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CONSTITUTIONAL OPTIONS PROJECT

PEACE POLICY PAPER

MANAGING DUAL EDUCATION SUB-SYSTEMS

INFORMATION NOTE

This Policy Paper starts out by examining the *governing principle* in Cameroon’s laws, which organizes the coexistence in the country of two education streams – one in English and one in French. The 1998 Law on Guidelines for Education, and the Special Status provisions of the Code on Regional and Local Authorities (2019) both state this principle as being that each educational sub-system is entitled to “preservation of its specificities”. The Paper then reviews the extent of compliance with this principle in practice before the crisis’ onset in 3 domains: in secondary education teacher training, in the content of Technical and Vocational Education, and in practice teaching assignments – and concludes that compliance therewith was tenuous.

The Paper traces the different historical trajectory of the French and English education sub-systems since their introduction into Cameroon 100 years ago, and drawing from Cameroon’s Education Ministries’ data, shows some signals of differences in performance between the 2 sub-systems. The English education sub-system out-performs the French education sub-system on less dropouts within a given school cycle, lower rates of class repetition, and higher rates of promotion to the next class.

A key commitment to resolve conflict over education systems in Cameroon, re-affirmed at the National Dialogue, and embedded in the Special Status provisions of the Devolution Code is that to respect the specificities of the Anglo-Saxon education system, those *specificities will be identified* in a separate future legal instrument – which in other words, will identify what makes the English and French sub-systems different. To help answer the question: *what makes education in the English/Anglo-Saxon system different from education in the French/continental system, and is there really anything different between the two*, the

Policy Paper draws upon expert studies in the field of *Comparative Education and Pedagogy*. This is the specialist field that studies the differences and similarities in the art of teaching and techniques of dispensing school education, between countries and education systems around the world.

Specifically, the Paper draws extensively on direct comparative education studies that have been done by British and French University experts in comparative education, which directly compare the education systems in England and France. With the caveat that Cameroon's variant of English/French education sub-systems have undergone influences from Cameroon-specific pedagogic directives, it nonetheless draws some traits that are unique to English and French education systems around the world – which signal their particularities. While under-scoring that these differences in education are themselves rooted in and are the result of different cultural mindsets about the functioning of society outside the school, the Paper identifies 47 separate aspects, across 10 broad thematic areas, in which *classical* English and French approaches to education differ.

Turning to education as a driver of conflict itself, the Paper demonstrates that in officially multilingual countries (such as Canada, South Africa, Belgium) the issues of competition and pre-eminence among languages as medium-of-instruction in the educational system are contentious and conflict-prone: such conflict vulnerability needs to be built into education sector planning in Cameroon. It also reminds that differences over education systems have been present since Cameroon's reunification – with its founding leaders disagreeing as early as 1961 over their visions for education.

The Paper also argues that resolving differences on control over education is *central* to resolving the crisis. In autonomy conflicts, control over education is a critical domain for identity-preservation and cultural survival. By situating the concerns over the English education system as *much deeper than the unionizing* interests of teachers, it dispels the often-expressed surprise over how such demands could generate *political conflict*. In the NW&SW crisis, the stakes are even higher because education was a specific asset of the two Regions prior to the crisis, accounting for their substantially high Human Capital accumulation.

Given the current national spread and the increasing demand nationwide for the English educational system, the Paper recommends that the optimal posture of the NW & SW Regions on the said educational system is that they should have a core policy voice on the said sub-system, which however remains a national, nationwide asset.

The Paper concludes by examining the evolving demographic trends of adherence between educational sub-systems in Cameroon. It puts figures on the prior, anecdotally documented patterns of school-system switching, notably of parents migrating their children out of the French into the English educational sub-system. It demonstrates that this trend has been taking place in nursery, primary, and secondary education – and highlights the importance

of monitoring the numbers, since large movements from the French to English sub-system can submerge spaces and capacity in the smaller English sub-system.

The Paper calls for Education sector forecasting into future language medium-of-instruction demand in Cameroon, to form more precise estimates of future demand for the languages-in-education at primary, secondary, and university levels. It recommends better nuanced understanding of the identities that are developing with the changes in language of learning, to make them more cohesive for the Nation. The Paper also calls for a review of language of instruction and learning policies in bilingual Universities where both languages are used interchangeably.