changes he/she have executed or that needed to be done.

In a different scenario, I had to identify and discuss emerging themes from the interviews with the participants. In the process of doing these, participants agreed with some of the themes and made amendments to others. Furthermore, a spectacular incident occurred at the end of one of the interviews with a lady who could not read nor write but could speak pidgin (the medium of communication used in her interview). At the end of her interview, she requested that I give her my recording device so that she could listen to her contribution. After spending time listening to her voice, she told me she was very happy and all what has been recorded is satisfactory. Whilst I previously did not foresee this as a form of member check I would encounter in the field, it proved valuable, especially to participants could not read or write English.

Peer review

I have had the opportunity to present this research in different national and international settings. I presented portions of this research at one of Canterbury Christ Church University's (CCCU) Faculty of Education Scholarship days; at a seminar organised by CCCU Faculty of Education research theme on Inclusion, Equality and Social Justice; at the World Universities Forum in Vancouver, Canada; at the University of Manchester Faculty of Education Postgraduate conference; at the 10th PASCAL Observatory international conference in Brest, France, at the European Society for Research on the Education of Adults (ESREA) conference in Canterbury, at the World Social Science Forum in Montreal Canada and at the Erasmus Intensive Programme on Research Methodologies for doctoral

students in Lithuania. These presentations to a national and global audience uncovered this research to scrutiny and I benefited from valuable inputs, as well as constructive criticism. Furthermore, I have had two articles from this research published in peer reviewed journals.

Participants' description forms

In the course of my fieldwork, I kept a description form for each participant I interviewed or who took part in a focus group discussion. These forms were designed to carry entries on participants' age range, level of education, occupation, sex and village of residence. As I made progress in the field, I kept an eye on the forms to ensure that I was not only interviewing participants from a particular age range, occupation or from a particular village but had a mix from different backgrounds. Given that I was able to draw participants from assorted social, economic and educational backgrounds, it gave this research some robustness and reliability.

Diary entries

My ability to construct a thick description of what transpired during my outing for data collection is triggered by the fact that I was able to keep a field diary which captured details on how the data collection process unfolded from day one and up to the final day when I left the field and returned to the United Kingdom. Entries in my diary captured issues on access to different settings, description of settings, selection of participants, observations, experiences and reflections as evident in appendix 1.

A significant amount of entries in the diary were done in the mornings and in the evenings. Morning writings generally depicted my plan for the day and the evening write-ups captured what transpired during the day and the accompanying reflections and thoughts. Whilst I must acknowledge a lack of consistency in the writing up of the diary due to tiredness resulting from strenuous field activities, I endeavoured to keep pace with the writings. There were moments I felt tempted to neglect the daily entries but as I pondered on the merits of such an exercise, it was necessary for me to keep up with it as it enabled me to continue to reflect and interrogate the enquiry process and bring in adjustments where necessary in order to enhance it. As shown in appendix 1, the diary entries were done in bullet forms so as to demonstrate the importance placed on each activity, subject and line of thought of the day or period. In addition to providing clarity and understanding of the interviews and focus group discussions, this thesis also maintains that the content of the field diary forms part of the data (Pedgley, 2007) that was used in conjunction with other data types such as the interviews within the enquiry process.

3.11 Conclusion

As earlier identified, my experience within this research was not a linear process but a learning experience which comprised of constant adjustments and readjustments. My methodological

conceptualisation was a journey of many twists and turns which sometimes found expression in the forms of lack of clarity and control. Holliday (2007) picks on this by maintaining that “qualitative research settings are difficult to control; and we have to capitalise on those that are available to us” (2007, p. 22). Apart from capitalising on the relevant settings, methods, and choices that were available to me, I would also add that the choices I made were intended to facilitate the enquiry process of my research. My participation at an Erasmus Intensive Programme on Research Methodology during my first year as a doctoral student was very helpful in facilitating the design of the research process and methodology. I can now maintain that the methodological choices identified in this chapter contributed to enhance the robustness of this research and consequently led to trustworthy findings which have been discussed in Chapters six, seven, eight and nine. However, the research process also suffered from limited time spent in the field collecting data. Spending more time in the field and furthering the investigation could have led to a more robust process but due to the nature of a doctoral programme which is time bounded, I had to limit the time spent in the field to ensure completion of the research and timely submission of the thesis.

CHAPTER 4

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

4.1 Introduction

This chapter is concerned with an overview of the main ideologies underpinning the concept of community development which informs this research. Given that community development is made up of two words, that is, “community” and “development”, this thesis argues that it is appropriate to expound on each term before addressing the meaning and context of community development within this research. Whilst defining the community within this thesis, this chapter also highlights the concept of Ubuntu to explain the nature of social relationships found in many African residential communities. The chapter later proceeds to discuss different approaches to community development, the significance of community voices and indigenous knowledge.

4.2 Community in perspective

Following the need to investigate how a university can engage with a local community for the purposes of realising developmental objectives which can redefine the community and improve the living conditions of its dwellers, it is necessary for this thesis to communicate a broad understanding of the concept of the community. Following an articulation of a wide perspective on the community, this chapter will narrow down to acknowledge the specific community type at the centre of this research. Starting with an overview, I will discuss the notion of the community from historical, sociological, geographical, function, interest, identity, distance and virtual perspectives. I will highlight “geographical community” as the community type at the core of this research.

4.2.1 Divergent views on community

The word community is a loaded term and has many meanings, depending on the context of its usage. It is characterised by a lack of precision and determined by the specific circumstances in which it is being alluded (Elliott et al., 1996, p. 50). Community means different things to different people in different fields such as geography, psychology, demography, history, women’s studies, political sciences and social policy; with each conveying a contextualised meaning of community rather than assigning a blanket meaning which might not be relevant to the context being referred to. Literature is inundated with many community types such as: ethnic communities, rural communities, urban communities, indigenous communities, professional communities, educational communities, biological communities, religious communities, cultural communities, political communities, institutional communities and virtual communities with each structured differently. Irrespective of the multiple community types in existence, it can be ascertained that the word community emanated from a Latin

word 'communitas' meaning 'common' (Williams, 1976). Therefore, it can be maintained that the idea of communality forms the bedrock of each community type and it is what knits together different elements and accords them the community identity.

Historical

Historically, when the term community is used, it points to the societies and periods of the past. For instance, people in sixteen century England did not live in places called communities but in places which could be described as manors, civil parishes, villages or townships with the term community rarely used although subsequently some of these residential places were later referred to as local communities (French, 1969). These local communities (another name for residential communities) were constructed around an occupation, a religion or a social class such as peasant settlement. In the earlier part of the twentieth century, the term "occupational community" was widely used in Britain which pointed to close knit settlement of workers and their families around the mines, ports, factories and workplaces of industrial Britain (Crow and Allan, 1994). These close knit settlements in occupational communities left a heavy imprint on the nature of social relationships within the communities (ibid) which still forms part of the sociological construct of the word community.

Sociological

In today's world, when the term community is used, it goes beyond places, physical settlements and societies of the past and actually introduces a concept which is largely a constructive sociological concept which reflects to an extent, the nature and quality of social relationships that existed in the Manor, Parishes, Villages and occupational communities of the past. The origin of community as a social construction can be traced back to the late eighteenth century where European social philosophers noted that the growth of capitalism, urbanisation and industrialisation had shaped the relationship that existed between humans in a fundamental way that resulted in the loss of the inter-dependence that existed in the communities of distant past (Plant, 1974). The social relationships that existed in some communities of the past carried a great deal of warmth and vibrated with a certain moral resonance and sentiment which continues to generate a nostalgic feeling of a lost past – a past that cared about human relationships but is currently in decline, under threat or which belongs to one or two generations ago. To corroborate the loving view of the social relationships in some past communities, Etzioni (1993) asserts that when the term community is used, the first impression that typically comes to the minds of people is "a place in which people know and care for one another – the kind of place in which people do not merely ask 'How are you' as a formality but care about the answer. This we-ness... is indeed part of its essence" (1993, p.31).

From this perspective, it can be argued that the sociological notion of community has a historical bearing that stems from moral voices, respect, mutual existence, interdependence, reciprocity and shared values.

Irrespective of the desirable social characteristics of some past communities such as strong social bonds, mutual dependence and shared values, these communities also had some concerns. Poverty, parochialism, insecurity, inequality and divisions were some of the challenges faced by many communities in the past. Given the deviation from strong cohesion and social bonds experienced in some communities of distant past, Crow and Allan (1994) argued that sociologists of community study have become increasingly aware of the danger of assigning a one sided representation of community which is void of the voices of the marginalised such as women and those in poor working social class or living in slum tenements. This accounted for the reason why participants in this research also came from the female population and the poor social class. A balanced sociological construct of the community is therefore relevant when class and settlement segregations are evident in some residential communities of today. For instance, in the 90s in Cameroon, there was a popular ideology of “came no go”¹⁸ in the municipality of Buea which was primarily focused on making life difficult for non-indigenes of the community. Without taking into consideration the experiences and situations of people of different social classes, a balanced sociological appraisal of the community cannot be achieved. Whilst healthy features of shared interest and social capital are part of the community life of the distant past, those who had the experience of living in the abandonment of slum life also formed part of the community. Damer (1990) maintained that nobody in his or her right mind would want to live in a slum tenement and if given the option, those living in a slum tenement would prefer to leave. From these perspectives, it becomes clear that there are social issues in past communities that can be co-opted to be part of present day communities, as well as social concerns that can endanger the ‘community spirit’ and these concerns can be ameliorated in modern communities. In view of this, there is increasing struggle amongst scholars, researchers and politicians to define what the community ought to be in the present world context.

4.2.2 Community types

This thesis cannot exhaust the different types of communities in existence in the present world. It will however identify and discuss a few.

Geographical communities

Geographical communities are relatively the oldest and most frequently used forms of community. It can also be referred to as place communities (Willmott, 1986), local communities (Lee and Newby, 1983), residential communities (Etzioni, 1993) and territorial communities, and according to Crow and Allan (1994), these are characterised by strong physical boundaries. Notwithstanding, it can be argued that some strong physical boundaries of past and present local communities have disappeared or are

¹⁸ This is an expression in pidgin English meaning “you migrated to a locality for social or economic or educational reasons but since you undertook that historic migration, you have since not returned to where you came from and at the moment, you appear to be taking over the privileges reserved for the indigenes”

fast disappearing due to the growth in population and infrastructural expansion. The present era of information technology and the internet also undermines the boundaries of many residential communities as many facets of rising information and communication technology extend beyond regional boundaries. This undermining of community boundaries is evident by the world being referred to as a “global village” in many respects.

In addition to the concept of physical boundaries affiliated to residential communities, Willmott (1986) asserts that community refers to the ability of people having something in common and this commonality is often expressed geographically, where the consideration is given to place or territorial community. Tazifor (2006) further corroborated this by highlighting that a community is a group of people living within a particular place. However, it can be argued that the ‘place’ sense of community does not have a sociological bearing as it does not highlight the dwellers, nor does it reveal how they interact with one another (Lee and Newby, 1983). From this standpoint, it can be posited that while a sociologist may fault the geographical notion of community which does not place emphasis on the social relationships existing within it, geographical locations have laid the foundation or site for multiple social relationships amongst people.

Shared interest/function/identity communities

In addition to the concept of geographical communities, Willmot (1986) advanced another community type which depicts shared characteristics. He identified these characteristics as interests, some of which are: religious interests, professional interests, political interests, economic interests and market interests. He maintains that a shared interest could lead to an interest based community bringing together individuals who share similar lines of interests. In addition to interest based communities; Willmot identified a third community type based on sentiment which he labelled as ‘community of attachment’. Whilst attachment can also be observed in shared interests, Willmot maintained that community of attachment is underlined by shared identity and collective actions and that this is not limited to specific interest lines. From his narrative, it can be argued that there is a strong link between “place”, “interest” and “attachment” notions of the community as one form can reside in another. There are situations where “interest” communities will have a foothold in several “place” communities.

Similar to the three types of communities advanced by Willmot (1986), many authors such as Bender (1978) and Wilkinson (1991) have conventionally identified three community types which are based on physical place or geographical location, local society and shared actions. Whilst “physical place” and “shared actions” are similar to Willmott’s concept of geographical and attachment communities, there is a clear distinction between a local society and an interest based community. However, it can be argued that an interest based community can reside in a local society just as in a residential community. In addition to “place community”, Tett (2006) explicated Willmott’s concept of characteristic based community into “interest” and “function”. She maintains that a community constructed by interest

would group people sharing the same interest or activity or membership whereas communities identified by function will connect individuals with similar professions or role. Given these analogies on the community, one may ask: can a sociological community exist in the absence of shared interest or function? Willmott (1986) presents a vivid answer to this within his notion of ‘attachment’ community which Lee and Newby (1983) further highlights as “communion”. Both argued that the underlining factor expressed by the ideology of “communion” is shared identity and belonging to an enlarged community. Furthermore, the word “communion” is related to the word community and though the last five characters of each word, that is, “union” and “unity” are different, they emphasise one thing and that is “togetherness”. Although it can be further argued that the main disadvantage with communities that retains close ties and togetherness within its members is a restriction of individual freedom (Etzioni, 1993), the emergence of virtual communities have undermined the importance of face-to-face relationships.

Virtual/distance communities

Advancement in communication and information technology has brought about virtual and distant communities which in themselves are a threat to the significant of place based communities with respect to the construction of social bonds amongst people. This threat can be evidenced by the limited non-face-to-face contacts and relationships within residential communities of today (Benn and Fieldhouse, 1996). Although recent technological innovations like the telephones, the internet and the mass media have contributed immensely to better human lives and social relationships within the much broader spectrum of the global community; it has not done much to foster social relationships amongst inhabitants of local communities. Despite this concern, it can be maintained that distance and virtual communities have come to stay and will continue to form a significant part in the sociological construction of communities of the future. The invention of telephones and the internet have changed the global landscape and social dynamics that existed in the communities of the past which were not accustomed to these innovations. With the world increasingly becoming a global village due to advances in information and communication technology, the identity of many residential communities and their boundaries are fast disappearing. Cohen asserts that

the spread of the mass media and of centrally disseminated information, and the growth of transportation infrastructure and increased mobility all undermine the bases of community boundaries (1985, p.44).

Certainly, Cohen wrote this when the internet was not as popular as it is today – yet the impact of the internet has left a lasting imprint on the construction of communities as social webs of people (Etzioni, 1993). Etzioni further asserts that the concept of community as social webs of people should be based on people knowing one another and promoting a moral voice (ibid). However, one may ask: how well do people in relationships based solely on social networks such as facebook and twitter and who have never met themselves know about each other?

4.2.3 Why place based communities matter

Defining a community in terms of the proximity of a geographical place gives little weight to other primary features of a community such as cultural identity, ethnicity, social class, behaviours, interest, values and norms. Though geographical locations seem to have lost some of these qualities due to technological advances, it can still be argued that physically bounded territories still play a significant role in fostering individual, as well as collective wellbeing of persons. This significant role can be attributed to

a wide range of mutual interdependencies that exist among people, businesses, governments, and institutions that operate... they are the ties upon which a foundation of inter-cooperation between people, businesses, government, and institutions within the region can be built (Inman and Schuetze, 2010, p. 3).

Although virtual ties and collaborations can be established between institutions and communities that are geographically apart, it can be ascertained that proximity enhances social capital which is an essential facet for any sustainable engagement within and between communities. This proximity can also lead to collective action which should be “viewed as an important component of well-being because they provide an opportunity to contribute to something larger than ourselves” (Bridger and Alter, 2006, p. 169). This thesis maintains that ‘this thing’ that is larger than the entitlement of a single community individual and which each member could seek to foster for the benefit of all is community development. Community development is therefore fundamentally connected to the notion of place based communities which are considered

stable, spatial entities, inhabited by people and families with similar needs and values; as well as the positive benefits of promoting ‘community’ as moral framework, which (it is alleged) engenders civic renewal, maintains social order and ameliorates social exclusion (Wallace, 2007, p.3).

Whilst it can be argued that not all residential communities are stable, and this can be due to social unrest or frequent occurrence of natural disaster or unpleasant phenomena, most geographical communities would have the quality of physical and social stability within which different institutions, organisations and bodies operate. From this view, it can be asserted that institutions such as universities form part of geographical communities (Mayfield, Hellwig and Banks, 1999).

Drawing on the above review on different community types, this thesis maintains that a place based community also referred to as a geographical community is the type at the centre of this research. It maintains a working definition of the community as a bounded geographical territory where individuals, people and families reside, meet most of their daily needs and interact with one another in a variety of social groups, organisations, institutions and businesses. It is also a place where social support networks abound and anyone would desire to live in. This community context is inclusive and does not leave out any person irrespective of social class. It takes into consideration men and women, their interactions

with one another and the possibility of having most of their basic needs met within it. It seeks the integration of those at the margins of society into the mainstream of community life. This community context is also a place where solidarity amongst members is evident and communal activities abound. This notion of the community can be seen in most developing countries, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa where the concept of Ubuntu manifests itself in practice in village communities.

4.2.4 Ubuntu in perspective

Underneath African communalism, lies the idea of Ubuntu. Essentially, Ubuntu can be identified as a way of life or shared-existence. According to Makgoba (1996), its uniqueness is underpinned by its emphasis on the respect for the non-material order that exists in and amongst people. It fosters respect within humankind and for the environment; it is spiritually inclined; it is non-racial; it accommodates other cultures, and it is an invisible uniting force amongst Africans (Enslin and Horsthemke, 2004). It can be seen as a value system which provides the source of many actions and attitudes in African communities. As an African way of viewing the world, Ubuntu represents an alternative to individualism and competitiveness in western communities by underlining the need for care, hospitality, respect and responsibility towards one another. However, Ubuntu may not claim complete source of some of its attributes as it is conceptually and ideologically associated with other profound humanist concerns of care, humility and compassion in western thoughts (ibid). Ramphela (1995) argued that “Ubuntu as a philosophical approach to social relationships must stand alongside other approaches and be judged on the value it can add to better human relations in our complex society” (1995, p.15).

Notwithstanding, Ubuntu can be said to ideologically represent the foundation of African values. Whilst these values of respect for human beings, obedience, sharing, solidarity, hospitality and interdependence also have presence out of Africa, Hailey (2008) argues that it represents a radical reflection of Africa’s view towards humanity and the community. Despite its positive qualities towards humanity and the community, the concept of Ubuntu has also come under criticism. The idea that Ubuntu fosters respect for the environment has been questioned. A person can foster the environment because of the extrinsic benefits he/she derives from it and not necessarily because of the intrinsic value nature provides (Enslin and Horsthemke, 2004). Furthermore, the notion that Ubuntu promotes respect, tolerance, care, humanity and accommodation of other cultures do not reflect many happenings on the ground in Africa. Incidences of discrimination, sexism, genocide, tribal wars, corruption and dictatorship in Africa contradict Ubuntu’s features of respect, care, sharing, tolerance and togetherness. Moreover, in situations where individualism is not tolerated, Ubuntu could be seen as reflecting elements of “totalitarian communism” where change is opposed and tradition is the standard (Louw, 2001).

The concept of Ubuntu nevertheless has practical implications for community development in Africa. According to Hailey (2008), Ubuntu has an ability to encourage consensus and collective work towards community building. In many parts of Africa, community members inspired by the Ubuntu spirit,

organised themselves into common initiative groups and associations to tackle challenges facing their locality and to assist one another. Whilst Ubuntu places emphasis on humans, this thesis argues that humans live in communities and these communities most often also consist of institutions such as universities. Therefore, the spirit of Ubuntu should not only manifest care and other attributes in community members towards one another but also in institutions towards the public and vice versa. This elaborate discourse on the community and Ubuntu is intended to acknowledge the community type central to this research and its working definition which would then lead to a better understanding of the framework of community development in the subsequent section.

4.3 Community development

In an attempt to have a full grasp of what community development is, there is a need to commence this section with a discussion on development.

4.3.1 The notion of development

The notion of ‘development’ often refers to a complex array of factors, including social development, economic development, cultural development and human capital development. It can be ascertained that the word carries different contextual meanings as we move from one field of human endeavour to another. What development represents to a biologist is different from what it represents to a chemist and is also different from what development represents to an economist. However, despite the wide range of differences, development could be defined in a general term as “the process of growing or developing” (Crozier et al., 2008, p.231). In other words, development can be framed as a process of change. It can also be maintained that there are positive changes, as well as negative changes. When a nation’s economy is on the rise, it can be said to be experiencing positive change whereas when the economy is on a decline it can be said to be experiencing negative change – consequently, there is positive development, as well as negative development. Development can also be defined as freedom (Sen, 1999). However, freedom is an ambiguous word which can represent a wide range of ideas such as mental freedom, political freedom and educational freedom. According to Sen, the perspective of freedom attributed to development is one that releases the capacity and capability embedded in humans, organisations, systems, nations and networks. It is also about enhancing the lives of people and the freedom they enjoy (ibid).

4.3.2 Community development defined

From a community stand point, development may be construed as acquiring infrastructures to serve societal and human necessities and giving poor people accessibility to a wide range of goods and services (Gyimah-Brempong, Paddison and Mitiku, 2006; Bloom, Canning and Chan, 2005; Rapley, 2007).

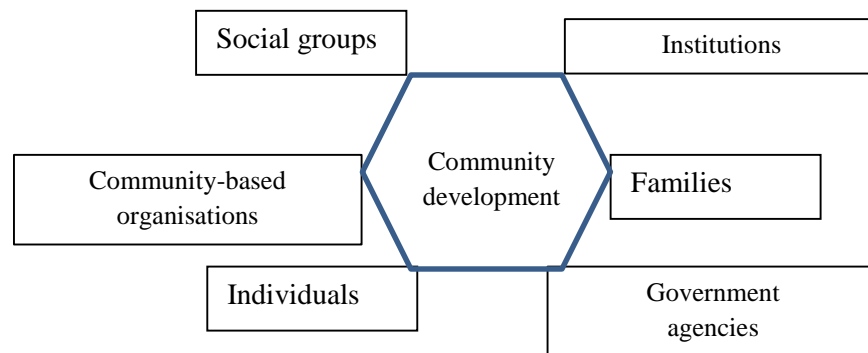
To further appreciate the community context of development, it is worthwhile to take a look at the underdevelopment theory. Drawing on Mosha (1986), this theory argues that there should be greater investment in the rural economy such that linkages can be created with urban economy to guarantee self-sustaining economic growth and local markets should be created. It holds that there should be integration of social and economic aspects of development and wealth redistributed and an emphasis should be placed on small-scale agriculture which has the propensity to serve as the nucleus for development and creation of a surplus for growth of the national economy, and self-reliance by local communities in the implementation of agricultural activities should be encouraged. The point of departure for the underdevelopment theory is rooted in the need to enhance the economic activities of local communities. Poor people want the ability to afford basic goods and services. For this to happen, their income levels would need to be raised as this has the potential to enlarge opportunities and choice and also provide the foundation for participation in community welfare and prosperity (Porter and Craig, 2004). However, it can also be maintained that a rise in the income levels of the poor is determined by varying factors such as a strong economy, investing in human capacity building and collective engagement in nation and community development.

Although the phrase “community development” is widely used in different sectors, there is no general consensus to its actual meaning. Similar to many concepts, different definitions have been attributed to “community development” in an attempt to highlight the context it was used in, as well as to serve a particular purpose. Further to the underdevelopment theory, community development has been defined as working in unison to initiate a difference and organising to address shared needs in the community (Flora et al., 1992); collectively initiating a social action process to change the social, economic, cultural and environmental situation of the community (Christenson et al., 1989); and a process by which the efforts of the people are united with those of government authorities... to improve the economic, social and cultural conditions of communities, to integrate these into the life of the nation and to enable them to contribute fully to national progress (United Nation, 1963 in Kishindo, 2003, p. 380). A concern can be identified with United Nation’s definition of community development as it expresses the potential of exclusion of development initiatives the government does not welcome or embrace. This can be evident in areas and nations where the government does not appear friendly and supportive of the developmental efforts of ordinary people or local groups. As such, some community members and associations in countries such as Cameroon where there is tokenise development actions by the State tend to engage in self-reliance community development initiatives (Fonchingong and Fonjong, 2003).

However, from the definitions of community development identified, it can be ascertained that community development revolves around two themes, namely: “collective actions” and “change”. Community development demonstrates a process of working collectively, and as well as points to a desirable outcome of change which can be expressed as difference. Collective action for the sake of “change” expressed in the form of community development is not limited to people but also includes

institutions, social groups, community-based organisations and government agencies which can be found within the local community as illustrated thus:

Figure 4.1 A participatory framework of local community development



Source: Personal illustration

Given the multidimensional nature of community development, this thesis maintains a working definition of it as working together across organisational, institutional, political, cultural, economic, social and personal divides to realise the holistic development of a residential community with each sector and member making a contribution and experiencing positive change, particularly an improvement in the living conditions of the inhabitants. This definition of community development takes into account the meaning of community attempted in section 4.2, as well as the notion of development. Even though this definition is predicated on the idea of a liberal community where democracy, freedom of expression, associations and interactions abound; it is what is commonly painted when the phrase is used in a country such as Cameroon. It can be ascertained that several residential communities in Africa would consist of different institutions, organisations, economic activities, political actors, cultural leanings, social orientations and personal preferences but the ability of each sector to overcome its unique identity and work in unison with other sectors is fundamental to the realisation of community development. In addition to addressing a working definition of community development, this thesis also unveils some approaches to it.

4.3.3 - Approaches to community development

Bridger and Alter (2006) advanced two approaches to community development, namely: development of community and development in community. According to the authors, development of community is a broader process that occurs as residents build relationships with one another as they work together in realising projects and issues that build linkages across groups and different lines of interest. The main focus in this development approach is healthy relationships between members of a given residential community. There is an underlining argument here: when community members operate within strong

social bonds, it engenders collective participation which can address different community concerns. Whilst development of community highlights the need for strong relationships, development in community points to profitable activities in the community such as capacity building, job creation and business retention.

However, this research argues that although some projects jointly realised may create some linkages across groups, it does not follow that these projects will serve the needs of the poor such as the need for education and the need for health care. This inability to serve the needs of the poor could be attributed to lack of participation of the poor to identify and be involved in the processes aimed at meeting these needs and the high costs involved in gaining access to these services or being served. On this basis, this research also suggests two approaches to community development, namely: 1) Inclusive development and 2) Development for inclusiveness.

Inclusive development

By inclusive development, the focus is on development that is accommodative, reachable and affordable. Development that is accommodative should not be hostile to differences in opinions, cultures, values, linguistic backgrounds and power levels. It should capture the views of different sectors of the community. Inclusive development should also be reachable in terms of proximity to participants or end users or if this development initiative is located far away from the dwellings of participants or end users, it should address the need for affordable means of transportation that connects to its site so that those dwelling in neighbourhoods who want to participate or in need of good services and opportunities can also reach out to where these activities, services or opportunities are (Wallace, 2007). This type of development should also be cost affordable to all rather than a few who are financially wealthy or from the ruling class as is the case in many developing countries including Cameroon. In essence, the notion of inclusive development is intended to foster widening participation which recognises that different facets of the local community have something to contribute to community development as well as benefit from it. From this narrative, this research argues that inclusive development enhances collective actions and interdependence which is essential in engendering the entire wellbeing of a residential community.

Development for inclusiveness

By development for inclusiveness, the focus is on 'diffused –development'. In other words, this research is referring to development that is not confined to a single site or targets a single class of people, but that spreads and directly affects the lives of the masses. An example of such development is community education which may be defined as:

a process designed to enrich the lives of individuals and groups by engaging with people living in a geographical area, or sharing a common interest, to develop voluntarily a range of learning, action and reflection opportunities determined by their personal, social, economic and political needs (SCEC, 1990, p.1)

It can be maintained that this type of development is not limited to an infrastructure or targeting a particular sector of the community but spans across different sectors and has the potential to lead to mental transformation and human development for the purposes of igniting and stimulating decisions and actions that will improve the livelihood of everyone within the community. This research thus argues that when inclusive development and development for inclusiveness are both integrated into the community, they carry the potential of fostering the collective development of all facets of community life, which is central to this research. In both scenarios, the role of community voices in framing and designing processes aimed at realising inclusive development and development for inclusiveness in community development efforts is fundamental.

4.3.4 Community voices and community development

The concept of community voices as used in this thesis represents the words, narratives, discourses, and stances from a residential community. It calls for the amelioration of power relations in a manner that creates an enabling environment where everybody, including the poor and ordinary people of the community can have a say in decisions, and processes aimed at fostering their development (Mansuri and Rao, 2003). In realising developmental objectives, Nyerere (1968) maintained that “people cannot be developed; they can only develop themselves by participating in decision and co-operative activities which affect their well-being” (Nyerere (1968) in Oakley et al., 1991, p.2). From this perspective, it can be argued that community participation within the framework of a developmental mission in residential communities is imperative if community inhabitants are going to benefit from the fallouts of such missions.

According to a study captioned “voices of the poor” based on interviews carried out with 60,000 people in 60 countries, poor people demanded a development process driven by their communities (Narayan et al., 2000 cited by Dongier et al., 2003). Whilst community driven development may pose the concern of inadequate leadership capacity on the part of the community to drive initiatives that brings together actors such as higher education and government agencies, it can be maintained that participatory development enhances access to man power, resources and ideas that can precipitate community development. The community should be allowed to participate in its development and in instances where the community is able to demonstrate the required leadership capacity, it should be allowed to lead other stakeholders and actors in the quest for its development. Furthermore, as part of a response to the critique of “top-down development” (Chambers 1983) where the government and its affiliates have always taken upon themselves to articulate the needs of the community without due consultative process with members of the community, fostering a participatory or inclusive framework of development should be promoted.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) asserts that the challenge facing development in Africa “is to develop institutions and processes that are more responsive to the needs of ordinary citizens, including the poor, and that promote development”¹⁹. From this perspective, this research maintains that a participatory framework of community development has the potential to lead to the achievement of shared needs of the community. Given that institutions like universities in a country such as in Cameroon have the mandate to foster community development, this research argues that they stand a better chance of aiding community development when they listen to “community voices” to ascertain community needs and processes aimed at achieving these needs.

Equally, Frère emphasised the need for individual participation in collective development and this could be achievable through paying attention to what each member of the community knows with respect to the problems facing the community and possible ways of addressing the problems (Freire, 1970). It also has to do with the need to respect the different forms of knowledge that exist amongst the popular class or ordinary people of the community. It can be argued that one cannot expect positive results from a developmental mission in a local community which fails to recognise, respect and capture the particular views of the community held by the people, according to Frère (ibid), such a mission will constitute culture invasion irrespective of good intentions. Therefore, it is conceivable for universities wishing to foster community development to create room for indigenous knowledge.

4.3.5 Indigenous knowledge and community development

Drawing on Freire’s (1970) notion of culture invasion, it can be maintained that interventions designed to address the development needs of a given people or community should adopt a collaborative approach that would capture and respect the views of those living within that environment if such a programme or mechanism would not be considered an intrusion by the locals irrespective of its good intension.

Bourdieu’s (1985) concept of habitus further emphasised the need to recognise communities and their identities. He underscores that communities can be distinguished from one another on the basis of distinctive features such as ways of expressions, political leanings, taste and preferences. Such distinctive attributes in communities can be expressed through a knowledge-base such as indigenous knowledge systems which have the potential to retain networks that foster social capital amongst community members and galvanise collective participation in societal transformation.

With close association to the notion of “indigenous”, indigenous knowledge can be viewed as native, primitive, ethnic, local and home-grown knowledge. Given its narrow context of being associated to remote localities, westerners and many others have shown little appreciation and understanding for the insight inherent in this type of knowledge and earlier theorists saw it as an obstacle to development (Agrawal, 1995). However, for many people and locals in Africa, Asia, Latin America and other parts

¹⁹ Source: <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/ourwork/democraticgovernance/overview.html> (accessed: 22/05/2014)

of the world, indigenous knowledge represents and reflects the ways natives in a given locality have come to understand themselves and their environment and how they relate with a wide range of resources and organise themselves to enrich their life and environment.

Nonetheless, attributing indigenous knowledge to a specific group of people known as locals, living in a given geographical locality can be problematic. This is particularly so as everyone in the world can lay claim of originating from a geographical locality and from this perspective, it can be rightly argued that every form of knowledge in the world originates from a region and is connected to indigenous knowledge. Given the ambiguity of the concept of “indigenous”, a question arises: what does indigenous knowledge mean to the millions of indigenous people in the world? With respect to the above question, Semali and Kincheloe (1999) maintain that

the dilemma we face in defining indigenous knowledge and what it means in the context of millions of indigenous peoples of the world is central to the postmodern and postcolonial debates on the origins of knowledge and the manner in which it is produced, archived, retrieved and distributed throughout the academy (1999, p.4).

Whilst it can be ascertained that most discourses on indigenous knowledge centres around agricultural practices, poverty alleviation, rural community development and inclusion (Agrawal, 1995; Sillitoe, 1998; Briggs, 2013), it is essentially a knowledge system that belongs to the community and accessing this knowledge means connecting to the community.

Although scientific knowledge and indigenous knowledge systems are essential in addressing the developmental needs of a locality in a complimentary manner, the latter could be said to be robustly different from the former. The differences between the two can be understood in relation to substantive, methodological, epistemological and contextual grounds (Agrawal, 1995). From a substantive and methodological point of view, it could be argued that indigenous knowledge preoccupies with the livelihood of ordinary people in a given geographical region and is made up of non-technical insight, non-complex theories, and is close and holistic, whereas western knowledge or scientific knowledge is systematic, technical, analytical and complex (ibid). Although many theorists have associated indigenous knowledge with local ownership, the notion of community ownership of indigenous knowledge beckons further questions such as: can knowledge be confined to a locality? Can a community claim ownership of a form of knowledge? How does a local community produce knowledge and what is the usefulness of local forms of knowledge (indigenous knowledge) to the community and the world at large?

Given the complexities surrounding indigenous knowledge, Briggs (2013) clarifies three broad themes associated with it. Firstly, it is a knowledge system associated with a specific geographical locality and by this assertion; there are different types of indigenous knowledge, defined by a geographical region and the inhabitants. This is particularly relevant to this research with a focus on a rural municipality in

Cameroon and its inhabitants. Secondly, the concept of indigenous knowledge has been considered useful in the production of hybrid forms of knowledge through integration with scientific knowledge to address local community needs. This form of integration is supported by the premise that natives tend to appreciate and conform to knowledge which is relevant to their context. Thirdly, indigenous knowledge has been considered essential within the current discourse of neoliberalism. The World Bank for instance continues to underscore the need to integrate indigenous knowledge into approaches and processes aimed towards poverty reduction in developing nations and remote regions of the world.

In an attempt to address a working definition of indigenous knowledge, this thesis highlights Warren's (1991) assertion by referring to it as

local knowledge – knowledge that is unique to a given culture or society... it is the basis for local-level decision making in agriculture, health care, food preparation, education, natural resource management, and a host of other activities in rural communities. Such knowledge is passed down from generation to generation, and in many societies by word of mouth (1991, p. 1).

From this definition, the notion of indigenous knowledge therefore represents a departure from scientific knowledge which is limited in capturing the aspirations and as well as rendering improvements in the living conditions of the world's small scale farmers and natives living in remote or rural regions of the world. Whilst modern scientific knowledge is centralised and often connected with State apparatus, and the politically and financially powerful and its adherers believe in its dominance, indigenous knowledge on the other hand is associated with rural or low-grade life and sometimes, those who bear this knowledge may also consider it inferior to other forms of knowledge (Warren, 1989) as they are seldom given the opportunity for expression. Yet, through indigenous knowledge, the needs of communities can be acknowledged and addressed in informed and sustainable ways relevant to those living in the locality.

4.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, the concept of community development as articulated in this chapter highlights the need for collective participation of community members for the purposes of fostering wellness for each member and affiliated institutions, associations, groups, linkages and systems in the community. This notion of participatory development has been carried across this thesis and also laid the foundation of the methodology with respect to capturing voices from different sectors of the community and the university. Accordingly, this research maintains that any thinking about community development that does not see the potential of ordinary people and their ideas being actively involved in it needs to change. Community members need to have a sense of ownership over the development of their community and any mission aimed at contributing to community development should consider the place of influence of community voices and indigenous knowledge. Given that the university at the centre of

this research is part of the broader community, the following chapter is concerned with the different levels of its engagement in the community.

CHAPTER 5

UNIVERSITY ENGAGEMENT

5.1 Introduction

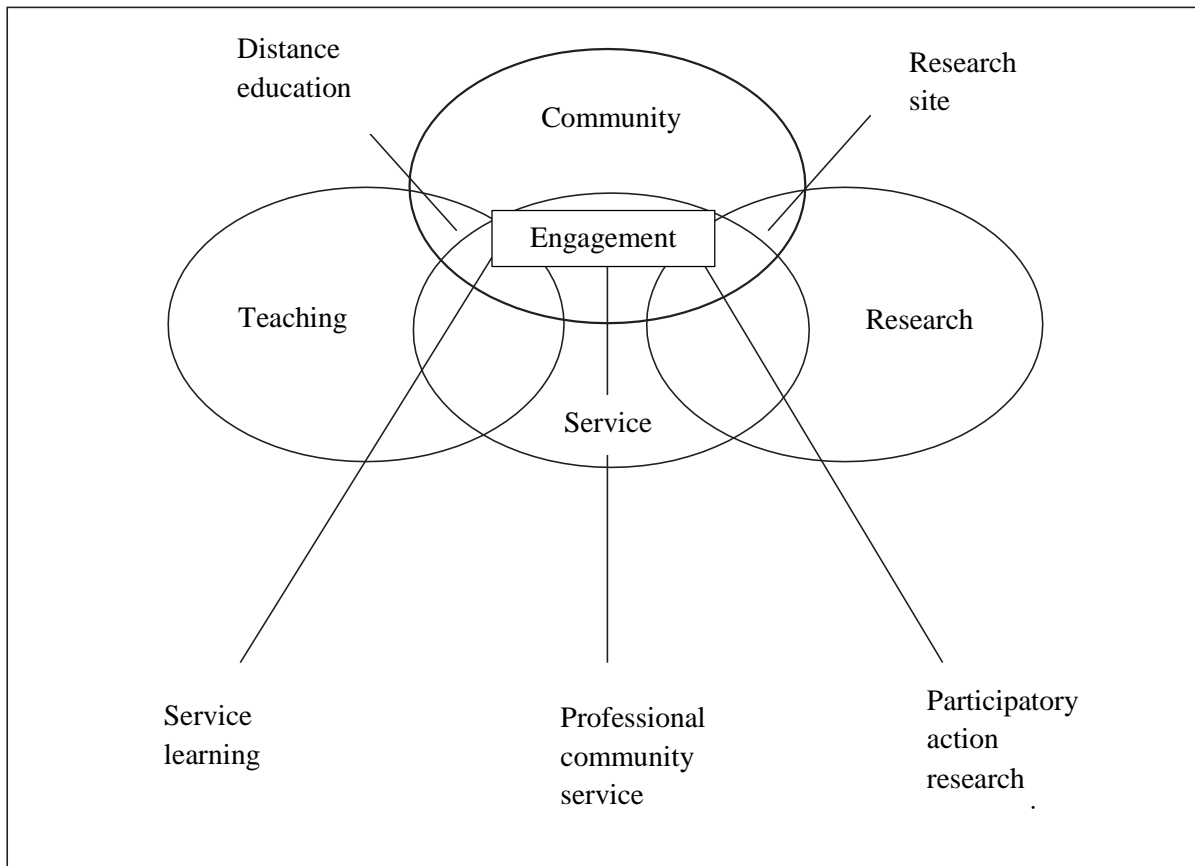
This chapter sets out to elucidate the notion of university engagement in local communities. The intention here is to identify potential opportunities through which the university can foster community development which is a key theme in this thesis. The chapter begins by identifying different dimensions of university engagement. It proceeds to elucidate on the concepts of community-based service learning, community-based adult education and community-based research and their potential connections with community development.

5.2 Different dimensions of university engagement

The concept of university-community engagement can be framed in multiple ways. Community-based experiential or service learning, community-based research and community-based continuing education (Hall, 2009) are some of the commonly identified types in literature. Community-based research can also be referred to as applied research, community-based service learning simply as community learning and community-based continuing education as community-based life-long learning or community-based adult education. The choice of reference depends on the author and the context he/she is addressing. Bell et al., (2007) for instance labelled community-based service learning as simply community learning in addition to community-based research and partnerships between the university and external organisations as examples of a university's engagement activities (2007, in Tagoe, 2012, p. 181). Irrespective of the different references made to identify aspects of university's engagement in the community, it follows that the different facets of engagement are connected to the university's missions.

Given that a contemporary university such as the University of Buea in Cameroon would typically have three missions, namely: teaching, research and service, Bringle and Hatcher (2007) identified different dimensions of university engagement in connection with the different missions of a university. That is, the authors identified distance education, service learning, professional community service, and participatory action research as different facets of a university's engagement associated with teaching, research and service missions as illustrated thus:

Figure 5.1: Different facets of a university's engagement



Source: Bringle and Hatcher, 2007, p. 80

However, Bringle and Hatcher distinguished between community engagement of university and civic engagement of university. According to the authors, the concept of community engagement highlights the location of the activity whereas the notion of civic engagement underscores not only the place (site) of the university's activity but also the relationship, partnership or collaboration with the place. This implies that "values of reciprocity, mutual benefit, democratic processes and community voice" (2007, p. 80) are fundamental to the notion of civic engagement. Nevertheless, this thesis maintains focus on community engagement with the knowledge that its location base can form the basis for civic engagement. Given that multiple dimensions of a university's engagement with the community abound, for the purpose of clarity, this chapter is concerned with community-based service learning, community-based adult education and community-based research.

5.3 Community-based service learning

Service learning is a new concept of learning that is gaining ground across universities as they seek to expand their involvement in local communities. Being multifaceted in nature, it criss-crosses different academic and professional disciplines, fields of study and schools. It possesses the potential of

connecting the vast and rich resources at the disposal of the university with the need to address societal concerns as well as enhancing the learning experience of students (Umpleby and Rakicevik, 2008; Bringle and Hatcher, 2007). Whilst the ideology underneath service learning remains unchanged, it can also be referred to as experiential learning (Gronski and Pigg, 2000). Hall (2009) argues that service learning is experiential learning for students. This can be observed when several university students make their way into the community for the purposes of gaining hands-on experience or apply class room knowledge in a real world context. They serve in different fields such as management, accounting, health care, teaching, nursing and agriculture and this is usually part of an academic requirement with a credit value to be earned by the student (Stoecker, Tryon and Hilgendorf, 2009). Whilst service learning helps in positioning universities from the margins of communities to the centre of communities (Hall, 2009), this research maintains that it also has the potential to position communities from the margins of universities to the centre of universities through their participation in service learning processes.

Given that not all community members are familiar with higher education to ascertain what service learning stands for and also, there would be many faculty members who are not abreast with its meaning and processes (Stoecker, Tryon and Hilgendorf, 2009), it is essential to attempt a working definition of service learning in this thesis.

5.3.1 Service learning defined

With a history traced back to Kurt Lewin's conceptualisation of action research (Lewin, 1946) and John Dewey's philosophy of experimentalism (Dewey, 1938), the general consensus underneath service learning put forth by many authors is that it consists of an inseparable link between service and learning (Wade, 1997; Jacoby, 1999). It has been described in different broad terms as a philosophy, a pedagogy, an experience and a programme (Mendel-Reyes, 1998; Gronski and Pigg, 2000; Bringle and Hatcher, 2009; Hall, 2009). Unlike community service and volunteerism which may not have an accompanying learning component with a credit value, service learning is laden with action projects and practices in local communities which are accompanied by academic credit values to be earned by the learner (Hall, 2009; Stoecker, Tryon and Hilgendorf, 2009).

Service learning can be defined as "a form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities intentionally designed to promote student learning and development" (Jacoby, 1999, p. 20).

Although Jacoby asserts that service learning promotes student learning, the definition does not say how it connects to student learning and how the latter can be fostered by it. This takes us to an alternative definition by Bringle and Hatcher (1995) which highlights the course-based and credit-bearing components of service learning as avenues through which student learning can be fostered and values

of mutuality, reflexivity and civic responsibility underscored. Bringle and Hatcher therefore maintains that service learning is

a course-based, credit-bearing educational experience in which students: participate in an organised service activity that defines and meets mutually beneficial goals, reflects on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility (1995, p.112).

Due to the contextual relevance of Bringle and Hartcher's definition which highlights service learning as a thoughtful, structured and reflexive service-directed pedagogy with a potential to meet mutually beneficial goals of fostering learning and addressing community needs, the South African Joint Education Trust (JET) adopted it in their programme documents (Hatcher and Erasmus, 2008, p.50). Additionally, the Community Trust Act of 1993 which authorises the allocation of federal funds to support service practices in American schools highlights key components of service learning by stating that it is

a method whereby students learn and develop through active participation in thoughtfully organised services that is conducted in and meets the needs of the community; that is coordinated with an elementary school, secondary school, institutions for higher learning, or community service program and the community; helps foster civic responsibility; is integrated into and enhances the academic curriculum of the students, or the education components of community service program in which the participants are enrolled; and provides structured time for students or participants to reflect on service learning (Corporation for National Service, 1993, p.5 cited by Koliba, Campbell and Shapiro, 2006, p. 685).

Even though service learning can be practiced at different academic levels and by different institutional types as highlighted by the above definition, the focus of this research is on the university and the local community. In addition to other components of service learning also identified in previous definitions, the above assertion highlights the time-bound component of service learning. The idea of time allocation in service learning is particularly relevant within its course-based structure in universities; there is a start date and a finish date.

Given these perspectives, this thesis maintains that service learning is a concept in which university students learn and develop their skills and sense of civic responsibility in structured, course based, credit laden and time bound activities aimed at enriching their learning experience through critical thinking, reflexivity and application, as well as addressing specific community needs within a framework of reciprocity.

From this working definition, it can be affirmed that service learning is underlined by the following ideologies: The development of critical thinking skills and reflexivity (Chun et al., 2012), connecting the cognitive with the practical (Butin, 2005), improving student learning (Bringle and Hatcher, 2009), moving higher education from the peripheries of society to the centre of society (Hall, 2009), enhancing

students' civic responsibility (Bordelon and Phillips, 2006) and meeting specific community needs (Jacoby, 1999). In addition to these ideologies, service learning has a theoretical underpinning.

5.3.2 Theoretical underpinning

Being a relatively new phenomenon in social and educational disciplines, service learning has been deprived of an adequate conceptual framework (Giles and Eyler, 1994). This is reflected in the lack of research in this area. The main focus in this section is not to advance the good of theory for its own sake but to see it as a necessary framework for developing and refining concrete research agenda and structure for service learning. Over the years, significant emphasis has been placed on the importance of usable or applicable knowledge (Dewey, 1938). Rather than learning just for the sake of learning, Boyer (1996) in his concept of the engaged scholarship highlights the need to enable learning experiences to address the pressing needs of the society. Whereas the focus of education in the past was primarily centred on one's ability to remember and reproduce information, in today's world, there is growing need to go beyond education for recitation or regurgitation to education for societal transformation and sustainability (Bransford, Brown and Cocking, 1999). This is however debatable. Another argument is that with more mass take-up of higher education, there are more tendencies to incline towards regurgitation.

Nonetheless, in recent times, there have been public dissatisfactions expressed at universities for their lack of perceived focus on addressing public concerns, leading to many universities experiencing a decline in state subsidies (Franklin, 2009). Given this scenario, many pathways have been adopted by different States to address the need to enable universities and their knowledge bases to be more relevant in addressing societal concerns. The concept of the developmental university which had a strong base in developing countries at the dawn of independence (Sawyerr, 2004; Preece et al., 2012) and land grant universities of the United States of America which had a particular responsibility to address the needs of members and the communities in the States where they are located (Schuetze, 2010; Franklin, 2009) are some of the gateways that have been adopted to crown universities with a sense of civic responsibility to serve the public good. But serving the public good or being engaged in civic responsibility will mean that universities move away from their traditional position of knowledge production to knowledge integration. Within this context, university students should not only be seen as barrels in which knowledge can be deposited but they should also be given the opportunity to apply acquired knowledge in real world contexts.

Freire cast a vivid illumination on the idea of students reciting and regurgitating information in his banking concept of education where he made it clear that "education has become an act of depositing in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor... the teachers make deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize and repeat" (Freire, 1970, p. 53).

According to Freire, this act of depositing knowledge into students without giving them the opportunity to be engaged in critical thinking and knowledge application, minimises or inhibits the creative power of students which have the potential to shape societies. Dewey's idea of experiential learning (Dewey, 1938), and his work on democracy and education (Dewey, 1916) illustrates this further. Although Dewey never mentioned the phrase "service learning" in his work, the principles of experience, reflection, enquiry and critical thinking which underline his concept of experimentalism can also be considered key pillars in the concept of service learning (Giles and Eyler, 1994).

Furthermore, the notion of learning through experience propounded by Dewey and Freire also has relevance within the concept of transformative learning which offers more insights into the need to address issues in connection with exclusion and the need to foster autonomous thinkers who could negotiate and integrate themselves into the mainstream society (Tharp, 2012; Mezirow, 1997). Given that the goal of transformative learning is to construct frames of references which are more inclusive, open, reflective and are able to support change (Dirkx, Mezirow and Cranton, 2006), service learning can also be seen in this light or construed as a potential tool that fosters transformative learning. Furthermore, service learning and transformative learning both highlight the significance of reciprocity in their framework. Just as reciprocity is a key value in service learning, transformative learning relies on one's ability to affect and as well as to be affected (Massumi, 2002), thereby paying attention to a win-win situation. Moreover, both concepts of transformative learning and experimentalism hinge on the principles of reflexivity and critical thinking for the purpose of self-development, as well as societal transformation (Giles and Eyler, 1994).

Although Dewey in his theory of experimentalism believed that experience enhances learning, he also argued that not all experiences were educative (Tagoe, 2012). Accordingly, experience can be termed educative when reflective and critical thinking processes create new meanings leading to informed decisions and consequently growth or positive transformations. In this light, Dewey underscored that for student learning experiences to be truly educative, they should be embedded in projects for the purpose of generating learning from experience and the following four situations are necessary:

Firstly, they must generate interest in the learner; second, they must be intrinsically worthwhile to the learner; third, they must present problems that awaken new curiosity and create a demand for information; and fourth, they must cover a considerable time span and be capable of fostering development over time (cited in Tagoe, 2012, p. 183).

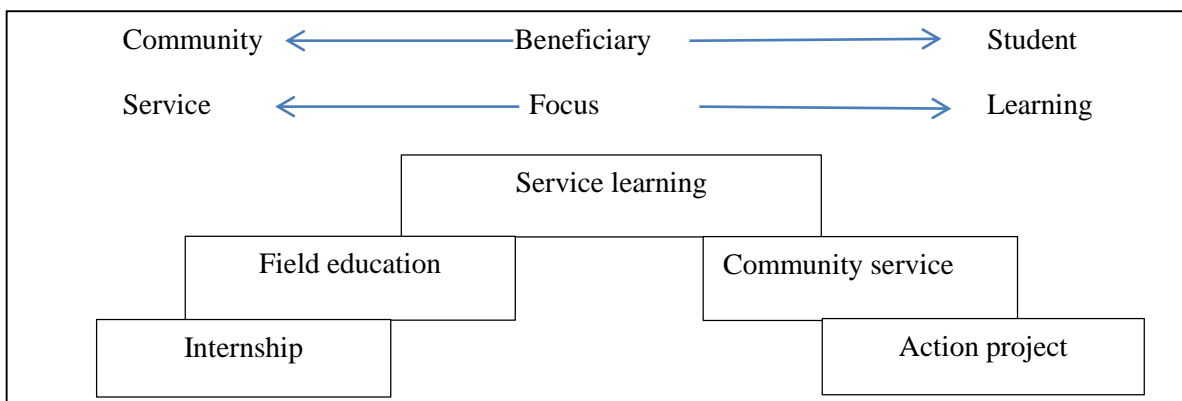
Whilst these four situations can be considered worthwhile, it can also be argued that securing the learner's interest before embarking him/her on a project for the purpose of fostering learning, addresses fundamental concerns of freedom and democratic processes. Who sets an agenda for the learner? Are learners' interests independent of a teacher or facilitator's interest? These are some questions that need to be answered.

5.3.3 Approaches to service learning

Before advancing the different approaches to service learning, it is worthwhile to distinguish it from other forms of service such as community service and volunteerism. It can be maintained that “service learning has been used to characterize a wide array of experiential education endeavours, from volunteer and community service projects to field studies and internship programmes” (Furco, 1996, p.2). Whereas community service and volunteerism can be carried out by community members including students, it is not often affiliated with reflection and an academic credit value. In an attempt to articulate the distinction between service learning and other forms of service, writers have often emphasised the relevance of reflections, reciprocity and an academic credit value component of service learning (Tagoe, 2012; Bringle and Hatcher, 1995).

Apart from the components of reflection and an academic credit value associated with service learning, reciprocity is another factor which distinguishes service learning from other forms of community service. Unlike with volunteerism where students can engage in activities where the “primary emphasis is on the service being provided and the primary intended beneficiary is clearly the service recipient” (Furco, 1996, p.4); the learner undergoing service learning engages in a framework of reciprocity where the university (represented by students) and the community are both teachers and learners with each having something to offer and learn from the other (Lamsam, 1999 cited by Tagoe, 2012). Distinct to volunteerism is a one way approach whereby the volunteer is essentially interested in offering help and does not expect any reward or an academic credit value. The features of service learning can be identified in a service learning continuum as follows:

Figure 5.2: A service learning continuum



Source: Adapted from Furco, 1996

In the continuum of service learning, there is a distinction between students’ field education and community service. Whilst community service revolves around engaging students in activities whose primary focus is on the service being provided and its benefits to the recipients, field education on the other hand provides students with service opportunities that are related to their academic studies (Furco, 1996). It is worth noting that while field education does play an active role in enhancing students’

learning outcomes; it also has the potential to address community needs. Two approaches to service learning will now be discussed:

Internship

Over the years, students enrolled in service oriented professional programmes such as accounting, management, social welfare and education go to the field on formal placement to gain experience that will enhance their learning. In some programmes, students can spend up to two years as interns providing services in different community-based organisations or agencies. Student doctors would at some point be placed in local medical units or hospitals to provide services to patients.

Internship programmes in the educational field seek to bridge theory and practice by providing student teachers with the reality of the demands inherent in the teaching profession by enabling them to practise their would-be profession under the guidance and watchful eyes of veteran and experience teachers and this can be ascertained as a powerful component of teacher preparation (McKinney et al., 2008). Beyond the need to prepare students for life after studies at the university, internship also contributes to students' intellectual growth through the provision of a "sustained opportunity for students to apply classroom knowledge in a multifaceted and challenging setting" (Inkster and Ross, cited in Clark, 2003, p. 473). During internships, students are prompted to integrate their thinking in a real world context which is ambiguous, complex and full of paradoxes.

Whilst students participating in hands-on experience exercises in communities stand to benefit from better understanding of their learning processes (Furco, 1996), greater awareness of their values, a deeper sense of vocational direction and career path and a clearer understanding of real-world issues (Clark, 2003), it can also be maintained that internships have the potential of benefiting the host institution or organisation through the injection of new knowledge and energy into the system from the interns who often demonstrate youthful exuberance. Internship provides solutions to complex problems and many tasks that would have been difficult to be accomplished due to shortage of staff can be accomplished within limited time as interns add to the manpower or labour force of an organisation. However, this thesis maintains that caution needs to be taken by those who are supervising interns to ensure that students are not exploited to meet the needs of the hosting organisation at the expense of student learning experience. Therefore, there should be a balance between the potential of internship for meeting organisational needs and the enhancement of student learning (Furco, 1996; Clark, 2003; McKinney et al., 2008). From this perspective, the quality of experience sought, the time allocated and the environment where internship is scheduled to take place should encourage student learning, as well as contribute positively to boost the activities and performance of the hosting organisation.

Given the significance of internship as an educational experience, Clark advances the following two safeguards that need to be taken into consideration in an attempt to ensure that the tangible benefits of service learning do not minimise their educational values:

Firstly, educational institutions should address formal letters to community organisations where students are to do internships acknowledging that the student(s) is working to learn more about his or her academic course and the work environment and job duties should facilitate such learning and secondly, a faculty member assigned to advise the student should ensure that the quality of work experience, the amount of hours to be spent in the internship during the semester they are seeking credit are adequate in addition to providing mentorship and determining whether the academic assignment completed in connection with the accomplished internship is of passing quality (Clark, 2003, p. 474).

Whilst the university has the responsibility to monitor the activities and performance of a student on internship, this thesis also argues that the community-based organisation where internship is taking place also has the responsibility to provide mentorship and supervision to the student through experienced professionals in the field as this would enable the student to be acquainted with real-world contexts in preparation for integration into the community after the completion of an academic programme.

At the University of Buea, students enrolled on programmes such as Accounting, Banking and Finance, Economics, and Management are sent to community-based institutions at the end of the second semester of the second year to spend three months (beginning July and ending September) gaining work experience under the supervision of faculty members or members of the organisations where the internship is carried out. In some cases, the process of internship is initiated by the university through a formal letter to target institutions and organisations soliciting their willingness and collaboration to host interns. At the end of the internship process, the student is expected to write a report and submit it to the academic department he/she was enrolled on. The content of the internship report which is supposed to be a narration of the student's experience is evaluated by an academic and scored against the course titled "industrial experience". In some cases, in addition to the assessment of the internship report by an academic member of staff, the student on internship is expected to be evaluated onsite by an official of the host organisation. The host organisation's evaluation, which is intended to assess the student in various aspects of professional skills, performances and quality of work, is based on a 10 by 10 matrix of selected variables which gives an overall score of 100 percent. These variables are: punctuality to work, regularity of attendance at work, attitude to work/involvement in work, relationship with other workers, relationship with supervisor, adaptability, cooperation, maturity, analytical ability and assiduity. The grading under each variable ranges from the least unsatisfactory score of 1 to an excellent score of 10.

Whilst the structure and duration of internship vary across different disciplines at the University of Buea in Cameroon, their course-based, credit value, practical experience and supervisory nature is similar.

However, what is not clear is how internship at the University of Buea is structured to address community concerns in addition to fostering student learning outcomes within the framework of mutually beneficial goals or reciprocity.

Apart from internship, the next approach to service learning to be considered in this chapter is action project.

Action project

Whereas internships are about gaining experience under the supervision of proven professionals, action projects fundamentally focus on the service being provided. This may be with little or no supervision from a community-based organisation though it however enhances a learning experience (Hall, 2009). Project approaches of service learning foster thought-provoking, hands-on experiences with an intrinsic motivation for students to apply their skills and reflective thoughts which could lead to the realisation of new insights towards learning (Helm and Gronlund, 2000) and provide solution to community problems (Furco, 1996). Given that a project can be defined as an in-depth investigation of a subject worth learning more about, its key feature is that “it is a research effort deliberately focused on finding answers to questions about a topic” (Katz, 1994, cited by Chun et al., 2012, p. 233). The topic to be addressed in an action project can be conceived by the student, a faculty member, the community or through a mutual effort.

According to Chun et al., (2012), the project approach of service learning has three phases namely: Phase one, the student and the faculty member select and refine a topic for investigation posed by the student or the faculty member and the faculty member who is the supervisor will help the student to develop key questions he or she want to investigate and the big ideas from a range of ideas that could guide the project. In phase two, the faculty member facilitates the execution of the project by facilitating fieldwork, visits from or to experts, carrying out experiments and making use of available resources. At this phase, the student is expected to draw lessons from observations, constructing models, recording findings, predicting outcomes, discussing and articulating new insights, constantly revisiting their questions, identifying new questions and repeating some processes where necessary. In phase three, the student prepares and presents his findings from the investigation in a planned culminating event in the company of other students, faculty members and family and the process is completed through a review and assessment of the preconceived goals.

Similarly, at the University of Buea in Cameroon, action projects are carried out by students in academic disciplines such as education, journalism, geography, environmental sciences and accountancy. Often referred to as “research project”, an action project has a credit value and is typically conducted in the last year of a degree programme which lasts between three to four years. It is intended for students to carry out field research on a current topic approved by a supervisor and the academic department. Whilst

it lasts for a few months, discussion and review of progress of work with the supervisor is done fortnightly and at the end of the process, a report of reasonable quality and acceptable length is submitted for evaluation and grading.

Notwithstanding, the phases of an action project approach to service learning articulated above and the experience at the University of Buea highlights the fostering of student learning experience, but falls short in advancing ways that would benefit the community, especially through its participation in identifying issues of relevance to the community that calls for investigation. Lasker and Guidry (2009) argue that

community participation processes play important roles in generating those ideas and putting them to use in developing and taking effective actions... by enabling the ideas of diverse players to be influential, participation processes support the co-production of knowledge, the generation of new knowledge, and the creation of synergy (2009, p. 202).

Whereas the enhancement of student learning processes are essential in action projects of service learning, this thesis posits that it would also be beneficial to skew action projects toward community concerns by incorporating community ideas for the purposes of identifying and seeking ways to address them. For instance, an action project that seeks to develop a curriculum that would foster professionalisation in the community and curb the rise in unemployment should be able to capture the perspective of unemployed people and employers, involve community members in designing the action project and deciding who participates in it. Community participation may not only ensure that an action project addresses the real concerns of a community but also that available resources at the level of the student and the community are maximised to meet actual needs of the community. This however may not be possible without a “commitment to democracy as a political principle and citizen participation as a professional principle” (Steckler et al., 1987 cited in Silver, Weitzman and Brecher, 2002).

The action project of service learning is not void of challenges such as the availability of time. In research carried out amongst some community organisations, one-third of the organisations noted the difficulty inherent in designing a meaningful service learning project that would fit into a semester/term the student had been allocated to complete the project (Silver, Weitzman and Brecher, 2002). Secondly, there is the challenge of compatibility. Given that the action project approach of service learning should not only be tailored to meet community needs but should also enhance student learning, there is a need to design the project such that it demonstrates relevance to student learning and the community. As service learning is ideologically structured to enhance student learning experiences and address specific community needs, it could also be seen as a potential instrument to foster community development.

5.3.4 Community-based service learning for community development

Many benefits of service learning has been identified in the literature, such as fostering student learning (Furco, 1996; Hall, 2009; Togoe, 2012) , enhancing student critical thinking and reflectivity (Bringle and Hatcher, 1995; Koliba, Campbell and Shapiro, 2006) and promoting civic responsibility (Gronski and Pigg, 2000). Apart from these benefits, much has also been written expressing the potential of service learning to meet specific community needs. For instance, Wilczenski and Coomey (2007) assert that service learning benefits communities; Jacoby (1999) and Bordelon and Phillips (2006) maintained that service learning addresses community needs and Umpleby and Rakicevik (2008) maintain that service learning enhances community relations. In addition to underscoring the connection between service learning and the realisation of specific community needs, some authors have also argued that service learning has the potential to foster sustainable development (Bodorkos and Pataki, 2009 and Brower, 2011). Given that service learning processes have the potential to address specific community needs and foster community development and community development calls for collective participation and action, this thesis maintains the need to investigate how community concerns can be determined for the purposes of addressing them and fostering community development within the framework of a university's engagement.

Apart from service learning, this chapter also sets out to identify and review the concept of community-based adult education and its potential to foster community development.

5.4 Community-based adult education

Adult education can be defined simply as the education of adults. However, a question arises: what is the meaning of adult within the concept of adult education? Rather than laying claims on the education of communities and societies, it can be maintained that adult education is concerned with the education of individuals in need of self-discovery and self-development. Although the culminating effect of educating adults can be community renewal and regeneration, adult education tends to minister directly to one's conscious self within the framework of a personal desire to attain greater fulfilment and a sense of self-actualisation. Mezirow (1997, p.11) asserts that

the goal of adult education is implied by the nature of adult learning and communication: to help the individual become a more autonomous thinker by learning to negotiate his or her own values, meanings, and purposes rather than to uncritically act on those of others.

From this premise, it can be argued that adult education is underscored by its potential to create a critical citizenry which fosters integration and participation and these could be seen as a precursor to healthy societies and social networks which are exhibitions of community development. Adult education also helps to sustain growth in human resource development as it enables individuals to achieve work related

knowledge and attain full potential in different professions (Jarvis, 2010). Apart from identifying its relevance, adult education has a history embedded in past centuries.

5.4.1 History of adult education

With a history dating back as far as the eighteenth century, adult education has taken different forms and shapes and some of these have been formal, others informal, some have been on short term basis, others long lasting, some have been self-generated by a group of adults in need of some redemption through education and others have resulted from organisations, institutions, government organs, philanthropists and concerned individuals (Thornton and Stephens, 1977). Adult education was tinted over the centuries by clergies wanting members of the society to be able to have some basic understanding of the bible as well as read it. Cross-Durrant (2006) maintains that from the 18th century, there was a rise and progression from Sunday Schools where adults were educated in reading, writing and arithmetic to Institutes of Mechanic, colleges for Working Men and University Extension programmes in an attempt to foster personal and social well-being and the emancipation education can bring to ordinary working men and women. The early forms and structures of adult education further grew into a desire by ordinary members of the community to understand the social, political and economic situation they considered victims of and desire to participate in the change process (ibid). Given its unsettled past, adult education has experienced multiple innovations, changes in direction, navigation into new fields and the pursuits of new targets (McIlroy and Spencer, 1988).

Although adults have historically been educated over the centuries in varying ways through a wide range of organisations, systems and individuals, this was not formalised at the level of the university until the twentieth century. The University of Nottingham spearheaded the way to the creation of the first Department of Adult Education and subsequently other universities and adult education providers such as WEA (Workers' Education Association) started providing adult education courses (Jarvis, 2010). Although early adult education structures at the universities were designed to reach out to ordinary working class people in their environments or neighbourhoods, a decline in university funding meant that universities would find it difficult to afford the cost of running off campus activities. The discontinuation of off-campus adult education programmes by many universities led to other expressions of adult education such as the liberal form exhibited by Britain's Open University. Today, in the United Kingdom, the term adult education mostly denotes liberal education that is serving the interest of individuals in the middle class who want to enhance or broaden their knowledge during leisure time (ibid). Although the cost of running liberal forms of adult education in the UK was subsidised by the State, Jarvis (ibid) noted that the pressure brought about by globalisation and the need to inject funds into vocational education led to cuts in funding for non-vocational or liberal adult education and these dynamics continue to push the frontiers of adult education to assume new directions.

5.4.2 Forms of Adult Education

The liberal form of adult education exists in other countries such as Cameroon where those in the middle class enrol in institutions of learning to gain more knowledge and/or acquire a higher certificate which would trigger promotion at the workplace, given that workers with higher certificates tend to occupy higher positions in organisation. Workers who enrolled in this form of adult education usually do so on a part time basis or during leisure times while operating in a full time job position. Nevertheless, the term Adult Education is not widely used or referred to in Cameroon the country of focus in this research. The forms of Adult Education commonly referred to and operated by the University of Buea in Cameroon for instance are: distance education, short/refresher courses and community education.

Distance education

Distance education is the commonest form of adult education run by the University of Buea in Cameroon. The concept is said to have begun in the UK when James Stuart also credited as the founder of university extra-mural adult education investigated the effect of correspondence education for women within the period of the 1870s (Jarvis, 2010). Within the early part of the twentieth century, correspondence education grew and spread across Europe and other parts of the world including Africa though it was not regarded as the best form of education but retains the advantage of widening access to education. This meant that those who were unable to afford the time and permission to stay away from work in order to be in the confinement of a classroom setting were able to pursue their educational dream through correspondence. As a form of adult education whereby students receive lessons and transmit exercises through a mailing system or some other device, correspondence education has since its inception now migrated to electronic communication techniques which can be evident at the centre of distance education. But what is distance education? It may be defined as

those forms of education in which organised learning opportunities are usually provided through technical media to learners who normally study individually, and removed from the teacher in both time and space (ibid, p.197).

Given this definition, it could be underscored that distance education is characterised by:

- Semi- permanent detachment of the teacher from the learner
- It is a structured form of education guided by an educational institution
- It uses technical media as a channel of communication
- Both teacher and learner are interlocked in a two way process of “give and take”
- It operates in the absence of the kind of learning groups seen in traditional classroom settings.

Irrespective of these characteristics, each institution has its own procedures, settings, facilities and design for distance education. Therefore, the definition and characteristics above may not be the exact description of distance education in different parts of the world. The University of Buea in Cameroon

operates distance education under the leadership of the Faculty of Education. The programme is intended to educate practising teachers in private and public primary and nursery schools in Cameroon. It is structured to run study centres in each of the ten regional capitals of the country and some district capitals as well. These study centres are progressively established and as at the time of fieldwork, there were five in number, serving as regional hubs and avenues for interaction between staff and students, tutoring and counselling. The study centres also provide facilities such as classrooms, laboratories and libraries to foster learning, organisation of tutorials, discussion groups, workshops and seminars. Face-to-face tutorials are held twice in each semester at the various study centres and electronic tutorials are held on a one-to-one basis or one to many basis (due to shortage of tutors) by students and tutors within the period between the face-to-face contacts.

As evident in the context of distance education at the University of Buea, distance education does not only utilise an electronic medium of communication between the student and the tutor but also consists of a formal classroom setting although the regularity of such a setting is minimal. The lack of adequate electronic and technical facilities at the disposal of the university and the learner also hampers the potential of distance education operated by the University of Buea in Cameroon to make more use of electronic facilities for contacts between the tutor and the student than face-to-face meetings. This scenario therefore highlights the fact that distance education is structured in different university on the strength of their capacity and resources. Irrespective of the limitations experienced by some universities in the operation of distance education, Holmberg (1989, cited in Jarvis, 2010, p.198) posited that distance education should however be guided by the following standards:

- There should be the creation of a personal relationship between the teacher and the learner
- There should be well-developed self-instructional materials to guide the learner in the absence of the teacher
- Both teacher and learner should experience intellectual pleasure in the exercise
- The design, language and conventions should foster friendly conversations
- Messages transmitted to the learner should be conversational in tone and easily understood and can be remembered
- A conversational approach should underscore the entire process
- It should be based on skilful planning and guidance

Given that distance education is an educational system that demands the use of technical equipment such as the computer and telephone to facilitate contacts, it is expected that learners should be familiar and be acquainted with their usage. From this perspective, distance education in areas of the world where the level of computer literacy is low such as in Africa, struggles to have major breakthroughs with respect to enrolment. However, in places where evolution in information technology is on the rise

and the usage of tools such as the internet and skype are common, distance education can easily be facilitated. Through the internet and skype, e-conferences and virtual learning environments can be set up which are not restricted by the teacher's role or a one-to-one contact. The internet and social media also present a great pool of resources learners can draw from and be self-educated without an intermediary. As education is concerned with the provision of learning opportunities which are predicated on what an education provider wishes the learner to know (Jarvis, 2010), growth in internet usage and the social media is increasingly shifting the pendulum of education from distance education to distance learning.

In view of the above account, it can be argued that distance education is laden with many benefits to the community and its development. In addition to its ability to reach those who cannot benefit or be part of the traditional system of education, distance education also helps to develop academic and professional competences amongst students who in the most part are workers. It also enhances equality of access to higher education by opening the door to anyone who wants a university education even though the cost may restrict some (Morrison, 2006). Following the changing nature of higher education and the need to conceive new ideas that can take the university and its activities forward in better ways (Barnett, 2013), this thesis maintains that there is room for the concept of distance education to be restructured and revamped to serve the needs of an evolving community of adults and societies in improved ways.

Refresher/short courses

Short and refresher courses are forms of adult education intended to improve the capacity of adults who are already operating in different professions but need to gain additional knowledge and competence to improve performance on the job. It is work-based in nature and at the level of the university; short courses can be defined as structured programmes intended to create a learning opportunity for staff of community organisations that would foster performances at work places and boost long term development of the organisation (Boud and Solomon, 2000). In addition to receiving training, participants on short courses are often awarded certificates or diplomas to attest to their participation and completion of the course.

This form of adult education is one of many innovative ways universities offer services to the community by enhancing community competences for improved productivity and development. This reflects contemporary demands levied on universities to be sensitive to every sector of society and to respond creatively to public good (Bridger et al., 2006). The 21st century is characterised by growth and expansion of the knowledge economy and society (Jarvis, 2010) and through programmes like short and refresher courses, it can be maintained that the university in its "ecological" position of "care" (Barnett, 2011) could be seen responding to current global and local demands.

Changes in technology or public demands would sometimes warrant that those who are already in some fields of work upgrade their knowledge and acquire new capacity in order to address new challenges in the society. Professionals who have been using certain technologies or software may soon discover that these tools are outdated and have been replaced by new versions and thus necessitates that they undertake a refresher course so as to be abreast with the latest technological innovation and subsequently be able to meet current demands and stay competitive in the regional and to some extent global market. Given that technology, taste, preference, community dynamics and demands are constantly changing, the need for continuing education within the framework of occasional refresher/short courses cannot be over emphasised.

The benefits of participating in continuing education expressed in the forms of refresher and short courses surpasses its ability to meet current economic demands or the acquisition of relevant technological knowledge. Refresher/short courses also help to constantly refresh and improve the cognitive capacity of individuals and thereby sustaining personal growth even after one has obtained a formal classroom education (Jarvis, 2010). It is understandable that formal or classroom education obtained at some points in one's life enhances one's cognitive and critical capacity to engage constructively in social and economic activities in residential communities. However, continuous education which takes various forms such as refresher and short courses ensures the substantiality of personal growth and contribution to societal progress. According to Dewey (1916),

It is common place to say that education should not cease when one leaves school. The point of this common place is that the purpose of school organisation is to insure the continuance of education by organising the powers that insures growth... Since life means growth, a living creature lives as truly and positively at one stage as at another, with the same intrinsic fullness and the same absolute claims. Hence education means the enterprise of supplying the conditions which insure growth or adequacy of life, irrespective of age (1916, p. 51).

From this perspective, it can be argued that adult education and life-long learning which finds expression through periodic refresher or short courses and is not age bound, has the potential to sustain the personal growth of participating individuals. By sustaining the growth of an individual's critical and rational capacity, short and refresher courses enable community members to continually take active responsibility over their own well-being and that of the community sectors they are members of (Tett, 2006). This thesis also maintains that through participation in short term educational programmes, individuals also retain the awareness and ability needed to integrate and participate in current debates and issues that affect their destiny and the destiny of their community. In addition, it can be posited that

people engaging in educational activities are enriched by having their view of the world and the capacity for rational choice continually expanded and transformed by increasing varieties of experiences and cognitive achievements that the lifelong learning experiences offers (Chapman and Aspin, 1997, p.156).

Despite the rich array of benefits short and refresher courses present, this research maintains that community participation in designing the content, context and mode of delivery of these short/ refresher courses is fundamental to serving the actual educational, developmental and professional needs of individuals, organisations and the community in profound ways.

At the University of Buea for instance, short courses are organised for professionals who wish to improve their capacity in order to be relevant or more useful at their work places. The department of Economic and Management organises short courses in management, finance and accountancy for willing professionals and members of community-based organisations. Whilst such programmes at the University of Buea are laudable due to their ability to improve the quality of the work force serving the community, enrolment on the programmes is largely predicated on affordability. This therefore implies that the benefits of short courses identified above can only be realised by individuals and organisations that are able to afford the costs. From this view, this thesis maintains that there is need to address the subjects of accessibility and affordability in order to render short/refresher courses more beneficial to the community and its members.

Community education

Given that the term community is all encompassing and expresses different views as already discussed in chapter four, the community context being referred to in this section is residential community which is also the community of interest in this research. Therefore, by making reference to community education, this thesis is laying emphasis on the education of all facets of a residential community. This position is reflected in a statement by a Scottish Minister of State which asserts that:

Community education is about enhancing the quality of life of the individual and community as a whole. All ages and all social groups in communities across Scotland will benefit from the Government's approach that is to move community education from the status of "orphan" to the mainstream provision. Education is this Government's number one priority and community education is at the very heart of this. It includes learning at all levels from the very basic life skills to learning for further and higher education. But it also includes learning for enjoyment and building better citizens and communities (Scottish Office, cited in Tett, 2006, p. 11)

From this assertion, it is clear that community education sets out to take education to the door step of each community member with an anticipated resultant effect of social inclusion, better citizenry and improved community experiences. Nonetheless, this research posits that there is need to address the question of: what type of education should the concept of "community education" or local or national brand of "community education" foster? Although there is credible evidence that depicts that education has the potential to foster economic development and healthy communities in places like Africa (Bloom, Canning and Chan, 2005; Gyimah-Brempong, Paddison and Mitiku, 2006), this thesis maintains that relevant education is what matters. That is, the type of community education that can build better citizens and communities should be relevant to citizen and community needs. Given that communities

and individual needs vary across nations and communities, the structure and content of community education should also vary.

Structuring community education to respond to individual and community needs should be able to capture concerns, aspirations and wisdom from community members through a participatory framework which recognises it is important for them to participate in the making of their world be destiny. Given this view, Jarvis (2010, p. 57) identified three distinct forms of community education, namely: education for action and/or development; education in the community and extra-mural forms of education. According to the author, education for community development stems from Freire's idea of non-neutrality of education, meaning that education has the capacity to spur action and increase the commitment and participation of individuals and groups in developmental processes affecting their communities (Tett, 2006). This is particularly relevant to the context of this research which is concerned with the nature of community participation in local development processes. However, it can be maintained that the nature of community education that stimulates development should be that which enhances democratic processes established on the needs and competences of community members.

Jarvis (2010) also propounded the idea of "education in the community". The idea highlights the place of education centres in the community designed to be accessible to community members and which address the needs of individuals and the community. Even though universities are distinct from community educational centres, these centres are intended to be the basis of lifelong education from which the community and its members can draw. This form of community education flourishes in many parts of the developing world including Cameroon where the government and members of non-governmental organisations have set up community education centres to provide vocational training and skills to community members at little or no cost.

With respect to the case of the University of Buea in Cameroon, it was evident that even though it does not run community centres outside of its immediate vicinity, it however makes available some of its facilities to the wider public for educational purpose at little or no cost. Similar to other universities where premises are used for community education activities (ibid), the University of Buea also lends out its amphitheatres to the community for educational and sometimes recreational purposes. Facilities such as the University Library and the Information Centre are open for public visits and this enhances the education of community members. In addition to these forms of community education, the University of Buea also participates in some forms of extra-mural adult education.

Whilst the idea of extra-mural education advanced by Jarvis has to do with university adult education extension classes whereby university lecturers are sent to teach in the community or the university employs part-time staff to run liberal adult education classes in the wider community and under their supervision, what operates at the University of Buea for instance is different. Many university lecturers at the University of Buea take part-time teaching positions in some community-based organisations but

this is solely at the discretion of the individual member of staff who negotiates his/her terms with the organisation. Furthermore, the crippling financial situations of most African universities (Sawyerr, 2004; Taal, 2011) make it difficult for them to be involved in some forms of charitable extra-mural adult education.

Notwithstanding, the University of Buea also enhances community education through symposiums and workshops on and off campus to disseminate the findings of research projects to the wider public, public lectures, service learning activities in communities, community-based research activities, and the print and audio media. In addition to community-based service learning and community-based adult education, the next section will explore the notion of community-based research.

5.5 Community-based research

Over the past centuries, research has progressively assumed a central role in directing the mission and activities of many universities (Hall, 2009). Whilst learning and teaching are still vital components of contemporary universities, research has been a tool to fashion and foster these. Research conducted at the level of the university can be viewed in two dimensions, that is, basic research which is concerned basically with the generation of knowledge and applied research which is focused on the generation of knowledge to address specific concerns in the community and the world at large (Hall, 2011). Given these two facets of research, the one of concern in this research is applied research or research which has relevance in local communities.

Whilst applied research can be carried out at different levels such as the level of the university, the level of a school laboratory and the level of a community institution (Collini, 2012), this research is concerned about the level of the community. The reason for dwelling on the community level of university research is because its community-based has the potential to foster community development which is a key theme in this research. The benefits of community-based research to national and local economic and social development is far reaching (Feldman and Desrochers, 2003; Preece et al., 2012; Bloom, Canning and Chan, 2005). In Africa for instance, universities have increasingly been directed to be engaged in activities that will foster national and local developments (Preece, 2012). The University of Botswana has a partnership agreement with the Gaborone City Council to enhance the city's developmental drive through engagement in research that would inform development strategies for the council whose target is to foster the well-being of city members, create employment and improve the quality of the environment (Ntseane, 2012). Many other universities in Africa such as the University of Buea in Cameroon and the national University of Lesotho have similar responsibilities to enhance the development of local communities and this thesis posits that one way African universities can go about this is through the framework of community-based research. But what is community-based research?

Framed on the basis of Boyer's (1996) concept of engaged scholarship, Dewey's (1916) idea of experimentalism, Levin's philosophy of action research (Burnes, 2004) and Freire's (1970) notion of participatory pedagogy, community-based research can be defined as

a way of integrating research and teaching, an opportunity for experimental learning in real-world settings, as a contribution to recruitment through the creation of a dynamic and engaged atmosphere, a means of making our region a better place to live as a contribution to national and global understanding of ways in which the creation and co-creation of knowledge are used for social innovation (OCBR, 2009, cited in Hall, 2011, p. 8).

From this definition, four ideas stand out about community-based research, namely:

- It seeks to blend teaching and research
- It provides an opportunity to generate knowledge and understanding in a real-world context
- It widens the participation of community members
- It seeks to improve the well-being of individuals and their communities

Apart from the first point which indirectly fits in this research, the other three encapsulated in the definition of community-based research above are central to the subject of this research which addresses the themes of community development and engagement. However, there is need to further address the question of how community members are brought in to be part of a community-based research initiative and what role they play in the process. Whilst different universities have different ways they go about conducting community-based research, this thesis maintains that the process can be sustainable if executed on the basis of suitable principles. At the centre of these principles should be the definition of engagement, the engaged parties, their responsibilities and anticipated outcomes. It should be noted that in the absence of clear and acceptable procedures that define the terms of engagement for participants in a community-based research initiative, its outcome may be very restrictive. From this perspective, the University of Victoria in Canada maintains that

in relation with the University, community-based research (CBR) is a collaborative enterprise between academics and community members. CBR seeks to democratize knowledge creation by validating multiple sources of knowledge and promoting the use of multiple methods of discovery and dissemination. The goal of CBR is social action for the purpose of achieving social change and social justice (Hall, 2011, p.8).

Whilst this position retains social change and social justice as the main outcomes or targets of community-based research, this research is concerned with community development which can also be construed within the frame of social change and social justice or social transformation. Nonetheless, this research adopts the assertion above as its working definition of community-based research though recognising community development as its outcome. It is clear that collaboration between community

members and academics within an atmosphere of mutual respect and knowledge creation to address common concerns for the sake of social transformations forms the basis and key components of community-based research. However, it can be maintained that the idea of joint participation of community members and academics within the structure of community-based research is centred on democratic processes or the need to establish or foster one, as well as give voice to the voiceless. In addition, this thesis posits that in order for a collaborative enterprise to be effective and serve its purpose, it is fundamental to address the tensions and differences that may exist between academics and community members so that dialogue, thoughtful inputs and knowledge creation can take place within community-based research processes.

5.6 Conclusion

Apart from teaching and learning, universities over the years have fostered a relationship with local communities through research and extension services (Preece et al., 2012). Boyer brought to the forefront some of the early conceptual framework of university - community engagement in his theoretical construct of “engaged scholarship” (1996) which explicates the relationship between higher education and their larger communities for mutual and beneficial exchange of resources and knowledge in a context of sustained partnership and reciprocity. In his concept of engaged scholarship, Boyer argues the need for education to have a fundamental role in contributing to public good through knowledge discovery, knowledge integration and knowledge sharing. But how can knowledge and resources in contemporary universities be placed at the service of the community? Given the need to answer this question, it was essential to articulate different ways universities can engage with local communities in an interlocking commitment to public service, knowledge integration and exchange that could engender community development. Dimensions of a university’s engagement such as community-based service learning, community-based research and community-based adult education present possible opportunities through which the university can address public concerns and foster community development. However, this thesis posits that the university may not carry out this mandate singlehandedly. The next chapters proceed to analyse the research data and bring out findings.

CHAPTER 6

VOICES FROM THE COMMUNITY I:

PARTICIPANTS' PERCEPTION ON THE UNIVERSITY'S ROLE AND ITS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

6.1 Introduction

This chapter which is the first of two chapters on “voices from the community” sets out to analyse the interviews and discussion which were conducted with community participants. Whilst the focus would be placed on interviews and discussion conducted during the main phase of fieldwork due to the refined and robust nature of the phase, and the extended time spent in the field, this chapter and subsequent ones on data analysis would occasionally draw on the preliminary phase and other sources of evidence such as the field diary (see appendix 1) and relevant documents such as the University of Buea's strategic plan of 2007 – 2015 and Buea Communal Development Plan of 2012 to present a rounded analysis of voices from the community. Analysis of voices from the community consists of two chapters because the enquiry process at the level of the local community had more participants and contributions than the one at the level of the university and moreover, the local community is wider and more populous than the university community. The following table represents a descriptive account of 18 community participants who participated in interviews or discussions during fieldwork from the 25th of March to the 1st of June 2013 and their pseudonyms as used in this thesis:

Table 6.1 Description of community participants interviewed during the main phase of fieldwork

No	Date	Sampling type	Participant	Code	Sex	Age range	Education	Occupation	Village	Marital status	Dependents
1	02/04/2013	Opportunistic	Martha	CM 1	Female	31-40	BSc	Business	Molyko	Married	2
2	06/04/2013	Opportunistic	Agnes	CM 3	Female	51-60	Class six	Business	Bokwai	Divorced	2
3	15/04/2013	Opportunistic	Margaret	CM 2	Female	41-50	MA	Medical scier	Bolifamba	Married	12
4	18/04/2013	Purposive	Clement	CM 7	Male	51-60	Diploma	Business	Clerk's quarter	Married	3
5	22/04/2013	Opportunistic	Joan	CM 4	Female	51-60	MA	NGO	Bulu	Married	6
6	26/04/2013	Snowball	Martin	CM 6	Male	31-40	GCE A'L	Farming	Molyko	Married	7
7	27/04/2013	Purposive	Cornelius	CM 9	Male	51-60	PhD	NGO	Molyko	Married	5
8	28/04/2013	opportunistic	Gregory	CM 10	Male	51-60	MA	Civil Servant	Wokoko	Married	5
9	03/05/2013	Snowball	Docas	CFG 1	Female	31-40	FSLC	Farming	Bokuva	Married	4
10	03/05/2013	Snowball	Elizabeth	CFG 2	Female	41-50	Diploma	Development	Bokuva	Married	6
11	03/05/2013	Snowball	Loveline	CFG 3	Female	51-60	FSLC	Farming	Bokuva	Widow	5
12	03/05/2013	Snowball	Grace	CFG 4	Female	51-60	FSLC	Farming	Bokuva	Widow	7
13	03/05/2013	Snowball	Alain	CFG 5	Male	41-50	FSLC	Farming	Bokuva	Married	4
14	03/05/2013	Snowball	Elvis	CFG 6	Male	51-60	FSLC	Farming	Bokuva	Married	6
15	05/05/2013	opportunistic	Helen	CM 5	Female	51-60	Class six	Farming	Bokwai - New L	Married	26
16	06/05/2013	Purposive	Alfred	CM 8	Male	51-60	Diploma	Clergy	Great soppo	Married	6
17	10/05/2013	Snowball	Sherley	CF	Male	51-60	FSLC	Farming	Bonakanda	Married	8
18	10/05/2013	Opportunistic	Peter	CM 11	Male	71-80	Standard six	retired	Bokwai	Married	10

Source: Fieldwork

Eleven community members were semi-structurally interviewed on a one-to-one basis, one family (husband and wife) was also interviewed and a focus group discussion comprising of six persons took place. The recruitment of participants from disparate backgrounds ushered in diverse voices into the enquiry process and this gave the research the occasion for a robust and rounded analysis. All interviews were conducted in either English language or Pidgin²⁰. Given that there are multiple variations of Pidgin spoken in Cameroon, there was no homogenised way of translating an audio recording from Pidgin into English and vice-versa. My familiarity with the local context of Pidgin and knowledge of the English language, gave me the ability to understand the narratives being articulated by participants and translate accordingly so as to have an accurate representation of their voices.

I will now proceed to uncover the different themes which stood out in the analysis process in an attempt to inductively generate meanings that would address the subject of the university and its engagement in the community and how this may address local priority needs and foster community development. The main themes discussed in this chapter are: a) disparate understanding of the role of the university; and b) university engagement acknowledged. The theme “disparate understanding of the role of the university” focused on participants’ understanding of the ‘university’ and its role within the wider community. It is broken down into two sub sections: intellectual and personal development, and capacity building and employment. The section on “university engagement acknowledged” captured participants’ voices on different dimensions of the university’s presence within the wider community. It is broken down into the following sub-sections: community-based adult education, community-based research, and community-based service learning.

6.2 Disparate understanding of the role of the university

Given the interviews and focus group discussion which took place with community participants selected from disparate backgrounds, members were invited to explore and describe their own understandings and definitions of the university and its role within their local community. From the responses gathered, the university was construed as: a) an educational and teaching centre; b) a place to acquire prestige and status; c) a venue for capacity building in order to gain employment and d) a place for intellectual and personal development amongst others.

Whilst some participants identified one or more purposes and potential roles of the university in their community, the different views expressed depicted a pluralistic stance on the university and its perceived role. The complexity surrounding the university is further echoed by Barnett (2013) who advanced the need for a proliferation of ideas on what the university is and should be. He stated:

²⁰Pidgin is a lingua franca which is a local variation of English, was occasionally used to avoid questions being misunderstood by participants if asked in English, especially when dealing with participants from very remote locations, and who have had very limited formal education.

We require the boldest of ideas; ideas that are not ‘cabined, cribbed, confined’. Through the imagination, we can come to realise vividly that the university can be conceived and even taken forward in quite different ways (2013, p.5).

From the array of ideas generated by participants on the purpose or role of the university, this chapter will proceed to expound the two most recurrent ones raised, namely: university for intellectual and personal development, and university for training, capacity building and employment.

6.2.1 University for intellectual and personal development

Many of the participants echoed Julius Nyerere’s (1968) stance on the university as a place where individuals are trained for improved thinking, analysis and problem solving. Their responses however shifted the boundary of personal development from one’s ability to think, analyse and solve problems to include one’s ability to show respect to other humans, interact and communicate with better lucidity. However, some disparities were noticed in participants’ responses. For instance, community participants who had experienced university education easily associated learning and intellectual development with university education when compared to other participants without the experience of university education. One female participant who happens to have gone through university education maintained:

I think university education has helped me to develop as an individual, my level of understanding and interaction in the society has improved. I think that it is a place for everybody and if you have the opportunity to be there, it is not only going to be for employment purposes but also for personal development because once your intellect is developed, your thinking capacity increased and you are able to interact in the society, you can do many things for yourself. You will not think like a “village farmer” because you have a bigger mind and I think this is good. When somebody is educated and developed, there is some degree of respect for humanity. So I think that university education help people to have some respect for humanity unlike people who are not educated or who have not been to the university, they tend to have less respect for human beings (Margaret, female, 41-50, Bolifamba, 15-04-2013).

From the response of this participant, two types of development associated with university education can be identified: a) intellectual development for better thinking ability and b) social development for better interaction and people relationship. These two aspects of development may be regarded as essential in enhancing social bonds in communities, and underpinning human interactions and relationships. Drawing on Newman (1999), it can be argued that integration and harmony in a society can be fostered by an acquisition of university education. University experience can teach a person

how to accommodate himself to others, how to throw himself into their state of mind, how to bring before them his own, how to influence them, how to come to an understanding with them, how to bear with them. He is at home in any society, he has common ground with every class; he knows when to speak and when to be silent; he is able to converse, he is able to listen; he can ask a question pertinently, and gain a lesson seasonably (1999, p.160).

Whilst it can be argued that university education has the potential to enhance a student's critical abilities such that he/she may not accept every school of thoughts, it can also be maintained that such level of education enhances respect of different social opinions or views of people in a conscious attempt to promote co-habitable spaces and not necessarily an acceptance of what others think or perceived.

Apart from maintaining that intellectual and personal developments are rooted in university education, some participants were of the opinion that the university serves the need for employment. Whilst the subject of employment was not very prominent in the narratives of community participants who had experienced university education, it did however take a central stage in the narratives of participants who had not experienced university education with many of them emphasising that university education should enhance the employability of university graduates.

6.2.2 University for capacity building and employment

Historically, universities have been very useful in providing the manpower needed to serve in public and private sectors worldwide. Even though the first university established in Cameroon had the mandate to provide a labour force to serve the demands of the newly independent nation - Cameroon; yet, many decades after independence, participants' responses revealed that university education in Cameroon is still being regarded as a gateway to employment. Many sponsors of university students in Cameroon rely on very small scale farming and other menial tasks to generate the funds needed to support a child or loved one to go to university with the intention that upon completion of studies, the graduate would be gainfully employed and begin to assist other loved ones economically. Given the challenging circumstances these sponsors endure in order to see a loved one through university education, it may not be considered a surprise that many participants emphatically stated that the university should be responsible in ensuring that graduates are ready for jobs or employment to guarantee 1) self-reliance and 2) to assume family responsibilities.

Graduate employability for self-reliance

In a deliberate move to convey a message when asked the purpose of university education, a community participant who was divorced and had two dependents stated: "if it is not to have a job then what is the essence of a child going to the university?" (Agnes, female, 51-60, Bokwai, 06-04-2013). Given this quotation and the desire expressed by many other participants to witness university graduates employed or finding jobs, one may ask: why is it necessary for graduates be employed? An answer to this question leads to the notion of "Self Reliance". The following quotation from a community participant who relied on small scale farming and had twenty-six dependents illustrated the notion of self-reliance:

When we the parents send our children to the university, it is that they should study and have something to do; If I, as a struggling farmer spend money and my child goes to the university and comes out, and there is no job, then the child turns to me and says ‘mummy I want a pair of shoe or bathing lotion’; it does not sound well. The weight of financial burden you thought you have uplifted from your shoulder by sending that child to the university to study and pick up a job returns back to you again. Because the child cannot find a job, he/she continues to rely on you for provision of his/her basic needs (Docas, female, 31-40, Bokuva, 03-05-2013).

Reading through the quotation, the key message communicated by the participant can be construed to be the need for university graduates to be employed so that they can be self-sufficient or demonstrate an ability to provide their personal needs. The participant argued it is expedient for graduates of the university to pick up jobs or be employed and this would enable them to become financially responsible or independent rather than reliant on their “struggling” parents or sponsors who have been waiting for the time when the university student would no longer be financially dependent but would be able to take care of his/her needs. To corroborate this notion of self-reliance, another respondent who was involved in small scale farming in one of the remote communities underscored:

The mother thinks the child should have finished studying at the university and gets a good job and starts to provide his or her needs and the needs of other family members but he or she comes out of the university and continue to be a burden and the both of you are just looking at each other. It does not make sense if he is unable to find a job when you know that he is educated. If he is educated and is not using his degree to earn a living, it does not mean anything (Helen, female, 51-60, Bokwai New Layout, 05-05-2013).

From the narrative of this participant and many others, it can be underscored that the reason articulated for graduate employment is not limited to self-reliance but also included the need to assume family responsibilities. The quotation above is not an isolated case which depicted a strong sense of the family in participants’ idea of graduate employment; rather, the notion of graduate employment to assume family responsibilities was also a recurrent theme raised in participants’ utterances.

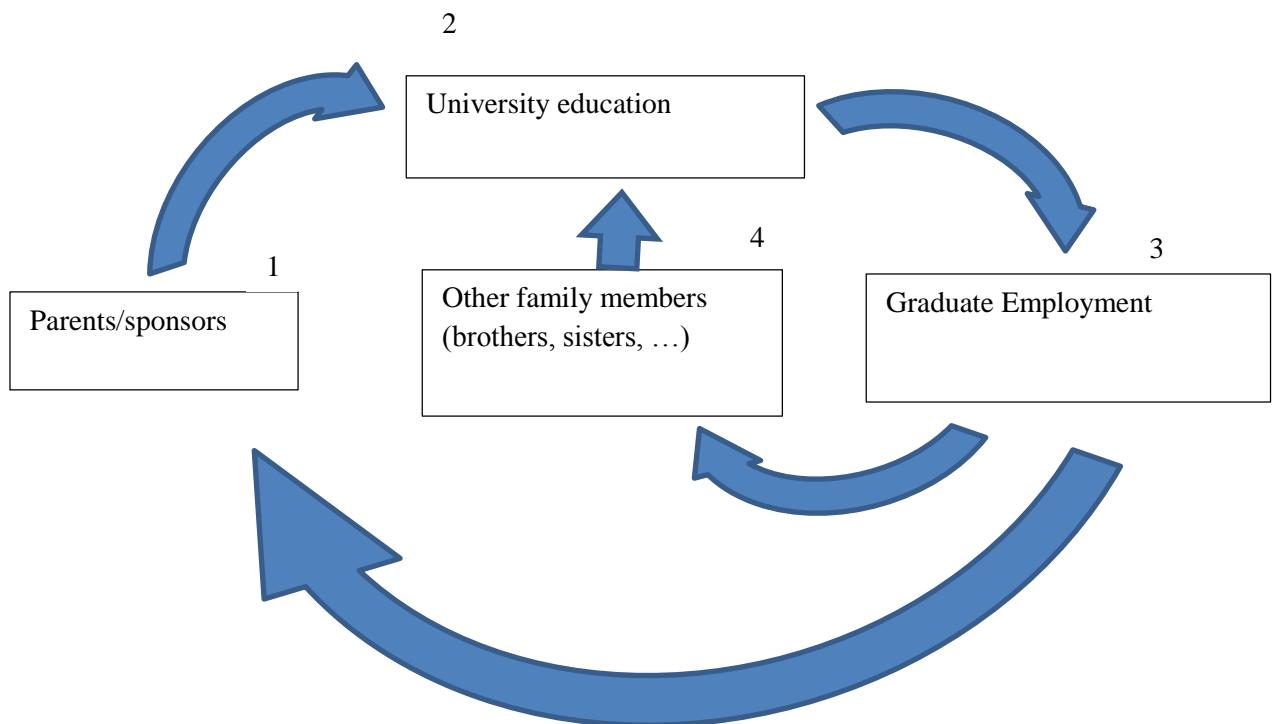
Graduate employability to assume family responsibility

In Africa in general and in Cameroon in particular, there is a strong sense of the family in almost every sector of social life. Family members tend to stick together and assist one another economically, morally and spiritually within a communal spirit of solidarity. This solidarity also aligns with the Ubuntu ideology. According to Makgoba (1996), Ubuntu’s uniqueness is underpinned by the need for care, hospitality and responsibility towards one another. Given this context, many community participants associated graduate employment with the family. A family member who succeeds in a venture is often considered the success of the family and families can be seen relying on a member’s economic fortune. In many instances, the employed is the sole bread winner of the entire family; one who assumes most of the financial responsibilities associated with it. The following excerpt from a participant’s response captures this understanding: “The mother thinks the child should finish studying at the university and

gets a good job and starts to provide his or her needs and the needs of other family members” (Helen, female, 51-60, Bokwai New Layout, 05-05-2013). This participant suggests that graduates should find jobs so that they can provide the needs of the family. Being an African, it is no hidden secret that the burden of economic responsibility that rests on an employed graduate goes beyond his or her immediate family to also include members of the extended family.

The nature of family economic responsibilities associated with graduate employability as revealed by participants can be illustrated thus:

Figure 6.1: Family economic responsibilities associated with graduate employability



Source: Data analysis process

The family economic responsibilities associated with graduate employment revealed by figure 6.1 can be explained. Starting from the position of a sponsor/parent “1”, he/she may engage in small scale farming or small business to sponsor a child at the university “2”. The sponsor or parent struggles in the process to secure the required funds to enable his or her child to enrol and go through university education with great anticipation that after graduation, the child would find a job or be employed “3” and eventually assist his/her siblings and other family members “4” to gain university education or meet any other socio-economic demands, as well as be of economic help to the parents or sponsors “1” who had hitherto gone through tough times to see her/him through university education and need to recuperate or be able to assist other loved ones go through university education.

A closer look at figure 6.1 also reveals that university education can be positioned at the centre of its own sustainability and as well as the economic sustainability of families. This sustainability is depicted by the cyclic nature of the figure. From this perspective, it can be argued that the rate of graduate employability may spur university enrolment, and hence the sustainability of university education in communities. Not only would graduate employment provide a convincing reason why parents should send their children to the university but also, it provides an economic opportunity to afford the costs of seeing someone through it. Despite participants' acknowledgement that the university carry the potential to build human capacities for employment, they also raised the concern of the high rise in graduate unemployment. This concern is discussed in section 7.2.5 of this thesis.

In addition to community members revealing their understanding of the university and its role in their community, participants' narratives captured insights into the university's engagement.

6.3 University engagement acknowledged

Further analysis of participants' narratives suggested that the university at the centre of this research has engagement in the community. But one may ask: in what areas is the university engaged in the local community? Given that a university's engagement in the community can be expressed in different forms, participants' narratives revealed the most recurrent theme being community-based service learning (SL), followed by community-based research (CBR) and community-based adult/continuing education (A/CE).

From research data, it can be underscored that a majority of the participants overwhelmingly acknowledged they were aware of university-led service learning activities in the community and these take the forms of internships and action projects. Fewer participants indicated they were aware of university-led community-based research initiatives and much fewer participants highlighted the functioning of the university's distance education scheme in the community which could also be seen within the framework of adult education. In addition to acknowledging the presence of different dimensions of the university's engagement in the community and their corresponding impacts and potentials, a vast majority of participants also revealed some concerns over the respective facets of the university's engagement.

6.3.1 Community-based adult education acknowledged

Given that "adult education" can be construed to capture the notions of distance and continuing education (Tagoe, 2012), as well as short courses, few participants expressed their awareness of the university's distance education programme and short courses. They also revealed some current and potential benefits of these forms of adult education to the community, as well as measures that can be taken to enhance the schemes.

6.3.1.1 Benefits of adult education

From the responses of participants, the following benefits of adult education to the community can be underscored: 1) it is flexible and provides an opportunity for some community members to further their studies, 2) it provides occasions for community members to acquire relevant capacity, and 3) it has the potential to foster literacy in the community.

Drawing on many of the responses that made reference to distance education and short courses administered by the university, it can be advanced that the time, duration and flexibility at which community members can further their education and acquire capacity building to enhance performance at work or qualify for hiring, employment or promotion are potential benefits of distance education and short courses. A female member of the community, involved in business, elaborated on the benefit of short courses or study-work programme at the university:

The number of people, who prefer to stay and work in Buea is on the rise due to the presence of the university. Many people want to come and stay in Buea. Some employees are seeking to be transferred to Buea so that they can enrol at the university and embark on a study-work programme tailored to meet their professional and promotional needs (Martha, female, 31-40, Molyko, 02-04-2013).

From this assertion, it can be construed this participant perceived that short courses provide an occasion for community members to obtain relevant capacity which can enhance their professional performance or instigate promotion at the work place. Similarly, a community member who knew someone who was registered on the distant education programme of the university asserted that distance education gave the individual enormous opportunities:

Distance education operated by the university gave Y the opportunity to work and study and with the achievement of a higher certificate, she will be promoted at her place of work. Promotion comes with financial increase and that will enable her to take care of her family in a much better way. I think that is some good thing the university is doing (Cornelius, male, 51-60, Molyko, 27-04-2013).

In addition to job promotion that can accompany a successful completion of a short course or distance education programme, there is the possibility to experience an increase in earning. Most promotions at a place of work are skewed around “experience” and “knowledge” which can be gained from a short course or distance education. Once promoted, there is likelihood that this would be accompanied by a rise in the pay package of an employee. Consequently, this enhances the purchasing power of the promoted staff and ability to assume greater economic responsibilities.

In addition to furthering one’s education, gaining capacity building and the economic benefits associated with distance education and short courses expressed by community members, the enhancement of literacy was also captured as a potential benefit. Whilst participants who have gone through university education and/or are professionals highlighted capacity building and promotion at

the workplace as benefits of distance education and short courses, some participants with very minimal formal education underscored literacy as a benefit. In highlighting the benefit of adult education, a community member who did not complete primary education maintained:

Adult education is very good because it will enable those who cannot write their names to be able to do so. It can also enable someone to read such that if someone sees a signpost that reads “danger”, he/she would understand what it means and avoid the danger (Agnes, female, 51-60, Bokwai, 06-04-2013).

Whilst this participant associated basic adult education with literacy, the university’s role may not be construed as one of advancing basic reading and writing skills in the community as there is a Ministry of Basic and Primary Education responsible for this. Notwithstanding, another participant asserted that a spill over from university education is the enhancement of public literacy. This participant noted: “a university is where our children go and obtain their degrees and come back to teach us” (Sherley, male, 51-60, Bonakanda, 10-05-2013). From this insight, it can be maintained that she thinks that many graduates of the university live with families in the community and impact these families and other community members through interactions and conversations with knowledge acquired at the university. Irrespective of these benefits and potential rewards of short courses and distance education to the community, it can be argued that without the university and policy makers addressing the subject of affordability to access them, many citizens who have the desire for enrolment on a short course or distance education but lacked the financial means, would be alienated from it.

6.3.1.2 Revamping adult education

Apart from addressing the cost of distance education and short courses in an attempt to increase access so that many community members can benefit from them, participants’ narratives also captured the need to revamp adult education for greater contribution to community wellbeing. In order to revamp adult education and make it more beneficial to the community, participants suggested the need to 1) create awareness for the short courses and distance education operated by the university, 2) diversify distance education and short courses to include many other academic disciplines and 3) establish suitable venues for adult education in the community.

Creating awareness for short courses and distance education

The participants who revealed awareness of short courses and distance education programmes operated by the university suggested that many community members are not aware of these programmes. One community member who expressed a strong desire for the university to operate short courses seemed to be unaware that the university already operate some. This female community participant suggested:

The university should run short courses that can be suitable for civil servants and others who are busy and cannot study during normal term times. I am talking of something that cuts across different professions and disciplines. I think it is going to really, really help. Because, the truth is; with the presence of the university in Buea, many more people want to study. You will find some people making effort but yet it is difficult because of their work schedule which cannot fit into a regular academic programme. I think that if the university could work out some programmes whereby it is possible for professionals or members of the public to pursue a work study programme, it is going to help a lot (Martha, female, 31-40, Molyko, 02-04-2013).

This research found that the department of Economic and Management run short courses targeting selected professions. The seeming ignorance of this participant of short courses being offered at the university highlighted the need for the university to create an awareness of its programmes in the community. By creating awareness, many community members can make informed decisions on their enrolment. In addition to the need for sensitisation of members of the public on university programmes, this participant also highlighted the need for short courses at the university to be diversified to incorporate more academic/professional disciplines.

Diversifying distance education and short courses

Given that at the time of fieldwork, only one faculty of the university operated distance education and one department ran short courses, the impact of these programmes in the community could be said to be limited by these units of the university. The limitations in scope of these programmes provide the community with little options to choose from. Consequently, a community member justified her call for the university to diversify and expand these programmes such that other faculties and departments of the university can also run them and in so doing, widen the opportunity for more community members to seek enrolment on and participate in their benefits.

Whilst participants suggested the need for diversification and expansion of the university's distance education and short courses, there is equally a need to ascertain if the university has got the human capacity and resources to run such programmes at a wider scale. In addition to creating awareness and diversifying distance education and short courses, participants raised the need for a suitable venue for adult education in the community.

Establishing suitable venues for adult education

Given that the target beneficiaries of adult education are professionals and non-traditional students, respondents argued that it is fitting for the university to operate adult educational centres in the community rather than on campus. A community member who was a clergy maintained: "the university should institute adult educational centres in the community and groom community members to take over their management on the long run" (Alfred, male, 51-60, Great Soppo, 06-05-2013). In addition to expressing the need for the university to run educational centres in the community through which short

courses can be administered, this participant also advanced a potential remedy to the university's potential lack of manpower to sustain the centres. Through training of trainers who could manage the centres, the university can guarantee their sustainability. The impression from this participant suggests that the success of such a scheme would not only depend on the university but also on the community's readiness to provide supports. A female community member (Joan, female, 22-04-2013) who managed a non-governmental organisation serving rural women involved in mainly farming activities shared the same view of the need for the university to establish adult educational centres in the community. She argued that the university campus is generally perceived as belonging to regular students of the university and is not user friendly to members of the outside community. Therefore, if the university wants to affect the community through its adult educational scheme, it should consider creating resource centres in the community.

Not only would a university's community resource centre act as a suitable venue to run short courses for community adults, it can also act as a friendly meeting point where members of the university and the community can meet for dialogue, reflection and draw inspiration from one another on a wide range of issues affecting the university and the community. This thesis also argues that such a venue could potentially ease any power dichotomy existing between the university and the community if both parties converge to co-construct, co-diffuse and co-apply relevant knowledge for university and community progress. However, the same clergy who had advanced the need for the university to operate community centres also suggested:

When programmes are organised for the public on campus, parents also have the opportunity to see the campus and assess the university's resources and capacity to accommodate their sons or daughters on academic programmes (Alfred, male, 51-60, Great Soppo, 06-05-2013).

Whilst occasions such as "Open days" and ceremonies such as the Convocation invite members of the public into the university and present them with the opportunity to view the university's campus, assess its resources and have a conversation with members of staff, running community centres informed by a strategic mission to reach out to professionals and other non-university members can be considered worthwhile. In addition to adult education, participants' narratives made allusion to community-based research.

6.3.2 Community-based research acknowledged

The concept of community-based research explored within the enquiry process of this research represented research carried out by academics in the community and this may have been sponsored by the university, the government or a non-governmental agency. Whilst there were discrepancies in the nature of community-based research in the community, some participants who acknowledged its presence also ascertained that it was beneficial.

6.3.2.1 Benefits of community-based research

Two types of benefits associated with community-based research were identified by participants, namely: a) fringe benefits such as free diagnosis and medication to those participating in a research scheme such as a medical study and b) economic benefits such as human capacity building and temporary employment.

Fringe benefits of community-based research

The fringe benefits expressed by participants represented those benefits which were not initially considered the primary intended objectives of the research. These were often short-term, tokenistic and motivational in nature. The following transcript of an interview carried out with a community member who had been part of a community-based research highlighted some fringe benefits:

Q: How did this entire process benefit the community? Can you outline some of the benefits to the community?

A: We gave free medication to those that were diagnosed to be positive. We also dewormed the children. We gave them some medicines for worms. For those who paid for transportation to be at the venue of the research, we reimbursed them. We also bought foodstuffs like rice and vegetable oil and handed them to the families that showed up. We also gave the families some financial tokens of appreciation for showing up (Margaret, female, 41-50, Bolifamba, 15-04-2013).

The original intention of the project was not to administer free treatments to sick participants or provide food and money to volunteers but to investigate the nature of the Malaria gene in Malaria victims. It was intended to explore and acknowledge why children of the same household manifest different symptoms when infected with malaria. Although the main objective of the research had the potential to exert a long term community impact if results and findings are put into appropriate use, the fringe benefits participants received for their involvement can also be positively viewed. These fringe benefits provided immediate relief to some community members in need of medical treatment, food or money.

Economic benefits of community-based research

In addition to the fringe benefits, participants' narratives posited that community-based research activities led to human capacity building and temporary employments. Whilst the capacity building of community members participating in a community-based research may be considered a lifelong investment, this was quite often intended to serve the objectives of the project and the accompanying employments were short term, and some lasting just as long as the project endures. A respondent who managed a community-based radio station stated:

I have a friend; I think you should know him. I am referring to Dr. X of the university. From what I have seen, I believe very strongly that he is doing a lot of work in the community. He has fish ponds and hatcheries where he produces fingerlings and trains other fish farmers on how to produce fish. Instead of importing fish from abroad, community members can produce fish. The fish ponds have also provided jobs to community members (Cornelius, male, 51-60, Molyko, 27-04-2013).

The subjects of human capacity building and temporary employment within community-based research was also highlighted in a symposium attended at the University of Buea on the dissemination of research findings from a project on “Land tenure practices and women’s rights to land in Anglophone Cameroon” (see fieldwork diary entries of the 2nd of May 2013 in appendix 1). The project, whose findings were disseminated to the public, recruited field assistants and built the capacity of several community members through workshops and symposia (Fonjong et al., 2013).

Irrespective of these benefits of community-based research, a community member maintained that university managed research activities in the communities primarily benefits the university rather than the community. This participant expressed the following thought: “I don't know if we will ever experience change in the community because of university research” – (Martha, female, 31-40, Molyko, 02-04-2013). Given this thought, a question arises: does the university have clear objectives for community-based research activities to make lasting contributions to community development instead of trickle-down opportunistic, tokenistic or short term benefits?

6.3.2.2 Revisiting community-based research for lasting benefits

It can be maintained that long term benefits of community-based research to communities cannot be possible without the university having a strong research base and an enabling environment that supports faculty involvement in community-based projects for sustainable development. Alter (2005) argues that such an enabling setting should take into consideration the provision of new and adequate resources or the reallocation and redeployment of existing resources for targeted purposes. The ongoing economic challenges facing African universities are enormous such that it limits the quality and scope of their research activities in the communities irrespective of the fact that community-based research has the potential to inform teaching at the university, shape State policies, and as well as established lasting benefits for the community. Modise and Mosweunyane (2012) maintained that this lack of resources at the disposal of African universities have alienated them from the ordinary populace and compromise their important function of taking part in the development of their countries and communities. Whilst this thesis posits the need for the university, the State and concerned organisations to prioritise community-based research by increasing investment in it, it also maintains the need for: a) man-power development; b) relevant partnerships to buttress financial support.

When the subject of the university's lack of resources to improve its involvement in the community was probed, a surprising number of participants revealed that the university does not need funds but man-power and partnerships. One community member who was a civil servant asserted:

What the community need is empowerment. We don't talk about financial resources when you are talking about empowerment. We talk about partnership with the community. The university don't need money to be able to partner with the farmers around, and put them into groups. There is financing if that university understands enterprise creation - they can do a lot to put the farmers in groups, and make them provide finance. Train students and community members to be able to develop the skills of enterprise creation. They don't need to finance; they only need to empower people to get finance and when the people are economically empowered, they can fund projects that have the potential to enhance their livelihood (Gregory, male, 51-60, Wokoko, 28-04-2013).

From this participant's perspective, it may be construed that the content and context of the university's teaching, training and partnership, has an effect on the quality of support it can get from the community in times of need. In other words, the quality of a university's graduates, alumni and partnership with the community has the potential to make or mar investment in the university's research mission in communities. Graduates who were not sufficiently empowered for employment or job creation would find it challenging to participate in funding the university's research activities in the community as a result of their limited or lack of financial income. Apart from the need for the university to major on human capacity development and empowerment as a pathway to generate funds for community projects of the future, participants also highlighted the importance of having a university committed to community development. Through commitment, the university can identify and maximise available community and university resources for community-based research projects.

Given all these submissions, this thesis argues that the university's community-based research schemes can benefit enormously from a more philosophically and practically engaged reconsideration of its mission. This should capture the fundamental concerns of empowering potential graduates, partnership with different segments of the community, commitment and a demonstration of relevance to community development. Apart from the frameworks of community-based research and community-based adult education expressed by participants in their narratives, the enquiry process also captured narratives on community-based service learning.

6.3.3 Community-based service learning acknowledged

A majority of the participants identified service learning activities at the nucleus of the university's presence in the community. Given the multifaceted nature of service learning, the activities identified and expounded by participants were largely student internships and action projects. The following are some excerpts from participants' narratives which hinted at service learning activities in the community:

I have experienced internship in the community because I also did my own internship. Many students from the Faculty of Science go out to the community to do internship. We also have the Faculty of Education that also sends students out for internship in primary schools (Margaret, female, 41-50, Bolifamba, 15-04-2013).

The university sends out students to carry out research projects. They come here in their numbers, and we even take them to the farms (Elvis, male, 51-60, Bokuva, 03-05-2013).

I see a lot of university students getting in to the villages to do some research on a particular subject (Cornelius, male, 51-60, Molyko, 27-04-2013).

In addition to service learning activities acknowledged to be present in the community, the following occasional benefits associated with it were also expressed.

6.3.3.1 Benefits of service learning

An occasion for knowledge exchange

At the centre of service learning activities in the community is interaction between students and members of the community. Within this interaction, knowledge exchange takes place. Referring to the researcher at the centre of this research, a community member working with a group of rural women elaborated on the notion of knowledge exchange:

As you have come here and initiated this discussion, we are learning from you and you are also learning from us. So that is one benefit I am seeing because when the students come, they want to know details about the village and as we give them the details, we also learn from them, even from the questions they asked us – such questions open our eyes and cause us to think. Student nurses also come here and carry out their internships and in the course of their stay here; they educate us on health and hygiene (Elizabeth, female, 41-50, Bokuva, 03-05-2013).

Whilst it is commendable to witness knowledge exchange during service learning, this can also create opportunity for civic education. Civic education can be said to incorporate an intentional effort to integrate and apply different forms of knowledge – be it technical/scientific knowledge from the university or rural/indigenous knowledge from the community (Campbell and Feenstra, 2005). From this perspective, it could be argued that there is a need for the university and the community to go beyond reaping an occasional benefit of service learning such as knowledge exchange to intentionally create or adopt mechanisms intended to integrate knowledge gained for community transformation, as well as the university's progress.

An opportunity for manpower deployment

Two participants interviewed who had hosted interns from the university, acknowledged that interns add to the manpower of their respective organisations. Considering the cost of recruiting or hiring an employee to perform a service, hosting an intern who can do the same service without being paid or

placed on a salary can enable organisations with limited or insufficient financial means to avoid cost. One female community member who managed an NGO mentioned this benefit of internship in her response: “the students who came here for internship did a lot of work on the farms and that was reflected in my report because they were human resources I never paid for” (Joan, female, 51-60, Bulu, 22-04-2013). Another community participant also corroborated the benefit of manpower interns bring along with them to their host organisations. However, he also highlighted the costly nature of training and getting these interns ready for productive tasks in an organisation. He posited:

The interns bring us a work force when they come in. To have ten students to increase your work force is beneficial somehow, though from the beginning it is very stressful in that they are spoiling things, they are not doing things rightly and we have to teach them over and over again on what to do. But at the end of the day, before they go out, we can relax. Some of our staff can sit back and watch them do things and they will do them well (Cornelius, male, 51-60, Molyko, 27-04-2013).

Given this account, it can be ascertained that while it is a useful resource to have interns in a community-based organisation, the value of this resource would be dependent on their ability to acquire the skills and experience needed to make meaningful contribution to the progress of the organisation. After an intern has acquired the necessary skills and experience that can boost an organisation’s performance, this thesis posits that caution needs to be taken to ensure that supervisors of interns do not focus more on enhancing the performance and productivity of a community-based organisation at the expense of meeting the students’ learning outcomes, given the limited time set aside for service learning. Additionally, students can be encouraged to do internship in organisational contexts that are related to their field of studies such that they would need limited time to adapt or require minimum attention to achieve skills and experience in order to effectively contribute to the host organisation’s activities.

A gateway to employment

The analysis of interviews and the focus group discussion with community members revealed that not only do internships have the potential to prepare interns for long term services in local communities; internships can also act as a gateway to securing permanent recruitment in the organisations where the internships took place. In this case, an intern does not need to go out of an organisation and seek employment elsewhere with the experience acquired during internship, but may be given the opportunity to be part of the organisation on a long term basis. One community member (Cornelius, 27-04-2013) interviewed, who had hosted many interns over the years, maintained that some of the interns were eventually recruited as staff of his organisation on a permanent basis. However, it can be maintained that some of those who moved on from being interns in an organisation to become permanent staff did not embrace an easy path to employment but unleashed the required performance to earn a permanent role. Therefore, this thesis argues that interns should not only consider internship as a learning process or one which provides an opportunity to earn academic credit but also a process to shine and convince the organisation that they are able to assume permanent roles. In addition, this

can be considered one of the ways for dealing with the dilemma of graduate unemployment expressed in section 7.2.5.

A platform for generous services

Similar to the fringe benefits of community-based research to the community revealed by participants, participants' narratives highlighted some generous services which can be considered benefits of service learning activities to the community. These generous services which are distinct and diverse as you move from one form of service learning activity to another can generally be observed as part of the service learning process. The following excerpt from the response of a community member captured a benevolent service within an internship exercise:

The first batch of student doctors from the University of Buea came here and did their practical and in the process, they carried out some medical tests on us. Some of the tests revealed that some of us had too much sugar in the blood and that was a benefit to us because they diagnosed health concerns we were not aware of and we did not pay for the test (Elizabeth, female, 41-50, Bokuva, 03-05-2013).

Whilst this type of benevolent service of carrying out medical tests on community members was not initiated by the community but the university to serve its objective, it was perceived to benefit the community.

In addition to acknowledging some occasional benefits of service learning activities to the community, participants' narratives also raised some concerns over service learning. Participants revealed that the scheme had largely been designed to meet the university's objectives, with little attention given to addressing community needs. The following excerpts from participants' narratives give credence to this assertion:

Those who go to the field, do so for their own studies, there is nothing the community benefits from it (Martha, female, 31-40, Molyko, 02-04-2013).

Students of the university carry out internships in some offices around the place or in some organisations. That is because they want to write their report and defend it. Just going around and doing some research to be able to write your papers and defend it to complete your course will not do for community development (Gregory, male, 51-60, Wokoko, 28-04-2013).

In the light of these quotations, it could be maintained that service learning activities in the community did not emerge from a conscious and deliberate attempt on the part of the university and its students to address community needs, as well as improve learning. Rather, students embarked on it solely for the sake of validating an academic programme and being awarded credits. Proponents of service learning maintain that service learning should not be limited to its curriculum base and credit bearing component but should include a deliberate identification of community needs and seeking solutions to address them. Fourie (2006) highlighted that well-structured and organised service learning activities should

aim at addressing identified service and development needs in the community and this should lead to reflection on the activities in an attempt to gain a deeper understanding of the content of a curriculum and community life, as well as attain personal growth and a consciousness of social responsibility. Within this context, there is a need to enhance service learning to address mutual interests of securing university and community benefits.

6.3.3.2 Enhancing service learning for lasting benefits

Although proponents of the subject of service learning have always maintained that service learning should be intended to serve the university as well as community interests, participants' narratives suggested that the pendulum of the benefits of service learning activities in the community swings toward the university than the community. For example, one community member (Martha, 02-04-2013) believed very strongly that internships had benefited the students more than the community. Based on this context, a question arises: how can service learning activities be enhanced to address mutual benefits? Mutuality as captured in this instance highlights the need to also bring into the framework of service learning, the community as a beneficiary, not just in terms of side effects but in recognition of the need to address priority needs of the community.

Building on the concept of the ecological university which seeks to address its interests alongside community interests (Barnet, 2011), this thesis advances the thoughts of community members with respect to what they perceived to be the way forward for service learning activities to address community expectations. Whilst the themes depicted by the research data are all relevant and can form the basis for a restructuring of service learning to serve community interests, some were more prominent in participants' narratives than others. Consequently, the following prominent themes will be discussed: a) the need for the community to participate in framing service learning objectives; b) the need to disseminate or feedback internship/project reports to the community; c) the need for collaborative engagement and d) the need to go beyond the current short termism nature of service learning to a more long term and sustainable model.

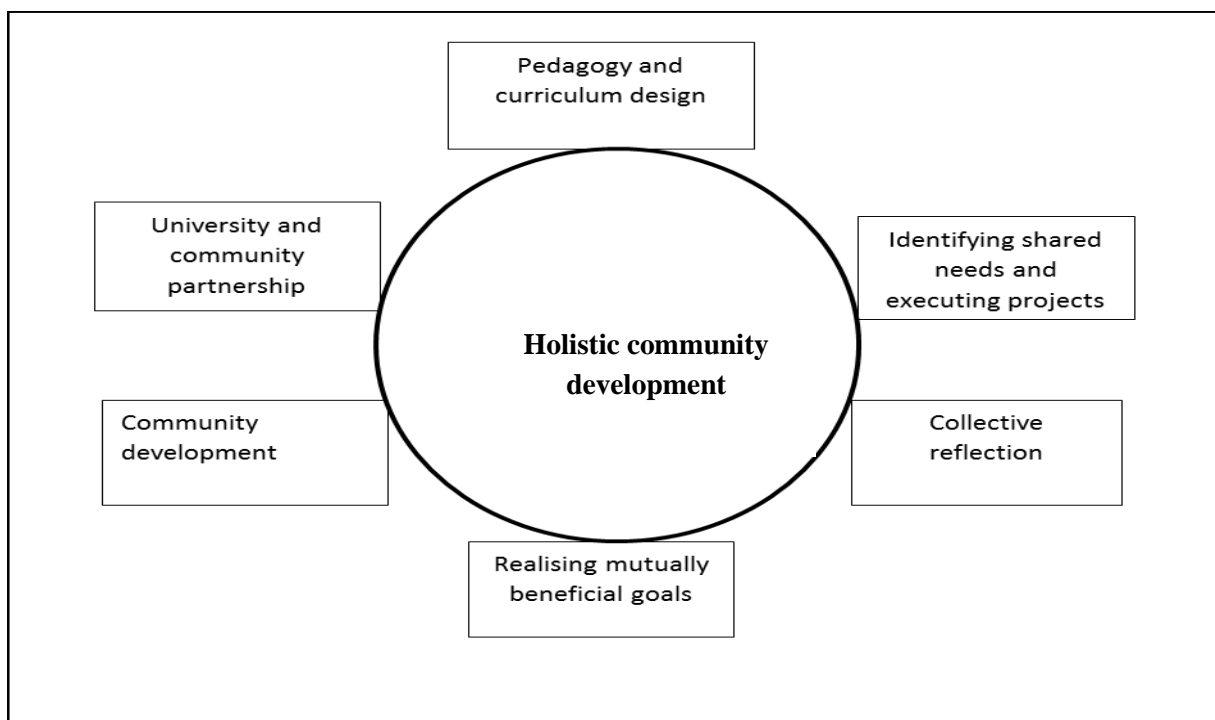
Community participation in structuring service learning

The need for community participation in structuring and framing service learning objectives was a recurrent theme raised by participants. One community member who also was a university graduate and had gone through an internship exercise justified the need for community participation in structuring service learning:

I think it is needful for members of the community to have their voices captured in the process of framing service learning objectives. This is important because, by being part of the process of formulating service learning objectives, the implementation can also address community concerns (Margaret, female, 41-50, Bolifamba, 15-04-2013).

According to Brower (2011), the framework of addressing community needs within service learning can be actualised within a pedagogical approach which structures and transmits community development knowledge through “student learning” processes. Whilst Brower underscored the importance of student participation within the designing process of a service learning pedagogy, participants’ responses also highlighted the need for community participation in every phase of the service learning continuum. Community participation within the framework of designing service learning objectives and processes can capture community voices and processes which would not only foster student learning, but might also meet specific community needs. Furthermore, a joint participatory framework of the university and the community in designing service learning objectives and processes could lead to collective reflection on the execution and impact of service learning and realisation of mutually beneficial goals as demonstrated by the following cyclic model of service learning to facilitate a holistic community development:

Figure 6.2: A cyclic model of service learning to aid a holistic community development



Source: Data analysis process

The concept of Holistic Community Development as illustrated by figure 6.2 is built on the premise that the university is part of the community it seeks to collaborate with. It calls for co-ownership of service learning by the university and members of the local community. This co-ownership can be expressed by collective involvement of the university represented by its constituent sectors such as academics, support staff and students, and diverse segments of the community in every phase of the

service learning process and continuum (Mbah, 2014). The resulting impact of such joint participation can be far reaching with development outcomes for the university and its surrounding residential communities.

Fostering service learning through collaborative engagement

In an attempt to ascertain if there is collaboration between the university and the community and the nature of existing collaboration if there is any, participants' responses highlighted four outcomes, namely: a) there is collaboration, b) there is no collaboration, c) there is opportunistic collaboration and d) there is tokenistic collaboration.

In the course of the enquiry process, it was also discovered that some initial comments made by some participants were later contradicted by other comments made by the same participants. This was particularly evident as the interviews/discussion progressed and the participants grew in confidence. For instance, a family (Sherley, male, 51-60, Bonakanda, 10-05-2013) interviewed highlighted that there was collaboration between the university and the community. Later on in the interview, the family acknowledged that there was no collaboration between the university and the villages. The family went on to state that "we actually did not even know that the university can provide services to the community, it is only through this interview we know the university has a service mission". Given that the subject of collaboration was one of key themes in this research, it is necessary to attempt a working definition of it.

Drawing on a Latin root "collaboratus", collaboration can denote working together (Himmelman, 1996). However, working together may not be as easy a process as coming together. There are many factors such as strategy, trust, motivation and power relations that need to be taken into consideration when considering the possibility of people from different cultural and traditional backgrounds working together. Furthermore, Stuart (2002) posits that "sometimes the working together feels like working with the enemy as the term collaboration can imply" (p. 5). Given the intricacies surrounding the meaning of collaboration, a working definition can be established as

an interactive process among individuals and organisations with diverse expertise and resources, joining together to devise and execute plans for common goals as well as to generate solutions for complex problems (Gronski and Pigg, 2000, p. 783).

From this assertion, it can be ascertained that collaboration is a dynamic process whose outcomes are conditioned by commonality and mutual interests. Although it carries with it the potential for knowledge exchange, the altering of activities, the sharing of resources and the enhancement of individual capacities for mutual benefits (Himmelman, 1996), it may further be argued that all these are subject to specific models of collaboration.

Many of the participants interviewed held that existing collaboration between the university and the community had been tokenistic or opportunistic in nature. The basis of this assertion is that the university collaborates with a local community or a community-based organisation/institution whenever it is in need of a service or resource and not because it is within its fabric to work with the community on a mutual and formalised basis. One community member, who had revealed his connection with the university with respect to hosting interns, expressed the opportunistic nature of the university's collaboration in the following account:

There was a time when landlords of students' residential houses met with the university administration and this was because something was not going on well. The meeting which was called by the university took place because there were lots of arm robberies going on around student residential areas, and the university wanted to know why and how this can be tackled. Furthermore, landlords were charging a lot of money as rents, and the university thought of meeting them so that they can standardise the rate. Sometimes, the university meets with other community stakeholders to resolve a strike action on campus. Apart from these kinds of meetings, I have not seen consultation or collaboration between the university and the common man down there. The university deals with the stakeholders, the mayor, the governor, business men and the police (Cornelius, male, 51-60, Molyko, 27-04-2013).

Given the existing context of opportunistic and tokenistic collaborations existing between the university and the community, community members argued the need for a collaborative form of engagement. The notion of collaborative engagement can denote joint involvement in a venture where knowledge exchange can be evidenced. To support this view, one community member asserts that "the university can work with community farmers and exchange knowledge on farming skills and techniques and in so doing that will help local farming" (Martin, male, 31-40, Molyko, 26-04-2013). But what is collaborative engagement? Collaborative engagement may be construed as

two-way streets defined by mutual respect among the partners for what each brings to the table. Such partnerships are likely to be characterized by problems defined together, goals and agendas that are shared in common, definitions of success that are meaningful to both university and community and developed together, and some pooling or leveraging of the university and public and private funds. The collaboration arising out of this process is likely to be mutually beneficial and to build the competence and capacity of all parties (Kellog commission, 1999, p.27).

Given the above assertion, it can be ascertained that collaborative engagement is underpinned by a participatory framework which draws on scientific and local knowledge in ways and methods designed to address an array of issues or societal challenges. Given its two-way endeavour, collaborative engagement can be beneficial in advancing, fostering and realising the interests of local partners and the community as well as enhancing and meeting the interests of the university and its affiliated structures and academics (Peters et al., 2005). In order to maximise the benefits of community-based service learning for scholarship and community development, it may be advantageous positioning it within the context of collaborative engagement.

Dissemination of internship/project reports

A significant number of community participants bemoaned the lack of feedback or dissemination of internship/project reports to the community. From the narratives of many community members, it can be deduced that when students engaged in a field project on a subject of great concern to the community such as water crisis, community members participate in it with great enthusiasm, hoping that the project would generate solution to the community challenge. Sadly, the community members soon feel abandoned, snubbed and disappointed by the student who disappears with the data and findings without reporting to the community. One community member living in one of the remote villages maintained: “the problem is that we give them information and their findings do not come back, so we don't know what they are writing about and even the good recommendations are unknown to us” (Elizabeth, female, 41-50, Bokuva, 03-05-2013).

Chun et al., (2002) assert that the third phase of an action project should see a student prepare and present his or her findings from an investigation in a planned culminating event in the company of other students, faculty members and family. This thesis takes this further and argues that findings from an investigation which was carried out in the community should not only be presented to students, faculty and family members but should incorporate community members as well. One may inquire: are there educational, developmental, social or other forms of benefits associated with feeding back to the community? One community member with a tradition of hosting interns suggested:

We need to be handed copies of the internship reports as it can help us a lot to shape our organisation and prepare for the next intake of interns and the internship process (Cornelius, male, 51-60, Molyko, 27-04-2013).

From this perspective, it can be maintained that the act of reporting to a community or an organisation after an internship or project can lead to organisational innovation, growth, and better planning and management of subsequent internship/project exercises. In addition, internship/project reports can communicate solutions or recommendations to a community concern which the community can rely on for its development. However, one community member felt that providing the community with an internship report can be better served by university authorities than students. This participant with an internship experience argued:

When students are done with internship, research or fieldwork, and report back to the university, the university should look at the reports and organise a symposium in the community during which issues identified or raised in the report can be discussed or disseminated (Martha, female, 31-40, Molyko, 02-04-2013).

Whilst the participant did not clarify why the university should look at the reports before it can be followed by dissemination or feedback to the community, it can be argued that authorities at the university are better placed with subject knowledge and competence to assess the quality and content of a project or internship report before it can be disseminated to the public.

Going beyond short termism

Service learning activities which students are involved in are traditionally time bound and sometimes lasting just for few months. As a result of the limited time span, their resulting or potential benefits to the community can be said to be equally time constrained. A community member uncovered the time restriction of service learning in her response: “students have a limited time for their fieldwork. They can only do little within the limited time and should they stay in the field longer than expected, their time will run out against other programmes at the university and the completion of their studies” (Martha, female, 31-40, Molyko, 02-04-2013). Whilst it can be argued that students who spend more time in the field than expected may have their academic trajectory altered, a participant whose organisation maintains a tradition of hosting interns emphatically upheld that extending the time for service learning would enhance student experience and boost their contribution to an organisation or local community’s productivity. This participant elaborated:

It takes enormous time and energy to give interns the needed skills and experience to perform tasks in the field and just about when we [the host organisation] are about to start benefiting from their services, their time runs out and they pack their bags and leave (Cornelius, male, 51-60, Molyko, 27-04-2013).

Just like in most projects, time is a limiting factor. However, extending the time for service learning can enhance its benefits to the university and the community as well. Furthermore, it would benefit the student and the community as well should the university and the community work together to allocate adequate and relevant time for service learning activities that would ensure that students are able to gain the required skills, experience and reflection needed to enhance their learning and also make a meaningful contribution to foster the productivity of a host organisation or address specific community concerns.

6.4 Conclusion

This chapter, which is the first of two chapters analysing voices from community participants, started with an exploration of participants’ understandings of the university and its role in the community. In addition to fostering intellectual and personal development, many participants maintained that the university should be involved in facilitating employment. It was noted that the subject of employment was much more prominent in the narratives of community participants who had not experienced university education. Self-reliance of graduates and the capacity to assume family responsibilities emerged as significant reasons why many community members wanted university graduates to be gainfully employed. Furthermore, the analysis depicted that graduate employability has the potential to enhance the economic sustainability of families and as well as the sustainability of university education. Following the desire expressed by some participants for the university to foster graduate employability,

research data suggested that the rate of graduates leaving university and securing employment could be further enhanced through the university's service learning scheme.

In addition to service learning activities in the community, this chapter explored participants' narratives on other dimensions of the university's engagement such as community-based research and community-based adult education. Service learning emerged as the most dominant amongst different strands of university engagement in the community discussed by participants; with most participants making allusion to at least one form of service learning. The analysis of participants' narratives revealed that the benefits of university engagement to the local community are diverse but mostly sporadic or temporal in nature even though they carry the potential for long term and expanded benefits to the community and the university as well. In this regard, participants suggested ways that could improve the university's engagement so that it could be of utmost benefits to the community. From the analysis, it can be suggested that the university should create an awareness of its programmes intended to benefit the wider community, diversify distance education and short courses to give more people of the community choices and opportunities to be part of and establish suitable venues for adult education in the local community to ease accessibility and convenience. Community members also suggested the need for the university to be committed to outreach and embark on man-power development and partnership with relevant segments of the community in order to enhance support from the community for its community-based research projects. By involving the community in structuring and framing service learning objectives so that priority needs of the community can be captured and addressed, embracing a collaborative form of engagement, disseminating internship and project reports to create awareness and possible implementation of relevant recommendations in the community and innovating service learning to address the need for long termism in order to sustain and have lasting impact in the community, community-based service learning can be fashioned for community development.

CHAPTER 7

VOICES FROM THE COMMUNITY II:

PARTICIPANTS' PERCEPTION ON THE NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY AND THE UNIVERSITY'S POTENTIAL FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

7.1 Introduction

This chapter sets out to continue the analysis of voices from the community. Whilst the previous chapter on voices from the community was concerned with participants' perception on the role of the university and the nature of existing dimensions of the university's engagement and how they could be revamped to be of utmost benefits, this chapter proceeds to acknowledge that participants are conscious of community challenges and the university's potential to address them. In spite of this consciousness, the community finds itself in a situation of not being able to narrow the perceived power gap existing between the university and the community in order to communicate these challenges within the framework of the university's engagement in the community. From this perspective, potential ways which are non-threatening for voices from the community to be captured, dialogue with the university enhanced and the university repositioned and envisioned to address local community needs within its engagement are highlighted in this chapter.

7.2 Community's awareness of its needs

Universities such as land grant universities have long been funded to promote scholarship, research as well as address the needs of local regions and their citizenry (Schuetze, 2010; Franklin, 2009). Yet, public dissatisfaction with the university's lack of focus on addressing public concerns has been on the increase (Franklin, 2009). Moreover, a university's engagement in the community can be conceived as a meaningful activity if it draws upon academic and local knowledge and as well as resources to address a wide range of issues affecting the community (Peters et al., 2005). It can also be rightly construed that the community's ability to benefit from a university's engagement would be dependent on how well the framework of engagement is able to capture and address the needs of the community. In this regard, the university does not need to make assumptions of what community needs are but work together with local community members to acknowledge and address these needs through processes that provide support to community voices. Lasker and Guidry maintain:

At a societal level, marginalized residents are often spoken for by others, and since we don't know what we don't know, everyone runs the risk of making mistaken assumptions. What processes can do is make sure that all players – especially members of a 'target population' – speak for themselves so that incorrect assumptions are identified before they become influential (2009, p.218).

Given this view, it can be argued that the university cannot assume to know what they do not know about the community they want to serve. Therefore, it should be conceived as appropriate for the university to create an enabling environment whereby voices from the community can articulate community concerns which can be an integral part of the university's engagement. The need to let the community identify its needs is also consistent with the ethos of the ecological university which according to Barnett (2011), seeks to address collective interests and not only the interests of the university. Therefore, it was necessary within this research to create an opportunity for community members to identify the developmental needs of their localities.

In addition to capturing community concerns through community participants, this thesis maintains that the developmental challenges faced by most African communities are somewhat uniform. With an average life expectancy of 53.8 years, Africa's regional health status is the poorest in the world (Aryeetey et al., 2012). Widespread poverty, illiteracy, corruption and bad governance have positioned the continent at the tail end of other continental economies. Whilst sectors such as agriculture and technology remain the key to Sub-Saharan Africa's development, citizens involved in low scale farming and economic activities find it challenging to introduce industrial activities (ibid). In the context of such an overview, participants spontaneously identified some of the main challenges facing the community's push towards sustainable development. On account of emphasis placed by participants, the limited access to potable water, the poor access to electricity supply, the deplorable and inadequate nature of roads, the inadequate nature of agricultural performance and graduate unemployment will be discussed. It is worth mentioning that many of these crises were also observed during fieldwork and documented in appendix 1 on the fieldwork trail.

7.2.1 Limited access to potable water

Amongst the crises identified by participants to be affecting the community, water crisis stood out as the most recurrent one which towered above all other crises. The seriousness of this crisis found expression in participants' narratives as "a big problem" (Sherley, male, 51-60, Bonakanda, 10-05-2013), "the main concern" (Elizabeth, female, 41-50, Bokuva, 03-05-2013), "a serious issue" (Martin, male, 31-40, Molyko, 26-04-2013) and "the greatest need of the community" (Cornelius, male, 51-60, Molyko, 27-04-2013). In addition, participants' comments did not fall short to capture some telling descriptions of the nature of water crisis in the community:

In this community, you cannot have your tap running for 24 hours (Martha, female, 31-40, Molyko, 02-04-2013).

Tap water flows in most places once in every 3 or 4 days (Margaret, female, 41-50, Bolifamba, 15-04-2013).

It can even be for a month that we go without water (Agnes, female, 51-60, Bokwai, 06-04-2013).

That is our greatest need - I cannot describe it (Cornelius, male, 51-60, Molyko, 27-04-2013).

These narratives suggested that the water crisis in the community is severe. However, the severity of water crisis in the community does not suggest that there are no streams in the community or the rate of rainfall is minimal but that pipe-borne or drinkable water is in shortage and its scarceness has brought untold hardship and sufferings on the community. As a coping strategy to withstand this challenge, some residents retain large drums with which they fetch water and preserve whenever tap water flows intermittently²¹. Some locals cover long distances to fetch water, and several others buy water from retailers who are exploiting the situation of water shortage for income generation²². Irrespective of the nature of this crisis, the community spirit remains strong amongst residents. Residents and families tend to help one another. It is common place for a family who does not have water to ask neighbouring families for water. A family going to fetch water at a distant location can take along additional containers from a neighbouring family to fetch them some water as well. This strong sense of community spirit is captured in the Ubuntu ideology of “I am because we are and we are because I am” (Hailey, 2008) which expresses a sense of solidarity. A participant elaborated:

Sometimes in my car, I carry about two hundred litres of water when I am going to the villages to give villagers; I give priority to the blind, widows and the vulnerable (Alfred, male, 51-60, Great Soppo, 06-05-2013).

Such is a common practise when a community member has a transport means and can cover long distances to water sources. He or she can decide to help the neighbours or other villagers by taking along with him/her their water containers. However, trekking long distances in search of water is most common and with it, there is a risk of being raped or assaulted. A participant with twenty-six dependents, who relied on small scale farming recounted:

Due to trekking on a lonely and long stretch of road to a water source, my neighbour's child was raped when she went out in the morning to fetch water and she is currently at the hospital (Helen, female, 51-60, Bokwai New Layout, 05-05-2013).

Apart from social ills such as waste of useful time and energy in procuring water, rape and health hazards were also identified by participants. The Communal Development Plan (CDP) of the municipality also maintained that water shortage in the community has led to consumption of water from poorly treated sources; high prevalence of water borne diseases and high expenditure on bottle water. Given the dilemma of water crisis raised by community participants, this thesis would explore to what extent the university and its capacity is able to address this concern. In addition to water crisis, participants made reference to electricity crisis.

²¹ The storage of water in large containers was observed and documented in the field diary of the 6th of April 2013

²² Also see diary entries of the 6th of April 2013 in appendix 1

7.2.2 Poor access to electricity supply

Many community members interviewed bemoaned the presence of electricity crisis in the community. This crisis, also depicted by Buea Communal Development Plan (2011) is characterised by no access to electricity supply in some areas; frequent shortage of electricity supply; low voltage and power supply, and expensive and frustrating services. One community member and former graduate of the university involved in retail business elaborated:

We have electricity problem. It is not enough for everybody, so we suffer from low voltage, I cannot keep appliances in my home connected to power; sometimes the light bulbs cannot turn on, so it is a problem (Martha, female, 31-40, Molyko, 02-04-2013).

Another participant (Margaret, 15-04-2013) weighed in and maintained that there is even a greater problem and that is, the regular power cuts. The effect of the electricity crisis on the community is extremely significant. The Communal Development Plan of the municipality further revealed that this crisis has led to a high rate of insecurity as armed robbers tend to capitalise on the blackouts in order to carry out atrocities. In addition, the blackouts led to the high expenditure on fuel for personal generators and lamps, and a reduction in economic activities. Moreover, a coping strategy of usage of kerosene lamps or candles during moments of blackout has led to accidents, with houses and properties catching fire. In the face of this crisis, this thesis would explore the potential of the university to resolve it within the context of its civic mission and engagement. In addition to the electricity crisis, participants' narrative highlighted the road crisis.

7.2.3 Deplorable and inadequate roads

During the enquiry process, participants spoke in detail of the poor quality of existing roads and the lack of farm to market roads. By "farm to market roads", this thesis is referring to unpaved roads which enable farmers to transport their produce from the farm to the market. According to the Buea Community Development Plan²³, the road crisis led to a high rate of accidents; loss of lives & resources; loss of bread winners in families; high cost of transport services, basic food stuffs and commodities; and the physically impaired requiring aid to move. A community member who had twelve dependents elaborated on the nature of road crisis in the municipality:

²³ Buea Communal Development Plan was developed from the period of July 2011 to January 2012, through a Local Support Organisation (LSO), GREMPCO supervised by the National Community-driven Development Program (PNDDP). The Plan covered a wide range of development concerns of the municipality such as Transport, Health, Water schemes, Electricity, Road networks, Basic Education, Secondary Education, Environment and Nature Protection, Women Empowerment and the family, livestock, Agriculture and Commerce.

There is need for farm to market roads. Look at distances farmers cover carrying farm produce on their heads. Some trek for 3 hours and most of them have huge plantations. Some have 3 or 4 hectares of farms and they carry food crops from there on their heads, it is too much. A woman once collapsed in a bush and died. She had trekked for long and it appeared that she felt sick and decided to have a rest but died on the spot. If there were farm to market roads, this woman would not have died (Margaret, female, 41-50, Bolifamba, 15-04-2013).

Whilst farm to market roads can prevent human fatality and waste of farm produce by providing opportunities for farmers to transport their produce from the farms to the market with much ease and flexibility; it also holds that poor farmers may not have the latitude to benefit from these if transportation charges are high. Reducing transportation cost may demand amongst other measures, reducing the cost of fuel and establishing multiple road networks. At the time of fieldwork, the town of Buea had just one main road which ran across it, dividing the town into two halves. One male community member noted:

A community like Buea having just one main road is dangerous. Given that the community is located in a risk zone with an active volcano, in case there is a volcanic eruption or some disaster, people will die because there are no escape roads or access to where they reside (Cornelius, male, 51-60, Molyko, 27-04-2013).

In addition to lack of roads creating a potential difficulty to access and evacuate victims in the advent of a natural disaster, the sick cannot gain access to the hospital, those in need of further education cannot access educational centres, resources in remote locations such as medical plants cannot be reached and people cannot go after their daily businesses with ease. Given the state of roads in the community and the implications on businesses and the welfare of inhabitants, it is worthwhile exploring how the crisis can be resolved. In addition to road crisis, there was significant reference to agricultural crisis in the research data.

7.2.4 Inadequate agricultural performance

Agriculture remains the backbone of development in most African communities. An analysis of the contribution of the various economic sectors to Cameroon's 2009 real economic growth of 1.8% reveals that food crop production made the greatest contribution with a 0.9% (Fouda 2012). Although food production guarantees food security and income generation in many families, this is usually at a low scale. The challenge over the years has been to adopt large scale farming, increase productivity, sustain food security and boost economic competitiveness. Many of the community members interviewed relied on small scale farming to generate the funds needed to sponsor a son or daughter at the university and to meet up with other family and personal exigencies. However, the very strenuous ways community members went about their small scale farming presented little prospect for increased productivity. Usage of locally made cutlasses and hoes, in addition to lack of good seeds; limited financial capacity; inadequate knowledge on how to control plant pests and diseases, climate change; poor farming techniques and scarcity of land pose a serious challenge. One female community member who was

engaged in small scale farming and supplemented it with a small business to manage her home and sponsor her dependents in school explained her desire to improve her farming activities:

We plant yams and plantains and sometimes the income you make from farming is too small and as such, some of us also do small business like what I am doing here [running a small provisional stall]. When you plant something like yams, you do not harvest immediately. It is going to take a while before harvesting but the small business you do will keep you and your family during the period of waiting before harvesting. You see, all our cry is about financial capital because with financial capital, you can buy good seedlings, you can prepare a piece of land for planting. When we harvest and sell the farm produce, we can now sponsor our children at the university. That is also why we are praying that when our children complete from the university, they should pick up something doing so that it will relieve us of some financial burden. Most of our mothers get old [depreciates] quickly. They labour too much to put ends together for their family and the education of their children. All what we are requesting for is financial capital. If we are able to secure financial investment into our farms, there would be improvement when you visit us next time (Elizabeth, female, 41-50, Bokuva, 03-05-2013).

Another community farmer with six dependents also underscored his lack of financial capacity to enhance his farming activities: “as for me, I labour a lot in farming. I need financial means to recruit people to work with me - doing all this work alone is too strenuous and demanding for me” (Elvis, male, 51-60, Bokuva, 03-05-2013).

Whilst graduate employment, small businesses and benefactors can provide the needed financial means for local farmers to purchase good seeds, acquire bigger pieces of land, get equipment and recruit labourers to enhance productivity, it can also be argued that returns from farming can be invested back into the farms for growth and expansion. This, however, is dependent on a number of factors such as capacity building of local farmers on relevant farming techniques, crop management, marketing skills and financial management. In the absence of an immediate financial investment from a benevolent source, proper marketing of farm produce and financial management skills can ensure that part of the income generated from local farming can be ploughed back into the farms to increase yields. The profitability of local farming and continuous investment into the farms also demands that basic knowledge and ability to manage crops be acquired. Some community members interviewed recounted how a food crop called ibo cocoyam²⁴ has disappeared from the scene due to a blight attack.

Achieving food security in a country like Cameroon with a large rural population require investing in capacity building of small scale farmers to generate income in order to afford basic goods and services (Janvry and Sadoulet, 2012). There is also the need for these farmers to grow beyond small scale farming into large scale farming and take advantage of available technology. In addition to the crises

²⁴ A food crop in local parlance and which had been cultivated in the community over the past decades and proven to be a great source of food security and income generation.

already mentioned, participants highlighted what they considered to be a crisis of graduate unemployment in the community.

7.2.5 Graduate unemployment

Most of the participants interviewed on the university and the quality of education it offers, were concerned over the lack of jobs for graduates. They overwhelmingly considered the university to be specialising in releasing graduates without prior preparation with practical skills for jobs. Consequently, the university was perceived to be busy turning out graduates who will fuel the already rising trend of youth unemployment in the community. The following excerpts from participants' responses revealed the nature of graduate unemployment in the community:

A lot of students graduate from the university and they do not have any employment. We the parents are taken aback because we expected that as soon as a child gets to that level, he or she should automatically obtain a job. But now we are realising that we spend more and more money each time in education and there is no solution (Sherley, male, 51-60, Bonakanda, 10-05-2013).

My daughter has just graduated with a degree in economics and she has a good GPA but what can she do? Is all theories and there is no job (Margaret, female, 41-50, Bolifamba, 15-04-2013).

Take the case of my child, he went to the university but even though it is a higher institution, to have a job is another problem. He is now in a professional school so that at the end, he can combine his certificates and see if God can help him find a job (Helen, female, 51-60, Bokwai New Layout, 05-05-2013).

Whilst the strategic plan of the University of Buea covering the period 2007 – 2015 underscores that one of the university's objective is to "make university programmes more professional and more responsive to market forces" (Mbuntum et al., 2008), the views of participants strongly suggested graduate unemployment is still a significant problem in the community. Given this situation, a question arises: what can the university do to ameliorate the rise in graduate unemployment beyond the path of service learning as discussed in section 6.3.3.1.

In addition to limited access to potable water, poor access to electricity supply, deplorable and inadequate nature of roads, inadequate nature of agricultural performance and graduate unemployment crises raised by community members, the Communal Development Plan for the municipality of Buea which is a working document of Buea Rural Council authorities, captured other crises in the community such as poor management of livestock structures; high rate of insecurity; limited access to basic, secondary and higher education; limited access to quality health care; poor town planning and a high rate of deforestation. Given this information, it can be argued that the community is aware of its challenges and therefore, any engagement of the university in the community with the intention of addressing community needs within an ecological ethos should be able to listen to community voices in an attempt to capture community needs before determining relevant possibilities, methods, processes

or ways of addressing them. The university's potential to address these concerns will be explored in the following sections.

7.3 The university as an agent of change

Change could be seen as an unfolding of a set of principles, policies, practices and outcomes which provide deepened understanding and fulfilments (Macbeath, 2006). When there is a rise in the economy, employability rate, and community satisfaction, positive change can be noted.

Whilst the current Communal Development Plan of Buea Rural Council also captured most of the crises identified by participants, there was no mention of the university in its pages as a key player of development in the council. Contrasting perspectives were however expressed by participants on the university's potential to address community crises. Most community members were of the opinion that the university can help the local community resolve its crises, a few were less optimistic. The few participants who said the university cannot address some community crises such as water, electricity or road crises argued that it is the responsibility of the government or the Mayor of the Council to look into such concerns and felt, the university lacked the financial resources to embark on such a venture. Justifiably, the university in Buea Rural Council relies heavily on dwindling State subsidies to meet its operational costs amidst a constant rise in student enrolment and need for infrastructural expansion (Njeuma et al., 1999). Due to declining State subsidies, it can be maintained that taking on the responsibility of addressing some community concerns would be an insurmountable challenge for the university. Notwithstanding, one participant argued against the university's need for funds to address community challenges. This participant explained:

The need is not money but man power and resources. We can dig the trenches and provide other resources if the university want to help us overcome water challenges. It is just that they do not care about the community. If they care about the community, the community will support. That is the truth about it. It can work (Cornelius, male, 51-60, Molyko, 27-04-2013).

Although providing the university with adequate funds can enhance its engagement in the community, it can also be maintained that the university and the community can jointly address community concerns on the basis of university and community competences, manpower appraisals, shared responsibilities, mutual trust and benefits.

Furthermore, in a deliberate attempt to debunk the view of a few participants that addressing some community challenges is the responsibility of the government or local authorities, a participant drew on the university's intellectual capacity to argue that the university could carry out empirical research and make suggestions to the government or local authorities on a wide range of community concerns and by so doing, helping to resolve them. Drawing on this view, it can be posited that the university has the potential to address community needs through community-based research and service learning projects,

and findings/recommendations from these activities can be collated and forwarded to the government or concerned authorities to make informed decisions or formulate policies with respect to addressing specific community concerns. However, evidence suggested that for outcomes of community-based research and service learning activities to inform the government and its policies, they would need to go beyond mere active presence in the community and extend into an interconnected presence.

7.3.1 Moving from active to interconnected presence

Taking the case of service learning and irrespective of its active presence in the community, it was mostly seen by participants as largely not being connected to community concerns as revealed in the previous chapter. Service learning has been defined as:

A form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities intentionally designed to promote student learning and development (Jacoby, 1999, p. 20).

Given this definition, service learning provides learners with experiential opportunities connected to addressing specific community needs. But on the contrary, participants' responses suggested that the potential of service learning activities to generate solutions to community crises have been grossly hampered by the way it was perceived and structured by the university. Students on internship or fieldwork are generally interested in securing the academic credit associated with service learning rather than gaining the experience of critical thinking and a sense of civic responsibility as already noted. A participant who worked as a clergy in some of the villages within the municipality explained:

Students come here and collect data and then go and pass their exams or defend their projects without returning to the village or communicate their findings to us (Alfred, male, 51-60, Great Soppo, 06-05-2013).

From this account, it can be maintained that there is need for service learning and community-based research activities in the community to go beyond an active presence in the community to an interconnected presence with and within the community and its crises. This interconnected presence should be evident by fostering suitable channels of communication through which diverse community voices can be captured to provide insight into the community's priority needs, attempt solutions, maintain long term partnerships, as well as the university regularly supplying the community with reports, findings and recommendations from these activities as expounded in section 6.3.3.2.

Within the framework of its civic responsibility, a university's success may not be limited to how well it runs its teaching and research agenda but also how this translates into being a leading player in societal transformation. Shattock maintains:

There are strong links between academic success and success in broadening the university's role in a wider economic and social agenda. Those universities with the highest levels of performance in core business of teaching and research are generally also leading players in extending their role in society as a whole (2003, p. 22).

From this standpoint, it can be fitting to argue that the university's research activities would have little significance to the community if they do not address societal concerns and promote social change. In addition to community-based research and service learning, another subject raised by participants on the university's ability to address community concerns, was the idea that the university has got technological competence and resources at its disposal which can help the community meet some of its needs. However, this competence has been limited to the confinement of the university campus with very little or no effect on the surrounding community and its residents.

7.3.2 Leveraging the university's technological competence and resources

Whilst the local community in this project was plagued with a water crisis, respondents explained that this water shortage was not a problem in the university where they have been able to maximise the intellectual and technological potential at their disposal to provide potable water to their members. A female community member who was managing a local business stated:

While the community is suffering from lack of water, the university has its own water supply, and running taps. The university can use their skills to address the community's water crisis. I think it is possible. If they were able to do it for the university, then they can do it for the community (Martha, female, 31-40, Molyko, 02-04-2013).

The reason the university owns a water supply is not one of being able to access an unfair share of the water in the community but one of being able to capture and convert water not fit for consumption into drinkable form from one of many running streams in the community. Rightly so, the university campus has a reliable water system which serves the university, designed and constructed by university technocrats. Given that the university has a civic mission to serve the community; it could leverage its water technology to protect the locals from the recurrent lack of potable water. Drawing on the ethos of the ecological university, propounded by Barnett (2011), which has an underlining feature of service to the community, the university can make available its technological resources such that they are also able to serve community concerns. Although this may incur additional logistical burden on the university in order to address the need of a wider population, respondents felt the university could work in partnership with the local population and authorities in order to meet the need of providing potable water to the community. By working with the population and authorities in a state of unison, the university could also attract financial, material, human and knowledge resources from disparate sources to enhance its engagement with a local community.

Furthermore, it was observed that the university runs an agriculture farm where it trains students on mechanised/industrial systems of agriculture. The use of tractors, high quality seeds and relevant farming techniques for improved productivity and income generation are components of the nature of agricultural technology available at the university which can be leveraged to enable local communities and more especially farmers to experience growth and success. Whilst it could be argued that students

trained in the department of agriculture at the university would eventually integrate into the community and exert an impact with acquired skills and knowledge, it could also be considered beneficial for the community to be part of the knowledge system and training that goes on at the university.

A community member taken along to observed a practical session at the university's agriculture farm assessed the importance of community participation by maintaining that when a local farmer participates in a practical session sets out to train students on agricultural techniques, he/she goes in with a wealth of indigenous knowledge which when blended with scientific or technical knowledge at the university can produce a hybrid form of knowledge that can serve the agricultural needs of the community in much better and relevant ways. Consequently, this thesis maintains that the university can partner with the community to build a knowledge base, identify, construct and deploy relevant technologies and competences to address local needs of the community. This attempt can justify the university's sense of civic responsibility, as well as the community's commitment to development.

With respect to addressing the challenge of graduate unemployment, most participants were of the opinion that the university can be envisioned as a gateway to employment rather than creating graduates with limited opportunities for employment.

7.3.3 Envisioning the university as a gateway to employment

A number of factors emerged from participants' narratives on how the university can help students to find jobs or be employed after they graduate. In addition to the potential of service learning activities such as internships providing opportunities for students to gain experience and eventually be employed, other factors that could enhance graduate employment mentioned by respondents were; customising education so that it better serves the needs of employers and providing entrepreneurial skills for job creation. The next section discusses these in turn.

Customising education and training to serve the needs of employers

A significant number of community members emphasised the need for education and training at the university to be better tailored to address the needs of the job market. They suggested that the university can connect with the civil society, the industrial world or other services in the wider community so that academic programmes can be customised to address their concerns. Another benefit of customising academic programmes could be that if a student, for example, reads English Literature at the university, a skill can be added to it such as teaching of English Literature, editing or creative writing to provide an opportunity for relevance in the society. Furthermore, the university could also work with community partners to negotiate academic pathways, modules and endorsement consistent with areas of community/market needs – however, these measures should also take into account the need for quality and standards in conformity with regulations for conferment of awards.

As many respondents picked issues with the educational system at the State owned university in the municipality, a participant suggested that foreign models of education which are obsolete and no longer relevant in serving the developmental or market needs of the community should be replaced with an updated educational system which is relevant to national and local contexts. This participant went on to interrogate the relevance of the Anglo Saxon system of education adopted by the university at the centre of this project. He probed:

Has the Anglo-Saxon system helped our development, in terms of meeting our needs or hinder it? If you tell a boy with maths, chemistry and physics at the Advanced Level who can read electronics normally, that he would not enter the university because of failure in ordinary level English, does that not hinder his development? As an English teacher, I will say that the English examination at the Ordinary level which I set and which I mark and which is an artificial test of language cannot be given priority over the language which he used to pass his Advance Level which is applied English. This is education we are talking about. We are talking about development to bring out skills from people not because the English man qualifies us for it but because we need those skills to develop our environment (Gregory, male, 51-60, Wokoko, 28-04-2013).

To clarify, the University of Buea²⁵ was established to emulate the standards of a traditional British university in terms of governance, structure and operations. As explained by the participant above, having the required result in an English Language test is a prerequisite for admission into the university irrespective of whether one has also passed other subjects conducted in English at the GCE Ordinary Level and Advance Level examinations organised by the GCE Board²⁶. Cameroon is multilingual, and English is one of official languages, spoken by 30% of the population²⁷. Irrespective of the fact that the English Language is an official language and Cameroon has historically maintained strong ties with Britain, a participant argued that the label of “Anglo-Saxon” over the University of Buea can be a barrier to the community’s development and the potential for graduates to integrate into society. With this, it is argued that the concept of Anglo-Saxonism over the university has alienated some prospective students from university education which has the potential to enhance one’s capacity for participation in nation building because of a failure to meet the English Language requirement.

Providing entrepreneurial skills for job creation

In order to address the need for graduate employment, some participants advocated that students without entrepreneurial skills should be given such skills to not only look for jobs after completion of studies but also to create new businesses. The following interview transcript with a tomato farmer (Martin, male, 31-40, Molyko, 26-04-2013) emphasises this:

²⁵ More information on the University of Buea can be gotten by visiting the following link:
<http://ubuea.cm/about/>

²⁶ More information on Cameroon General Certificate of Education (GCE) Board can be gotten from the following link: <http://www.camgceb.org/en/>

²⁷ <https://www.prc.cm/en/cameroon/presentation>

- Q: what do you want the university to do in the future?
- Martin: They should go more vocational, if they go more vocational then it would be so wonderful
- Q: And what is the effect of that? What is the benefit of vocational training?
- Martin: Somebody being trained will not come out and seek employment; they will create employment for others

It is argued here that although the above mentioned factors have the potential to boost graduate employment, it could also be ascertained that the purpose of university should extend beyond employment. As such, there is a need to strike a balance between university education for, for example personal/intellectual development and university education for local/global market consumption. Whilst liberal education may be concerned with the cultivation of the mind as the business of a university, Newman asserts that some individuals would be very slow to understand this. According to Newman,

they insist that Education should be confined to some particular and narrow end, and should issue in some definite work, which can be weighed and measured. They argue as if everything, as well as every person, had its price; and that where there has been a great outlay, they have a right to expect a return in kind. This they call making Education and Instruction ‘useful’, and ‘utility’ becomes their watchword (Newman, 1955, p.77).

Although this assertion is consistent with many participants who called for university education to ensure better graduate employability, the emphasis should not be limited to graduate employability within the local community but should extend to the global community. This was reflected in a participant’s narrative which made allusion to the fact that the local job market has limited choices. This limited size of a local job market means that it can easily become saturated with too many applicants competing for too few job vacancies, hence the need for the university to also train students who are able to compete within the global market.

Although graduate employment has the potential to 1) establish one’s self-reliance, 2) enhance the economic viability of families, 3) promote continuity of university education and 4) contribute to community development and nation building, participants’ narratives also revealed that dialogue between the university and the community can unlock employment opportunities for university graduates. This research also sets out to explore the extent to which there may be a mutually valuable and accessible medium through which the university could engage with and listen to the community and the community listen to the university in order to better establish or foster employment opportunities for university graduates.

7.4 The need for communication

Data from both preliminary and the main phases of fieldwork revealed a limited communication between the university and the community. This limited communication was evident by the fact that many participants expressed a lack of awareness of the nature of the university's service mission²⁸. A traditional ruler interviewed during the preliminary phase of fieldwork iterated that due to a lack of communication, it is hard for the community to approach the university with their concerns even though they may be aware that the university has the potential to make a difference. He stated:

How can you communicate the needs of the community when the university has not made you to understand that they are willing to help? Go round and find out and ask this question to many traditional rulers. They will tell you they do not know that the university is willing to do something in the community. That is what they will tell you because the university has not opened up. It has not made the community to understand they can be of help to them. So how do you expect the communities to come out? We the community members just know that the university is more concern with issuing out degrees. We do not know that the university has the mandate to help resolve crisis in the community (Timothy, Muea, 2011).

The lack of information on the university's mission was also echoed by another community member from a non-governmental organisation that worked with rural women. She maintained: "I have never heard it! It is today I am hearing that the university has a service mission despite the fact that I have many friends there" (Joan, female, 51-60, Bulu, 22-04-2013).

Many community members interviewed have never heard of the university's service mission or civic responsibility and because they were hearing it for the very first time during the enquiry process of this project, some were very willing to take the university to task by critically assessing their impact in the community. Some participants argued that it is not sufficient for the university to have a mission but also to communicate the mission so that intended beneficiaries of the said mission can consciously and deliberately engage with it.

The importance of communicating a coherent, compelling and persuasive mission is as vital as the mission itself (Tirozzi, 2001). In this regard, how the mission is communicated reflects the significance of what is being communicated. Consequently, this thesis maintains that the university can seek to communicate its mission in a 'digestible' statement which clearly articulates its target and path to reaching that target. In addition, there is need for the university to demonstrate a willingness to listen to community voices so as to incorporate community concerns in the operationalisation of its mission. A female community member who was heading an NGO, interviewed during the preliminary phase of fieldwork stated:

²⁸ The University of Buea maintains that it is dedicated to the continuous quest for excellence in research, the promotion of moral and human values, and service to the community: <http://ubuea.cm/about/>

There has never been this type of environment which is created whereby the civil society can sit on the table with university leaders and talk about some things such as how the university can benefit and how the civil society can help also the university to be more useful to the community. This table of dialogue that people can sit around and discuss some of the things that can be more practical in their work does not exist. That is the problem! (Constance, Molyko, 2011).

Given that communication is largely ideologically driven and should emphasise reciprocity of relations between the university and the community, this thesis posits more efforts should be made to ensure that the university's mission is communicated both to members of the university and local community. By so doing, the local community could reciprocate by feeding back its knowledge of community challenges and resource base for mutual dependence and partnership. Such collaborative engagement, sustained by effective communication can be mutually beneficial in that "it helps to advance the interests of specific external partners and the general public while it also advances and enhances the interests and work of the academy" (Peters et al., 2005, p.3).

From this perspective, it can be considered beneficial if multiple channels of communication can be established between the university and the community for flow of information. For these channels of communication to be realised, participants' narratives revealed the need to narrow the power gap existing between the university and the community.

7.5 Narrowing the power gap existing between the university and the community

Most African universities can be seen perpetuating an ivory tower image (Taal, 2011) and advancing the causes of those who wield political power. The power dynamic at the centre of African universities is compounded by the fact that several of the Vice-Chancellors are appointed by the government on the basis of political affiliation and their Chancellors are usually a State minister with the university subjected to government control in relation to recruitment, appointment, research and publication (Preece et al., 2012). The case of the University of Buea is not different. The Vice-Chancellor and his/her close collaborators are appointees of the government; they are accountable and expected to remain loyal to the same. Consequently, many community members interviewed felt the university was unapproachable. Two schools of thought were captured by participants who alluded to the power gap existing between the university and the local community, namely: superiority complex and inferiority complex.

7.5.1 Abating the university's 'superiority complex'

Drawing on participant's narratives, the university was seen as having a 'superiority complex'. This meant that the university and its members regarded themselves as more knowledgeable, politically more connected and economically more viable than members of the community and would not readily embrace the need to engage in dialogue with the local community. Rather than dialogue with different

segments of the community, the university at best would limit it to elites of the community for economic and political reasons. The following excerpts from participants' narratives lay credence to this claim:

The university's approach has always been up - down approach (looking/ speaking down on others). We are saying if they can start to use the down –up approach (listening to the voices of ordinary people), it will be good and with this, ordinary people of the community would be confident to share their views (Elizabeth, female, 41-50, Bokuva, 03-05-2013).

If I were to assess the university in relation with the community, I will say the university has a superiority complex towards members of the community (Joan, female, 51-60, Bulu, 22-04-2013).

Well, they are more concern with their institution, and they seems to be building high towers, and neglecting the environs which are connected to their wellbeing because should there be any plaque around here, it must affect them (Cornelius, male, 51-60, Molyko, 27-04-2013).

It is not easy to see the Vice-Chancellor, you have to fill the audience card and wait for hours to see him/her. He or she is like a god or goddess (Agnes, female, 51-60, Bokwai, 06-04-2013).

From these narratives, it is clear that community members do think that the university has what may be referred to as 'a superiority complex' in relation to the local community. Given that the university at the centre of this research may be trying to close itself off from the outside community by adopting an operational version of doing it alone (Jua and Nyamnjoh, 2002), globalisation and the concept of the "ecological university" present opportunities for the university to connect with local communities for collective wellbeing. This connection can be underpinned by adopting multiple channels of communication which can enable the university to benefit from the enormous resources and opportunities available in different segments of a local community to enhance its engagement and activities.

Participants' responses also suggested that overcoming what they considered to be the university's 'superiority complex' would require the university to be democratised, with policy changes that served to widen the participation of the community in its day to day operational schemes. To buttress this suggestion, a participant at the preliminary phase of fieldwork who was heading an NGO working with rural women noted:

I think the programmes that are designed at the university are supposed to be designed with the presence of the community; that is, it should be ensured that these programmes are going to affect the development of the community (Constance, Molyko, 2011).

From this assertion, it can be argued that community participation within the framework of university operations would accommodate the needs and expectations of the local community. The University of Buea however has a governance structure with the Council at its helm. It has four representatives of the private sector representing different areas of interests and appointed by the government. Whilst this

may be considered a good practice that could ensure voices from the private sector are represented in deliberations and decision making processes at the university, there is also need to ensure that these representatives are not merely handpicked to represent the ideologies of the authority that appointed them but that they are able to represent the voices of the masses including those living on the margins of society. It can be argued that the kind of representational governance that captures community voices and enhances development in the community, is that which brings community representatives “into an even-handed deliberation amongst equals resulting in community ownership of decisions as well as new insights and knowledge” (Thompson, Story and Butler, 2002, p. 265).

In the absence of this kind of representational governance that gives community members a sense of ownership of decisions, the university could be seen staging a false impression of listening to the community whereas it is not.

7.5.2 Building the community’s confidence and overcoming ‘inferiority complex’

In addition to participants’ narratives which suggested that the university has got a ‘superiority complex’, some narratives suggested that the community has got an ‘inferiority complex’. Whilst the view of the university’s ‘superiority complex’ suggested that there are little or no opportunities for members of the community to have their concerns listened to by the university, the perception of the community’s ‘inferiority complex’ conveys a message of inadequacy and insecurity on the part of the community to approach the university and voice their concerns. Even though community participants felt at ease with the enquiry process of this project to make suggestions on the nature of the university’s engagement and educational system, they perceived the lack of a similar environment where they were given space to have dialogue with members of the university on a range of issues that were important to them. One community member who was a retired primary school teacher with eight dependents explained:

It is not for an individual to go and suggest something to the Vice-Chancellor or whoever at the university. Who are you by the way to go there and say I want to talk to the Vice-Chancellor? (Peter, male, 71-80, Bokwai, 10-05-2013).

Other community participants corroborated this view which suggested a lack of confidence on the part of the community to approach members of the university:

I do not have the powers to make suggestions to the university (Margaret, female, 41-50, Bolifamba, 15-04-2013).

I do not see the possibility of the Vice-Chancellor listening to me (Joan, female, 51-60, Bulu, 22-04-2013).

If I go and suggest things to the university, they will say ‘look at this woman, she is nothing, who does she thinks she is?’ (Helen, female, 51-60, Bokwai New Layout, 05-05-2013).

Some authors have argued that the university as an agent of societal transformation is better positioned to initiate a process of dialogue with the community because it has the vision, resources and motivation

needed to sustain it (Marullo and Edwards, 2000; Thompson, Story and Butler, 2002). Furthermore, it can be said that it is preferable for a university to initiate a collaboration process with the community because the basic skills and instruments of collaboration such as curriculum and experiential learning can be better developed in a university setting (Gronski and Pigg, 2000) but this should also take into consideration community voices. It can further be argued that in order to increase the likelihood of establishing a sense of community ownership and to narrow the power gap that may exist between the university and the community, it may be worthwhile for a community member/sector or community-based organisation to approach or initiate a process of collaboration with the university by extending an invitation to the university. However, it could also be maintained that the community's ability to approach the university could be based on the type of rapport that exists between the university and the community.

Whilst some community participants suggested a lot could be done to improve the university's engagement and educational system in order to better benefit the community; they also explained that they did not feel they were positioned to make their opinions known to the university. Although this research found very few opportunities for community members to share their concerns with representatives of the university, a few participants also expressed concerns that the university would not listen to the ideas coming from the community should the opportunity arise. Whilst community participants overwhelmingly thought it would be helpful for the university to work with the local community to operationalise its engagement, Dunne, Akyeampong and Humphreys (2007) maintain that for such a scheme to succeed, "there must be mutual trust, commitment and a real sense of collective decision-making between the [university], the local community and local authorities" (2007, p.14). In spite of the challenges facing dialogue, this thesis suggests the need to have community confidence galvanised and their concerns captured in formalised, recognisable and structured ways, given that 1) many community members feel they have limited opportunities to have their voices listened to by the university and 2) it is important for the university to listen to their voices if they are to establish more collaborative practice and fulfil their service mission.

7.6 The imperative of a university to capture community voices

Drawing on the notion of university engagement and the concept of the ecological university propounded by Barnett (2011), the university has a responsibility to address community concerns within the context of mutual interests. Whilst the ecological university is designed to serve collective interests, it can be rightly argued that this would be predicated on the university's willingness to recognise pathways that can enable it to capture and maximise community voices.

By capturing voices from disparate backgrounds in the community, the university can factor into its mission and processes, community concerns in an interlocking framework of securing benefits both for

the community and the university. The following are some perceived benefits of capturing community voices by the university revealed by participants:

Community voices can provide the university with indigenous knowledge:

It is important for the university to capture our voices because we have indigenous knowledge which reflects what we are going through and this can help the university as well to ascertain our way of life and design methods to address our concerns (Elizabeth, female, 41-50, Bokuva, 03-05-2013).

Community voices can improve standards at the university:

Why should the university not listen to the parents of the students? If I say that they are not doing well and they should improve these things, they should listen. It is my money being spent to educate my children at the university. I cannot be spending money without actually seeing the benefits (Peter, male, 71-80, Bokwai, 10-05-2013).

Community voices can orientate programmes at the university:

Let them call for a meeting with civil society organisations and we will come and talk and they will know how to fashion their programmes and activities from the talks (Joan, female, 51-60, Bulu, 22-04-2013).

Community voices can foster better management:

Nobody is a monopolist of knowledge. They should brainstorm with people in the society and get ideas and see exactly how they can better manage the university (Clement, male, 51-60, Clerk's Quarter, 18-04-2013).

These benefits for capturing community voices can be complemented with the notion of knowledge integration. It can be argued that community voices contain different forms of knowledge whose benefits can be maximised through knowledge integration. In addition to indigenous and scientific knowledge systems, other forms of knowledge exist such as political and relational knowledge (Campbell and Feenstra, 2005). These different forms of knowledge have the potential to play a role in stimulating community development via a collaborative framework which recognises and draws from the values embedded within them. Scientific knowledge produced at the university can be more relevant in addressing local community needs through the process of integration with another form of knowledge such as indigenous knowledge. The process of integrating scientific and indigenous knowledge systems to address local developmental needs can lead to a better understanding of the nature of challenges facing the community (Warren, 1989) and how these concerns can be addressed in a way to the benefit of ordinary people.

As community members tend to be aware of what they need, as well as what can be user friendly to them in terms of solutions, expert researchers can work with this knowledge to develop tools and mechanisms that can serve a local context in a much more efficient way. Preece, et al., (2012) noted that in some instances, indigenous knowledge practices in African communities on the making of

organic fertilizers can be enhanced and made more robust by accessing scientific knowledge and the university can also access indigenous knowledge and render its knowledge base more robust for local and global relevance. Whilst indigenous knowledge is an important form of knowledge with the potential to facilitate local development in a participatory, cost effective and sustainable way, it has values not only suitable for the culture and community in which it evolves, but also to community developers striving to improve the condition of ordinary people in rural communities and in other parts of the world (Warren, 1991; Agrawal, 1995).

Given the significance of capturing community voices and benefiting from the knowledge embedded in them, a question arises: how can the university listen to a broad range of community voices without the bias of political affiliation, economic viability, class, tribe, gender or education? It can be argued that the university as an institution consists of governing standards, rules and cultures, and would seldom seek to literally dialogue with every single member of the community. However, the university could create and foster strategic links with the community through which voices from different segments of the community can filter into its mechanisms and processes.

7.6.1 Creating opportunities for community voices

Even though the university at the centre of this research tends to create some, often ‘tokenistic’ opportunities for discussion with the community, participants were generally of the opinion that the university lacks the will and determination to listen to community voices. One community participant and former student of the university maintained that “there is no such opportunity for us to make suggestion to the university. I don't know, maybe it is there. I have been looking for it” (Margaret, female, 41-50, Bolifamba, 15-04-2013). This view was also shared by many participants; they said they have suggestions to make and seek for opportunities to speak but felt there were none. One community member felt that the university was operating in a cocoon and the community does not have a say in its affairs. However, despite the difficulties expressed by participants for community members to have their voices listened to within the framework of the university’s operations, it was also noted that a few community members had been able to have their voices listened to by certain members of the university based on personal relationships. To corroborate the idea of “personal relationship”, a female community member who was managing an NGO that had hosted interns from the university stated that “I have no collaboration with the university. I however have contacts with some of the educationist there like Dr. X.” (Joan, female, 51-60, Bulu, 22-04-2013).

Given that this participant had hosted university students on internship, the question is: on what basis did she host the students if there was no formal collaboration between her organisation and the university? She went on to clarify: “Well, because of my personal rapport with some of the members and not the institution, they have placed their students here for internship”.

The notion of being in contact with an institution on the basis of personal relationship with few members of the institution may also be referred to as “man-know-man”²⁹ which is an expression in pidgin. A community member who was relying on food crop production and had twenty-six dependents illustrated the notion of “man-know-man” when asked if she has ever had the opportunity to dialogue with the university:

It is a matter of who you know there. I think that they can deal more with the people they know, those that they are familiar with. I had a problem: somebody went and cleared the farm the university gave me. But I had to go through a sister of mine to channel my problem which was resolved. I could not go there myself and had to pass through that sister of mine to meet an authority of the university (Helen, female, 51-60, Bokwai New Layout, 05-05-2013).

Whilst the idea of “man-know-man” presents an opportunity for some community members to have their voices listened to and their needs addressed, it also suggests that those who do not know someone at the university would be side-lined. In such situations, the strong and connected could take advantage over the weak and disconnected and this has the tendency to foster massive segregation, bias, tribalism, favouritism and nepotism in a university environment. For this to be abated and a level playing field established for diverse community voices to have a place in university operations and processes, this thesis suggests that formalised links should be established with different segments of the community backed by a commitment to promote inclusion.

7.6.2 Recognising and adopting strategic partnerships and links for community voices

Partnership is a kind of relationship formed between entities with each entity having something to offer to the wellbeing of the partnership which may be different but complements that which is offered by the other partner (Arcaro, 1995). A university aiming at incorporating an ideological feature of care for the community could:

seek to build internal and external partnerships that serve mutual and larger community interests. Such partnerships might include those that promote labor-management cooperation such as agreements with unions, cooperation with suppliers and students, and linkages with other education organisations and businesses that serve the community (ibid, p. 21).

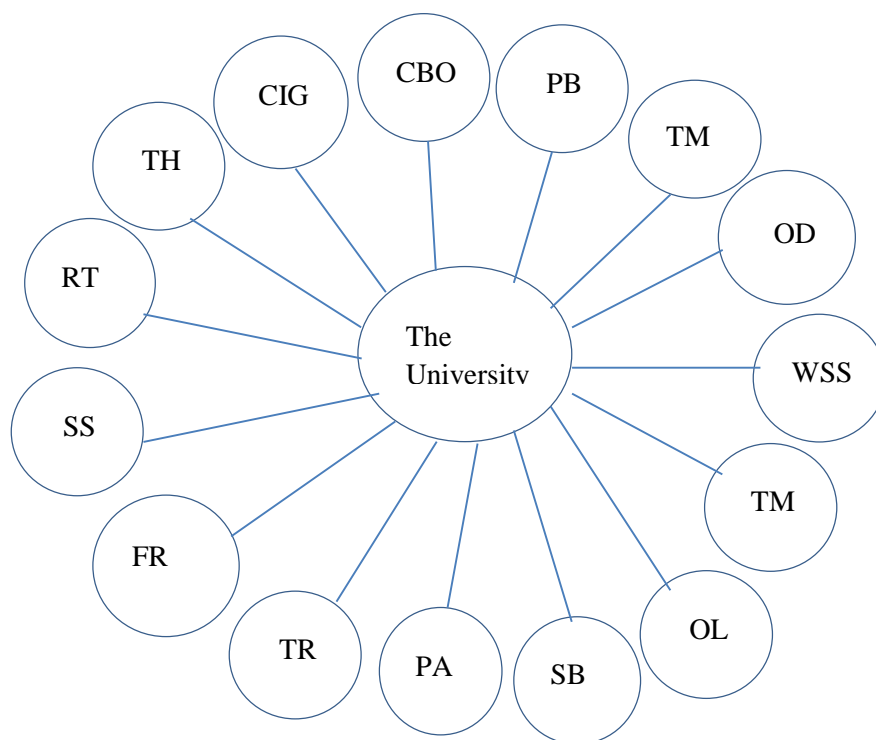
Whilst this assertion captures a limited number of partners and sectors the university can establish links with, it can however be argued that such partnerships has the potential to create opportunities for mutual dependence, cooperation and collaboration.

Participants’ narratives revealed potential links the university can establish to understand and address community concerns. Many of these links are channels the university is familiar with but hitherto have

²⁹ “Man-know-man” is an expression in the local parlance which may also be referred to as the concept of “Godfatherism” signifying that you need to know someone in an organisation who is willing to promote your interest in order to have your voice captured or your request met by the organisation.

not been significantly maximised as means to ascertain community concerns. The following channels of communication which are in touch with the community can act as strategic links through which community ideas and concerns can be captured by the university: Common Initiative Groups (CIG), Community-based Organisations (CBO), Tribal Meeting Groups (TMG), Open Days (OD), Suggestions Boxes (SB), Parents' Associations (PA), Fieldwork Reports (FR), Research Tools (RT), Traditional Rulers (TR), Professional Bodies (PB), The Media (TM), Students and Staff (SS), Town Hall Meetings (THM), Opinion Leaders (OL), Workshops, Symposiums and Seminars (WSS). This can be diagrammatically illustrated as follows:

Figure 7.1: Strategic links to capture community voices



Source: Data analysis process

For the sake of emphasis placed by participants, the following links would now be expounded:

Capturing community voices through Common Initiative Groups (CIG)

Most rural communities in Cameroon have Common Initiative Groups (CIGs). Some of these CIGs operate within the agricultural sector and serve the interests of farmers involved in a common line of farming. For instance, some tomato farmers in a locality can come together and form a CIG to serve their farming needs and provide support to one another. As a group, they can apply and obtain loans from the banks to buy fertilizers or equipment to enhance their agricultural productivity. Some CIGs

run financial schemes to encourage their members to save and occasionally provide loans to those in need. Given that these groups operate at the grassroots and consist of farmers who form a significant sector of the community contributing to the nation's economy, some participants suggested that should the university establish links with the leaders of these groups, they could be useful opportunities through which the university can capture the concerns of CIGs. However, it can be argued that all the CIGs do not operate at the same level of proficiency, strength and activity. One community member who was residing in one of the villages elaborated:

A better way to capture the voices in the community is through Common Initiative Groups (CIG) that are active and have shown a significant level of effectiveness in the field. Common Initiative Groups that are influencing the community can be brought together and once in a while, the university can have a conference in a specific field with common initiative groups in that domain. The university can then capture the voices of these groups representing the community and use them to reach the community (Margaret, female, 41-50, Bolifamba, 15-04-2013).

It can be considered an ambitious idea for the university to organise periodic meetings with CIGs but given their sizes, it may be cost effective for the university to relate with their leadership who should be able to represent the groups.

Capturing community voices through Community-based Organisations (CBO)

CBOs do not operate in a vacuum but within the communities they serve. These organisations are sensitive to the environment and societal likes and dislikes and strategic links with them may ensure that the likes and dislikes of the community can be communicated accordingly to a concerned party such as the university. As such, the university can partner with reliable and trustworthy CBOs in the community to reach and/or be informed about target sectors in the community. A community participant interviewed who managed a community-based organisation underscored:

The university can use the third and second arms and liaise with; I mean those of us in the community who are in touch with the local masses. If you get to us, you have gotten in touch with the rural masses (Joan, female, 51-60, Bulu, 22-04-2013).

In addition to this view and given the possibility of a university to liaise with a local organisation to extend its services to local targets or neighbourhoods, a participant (Johnson, Bonduma, 2011) interviewed during the preliminary phase of field work indicated that his organisation was provided computers by the university to enable it promote computer literacy amongst community members. Whilst this can be considered a good practice, the university's presence in remote regions can be further facilitated through working closely with organisations that have an established presence within those regions. To corroborate this, a participant (Constance, Molyko, 2011) at the preliminary phase of field work noted: "I don't think you will learn women and gender studies in the class room. The university should be able to work in collaboration with people who are working with women in the field". From this assertion, it can be further argued that several community-based organisations present good

opportunities for the university to partner with and consequently extend its mission to remote locations. In the process of working with community-based organisations with established presence in local communities, the university retains an opportunity to capture voices and insight from those regions/communities to complement its engagement. However, for this to be operationalised, this thesis suggests that the university can identify relevant CBOs in the community they can work with, set up a data-base of these CBOs, and formalised partnership with them for mutually beneficial activities.

Capturing community voices through Tribal Meeting Groups (TMG)

The municipal council where empirical work took place consisted of people from diverse tribal and cultural backgrounds drawn from different regions of the country. Many of the people came to settle and take advantage of the municipality's fertile soil for agricultural activities and the university for education and capacity building. As people migrated to the locality from different parts of the country, they formed clusters of affiliation and solidarity. For instance, in the municipality, there are people from Bayangi, Bakossi, Meta, Bali, Oroko and Moghamo tribes. People from the same tribe tend to have a weekly tribal meeting day when they congregate and discuss issues relating to their welfare in the community. These tribal meetings are led by elected or designated leaders who are members of the tribes and delegated with the responsibility of fostering unity amongst members, as well as secure their interests in the community. One community member felt that tribal meeting groups could present an ideal opportunity for the university to hear the views of the community: He explained:

Because tribal meetings and associations in the community are well organised, it can serve the university should the university be interested to know what community concerns are (Cornelius, male, 51-60, Molyko, 27-04-2013).

These tribal meetings however, have the potential to promote segregation and division in the society, though they can also help the university to overcome the accusation of tribalism which frequently accompanies the appointment of some authorities. Drawing on the previous service of this researcher at a university, some authorities were accused of being tribalistic. Those who peddled such accusations maintained that promotion and recruitment of staff, as well as the university's engagement were grossly compromised by tribal interests. Notwithstanding, should an authority of the university maintain a strategic link of communication and dialogue with members of other tribes in addition to his or her own tribe, the concerns of these tribes can also be listened to and potentially factored into the university's engagement and operations.

Capturing community voices through Suggestions Boxes (SB)

Most of the community participants revealed a desire for opportunities to have their voices listen to by the university and these opportunities should be non-threatening, and which enable freedom of expression. In this light, some participants called for the university to create and position suggestion boxes in strategic places for community members to take advantage of and channel their suggestions

on a wide range of issues regarding the university and its activities. The following interview transcript captured a participant's desire to see suggestion boxes on campus:

Q: Does not the university have different channels of communication through which the local community can communicate their needs and concerns?

Clement: When you walked through the university, you will hardly even see a suggestion box anywhere. So what are we going to say? We do not see it (male, 51-60, Clerk's Quarter, 18-04-2013).

Whilst placing suggestion boxes on campus may be utilised mainly by students and members of staff of the university, it could be considered more appropriate for the university to have some suggestion boxes positioned in the community for easy visibility and accessibility by community members. This view was shared by a civil servant. He elaborated:

Suggestion boxes should not just be at the level of their campuses because it concerns only their students but they should be able to place some in the community and we can take advantage of that and be able to address some issues (Gregory, male, 51-60, Wokoko, 28-04-2013).

Those who cannot make use of suggestion boxes on the university's campus, either due to the distance or because of their perception of the university to be intimidating, could benefit from suggestion boxes being placed in the community.

Capturing community voices through Fieldwork Reports (FR)

In addition to expressing their desire to have findings and reports from community-based research and service learning activities in the community communicated to them, some community participants also argued that these findings and reports from the field would be a valuable tool through which the university can be alerted to community concerns. A participant cited the case of this researcher as an example. When asked: "how will the university capture the voices of community members?" She replied:

They have not really been listening to community voices. Now that you have come up with this research, when your findings will be presented, they will be able to know our concerns (Joan, female, 51-60, Bulu, 22-04-2013).

Whilst students of the university carry out different activities in the community and write reports which they tend to submit to the university, it is not clear how the university handles such reports beyond the usual process of grading them. Not only it could be considered appropriate for reports from field activities to reach the university, this thesis also posits that it is essential for reports and findings from the field to be verified and approved by community participants in order to be sure that the views expressed in them actually represent what they said.

Capturing community voices through Research Tools (RT)

Being an institution with a research mission, some participants suggested that the university can capture community voices by simply sending out some of its members into the field with a research tool such as a survey to capture the community's opinion on a subject. One community participant who had gone through university education explained: "the university is a research base environment; they should carry out surveys to diagnose what the community wants" (Gregory, male, 51-60, Wokoko, 28-04-2013).

Whilst research tools such as questionnaires can capture community voices, the university could also move away from asking community members what they think through a self-administered questionnaire, to working with them to design the questionnaire, analyse the results, and co-research specific areas of interest on a situation where the community can own the agenda for research on issues important to them.

Capturing community voices through Traditional Rulers (TR)

A significant number of participants residing in some of the villages in the municipality were of the opinion that the university can capture community voices through the village chiefs. These village chiefs were considered by many as the fathers of the villages who should be able to articulate the needs of their respective villages. A community member explained:

As a villager, if you have something to say, you have to tell the chief because he is the head of the village. Anything that is going on in the village, he must be the first person to be aware of it and he will then take it ahead (Agnes, female, 51-60, Bokwai, 06-04-2013).

This statement shows how important a local chief is to a village. He is given significant respect by the villagers and seen as one who should be able to clearly articulate the needs of his village and champion its prosperity. The strategic position occupied by local chiefs was captured in the following response from a clergy:

Those of our chiefs who are educated should be able to make sure that they bring their people together and then, listen to them and see for themselves the problems that these people are facing and meet the Vice-Chancellor of the university with these issues. When the chiefs walk into the university and say for instance: 'Madam Vice Chancellor, this is what we have brought to you and these are some problems we are facing, consider at your own level and through the university community what can be done', then you will realise that the power gap existing between the university and the community will be narrowed. I am therefore pleading that as you have come, if this voice have to be heard, the traditional rulers also have something to do. They are the ones in the villages who know where the shoe hurts, and are able to transmit the concerns of their villages. Through the traditional rulers there is a lot that can be done (Alfred, male, 51-60, Great Soppo, 06-05-2013).

Whilst the clergy is of the opinion that local chiefs have an opportunity to discuss the concerns of their villages with university authorities, one traditional ruler interviewed during the preliminary phase of field work decried the lack of collaboration between the chiefs and the university, explaining:

When you go there to see the Vice-Chancellor, you may be told he/she is not at his desk whereas it is not true. At times when you go there, you can even stay for two to three hours to see him/her and they do not even care that this is a traditional ruler who has come to see the Vice-Chancellor (Linus, Wokolo, 2011).

Given this narrative, it could be argued that it is not enough for traditional rulers to carry the concerns of their subjects to the university, but this should be predicated on mutual trust and interdependence between the university and the local communities. Furthermore, there is need for traditional rulers to demonstrate commitment to fostering the wellbeing of members of their villages. A research on Land Tenure Practices and Women's Rights to Land in Anglophone Cameroon and its implications for sustainable development sponsored by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) carried out by four members of Staff at one university revealed:

Traditional rulers do not only wield traditional powers but have a lot of political authority. Findings from the field research reveal that traditional rulers play an important role in promoting practices that discriminate against women's rights to land (Fonjong et al., 2013, p. 46).

Given such a finding, a question arises: can a traditional ruler be an effective channel through which community voices can be captured? Can they represent their subjects without gender bias, political influence or self-interest? A female participant maintained it would be inappropriate to rely on traditional rulers to capture community voices. She presented the following argument:

To me I think that in most cases community members always go through the community heads, the chiefs, but I think it is not the best because most of the chiefs are looking for their personal interest, some of them are short sighted and only interested in sitting fees or take home packages. If you want to help a community, it is good to go beyond the chiefs. That is, you should look for opinion leaders in the community (Margaret, female, 41-50, Bolifamba, 15-04-2013).

This participant suggested that "opinion leaders" would be better channels for community concerns than local chiefs. By opinion leaders, this participant is referring to leaders of NGOs, CIGs and other members of the community who are selflessly serving the community in one way or the other and who may not have a "big" title associated to their names. These, according to the participant, can more adequately communicate community concerns than local chiefs who have been corrupted by politics, personal interest or quest for riches. Whilst it may be argued that not all chiefs are in the category of self-aggrandisement and bias, most could however benefit from seminars to educate or remind them of their responsibility of care over their villages. Fonjong et al., (2013) maintain that traditional rulers need recurrent education to enable them to align their communities with an increasingly changing world. The change in this context can denote the need to move their communities from a state of deficiency to

strength, from scarcity to abundance and from shortage to surplus by retaining the ability to listen and articulate the burden of their people, as well as seek solution.

One interesting observation during fieldwork was that most of the traditional rulers of the villages that constitute the municipality of Buea were men. This project sought clarification from one of the traditional rulers on the subject of gender representation in traditional councils and was told it is the custom for traditional councils and villages to be headed by men. Given this situation, it may be argued that a traditional custom that does not create the possibility for women to be in position of authority raises the question of gender bias. This thesis therefore maintains that having women traditional rulers, as well as a significant representation in traditional councils, could grant the voices of women better recognition and opportunity of being listened to by a concerned entity.

Capturing community voices through Workshops, Symposiums and Seminars (WSS)

Whilst symposiums, workshops and seminars organised and led by the university have hitherto been geared towards educating, training and informing invited guests, some community members suggested that these events should also be organised for selected members of the community to come in and deliver talks on a range of subjects to university members. A female community participant who was working with a group of rural women involved in small scale farming, elaborated:

If only the university will organise a forum that can bring us together, then we can talk. Irrespective of our educational level, we can say something based on our experience which can help the university (Elizabeth, female, 41-50, Bokuva, 03-05-2013).

Local people can articulate their concerns with clarity, based on their experiences. As such, it can be maintained that there is a need for the university and its members to overcome any idea which suggests that most villagers are not sufficiently educated to address a university audience.

In addition, there were other community members who felt that they do not only have experience but also an educational standing which can enable them to meticulously and succinctly articulate community concerns in a symposium. One participant who was running a local business and had experienced university education maintained an eagerness for symposiums to be organised at the university for professionals in the community to share their experiences and knowledge. He noted:

Business people, nurses and doctors should be invited to come and talk to students and members of staff. But it hardly happens. So what are they doing? It becomes something of the classroom. Classroom can never affect anybody. People come out of the classroom empty. But when you have experts who come and talk to these children, they shake them up and then their inner minds are awakened and they can be better prepared to face life's challenges after graduation (Clement, male, 51-60, Clerk's Quarter, 18-04-2013).

It was observed during fieldwork that the university does organise seminars and symposia and one was attended by this researcher as revealed in the fieldwork diary entries of 2nd of May 2013 (see appendix 1). Whilst the symposium was organised by the university for some of its members to address invited guests, the thrust of the argument presented by this participant is not about the need for university members to lecture the community but for university members to do the listening and the outside community do the talking. However radical this view may sound, the key message passed across by some participants is the need for a two-way communication between the university and the community. That is, both the university and the community should be able to address each other and not be the exclusive responsibility of one. Furthermore, some participants' narratives revealed that university symposia and seminars aimed at benefitting the community will record greater success of community participation if they were organised in the community than within the premises of the university.

Capturing community voices through university Students and Staff (SS)

A very insightful finding from participants' narratives was the idea that students and staff of the university can represent voices from the local community. This suggestion dismisses any idea which suggests that students and staff of the university can only best represent and articulate what concerns their learning and profession. Moreover, the university is part of the wider community (Mbah, 2012) and most of its members reside in it. The following excerpts from participants' narrative affirm this:

I think the university is not only made up of teaching staff, it is also made up of non-teaching staff and they both happen to be members of the local community (Martha, female, 31-40, Molyko, 02-04-2013).

Students reside in homes found in the local community, they can report to the university what transpires in the community and the university can use them to reach the community as well (Cornelius, male, 51-60, Molyko, 27-04-2013).

Due to the close proximity of students and staff of the university to the local community, most participants maintained that they can act as a strategic link between the university and the community through which the university can capture community voices. By this, it means that each student or staff of the university can also be seen to potentially represent the voice of a parent, loved one, family, neighbour and friends who are not members of the university. However, the student and staff population of the university is sizable and relating with each student and member of staff as a strategic link with the wider community can be challenging. Therefore, it can be appropriate to adopt a realistic means that would filter community concerns through members of the university. In this light, the Student Council and the Staff Syndicate of the university can be involved. Leren (2006) asserts that "the student council is a permanent way of organising the student voice and it provides... a high level of influence in decision making processes (2006, p. 363).

Although the Student Council or Student Union (as is referred to at the University of Buea) and the Staff Syndicate of the university is generally perceived to represent the voices of students and staff

members, participants maintained that these can also represent community voices. Notwithstanding, it can be argued that a successful utilisation of the Student Union and Staff Syndicate as strategic channels through which community voices can be captured is centred on the university's willingness to foster a democratic culture that gives voice to its members. A student protest observed during fieldwork on the 15th of May 2013 (see appendix 1) seemed to depict a lack of dialogue between the student body and the management of the university. A repressive system of management at the helm of the university which opposes dissenting voices impedes the students' and staff's ability to act as channels for community voices. Whilst it is important for the university to create an enabling environment to capture community voices through its students and staff, the question for university administration is not only one of incorporating these voices into university operations but also how to assist in nurturing the growth of those voices.

There is therefore a need to build a climate of collaboration, relationship and trust between ordinary members of the university and the university management in order to nurture and foster the growth of student and staff voices such that they are able to represent community voices. This thesis maintains that the success of an educational organisation does count significantly on its management and governance systems. Moreover, it takes full participation by all parties in a climate of collaborative enquiry and practice to realise the corporate objectives of an organisation (Street and Temperley, 2005). With a grip on internal collaboration, the university can be able to widen participation by involving staff and student members as it strives to fulfil its mission. It can be maintained:

Collaborative cultures can extend into joint work, mutual observation, and focused reflective inquiry in ways that extend practice critically, searching for better alternatives in the continuous quest for improvement. In these cases, collaborative cultures are not cozy, complacent and politically quiescent. Rather, they can build collective strength and confidence in communities (Hargreaves, 1994, p. 195).

Drawing on this assertion, it can also be argued that collegial approaches towards attaining shared objectives are more effective and successful than the efforts of those working in isolation (Gleeson and Husbands, 2001). The university can therefore, consider the student body and its Union, as well as the staff body and its Syndicate, partners in university operations by recognising them as strategic links to determine community voices.

7.7 Conclusion

This chapter picked on a range of themes raised by community participants. It drew on the concept of the ecological university which seeks to address collective interests to acknowledge that the community within the context of this project is aware of its needs (interests). The limited access to potable water, the poor access to electricity supply, the deplorable and inadequate nature of roads, the inadequate nature of agricultural performance and graduate unemployment which had recurrent presence in participants' narratives were discussed. By having an active presence in the community and not an

interconnected presence with the community and its challenges, research data suggested that the university was perceived not to be doing enough to address community concerns within the framework of its engagement and operations. Nevertheless, the university was overwhelmingly considered to possess the potential to address the community's needs. From participants' insights, the chapter posited that the community can benefit from the university's resource base and competence to address some of its priority needs such as the need for potable water and agricultural means. It also underscored that the university can be repositioned to abate the rising trend in graduate unemployment by: 1) establishing connections with the civil society, the industrial world or other services in the community so that the university can customise its programmes to address community concerns and education and training at the university can be relevant to the job market and 2) giving students entrepreneurial skills to set up businesses.

Whilst it was overwhelmingly considered essential for the university to capture community voices to 1) benefit from indigenous knowledge, 2) improve standards at the university, 3) enhance university management and 4) orientate academic programmes, this chapter addressed the existing challenge of communication and the power gap existing between the university and the community. This challenge is evident by the university being perceived as having 'a superiority complex' and the community 'an inferiority complex'. Through the establishment of strategic links between the university and the community, this chapter posited that the power gap could be narrowed, communication between the university and the community enhanced, and community voices captured to aid the university to make informed decisions on the community within the framework of its engagement and operations.

This chapter maintained that Common Initiative Groups, Community-based Organisations, Tribal Meeting Groups, Suggestions Boxes, Fieldwork Reports, Research Tools, Traditional Rulers, Students and Staff, Workshops, Symposiums, and Seminars can act as strategic links between the university and the community through which the university can ascertain community needs and maximise this knowledge for effective and efficient engagement in the community. This chapter also underscored that participants' narratives dismissed any idea that may suggest that members of the local community lacked the *locus standi* to address a university audience. In the absence of scientific or some form of formal knowledge, members of a local community can address a university audience on the basis of lived experience and indigenous knowledge.

Furthermore, the chapter also undermines any perceived idea which suggests that students and staff of the university can only articulate what concerns their learning and professional development to a university audience. University members can also effectively represent the voices of the surrounding communities they reside in, on the basis of their interconnections, interactions, experiences and relationships with other community inhabitants. By capturing voices from the community, the university can factor into its engagement processes, community concerns in an interlocking framework

that guarantees university but also community benefits. The subsequent chapter will explore voices from the university.

CHAPTER 8

VOICES FROM THE UNIVERSITY

8.1 Introduction

This chapter is intended to construct meanings from the narratives of participants drawn from different segments of the university, notably: the student body; academics and support staff. The following table gives a description of university participants who took part in interviews or discussions during the fieldwork which ran from the 25th of March 2013 – 2nd of June 2013.

Table 8.1: Description of university participants at the main phase of fieldwork

No	Date	Sampling type	Participant	Code	Sex	Age range	Education	Occupation	Village	Marital status	Dependents
1	02/04/2013	Opportunistic	Paul	UM 2	Male	21-30	GCE A'L	Student	Molyko	Single	-
2	04/04/2013	Snowball	Joseph	UM 3	Male	31-40	PhD	Lecturer	Bomaka	Married	4
3	04/04/2013	Opportunistic	Marcus	UM 4	Male	31-40	BSc	Admin Staff	Bakweri town	Married	3
4	10/04/2013	Snowball	Stephen	UM 5	Male	41-50	PhD	Lecturer	Bonduma	Married	6
5	12/04/2013	Snowball	Pauline	UFG 1	Female	21-30	GCE A'L	Student	Molyko	Single	-
6	12/04/2013	Snowball	Catherine	UFG 2	Female	21-30	GCE A'L	Student	Molyko	Single	-
7	12/04/2013	Snowball	Susan	UFG 3	Female	21-30	GCE A'L	Student	Molyko	Single	-
8	12/04/2013	Snowball	Federick	UFG 4	Male	21-30	GCE A'L	Student	Bowango	Single	-
9	12/04/2013	Snowball	Lucas	UFG 5	Male	21-30	GCE A'L	Student	Molyko	Single	-
10	16/04/2013	Purposive	John	UM 7	Male	41-50	PhD	Lecturer	GRA	Married	3
11	17/04/2013	Purposive	Eric	UM 6	Male	41-50	MA	Lecturer	Bokwango	Married	7
12	18/04/2013	Snowball	Philemon	UM 8	Male	41-50	Diploma	Admin Staff	Bolifamba	Married	3
13	19/04/2013	Opportunistic	Sophie	UM 1	Female	21-30	GCE A'L	Student	Molyko	Married	5

Source: Fieldwork

Based on findings from research data, the chapter has been divided into sub sections. The first section addresses a diverse view expressed by participants on the role of the university within the wider community. This is followed by participants' opinions on the nature of the university's engagement which addresses subjects of community-based adult education, community-based research and community-based service learning. Community-based service learning was the most recurrent activity of the university in the community identified and discussed due to participants' familiarisation with internship exercises. Concerns were nevertheless raised by participants on the need to restructure service learning in order to enable it meet the objective of addressing community needs. The later part of the chapter focuses more broadly on community needs identified by participants and how community voices can be captured by the university to ascertain these needs. The chapter uncovers the university's potential to address community needs within its engagement and other mechanisms underpinned by

collaboration, dialogue and the need to narrow power gaps existing within the university and between the university and the community.

Whilst this chapter is distinctively focused on university voices, it should be noted that its content is not so different from the previous two chapters on voices from the community. A reason for this similarity can be due to the fact that the university and the local community are situated within close proximity to each other and moreover, most members of the university reside in the local community. Consequently, both groups of participants were able to articulate similar thoughts such as the challenges faced by the local community. However, this thesis maintains that it was expedient to give ‘voices from the university’ its own merit by analysing it separately.

8.2 Diverse views on the role of the university in the community

The views and opinions expressed by participants on the university and its role in the wider community were diverse. Participants maintained that the university 1) promotes morals in the community, 2) impacts students and the community with knowledge, 3) is involved in the business of education, 4) is an instrument of development, 5) fosters integration 6) has a triple mission of teaching, research and service and 7) promotes employment. As to whether the university was living up to these roles is one thing that will be explored in this chapter. Underneath participants’ perceptions on the role of the university, both the liberal and neoliberal notions of university education came to the fore.

8.2.1 The liberal view on the role of the university

As participants expressed what they perceived to be the role of the university in the wider community, many of them identified with the liberal notion of university education which sees the business of education as the cultivation of the mind (Newman, 1999). These participants’ narratives which tended towards the liberal notion of the university also laid emphasis on the idea that the university promotes “ethics” and “values” in the community.

The university as a promoter of ethics and values

By ethics, this thesis is referring to certain modes of conduct, attitudes or morals being adhered to by members of a community (Peters, 1970). During a focus group discussion, one student participant suggested that the university provides the basis for ethics in the society. This student elaborated:

I will like to say that the University of Buea promotes ethics in the community. For example, a dressing code was implemented this year that there should not be poor dressing; short skirts, boys wearing their jeans below their waist, etc. This has gone a long way to affect the surrounding community such that if a police officer sees a girl or boy poorly dressed, the person is arrested and sometimes he/she is requested to pay a fine, so I think the University of Buea has helped to enhance the ethics and morals of the Molyko community through its dressing code (Lucas, male, 21-30, Molyko, 12 – 04 – 2013).

Although moral education may not only be taught but also caught through observable practices in the community (Fisher, 2000), guiding policies and rules at the university such as dressing codes and conducts which are sometimes contained in a student handbook may provide the basis for a moral lifestyle amongst students. These students after graduation can integrate into the community and impact neighbourhoods with acquired morals. However, it may not always hold that the university can succeed in causing every student to abide to certain guiding principles as a means of promoting ethics in the society. Due to globalisation and free movement of people from one geographical location to another, people tend to move with variances in taste, and preferences. Therefore, creating an enabling environment for members of the university to be engaged in moral reasoning rather than sticking to rules or modes of conduct in an attempt to foster ethics in the society may be a worthwhile alternative.

In addition to impacting the society with ethics, the university was seen to create an awareness which promotes certain values in the community. Giroux (2009) underscores that

colleges and universities do not simply produce knowledge and new perspectives for students; they also play an influential role in shaping their identities, values, and sense of what it means to become citizens of the world (2009, p.38).

Whilst there are moral or ethical values, there are also educational, economic, scientific, political and medical values (Haydon, 1997). Given the complexity surrounding the word “value”, it is easier to outline examples of values than assign a specific definition of what ‘value’ stands for. Nevertheless, from the response of one female student, the university was said to be promoting the value of equality in the community. She explained:

There is a course we studied called “SOC 306”. This course dealt with issues of social inequality and stratification. It revealed how society is being stratified and how inequality exists. It gives you the concept of the layman and the one who is educated. It makes you identify inequality in the society and stand out (Susan, female, 21-30, Molyko, 12 – 04 – 2013).

Drawing on this assertion and the Cameroonian context, there are certain practices which are inherently seen as normal. For instance, when elders of a particular village meet to discuss issues on development, women may not be invited to be part of the discussion and even when a few are involved, they are seldom given adequate opportunities to make their views known. This is similar to the following observation in Nigeria:

Men dominate speech interactions by monopolising turn taking, by speaking longer and thereby maintaining the floor, and by turning up the vocal volume in order to assert dominance and minimise the potential for disruption (Morley, 2006, p.106).

Such a scenario is typical of a male dominated society. But with education, traits of inequality can be exposed, discrimination against women abated and the value of equality and respect instilled in the community. However, this thesis also adds that reaping the fruits of equality and equity in the community can be predicated on appropriate mechanisms and systems put in place to check inequalities and having women or minority groups represented in decision making processes in the community.

8.2.2 The neoliberal view on the role of the university

Apart from the liberal view on the role of the university, some participants were of the opinion that the university has or should have a neoliberal agenda. Although at the core of neoliberalism is capitalism and the need to seek profitability (Kumar and Hill, 2009), the profitability of university education advanced by participants is largely instrumental and geared towards the need to enhance societal development and for graduates of the university to be gainfully employed. Whilst some participants noted that the university was thriving on its teaching mission, one male student participant felt teaching alone was inadequate and would not change the development and economic face of the community. He elaborated:

The university should not only be regarded as an educational milieu where people enrol and are taught and then get awarded certificates. It should also be regarded as an instrument for development. The university should be seen as having the potential to develop the society in many aspects like carrying out community-based projects. It should not only be viewed as if students just go there to get degrees. Research should be carried out in the area of health to improve the health condition of people (Lucas, male, 21-30, Molyko, 12 – 04 – 2013).

From this narrative, it can be argued that the university would be more useful to the community by seeking to address community concerns such as the need for a better health care rather than teaching students solely for the sake of teaching without the objective of fostering community development. However, the university at the centre of this project does have a research and service mission but the question is: how are these affecting the community? Besides the need for participation in sustainable development, some participants associated the role of the university with youth empowerment and employment. One male student posited:

Every year, over 1000 students graduate from the University of Buea but sincerely speaking, just about 200 are able to gain employment in the public sector while a few others with the abilities and skills in them are able to start a private business or get involved in community building activities. However, I maintain that university education can empower youths towards a good future (Paul, male, 21-30, Molyko, 02-04-2013).

Although the university was generally seen to have the potential to promote graduate employment, several participants were of the opinion that little was being done to enhance this. They bemoaned the situation of graduate (youth) unemployment in the community and acknowledged some of its causes.

From participants' narratives, the rise in graduate unemployment was seen to have an endogenous root within the university and exogenous root outside the university. Endogenous factors responsible for graduate unemployment are factors the university could bring under its control whereas exogenous factors are factors the university could struggle to address, possibly because they are beyond the reach of the university's means and capacity.

8.2.2.1 Endogenous factors responsible for graduate unemployment

Lack of student orientation, absence of course relevance and lack of practical skills are some of the factors that participants believed to be responsible for the undesirable situation of graduate unemployment.

Lack of student orientation

One participant suggested that the lack of proper orientation led many students to embark on the wrong academic programmes at the university which resulted in limited prospects of finding employment as there were limited jobs in that academic field. This female student participant elaborated:

You would notice that some students before being enrolled into the university are not orientated. When they are not orientated, they come in and they study something. But when you study something that the community is already saturated with or may not have immediate need of, you will automatically have some graduates jobless (Susan, female, 21-30, Molyko, 12 – 04 – 2013).

Whilst students can benefit from parental counselling or the advice of a loved one before enrolment on a university programme, the university can also set up a counselling unit to assist students caught up at the crossroad of confusion or doubt on which academic path to pursue with prospects for employment. Nevertheless, when many of the participants spoke about graduate unemployment, it was noticed that the idea of employment they had was more centred on being recruited by the private or public sector rather than being self-employed. Accordingly, having a relevant orientation could lead to a change of mind set and prospective graduates could acquire skills for job creation or self-employment. One student participant corroborated this view by suggesting that the youths of Cameroon in general should depart from the idealistic position of seeking for jobs that would enable them to sit in offices. He went on to state: "There are other forms of employment; you must not only sit in an office as a lawyer or a doctor" (Lucas, male, 21-30, Molyko, 12 – 04 – 2013). Although the university at the centre of this research has staff members who were recruited to provide guidance and counselling to students in need, how effective the service is running is worth examining.

Absence of course relevance

Research data revealed that many students enrolled at the university due to the accompanying extrinsic benefit of securing employment. One female student on an agricultural course explained:

I wanted to do agriculture because of the employment prospects it offers. Self-employment, employment with the private sector, and employment with the government are possible options after my studies. If I apply the skills I have acquired here, as a self-employer, that is, doing my own farming, I will still make a lot of money and earn a living (Sophie, female, 21-30, Molyko, 19-04-2013).

This is the scenario of a student who saw the need to enrol on an academic programme which provides a prospect for employment after completion. Whilst enrolling on an academic programme like agriculture may guarantee employment, even as the economy of Cameroon largely relies on the agricultural sector, not all programmes at the university were seen in the same light. A male student participant noted:

About one quarter of academic programmes at the university are not useful in the contemporary world, they are not profitable and as such, it makes it difficult to get a job, whereas, if half of the population in the university is orientated towards things like the sciences, technology, agriculture, it will help completing students to at least be self-employed. Looking at the Cameroon society, I think our main source of livelihood is agriculture and so, majority of the students of the University of Buea should be orientated towards agriculture and even technology because globalisation has made technology to gain ground in the developing world (Lucas, male, 21-30, Molyko, 12 – 04 – 2013).

This assertion suggested the need for the university to run more academic programmes which are relevant to the local community but also globally significant. The university may therefore need to keep pace with changing local and global market demands and trends and train/educate students suited for these changes. To support the need for academic programmes at the university to also be globally relevant, one female participant maintained that the university should “enlarge its scope and diversify its programmes. They should open the students not only to the Cameroonian community but to communities abroad” (Susan, female, 21-30, Molyko, 12 – 04 – 2013). This underscores a desire for the university to adequately position prospective graduates such that they are able to maximise the advantages of globalisation by being able to compete for jobs or demands out of the country.

Lack of practical skills

In addition to revealing the desire to see university education relevant to local and global demands, research data suggested that such relevance can be enhanced when practical components are associated with each academic programme. A female university student suggested:

The university need to bring in more practical into their academic programmes. It has been theory, theory, and you discover how boring it is the more you remain in class. We do not even know what we are going to face outside. They need to widen the scope a little bit (Pauline, female, 21-30, Molyko, 12-04-2013).

The view of this participant can be said to also fall in line with the notion of the engaged scholarship propounded by Boyer (1996) where he argued that scholarship should not be confined to theory but should also find expression in the field through engagement. By engaging students in practical activities, they tend to have the opportunity to apply classroom knowledge in a practical context and this has the potential to prepare them for life after studies.

Whilst these endogenous factors responsible for graduate unemployment can be addressed by the university, there are other factors termed ‘exogenous factors’ which the university could find challenging to address as they do not fit so much within its remit.

8.2.2.2 Exogenous factors responsible for graduate unemployment

Lack of facilities to conduct training, as well as public corruption, heavy taxes and cumbersome governmental processes are some of the exogenous factors revealed which are responsible for graduate unemployment.

Lack of facilities

The University of Buea is a State owned university which relies on State subventions for its recurrent and investment expenditures. The current economic situation of the country has led to dwindling subsidies to State universities (as expounded in chapter 2) irrespective of an increasing need for investment in facilities that would enhance the capacity building of young Cameroonians for employment and societal transformation. This situation has affected the quantity and quality of infrastructures at the universities. Some student participants noted:

We do not have the necessary facility to foster our learning so that we can come out with skills to serve the society. I think that if the university has a good science department with equipment, it would be of help to us (Lucas, male, 21-30, Molyko, 12 – 04 – 2013).

The university is here to train us and I believe they should be in a better position to help us in our practical. We should have the facilities to carry out practical in what we are learning. For instance, during the last strike action, I heard that science students were striking because they do not have laboratory equipment (Catherine, female, 21-30, Molyko, 12-04-2013).

Whilst it can be argued that the university’s ability to secure relevant facilities to enhance the training of young Cameroonians with transferable skills needed for gainful employment after studies and effective contribution to the country’s GDP is dependent on financial or budget management at the university, it can be argued that it is also dependent on State allocations. This thesis therefore suggests that the State may need to revisit its budgetary allocations by prioritising university education and investing sufficiently in its infrastructures, facilities and capacity building of the students, as well as the staff.

Public corruption, heavy taxes and cumbersome governmental processes

Whereas employment may be regarded as work under contractual arrangements involving economic benefits (Jahoda, 1982), it is not restricted to being recruited to work in a public or private sector but also involves being self-employed. Self-employment can be expressed through the setting up of businesses. As entrepreneurs and sole proprietors set up businesses, they would normally seek for a relevant environment and climate that would enable their businesses to flourish and their profit to maximise. According to a male student participant, this is not the case in Cameroon where he maintained the environment and business climate does not enhance sole proprietorship. He posited:

The government of the country is corrupt which makes it difficult to even start a business. The procedure to start a new business is cumbersome, couple with heavy taxes. The system should facilitate private investments (Paul, male, 21-30, Molyko, 02-04-2013).

This account suggests that the university can impart students with entrepreneurial skills for self-employment but State policies and corruption³⁰ can make it difficult for them to engage in profitable ventures like starting up a new business or a community-based organisation. Whilst participants expected the university to equip students with what it takes to seek or create jobs, they also want the State and the wider community to be less corrupt and to ease the process of registering a new business by making it less cumbersome and bureaucratic. Furthermore, as a means to curb unemployment, this thesis suggests the need for new businesses not to be allowed to crumble under the weight of heavy taxes. Rather, the State and its policies can provide incentives to enable new businesses to stabilise and grow to the point whereby they can begin to make realistic tax contributions to the system which would not be counterproductive to their long term profitability and survival.

Apart from the university's liberal and neoliberal roles identified in participants' narratives, their narratives also expressed views on different aspects of the university's engagement in the community such as community-based service learning, community-based research and community-based adult education, as well as their potential to address local needs.

8.3 Participants' perception on community-based adult education

Research data from university participants revealed that the university runs a distance education scheme under the faculty of education which can be positioned within the framework of adult education. Given that distance education is a form of education in which organised learning opportunities are typically provided through technical media to learners who would normally study individually, and distant away from the teacher (Jarvis, 2010), the programme at the University of Buea was established to train school

³⁰ Corruption in Cameroon is a widespread concern. According to World Bank report, Cameroon ranks 144th out of 177 countries in the 2013 Transparency International corruption perceptions index: <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/cameroon/overview>

teachers in distant locations. It operates on a collaborative framework between the Ministries of National Education, Basic Education and Higher Education. Although previous interviews with community members call for the scheme to be diversified and expanded so that other professionals from different backgrounds can enrol on it, a staff of the unit argued otherwise:

The programme is just beginning and for now we want to keep the focus for which we first created it. We have people who have asked us to diversify the programme but right now the university has not decided to diversify. The university is maintaining the focus because the programme is not just a national programme. The intention is to run the programme on a regional basis and being a bilingual country, in a region which is predominantly French speaking, we have to translate the programme into French to achieve the goal and that process has started and so the idea of diversifying will come later on when the university must have judged that the programme has stabilised itself. The demands are there. The university has to decide how it wants to go but for now the university is focusing on its primary objective (Eric, male, 41-50, Bokwango, 17-04-2013).

It was revealed that whilst the primary objective of the distance education programme is to offer teachers of nursery and primary education the opportunity to do a four year degree programme at a distance, diversification and expansion of the programme to incorporate other disciplines was in view. However, one may ask: what are the benefits of distance education to the wider community? The same participant cited above elaborated:

We provide a service. The community service is education and you would realise that all our students are practising teachers. These are teachers who are working in the field. And so the knowledge, the skills that they get from the programme are directly translated into their work in the classroom and so the children are benefiting directly and that also affects the parents of the children and the external community. Most of these teachers have become resourceful in their areas, such that seminars are being organised by them to train other colleagues. From the first batch of 40 students, 30 of them were promoted to positions of responsibility in Basic Education. It is a very dynamic contribution because it is something that is related to their learning. The community benefits are directly tied to the learning process. They are not only trained to teach, they are trained to administer. So they gain administrative, management and teaching skills (Eric, male, 41-50, Bokwango, 17-04-2013).

From this narrative, it can be argued that distance education possesses the following benefits: 1) It enables the university to serve the community by enhancing the capacity of professionals in the community, 2) it provides better services in the community through trained professionals and 3) it leads to job promotion. Whilst distance education administered by the university is associated with these benefits and more, participants' responses nonetheless revealed that the scheme needs to be enhanced to buttress its effectiveness and benefits. Some participants' narratives suggested the need for adequate manpower, financial resources and infrastructure to boost its operation. Apart from distance education, participants' narratives also revealed that the university operates community-based research.

8.4 Participants' perception on community-based research

Most academics interviewed were able to identify some of their colleagues involved in some forms of community-based research. Some of the projects acknowledged under community-based research were still on-going at the time of fieldwork. Research data revealed that most of the staff members involved in research activities in the community are those who were privileged to win international grants. Local funding from the university and the Ministry of Higher Education can be said to be rudimentary, probably just to help staff members write papers and not to conduct original research with long term community impact. A male academic elaborated on two forms of community-based research managed by the university:

There are basically two categories of research. 1) Funded research. This is research carried out because of the funding and in which case the sponsors have a clear cut objective and you have a clear cut expected outcome and you deliver it like a contract and so you have no liberty to modify it by any means and 2) you have those which are done because of the identification of issues that are related to the communities around you (Stephen, male, 41-50, Bonduma, 10-04-2013).

Whilst research funded by external bodies can be relevant to the community like the one on “Land Tenure Practices and Women’s Rights to Land in Anglophone Cameroon”³¹ whose symposium for result dissemination was observed during fieldwork, this thesis posits that the university and the State could create opportunities and provide support for research aimed at addressing specific community concerns. Apart from funded research that can connect staff members with the community, the dissertation phase of research degrees have taken students into the community to carry out original pieces of research which addressed specific community subjects. This was the crux of an argument presented by a male member of staff:

I had a PhD student recently who carried out a research on land rights, and this research was community-based in the sense that, she looked at access to land by women and the vulnerable and that meant that she had to work with various chiefs and stuffs like that (John, male, 41-50, GRA, 16-04-2013)

The possibility of a PhD student going into the community to carry out a case study on a community concern is common place, but the big question is: what happens after the research is completed? Are there mechanisms and processes in place to ensure that the outcomes of a community-based research benefit the community? Closely associated to community-based research is community-based service learning which was overwhelmingly expressed in participants’ responses.

³¹ The research on “Land Tenure Practices and Women’s Rights to Land in Anglophone Cameroon” was carried out by some members of staff of the University of Buea, sponsored by the International Development Research Centre.

8.5 Participants' perception on community-based service learning

Amongst service learning activities of the university in the community, student internship was recognised. One female student captured the significance of internship in her response:

Internship is a very important part of our studies because it is the only opportunity we have to blend theory with the practical part of it. We are learning here to go out and integrate in the community. It is the only time when we see what we learn and what is actually taking place out there (Catherine, female, 21-30, Molyko, 12-04-2013).

Participants generally viewed internship as providing an opportunity for students to blend theory and practice and in most cases it involves students in their second year of studies (level 300). Additionally, an academic asserted that in some cases, internships are structured to enable students in a particular department to go to the field and pick up some skills. Such was the case in the Department of Law where he explained:

In the Department of Law, we have this project where we send our students to various law firms, for pupillage and internship. This has been done in the last four to five years and is ongoing. The students are received by law firms, but I think that the objectives and the way the programme is structured is such that the students go there to pick up skills (John, male, 41-50, GRA, 16-04-2013).

Comparatively though, it was noticed that student participants made more allusion to service learning in their narratives on the university's engagement than members of staff. Such allusion was informed by their personal experiences. One female student participant who had gone through internship presented the following narrative of her experience:

We went out to the rural communities and met women. We saw how they interact, how they relate with their community, what they do to alleviate poverty, the processes, the challenges, and we spoke with them. I dealt with women who produce cassava. We had to teach them how to plant cassava in a way that will increase yield. We then had to provide them with tools like trucks, and higher yield seedlings and taught them planting techniques, when to plant, when to harvest, how to process the farm produce. We had to teach them record keeping, how to make money as a woman and not go into conflict with their husbands and how to appropriate their time. Indeed, it was educational!!! I have learnt a lot and I think it was good because tomorrow, if I find myself working under the Ministry of Women Empowerment, I will not just sit there and be contented with my salary. I will know that I have seen what these rural women go through to provide food to their families. I will better understand them and better attend to their needs because administrators nowadays just sit in their offices and assume but I know now what these women at the grassroot level go through (Susan, female, 21-30, Molyko, 12 – 04 – 2013).

From this narrative, it can be ascertained that service learning does not end at the level of enhancing learning experiences even as students engaged in practical exercises, as well as gain knowledge and skills from the field, it also has the potential to address specific community concerns. Internship also prepares students for community life and service after university education (McKinney et al., 2008;

Clark, 2003). As succinctly spelt out by the student cited above, through internship, a student has the opportunity to understand what community members go through in their daily life. Such understanding can prepare one for future community services. Irrespective of these benefits and potential contribution of service learning to community development, participants were concerned with the ways internships are being structured and operationalised in the community.

8.5.1 Concerns over service learning

Research data from university participants revealed the following concerns over service learning: 1) students carry out internship exclusively for academic credit, 2) the scheme is underlined by unethical practices, 3) it is inconveniently timed, 4) it has no clear-cut objective of securing community benefits, 5) it lacks uniformity across different departments of the university, 6) it is not framed by dialogue between the university and the community and 7) there is no follow-up on students' internship reports.

Students carry out internships just for academic credit

Whilst proponents of service learning have consistently revealed that service learning serves learning and service objectives (Bringle and Hatcher, 2007; Butin, 2005; Furco, 1996), research data suggests that students who go out for internship primarily do so to earn an academic credit rather than address specific community challenges. A female student posited: “students who go out for internship go out there ignorantly and all they are trying to do is earn marks. It should not be all about earning marks but also about the impact that this thing has on the society” (Sophie, female, 21-30, Molyko, 19 – 04 – 2013)

Although service learning is structured as part of an academic programme, this thesis posits that if all the students do is focus on acquiring an academic credit at the expense of gaining insight into a subject while addressing specific community concerns, it becomes limited and the scheme needs to be revisited and restructured to serve the objectives outlined by its proponents.

Internship is marred by unethical practices

Participants were also of the opinion that internships are often interspersed with unethical practices. Given that students generally have a strong appetite for marks, they tend to do all it takes within their power to earn them and sometimes by employing unethical means. A female student participant elaborated:

You would find some students right up to July when we are expected to be finishing our exams who have not had somewhere to do internship. As a consequent, some students have furnished the university with internship reports resulting from an internship they never did (Catherine, female, 21-30, Molyko, 12-04-2013).

From this account, I might be argued that the lack of effective field supervision, as well as limited or no emphasis on the ethics that should underpin service learning have lured some students to report back to the university with fictitious reports on a service learning activity which never took place. Given such

a situation, the potential of service learning to enhance student learning processes and address community concerns can be hindered.

There is inconvenient timing of internship

Participants' narratives revealed that most often, internships administered by the university take place within the same period of the year irrespective of whether this period is convenient to host organisations or communities. The university programmes internships to align with its academic calendar of the year rather than the calendar of intended hosts. As a consequence, students scramble for available opportunities to do internship within the same period due to the few available but also competitive spaces at their disposal, given that some community-based organisations or communities may not be ideally ready to host interns at the time the university wants them to, for different reasons.

Internships lacked clear-cut objectives of securing community benefits

A majority of university members interviewed revealed limited understanding of what service learning was all about and more specifically with respect to its capacity to address specific community needs and potentially contribute to community development. An academic maintained that students on internship "rarely contribute anything if any, to the organisation they go to (John, male, 41-50, GRA, 16-04-2013). The lack of objectives to address community needs within service learning processes could be perceived as one of many reasons why internships in the community have had little impact on fostering community development. This deficiency of internship resulting in community benefits could also be attributed to a lack of proper university, as well as community orientation or education on what service learning is ideologically about.

Internships lacked uniformity across academic departments

Drawing on participants' responses, it can be ascertained that the fundamental principles underpinning internship processes across different departments of the university lacked uniformity. For instance, a male member of staff maintained: "In my department, it is an obligation to leave behind a copy of your internship report in the institution where you did the study" (Joseph, male, 31-40, Bomaka, 04-04-2013).

Whilst it was mandatory in the department cited above for students on internships to hand a copy of their internship reports to the organisations or communities where the internship was carried out, in other departments, the situation seems to differ. To substantiate this assertion, some university members interviewed suggested that the community is often not furnished with internship reports. It can be either interns are not following the university's instruction to hand a copy of their internship reports to a host organisation or community, or the internship process is not uniform across the different disciplines at the university. Most likely, the latter was the case. A female student who had observed lack of

uniformity across different academic departments of the university elaborated: “In some departments, they really help the students a lot but in our department, they only print the internship forms and give you to go out and look for institutions, they do not even arrange with any institution on behalf of the students” (Catherine, female, 21-30, Molyko, 12-04-2013). This thesis argues that the lack of uniformity of fundamental principles guiding service learning processes across different academic disciplines of the university could lead to failure of service learning to exert greater impact in the community and student learning experiences.

There is absence of dialogue between the university and the community

Participants’ responses suggested a lack of dialogue between the university and the community to foster internships. This was particularly noted in departments where students are given the responsibility to go to the field and look for host organisations without need for a prior memorandum of understanding between the university and a host organisation where the university and host organisation’s roles, responsibilities and benefits are clearly spelt out. One academic acknowledged:

Dialogue does not exist. Internship follows some aristocratic format. ‘Oh these guys are coming again’ says the community! No questionnaires to the chiefs to evaluate the exercise at the end of the process. Through questionnaires, you can ask the host organisation: ‘do you see any value in what was done or what will be done?’, ‘is there anything we can do to improve internship?’, and ‘is there anything that was done instead of that other one?’ Answers to these questions will guide the university on what should be done next time (Stephen, male, 41-50, Bonduma, 10-04-2013).

Due to lack of dialogue between the university and the community, the community’s responsibility would be unclear and internships may tend to be devoid of innovations as it is largely structured to address the university’s objectives with little or no concern for community ideas.

There is lack of follow-up on students’ internship reports

Some participants’ narratives revealed that at the end of every internship exercise, interns are required to write a report which is submitted to the relevant university department and is eventually graded. Under normal circumstances students are expected to highlight in their reports issues of concern to the community or a host organisation in addition to lessons learnt in the process of doing internship. Whilst community concerns captured in an internship report can provide an opportunity to ascertain what community challenges are, this thesis posits that this can also instigate a process of a university fulfilling a civic responsibility of not only identifying community needs but also seeking ways to address them. Instead of acting on internship reports, a male student participant noted that the university shelves them. “when students carry out their research or projects, and make recommendations in their reports which are submitted to the university, they are read and shelved and no action is taken” (Lucas, male, 21-30, Molyko, 12 – 04 – 2013) he stated.

Whilst it may not be feasible to follow up on all reports from service learning projects, it can be maintained that a lack of follow-up action on some internship or project reports by the university may inhibit the potential of these reports to address some community challenges. Given these concerns plaguing service learning in the local community, participants' responses also revealed measures that can be taken to restructure it such that it is able to meet a dual goal of serving university and community interests.

8.5.2 Restructuring community-based service learning for mutual benefits

By fostering community involvement, promoting community education, maintaining time flexibility, ensuring uniformity, assigning adequate budget and following up on internship reports, participants perceived service learning can be more beneficial to the local community in addition to the university.

Fostering community involvement

Participants' narratives suggested that framing and firming up service learning to respond to community needs, as well as enhance learning, necessitated the participation of the community. Rather than the community participating in structuring service learning processes, it was revealed that hitherto the university unilaterally structures service learning objectives and processes and imposes them on the community. When an institution such as a university imposes an agenda on the local community for an action project for instance, the community may consider their involvement an additional burden on their time and resources (Dunne, Akyeampong and Humphreys, 2007), given that the exercise they have been invited to participate in does not address their priority needs. Consequently, imposing an agenda on the community falls short of identifying and addressing community needs in an interlocking process of enhancing student learning and fostering community transformation. Whilst community participation can lead to better understanding of the nature of challenges facing the community and how these concerns can be addressed in a way relevant to the local community context (Warren, 1989), this thesis also maintains that there is need to address how the community can become part of a service learning scheme and play an active role in it. Consistent with this argument, some participants suggested the need for the university to identify potential host organisations and communities and work with them through active dialogue to meet the objectives of service learning addressing student learning outcomes and community needs. The following transcript of interview with an academic who ran a consultancy firm with a history of hosting interns highlighted some importance of involving the community in designing and executing a service learning scheme:

Q: Are community members involved in setting the stage for internship?

A: They are not involved in the selection of students, they do not participate in determining which students gets to where. What they do is, they received the students and exposed them to what they are doing. That's the way it operates with the University of Buea.

Q: Is it important for community members to be part of the selection process?

A: I would have thought so, because sometimes I find my consultancy being flooded with too many students, such that it becomes a problem to manage. So if the law firms themselves were involved, I think some of these difficulties would have been handled and these problems avoided. So I believe that perhaps it would be a good thing to get them involved even from the very beginning. Internship is a good idea, and if it were to be broadened slightly it would be a good idea such that in the course of the internship, students pick up what the issues are in the various communities where they do their internship. It would be very useful because it now becomes a thesis for further research and if such research is successful it helps to ameliorate the conditions of communities (John, male, 41-50, GRA, 16-04-2013).

From this interview transcript, it can be maintained that by involving community members as active partners within an internship scheme, the scheme stands greater chances of 1) identifying and addressing community concerns because people living in communities can acknowledge and describe situations in their neighbourhoods, 2) identifying host organisations' capacity such that they are able to take in the number of students they can train and who can be of benefit to the organisation or community.

Promoting community education

The need to promote community education was expressed by some participants who felt that the failure of service learning to provide benefits to the community was largely due to community ignorance on its merits. A need was therefore raised to bring the community to a point of awareness of service learning's potential to improve students' critical thinking (Chun et al., 2012), enhance student learning (Bringle and Hatcher, 2009), enable students to have a sense of civic responsibility (Bordelon and Phillips, 2006) and meet specific community needs (Jacoby, 1999). Rather than recognising internship as an asset to community transformation, some organisations hosting interns consider the process of internship a burden and a liability to the organisation. A university member of staff maintained:

The staff of most of these community organisations do not consider internship as a win-win situation where the organisation is gaining and the university is gaining. They look at it as something of pressure, and 'you are just coming to use our resources'. Some organisations do not have that service or that department in charge of internship, and when it is not structured to accommodate internship and its merits; students go there and are not properly supervised (Joseph, male, 31-40, Bomaka, 04-04-2013).

In addition to the community being educated on the potential benefits of service learning to the community, they can also be given the opportunity to maximise these benefits through their involvement in every phase of the service learning process, that is, from conception to implementation. Questions on how to carry out supervision, evaluate the students and report to the university on any eventuality can be answered within a scheme intended to educate the community on service learning and its different forms such as internship and action projects. It can further be argued that the community

is not the only organ that needs education on service learning; faculty members of the university who merely see service learning as an opportunity to grade students' reports also need education on the ideologies underpinning it.

Maintaining time flexibility

It was revealed that some community-based organisations willing to host interns would want to do so at a period when the interns can contribute profitably to the organisation. Furthermore, the duration of internship is often not sufficient for students to acquire skills and contribute meaningfully to a host organisation's activities. On these bases, some participants expressed the need for the participation of the community and other segments of the university in structuring service learning time and duration such that a form of service learning such as internship can run at a convenient time and be of utmost benefit to the university, the student and the community. However, a male academic who suggested the need for community education also suggested that structuring service learning time to favour the student, the university and the community would be a challenge. He explained:

Unfortunately, it is difficult to marry the three voices because they are not compatible. That is the biggest problem, they are not compatible. So we have the university, the students and the community, it is difficult to harmonise the three voices. The students are operating within a context of what we call 'economic hardship' and there is no way you will tell the students, 'you are going to spend three months doing just internship without going to school'. So the student is crying that 'no I can do internship only during a break' even though internship could have been done as a semester (Joseph, male, 31-40, Bomaka, 04-04-2013).

Apart from the possibility of students having a time preference for when they would want to carry out internship, community-based organisations may also have a period in which they would prefer to host students for internship. The university working on an academic schedule may also have a preferred period it would want the students to go for internship. These differences clearly call for negotiation between the community, the students and authorities at the university on the time, as well as duration of internship. The reason for negotiation is to best serve the interests of different parties involved in the internship process.

Ensuring uniformity of internship processes across academic disciplines

Given that it was evident that internship processes vary across the different departments of the university, the need for uniformity and enforcement of fundamental principles underpinning service learning need to be established. This thesis also argues that good practices in some of the departments can be emulated by other departments through a standardised process managed by an outreach or service learning centre whose prime mission could be to foster and ensure that service learning standards and quality are maintained across disciplines where internships and other forms of service learning are an integral part.

Following up on internship reports

Although the university may not be able to follow up on all reports from the field due to the varying qualities and reliabilities of these reports, it was maintained that the university can institute mechanisms and processes to identify selected service learning reports which can form the basis of a long term project in the field. A female student participant elaborated:

The university has to take seriously the reports and projects of its students. These reports and projects are based on the community. When they are brought back to the university, the university should not just leave these reports on students' findings in the cupboards, on the counters or in the library. They should read them and see what they can make out of them and follow up some (Susan, female, 21-30, Molyko, 12 – 04 – 2013).

Given that internship and project reports from students can capture realities in the field which can inform the university on community concerns, funded projects aimed at addressing these concerns could result from them.

Allocating adequate budget for service learning

Participants' narratives revealed that in most cases, students are responsible for the costs associated with their involvement in internships. However, there are other costs associated with the university and host organisation/community's involvement in the internship process such as providing field supervision and material resources to be used at a host organisation or community. Given these costs and the significance of service learning, a participant suggested that there should be a specific budget at the university to support service learning. He stated: "As part of community outreach of the university and knowing that the university is there to provide service to the people, service learning as an item should be budgeted under outreach" (Joseph, male, 31-40, Bomaka, 04-04-2013).

It was noted that the university operates on an annual budget and while there was a budget line dedicated to outreach, there was no specific line dedicated to service learning. By providing a budget line for service learning, it is quite likely that that would facilitate the process of internship by enabling adequate supervision in the field, subsidising/financing the cost of materials used by students in host organisations/communities and offering remuneration to some professionals in the community who are taking time off to provide students with necessary trainings and skills.

As service learning has the potential to capture and address specific community needs (Jacoby, 1999; Hall, 2009; Bringle and Hatcher, 2009), an attempt was made to identify through participants' narratives some priority needs of the community and how the university could play an active role in addressing them within the framework of its engagement.

8.6 Community needs identified

It is worth noting that all university members interviewed lived within the wider community, as such, they were able to eloquently identify some challenges the local community faces. From their narratives, it can be ascertained that water crisis was the most recurrent crisis raised followed by electricity, road and health crises. Since most of the descriptions of these crises reflected those of community members presented in Chapter 7, section 7.2, it is unnecessary to repeat them here. However, it is appropriate to uncover participants' views on the university's potential to address these concerns.

From the narratives captured, a few participants were of the opinion that the university cannot help in resolving the community concerns identified. They attributed this to the university's lack of resources, budget deficit, the responsibility of the municipal authority and service providers. Whilst there were service providers responsible for water and electricity distribution in the community and a local council in charge of the smooth functioning of the municipality, it can be argued that the university can partner with these organs to generate solutions for complex problems faced by the community (Gronski and Pigg, 2000). Even though it can be verified that "the university has been running on a budget deficit" (Marcus, male, 31-40, Bakweri Town, 04-04-2013) and "financial resources are not sufficient" (Philemon, male, 41-50, Bolifamba, 18-04-2013), it can also be suggested that through a collaborative framework with the community, the university could benefit from financial and material resources made available by the community to complement its intellectual capacity in an attempt to provide solutions to certain community challenges. The following section draws on research data to expatiate on how the university could be positioned to address community challenges.

8.6.1 Positioning the university to address community challenges

The concept of the ecological university propounded by Barnett (2011) specified that the ecological university has a responsibility of care over the wider community. Irrespective of the few participants who felt that it would be difficult for the university to address community challenges due to certain limitations, most participants suggested that the university can be strategically positioned to address community needs in addition to its other missions. During a very vibrant focus group discussion with a selection of students, a male participant maintained that the university has an enormous potential at its disposal to transform local communities. He stated: "contrary to what some of the speakers have said, I think that the University of Buea has a lot of potentials to meet many of these developmental needs" (Lucas, male, 21-30, Molyko, 12 – 04 – 2013). He went on to substantiate his point:

The University of Buea has lecturers who can write projects which can be funded by non-governmental organisations. These projects can take care of the problem of lack of funds. Moreover, the local Council will not refuse somebody from executing a developmental project in the community which has secured funding.

Whilst it is true that academics can compete for relevant grants to fund development projects in the community, this thesis maintains that it should not however suggest that winning a grant to execute a development project is an easy task. Funders' interests and fierce competition can render the process of bidding for international research grants to support local developmental projects tough. However, research data revealed that there are funding schemes operated by the local council and the university, which an academic can address to support projects relevant to the community even though these are rudimentary. In addition to writing funding proposals, research data also suggested that the university can address community concerns through 1) rendering evidence-based advice to policy makers, 2) service learning activities in the field, 3) making resources at the disposal of the university available for community advantages and 4) fostering a collaborative framework which anchors on university and community competences to address mutual concerns. The fundamentality of collaboration between the university and the local community to identify and jointly execute projects that would be of utmost benefits to the community as well as the university was given significant attention.

8.6.2 Collaborating to address community needs

Whereas the idea of collaboration was thought to be essential to a university's ability to address the needs of a residential community, it was also essential within the enquiry process to examine the nature of existing collaborations between the university at the centre of this research and the wider community and if there were any. On this basis, varying views were expressed by participants:

There was no collaboration between the university and the community

Some university participants were categorical in their assertion that the university does not have any form of collaboration with the community and particularly, community-based organisations. A female student participant revealed:

Not at all! I have not seen any collaboration. If there were, we could have heard it being mentioned. There is a university community radio "Chariot FM", it keeps us informed of everything that the University of Buea does. I have not heard of any collaboration between the university and the community (Susan, female, 21-30, Molyko, 12 – 04 – 2013).

According to this participant, since she has not heard of any collaboration between the university and the community, it meant that there was no collaboration. But there could be evidence of collaboration she had not seen or heard of and therefore she could not definitely maintain that the university does not collaborate with the external community. A different female student participant maintained that the university has a nature of displaying any venture it gets into and since no collaboration has been publicised, there was none. This student elaborated:

I too have not heard of, because when the University of Buea does something, they show off and flag it to let everyone know that they have done it. They make a big show of it, and write billboards and paste everywhere. So I have not heard of anything. If they have not made any big show, it means it does not really exist (Pauline, female, 21-30, Molyko, 12-04-2013).

Although the account of this student of the university writing billboards and pasting everywhere may sound like an exaggeration, it was observed that the university generally has the tendency of publicly celebrating its accomplishments and milestones. However, it could also be possible that the university has some memorandum of understandings with some community-based organisations which ordinary members of the university may not be aware of. The following excerpt from the narrative of a male academic supports this assertion:

It is difficult to say, that is why I say there are some of these issues that are top management issues, individual staff may not know. But I know that the university sometimes work with the traditional authorities when there is the question of insecurity on campus (Joseph, male, 31-40, Bomaka, 04-04-2013).

From this account, it may be argued that there could be some covert or unpublicised collaborative agreements between the university and segments of the community which has not caught the attention of a majority of university members. Therefore, it can be inappropriate to assume that there was no collaboration between the university and the community simply on the basis of lack of information.

There was opportunistic collaboration between the university and the community

Many of the narratives on the nature of existing collaborations between the university and the wider community revealed that the university was involved in some forms of opportunistic collaboration. An academic illustrated:

I know that the university when it thinks of collaboration, it thinks in terms of collaborating with big corporations like the C.D.C and SONARA. The idea is that the university is looking at profit. They are trying to make money out of these organisations. So if the university were to be genuinely interested in collaboration with the community as such, it would be very helpful. I'm thinking in terms of community in the sense of villages and local people around. To my knowledge there is no such collaboration going on right now. Except that recently when the Vice-Chancellor ran into some difficulties in managing the university, he/she decides to get the chiefs involved and started collaborating with them. I don't know of any positive collaboration between the university and rural communities around. The tendency is to look towards rich corporations in the hope that they can make money out of the relationship (John, male, 41-50, GRA, 16-04-2013).

Whilst an opportunistic collaboration can enrich the university with financial resources to keep up with some of its operational costs, this thesis argues that sustainable collaboration would be built on trust, mutual responsibilities and benefits. Equity can also be considered a component of any meaningful collaboration (Barnes et al., 2009; Nocon, 2004; Thompson, Story and Butler, 2002) which guarantees a win-win outcome for collaborating partners (Gronski and Pigg, 2000). On the contrary, opportunistic

collaboration can be said to be manipulative and often does not endure. A member of staff was bold to assert that such an approach to collaboration was wrong. He explained:

Constant relationship with the community should replace opportunistic relationship so that priority needs of the community can be identified and the university seek ways to address them and not only receiving resources from the community (Stephen, male, 41-50, Bonduma, 10-04-2013).

By building and sustaining relationships with the community, an atmosphere of trust and synergy for knowledge and information exchange can be fostered in order to address mutual interests. Whilst many participants' narratives highlighted the need for relevant collaboration between the university and the community, they also suggested that collaboration can best be enhanced when it is underlined by effective communication.

8.7 The need for effective communication

Given that participants generally found it difficult to identify existing collaborations between the university and the community where both parties were engaged in meaningful dialogues aimed at addressing university and community concerns, it was expedient to ascertain what made collaboration a challenge. On this basis, a university administrator interviewed during the preliminary phase of field work maintained lack of effective communication as an obstruction to sustainable collaboration between the university and the community. He posited:

There is the question of communication because as it appears now, we have no forum in which we can come to know what the community expect of us. But we have many communication channels; we publish newsletters, we have websites, we hold seminars, we give interviews and so on about what the university can do but we do not know what the community expects from us (Magnus, GRA, 2011).

From this assertion, it can be maintained that it does not matter how many activities the university gets involved in or channels of communication it adopts; without a commitment for dialogue and interaction with the community, its mission to foster community, as well as national development within a collaborative framework is unlikely to be realised. It can also be noted from the quotation above that the university in the most part has been the one doing the talking or communicating to the community with little or no feedback from the community, possibly because there are no opportunities for the community to have their ideas listened to. Given this context, a question arises: how can the university effectively collaborate with the local community such that there would be effective communication between both parties? In the light of this question, ameliorating power difference within the university and between the university and the community and as well as adopting strategic links to capture community voices are some of the approaches identified in the research data.

8.7.1 The case of power at the university

Whilst the university at the centre of this research is locally based, it is driven by actors who are part of the management team headed by the Vice-Chancellor. Surprisingly, the narratives of some university members revealed that the management of the university possesses so much power and its Vice-Chancellor appears to be the embodiment and expressed identity of it. Drawing on the social construction of power, the management of the university was seen to be domineering and usually not willing to accommodate dissenting voices from other members of staff. The following excerpt from the transcript of a focus group discussion made reference to the lack of opportunities for students to have their concerns listened to by the university:

- Q: Is there any forum where you can actually share some of these ideas?
- Susan: Are you asking of a forum in this university where we can share these ideas?
- Q: Yes.
- Susan: Do you want the university to send the police after me? No way!!! I can't do that!!! – “they go come take me go lockam”³²

The other members of the focus group were asked if they shared the same view expressed by Susan and most of them said “Yes”. However, one female student maintained a contrary experience against the views of others which depicted the management of the university as undemocratic in the manner in which the university was being administered. This student posited:

On the contrary, we have experienced something different. At one moment in Banking and Finance department, we organised a workshop, invited people and the lecturers were there. We asked our questions on entrepreneurship and they were answered. We tabled our problems to them and most of our problems were solved. The Student Affairs' Officer of the Faculty was there and he explained the student guide to us and said most students are suffering because they do not know how to get their concerns through, they do not know their limits, their rights and responsibilities and channels to follow when tabling a matter (Catherine, female, 21-30, Molyko, 12-04-2013).

It is verifiable that the university has a Student Guide and there are tokens of democratic practices on campus. Moreover, the university has different organs such as the Congregation, the Senate, the Council and Committees through which different segments of the university can make vital contributions to influence the university's operations and direction. One staff member who was part of the management team of the university argued that the different organs of the university are intended to act as channels through which different members of the university can communicate their concerns to the university's management team. He stated:

³² a phrase in pidgin meaning, “I will be arrested and detained”

I think the university captures the opinions of his staff easily, through the various institutions they have. We have Faculty Boards, the Senate, and the Congregation, where we can discuss ideas, and that is fine at that level (Joseph, male, 31-40, Bomaka, 04-04-2013).

Whilst it is common place for some staff members of the university to speak in favour of the systems in place because of the need to secure their positions, personal affiliations and interests, a different staff member who is also part of the management team argued contrary to the view expressed by Joseph above. He maintained:

Departmental meetings, Senates, etc are places where we could actually formulate community-based programmes but you see, these meetings have so much to chew and so much wrangling goes on such that it becomes 'me, me, me', rather than 'us, us, us...' (Stephen, male, 41-50, Bonduma, 10-04-2013).

The idea of 'me, me, me' rather than 'us, us, us' expressed by this participant reveals a self-centred tendency that does not provide room for other voices to shape the course of events at the university, as well as the community. As such, many of the organs at the university said to enhance democratic practices could be seen as smokescreens which are stage-managed to give a false impression of participatory democracy. A senior staff member could not hide his view with respect to what he perceived to be an autocratic system at the university. He explained:

Things are pre-arranged, decisions are taken behind the scene and they come to the committees or meetings and just execute. Whatever the VC says, members of the meeting clap and says 'yes'. Even in the Faculty Boards, the Deans just come and dictate. It happens all the time even in the Senate. Pre-conceived positions are brought and implemented, and people just tend to clap them into being. That is the reality of the university. The structures are not democratic (John, male, 41-50, GRA, 16-04-2013).

Given existing power gaps between the management team and other members of the university, a question arises: what can be done to narrow the power gap for better internal communication, as well as external communication with the wider community? It can be argued that a strong internal communication has the propensity to engender a strong external communication.

8.7.2 Mitigating power difference at the university for better communication

The need for democratisation, transparency, distributed leadership and decentralisation are the recurrent themes raised by participants that can mitigate power difference at the university for enhanced communication within the university, as well as with the wider community.

Democratising the university

Whilst democracy is a loose concept with varying interpretations, the one central to this thesis is participatory democracy, which is, listening to the other side in principle and in practice (Mutz, 2006). One participant, who felt that the university was being managed in an autocratic manner, argued that

structures at the university are not given to dealing with issues democratically. Although the President of the Republic appoints the Vice-Chancellor (VC) and other top ranking university officials, this, according to this participant, is a violation of the law setting up the university which stipulated that the Vice-Chancellor for instance should be elected by his/her peers. It could hold that if the VC was elected by members of staff, he/she would be inclined to be accountable to the staff which may necessitate listening to their voices, hence fostering a democratic value at the university. According to Dewey (2012), a democratic culture is underpinned primarily by:

a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience. The extension in space of the number of individuals who participate in an interest so that each has to refer his own action to that of others, and to consider the action of others to give point and direction to his own, is equivalent to the breaking down of those barriers of class, race, and national territory which kept men from perceiving the full import of their activity... it is the widening of the area of shared concerns, and the liberation of a greater diversity of personal capacities which characterize a democracy (2012, p.44).

However, there is a potential flipside to the benefit of letting staff members elect a VC. This could narrow the university's potential to exclusively address the aspiration of its staff whereas the intervention of the State may take into consideration the demands of the nation and the wider community. Nonetheless, this thesis posits that a participatory form of democracy is helpful in enabling the university draw from a wide pool of ideas to lead and fashion its mission and objectives to better address the needs of the university, as well as the community.

Instituting transparency

Research data revealed that sometimes there is the tendency that when someone is appointed to a position of responsibility at the university, he/she ensures that only people from his or her tribe are his or her closest collaborators. The appointee side-lines and marginalises staff from other tribes or ethnic groups such that there is no collective sense of belonging and ownership of decisions in the department or at the level of the entire university. This phenomenon of side-lining members of staff from other ethnic groups other than the one the appointee is from could be referred to as "an ethnic entitlement to power". One participant explained this phenomenon:

An ethnic entitlement to power can be evident when indigenes within a locality feels that whosoever is going to be appointed to manage the helm of affairs of a State institution in the locality should be one of theirs. Once an indigene is appointed, the decision he/she takes is theirs and people from other tribes dare not interfere (Stephen, male, 41-50, Bonduma, 10-04-2013).

However, if the university would practise an inclusive form of governance and management, where people are given the opportunity to take responsibility to what they are supposed to do without bias and they do it in a transparent manner, everybody could certainly value it.

Fostering decentralisation and distributed leadership

Although there were a few isolated exceptions, most participants were of the view that power is centralised within the VC and his/her close collaborators, with little or no power for junior management staff and other members of the university. Whilst the university has decentralised structures such as Faculties, Departments, Schools and other units, it was felt that decentralisation was only in principle or on paper but devoid of practice. Decentralisation can be defined and enacted as “a process that is supposed to make decision making more appropriate to local contexts with the involvement of local actors and institutions” (Dunne, Akyeampong and Humphreys, 2007, p. 21). Some participants advanced that those heading Departments, Divisions and Services at the university have very limited powers to make decisions given that they are always expected to seek the views of top management. A male student member asserted:

Decentralisation is on paper and not in practice. This is because, and as it has been rightly mentioned and truly speaking, I will confess that the university is structured in such a way that the Vice Chancellor has so much power. At the departmental level, the power is not really much and anything they want to do, they must consult the Dean, the Dean must consult the Central Administration before anything can be done. They need to make it in such a way that the Departments can have some powers to do things without always seeking permission from the Central Administration (Federick, male, 21-30, Bokwango, 12-04-2013).

Initiatives to decentralise an institution such as a university can leave out crucial decision-making responsibility such as the power to allocate resources for the needs of a specific context (Dunne, Akyeampong and Humphreys, 2007). This can hamper the progress of the university in certain areas, given that the lack of decentralisation and accompanying empowerment could result in bottleneck and bureaucratic practices as all members of the institution are expected to align with a centralised system. This thesis therefore argues that it would be beneficial to the university’s progress that leadership or responsibility should not only be shared or distributed but people should also be empowered to function in their offices or positions with a significant amount of autonomy in decision making without constant interference by top management.

Given that democratisation, transparency and decentralisation could boost the university’s ability to capture the voices of its members to render its operations more robust, they might also enable the university to capture voices from the local community to enhance its engagement and developmental mission. But how can the university capture voices from the local community? Research data from university participants provides an opportunity to explore this.

8.7.3 Adopting channels to capture community voices

The following strategic channels through which the university can listen to the voices of local community members were identified by participants in their narratives: students’ projects; traditional

rulers; conferences; community advisory boards and research instruments. Whilst most of these channels are a repetition of what community members highlighted, there was however an emphasis on Students' Projects and Community Advisory Boards as strategic channels through which the university can capture the voices of community members to enhance its engagement and address community needs.

Capturing community voices through students' projects

Capturing community voices through students' reports from field activities such as internships or action projects emerged as a recurrent theme from the data. Though internship or project reports can unveil the voices of community members, a need was however suggested for student internships and projects to be underpinned by ethical standards (also see section 8.5.1 of the current chapter). One female student elaborated:

The problem we have is that students go and manufacture data and information which is not correct. And I think that is the main reason why some people do not even trust some of our reports. When you read one or two reports you can tell that these students are joking but how do you come across those who are serious? The system is not really organised. Everybody has to play their part to make the system organised. It does not rest only in the hands of the administration. If the students also take their part serious knowing that what is needed is real data from the field and this information that I am submitting is what I collected from the field, the administration can take them serious (Sophie, female, 21-30, Molyko, 19-04-2013).

It was encouraging to record the honesty and boldness of some participants irrespective of how sensitive an issue they were discussing such as the case cited above. Given the above assertion, this thesis maintains that the act of assembling false data and presenting fictitious reports to the university to earn academic credits was unethical and does not serve the potential of an internship/project report acting as a channel through which the university can be informed about community concerns. Therefore, it can be rightly argued that while field reports can verily provide insights into community needs, the reports should be trusted reports, underscored by a strong sense of ethics and civic responsibility on the part of the students.

Capturing community voices through a Community Advisory Board (CAB)

Whereas some university participants also maintained that the university can capture community voices through traditional authorities, it was also revealed that several chiefs are biased, corrupt, and egocentric, as such, they seldom adequately represent the concerns of their communities. Given this context, a Community Advisory Board (CAB) can be a better alternative to capturing the concerns of the community. But what is a CAB? One university member of staff explained:

You know in Africa, we have our chain of command and control. In the cultural context, you cannot get into a community without going through the chief or the quarter head or community leader, etc. That is the entry point. And somehow you want to have pre-set number of members by making sure that there is a fair representation of the community in that board. So the chief does know the organogram of command, right to the household and he tells you ‘we have a certain number of councillors and we have quarter heads, in this quarter there is a quarter head’, and in the quarters we also have opinion leaders or elites who contribute in the quarters. So you will be having representation from the counsellors that work with the chief, the quarter heads, and the elites. All these individuals can constitute a Community Advisory Board with the task of representing the community and speaking on their behalf (Stephen, male, 41-50, Bonduma, 10-04-2013).

Given that the structure of a CAB consists of more than one person drawn from different social backgrounds and segments of the community, it can be argued that it has an advantage over a single individual speaking on behalf of the community such as a chief. The basis of this argument is that it is likely many people would present a more robust analysis of community concerns than an individual will do. Secondly, the diverse representation in a CAB could provide an occasion for less bias and discrimination in its functioning. Furthermore, it can be suggested that it is easier to corrupt or manipulate a person than a group such as a CAB. Whilst the position of a traditional ruler in a CAB can be influential just like any other position, it can also be maintained that it is the responsibility of the moderator of such a group to create a level field for all participants to have a sense of belonging and take ownership over deliberations and decisions at a CAB meeting.

8.8 Conclusion

Drawing on this chapter, university participants viewed the role of the university within two perspectives, namely: a liberal role of the university which brings to focus the ethics and values it instils in learners and a neoliberal or instrumental role of the university which sees education and training at the centre of socio-economic transformation of communities and paving the way for graduate employment and resourcefulness in nation building. Even though community members were concerned with the rising trend in graduate unemployment, it can be underscored that the university could address the endogenous factors responsible for this such as the lack of student orientation, absence of course relevance and lack of practical skills. Exogenous factors contributing to graduate unemployment such as the lack of facilities to foster training at the university, public corruption, heavy taxes and cumbersome governmental processes might be addressed by the State and relevant policies.

Community-based adult education, community-based research and community-based service learning were generally seen to have the potential to benefit the community extensively even though they have had little impact in it. Distance education which can be construed as part of adult education has the potential to 1) enhance the capacity of professionals in the community, 2) provide better services in the community through trained professionals and 3) lead to job promotion. However, the scheme can be enhanced through provision of adequate manpower, financial resources, and infrastructures. Whilst

participants overwhelmingly expressed familiarisation with service learning activities in the community, they also raised concerns with the way it is being administered. Elements which impede its potential to address the needs of the local community within the framework of development were identified, such as 1) internship being marred by unethical practices, 2) inconvenient timing of internship, 3) lack of clear-cut objectives of securing community benefits, 4) lack of uniformity across academic departments, 5) absence of dialogue between the university and the community and 6) lack of follow-up on students' internship reports. Consequently, research data revealed the need for community participation in framing and firming up service learning objectives and processes; community and university education on the nature and merits of different forms of service learning such as internships and action projects; maintaining time flexibility on internship duration and period; ensuring uniformity of fundamental principles underpinning service learning practices across academic disciplines and departments; allocating adequate budget to cover relevant costs associated with service learning; operationalising internships and other forms of service learning with an ethical underlining and maximising service learning reports to determine and address community needs.

Whilst most participants acknowledged priority needs of the community, research data revealed that the university can be positioned to address these needs by rendering evidence based advice to policy makers; rethinking service learning activities in the field; making resources at the disposal of the university available for community advantages and embracing a collaborative framework centred on university and community competences to foster mutual existence. In addition, there is a need for the university to go beyond an opportunistic form of collaboration to establish and nurture lasting dialogue and communication with the community. Such lasting and beneficial dialogue between the university and the community demands the narrowing of perceived power gaps existing within the university and between the university and the wider community. Through democratisation processes at the university, instituting and fostering transparency in university management, empowering decentralised structures and adopting relevant channels through which community voices can communicate community ideas, power gaps can be narrowed, community concerns ascertained and potentially addressed within the framework of the university's engagement. In recognising relevant channels through which community voices can be captured by the university, the significance of service learning reports and Community Advisory Boards can come to the fore.

CHAPTER 9

SUMMATIVE FINDINGS AND GENERAL CONCLUSION

9.1 Introduction

Whilst Chapters six, seven and eight were concerned with the analysis of the research data and bringing out findings, this chapter centres on presenting findings from a summative and in some cases, comparative perspective and giving the thesis a general conclusion. The intention here is to encapsulate the stand out points and key findings in a succinct and concise manner, and conclude the thesis with implications of the case study for the State, the community and the idea of the university.

Given that this research is predominantly underpinned by the interpretivist research paradigm which hinges on the notion of multiple realities derived from the inter-subjective construction of shared human perception and cognitive apparatus (Hay, 2011), and drawing on analysis and findings in Chapters six, seven and eight, the following key inferences can be made: 1) people's perceptions on the role of the university are diverse although research data revealed a strong emphasis on the instrumental potential of the university to stimulate social and economic prosperity within a context of poverty, unemployment and community needs, 2) local community members may lack or have very limited formal education but they are aware of their needs and local knowledge can complement the university's community engagement and operations, 3) the university has diverse opportunities to capture community voices and ascertain community needs and these opportunities are not limited to avenues outside the university but also include members of the university, 4) having a mere presence in the community in the form of community-based service learning is not enough to foster community development. The university can establish and take advantage of interconnections to achieve mutually beneficial operations, 5) the university can rethink its different forms of engagement and particularly community-based service learning which the community is already very familiar with as a potential pathway to fulfil its civic and service mission, as well as engender community development. These key findings from the research data and others will be expounded in the subsequent sections.

9.2 The instrumental potential of the university within a context of poverty, unemployment and community needs

From the analysis of research data, it was evident that both groups of participants underscored the instrumental potential of the university in addition to its traditional liberal role of fostering education which has an inherent outcome of promoting certain ethics and values. The emphasis on the instrumental potential of the university was more evident in the narratives of community participants

who were outspoken in calling on the university to be more responsive to fostering graduate employability and community development.

9.2.1 The case of graduate employment

It was evident from research data that the university can be construed as a gateway to employment. Underlining reasons for graduate employment are diverse. Whilst some university participants maintained that graduate employment has the potential to economically empower young people towards a good future, it was however not clear what constitutes this good future. However, most community participants were forthcoming with their opinion that graduate employment has the potential to 1) foster self-reliance as graduates would no longer depend on sponsors or parents as a source of livelihood, 2) contribute to the economic sustainability of families as employed graduates would be able to earn income and economically assist families, 3) enhance the sustainability of university education as employed graduates can take up sponsorship of loved ones at the university and 4) contribute to nation building and community development through the services of employed graduates.

Although research data revealed the potential of the university to enhance the employability of graduates, it also did reveal that there was a crisis of graduate unemployment in the community. Drawing on participants' voices, diverse reasons could be advanced for this crisis such as: academic programmes at the university being more theoretically inclined than practically and professionally skewed; some programmes at the university are deemed not relevant to community demands; many graduates lack entrepreneurial skills to start-up new businesses; the university is considered not properly connected with the community to enhance graduate integration; the university lack adequate facilities and infrastructures to enhance the training of students for local and global markets; State policies and governance structures do not provide adequate support for new businesses; and many students of the university lack proper career orientation and are enrolled on academic programmes that provide very minimal prospects for jobs or employment. Given that some of these reasons for the rise in graduate unemployment are exogenous factors, about which the university may struggle to address such as the need for appropriate State policies and governance structures to support the emergence of new businesses, it could be rightly maintained that the university has the capacity to address the endogenous factors which lies within its reach.

By enhancing the connection between the university and the society, employers and the industrial world so that academic programmes at the university can be customised to serve local and global markets; operationalising an appropriate counselling unit to provide career guidance to students; promoting professionalism and fostering entrepreneurial skills for job creation, the university can make effective contributions to graduate employability. In addition to the university's potential to foster graduate employability, it can be considered that the university has the potential to stimulate community development.

9.2.2 Positioning the university to foster sustainable community development

In addition to viewing the university as a potential gateway to employment, research data overwhelmingly suggested that the university can serve the need for sustainable community development. Whereas sustainability can be defined as “improvement that is enduring and that draws on resources and support at a rate that matches the pace of change without compromising the development of the surrounding environment” (Nocon, 2004, p. 712), the concept of community development sustained in this thesis is concerned with collectively addressing common needs of the community in order to improve the living condition of the citizenry. Whilst a university’s involvement in community development is consistent with the notion of the ecological university which has a characteristic feature of addressing collective interests and care for the wider community (Barnett, 2011), this thesis maintains that it is necessary for the university to acknowledge means through which community interests can be determined.

9.2.2.1 Recognising opportunities to determine community needs

Whilst research data revealed that the university has diverse opportunities to determine community interests, this thesis maintains that there is need for the university to recognise these opportunities. It can be ascertained that “when communities speak for themselves, incorrect assumptions can be identified before they become influential” (Lasker and Guidry, 2009, p.218). Recognising and adopting opportunities to listen to the community, as well as the university can form the basis for collective action which is an essential ingredient for community development. Given that both categories of participants revealed common challenges the community was facing such as limited access to potable water, poor access to electricity supply, the deplorable nature of roads, inadequate agricultural performance and graduate unemployment, it was also evident that the university could ascertain community needs and ideas through its members and more particularly through reports from service learning activities in the community. However, there is a need for these community-based activities to be well structured and underpinned by ethical measures to guarantee reliability and trustworthiness of the resultant reports. It was also enlightening when research data revealed that the university can capture community concerns through the community experiences of university members in addition to reports from community-based projects. It can be rightly revealed that most students and university members of staff live in the local community and can articulate what community needs are on the basis of their experiences and interactions in the community. The fact that both university and community participants articulated similar challenges faced by the community also supported this assertion. This finding undermines any idea that may suggest that university members can only articulate what concerns their welfare within the university milieu and only non-university members living in the community can articulate community concerns. However, there is need for appropriate measures to be taken and a relevant environment established if university members would be able to communicate community concerns on

the basis of their community-based experiences. Furthermore, ideas that emanate from the university purportedly designated to represent local community concerns can always be checked against other local community sources for confirmation.

Other strategic channels through which the university can capture community voices to inform its engagement, as well as form the basis for collective action towards community development abound. Community-based organisations, tribal meeting groups, opinion leaders, suggestion boxes, traditional rulers, workshops, symposiums, seminars and community advisory boards present opportunities through which the university can link-up with the community and determine its needs or ideas. Although the university at the centre of this project have occasionally had contacts with traditional rulers, it can be maintained that some traditional rulers wield so much political power, are self-centred, greedy and biased, and may not be able to effectively represent the views or concerns of their subjects. Whilst taking traditional rulers (such as local chiefs) through an educational scheme may give them an appropriate orientation towards their role as representatives of their villages, it can be argued that a Community Advisory Board whose membership comprises of traditional rulers and other notables of the community would be a better alternative to capturing community voices than solely through the occasion of local rulers. Whereas community voices have the potential to convey indigenous knowledge, contribute ideas towards enhancing standards at the university, provide insight into community challenges and orientate programmes at the university to meet local demands, research data overwhelmingly revealed that there is a need for power gaps within the university and between the university and the community to be narrowed for effective connections, dialogue and collaboration.

9.2.2.2 Narrowing power gaps for dialogue and collaboration

Existing forms of short term and opportunistic collaborations between the university and the community do not guarantee lasting benefits for the university and the community. There is therefore the need for the university to establish collaborative partnerships within its community, as well as with the wider community by narrowing existing power gaps so that an atmosphere of dialogue can ensue. Given that university students and staff can also act as strategic links through which the university can determine community concerns, it is also needful for there to be an enabling environment at the university that promotes collective participation in university management and operations. Backed by findings from research data, this thesis posits that collective involvement of university members in the daily management and operations of the university can be engendered through transparency in university operations, adoption of a distributed form of leadership, empowering of decentralised structures, and promotion of participatory democracy.

Furthermore, in order to mitigate existing power gaps and foster dialogue so that the university can effectively listen to members of its community and the wider community and benefit from a wide range of ideas to inform and inspire its engagement in the community, the perceptions of superiority and

inferiority complexes need to be dislodged from the university and the community respectively. By rooting out existing superiority and inferiority complexes from the university and the community through relevant connections, collaboration, and dialogue, the university stands the chance of benefitting from enormous resources available within its community and the wider community to enhance its activities, and the wider community can have some of its challenges factored into the university's engagement and potentially resolved. However, for the university's engagement to play a transformational role in the community, research data underscores the need for enhancement.

9.3 Enhancing the university's engagement to address community needs

Research data revealed that the university's engagement in the community comprises mostly of community-based service learning, community-based research and community-based adult education with the majority of participants making reference to community-based service learning. Research data also revealed that these dimensions of the university's engagement have presented limited benefits to the community. Drawn from participants' narratives, some of the limited benefits associated with community-based service learning for instance include an occasion for knowledge exchange, an opportunity for manpower deployment, a gateway to employment and a platform for generous services. Whilst research data revealed that different forms of service learning such as internships and action projects have an enormous potential to address community needs and stimulate development, the following issues identified in this thesis can hamper the scheme's potential: students carrying out service learning solely for an academic credit without regard for civic responsibility and commitment to addressing community needs; service learning being marred by unethical practices of students making up data and presenting fictitious reports to academic departments; lack of uniformity of fundamental principles guiding service learning processes across different academic disciplines of the university; seldom involvement of the community in the process of designing service learning objectives and processes nor providing the community with support for training interns; period and duration assigned for service learning projects are not sufficient for adequate enhancement of learning experience and profitable contribution to local communities; lack of dissemination and follow-up of service learning reports, and inadequate knowledge in the community, as well as the university on the potential and ideologies underpinning service learning.

In the face of these issues, the university's engagement within the context of community-based service learning can be enhanced to address community needs and promote development if the university would take the following measures: 1) involve community members as active partners within a service learning scheme, and through this, the scheme stands greater chances of identifying and addressing community concerns because people living in communities can acknowledge and describe situations in their neighbourhoods and host organisations' can ascertain their capacities such that they are able to take in the number and quality of students they can train and who can be of benefit to the organisation or the

community; 2) negotiate the period and duration for service learning and this should involve the student, the university official and the community given that different parties may have a preferred period for it; 3) promote university and community education on the concept of service learning to highlight its merits to the student, the university and the community as some members of staff at the university mostly sees it as an opportunity to grade students' report, some community members consider it as extra burden on their time and scarce resources and some students mostly see it as an opportunity to earn marks; 4) allocate adequate budget to subsidise/finance the cost of materials used by students in host organisations/communities and offer remuneration to some professionals in the community who are taking time off to provide students with necessary trainings and skills; 5) unify and enforce fundamental principles to underpin service learning in different academic department where it is operated and good practices in some of the departments can be emulated by other departments through a standardised process managed by an outreach or service learning centre whose prime mission could be to foster and ensure that service learning standards and quality are maintained across disciplines where internships and other forms of service learning are an integral part; and 6) disseminate and follow-up trustworthy service learning reports as this will give room to community members to access relevant recommendations from the field to address their concerns and it is also worth stressing that a relevant means of dissemination that supports community access should be adopted such as organising seminars in communities or publishing in open access journals.

In addition to community-based service learning, other dimensions of the university's engagement can be enhanced to benefit the community like never before. It can be maintained that adult education can be more relevant to community development through the establishment of community centres where short courses to enhance the capacity of community professionals, as well as ordinary people can be organised. By operating adult educational projects in the community and amongst non-university members, it takes the university from the margins of society to the centre of society. This has the potential to encourage community participation within the framework of the university's engagement due to proximity and power gaps between the university and the community can also be mitigated. Although it can be acknowledged that the university's engagement has an active presence in the community, it was evident in the research data that what counts for community development should go beyond having an active presence to having an interconnected presence.

9.4 Towards the “Interconnected University”

Whilst the University of Buea like many other African universities operates within a context of certain challenges such as financial and infrastructural limitations (Taal, 2011; Sawyerr, 2004; Teferra and Altbach, 2004), which hampers its effectiveness in addressing community needs and contributing to community development, this thesis has argued that the university can nonetheless benefit from interconnections. The significance of interconnections highlight occasions for mutually beneficial

connections where the university and its members connect and are also being connected to and parties within such connections are able to construct shared aims or complement the capacity of one another in addressing common goals. This notion of the interconnected university is also consistent with the idea of “community development” which underscores the need for collective action (Christenson et al., 1989; Flora et al., 1992). Whilst it was noted that the university at the centre of this research has some presence in the community through its engagement activities, research data also maintained that these engagement activities such as internships were mostly not interconnected with addressing the concerns of the community in addition to other university objectives. Some community and university members felt that the local community was seldom involved in crafting the structure of the university’s engagement activity such as service learning and as a consequence, it rarely contributes to improving the living conditions of community dwellers and fostering development. Consequently, this thesis advances the idea of the Interconnected University.

The idea of the Interconnected University brings to the fore the need for the university as an institution to establish strong cords of relationships within itself, as well as with different segments of the community and the State to determine shared ideas, and galvanise collective participation/action towards a common mission of addressing community but also university and State aspirations. Through interconnections, the university can leverage some of its resources to address specific community crises, different segments of the community can also leverage some of their resources to complement the university’s limited resources; the State can benefit from knowledge generated at the university to inform and shape its policies and the university’s engagement operationalised within a collaborative context for university, community and State benefits. This notion of interconnection can further be said to capture the spirit of Ubuntu in university, community and State relationships for mutually beneficial engagements, whereby each party’s contribution towards the development of the other can be seen as an expression of solidarity and a sense of shared belonging.

Whereas the findings articulated above revolve around the university as an institution, yet the university does not operate in isolation. The next section will explore the implications of the findings to the State, the community and the general idea of the university.

9.5 Implications for practice

The findings of this research also present implications for the State, the wider community and the idea of the university.

9.5.1 Implication for the State

Given that the university at the centre of this research is State owned and influenced by State policies, the State was implicated in the enquiry process. For instance, exogenous factors that impede the

university's involvement in community development such as inadequate subsidies, infrastructures and facilities to enhance its teaching, research and service missions could be addressed by the State. As evident in this research, the university can be positioned as a key player in the drive for national development which is central to Cameroon's vision 2035. Consequently, greater investment of the State in its operational costs can be considered worthwhile.

Furthermore, the revealed need for the university to be democratised so as to enhance its participation as an institution, as well as the participation of its members in societal development is largely predicated on the governance structure of the State and its policies. Given that policies are intended to articulate standards or rules for the conduct of individuals, organisations and institutions (Lerner, Sparks and McCubbin, 1999), when they are skewed to favour a given system, they may impede the university's involvement in addressing local needs and fostering community transformation. There is therefore the need for the State to work in partnership with the university and members of the wider community to design relevant policies in the interest of all. By promoting participatory democracy and giving voice to the interests of different members of the university and segments of the community with the goal of addressing common concerns, the State can be pivotal in fostering community development. Further still, in order to enhance the democratisation process at the university, the State can lessen its grip and control over it for university freedom and State policies can be informed by evidence based ideas emanating from community-based research or community-based service learning outcomes.

9.5.2 Implication for the Community

The university at the core of this research is also part of the wider community (Mayfield, Hellwig and Banks, 1999) and one participant asserts: "anything that happens in the community would also affect the university" (Cornelius, male, 51-60, Molyko, 27-04-2013) and vice-versa. Given the university's presence in the wider community, this thesis posits the need for the community to regard the university as a fundamental asset positioned with the potential to foster its development. Therefore, the community could seek partnership with the university to jointly articulate shared aims and secure mutual benefits such that the university can leverage its competences and resources for community development and the community leverage its own capacity and resources for university gains. To buttress this and as mentioned earlier under section 7.6.2, a participant (Johnson, Bonduma, 2011) interviewed during the preliminary phase of fieldwork revealed that on the basis of a mutual agreement, a village provided the university with a water source and in return, the university constructed a village hall for the community. This thesis maintains that this kind of good practice which highlights a win-win situation gives the community and the university reasons for collaborative engagement. Furthermore, a win-win collaborative framework between the university and the community has the potential to help both parties cut down financial costs in areas where each is able to provide support to the other.

Drawing on the idea of Ubuntu which has characteristic features of care, hospitality, respect and responsibility within members of a community (Hailey, 2008), this thesis also argues that members of the community need to demonstrate care not only towards other fellow humans but also towards institutions in the community such as universities and more particularly those that have a service mission. By demonstrating care and solidarity towards the university, the community would not only be preoccupied with what the university is offering the community in terms of service but also what the community is offering the university to enable it fulfil its mission. For instance, research data revealed that it would be more beneficial to the community should the university operate community centres to advance adult education. Not only would a university's community resource centre act as a suitable venue to run short courses for community adults, it can also act as a friendly meeting point where members of the university and the community can meet for dialogue, reflection and draw inspiration from one another on a wide range of issues affecting the university and the community. Furthermore, such a venue has the potential to ease any power dichotomy existing between the university and the community as both parties are able to converge to co-construct, co-diffuse and co-apply relevant knowledge for university and community benefits. However, the university may not have the means to construct a community centre. Given that such a venture would benefit the community, the community can provide suitable venues for the university to use or bankroll cost of renting a community property to advance the university's agenda for adult education. Furthermore, the community could overcome any perceived state of inferiority complex and rise to the occasion of partnering with the university to extend a significant mission of the university in relevant areas of the community.

9.5.3 Implication for the idea of the university

In Barnett's (2011) concept of the ecological university, he maintained that the university has both the position and responsibility to care for itself and the wider community where it finds itself. Through care, the university is able to demonstrate a conscience of civic responsibility towards the wider community. Whilst Barnett also asserts that the ecological university acts in collective interests to foster this care for itself and the wider community, his ideology did not clarify what constitutes collective interests or how they can be ascertained. Given the need to push the boundary further and conceptualise better ways, the idea of the university can be of utmost benefit to mankind and local communities, Barnett maintains:

The contemporary debate over higher education is, then, both narrow and is marked by an insecurity about how we might move forward. We require, therefore, in the first place, a proliferation of ideas of the university, if only to begin to demonstrate that things could be other than they are (Barnett, 2013, p.5).

Drawing on this assertion, this thesis advances the idea of the Interconnected University to address local needs and foster community development. Whilst the local community in the context of this research had priority needs and concerns over the nature of the university's engagement and relation with the community, this thesis argues that the university can fundamentally be a force for community transformation through interconnections. By complementing its active presence in the community with interconnections, uneven power relations and communication gaps existing within the university and between the university and different segments of the local community which had hitherto limited the university's engagement from addressing local needs can be mitigated. Whilst prioritising engagement for university and community benefits, the university can adopt relevant channels to ascertain community ideas and concerns; embrace a collaborative form of engagement; broaden participation; operate accessible community centres; research local concerns such as water supply, agricultural systems and electricity generation; combine theory with more practical insights, and customise the educational system and programmes for local, as well as global relevance. By these, its interconnectedness can be epitomised and the university seen as an agent of community development.

9.6 General conclusion

This project which ran for three years involved empirical research into a university's engagement within a geographical location and how this could address local needs and foster community development. The University of Buea and its surrounding community of the Municipality of Buea were chosen to be the case study due to my familiarity with the research context and easy accessibility. Although this part of the country which falls within the English speaking zone of Cameroon is distinct from French speaking zones, I argue that the findings of the project can be applied to other parts of Cameroon and the world. The findings can be used to discuss and model a university's engagement in the local community, especially where developmental needs abound and there is an overall desire for improvement in the living conditions of the citizenry. My position as an insider/outsider and role as a researcher in the project was discussed in Chapter three and I acknowledge the biases/tensions this might have had within the enquiry process and the findings resulting from it, even as Fook (1999) maintains that "the researcher is unavoidably located politically, culturally and socially, and that her or his experience and perceptions are necessarily mediated through the lens of their own body, biography and changing contexts" (1999, p.14).

Whilst the research suffered from the limitation of time constraint as a PhD study, there are however prospects for future studies resulting from it. In this regard, the adoption of a different methodological path such as Action Participatory Research is in view to further probe some of the findings. For instance, an Action Participatory Research can create a practical scenario for community members to participate in designing a service learning curriculum which would be operationalised in the community and the outcomes examined in the light of addressing local needs and fostering community

development. Furthermore, it would be appropriate at some point to complement this research on a single case study with another research on another university or multiple universities to come up with a comparative study which can potentially articulate best practices in different locations of the world and universities/communities can have the opportunity to draw on a variety of outcomes.

Given that many participants expressed a strong desire to have their voices heard and the findings of this research communicated to them and officials at the University of Buea, this research acknowledges such ethical responsibility. Therefore, appropriate actions will be taken to convey the findings of this research to the Management Team of the University of Buea and relevant community members such as those who participated in the focus group held in the community. In doing so, this research will be upholding its ethical responsibilities of providing feedback.

In conclusion, this thesis argues that the university can play a transformational role within a context of poverty, graduate unemployment, and community needs. Even though the university was seen as not maximising its potential primarily due to lack of interconnections with different segments of the local community and within the university, it can nonetheless take measures to revitalise its role. The university's engagement activities such as community-based research, community-based adult education and more particularly community-based service learning are potential avenues through which the university can address local needs and foster community development. By complementing its active presence in the community with interconnections, uneven power relations and communication gaps existing within the university and between the university and different segments of the local community which had limited the university's engagement from addressing local needs can be mitigated. The university can optimise its interconnections by prioritising engagement; adopting relevant channels to capture community voices such as service learning reports; embracing a collaborative form of engagement; broadening participation; operating accessible community centres; researching local concerns such as water supply, agricultural systems and electricity generation; combining theory with more practical insights, and customising educational programmes for local, as well as global relevance. Through these, the university can be seen not only as an agent of community development but also fostering mutually beneficial engagement.

Appendix 1

Diary entries of main fieldwork

25th March - 1st June 2013

25TH MARCH 2013

- The Journey began and I left the United Kingdom for Cameroon through Brussels (as it was an indirect flight) for the main phase of field work, taking along with me an interview guide, introductory letter, ethics approval, recording device and my luggage.
- I arrived Brussels at about 10:30 pm and after a sleep over at the airport, I caught the next flight bound for Cameroon at 10:30 am.

26TH MARCH 2013

- I arrived Cameroon at 5:30 pm and on arrival I was immediately greeted by heat (given that I had just moved from winter in the United Kingdom to the dry season in Cameroon) and rowdiness at the airport. Although my bags arrived safely, I realised one had been skilfully unzipped by an unknown person and some of my personal effects had been removed. No official at the airport could accept responsibility for such a perverse act.
- From the airport, I was ferried to Buea the capital of South West Region of Cameroon where I was to reside throughout the period of fieldwork.
- Shortly after my arrival in Buea, I conceived that it would be good for me to have five people in the planned focus group discussions. I reasoned that limiting the number to five, rather than having a larger group, would give every member of the focus group an opportunity to share their views, rather than having a larger group that would be dominated by fewer voices.
- Furthermore, I also conceived that it would be good to have all genders represented in the focus groups, even though I intend to have more women than men. The intention here was to give the women a voice, given that the society in which they live is male dominated and they tend to be shy when underrepresented in discussion forums.
- After a moment of discussion with my host on the subject of my research, and my desire to have all the recorded interviews transcribed before returning to the United Kingdom, she suggested that I should recruit a secretary.
- Given the need for a secretary, my host promised I could use a desk top computer at her residence which could be used for the purpose of interview transcription. Furthermore, she promised to arrange for an announcement to be read in her local church about a job opening for a secretary to work for me.

27th MARCH 2013

- I started this day by planning to go out and meet as many individuals as possible in different neighbourhoods and the university. My intention here was to build relationships which may eventually result in the recruitment of willing participants to be interviewed.
- My first stop was at the University of Buea where I met former colleagues who were all happy to see me and curious to know what my research was about and how far I had gone into the programme.
- To demonstrate my friendliness, I shared some chocolates that I had brought to some of the employees of the university, friends and loved ones.
- I was unable to meet many of the administrators as they were having a Senate meeting on this day. However, I was able to meet and talk with the private secretary of the Vice- Chancellor who promised to facilitate my contact with the Vice-Chancellor and to obtain the university's written consent for me to recruit and interview members of the university.
- Some of the employees of the university who were happy with my research promised to help me with photocopying any documents I may need.
- Given that I needed to have internet access to maintain contact with my supervisor and host university in the United Kingdom; I proceeded to inquire about how to get a portable internet modem that provided wireless access to the internet.

28TH MARCH 2013

- I successfully paid for an internet key (modem) this morning but was unable to connect my laptop to the internet. I later spent the greater part of the day trying to obtain internet access but did not succeed. I planned taking my laptop to the service provider the following day to see if they can resolve the problem.
- I later visited the University of Buea and attempted to use the internet but did not succeed as the whole place was shutting down in view of the Easter holiday which was commencing the following day.
- While at the university, I came in contact with a student from the Political Science Department who was sitting outside of the Information Technology (IT) Centre of the university. As I sat near to him, I started a conversation and eventually shared the purpose of my visit to Buea. After inquiring whether he would be interested to be interviewed as a participant in my research, he joyfully accepted and we scheduled to conduct the interview on Tuesday the 2nd of April at 9 am at the University.

- I later visited the Department of Economics and Management where I met the coordinator of the department, whom I had known during my period of service at the university, and he was happy to see me. Following our conversation, I indicated my willingness to carry out a focus group interview with some of the students of the department and he assured me that would not be a problem at all.
- Following that I visited the Department of Women and Gender Studies to see the head of the department I had spoken with prior to my arrival in Cameroon to help with the setting up of a focus group of students. Although he was not there, I met a colleague of his who did recognise me and promised to facilitate the recruitment of students from the department to be part of the focus group.
- I later visited other colleagues at the university and members of the community I had known over the years to reignite past relationships.
- In conclusion, I sensed the day was successful with respect to setting the stage for the commencement of interviews in the coming days.

29TH MARCH 2013

- Today marked a public holiday in Cameroon and consequently offices and many public places remained closed.
- I continued making informal contacts and building relationships with members of the community in the different neighbourhoods. Many of those I spoke to showed willingness to be interviewed.
- After several fail attempts to connect to the internet, by mid-night I succeeded.

30TH MARCH 2013

- I continued relationship building by going out to meet different people and families in the neighbourhoods and on the street and having conversations with them.
- I met the proprietor of a local Christian radio station at his home and we had a lengthy discussion, during which, I mentioned the subject of my research. He expressed willingness to be interviewed and also invited me to visit the radio station. It is worth noting that I served at this local radio station as a broadcaster for a period of over four years, long before I started the PhD.

31ST MARCH 2013

- Today is Sunday and being a predominantly Christian nation, churches would be crowded with devoted worshippers.
- I started the day with a visit to the Christian radio station where I ministered live to listeners on a biblical subject.
- I later visited a local church in one of the villages called Muea where I was warmly welcomed by the pastor and members of the church, some of whom recognised me
- I anticipated fostering relationships, and subsequently interviewing, some of these members who lived in different neighbourhoods of the municipality of Buea.

1ST APRIL 2013

- As I started this day, I planned to get the individual consent form and interview guide photocopied, proceed to the university and endeavour to see the Vice-Chancellor for the university's consent.
- I got the individual consent forms and interview guides photocopied and ready to commence interviewing.
- I attempted to see the Vice-Chancellor but she was not on seat. I was asked by her private secretary to come back the following day at 2:00 pm.
- I had an assurance that the consent of the university will eventually come through and it was only a matter of due process and bureaucracy causing delay, thus I proceeded to have conversations with some university staff (most of whom are my former colleagues) and inquire about their willingness to be interviewed.
- I succeeded to secure an appointment with a university member of staff to be interviewed the following day.

2ND APRIL 2013

- I began this day with a visit to the university for an appointment to interview a student of level 400 in the Department of Political Science. Prior to meeting up with the student, I came in contact with a former colleague who was recently appointed as the Faculty Officer of one of the faculties. I accompanied him to his office where we had a cordial conversation.
- I also met, spoke to and handed a copy of my interview guide to the head of the Department of Women and Gender Studies in view of an interview with him as well as assistance with the recruitment of some students for a focus group discussion.

- By 10:00 am, I started interviewing the student from the political science department that I had an appointment with and the interview lasted for 45 minutes. At the end of the exercise, the student expressed his happiness to have taken part in the process as it gave him the opportunity to share his experience.
- I later met a community member who does business on campus. After a moment of conversation with her, she expressed willingness to be interviewed. She was later interviewed.
- By 2:00 pm, I was at the Vice-Chancellor's office to see her. Despite the fact that the private secretary asked me to come at 2:00 pm, I ended up seeing her after 4:00 pm. I felt disappointed that I had wasted time just sitting and waiting.
- Upon seeing the Vice-Chancellor, she directed my request for consent to the Deputy Vice – Chancellor in charge of research whom I later met. He asked me to come back the following Monday as he was due to travel to the nation's capital and would not have the time to discuss with me at the moment.

3rd APRIL 2013

- I succeeded today in scheduling an interview appointment with two of the Vice-Deans of the university. An interesting feature of these two appointments stood out. Both on separate occasions refused to be handed or take a look at the interview guide prior to their interview. They argued that it is much more preferable for their response to be spontaneous rather than being pre-meditated. One of them likened the act of securing pre-meditated responses to the written speeches politicians are accustomed to. While I considered their observations unique, other participants appreciated the fact that they were given interview guides which prepared them for interviews.

4th APRIL 2013

- I succeeded in interviewing two (2) people today: a non-academic staff member of the University of Buea and a Vice-Dean.
- Apart from the Vice-Dean's interview, which was by appointment, the interview with the non-academic staff was opportunistic in the following way:
 - As I visited the university, I had a time of discussion with a former colleague which eventually tended to centre on the subject of my research. As the discussion went on, I realised he was saying things which could constitute vital data. Instead of resolving to writing down emerging ideas out of the discussion, I conceived it would be good if he would be one of the participants in the inquiry process, with his word recorded. I asked if

he was willing to be interviewed and he accepted joyfully and we transformed the non-recorded conversation into a recorded inquiry process.

- In the course of the interview with the Vice-Dean, which went well, he handed me some of his publications which highlighted and supported some of the issues he raised in the interview.
- Later in the day, I conceived it would be beneficial for me to:
 - Design a short form for the description of participants;
 - Secure documentary evidences where possible to support some interviews.

5th APRIL 2013

- I proceeded today to pick up a copy of the Faculty of Social and Management Science's brochure of the University of Buea. I conceived that this would provide additional/supporting information to some of the interviews carried out with members the faculty.

6th APRIL 2013

- I started this day by having a retrospective look at the condition of my stay in Buea so far. The intention here was to connect my experience with the condition of life of ordinary people living in Buea and the municipality. I was able to note the following:
 - Since my arrival in Buea, I have observed periodic power failures. Some people burn candles as a survival strategy to provide light and I consider this can be dangerous in the sense that it can cause an entire apartment or house to be set ablaze if candle flames are not properly handled. The following photo of a candle light was taken during a moment of power failure while I was in the field.



- There has been constant rationing of water in the town of Buea, with the taps flowing intermittently. The effect is for tap water to flow again after a day's interval. As a survival

strategy, community members collect water in large drums (as shown below) to be used when the taps stop to flow. The problem with this is that water not properly kept or stored is likely to be contaminated which could lead to water borne diseases.



- Internet connections are very unreliable and broadband speed is very slow, posing a challenge to online research, social communication and the connection of community members with the rest of the world.
- The town of Buea has just one main highway that runs through and divides it into two halves as seen below. This makes accessibility of the different neighbourhoods and sections of the town difficult



- Lack of time keeping. I observed that you can succeed in making an appointment with someone at a particular time but hardly ever would the time be kept as people tend not to keep to time.
- Given the state of banditry and insecurity in the neighbourhoods, I conceived it is essential for me to make multiple copies of the data I collected and keep it in different locations for the purpose of safety. The wisdom here was that should a thief break into my room and steal a storage device containing my data, I have a backup kept somewhere out of his/her reach.
- Later today, I was accompanied by a friend (field assistant) I had known over the years to a village within the municipality of Buea called Bokwai.



This picture reveals a house at Bokwai village centre with a display of a small-scale business in front of it.

- The reason I was accompanied by a field assistant, who is also a friend, was because he was born in the municipality of Buea, grew up there and was well known in the municipality compared to me. Given his familiarity with the municipality and the villages around, he could introduce me to different homes, families, and inhabitants. It is worth noting that he is the same person who accompanied me to many of the Chief's palaces I visited during the preliminary phase of my field work.
- The village of Bokwai is one of the several rural communities (villages) in the municipality of Buea with a population of about 700 inhabitants. Farming is the main occupation of the inhabitants, as in other villages.
- Whilst the villages in the municipality are accessible, most of the roads are not tarred and can be very dusty as evident by the following photo.



- We were able to survive the dusty road and arrived the village centre. On arrival, we approached two women who were sitting and discussing in front of one of the houses. My friend introduced me to them and following their acceptance to be interviewed, they were interviewed.
- The interview was conducted in Pidgin English (a local version of English which is mainly used by the masses and the less educated for trade and social interaction).
- I observed that one of the women was relatively passive in the enquiry process while the other was very active and full of enthusiasm. The passive woman left the process halfway through while we continued talking with the willing and active participant.
- After the interview, the woman who was active in the process requested that she should be given the recorder so that she can listen to her voice and what she said. The recorder was handed to her and as she listened to her voice, I observed that she was very excited and it seems that was the first occasion she was hearing a replay of her voice. When she was satisfied, she told us she has listened to everything and it is all right
- I later conceived that the act of a participant requesting to listen to his/her recorded interview can also be viewed in the light of member check which goes to enhance the validity of a research process.
- Although the woman expressed reservations over the signing of the consent form, after a subsequent visit to her with further explanation she signed it.

7th APRIL 2013

- Today being Sunday, I attended church where an announcement for the recruitment of a secretary to work with me was read and at the end of the service, a total of four (4) individuals walked up to me for the job.

- Shortly after, I began interviewing and testing the different candidates.

8TH APRIL 2013

- I was at the University of Buea today to honour the appointment with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor in charge of research. I eventually met him and he directed me to meet one of his collaborators for a consent letter to be drafted for his signature but unfortunately, the said collaborator was not available. I had to return to the university the following day to see the collaborator.
- A greater part of the day was spent at home where I tested one of the candidates for the position of secretary. She proved serious and immediately started the transcription of one of the interviews under my supervision.

9th April 2013

- I returned to the university to meet with the collaborator of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor but could not see her.
- I continued to meet former colleagues and community members and spent time interacting with them.
- I also continued to supervise the interview transcription.

10th April 2013

- I started this day by designing a participant description form as planned. Though I did not use this form in previous interviews, I conceived that it was necessary for me to identify particular variables which would be used to describe the background of participants and which would aid data analysis. Participants who did not fill the form will be contacted to do so and subsequent participants will be asked to do so.
- I later visited the University of Buea today and succeeded in meeting the collaborator of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor who promised to draft the letter of consent and let me know when it was ready for collection.
- After a moment of discussion, I had a very successful interview with one of the Vice-Deans in his office. I deemed it a very successful interview because in the course of the interview, the Vice-Dean indicated that he has been enlightened and provoked to think about things which can be very beneficial to the university and the community on a collaborative basis. Furthermore, after I thought the interview was over and switched off the recorder, the Vice-

Dean continued to articulate many ideas which prompted me and with his consent to restore the recording. I observed that he was very passionate about the subject of the enquiry and enjoyed addressing the issues raised while making reference to his own research activities in the community.

- Later in the day, I had a telephone call from the coordinator of the department of Women and Gender Studies I had spoken with for assistance in identifying students for a focus group discussion. She indicated she had succeeded to identify five students from different backgrounds and comprising of three females and two males which was in accordance with what was planned. The focus group interview with the students was scheduled to take place the following Friday at the university.

11th April 2013

- I started this day by emailing an update of my fieldwork to my supervisor.
- I later proceeded to request some supporting documents such as internship application and evaluation forms from the Department of Economics and Management to support some of the interviews which raised the subject of service learning.
- I continued to supervise the transcription of interview and offer help with clarification where needed.
- An additional person was recommended by the lady doing the transcription to be part of the transcription. This person was interviewed and asked to transcribe one of the interviews which would be evaluated the following day.

12th April 2013

- I was at the university today for the focus group discussion with five students. One of the students came from the Department of Economics and Management and four from the Department of Women and Gender Studies. It was originally planned for all the students to come from the Department of Women and Gender Studies but one did not turn up and had to be replaced by a student from a different department. The focus group was intentionally skewed to have three female students and two men, all in their final year of studies. As indicated earlier, more female students provide the basis for female voice and having final year students means they would have rich experience of university and community life. It is also worth noting that the four students from women and gender studies had different academic backgrounds. Given that the Department of Women and Gender Studies offers a double-major programme, I had

one student majoring in Sociology, another majoring in Management and the other two majoring in Law.

- As women and gender subjects are very relevant to the conceptualisation of a development framework in local communities such as the one I am investigating, I conceived that recruiting these students from this discipline will be advantageous. Secondly, the coordinator of the programme was happy to assist with the recruitment of these students unlike other coordinators who may not have the time or willingness to do so.
- After discussing with a former colleague, he generously allowed us to use his office space for the focus group discussion in his absence.
- The discussions, which were very exciting, insightful and full of energy, ran for about two hours.
- One thing to note is that even though the students at the discussion all reside within the municipality of Buea, one was a francophone who had relocated from the French speaking part of the country to the municipality for university studies.
- I started the focus group discussion by once more clarifying the purpose of the gathering. All participants signed a consent form and filled the participant description form.
- In order to ensure the process was followed with some order and everyone was given a voice, I assigned an identification tag to each participant using the first five letters of the alphabet which would be called out by each person before a contribution is made. The order is: the moderator sets out a line of enquiry and follows that with probing questions and each person wanting to say something will lift up the hand and when pointed to speak, he/she will start by calling out his/her letter of the alphabet tagged to him/her before making a contribution. With this, one can extract all contributions made by participant “A” for instance.
- Given this sense of order, a few students who would have dominated the discussion were restricted as others were given similar opportunities to speak.
- There were however few moments when some participants were very spontaneous and would not request for time to speak by lifting up the hand but would just interject and speak out. A state of honesty and boldness in participation prevailed amongst participants as they made their thoughts known. Even those who started timidly eventually gained courage to say their thoughts as they observed the boldness of others. It was also a relaxed atmosphere as some contributions prompted collective laughter.
- I also observed a sense of unity and agreement in the discussions. For instance, when one person made a contribution that resonated with the thoughts of others, a general affirmation ensued through the nodding of the head. In other cases, when one person was still speaking, he/she gained moral support from others as they affirmed what was being said with a “yes”. However, in some instances, there were disagreements.

- Given the occasional power failure in Buea, the focus group discussion could not escape being a victim on one such occasions. Suddenly, there was power failure and we were all in darkness. Despite the darkness that ensued and extended to the end of the discussions, participants remained committed to making their contribution and being part of the process.
- After the discussion was over, one the students, who also happened to be a departmental student representative, indicated that he would like to invite me to the department's open day to give a talk.
- Later in the afternoon, I was at the Central Administration of the university to collect a letter of consent from the university to support my research activities on campus.

13th April 2013

- I spent the most part of this day meeting people and initiating discussions around the subject of my research in an attempt to secure willing participants to be interviewed.

14th April 2013

- Today being Sunday, and with people going to church, I spent most of the day at home and eventually participated in the birthday celebration of one of the children who was living in the house where I was staying.

15th April 2013

- I was at the university today to pick up some of my research documents which I had left in the office where the focus group discussion took place.
- I later visited a centre where people are trained in languages and when I arrived there, I met a woman I had known over the years but had not seen recently. After a moment of discussion about family life, I introduced my research to her and inquired if she was willing to be interviewed. She accepted and we found an appropriate location for the interview to take place, lasting for about 50 minutes.
- I observed her frankness in the course of the interview, which was evident by the way she exposed some of the developmental concerns plaguing the rural municipality. Some of the concerns raised were: lack of farm to market roads and inadequate supply of potable water.
- Later on, I succeeded to arrange for a friend to accompany me the following Friday to a village in the municipality called Bokuva. Given that he is familiar with the place and knows some

residents, I conceived that it would be good for me to be accompanied by him as this can facilitate the villagers' willingness to be interviewed.

16th April 2013

- Today, I succeeded to book an appointment to interview the head of Distance Education in the Faculty of Education tomorrow at 8am. I conceived that it is relevant to interview different members of the university community who are involved in some aspect of the university's engagement in local communities such as continuing education, community-based research and service learning.
- Later in the day, I paid a visit to the head of the University of Buea trade union. Following a moment of general conversation during which I was briefed on some developments at the University of Buea, I inquired if he was willing to be a participant in my research and he accepted and was interviewed thereafter.
- Given that he owned a law firm, and there were people who had come to see him, he was still committed to be interviewed and asked visitors to wait.
- Being the head of the lecturers' trade syndicate, I observed that he was very bold in his criticism of the university's management and structures.

17th April 2013

Some observations/reflections:

- I realised that many of the participants interviewed thus far, grew in confidence as the interview progressed. Some started by being timid but eventually gained boldness and security to voice their thoughts.
- Some themes are beginning to emerge from the interviews on how the university can capture the voices of ordinary people of the community and not just those of the elite or business people. Some of these are: 1) through their students engaged in field activities, 2) through Common Initiative Groups and 3) through the opinion leaders of the society. A traditional method of capturing community voices being through local chiefs has been criticised as not being gender representative or sensitive. One participant argued that not all men can successfully express the views of women and also, some local chiefs attend meetings just for the sake of obtaining sitting fees and not to represent their villagers.
- Today, I was at the University of Buea to honour an appointment with the head of Distance Education in the Faculty of Education. During the interview, which lasted for about forty

minutes, he justified the creation of distance education at the university as well as addressing some of the challenges facing the unit.

- I later visited some former colleagues of mine and as we spoke about the subject of my research, one of them suggested that I should interview one of the members of staff working under the Department of Development and Physical Planning, given that he is conversant with an aspect of the university's contribution to local community development. Given this suggestion, I immediately proceeded to see him and booked an appointment to interview him the following day at 9:00 am.

18th April 2013

- I started the day by heading to the University of Buea to honour an invitation to interview a member of staff following a recommendation from another member of staff. When I met him, he appeared very busy but was apparently willing to give his views on the university's involvement in local communities. I observed that he was timid and was not confident with his participation. Occasionally, within the course of the interview, he would say things like "I don't want to get into that" or "I don't want to say something I am not sure of". Even though I assured him that participant's identity will remain anonymous in my thesis, he still reiterated the need for his identity to be anonymous in my thesis.
- Later in the day, I proceeded to the Faculty of Agriculture and had a conversation with a member of staff. He noted that there will be a practical session with some students on the Faculty's farm the following morning. Given this opportunity to observe what they actually do, I promised to pay them a visit and carry out an observation, take a few photographs and possibly speak to some of the students.
- I had conceived that it was necessary for me to interview a businessman in the community as I seek to capture voices from different segments of the community. Thus, I proceeded to interview a local book dealer who does business with the university following an appointment I had with him. I observed that he grew in confidence and authority as the interview progressed and eventually became very outspoken, sometimes shouting and speaking at the top of his voice as he criticised the university for being too theoretical, promoting an ivory tower image and lacking a sense of dialogue with the wider the community. He called on the university to organise symposiums and invite people like himself to come and give talks as by so doing, the university can capture the concerns from the local communities and shape their programmes to be relevant to community needs. He also challenged the Faculty of Agriculture to grow and

market some of the fruits and food items locals import from far which are expensive in order to reduce their cost.

19th April 2013

- As planned, I visited a practical session of the Faculty of Agriculture to carry out some observations and ask questions to students.
- A total of about two hundred students drawn from levels two hundred and four hundred were present.
- I observed that the students were generally happy to talk to me about their experiences and the relevance of their programme to community development and their future career prospects.
- Two students noted that they were on the programme because it is a professional programme and there is a prospect of picking up a job or starting one after completion.
- The activities of the students on the faculty farm observed centred on measurement of farming plots, tilling and preparing the beds by removing stones and impediments to planting, applying compost from poultry within planting regions, accurate measurement of spacing distances for planting, learning how to apply fertilizers around the root regions of each plant and receiving specific measurements of fertilizers for those whose crops have germinated or composted for those preparing for planting. The following photos reveal some of the activities of the day:



- Some of the students complained about the rigorous process they are subjected to, such as working under the hot sun as was the situation today. They nevertheless have to abide to the rules as they will be graded at every phase of the practical, that is, from plot allocation to harvesting. The students are also expected to maintain a dress code which comprises of wearing a green overall jacket and boots.

- Given that most of the population of the municipality of Buea are involved in farming, I asked some students the difference between the training they are receiving from what is obtainable in the community. They acknowledged that the difference lies with the scientific nature of the farming they are being trained on. Nevertheless, one of the students noted the high cost of fertilizers which makes it difficult for local farmers to afford to implement the type of farming techniques they have been taught. Another student decried the lack of training in forming compost in their programme. She argued that the locals make use of compost and it is helpful for them to be trained on how to make compost or organic manure so that when they go to the field, they can communicate relevant knowledge to local farmers.
- I asked a student if there was a feedback mechanism or a forum whereby they can share their concerns with the lecturers or management and she indicated there is none in existence. She further said that if they do speak out, they would be marked out and punitive measures would be carried out against them.
- I also observed that the student to teacher relationship was of concern as I overheard some of the students referring to one of the lecturers on site as “diable” meaning devil.
- I later had a prolonged interview with one of the students and spoke with the Dean of the Faculty.

20th April 2013

- I spent the greater part of this day visiting some friends and loved ones, re-igniting past relationships and talking about the subject of my research.
- The head of one of the families visited promised to provide me with the map of the Buea municipality consisting of the different villages and the chief occupation of the inhabitants.

21st April 2013

- Today is Sunday and as usual, being a predominantly Christian population; many people will be going to church.
- I decided to worship in one of the churches and also planned to meet people I had known before and re-establish relationships which can reward me with the opportunity to conduct some interviews.

22nd April 2013

- Early in the morning, I made a telephone call to the director of an NGO working with rural women for an appointment to interview her. It is worth noting that this was an opportunistic sample as I only came to know of the NGO through one of their newsletters which I had recently laid hands on.
- But before heading to the NGO, I decided to pay a visit to the Chief of a village to follow-up the interview I had with him during the preliminary phase of my field work but he was not available.
- I met the Director of the NGO who warmly received me and also introduced me to another PhD candidate from Canada who was also carrying out research in Cameroon communities and was present when I visited the NGO. We spoke about research and exchanged contacts.
- I was informed that the NGO has always hosted students from the University of Buea for internship. I conceived this is relevant as I explored the concept of service learning within the framework of community development.
- It can be noted in the interview that followed that the participant regards the university as an elite institution which promotes a superior image and is not in touch with the local people. She noted that many people do not know that the University of Buea has a third arm which is service and it should sensitise the public on it. She also stressed that the university should formalise its collaborative engagements with NGOs and the civil society and this should go beyond its current tokenistic gestures of engagement. She also indicated that the university should be able to work with “second arms” or sister organisations to reach those at the grassroots.
- In the course of the interview, she brandished an invitation letter from the university inviting her to a symposium where the results of a research on women’s right to land ownership will be disseminated. According to her, the invitation got to her based on her personal relationship with some of the members of staff and not because there is a formal structure at the university which identifies and relates with community-based organisations.
- Regarding student internships at her organisation, she indicated that it is not only beneficial for nongovernmental organisations to evaluate the performance of students but that the students should also evaluate the organisations.
- After the interview, which lasted for about an hour, I indicated my intention to set up a focus group discussion with some rural participants. Hearing this, she immediately promised to help through one of her contacts who does some work with rural people in one of the villages.
- The interview ended on a good note with a joint photograph with the participant.

23rd April 2013

- I visited the University of Buea and continued my conversation with one of the Deans I had spoken with. While he agreed to be interviewed, he nonetheless refused that I should record it and instead preferred note taking.
- The following points can be noted during the interview:
 - He emphasised the need for the university to collaborate with NGOs in order to reach grassroot people. Furthermore, he acknowledged that the students of the university can gain knowledge on how to reach the rural population through the university's collaboration with NGOs serving the rural masses. He also however maintained that the NGOs should identify themselves and their areas of interest so that the university can partner with them.
 - I inquired what contribution the faculty was making to the community's agricultural sector given the faculty's potential and he had this to say: 1) the university trains students to use hybrid seeds and this guarantees greater agricultural yield, 2) the students are trained to employ scientific methods which have been tested and proven over time and 3) despite the fact that most local community farmers prepare and use compost instead of fertilizers due to cost, he noted that farming practices that will have an economic and developmental impact should move from subsistence (which predominantly uses compost) to commercialisation (which predominantly uses fertilizers).
 - The Dean also noted that there was a need to go past the first generation farming practices that uses local tools, compost and manual strength to second generation farming which makes use of greater inputs and mechanisations or use of machines.
 - Given that local farmers would find it hard to afford the cost of fertilizers and machines, he argued that the Ministry of Agriculture encourages farmers to form Common Initiative Groups or Cooperatives and through these, the ministry can assist the groups or cooperatives with farming tools, machines, good quality seeds, etc.
 - I inquired why the students are trained with very local tools and not with machines. He argued that the plots given to each student is small and furthermore, the university was given just two tractors by the Ministry of Agriculture.
 - Regarding the research arm of the faculty and the need to inform policy makers on current findings which can be disseminated through extension workers of the Ministry of Agriculture who are in touch with community farmers, he noted that the economic crisis of the 1980s incapacitated the extension service of the ministry but in the mid 90s, the World Bank came to revive it, which only lasted for five years and since then, this service has not been effective. He noted that this extension service of the Ministry of Agriculture carried information packages and new farming techniques resulting from research to the farmers

for implementation. He also maintained that the research arm of the Faculty of Agriculture was still very timid.

- Regarding the fate of the students being trained in the faculty, he noted that 1) a few could be recruited through a competitive examination to serve with the public service, 2) they could be recruited to serve in the private sector such as the CDC, 3) they can also go private as agricultural entrepreneurs and 4) they can go into the communities and organise farmers into groups (CIG) and seek state subsidies.
- After the interview with the Dean, I conceived it could be beneficial for my research to bring in a community farmer to one of the faculty's practical sessions with its students to enable he/she to observe and interact with the students and later provide feedback on what he/she has gained and have contributed or could contribute. The Dean applauded the idea and we planned the exercise to take place next Friday when there will be a practical session on tomato planting.
- After speaking with the Dean, I headed to see a friend who is also a PhD student at the University of Buea and mentioned to her of my need to identify a local tomato farmer to take along with me to the university for a practical session and she immediately directed me to someone who was into tomato farming.
- I got to meet the tomato farmer on his farm and had a period of observation and conversation with him. In my interaction with him, I realised he was given a piece of land by the university to farm tomatoes so that in return, he can assist the university by offering practical experience to students of the Faculty of Agriculture and Department of Botany.
- While standing in the tomato farm, I observed that there was a basket full of harvested tomatoes which the farmer eventually carried away. The farmer mentioned that he was going to supply the tomatoes to a retailer and this will bring some economic dividend to his life.

24th April 2013

- Later in the day, I found myself walking through one of the narrow paths in the neighbourhood of Molyko and suddenly bumped into one of the support staffs from the university who happened to be someone I had known over the years. After exchanging greetings with him, I had a conversation with him about my research.

26th April 2013

- I attempted this day to visit one of the heads of an NGO I had interviewed previously to have a follow up session with her but she was not on seat when I arrived her organisation.

- By 2:00 pm, I proceeded to the university to have a session with a community farmer and students of the Faculty of Agriculture who were going to be having a demonstration of tomato planting.
- On arrival, I instructed the tomato farmer to 1) interact with the students and generally observe what the students were doing, 2) identify what the students are doing which is familiar to what he does in the community, 3) identify what the students are doing which he is not familiar with, 4) underscores what he can contribute to improve students' experience and 5) acknowledge what he can take back which will improve his farming practice.
- After the exercise, the farmer was interviewed, during which he provided his remarks. He observed that students transplanted tomato seedlings with the soil in which the roots are firmly intact. Transplanting a seedling with the soil means that the seedling is able to quickly adapt and have immediate nutrient in a new location than when it is rooted out of the soil and planted in a new environment.

27th April 2013

- I followed up a discussion I had with the proprietor of a Christian radio station some days ago and inquired if I could interview him and he accepted. The interview ran for about an hour.
- Even though the interview was occasionally interrupted by phone calls, he was committed to the interview and stayed through to the end.
- He disclosed that he was not aware that the University of Buea has a service mission even though over the years he has hosted university students for internships at the radio station.
- When the interview ended, he suddenly thought of some ideas and began to articulate them. He indicated amongst many things that the university could help the community overcome electricity problems by exploring the possibility of creating a hydroelectric power station to maximise the several streams and rivers within the municipality of Buea.
- At the end of the interview, he noted very strongly his desire to have his words well represented in my research and for the findings of my research to be communicated to the public.

28th April 2013

- By 2 pm, I received a visitor who had been a friend and works with the Ministry of Secondary Education. On discussing with him about the subject of my research, I realised he was excited about it and began to make vital contributions I conceived can be relevant data. I immediately disclosed my willingness to transform the informal conversation into an interview session which would be recorded and he agreed.

- Although he agreed to be interviewed, I observed that in the beginning of the recorded interview, the excitement and enthusiasm he had before had reduced and he seemed to be careful with his utterances and the pronouncement of each word. However, he became more confident, and recovered his former state of boldness. At one point in the course of the interview, he requested that I place the recording on pause so that he can recollect his thoughts.
- After the interview, with the recorder turned off, he suddenly remembered he had made an error in one of his utterances and thereafter submitted a written correction which he said should be taken into consideration during transcription.

29th April 2013

- I conducted no interviews today but made arrangement for a focus group discussion with a group of rural women.

30th April 2013

- Today was a break from research but I spent a significant part of the day helping a candidate complete an application form for a research scholarship at CCCU whose deadline was today.

1st May 2013

- Today is Labour Day and as such, was a public holiday here with employees of different organisations converging at a common ground to commemorate the day.
- I decided to visit the city of Limbe where Labour Day activities were taking place in order to have a glimpse of it.
- Later in the evening, I was informed by an individual I had recruited to transcribe the interviews that due to electricity failure, his laptop crashed and as such he cannot retrieve the data he has typed. It is worth noting that this was not the first incident of breakdown of transcription.

2nd May 2013

- Today, I decided to be part of a symposium on research results dissemination on the “implications of customary practices on women’s rights to land and access to natural resources in Anglophone Cameroon”, sponsored by the International Development Research Centre, IDRC Canada.

- I conceived that it is important for me to be part of this meeting and see how the university engages with its community in terms of dialogue.
- Although the meeting started late, there were about two hundred persons in attendance comprising of representatives of NGOs, the Press, members of university staff, members of the government and postgraduate students.
- In attendance also was the Vice-Chancellor and her close collaborators, a member of parliament and the principal investigator of the project.
- As I sat down in the meeting I had the following thought:
 - Considering that the target beneficiaries of the research whose findings will be disseminated today are rural women who are in need of economic empowerment through land ownership; I am not sure what structures were put in place with respect to their participation at this symposium in an attempt to ensure that the findings and recommendations to be dished out today, reach them.
- As the Vice-Chancellor took the microphone, she asserted that the symposium is to generate ideas that will inform the researchers and policy makers.
- I observed on the circulated programme that there is a time allocated for discussion which would involve questions and answers. Could this be an opportunity for participants to have their voices heard? I pondered!
- One of the findings of the research revealed that customary practices do not tie with statutory laws – the living laws opposes the written laws. This is similar to some of the emerging findings in my research where some participants claimed that based on statutory documents, the university does not discriminate or suppress divergent voices but empirical data reveals otherwise.
- The following photo illustrates the symposium:



- After my time at the symposium, I proceeded to the Pan African Institute for Development (PAID) to see the Director whom I had interviewed during the preliminary phase of my field work. We also spoke about the possibility of linking her institution with CCCU.
- From PAID, I proceeded to meet a lady who was helping to put together a focus group for me in one of the villages (Bokuva). I was directed to see her by the leader of an NGO, given her involvement at the grassroots.

3rd May- 2013

- I proceeded to the village for the focus group discussion. As I had earlier indicated my willingness to have a group comprising of more women than men, the group was made up of four women and two men.
- Coincidentally, the meeting was planned to take place at the residence of a Quarter Head I had visited last month. He was also part of the focus group.
- The meeting started quite formally with an introduction by the head of the village's Agricultural Post who had set up the focus group. After requesting one of the participants to give a word of prayer, she proceeded to ask everyone to introduce themselves and they all called out their names and identified their occupation as farmers. I was then given the space to introduce myself and the reason for requesting the gathering which I did and thereafter proceeded with the coordination of the discussion.

- I observed that all the participants were engaged in the discussion and no one stayed quiet. Occasionally, a contribution from a member would resonate with other members and there would be a common affirmation.
- Some of the key views that stood out in the discussion, which lasted for a little above one hour, are the following:
 - They all acknowledged strongly that the university ought to be a place where they send their children to so that when they complete the course, they can get a job and help the family. Here, the concept of family is not restricted to husband and wife but extends.
 - They all acknowledged some of the problems they are facing in the community such as: shortage of water, setbacks with electricity and lack of financial means to buttress their farming occupation.
 - They all maintained a strong desire to see university programmes become more professional to ease the possibility of their children finding a job after completion.
 - They also maintained that even though the university sends out students into the village for internship and research, the village is seldom given findings or feedbacks from the research and would like to see a change in this.
- Getting to the conclusion of the discussion, I inquired if there is one last word any of the participants want to say and one of them said this: “we want to know your university, where it is and how we too can send out children there”. Following this, I proceeded to give them the web site of Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU) and my email address so that they can maintain contact with me.
- At the end of the focus group discussion, we took some photos together, and consumed the drinks I had brought for refreshment.
- Everything ended with a note of thanks and cheerfulness and I was later escorted to the road side by the men, where I got into a car which ferried me back to where I had come from.

4th May 2013

- This morning, I updated my host on the progress of my research, especially on the focus group discussion which had taken place yesterday. It is worth noting that she had promised to set up a focus group discussion for me through her organisation but she was busy and could not do it.
- Later in the day, I proceeded to have a walk to one of the villages (called Likoko) in the municipality of Buea during which I came into contact with one of the many streams in the municipality of Buea which could be explored to salvage the water crises in Buea. I took a snapshot of it as seen below:



5th May 2013

- After the Sunday service, I made a telephone call to one of the rural women living in one of the villages (called Bokwai New –Layout) I had known over the years. She took the call and we agreed to meet at a later time that day. I succeeded in meeting her and proceeded to interview her.
- During the interview, which ran for about one hour, she identified the university as an institution of higher education and further maintained that the university is there to give students skills such that when they graduate they should be employed or occupy high positions in the society and as such could help themselves and the family rather than leave the university and begin to strive with their parents for food.
- She was equally not happy with the university's decision to reclaim unused lands which had been given to her and other rural women to cultivate food. These lands were reclaimed and given to employees of the university which, according to her, earned a salary from the university whereas she depends on farming to feed and sponsor her many children and dependents. Further, these university workers to whom the lands are given, turns around and rent them out to some community members, in order to gain additional income. According to her this is not reasonable.
- After the visit, I decided to make a telephone call to one of the pastors in the municipality in order to interview him. Although it had been recommended that I interview him, I also conceived that given his status as an indigene and pastoral duties over the years in the municipality, he could provide rich data which would address some of the issues in my research. I succeeded in booking an appointment to interview him at 9 am the following day.

6th May 2013

- As planned, I succeeded in interviewing someone who is a clergy with the Baptist mission. He had served as the first Baptist chaplain designated to the University of Buea and had a further experience of pastoring in about 17 villages within Buea Rural Council. Given his rich experience in the villages, it was worth interviewing him.
- During the interview, which ran for about one hour, he addressed different issues. According to him, the university is not very much in dialogue with the local communities and should draw closer by organising programmes in the communities or inviting the community to the university; by so doing the university would get to be aware of what the community is facing.

7th May 2013

- I spent time today trying to go through one of the transcribed interviews, correcting errors and making sure everything spoken by the participant was captured in the transcription.

8th and 9th of May 2013

- I spent these days sorting out issues on transcription. Because of the slow pace of transcription, I conceived it would be good to recruit another person to help with it.

10th May 2013

- While at home today, a friend visited me who is also an indigene of one of the villages in the municipality. I conceived it could be a good idea to visit his village. I proceeded to inquire if he would be willing to accompany me to his village, which he accepted, and we went there together. I conceived that his presence would aid in introducing me to some villagers I could interview.
- On arrival, this friend took me to the acting chief. The chief was not at home but the wife was. I proceeded to introduce myself to the wife and eventually started interviewing her. She identified some of the challenges the village was facing such as water shortage and also the need for graduates of the University of Buea to find job.
- While I was still interviewing the wife of the acting chief, the acting chief appeared and did not want to disturb the interview with the wife. The acting chief proceeded into his house but as the interview with the wife went on, he answered some of the questions posed to the wife from where he was. I eventually invited him to be part of the interview which he did but I noticed that when he joined the interview, the wife retreated. I did not observe a problem here as the

wife left in respect of the husband – possibly with the thought that the husband is better positioned to answer my questions.

- One key thing that emerged from the interview with the acting chief was that he was not aware that the university has got a service mission and he called on the university to open dialogue with the local communities.
- After the interview, I handed a token of generosity to the wife of the acting chief who was very happy and we proceeded to take a photograph.
- I and my friend later visited one of the participants in the village of Bokwai who had only given a verbal consent. After explanation, the participant completed the consent form and the participant descriptive form. It is worth noting that my friend actually facilitated the process as he was able to communicate my intention in their tribal language and this made the participant more confident.
- While my friend explained to some of the villagers, who were at the premises of one of the initial participants the subject of my research, one of the villagers opted to be interviewed. I did not want to interview more participants in that village but due to his passion and repeated demand to be interviewed, I proceeded to interview him. I later realised that it was worthwhile getting his perspective on the subject of my enquiry given that he was a pensioner and could be considered one of the elites of the village who can provide rich data.
- One key input that he made was to say that the university should have a parents association that brings together the parents of the students for dialogue and contributions into the functioning of the university. According to him this will enable the university to capture the concerns of the community. He also stressed the need for university education to be more practicable so as to enhance the integration of graduates into community life.

11th May – 2013

- On this day, I decided to visit one of the participants I had interviewed within the preliminary phase of my field work.
- I visited him with the friend who had accompanied me when I had the interview with him.
- After a moment of discussion with the participant, he maintained that:
 - The joy of the researcher will be fulfilled if policy makers and the powers that be can make use of their findings.
 - The university should always send students out for internship with an introductory letter to ease their acceptance in the villages and after the internship or research experience, the university should address a letter of appreciation to the communities for their hospitality and assistance to the students.

- The session with the chief ended on a very good note, evident by the way he left his seat and escorted us as we left his premises.

12th May 2013

- After church service today, one of the people I had contacted to do transcription visited me to update me on the progress of the transcription. On taking a look at what he had done, I realised that some of the transcriptions he thought he had completed, he had not completed and that there were many errors in what he had typed. Instead of giving him additional interviews to transcribe, I requested him to complete the ones he had not completed and go through those he had done.

13th May 2013

- Today, I visited someone I had met few days ago who promised she could transcribe some of the interviews. I eventually installed a software programme into the laptop she had got for the work and also uploaded some interviews for her to start with.

14th May 2013

- I visited loved ones today.

15th May 2013

- There was a violent strike action at the University of Buea today by students demanding many things from the administration which includes: the payment of 3000FCFA or more for march pass dues, resit examinations should be given to all students and the number of courses increase, court charges levied on students who were arrested for perpetuating the last strike be dropped, the students should be allowed to vote for their student union president and a presidential grant should be given to students with a GPA of 2 and above and not 3 and above.
- It should be noted that security forces were present on campus to abate the strike and though they used tear gas, and I could hear sounds that resembled that of gunshots, it did not stop the students from inflicting destruction on university properties. Cars were damaged, offices left ramshackled and many individuals wounded. The following photo is evidence of the strike.



- Despite the strike action, I was able to meet up with one of the participants in my research for some descriptive information.
- I also met another participant I had interviewed and found out from him if there are other inputs he would like to make.
- While I was on campus to have a first-hand observation of the strike action, my national ID card fell off and I did not notice it was gone until I was notified by a well-wisher, who gave me a telephone call later in the day and I met up with him and collected the card.

16th May 2013

- I decided to visit a lady I had given some of the interviews for transcription, but on arrival at her office, she told me the work was tedious and needed full attention, even though she had previously indicated that it was something she could do. I felt disappointed and had to reconsider taking the transcription from her.
- Later in the day, I visited a friend I met during my field work who also indicated her willingness to help with the transcription. I handed a number of interviews to her to begin the transcription.
- Before the day rounded up, I met a member I had interviewed during this field work and inquired if there were any inputs he would want to add to the interview and he objected, arguing that he articulated what he wanted to articulate and there was nothing to add.

17th -19th May 2013

- My basic concern these days was with the transcription of the interviews and doing follow -up

20th May 2013

- I visited one of the participants I had interviewed during this period of field work. I had time to talk to her husband who is also a member of staff at the university and who did his PhD in the UK. He was fascinated to learn about what I was researching on. I further inquired from the wife if she had anything to add to the interview and she said no.

21st May 2013

- I went out today to verify and collect some of the interviews that had been transcribed.

22nd – 26th May 2013

- Within this period, I generally had a break from field work, although still had time to follow-up on the transcription of interviews.
- I visited loved ones in other cities.

27th May 2013

- I visited and collected the revised version of the Map of Buea Rural Council from an architect who had planned to give me one.
- Together with one of the people doing interview transcription, I cross-checked the interviews to see if all have been transcribed. I collected one which had been transcribed and gave him two more.
- I also observed that some transcribed interviews had some errors and that I needed to go through them once more and edit before I start my analysis.

28th May 2013

- I visited, for the third time during my research, one of the local chiefs I had interviewed. Although, not much resulted as a contribution to my research, it was a courtesy call to meet

him for the last time before travelling back to the UK. After a brief discussion, during which I recounted my research, we prayed and he bid me safe journey back.

- Later in the day, I succeeded in helping a student to apply for admission in one of UK's universities.

29th May 2013

- I started this day by visiting one of the persons doing interview transcription.
- I later visited the University of Buea and spoke with one of the lecturers who expressed an interest in his department partnering with the Applied Linguistic unit of Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU).
- After talking with the lecturer, I visited one of the participants I had interview to inquire if there is something she would like to add to the interview and she revealed she has nothing to add.

30th May 2013

- I proceeded to a local market called Muea to buy some basic items I was going to take along with me to the UK.
- I spent part of the day following up the transcriptions of the remaining interviews.

31st May 2013

- I visited one of the participants and she went through the soft copy of her transcribed interview and made some corrections. I noted that one of the edits she made was to do with identifying the fact that the University of Buea system of education is more theoretical and there was a need for more professional and practically oriented programmes.

01st June 2013

- Today marked the day of my departure from Cameroon to the UK after a period of field work.
- Prior to departure, I left the house at about 7:00 am to follow-up some of the interviews I had given for transcription.
- Later in the morning, I met one of the participants I had interviewed for member check. The meeting took place at her residence and she went through the soft copy of the transcribed interview and made some grammatical corrections. As for the content of the transcription, she had no issues.

- I headed back to the UK through Douala to continue the analysis of the data I had collected and eventually concentrate on the write-up.

Appendix 2 – Introductory letter for preliminary fieldwork



Principal Research Fellow / PhD Student Supervisor:

Dr Ruth Rogers

Direct Line 01227 782099

Secretary Charmian Cowie

Direct Line 01227 782766

E-mail ruth.rogers@canterbury.ac.uk

1st December 2011

Student ID MBA1105288

LETTER OF AUTHORISATION

This letter is to inform you that Marcellus Mbah is a registered full-time Post-Graduate PhD Student at Canterbury Christ Church University, Educational Research Directorate.

Marcellus Mbah has been granted ethics permission by the Faculty of Education Ethics Committee and has been authorised by the University to conduct fieldwork research whilst visiting the Cameroon during December 2011 – January 2012.

If you have queries regarding any of the above, please do not hesitate to contact me directly at:

tel: 00 44 1227 782099

email: ruth.rogers@canterbury.ac.uk.

Regards

Dr Ruth Rogers

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ruth Rogers".

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Professor Robin Baker CMG, Vice-Chancellor and Principal

Appendix 3 – Introductory letter for main fieldwork



Principal Research Fellow / PhD Student Supervisor:

Dr Ruth Rogers

Direct Line 01227 782099

Secretary Charmian Cowie

Direct Line 01227 782766

E-mail ruth.rogers@canterbury.ac.uk

06th March 2013

Student ID MBA1105288

LETTER OF AUTHORISATION

This letter is to inform you that Marcellus Mbah is a registered full-time Post-Graduate PhD Student at Canterbury Christ Church University, Educational Research Directorate, UK.

Marcellus Mbah is in his second year of PhD study, where he is exploring the nature of a university's engagement and its implications for community development in Cameroon. He has presented his research at international conferences in France and Canada.

Marcellus submitted his research proposal to the Faculty of Education Ethics Committee, who granted permission for him to conduct fieldwork research whilst visiting Cameroon during April – May 2013.

As Marcellus's supervisor, I would be extremely grateful for any support or assistance you would be willing to provide him.

If you have queries regarding any of the above, please do not hesitate to contact me directly at:

tel: 00 44 1227 782099

email: ruth.rogers@canterbury.ac.uk

Regards

Dr Ruth Rogers

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ruth Rogers".

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Professor Robin Baker CMG, Vice-Chancellor and Principal

Appendix 4 – Gate keeper’s authorisation

UNIVERSITY OF BUEA

REPUBLIC OF CAMEROON
PEACE – WORK – FATHERLAND

P.O. Box 63
Buea, CAMEROON
Tel: (237) 33 32 21 34/33 32 26 90/3332 27 06
Fax: (237) 332 22 72



PRO-CHANCELLOR: Professor Maurice Tchuenté
VICE-CHANCELLOR: Nalova Lyonga, PhD
DVC/Teaching, Professionalisation and Development of
Information and Communication Technologies: Professor Joyce B. Endeley
DVC/Research, Cooperation and Relations
with the Business World: Professor Victor Julius Ngoh
DVC/Internal Control and Evaluation: Professor Moukoko Blaise
REGISTRAR: Professor Samson N. Abangma

Your Ref: _____

Our Ref: 2013/207/UB/DVC/RCB/UCD/AA *MM JIN*

Date: 10 AVR 2013

Mr. Marcellus Mbah
Post Graduate Student
Canterbury Christ Church
University
UK

Dear Mr. Mbah,

Request for Authorisation to carryout Research

Following your letter of April 2013 on the above subject, we hereby authorize you to carry out research within the University of Buea community, on the title “How can a University’s Contribution to Community Development be Enhanced? Investigating the Role of Voices from the Community”.

We call on all the Deans and Directors and staff of the University to give you the necessary support that is required to carry out this research.

Thank you for your interest in our University.

Yours sincerely,

Ngoh
Prof. Victor Julius Ngoh
Deputy Vice-Chancellor/RCB



- cc:
- VC
 - DVCs
 - REG
 - Deans and Directors

Appendix 5 – Participant consent form

Research Topic:

Investigating a university’s engagement and implications for community development

CONSENT FORM

Name:

Please tick the boxes as applicable to show your agreement:

√

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	(1) I agree to take part in an interview with Marcellus Mbah from Canterbury Christ Church University.
-------------------------------------	--

<input type="checkbox"/>	(2) I understand that I may withdraw my consent at anytime.
--------------------------	---

Signed.....

Date:.....

Appendix 6: Participant description form

Participant Description Form

Sex: Male Female

Age range in years: 10 – 20 21 – 30 31 – 40 41-50 51-60 61 – 70 71 – 80 above 80

Highest academic attainment: _____

Profession: _____

Residential village: _____ Length of stay: _____

Marital status: _____ No of Children/dependents: _____

Interview guide

Brief description of the project:

This research seeks to engage, dialogically, with diverse samples of people living in the municipality of Buea in Cameroon, and those working in the university. The intention is to build some systematic understanding of how people construct the existing and potential role of the university, and what might be required to meet their aspirations and desires in more developed and dialogical ways. It would articulate, based on such interviews and focus groups, specific methodologies by which the university's contribution to community development can be enhanced, with particular emphasis on community-based service learning, but also community-based research and community-based adult education.

Introduction:

- Start with greetings: “Good morning/good afternoon/ good evening Mr/Mrs/Miss/Dr... I am called Marcellus Mbah. I am a research student at CCCU. I am currently in Buea to conduct interviews in line with my research which investigates the university’s contribution to community development. I would like to find out from you if you are willing to be interviewed?”
- If yes, the participant may be interviewed immediately or an appointment scheduled to take place on a later date in a neutral, confidential, comfortable, quiet place free of distraction and easily accessible by the respondent.
- Before commencing the interview, I will say: “the interview will be recorded and later transcribed and your responses will be kept confidential at all times – would you like us to proceed with the interview?”
- If yes, I will say: “as part of the ethics regulation of my university, each respondent is expected to sign a consent form. One of the reasons for doing so is to ensure authenticity – Would you be pleased to sign one?” If yes, the consent form will be handed to the participant for his/her signature.

The following questions are intended to guide interviews with community members but will be adapted for university members as well and would also provide a guide to the focus group discussions.

D) The Role of the university

- A) Have you had any experience of the university? Such as you or any of your loved one being part of it as a student, faculty member, doing business with it, ...
- B) I see there is a university in this community, what do you think of it? What do you think the university is here for?

II) University's engagement

- A) How long have you lived in this community?
- B) Given that you have lived in this community for this number of years, are you aware of university activities in the community such as service learning, research and adult education?
- C) You mentioned..., can you tell me more?
- D) How is this/these activities benefiting the community?
- E) What can be done to improve this/these activities such that it can benefit the community or more?

III) Community development

- A) Can you tell me something about the community you live in? What does it mean to live in this community?
- B) Does the community have developmental needs? If yes, what are they?
- C) Do you believe the presence of the university can be helpful in meeting these development needs?
- D) Can you say something more on that?

IV) Participation

- A) As a member of this community, are you aware of joint activities between the university and community members?
- B) What types of activities and how often?
- C) Who directs these joint activities? The university or the community?
- D) Do you know how community members get involve in university driven activities? Are they invited?
- E) What do you feel are the benefits of these joint activities to the community?
- F) What do you think would be difference if community members were to direct these joint activities?
- G) What do you feel could improve the participation and functioning of these activities?

V) Voice

- A) Overall, what are your opinions or suggestions about the potential role/purpose/place/etc of the university in this community?
- B) Do you feel your opinions can be / are listened to? Are there any opportunities for you / or others to share your views?
- C) Would you like there to be opportunities for this? What might this look like?
- D) What do you think could be the advantages?
- E) Do you have any concerns about / see any problems with speaking your mind / sharing your opinions about the role of the university?

Concluding the interview:

- I will ask the respondent if he/she has anything to add
- I will thank the respondent for participating
- I will promise to get back to the respondent
- Shortly after the interview, I will endeavour to summarise what the respondent said, write down my impressions and anything that stood out before transcribing the entire interview.

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