

**TEACHERS TRADE UNIONISM IN THE BRITISH SOUTHERN/WEST
CAMEROONS: CONTRIBUTIONS TO SOCIAL MUTATIONS AND
IMPLICATIONS**

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the emergence of autonomous teacher's trade unions in the British Southern/West Cameroons. The objective is to account for their creation and the important role they played in enhancing the teaching profession, education and social evolution of the territory. The paper demonstrates their contributions to social advancement and the impact of their activities. Using archival and secondary sources, the study reveals that the teacher's trade unions were well organised, conscious of their tasks and were determined in protecting the interest of the teachers. More to that, the unions actively participated in the social dynamics of the Southern Cameroons nations.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

A trade union means any combination, whether temporary or permanent, for regulating the relations between workmen and masters, or between workmen and workmen or between masters and masters for imposing restrictive conditions on the conduct of any trade or business. The origin of trade unions or unionism can be traced to Britain. In fact, the growth and development of the Industrial Revolution in 1760 in Britain laid the basis for the development of trade unions (Hassan, 1966). The first generation of trade unions started as local and small trade clubs of workmen of particular professions or occupations whose discussions centred on wages, hours of work, conditions of work, and benefits amongst another issue. Progressively, their activities broadened as they began merging up with counterpart groups in other areas, leading to the formation of loose federations (Ibid). These unions were out to protect their membership while catering for the needs of their conglomerates, otherwise known as branches. Generally, trade unions were formed by workers seeking the amelioration of their working conditions; put an end to exploitation and to be treated with respect and dignity. After struggles between the British government and employees, the British parliament in 1825 passed an Act which gave legality to the right to associate, the right to strike and rights to pay union dues (check-off dues). Thus the date 1825 marked the start of the legal history of trade unionism in Britain (ibid).

The development of trade unions in British colonies and especially those in Africa was based on the back drop that the colonial government understood that trade unions were necessary for social and industrial progress (Godfrey, 1982). In this regards, the development of trade unions in British territories was encouraged by the colonial administrations. Trade unionism in Africa was introduced by European workers who were deployed to British colonies in the later decades of the Nineteenth century. Thus, the first trade unions were consequently exclusively unions of European workers (Orr, 1966). As earlier mentioned, the colonial government fostered the development of trade unions in all of her territories. To this effect, on September 17, 1930, Lord Passfield (secretary of state for Colonies) issued a directive soliciting colonial administrations to encourage the formation of trade unions in the British Colonies. To the secretary, their existence was natural and legitimate but under government control and supervision (Godfrey, 1982). The colonial administration created labour departments in all British colonies with the principal objective to promote the development of trade unions along traditional British lines (Kenneth, 2009). The Colonial office through Paasfield encouraged the implementation of sections 2 and 3 of the Trade Union Act of 1871 granting legality to trade unions in the British dependencies based on the British model with the notion of social pluralism as the model's prime concept (Godfrey, 1982). The concept stipulated that trade unions be formed by private interest groups as a means to maximize the social and economic advantages of the memberships. Consequently, the British trade union policy from 1930 onwards regarded trade unions as part of the overall development of democratic institutions aimed at preparing the colonies towards self-government and economic viability (Ibid). In Nigeria, where the Southern Cameroons and Northern Cameroons were administered as integrals from 1916 to 1961, trade unions had been established as far back as 1905. The civil servants in the Lagos colony and the Southern Nigerian Protectorate had organised unions (Orr, 1966). These unions were predominantly regional-based or sectorial. The Nigerian Civil Service Union (NSCU) was the only major national union in Nigeria between 1912 and 1922 and it was only in the 1930s that other national unions were created such as the Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT) and the Railway Workers Union (Kenneth, 2009). Trade Unions were not only very active in the amelioration of workers social rights and conditions; they also act in accompanying the government in the social and political evolution of the territory. This was the case with the teacher's trade unions in the British Southern (West) Cameroons which is the focus of this study.

Following the defeat and the ousting of the Germans from Cameroon in 1916, the territory was partitioned between Britain and France. France obtained four-fifth while Britain got the remaining one fifth. The British divided her portion into British Southern Cameroons and British Northern Cameroons. They were both administered as integrals of the British colony of Nigeria for administrative convenience. This division was made permanent and consequently, the Southern Cameroons evolved from a province of the Eastern Region of Nigeria to an autonomous region in 1958. This territory decided on 11 February 1961 following the United Nations organised plebiscites to gain independence by reuniting with the independent Republic of Cameroun. Thus following the creation of the Federal Republic of Cameroon on 1st October 1961, the Southern Cameroons adopted the name of the "State West Cameroon". Therefore it was within the federation of Nigeria that the teachers in the Southern Cameroons militated in trade unionism which was initially Nigerian based and dominated unions. Branches were only subsequently opened in British Southern Cameroon. It was only in 1959 that the first indigenous national teacher's trade union was founded in the

British Southern Cameroons. Mindful of the fact that the Southern Cameroons Union of Teachers was formed in 1959 and in conformity with the political evolution of the territory in 1961, the name of the union was changed to the "West Cameroon Union of Teachers". The union, therefore, adopted the name "West" as it was the new identity of the state. Both names are used in the study interchangeably to mean the same union.

Teachers Trade Unions Basis and Nascent Phase

The nature of the relationship between workers and their authorities in the Nigerian Federation, directly and indirectly, necessitated the formation of trade unions for the protection of worker's rights and interest during the colonial era. This was without the exception of the educational sector and its practitioners. British social ordinances or trade union ordinances like the March 3, 1938 trade union ordinance were fashioned to heighten social developments, stir up the establishment of labour unions which stood as defence shield of their members (NAB, Qe (1938) 1, Trade Union Ordinance). The enactment of social laws or trade union ordinances by the British colonial administration in her colonies precipitated the formation of labour unions. This was amidst circumstances that made workers to see trade unions as protective institutions or umbrellas. Developments from 1916 such as; the education code which laid down very challenging considerations for teacher qualifications, the sacking of workers and the very poor working conditions of mission teachers as compared to civil servants, inequitable salary scales, and worst of all the spillover effect of the 1929-30 economic depression which ravaged the world not leaving out the European dominated African colonies prompted the creation of labour unions. The negative effects of the Great Depression were greatly felt by teachers as several actions were taken by the colonial administration and school authorities in a bid to contain the circumstances. This can be better understood in the words of Hilliard as he presents the situation in the following words, "... teacher's salaries had in several instances to be reduced and increments withheld; some missions imposed levies on the salaries of their teaching staff in order to keep their schools going in poorer areas"(Hilliard, 1957). Confronted with such perplexity, the formation of teacher trade unions in Nigeria by the late 1920s became inevitable. The pioneered trade unions which included teachers unions within the federation had a more factional base. Between 1925 and 1930, there were a number of teachers trade unions formed within the federation and which represented the structure of the federation. The first set of teacher unions were founded between 1926 and 1929 (Cyril, 2002). However, it was not until 1938 that trade union activities in Nigeria gained legal backing following the proclamation of the first Nigerian law on the development of trade unions. The law was strengthened by the creation of a labour office in 1942 (Michael, 2014). This study, therefore, pays attention to three teacher trade unions; the Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT) which had branches in the Cameroons and was more to that the first teachers trade union that all the teachers in the southern Cameroons adhered to. The Southern Cameroons Union of Teacher (SCUT) formed after a breakaway from NUT and the West Cameroon Union of teachers (WCUT) which was a transformation of SCUT.

The Nigerian Union of Teacher

The Nigerian Union of teachers (NUT) had been formed way back on July 8, 1931, as a result of a merger of factional teacher unions who sought protection in a national powerful union than sectorised unions. The NUT had several objectives which ranged from "...equal pay and better working conditions of service for teachers, foster unity and progress among teachers in Nigeria, to raise the status of the teaching profession, to promote and advance the cause of education..." (Cyril,2002). The union acted as the mediator between the government, voluntary agencies (V.As) and the native authorities (N.As) and the teachers. It listened to teachers complaints and channelled proposed solutions to the various authorities. The union welcomed problems such as sanctions on teachers, issues that were related to salaries and teachers conditions of service (NAB, File, si/(1952) 14, Nigerian Union of Teachers.). The union protected its members (Nigerian and Cameroon teachers) and fought for the preservation of their rights. Affiliated to the NUT was a Southern Cameroon based Bamenda Catholic Teachers Union (B.C.T.U). An association that was formed by John Ngu Foncha a catholic primary school teacher in 1944 (Pius, 1999). In 1946, a provincial branch of NUT has created in the Southern Cameroons thanks to the efforts of Foncha (Ibid). One of the biggest goals of NUT was to secure better pay for teachers. Through her efforts, the union was able to guarantee significant salary increments for her member's in 1947 (Cyril, 2002). However, it was only by 1950 that the British Southern Cameroons administration included in her report to the United Nations Trusteeship Commission about the activities of NUT in her branches of Kumba, Bamenda, Buea, Mbengwi, and Njinikom. The NUT produced a periodic academic journal, "The Nigerian School Master" which was mainly on educational matters and teachers affairs. Another publication of NUT the "Nigerian Teacher" was launched in 1950. This magazine was sponsored by the government and was widely read by teachers in the territory (NAB, 1950 Report). As time passed and developments unfolded, the juicy relationship that existed between the local teachers in Southern Cameroons and the union became sour. The Cameroons indigenous teachers were becoming uncomfortable with the union and by 1959; they could no longer sustain their patience. The Southern Cameroons teachers felt that the union could no longer protect their interest to the latter. This resulted in the formation of the Southern Cameroon Union of Teachers in 1959. This was the first teacher union formed by indigenous Cameroons teacher in the Southern Cameroons. The SCUT was later transformed into the West Cameroon Union of Teachers (WCUT) by 1961 following the reunification of British Southern Cameroons and the Republique du Cameroun. Thus they are examined in this study as one institution since as the later was just a change of nomenclature of the former.

The Southern Cameroons Union of Teachers (S.C.U.T) and the West Cameroon Union of Teachers (WCUT)

The establishment of the SCUT by the indigenous teachers of the Cameroons was a means to end a series of challenges which they had been facing and NUT could not resolve them. Thus in seeking for solutions to their problems this group of teacher broke out from the NUT. Several factors led to the creation of the SCUT. Constitutional developments in the Federation of Nigeria affected the Southern Cameroons. The espousal of the 1951 Macpherson constitution and the partitioning of the Federation into autonomous regions paved the way for the founding of regional trade unions. Provincial and district trade union headquarters began thinking and embracing separate regional statuses. The effect was the gradual break away from the parent national unions and their headquarters (Wogu, 1969).

This was further accelerated with the creation of the Federation of Nigeria and the provision of a quasi-regional status for the Cameroons in 1954 (Victor, 2001). With the administration of Southern Cameroons separately from the Eastern region of Nigeria, the NUT repeatedly failed to bring any pressure to bear upon the government of the Southern Cameroons to concede to the needs of the teachers especially the voluntary Agency teachers in the territory (NAB, File, si(1959)11, West Cameroon Union of Teachers). In fact, trade unions which were formerly branches of the Nigerian Organisations were adjusting themselves to fall in line with constitutional developments in Southern Cameroons. "Cameroonian" Unions were emerging, some of which were; the Southern Union of Catering Workers, the Southern Cameroons Civil Service Union and the Southern Cameroons Union of Teachers (NAB, Report for 1959). These disgruntled teachers were forced to seek assistance elsewhere and therefore founded the SCUT.

Again, in the other regions of Nigeria, local or regional teacher trade unions had been formed with the result that each of these regions had a salary structure peculiar to the teachers in that region and different from the rest of the other regions (NAB, File, si(1959)11, West Cameroon Union of Teachers). The Southern Cameroonians fell behind all the three regions and the federal bureau of Lagos. Thus, the establishment of SCUT was envisaged as a means of catching up with the pace of events. Furthermore, the success which the Lagos teachers registered in 1957 which secured them an increase in their salaries also raised the appetite of the teachers in the Southern Cameroons whose salary conditions were deplorable. This was especially so as such increases were not extended to the teachers in the Southern Cameroons through politically the territory was still treated on the same line with Lagos according to the constitutional provisions (Ibid). The NUT was not only reluctant but was ineffective and failed to negotiate with the federal or the Southern Cameroons government on the salary conditions of the teachers in the Southern Cameroons. The teachers felt abandoned and thus the adoption of a new identity was inevitable considering the numerous challenges they faced. Moreover, in the 1950s, most regional governments in a bid to secure votes from the electorate offered increases in salaries to civil servants. This according to the governments was also a means to ameliorate the poverty conditions of their citizens. But unfortunately, employers in the private sectors felt a bitter peal as their employees (including voluntary agency teachers) were increasingly demanding the extension of such benefits to them. Regrettably, such benefits were not stretch to the reach of workers of the private sector amongst who were V.A teachers. These teachers, therefore, felt that their interest was no longer catered for within NUT and thus formed SCUT (Olusoju, 2012).

The attainment of a full regional status by the Southern Cameroons in 1958 was seen as a blessing to the Southern Cameroons teachers. Most if not all indigenous Cameroons teachers cut off links with NUT and declined allegiance to the union. The first step of separation was the non-payment of union dues. By extension, the union's branches in the territory became paralysed due to the lack of funds. The 1958, 1959, and 1960 annual reports of NUT depicted the situation of the union in the Cameroons as ineffective (Ibid). Since the teachers in the Cameroons ceased to accredit the NUT activities, the union could not also represent teachers who did not pay in their financial obligations as stipulated by the union's constitution. It was therefore clear that that the Southern Cameroons teachers were no more members of NUT.

The relative cordial relationship that had transpired within the Nigerian teachers and the local Cameroon teachers over the years had become so slippery. The proud and uncompromising attitude of the Nigerian teachers was steadily becoming a torn in the flesh of the Southern Cameroons teachers (Christian, 2018). These poor attitudes were further compounded by the Igbo atrocities which later gave rise to "Igbophobia" (Amaazee, 1990). The Southern Cameroonians teachers were scared and disturbed by the numerous crimes that were committed by the Nigerians in the Cameroons. Another issue was the domineering role of Nigerian teachers in the Southern Cameroons as they monopolized the posts of headmasters and supervising teachers. To the teachers of Southern Cameroons, the availability of a regional teachers union would exclusively cater for their interest as long as education remained within the powers of the regional authority (NAB, File, si(1959)11, West Cameroon Union of Teachers). That is within the Southern Cameroons. They envisaged a body closer and within the jurisdiction of the region which they could have easy access to and which could readily listen and take actions to their problems. More to that, the Southern Cameroons government demonstrated her willingness to recognize any union of teachers formed in and registered for the territories services. This was contained in the press release No.528 of November 3rd 1959 by the information service which stipulated that a representative of a recognised union of teachers in the territory would be appointed in the Southern Cameroons board of education. Thus a sign that SCUT was the recognised representative union of the teachers in the Cameroons, the Southern Cameroons government wisely declined to accept a nominee of NUT in the Southern Cameroons Board of Education (Ibid). The popularity of the SCUT was boasted and this of course meant that the NUT no longer enjoyed such privileges in the Southern Cameroons.

Faced with numerous challenges and due to the loss of confidence in NUT, the indigenous Cameroon teachers decided to cut off links with NUT by forming the SCUT. Thus during a meeting of the local Cameroons teachers which held on March 4th 1959 in Nanchang (Mamfe Division), they unanimously ceased all connections with NUT and opted for the creation of the Southern Cameroons Unions of Teachers (SCUT) (Piet, 2006). This young union just a year after its creation had a membership of about 75% of the total population of the teachers in the territory, its headquarter in Mamfe and D. A. Wan Obi elected as the union's pioneer secretary-general. The motto of the union was "Service, Honesty and Justice." (NAB, File, si(1959)11, West Cameroon Union of Teachers). The objective of the union was to cater to the needs and troubles of her members. The union became officially recognised from May 27, 1960 and its activities in the interest of the members became legitimate and legally covered by the Trade Union Ordinance cap. 218 (Ibid). The union's nomenclature was changed to the "West Cameroon Union of Teachers" (W.C.U.T) in 1961 following the reunification of British Southern Cameroons and La Republique du Cameroun (Christian, 2018). This was just a change of name as the policies and constitution of the union remained the same.

As a response to these secessionist actions, at the beginning, NUT persistently claimed representation of all teachers in the Southern Cameroons. This reaction by the NUT affected the ministry of social services that was responsible for education in the Southern Cameroons. The ministry was placed in the awkward position of not knowing which union-represented teachers in the Southern Cameroons Board of Education. Consequently, SCUT started pressing for representation in the board which was achieved later in November 1960 (File, si

(1959) 11, West Cameroon Union of Teachers.).The tussle between the SCUT and NUT demonstrated and indicated that the union though very young was at any time ready to fight for the interest of its members. The fact that the union secured registration as a trade union through the registrar of Trade Unions in Lagos clearly distinguished it from NUT.

The British colonial administrative Trade Union Model prohibited trade unions from political activities and to mingle with nationalist parties. The model advocated for "free, but responsible trade unionism". Trade unions were obliged to preserve their autonomy and to opt for amicable measures of conflict resolution than strike actions (Piet, 2009). The union in respect of the British Trade union Model claimed no links or direct involvement in government affairs according to her constitution. Its constitution also explicitly affirmed strongly that the union stays off from political matters. The union assisted the government in the execution of government educational policies or in political issues in several ways. The general secretary of the union was the liaison between the union and government of the authorities. During the union's second annual general assembly on 20 May, 1961, the minister of social services, Agustin N. Jua applauded the union in the following words "... in the past, people felt that only outsiders could help us. By forming a Cameroon union of teachers, we have come to a step forward to show the world that we can manage our own affairs...." (NAB, File, si(1959)11, West Cameroon Union of Teachers). This was just after the Southern Cameroons had gained full regional autonomy in 1958 and Kamerun National Democratic Party (KNDP) had won the United Nations plebiscites of 11 February 1961 deciding to secede from Nigeria and reunite with French Cameroon to form a federation. Therefore the secessionist attitude of the union from the NUT was gladly welcomed by the KNDP government as it meant that the union was ready to accompany her in the struggles for self-government and the political evolution of the territory. In fact the union maintained a proportional level of relationship with the government as in all its annual conferences, the union always sought the presence of a high ranking government official of the ministry of social services (NAB, Government Press Release No. 3457,3 August 1964).

Contributions to Social Mutations and Implications

The establishment of teacher's trade unions in the Southern Cameroons contributed in several ways to the social evolution of the territory and had varying implications. The institutionalisation of NUT branches in the British Southern Cameroons enhanced the well-being and working conditions of the indigenous Cameroon teachers as it acted as a mediator between the teachers and the colonial authorities by listening to their problems and proposing possible solutions. It greatly boosted their bargaining chip. Again, the production of periodic academic journals; "The Nigerian School Master" and "The Nigerian Teacher" helped teachers in strengthening and developing their teaching abilities and was also source of knowledge to the general public.

During the second visit of the United Nations Trusteeship Council to the Southern Cameroons on November 21, 1952, teachers through the N.U.T Buea branch mobilised and produced a memorandum containing a number of requests. To the U.N Department of Public Information, the teacher's union recommended the U.N. to vigorously implement schemes of educating the Cameroons public about the United Nation Organisation (UNO) and the role it played in maintaining world peace. They urged the Visiting Mission that publicity be given

on the ideals and work of the U.N.O in order that a great number of Cameroonians would know about the Trusteeship Council under whose special orbit the territory fell politically (NAB. file Td(1952)25 Petition from Nigerian Union of Teacher Buea to Visiting Mission 1952). To the teachers, such propaganda and teachings were necessary especially for the younger generation to get a healthy and promising attitude towards local and contemporary problems. To this end, the teachers advised that studies about the U.N.O be incorporated in the school syllabuses in the territory and indeed in all of Nigeria (Ibid). The teacher's union suggested the establishment of a Public Relations Department in the British Cameroons territory as was the case in Nigeria. The essence of a Public Relations Department according to the teachers was to keep a pace with Nigeria in the political and constitutional evolution. The union envisaged the department to be a channel through which new ideas, proposals and or experiments could be reached to the public of the Cameroons.

The teachers called on the U.N through the mission to establish a Welfare Department to help check juvenile delinquency which was in an ascendency especially in the South of the territory where the plantations were located with a high population density. This department was envisaged to curb anti-social wave and re-adjust family. With the attainment of an autonomous federal status, a Ministry of Education and Social Services was established in the Southern Cameroons and this cry became an issue of the past. Worried about the poor health care services in the Cameroons, the teacher's union cried out the high rate of infant mortality prevalent in the territory as a threat to the future generation. An infant mortality rate of 3 babies out of four was a cause for concern to the teachers. The Union encouraged the U.N to organise intensive and extensive health education campaigns, the establishment of domestic science centres and vocational schools for the training of women in domestic arts and child welfare (Ibid). The teachers also suggested the organization of health weeks and baby shows. The union called the World Health Organisation (W.H.O) and other institutions like the Red Cross arguing that they could do untold good in this direction. The reactions to these wishes led to the organization of systematic health campaigns in the Southern Cameroons to mobilize, rally and persuade the masses to consult hospitals, receive mass treatments or vaccinations while observing personal and communal health principles (Flavious, 2011). Alongside these health campaigns was health education. Both programmes were the responsibilities of the government health staff and community nurses. To prevent the spread of diseases, villagers were advised and encouraged to often sleep in well ventilated and roomy houses. The local authorities with the help of teachers of the union participated in the sensitization of the general public and also in the schools. The Teachers of the union took part in the teaching of personal hygiene and ways by which the spread of diseases could be avoided or prevented. Teachers of E.T.C. Kake received basic medical training for free in order to reduce the spread of some diseases. More to that, to better equip the knowledge of women on maternal issues or topics, the Education Department opened Domestic Science Centres in every division in the late 1950s (Ibid).

As concerns education which was of direct interest to the teachers, the union urged the U.N to ameliorate the educational policy of N.As and government educational efforts. The union went further to utter that with the solitary exception of the Victoria N.A school, there was no other N.A school in Victoria Division that ran up to standards six and this was a similar situation with the other divisions. The union lamented that the government itself ran only four schools in the whole territory and sometimes suitable N.A teachers were converted as

government teachers, consequently leaving the N.A school understaffed and inefficient in certain cases. The Visiting Mission was reminded by the union that education was fundamental in national life and would serve good if N.As were encouraged to establish more schools with efficient staff (NAB. File Td(1952)25). The pedagogues proposed that a secondary school be opened by the government to cater for the surplus children who could not find entrance into the two mission secondary school in the territory. This suggestion, however, was never materialized as it was only in 1962 that the first government secondary school was created in the Cameroons (that is, West Cameroon or former British Cameroons). This was the Cameroon College of Arts, Science and Technology at Kumba and the Bilingual Grammar School ManO" war Bay in Victoria opened in 1963 as the first bilingual college in Unified Cameroon (Christian, 2018).

Again, the union presented their belated conditions of service and remuneration of the teachers at the mercy of the Mission. They regretted the fact that government attitude towards V.A teachers was making the teaching profession distasteful and by extension, was leading to considerable leakages in the ranks of the profession. To put things to light, they made a comparison between the conditions of service and remuneration of V.A teachers and teachers holding similar qualifications in government schools. Their cry was that teachers of government schools were treated and given better conditions of service than V.A teachers. They also put the blame of their poor working conditions and remuneration on the communities which made little or no efforts to contribute to the evolvement of education except the fees they paid. To solve their problem, the teachers went on and suggested that a certain percentage (about 10%) of the Cameroon Development Cooperation (C.D.C) yearly profits be allocated annually to meet the cost of the remuneration of teachers in the Trust Territory. Concluding on the teacher's conditions of service, they quoted the declaration of the Conference on African Education that held at King's College, Cambridge University from the 8th to 20th of September 1952 about the conditions of service in Nigeria and other African territories and which reported as;

We are conscious that there are widespread feelings on insecurity and unfairness among many teachers because of the wide variations on the conditions of service. We think the establishment of a unified teaching service [is] the only effective way of removing these feelings, which must be great hindrances [hindrances] in the development of a true professional spirit.... (NAB. File Td(1952)25)

This shows that the teachers of the Southern Cameroons were not only the one plagued with problems. It was a general issue throughout most of the British dependencies in Africa and which greatly deterred teacher's efficiency and productivity.

The SCUT (WCUT) through its activities contributed to the social development of the territory in several ways. The union's success in preserving permanent representation in the Educational Board of the Southern and later West Cameroons gave the union the opportunity of contributing to educational debates and the adoption of education policies. In fact, the union was represented in all education committees such as the harmonization committee, the disciplinary committee, West Cameroon Joint Consultative Council (NAB, File, si(1965)2, West Cameroon Union of Teachers). The union made credible suggestions which were taken up and implemented by the government. For example, the opportunity that was accorded

external candidates to be able to sit for the First School Leaving Certificate Examinations was a suggestion of the union (NAB, File, si (1959) 11, West Cameroon Union of Teachers). Again, the WCUT successfully convinced the government to stop the issuing of "fail" certificates to unsuccessful candidates at the FSLC examinations (NAB, File si(1965)2, West Cameroon Union of Teachers). The issuing of fail certificates was not only meaningless but unnecessarily expensive. This was a very credible opinion as it relieved the government from irrelevant expenditures and saved failed candidates from the negative impact or stigma.

In respect of the constitutional responsibility of the union in promoting quality education and the availability of quality teachers as a prerequisite for promoting and sustaining decent education, the union during her annual general conference in Bamenda from 28 to 29 August 1964, called on and encouraged the government to put in all efforts during the period up to 1970 to integrate teachers training with the Cameroon College of Arts and Science and the University of Yaounde (NAB, File, si (1964) 1, West Cameroon Union of Teachers). Whether or not this suggestion was embraced by the administration cannot be established. The union also called on the government to develop the Cameroon College of Arts Science and Technology (CCAST) Bambili into a full university so as to make it possible for more Cameroonians to receive university education at home (Ibid). This wish was more pressing especially as there was an acute shortage of university graduates to occupy the senior staff positions in the new state and by extension the demands of the civil service. In fact, by 1962, there were slightly over 20 university graduates in the State of West Cameroon and by virtue of the limitations of university graduates, most of the top civil service positions were occupied by none academically Cameroonians or by expatriates who were Nigerians and British for the most part. Thus, the union's wish was in complicity with the policy of the Cameroonisation of the Cameroon public service that had been initiated by the Foncha government in 1959. This opinion remained a dream yet to be realized as the college was never transformed into a university as was proposed by the union. However, this later influenced the creation of the annexe Higher Teachers Training College in Bambili on September 13, 1967, with its first batch of government candidates graduating in 1969 and by extension, the creation of the University of Bamenda in 2010 (Christian, 2018).

The production and publication of periodic academic journals by SCUT contributed to the educational progress in the country. The union's journal, "The Teacher's Voice" contained literary articles and discussion which teachers were highly encouraged to own copies and read as their intelligent quotients were broadened by the scintillating particles. The first volume of this journal was issued in October 1967 (PCCCAL, File, No. 6078 General Matter Relating to West Cameroon Union of Teachers 1965-1977). Teachers were enlightened by the journal in aspects of teaching aid, some common faults on the blackboard, the development of specific topics for juniors and on general pieces of advice on the teaching profession. These articles raised the morals of teachers and by extension, teaching was rendered more effective. The teacher's magazine was not only a journal for teachers per se, as interested readers from other works of life were furnished with an avalanche of educative subjects. The creation of a June centre for the G.C.E in Bamenda in 1968 was thanks to the request of the WCUT to the Education department in July 1967 (PCCCAL, file No. 35 West Cameroon Union of Teachers 1959-197249). This relieved candidates from travelling long distances from the Grass fields to Buea. The cost of transportation was also reduced and the

problem of long absence by teachers was reduced (NAB, file si(1965)2, West Cameroon Union of Teachers).

Again, the SCUT was able to secure the salary recommendation of 15% salary increase to all teachers in 1960 in the Southern Cameroons (Konings, 2009). Furthermore, the 1963 salary revision was partly due to the pressure that the WCUT put to bear on the West Cameroon government (NAB, File, Sb/a(1963)12 Education Policy General).²⁹³ Salary issues were a constant cry of the union as it kept pressing for better salary scales for V.A teachers throughout her existence. Their pressure was compensated by the 1966 award of 10% to 15% salary increments to teachers (Konings, 2009). The WCUT also recorded remarkable success in guaranteeing the 4% and the 3% annual salary increments by presidential decree of March 1969 by July 1972 (NAB, File Si(1965)2 West Cameroon Union of Teachers). Again, it was thanks to the relentless efforts of the union that by 1970 the "C" grade category of teachers was abolished. This consequently gave birth to the emergency grade III programme which helped the government in her project of 100% trained teachers in the country. The union through her efforts pressed on the government to create a June centre for GCE external candidates which were realised in 1970 and also with the creation of more centres for FSLC, Common Entrance exams and external exams for failed Std. VI pupils, an inducement for teachers in training colleges and the creation of Educational Secretary Council schools (Cameroon Times, Vol.10, No 52, Tuesday 9, 1970,4).

In the quest for political unity and the introduction of a one-party state led to the dissolution of the numerous political parties in the States of West and East Cameroon to form the Cameroon National Union (C.N.U) as the lone national political party on September 1, 1966. This had several consequences not only on political matters but also on autonomous trade unions (Mbu, 2004). The euphoria which ravaged the Federal Republic after the formation of the CNU was transcended to other sectors of the state including trade union activities. After the successful creation of a one-party state by President Amadou Ahidjo, to enhance the strength of the CNU, he extended the call for a merger of all trade unions in the country in the name of "National Integration and National Unity". Ahidjo's call for a Grand National trade union was made in 1972 during the presentation of a marathon speech in Garoua. His call was contained in the following words as was quoted by E.K. Lottin, Delegate and Regional Inspector of Labour and Social Insurance for West Cameroon in 1972 addressing the 12th Annual Conference of the West Cameroon Union of teachers which held in Bamenda on the 7 and 8 of April:

Here and now, I say to our trade union friends: put an end to your personal squabbles; have done with this ideological strife bequeathed to you from the time of colonialism but which is irrelevant to the present national situation; forsake these labels which are now meaningless and hearken to the deep voice of the mass of the workers who, with their sound common sense have understood where the real problems lie and where the national interest rest. Joined together in this way under a single trade union within the framework of a party which assumes the conscience of the entire nation, all of you, leaders and members, will re-discover the faith and enthusiasm that will allow you to contribute the full power and dynamism of the working class of our dear country to the task of national construction (NAB, File Si(1964)1 West Cameroon Union of Teachers).

Deducing from the President's speech, the trade unions were called upon to form a single national trade union. This union was to be the representation of all trade unions in the country. This was to ease the co-operation of workers with the government and the party (CNU) for the construction of a great nation. The single national trade union was envisaged by the government as being in line with the wind of change that had swept the country since the formation of the CNU in 1966. Reacting to the President's call for a national trade union, the WCUT in respect of article 19 of her constitution which stipulated that the union negotiate to amalgamate and arrange to join the action with other bodies or societies whose objects or aims were in part or whole similar to the objects or aims of the Union; in such matters, as may be prescribed by law, propagated several reasons why the merger was very necessary. The WCUT made arrangements and met with the teachers union of East Cameroon to discuss modalities of how the merger will be. Addressing the teachers union of east Cameroon during the FNEPCAM organised "STAGE" in Douala in July 20, 1972. J. N. Tamen, Secretary-General of the WCUT outlined several reasons why it was important to merge the two teachers unions. He appealed that it was very necessary to follow the footsteps of the numerous political parties that existed in both states in merging to form the CNU in 1966. Tamen went on to elucidate that anyone who opposed this unity was not only an enemy to national unity but was also a foe to the teaching profession (NAB, File Qe 1967/10, Teachers Union Security Reports 1967-172).

Furthermore, the WCUT saw the formation of a single national trade union as a means and platform where its long cry for uniform conditions of service could be achieved. To the union, all the members of the lone union would enjoy equal rights and benefits irrespective of authority. A Grand National union was conceived as a bridge to be able to demand for: uniform training of teachers, unique syllables for all primary schools in the country and most importantly to endeavour to make the teaching profession a dignified occupation. The united national union was also going to help eradicate the xenophobic attitude that was put up by some teachers on their colleagues who were either transferred from East to West or from West to East states (Ibid). He went further to propose a nomenclature for a united teacher's trade union. He suggested that the unified teachers union be called the "National Union of Cameroon Teachers" (N.U.C.T) and be an affiliate of the National Union of Cameroon Workers (N.U.C.W) which was been recognised as an organ of the CNU (Ibid). With the abolition of the Federal state on May 20, 1972, the teacher's unions of both states followed the political pace a few weeks afterwards to form a unified teachers union which fell as a component of the National Union of Cameroon Workers (N.U.C.W). Consequently, the WCUT lost her status as the lone teacher's trade union in Anglophone Cameroon. More to that, its position as a powerful autonomous trade union was ceded to the NUCT and by extension, to the NUCW as the former was a unit of the latter. None the less her merger with the trade union of East Cameroon signified not only the union's readiness to social mutations but it also demonstrated that the union was prepared in accompanying the government in the political evolution of the nation.

CONCLUSION

British social laws or ordinances encouraged the creation of autonomous trade unions in British dependencies as part of the overall development for responsible democratic institutions aimed for the social and political evolutions of the territories. These laws and the

formation of trade unions were in part to prepare the territories for self-government. Trade unions were understood to be natural and legitimate and as such, their existence was indispensable. Based on these principles, several autonomous trade unions were formed in British colonies including Nigeria from where the British Southern Cameroons was administered from 1916 to 1961 and later within the Southern Cameroons territory. The teachers in Nigeria and the Southern Cameroons also formed trade unions to cater to their needs and challenges. Despite the breakaway and formation of other trade unions by the indigenous British Southern Cameroons teachers, they all had the same agenda; the protection of their member's rights, the respect and preservation of good working conditions. In fact, the unions were the bargaining chips of the teachers. The teacher's trade unions were generally conscious, organised and made available their services in assisting the administration towards the social evolution of the territory and by extension political dynamics which produced a good number of outcomes. Therefore, their role cannot be undermined.

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