

## Early Childhood Education as an Instrument for Good Governance in Cameroon

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**Abstract:** This study examined Early Childhood education as an instrument for good governance in the entire World and Cameroon in particular. Good governance, is a situation whereby those in power decides what is to be implemented or not without making the governed feel marginalized. Good governance requires certain characteristics before one can say it is good like accountability, vividness, responsive participatory attributes, effectiveness and efficiency in duties, control, and evaluation of all the due processes of the law as needed. In Cameroon, Early Childhood Education is an education given to children in a formal school setting. It starts from 0-8 years, which means that the child starts from crèche through primary three to acquire this crucial education. Thus, pupils are taught social norms and social skills like friendship, volunteering, sympathy, kindness, empathy, truthfulness, and accountability. It has been observed that most developing nations are experiencing the problem of under-development economically, socially, politically, and morally due to a lack of preschool experience as witnessed in countries with preschool. This problem could be traced to negligence, negative attitude as well as unawareness of the importance of early childhood education in Cameroon. Since good governance is directly related to social and moral habits, good governance cannot be achieved if people being governed are socially and morally undeveloped, due to lack of training in early childhood education. Therefore, the good governance characteristics for future leaders should be imbibed in early childhood education and the a strong community. Hence, there is a need for the government to sensitize the parents and teachers on the importance of preschools to parents to enroll their children in early childhood education and that the state should create preschools all over Cameroon. The cost of preschool most parents are subsistence farmers with low incomes.

**Key points:** Pupils, Early Childhood Education, Good Governance, Cameroon.

### 1. Introduction

The study has revealed that the ranking of Cameroon in the Ibrahim Index of African Governance (IIAG) over the years gives food for thought. The IIAG provides an annual assessment of the quality of governance in African countries under four main conceptual categories: safety and rule of law; participation and human rights; sustainable economic opportunity; and human development. In the 2014 IIAG report released recently, Cameroon ranked 37th out of 54 countries in Africa. This is an improvement over the 2013 ranking when Cameroonians ranked 35th in Africa. The country scored 47% in the overall governance index, 38% on safety and rule of law while on participation and human rights, it scored 49%. The country was scored 43.3% on sustainable economic opportunity while it got 53% on human development. Overall, Cameroon scored 47% on category and sub-category ranks and was placed 12th out of 15 in West Africa. Mauritius maintains its rating as the best-governed country in Africa with 81.7%, a position it has occupied since 2007. Cape Verde placed second with 76.6%, Botswana was ranked 3rd with 76.2%, South Africa 4th with 73.3% and Ghana was rated 7th (Business Day, 2014). Analysts argued that of all the problems,

challenges and crisis facing Cameroon, the most disheartening appears to be ineffective leadership. They further argued that the reverberation effect of the failure of the leadership, corruption, and bad governance are being felt across all sectors and segments of Cameroon (Business Day, 2014). Based on this premise, the activists are of the opinion that the process of education which begins at the early childhood education stage can be used as an instrument for good governance. Cameroon's National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013) recognizes the need to use education to achieve development. The policy stressed that the goal of Cameroonian education is to prepare learners for an effective and productive life in society. This implies that Cameroonian education is expected to equip learners with the necessary knowledge, attitude, values, skills, and competencies that would enable them to respond positively to the changing world in which they live and work.

According to Osakwe (2006), education being an indispensable tool in nation-building is a process of systematic training and instruction designed to transmit knowledge and acquisition of skills, potentials, and abilities that would enable an individual to contribute efficiently to the growth and development of an individual; physically, socially, morally, intellectually and emotionally. The rigorous process of inculcating such knowledge, values, attitudes, skills, and competencies is recommended at the early childhood education level. Early childhood education, therefore, is the level at which the foundation of knowledge, attitude, values, skills, and competency acquisition for personal and national development is laid. It is at the early childhood stage of a child's life that basic skills to govern may be inculcated into the child. For one to govern right, one must have good leadership skills. Acquiring leadership skills helps the child to live a controlled or disciplined life. With a disciplined life, a child can become whatever he desires to be and actually pursue it to logical conclusion and make it happen (Penstate Extension, 2022) or actualize the desire. Good leadership skills make an individual to be responsible. Every opportunity to serve puts a demand on you to show a high sense of responsibility and in which one must not waiver. Every good leader is intentional with whatever he does. He sees to it that he makes a heady way with greater consciousness to succeed. The child who intends to be a leader must have been made to develop confidence in himself or herself so as not to be tossed and manipulated. He/she must have been schooled to be a problem solver with sound judgment and great vision. This means he/she must be visionary. He/she must not be doing things as they used to be or follow the status quo. He must make a difference. He/she must be creative. He/she must also be able to work in a team. He must be a team player that can relate peacefully and collaboratively with others. He/she must be able to think outside of the box. Children by nature usually think out of the box. Children are trained to develop analytical and critical thinking during reading comprehension. They can be imaginative, and innovative, make abstract connections, listen to others' ideas, be open-minded, and satisfy their curiosity. This study would be significant to the entire community( pupils, parents, teachers, the government, policymakers, and curriculum planners). It would give pupils an insight into what good governance entails. It would also develop children's interest in being part of a decision-making body and governance. Parents would be aware of how to inculcate morals into the children early in life, in order to display appropriate behavior when they have the opportunity to be part of the helm of affairs (leadership position). Teachers need to be aware that when they develop needed social skills in pupils, it will impact the learners to become good citizens in the future. With this position, the government would see the need to ensure that teachers in the Early Childhood Centres are properly trained. Specialists in the field of Early Childhood Education should be employed. Furthermore, the government should make sure that educators, caregivers, and center heads in early childhood establishments are well-trained and certified. Lastly, the government should ensure that policymakers on children's education should be specialists in early childhood education. Curriculum planners should also allow the teachers to spend quality time developing children's social skills in classroom in all the localities of Cameroon

Cameroon, officially the Republic of Cameroon, is a country in Central Africa. It shares boundaries with Nigeria to the west and north, Chad to the northeast, the Central African Republic to the east, and Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, and the Republic of the Congo to the south. Its coastline lies on the Bight of Biafra, part of the Gulf of Guinea and the Atlantic Ocean. Due to its strategic position

at the crossroads between West Africa and Central Africa, it has been categorized as being in both camps. Its nearly 27 million people speak 250 native languages, in addition to the national tongues of English and French, or both.

The official languages of Cameroon are French and English, the official languages of former French Cameroons and British Cameroons. Christianity is the majority religion in Cameroon, with significant minorities practicing Islam and traditional faiths. It has experienced tensions from the English-speaking territories, where politicians have advocated for greater decentralization and even complete separation or independence (as in the Southern Cameroons National Council). In 2017, tensions over the creation of an Ambazonian state in the English-speaking territories escalated into open warfare.

Large numbers of Cameroonians live as subsistence farmers. The socioeconomic position of the community plays a crucial role in ECE and the connections between children, families, and care providers, and an inclusive environment that helps pupils grow their social-emotional skills and feel a sense of belonging. It also offers access to resources, experiences, and opportunities that improve the quality of care. Care providers should focus on open communication, appreciate diversity like in Cameroon and collaborate with the large community, and involve families. The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLY) also recognizes the significance of this involvement in children's growth and is crucial for building resilient and connected communities that benefit everyone in Cameroon. Cameroon is a low socio-economic community and less involved in preschool activities because it is costly thus less demand and supply in most remote areas.

Cameroon is often referred to as "Africa in miniature" for its geological, linguistic, and cultural diversity. Its natural features include beaches, deserts, mountains, rainforests, and savannas. Its highest point, at almost 4,100 meters (13,500 ft), is Mount Cameroon in the Southwest Region. Its most populous cities are Douala on the Wouri River, its economic capital and main seaport; Yaoundé, its political capital; and Garoua. Limbé in the southwest has a natural seaport. Cameroon is well known for its native music styles, particularly Makossa, Njang, and Bikutsi, and for its successful national football team. It is a member state of the African Union, the United Nations, the *Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie* (OIF), the Commonwealth of Nations, the Non-Aligned Movement, and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation.

Early childhood education begins at home, and there are numerous books and television shows aimed at helping mothers and fathers of preschool children to educate their children and to parent more effectively. Much of the home training is devoted to teaching manners, social skills, and structured play, although verbal and number skills are also popular themes. Parents are strongly committed to early education and frequently enroll their children in preschools. Kindergartens, predominantly staffed by young female junior college graduates, are supervised by the Ministry of Basic Education but are not part of the official education system. In addition to kindergartens, there exists a well-developed system of government-supervised nursery schools supervised by the Ministry of Basic Education. Whereas kindergartens follow educational aims, nursery schools are predominantly concerned with providing care for infants and toddlers. Together, these two kinds of institutions enroll 86% at age three and 99% at age five prior to their entrance into the formal system at first grade. The Ministry of Education's 1990 Course of Study for Preschools, which applies to both kinds of institutions, covers such areas as human relationships, health, environment, language, and expression. Starting from March 2008 the new revision of curriculum guidelines for kindergartens as well as for preschools came into effect.

Cameroon has one of the highest school attendance rates in Africa. Girls attend school less regularly than boys do because of cultural attitudes, domestic duties, early marriage, pregnancy, and sexual harassment. Although attendance rates are higher in the south, a disproportionate number of teachers are stationed there, leaving northern schools chronically understaffed. In 2013, the primary school enrollment rate was 93.5% however, preschool enrolment is about 35% due to ignorance and the expensive nature.

School attendance in Cameroon is also affected by labor. The United States Department of Labor Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor reported that 56% of children aged 5 to 14 were working children and that almost 53% of children aged 7 to 14 combined work and school. In December 2014, a *List of Goods Produced by Child Labor or Forced Labor* issued by the Bureau of International Labor Affairs mentioned Cameroon among the countries that resorted to child labor in the production of cocoa.

### **Life expectancy in Cameroon**

The quality of health care is generally low. Life expectancy at birth is estimated to be 56 years in 2012, with 48 healthy life years expected. The fertility rate remains high in Cameroon with an average of 4.8 births per woman and an average mother's age of 19.7 years old at first birth. In Cameroon, there is only one doctor for every 5,000 people, according to the World Health Organization.

In 2014, just 4.1% of total GDP expenditure was allocated to healthcare. Due to financial cuts in the health care system, there are few professionals. Doctors and nurses who were trained in Cameroon emigrate because in Cameroon the payment is poor while the workload is high. Nurses are unemployed even though their help is needed. Some of them help out voluntarily so they will not lose their skills. Outside the major cities, facilities are often dirty and poorly equipped.

The problems relating to economic growth and productivity have been a matter of concern and ECE is a direct concern, as it renders a significant contribution towards the development of future citizens (Calman & Whelan, 2005)

### **The Importance of Early Childhood Education in Cameroon**

Early childhood education refers to the education of children from birth to age 8, including both in-home and out-of-home settings. To many of us, the importance of early education in children is common knowledge, however, more studies are coming to light about that reveal the potential learning disparities between students who had the luxury of early childhood education and those who never.

In Cameroon, like in many other African countries, early education is not commonplace for many families. Lack of investment in early childhood education across the continent is putting millions of children at a significant disadvantage before they even start school. Only one in four children aged three to five currently attend some form of preschool in West and Central Africa urban areas, including Cameroon.

Early childhood education is being hailed as one of the secrets to helping developing countries like Cameroon to become more prosperous and help people break out of the cycle of poverty. However, with access to education limited and multiple barriers faced by many children and families, it's not easy. The irony is, that in communities where ECE would have the most significant impact, there simply isn't the funding or the teachers to make it a reality like in almost all the rural areas.

Africa faces an increasing share of the world's out-of-school and uneducated young people. By 2030 Africa will have one-third of the world's children but 70% of its out-of-school population. Having a population that is lacking in skills and opportunity will mean that around 90% of the world's poorest people will be in Africa. Therefore, the Sustainable Development Goals agreed by world leaders have set a target to ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care, and pre-primary education by 2030.

However, to truly understand the importance of early childhood education, we're asking what are the real benefits and why is it so important for young children.

### **Prepares children for school**

Most obviously, early education prepares children for going to school. Going to school is a significant event in a young child's life and means a complete change in environment, routine, and lifestyle. Early education plays a role in ensuring that children are used to leaving their families and

being placed in structured learning environments by the time they reach school age. ECE also helps children to learn to follow instructions and share the teacher's attention, which will give them a vital foundation for when starting school properly at the age of five.

### **Critical for development**

Studies show that 90% of critical brain development happens before the age of five. The young brain is like a sponge and having access to education early in life means they stand more chance of absorbing information and developing critical skills from learning to read and write to socializing and mixing with others. Early years are the best opportunity for a child's brain to develop the connections they need to be healthy, successful adults with the ability to solve problems, motivate themselves, and communicate clearly.

### **Break the poverty cycle**

Studies report that children from the poorest families learn approximately 30 million fewer words by age three than those from more affluent families, which is a concern for children living below the poverty line. Early education can give children the fundamental skills they need to succeed at school, which can help them and their families break out of the poverty cycle later down the line. Of course, it's thinking a long way ahead. However, early education can be vital in preparing a child for the future and ensuring they have the skills needed to one day build a successful career that can help them live a better life.

### **Creates an enthusiasm for learning**

Early access to education can create an enthusiasm for learning among children. If they're taught through fun and engaging activities at an early age, children will become hungry to learn and be more enthusiastic pupils, setting them up for a more successful school career. This enthusiasm could make a difference for a child when it comes to planning their future careers. It could motivate them to attend university and form a career for themselves. It will also help children to learn the true value of education as from an early age they'll be able to apply their knowledge to real-life situations.

### **Allows children to socialize**

Often, young children only mix with their family or close friends of the family. In Cameroon when children are being raised below the poverty line, it's likely that their families are also busy working and running the family home. Therefore, access to early education can be a vital chance for children to socialize and interact with others their own age. This means they can build relationships as well as learn vital life skills like communication, sharing, and cooperation. Early education is a great place for children to meet new people and also to learn social values, to understand how to interact with others and take into account their feelings. It's not only about seeing new faces but learning how to behave around other people.

### **Benefits the wider society**

The more children that receive an education, the more a community benefits. In countries like Cameroon, only 75% of children complete primary school, while only 45% finish secondary school. If the studies are to be believed, the more children who have access to ECE, the more will complete their education. In the simplest terms, this means more career prospects and less poverty for future generations. The more qualifications a child has, the better their prospects; they'll be able to go to university and get better, more well-paid jobs. This can also lead to more doctors, nurses, lawyers, and teachers amongst the community, benefiting Cameroon for many years to come.

Sponsoring a child is one way that you can help them to access education and change their lives. Your support will help them to socialise, develop new skills and gain an education that could one day help them break out of the poverty cycle. By sponsoring one of our younger children, you'll be helping to create a foundation for the rest of their lives, helping them to develop vital skills and creating a hunger for education and learning which can fuel them for many years to come.

To sponsor a child with us, help to change a girl's life, and fight gender inequality, take a look at our children currently searching for sponsorship and get in touch with our team today.

You can also help us raise awareness for our work by following us on social media, you'll find us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn. Plus, you can sign up for our newsletter to make sure you never miss an update about our work. Our volunteers work to find sponsors. They also help the children to access safety, education, nutritious food, and basic health and safety.

## **2. Statement of the Problem**

It has been observed that most developing nations are experiencing the problem of under-development economically, socially, politically, and morally. This under-development could be due to citizen's socio-developmental defects resulting in lackadaisical attitudes towards moral and social skills development.

*Cameroon is viewed as rife with corruption at all levels of government. In 1997, Cameroon established anti-corruption bureaus in 29 ministries but only 25% became operational, and in 2012, Transparency International placed Cameroon at number 144 on a list of 176 countries ranked from least to most corrupt. On 18 January 2006, Biya initiated an anti-corruption drive under the direction of the National Anti-Corruption Observatory. There are several high corruption risk areas in Cameroon, for instance, customs, public health sector, and public procurement. However, the corruption has gotten worse, regardless of the existing anti-corruption bureaus, as Transparency International ranked Cameroon 152 on a list of 180 countries in 2018*

This problem could be traced to negligence, non-Challans attitudes as well as unawareness of the significance of or what good early childhood education entails on the part of parents and teachers. Parents could be the culprit when they fail to send their children to early childhood and care centers to develop basic social skills. In addition, when parents overlook correctable behaviors, it can result in unacceptable social and moral behaviors in the child. Furthermore, when values and morals have been watered down children misbehave. Teachers on their part, may not be aware of the importance of harnessing the benefits that early childhood education can offer to develop good governance traits. The fallout is as a result of not employing specialists in early childhood education to teach at this level. The aforementioned, therefore, informs the focus of this paper.

## **3. The Concept of Good Governance**

There is no single and exhaustive definition of good governance nor is there a delimitation of its scope that commands universal acceptance. The term is used with great flexibility. Good governance has been said at various times to encompass full representation of human rights, the rule of law, effective participation, political pluralism, transparent and accountable processes and institutions, access to knowledge, information, and education, political empowerment of people, attitude, and values that foster responsibility, solidarity and tolerance (Business Day, 2014). However, there is a significant degree of consensus that good governance relates to policies and instructional processes which leads to outcome that are deemed necessary to achieve the goal of development (Business Day, 2014). According to Dugumar & Kompuok (2021) good governance stands for accountability, transparency in decision-making, implementation of the rule of law and regulations, early response to citizens' needs, equity and integration among interest groups, and efficiency in using resources in the delivery of services approach. Good governance is the process whereby public institutions conduct public affairs, manage public resources, and guarantee the realization of human rights in a manner essentially free of abuse and corruption, and with due regard for the rule of law (Business Day, 2014). Therefore, good governance is encapsulated in having the love of the citizens at heart and putting in place everything that will make them live happily and enjoy their lives. Cameroon had been the most corrupt country and many other less developed countries that amassed wealth for the few.

#### **4. The Concept of Early Childhood Education**

Early childhood education is seen as a branch of knowledgeable and essential components of all family and program arrangements for young children from birth to the statutory school age of six (Oduolwu, 2006). Pre-primary education otherwise known as early childhood education is the kind of education that provides young children from the cradle to the age of five plus with cognitive, physical, moral, social, and emotional development. That is, it is a level of education that helps the mind to develop in terms of moral, spiritual, and emotional capacities. It covers all forms of organized and sustained center-based activities such as preschool, kindergarten, and daycare centers designed to foster learning, emotional and social development in children. National Policy on Education (2013), defines pre-primary education as the education given in an educational institution to children prior to their entering primary school. It includes the crèche, the nursery, and the kindergarten in Cameroon.

#### **5. Purpose of Early Childhood Education in Cameroon**

The purposes of early childhood education otherwise known as pre-primary education as expounded in the National Policy on Education (2013) are as follows:

1. Effect a smooth transition from the home to the school
2. Prepare the child for the primary level of education.
3. Provide adequate care and supervision for the children while their parents are at work (on the farm, in the market, offices and other places)
4. Inculcate social norms
5. Inculcate in the child the spirit of inquiry and creativity through the exploration of nature and the environment, art, music, and playing with toys and other non-dangerous objects.
6. Develop a sense of cooperation and team spirit
7. Learn good habits, especially good health habits and
8. Teach the rudiment, letters, colors, shapes, and forms, through play. The aforementioned purposes place so much importance on Early Childhood Education as an instrument for developing good leadership skills in children early in life. It also demands being intentional about it.

#### **6. The Place of Early Childhood Education in Good Governance**

Early Childhood Education is designed to develop children's intellectual, social, emotional, language, and physical development and learning from birth to age eight. From the foregoing, it is obvious that one of the objectives to be achieved during the early childhood period is to inculcate social and moral habits in children. Moral values refer to a set of principles that guide an individual on how to evaluate right and wrong. People generally apply moral values to justify decisions, intentions, and actions. It also defines the personal character of a person. An individual with high moral values typically displays characteristics of integrity, respect, fairness, honesty, and compassion. The basic foundation of an individual's character is developed during the early years.

Good Governance is directly related to social and moral habits. Good governance cannot be achieved if the people being governed are ungovernable, that is when the people do not have the skills, potential, and abilities that would enable them to contribute efficiently to their personal and social development. During the early childhood period, children discover how to establish and maintain relationship with peer groups (Kostelnik, Soderman, and Whiren, 2011). Hence the skills that would enable them to develop healthy social competence later in life are acquired. These skills are embedded in the social, emotional, and moral domain of learning and they include peaceful co-existence, respect, love, care, tolerance, friendship, acceptance, cooperation, sharing, responsibility, helping, sympathizing, defending, rescuing, empathy, and conflict resolution among others (Bredekamp, 2011; Kostelnik, et al 2011). These skills would enable them later in life to establish

positive relationships with others, live with the bonds of societal expectations, and perceive, interpret, and respond to situations positively. It is therefore pertinent to say that addressing the issue of good governance would take the commitment and involvement of many elements in society, including early childhood education. In the view of Bredekamp (2011), building positive social skills and healthy emotional relationships during the early years is more effective than trying to remedy problems later. A child's high level of social competence in our society means that such a child would exhibit responsible, independent, friendly, cooperative, purposeful, and self-controlled behavior (Kostelnik et al, 2011). All these explanations point to the fact that early childhood education is an institution for good governance.

## **7. Skills Acquired During Early Childhood Period**

Olowe, Kutelu and Majebi (2014), gave an account of the skills that can be acquired during the early childhood period which can make children become governable and able to govern in the future. The skills are pre-social behavior, friendship skills, conflict resolution skills, emotional literacy, and a positive attitude towards diversity. Pre-social behavior or skill is a set of activities performed by one that are of benefit to society as a whole. They include activities such as helping, cooperating, rescuing, defending, sharing, donating, volunteering, comforting, sympathy, kindness, giving, showing concern, and taking another person's perspective among others (Preusse, 2008; Kostelnik, et al, 2011). There is no doubt that these activities or skills would give room for enabling an environment where there would be peace and where everyone can be loved and cared for (Olowe, et al, 2014). Through friendship, children learn how to relate with others because they develop social skills. Children who have friends respond to conflict in positive ways, they are inclusive and more often express empathy and compassion (Stephens, 2007). As noted by Kostelnik, et al (2011), and Stephens (2007), friendship stimulates sensitiveness, alertness, responsiveness, flexibility, assistance, companionship, social comparison, and affection. Within friendship, children can experiment with a number of social roles such as leaders, followers, risk takers, and comforters. The most complex aspect of peer relationships according to Kostelnik, et al (2011), is handling conflicts. Children's ability to deal with disputes in democratic ways includes recognizing and taking account of other's viewpoints, compromising, bargaining, or suggesting non-violent solutions to problems which is highly indicative of the future success of a relationship (Epstein, 2009). In resolving conflict, children are expected to learn to express their rights, explain the reason behind the suggestion, and accept reasonable disagreement. (Kostelnik et al, 2009; and 2011). The children, during their course of study, their care giver would have initiated a mediator role by stopping aggressive behavior, solicit statements from each party, and define problem in mutual terms. Hence, they acquire conflict resolution skills. Joseph, Strain, and Ostrosky (2006), submitted that emotional literacy is the ability to identify, understand, and healthily respond to oneself and others. It means that emotional literacy has to do with having self-awareness and recognition of one's feelings and knowing how to manage them, such as the ability to stay calm when angered or reassure oneself when in doubt (Olowe, et al. 2014). It includes empathy that is, having sensitivity to the feelings of other people. This skill is acquired early in life through the use of songs and rhythms, plays, games, and story reading during early childhood education programs. These skills enable them to appreciate that there are diversities in life. This knowledge moderates one's attitude in relating with people who are different from one's self (Koselink, et al, 2011).

Children's attitude about diversity have their roots in childhood, even before they are three years of age, they notice their peers' physical attributes and begin to compare these features with their own. In early childhood education programs, children are raised to celebrate and value diversity and to be proud of themselves, their family, and traditions, and respect and value people regardless of the colour of their skin, their physical abilities, or the language they speak. This builds positive identities and respect for difference during the early childhood period. Thus, diversity is woven into the fabric of the child's everyday life. Other basic skills important for governance include good communication skills. This is because such an individual must be able to articulate his views clearly and succinctly without ambiguity so that people may be able to understand his vision and run with it. Good governance demands trustworthiness, integrity, ability to apologize, consistency in

behavior, and accountability. These traits are developed right from childhood age. Additional traits include honesty, the ability to delegate responsibility, and define duties with confidence. The ability to show empathy, loving, caring, loving, humorous, guard confidence, and meet basic social needs are prerequisites to good governance. Emotional intelligence, matters most, he must be morally upright, reliable, respectful, stand for whatever is right, and be thoughtful of others. All these emotional intelligence are developed from childhood age. A good leader listens to feedbacks and learns from the past mistakes and can troubleshoot to find solutions to problems. A reflective mind is needed to be able to govern well and children are taught to engage in reflecting to solve problems. Children are initiative and get themselves involved and are focused, target-based, and may volunteer not for monetary gains. Being a leader entails becoming an independent thinker who understands how to work as part of a team as well as have effect on others around him positively (Natalie, 2022). The word leadership are not explicitly states in early childhood standards but there are socio-emotional phrases such as “self-confidence, problem-solving, pro-social, and ability to make independent decisions and choices. Children are also expected to know and state independent thoughts and feelings and participate in new experiences with confidence and independence Pennstate Extension (2022). All children have the potential to develop leadership skills. It is a lifelong process and children must be taught these skills so that they can take up leadership roles in the future (Pennstate Extension, 2022).

### **8. Challenges of ECE in Cameroon**

The development of basic leadership skills in pupils may be facing certain challenges. Parents and teachers need to adapt to make it a priority to develop leadership skills in pupils that would make them govern later in life when the opportunity arises. Parents and teachers need to change within themselves and see that as much as pupils are seen they also need to be heard. The pupils must be given a voice. The development of self-confidence in children must be encouraged by all and sundry. Parents may not allow their children to take certain decisions that could affect their lives. However, they should be encouraged and given room to practice confident decision-making. Parents are the major decision-makers in education, social as well as financial matters however, giving children money or allowance and allowing them to budget is essential. Although difficult they should be guided in making the right decisions. Parents, older siblings, and elders in the community may find it rude when children want to negotiate and change decisions made by them. Children should be allowed to negotiate and buttress their points as this would strengthen their negotiation skills. Children should be allowed to do certain chores, doing such chores by parents would prevent them from being hardworking in the future. Some parents do not allow their children to mix with others in the society. They feel they are lower in status than they. The ability to mix with the grassroots affords them the ability to know what the less privileged are going through. It makes them to identify with them and so when they get to governance they would be able to team up with people, work as a team, and have team spirit (despite their social status). Ability to think critically, have a goal, plan on how to attain it and solve problem must be developed in children. Perhaps the issue of time management should also be developed in children. Punctuality is key. When parents themselves are punctual, children would also develop a punctuality mentality. Going to function one hour or two behind schedule because you are the governor or head of a state should be discouraged and should be inculcated into children from childhood This brings us to the problem of parents not setting a good example for their children to follow. Parents are expected to be role models hence they must not be found wanting if leadership skills that would develop to governance must be instilled in pupils.

### **9. Implications of Acquired Skills in Early Childhood Education**

There is no doubt that all the skills acquired through early childhood education program would have great and positive impact on Cameroon society. This is particularly true because the children would soon grow to become adults later in life and they would be the ones to carry on the affairs of their society (Olowe, et al., 2014). Pro-social behavior acquired during the early childhood period will enable a child to be ready to help and cooperate with others who have less opportunity. They would

show kindness towards others, defend them, share resources with them and share their perspectives, in relation to good governance. A child who has acquired this skill and who find himself in a position of authority, such as political office in Cameroon, would be ready to help the masses, cooperate with them, show kindness to them, defend them against external aggression, and cooperate with others. This will result in good governance. The possession of these skills as a subordinate makes him governable. Again, a Cameroon child who has been taught friendship skills and emotional literacy during the early childhood period would grow up to ensure that he shows love and affection towards others. He would ensure that conflicts are amicably resolved, and exhibit and show respect for elders and those in positions of authority because he would always show love and respect for those he is to govern. In addition, the knowledge of conflict resolution acquired during childhood would enable them to deal with disputes in democratic ways.

Recognizing and taking account of differences in opinion, listening to and acknowledging others' rights, compromising, bargaining, and or suggesting non-violent solutions to problems. In the same vein, a child who has the knowledge of conflict resolution and find himself in governance would be able to take into account differences in others' points of view. This skill would help him to settle disputes in a democratic way. For example, if such a child is to handle the issue of Boko -haram, he would use the skill of conflict resolution to handle the issue. If children are taught early during childhood years to appreciate diversity, they will be ready to celebrate, accept, appreciate and value others regardless of the colour of their skin, physical abilities or the language they speak like the bilingual nation of Cameroon, and if found in the position of authority, they would be able to celebrate, accept, appreciate and value others. This skill would enable him to govern very well even as a subordinate he would appreciate diversity in government and its representative. As a result, he would be governable as a leader.

## **10. Conclusion**

It is apparent that all the problems, challenges and crises facing Cameroon are traced to ineffective leadership, corruption, lack of control and evaluation, and bad governance. To address these problems, there must be commitment and involvement of many elements of society, including quality early childhood education in all the towns and villages in Cameroon. There is no doubt that all the skills acquired through early childhood education programs would have a great and positive impact on Cameroon society. This is particularly true because the children would soon grow to become adults later in life and they would be the ones to carry on the affairs of their society (Olowe, et al., 2014). Preschools should be accessible to both the poor and the rich and located in all areas in Cameroon.

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