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THE IMPACT OF RELIGIOUS DENOMINATIONAL EDUCATION ON THE STATUS ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY.

**(CASE STUDY: COMMITMENT OF TERTIARY SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS
SHISONG, BUI DIVISION, NORTH WEST REGION, CAMEROON)**

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to my beloved Mother Mama Angelina KONGLA and to the TSSF Shisong for all they do daily in the example of Christ to Raise the Status of a woman in Bui Division Cameroon.

Abstract.

Discrimination between genders creates an unjust society that no longer guarantees equal rights and opportunities for its citizens. It creates a climate of suspicion injustice and domination between individuals; it condemns them to live in fear and insecurity.

Originally, the traditional practice has been to relegate the girl child and women in all spheres in the society and particularly in Bui Division in Cameroon and other parts of the world. To a larger extent, this has brought about glaring features of gender inequality and denigration of the status of women. The prevalence of this attracted the attention of the Tertiary Sisters of Saint Francis, (TSSF) Shisong, North West Region of the Republic of Cameroon, to engage in the education of women in institutions; all these aimed at improving upon their situation. Basing the foundations on the teachings of the gospel and religious motivations of different forms.

The fundamental question is: “In the commitment to religious denominational education, in view of advancing the status of women and ensuring gender equality in Bui Division, to what extent has the Franciscan Sisters succeeded in meeting up the essentials of education as guaranteeing freedom and over-coming opposing cultural obstacles towards woman?”

This question is answered in five chapters of this thesis. Chapter one shows the historical background and inspirational features of Tertiary Sisters of Saint and women education; chapter two looks on how far the education and status advancement of women and gender equality by the sisters has been attained; chapter three on its part considers the application of UNESCO and the Cameroon Government Policy of women`s education. This indicates that what has been done so far is in line with universal declarations or norms. Chapter four delves into critical analyses with the use of Paulo Freire`s lenses to examine his role or concern; and chapter five looks at the relevance and impact of denominational education of women by the Tertiary Sisters. This further indicates the successes registered; thus, making it obvious that the enterprise and efforts of the Tertiary Sisters of St Francis in the education of women has not been fruitless but still needs more steps forward considering the evolution of the society.

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TO GOD BE THE GLORY

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Abbreviations

ALVF	<i>Association Fighting Violence against Women</i>
BUCREP	Central Bureau for Censuses and Population.
CGPWE	Cameroon governments Policy on women's education.
CEA	Catholic Education Agencies.
CPE	Catholic Private Education.
CSHS	Catholic School of Health Sciences.
GVS	Girls Vocational School
NCS	Non Catholic Schools.
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations.
NEMAP	National <i>Environment Management Plan</i>
PTA	Parents Teachers association.
TSSF	Tertiary Sisters of Saint Francis.
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund (formerly United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund)
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

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General Introduction

Religious denominations and moralists are sensitive to issues of injustice, especially with regards to female. Limited access to, and inequality in educational opportunities between men and women is a form of injustice. This is what occasioned the commitment of Tertiary Sisters of St. Francis, Shisong, in Bui Division, of the North West Region of Cameroon; to stay committed with the hope of impacting gender equality and to advance the status of women, via religious denominational education. It is well noted that these group of religious women do not only deal with education as directly is the case in this thesis but also deals with other apostolates in Bui divisions. Though not our focus here, we mention medical care, child care, farming and Moral instructions in non-religious school. Initially, the sisters embarked on educating the girl or women; this explains why they opened six Girls' Vocational Schools in Shisong, Nkar, Njinikom, Bafut, Akwaya and Djottin, to address issues hinging on status advancement of women and gender equality. Later on, through the construction of colleges for co-educational purposes, the Tertiary Sisters continued with the promotion of education. The reduction in the prevalence ignorance and illiteracy is as a result of this effort, centered on gender inequality.

The above concerns and initiative of the Tertiary Sisters of St. Francis moved me to appraise their efforts and commitment presented in this work. This justifies the choice of the topic: *The Impact of Religious Denominational Education on the Status Advancement of Women and Gender Equality*. With such ideas in mind, the research constituted two phases: field study guided by the preparation of some sample questions (see Appendix 1) and the compilation of data collected from field work.

St. Francis Catholic Comprehensive College Shisong, St. Therese Catholic Comprehensive College Djottin, and Regina Pacis Comprehensive College Nkar, in Bui Division, North West Region, Cameroon, managed by the Tertiary Sisters of St. Francis, constitute our - choice of study. This is because not only do these institutions educate those from its environs (women in particular); but it also has undergone significant changes, from a *Girl Vocational Schools (GVS)* to co-educational institutions, involving youths and adults from neighboring villages. Equally, being an effort in the developing country, where the traditional role of the woman has been limited in the past to household chores, child bearing, and farming amongst others; while men, as bread winners, are mostly involved in white collar jobs, inequality is most noticed. Because religion and its authorities are still revered, the role of the Tertiary Sisters is significant.

Lastly, the agents involved in this industry do not only afford formal education, but employ aspects of holistic education, introducing extra-curricular activities and social teachings of the Church. However, this suggests that the work clarifies the attempts to erect professional standards on a “technical core” in women (especially), bridging the inequality gap, encouraging academic freedom, action learning, theories of cognition, alignment of curriculum, career development, and child development theories.

Finally, a fundamental question is asked: “In the commitment to religious denominational education, in view of advancing the status of women and ensuring gender equality in Bui Division, to what extent have the Franciscan Sisters succeeded in meeting up the essentials of education: guaranteeing freedom and over-coming opposing cultural obstacles?” In other words how have the Tertiary sisters of Saint Francis successfully used Religion in advancing the status of a woman in Bui? This Thesis is divided in five Chapters. Chapter one deals with the historical background and inspirational features of the Tertiary Franciscan Sisters and women education; chapter two examines education and status advancement of women and gender equality by the sisters; chapter three, on its part, considers the application of UNESCO and the Cameroon Government Policy of women`s education; chapter four delves into a critical analyses with the use of Paulo Freire`s lenses to examine his role or concern; and chapter five looks at the relevance and impact of denominational education of women by the Tertiary Sisters. A conclusion and select bibliography ends the whole enterprise of this thesis.

Chapter I: Historical Background and Inspirational features of the Tertiary Sisters of St. Francis and Women's Education in Cameroon.

In order to understand and visualize the impact of religious denominational education on the status advancement of women and gender equality by the Tertiary Sisters of St. Francis, in Bui Division, North West Region of Cameroon, a historical background is imperative. This background and inspirational features shall see us go through the layout of education in the country and also in the context of emergence of such a challenging task for the Tertiary sisters of Saint Francis.

In this chapter, an attempt is made to recount some of the notable features of the Educational history and strata in Cameroon, history and foundation of the Tertiary Sisters of St. Francis, educational policies, original educational structures set in Bui Division, demographical educational ratios between men and women, and personnel involved in original educational institutions. The importance and significance of the impact of religious denominational education on the status advancement of women and gender equality by the Tertiary Sisters of St. Francis- Cameroon in general, and Bui division in particular, can only be guaranteed by this historical survey. This provides a right ambience for us to enumerate some salient points and challenging tasks, which continue to be addressed even to this day, despite the change in the status and equality of women.

1.1 Educational History and Strata in Cameroon.

1.1.1 Educational History

The history and layout of education in Cameroon is largely influenced by its bi-cultural nature; this for the simple reason that Cameroon is a bilingual country. Thus, the history of education in Cameroon cannot be separated from its issues of independence, the first and second world wars, and colonial factors. Prior to the introduction of secondary education in Cameroon, D. Lantum in his work *The History of a People and Education* intimates that the foundation of educational institutions and features in Cameroon came after the constitutional conference, held between the 17th and 21st of July, 1961. (Lantum, 1972, p. 5). For him, this did not only resolve the difference between the British and French Cameroon conceptions of Federation, but also reconciled and set precedence for the educational systems. (Lantum, *ibid.*) On the other hand, and preoccupied with similar concerns, Elias M. Nwana

emphasizes that since the unification in 1961, one of the many problems that plague Cameroon is how to cope with the British and French inherited systems of education. He considers this difficulty to be continuous. (Nwana, 1989, p. 1)

Equally, E. Nwana contends that although it was difficult and costly to implement, the systems of education (British and French), were harmonized to read thus:

While teaching the same program in English in the Anglophone sector, teaching of French should be part of the program while in the Francophone sector, when teaching the same program in the French language, English should be taught as part of the program. (Nwana, 1989, p. 2)

According to E. Nwana, the next matter under consideration by the then Federal government of Cameroon seems to have been the study of the *UNESCO* document on education. (Ahmed & Coombs, 1977, p. 4). This for him is what led to the production in 1963 of similar laws on harmonizing the structures of education in Cameroon at various levels. (ibid., p. 3) He coined this from the Federal law *No. 63/13 of 19 June 1963*, relating to the organization of public secondary grammar and technical schools; and the law *No. 63/COR-5 of 3rd July 1963*, relating to the organization of Government primary schools. (ibid.) He later insisted, quoting for the harmonized program: “It should be noted that when the country was a federation, secondary grammar, secondary technical and University education was the responsibility of the Federal government. (Nwana, 1977, p. 3)

As indicated above, prior to this distribution, harmonization and implementation of educational policies, the major consequence of the First World War in Cameroon was not only the mandating or trusteeship to Britain and France from 1916 to independence in 1961, but also a particular concern in educational matters. Chem Langhe asserts of this:

Secondary education, consisting of general or grammar, technical, and comprehensive in Cameroon, was first introduced in 1939 with the opening of St. Joseph's College, Sasse-Buea, by the Mill Hill Missionary Society of St. Joseph, based in London. This college was founded in the British Cameroons, nine years later; French Cameroun introduced secondary education in its own part of the country when the Advanced Primary School at Yaounde was transformed into the *College Classique*. Prior to this, those pupils eligible for secondary education in

the British Cameroons and who could afford it went to neighbouring Nigeria... On the other hand, those of the French Cameroun either continued studying in *L'Enseignement de Troisième Degré Primaire Supérieur* where they were trained vocationally or offered scholarship to study in France. (Langhe, 1991, pp. 12-13)

Following from the above, N. Langhe thinks, it was thanks to the Missions that secondary education was introduced in Cameroon. An illustration of this fact he insists, can be seen in the attitude of the British colonial government when Rev. Fr. Staats applied for the opening of St. Joseph's College, Sasse in 1938. (Langhe, 1991, p. 13) The reply from E.A.L. Gaskin (17th November, 1938), the Senior Education Officer-Cameroons Province, he claims, stated among other things: "With reference to your letter of the 20th April, 1938, I have to inform you that the Assistant Director of Education has authorized me to say that you are at liberty to proceed with no prospect of Government assistance in any form." (Langhe, 1991, p. 13)

Unlike the British *laissez-faire* attitude towards the Missions in the colonies, which relieved her of the responsibility of educational administration and policy formation, C. Langhe presents the French, on her part, as being fully involved in the opening and administration of educational institutions. In his words: "the establishment of a new school in the colonies required government permission, government-certified teachers, a government curriculum and the exclusive use of French as the language of instruction." (Langhe, 1991, p. 14)

Therefore, for a better appreciation of the role of women's education and status advancement by Tertiary Sisters in Bui Division, in Cameroon, it would be worthwhile to examine it under three major phases: development of secondary education under British Cameroons, French Cameroun and Independent Cameroon. First, concerning British Cameroons, C. Langhe contends that the aims of secondary education under the British were officially described in Her Majesty's Stationery Office: *Report to the United Nations on the Cameroons Under the United Kingdom Administration*, (Langhe, 1991, p. 14) as "an education which, while complete in itself, will fit students to become responsible citizens and provide ground-work for further training." (Langhe, 1991, p. 15) Secondly, he asserts that while the Missions were seen as Britain's unofficial partner in secondary education in British Cameroons, and were at liberty to administer the schools as best as they could, the French, on the other hand, had full control over the development of secondary schools in their own region. He quotes Hailey as stating in 1945: "The state (France) is prepared to support the

mission school only in so far as it affords instruction in the French language and develops sentiments of loyalty to France. The education given in the state schools is entirely secular.” (Langhe, 1991, p. 16) Hence, mission schools did not play any important part in the general educational scheme as the French official view of society is humanitarian and idealistic, rather than religious; that is, definite religious teaching had no part in the curriculum.

Finally, with the dawn of independence, the Federal Republic of Cameroon (1961) V. Fanso intimates, was faced with two major problems. Firstly, it had to adapt the educational program to suit the needs of the country; and secondly, due to the fact that the demand for secondary education greatly out-numbered the number of schools run both by the government and mission agencies, a solution had to be found. According to him, the demand for secondary education was caused, primarily, by the privileged positions held by the educated Cameroonians in the administration of the newly independent state. (Fanso, 1989, p. 16) It is against this background that, talking about the reformation of secondary education in Cameroon, 1962, the then former head of state of the country declared:

Secondary education in Cameroon, as everywhere else in Africa, presents this peculiar aspect of being almost completely dependent on the former European colonial country. As a matter of fact, for many more years to come, we shall be obliged to recruit certain categories of personnel from abroad. Furthermore, the form of education, the progress, the certificates which crown the cycles of studies are copied from France and from the United Kingdom. It is on these two points that attention should be focused so that, in organizing, we may be in a position to determine the sort of adaptations that are compatible at once with the particular needs of our country and with the need to bring the education imparted in our establishments to the same level as that in the rest of the world. (Fanso, 1989, p. 97)

Understanding this quote, could mean that these changes were necessitated by the fact that new problems had to be grappled with. Certainly, these included the pace of the development of science and of technological skill, the rapid increase in population, the new dimension of needs, the social changes, and the need to accelerate economic growth. All these demanded profound reforms in the educational system. Thus, we can assert without fear of contradiction, that in Cameroon, as everywhere else in the underdeveloped world, the purpose of education is not to instruct men for the pleasure of instructing them. It is to enable them to participate

with increased output capacity, in the development of their country. Obviously, it is such a motive alongside religious lines, and raising the status of women, that the Tertiary Sisters of St. Francis in Bui Division, plunged into ministry of educating women. How then do we distinguish the education carried on by the state and that by private institutions?

1.1.2 Educational Strata

The outline of the administrative machinery or what we may term the educational strata in Cameroon is made up of public and private education. Further still, private education is sub-divided into denominational and lay private education. But we must take note that all of these are answerable to the ministries of higher, secondary, and basic education.

1.1.2.1 Public Education

There are basically three separate ministries involved in public education in Cameroon; namely: ministry of higher education, ministry of secondary education, and the ministry of basic education. As noted by E. M. Nwana, each of these ministries is responsible for legislation; that is, drafting of laws, status of governance in particular fields, and issuing of general directives. All these, he insists, consist of central and external organizations. He further lists these as involving: the minister, provincial delegates, divisional delegates, inspectors, principals, and head teachers. Notwithstanding, he isolates the situation of universities made up of University board chairperson, councilors, rectors or vice chancellors, and secretary generals. (Nwana, 1977, p. 34) Equally, these are further divided into professional higher institutions of learning, Government Bilingual High schools, Government High Schools, Government Secondary Schools, Government Technical Colleges, Government Technical High Schools, Government Teachers` Training Colleges, and government primary schools. (Nwana, 1977, p. 35)

1.1.2.2 Private Education

Since the State cannot single-handedly carry on the education of her citizens due to the challenging task of effective supervision, there exist have private education in Cameroon. This is divided into the denominational and secular educational agencies. And as outlined by E. Nwana, directives from the various Ministries stratify denominational education as follows: Catholic Education Agency, Protestant Education Agency, and Islamic Education Agency.

Also, the secular education agency, he contends, comprises of lay private schools and colleges owned by individuals; mostly for profit making motives. (Nwana, 1977, p. 36) Each of the agencies is to make sure that the curricular complies with Ministerial Norms and Directives; such as staffing and infrastructure. (Nwana, 1977, p. 36)

In order to achieve the above objectives, the Catholic Education Agency (CEA), under which the institutions of the Tertiary Sisters of St. Francis operates, is further organized in a particular manner. Its hierarchy has four echelons: The National Episcopal Commission for Catholic Education, the National Directorate in charge of the Permanent Secretariat of Catholic Education Agency, the Diocesan Director in charge of Catholic Education (Education secretaries), and Catholic Private Education (nursery, primary, secondary and specialized cycles headed by head teachers and principals. Also, added to these, are Catholic Universities, headed by vice chancellors or rectors. (Ntangsi, 2005, p. 44)

1.2 History and Foundation of the Tertiary Sisters of St. Francis.

After a marathon tour of the history and strata of education in Cameroon, it is but fitting to describe some key issues about the history and foundation of the Tertiary Sisters of St. Francis in Cameroon. It is against this background that we shall be able to understand their impact on religious denominational education on the status advancement of women and gender equality in Bui division. (See appendix 3 for the location of Bui division and the various villages and localities where the TSSF operates). Firstly, the request for Tertiary Sisters of St. Francis of Brixen, was made by Fr. Figl, a Mill Hill Missionary on missions to Cameroon, from Brixen. O. Ngong in relation to this asserts:

Fr. Figl came into a land of primary evangelization where people were still being taught every basic thing that concerned self-care, hygiene and faith. The work was overwhelming as almost every area was a priority. One of the crucial and pathetic issues was the high infant mortality. More than 40% of children died before six months of life, let alone those who died at birth. Fr. Figl saw the pressing need for a midwife and recruited the mother of Immaculate Kerwai (Immaculate later joined the TSSF and today is counted among the very first Cameroonian Tertiary Sisters), and Mama Paulina to assist women at child birth... One evening, as Fr. Figl did his usual rosary walk from the Shisong mission

pass the present Sisters` cemetery, across the road to Bambui, he was confronted with a rather sad scene. The people carried up on bamboos a pregnant woman at the peak of labor pains. The task grew severe and the woman cried painfully. As the people could not continue, they lowered her under the big tree and every effort to get her deliver safely was futile. She died on the spot, and the carriers mourned painfully for her. (Ngong, 2010, p. 16)

O. Ngong further recounts that Fr. Figl who had become part of all that happened there before his very eyes, remembered Sister Floriana`s advice: “If you once need help, write to me.” Following from this, O. Ngong holds, this moved Fr. Figl to immediately remember the TSSF back in his homeland, Brixen and how much they would be needed in doing the work of midwives. (Ngong, 2010, p. 16)

According to O. Ngong, in solidarity with his bishop Mgr. Peter Rogan, the then apostolic prefect of the British Cameroons, the request of Fr. Figl for the Tertiary Sisters of St. Francis of Brixen was made in October 1934. (Ngong, 2010, p. 17) Mother Leonarda announced in Brixen that they were to open a mission in Cameroon, West of Africa. Eventually five sisters were to be sent to Cameroon. They proceeded to receive training in medical work and teaching prior to their departure for Cameroon. (Ngong, 2010, p. 17)

It is recounted that these five left on the 29th of August, 1935 for Cameroon through Genoa. They arrived Douala and they took off for Shisong on Monday 14th October, 1935, moving through Bamenda to Kumbo. Upon arrival in Shisong, they were moved by Fr. Figl to the church for prayers and thanksgiving. This followed the visit of the Fon of Nso (king), upon hearing the news of the sisters` arrival. Being so happy, he gave the sisters enough land to settle and pronounced publicly that their land ranged from river to river. (Ngong, 2010, pp. 21-23)

On November 15th, that is, a month after their arrival, Sisters Camilla and Kleopha started to work in their little health centre (a house with only three rooms); one of the rooms contained eight beds (reserved for women and children), a delivery consultation room and an outpatient department. The sisters and priests had to face the difficult task of educating the people to deliver their babies in the hospital. Both the women and their husbands were used to their old ways and took time to see the need to come to the hospital to deliver. They continued to work in the small thatched houses until a time when Sister Assumpta`s arears came from

Brixen and were sent to Cameroon since she was already in the mission land. (Ngong, 2010, p. 22)

Another major step was the founding of the “vocation home”. Sr. Dorothy, having a wide capacity for learning new languages, was able to teach Class One in the primary school by April 1936, because she had learned *Lamnso*.¹ Also, Sr. Ottilia who was a domestic science teacher taught young women and girls’ hygiene, cookery, sewing and knitting in the centre, which was later called vocation centre. At this point, Sr. Camilla was able to join her to teach since by then, she had trained the two women: Elizabeth Yila and Margaret Nsaisi as birth attendants. These created times for the school and garden and for training the girls in home management, child care, hygiene, and other works of art. (Ngong, 2010, p. 23)

Much later, there surfaced a group of indigenous sisters who joined the Tertiary Sisters of St. Francis subsequently. In September 1971, at the General Chapter of the Congregation, Cameroon was canonically made a Province, with the Provincial House in Shisong. (Ngong, 2010, p. 24) It is from here that they continued with the establishment of health institutions and vocational training centers in other parts of Cameroon and into other Countries.

1.3 Educational Policies of the Tertiary Sisters of Saint Francis.

The educational policies of the Tertiary Sisters of St. Francis in Shisong, Bui Division, follow closely, after the conditions laid down for the establishment, operation, and financing of private educational and training establishments in Cameroon. This implies that they do follow the order and directives of the ministry of education. This is integrated into the spirit and rule of their patron saint, Francis of Assisi. In this case, the Sisters inspire in the children such values as simplicity, solidarity and service. Quite interesting is the description which covers the educational policies as: “Educational apostolate of the TSSF (Mission statement);” which O. Ngong presents as:

To impart holistic education on the underprivileged youth (women in particular), and enable them build up a positive view of life, trusting in their ability to be self-reliant and cultivate values which would lend them the dignity they deserve. (Ngong, 2010, p. 97)

¹ *Lamnso* is the locally spoken language in Bui Division, North West Region of Cameroon.

Achieving the above objectives, O. Ngong indicates that their congregation sets in place a particular vision and certain values to be inculcated or put in place. As for the vision, she claims that the transmission of knowledge and skills is central since for her, the underprivileged can be self-reliant only when equipped with knowledge and skills. (Ngong, 2010, p. 97) Regarding the values, she presents the following: modesty, respect, simplicity, and sense of the sacred, hospitality, compassion, joy solidarity, creativity and responsibility. (Ngong, 2010, p. 98)

Once more, the educational policies are carefully outlined in the objectives that the sisters share as follows:

To offer integral education in the following options: Home economics, Fashion and Fabric, accounting and commerce. To develop a program of studies adapted to meet the needs of the youth in today's fast evolving Cameroon; to create an educational environment which is conducive for teaching and learning, fostering emotional maturity, and self-actualization; to foster the interaction of knowledge with moral and religious values; to give the average Cameroonian youth or woman, an opportunity for integral education, and bring them out of ignorance by equipping them with knowledge and skills necessary to prepare them for professional and self-help projects. (Ngong, 2010, p. 99)

In this case, the sisters think much would be achieved with the above policies set in place. Emphasis on the moral foundation of the youth is important because without a moral base, education is useless. It is equally the concern of the Sisters to pay particular attention to young people with special needs and the under-privilege; and to encourage them to be respectful of self and environment. (Ngong, 2010, p. 99)

Thus, the purpose of the educational institutions created by the Tertiary Sisters of St. Francis in Bui Division, had the foremost objective to satisfy the inalienable right to maternal care, after the nasty experiences of Fr. Figl. Therefore, as recounted by one of the Sisters interviewed, the basis provided by the five pioneer sisters was centered on formation in religious life, especially of women. They had to be formed on the necessity of going to church, taking care of their homes and children, farming, hygiene, cookery skills, language

studies (especially English language), leadership skills, and basic “standard six (preliminary studies).”²

1.4 Original Educational Structures set in Bui Division.

Initially, the original educational structures set in Bui division by the Tertiary Sisters of St. Francis, was aimed at answering the direct needs of women in relation to family care. This explains why they opened home economic centers for professional training, known as Home Economic Schools, later called, *Girl Vocational Schools (GVS)*. (Yenmole & Banye, 2014) As recounted by the sisters themselves, the original integral education was aimed at holistic formation began as vocational schools, with the aim of upgrading the status of women (hygiene, homes, child care, communal or rural development). (Ibid.)

However, prior to the foundation of these vocational training centers, the Sisters were extremely concerned with the medical apostolate, which saw them train entirely women. In the long run, there was the need to open a training school for nurses, which would train personnel especially midwives to work in the hospitals and health centers as helpmates of the sisters, which was recognized by the Government on September 19, 1954. It is worth noting that prior to Government recognition, the midwife course had started earlier on 1st February, 1954, with twelve female students. (Ngong, 2010, p. 34)

In relation to the original nursing schools aimed at training women as midwives, O. Ngong asserts:

On the 30th of July, 1951, Sr. Camilla sent a letter to Enugu asking for permission to open a training school for midwives, which later on, trained nurses. The hospital did not meet the required standards, and then on the 10th of February 1953, she applied for recognition of the maternity home as a training centre for grade II midwives. The permission to start was granted at the midwives board of Nigeria and signed in Enugu... Grade I midwifery course was started in January 1962 for one and half years. On the 9th of July, 1973, permission was received from Yaoundé to train *Brevete* nurses and midwives. (Ngong, 2010, p. 94)

² Cf. Interview with some Sisters of the Congregation, December, 2014.

It should also be noted that up to a later date, in the late 1970`s, the training for midwives was strictly for women, and most of the nurses trained were young girls and women. And as intimated by O. Ngong, this was aimed at raising the status of women; freeing them from cultural and societal discriminations and complexes. (Ngong, 2010, p. 96)

Furthermore, one of the most striking and impressive features of original educational structures in Bui Division by the Tertiary Sisters of St. Francis, is the fact that apart from the original health institution, they founded home economic centers in three rural localities of the division. These were created simultaneously in 1975; and as O. Ngong describes, the common name of all the institutions was *Girls Vocational School* (GVS), directly making them exclusive. (Ngong, 2010, p. 98) This is summed up in the following words:

The mission objective of the first Tertiary Sisters of St. Francis was to attend to health and educational needs of the people (according to the inspiration of “Mother Beginner,” Maria Hueber) in order to foster integral evangelization. Besides the maternity and orphanage, they took note of the woman and the girl child who was, back then exempted from formal educational opportunities to assume uniquely the role of house wife and farmer. Since the sisters could not get the women to school as easily as the boys, they started home craft centers. Here, the women were taught: women personal hygiene, child care, knitting and embroidery, religion, English, sewing, and first aid. The women/girls who completed the two year course were given an attestation; later approved by the government in 1972. (Ngong, 2010, p. 98)

Accordingly, the sisters attest to the fact that three of such vocational institutions were founded in the same year, but in different parts of the division. These were as follows: Girls Vocational School Shisong (the first to be founded), Girls Vocational School Nkar (the second), and Girls Vocational School Djottin (the third). All of these, according to O. Ngong, were spread in the three main angles of Bui division; Shisong in the center, Nkar in the south, and Djottin in the North. (Ngong, 2010, p. 99) The implication of the location of these home economic centers in the various angles of the division, suggest and confirm the purpose of the Tertiary Sisters, in fostering or impacting education to advance the status of women and guarantee gender equality in the whole Division. With the establishment of these centers, was there any guarantee of matching up the number of girls to boys educated?

1.5 Demographical Educational Ratios Between men and Women.

Eventually, the aim of training solely women or the girl child in the institutions founded by the Tertiary Sisters evolved. Not only did they see the need of isolating girls and women, but equally, that of incorporating boys into their institutions, making them co-educational. In the early 1990`s, the value of training only women or admitting strictly girls in their educational institutions was dropped. As the sisters intimate, there was no relevance of exclusively girls education anymore due to the evolution of the social system: mentality and the needs changed since girls were no longer being restricted from educational opportunities. Simultaneously, there emerged the consciousness to respect and offer equal opportunities to girls and boys whether in the comprehensive, technical, or general education. (Banye & Budze, 2014, p. 4) The existence of the underprivileged, uneducated boys equally posed a challenging question to the Sisters and their needs analyses had to shift. Every child (male or female) is now given or having the same right to integral formation. (ibid.)

According to O. Ngong, the male dominated educational Bui society, experienced at the moment of the foundation of vocational institutions, to match up the ratio of the girls to boys educated, and the bid to emancipate the girl, changed or improved and provoked the change of name and statues of the Girls Vocational Schools. The explanation is on the grounds that nowadays, the enrollment of girls outnumbered those of the boys. (Ngong, 2010, p. 99) Thus, she considers these changes as rescuing the schools from total collapse that threatened it in the 90`s as educational institutions increased in the locality. Another factor is that the enrollment exclusively for girls was no longer appreciated by the population. (Ngong, 2010, p. 100)

Equally, it should be recounted that the presence of women in several leadership positions in Bui division, can be understood as an indication that the Tertiary Sisters have succeeded to a larger extent in narrowing the gap of the ratio of educated girls to boys in this area. More so, the fact that in most of the institutions run by Tertiary Sisters, we find former students who are religious women working as principals and directors could indicate that the educational gender gap has been narrowed. Assessing them as women or products from their schools, there are many of them who are servant-leaders and who empower others. Budze & Banye, 2014, p. 3) initially, particular attention of the issue of gender equality in the

educational system was emphasized since underprivileged girls were educated to bridge the gap with boys. However, since the stress now is on the fact that both sexes are equal, there is a balance in the ratio; this is because boys are also being admitted. The result is that in the division as a whole, women who are educated in these institutions are now involved in economic activities, they are providers, involved in skilled labour (and are skill builders), and quite a handful of them are motivated speakers. (ibid.) Who were those involved in the initial setting of educational institutions?

1.6 Personnel Involved in Original Educational Institutions.

The original educational institutions were run by “uneducated”, but experienced and good-willed missionaries. Thus, there was little academic backing in whatever they did or passed on to the women or girls even as it could give practical good results. And it is noticed that the initial instructions were done in introductory courses in English language; with Fr. Figl and his assistants as the first instructors. They combined this exercise with counseling, which enabled the women to choose particular specialties. (Ngong, 2010, p. 101)

Apart from the clerics, the first five Brixen sisters who served in Cameroon from October 1935 constituted the pioneer personnel involved in original educational institutions. O. Ngong captures this properly, when she states:

Sr. Camilla Geier (Midwife/gardener/nurse), Sr. Dorothea Wild (Teacher/animal husbandry/catering/gardening), Sr. Ottilia Hillebrand (Catering/teacher/sacristan/gardening), Sr. Kleopha Jocher (Nurse), and Sr. Martina Arbenberga (catering/animal husbandry/gardening), were involved in the education of girls in various fields. (Ngong, 2010, p. 109)

From the above, it is noted that these were responsible for setting the original educational institutions. Also, in November 1938, Sr. Mary Assumpta Niedestatta, teacher by profession, started the Girl`s school. And since emphasis was laid on Christian education and the moral formation, chaplains were appointed to cater for or pay particular attention to those with special needs and work to equip them with skills (not sure this is true); which enabled the women to face the challenges of the changing world. (Ngong, 2010, p. 104)

Finally, it should be noted that the task of raising the status of women in the original educational institutions in Shisong, Nkar, and Djottin; all in Bui division, saw an average of eight teachers, headed by one of the Tertiary Sisters of St. Francis. (Ngong, 2010, p. 106) In relation to this, O. Ngong shares a practice which has stood the test of time since the creation of the original institutions:

The staff are helped to internalize the Franciscan values, to understand our mission and to actively participate in its promotion. This is done through the beginning-of-year retreats and sharing and the very witness of the sisters working in school. (Ngong, 2010, p. 104)

The above concerns lay participation in the teaching ministry of the original institutions of the Tertiary Sisters. Equally, other auxiliary staff was employed to ensure the welfare of the students.

After exploring the historical background and inspirational features of Tertiary Sisters and Women`s Education in Cameroon, namely: educational history and strata in Cameroon, history and foundation of the Tertiary Sisters of St. Francis, educational policies, original educational structures set in Bui division, demographical educational ratios between men and women, and personnel involved in original educational institutions; it facilitates the understanding of the next chapter, dealing with education and status advancement of women and gender equality by the Tertiary Sisters in Bui Division.

Chapter II: Education and Status Advancement of Woman and gender equality in Bui Division.

In the first chapter I presented the historical background and inspirational features of the Tertiary Sisters of St. Francis and women education in Bui Division of Cameroon. The intention in this chapter is to examine how the Franciscan Sisters have been carrying on this task with the help of Religion. Thus, the education and status advancement of women and gender equality by the Sisters is the main concern of this second chapter. This is to be done by examining the following: purpose and objective of creating the educational institutions, describing the infrastructure and personnel responsible for training, funding and scholarship schemes, daily theoretical aspects of the horarium, orientation towards professionalism, subsequent adjustments and vision, teacher-student relationship, application and practical work, social factors favoring women`s education, and the availability of moral and religious factors. (See Appendix 2 for a picture demonstration of the various encounters of the TSSF with women and in their various educational institutions in Bui Division.) I had the verbal permission of Rev. Sr Robert the provincial superior of the Cameroon province to use these pictures.

2.1 Purpose and Objective of the Creation of Educational Institutions.

What prompted the Tertiary Sisters of St. Francis to create schools or institutions for the education of women is linked to the ideas nursed by the founder of the congregation, Maria Huebar. This is what formed the origin of the education apostolate of the Sisters as O. Ngong alludes:

Both Maria and Fr. Kirnigl agreed that their poor girls in Brixen were in need of help. Maria will begin a school to teach the underprivileged girls how to read and write; how to sew and make other forms of handwork as well as teach them Christian doctrine twice a week... So, the Maria Hueber School or the first girls' vocational school run by the Tertiary Sisters started on the 12th of September 1700. This was Maria`s initial charism and apostolate (Ngong, 2010, p. 15).

It is from such original thoughts that eventually, with the founding of the community of sisters in Shisong, the Tertiary Sisters, in creating educational institutions employed such ideas as the basis of the purpose and objective of opening schools. The purpose and objective of creating institutions by the Sisters as stated by O. Ngong includes: “To educate the poor and underprivileged, nurse the sick, spread the word of God, and feed the hungry (Ngong, 2010, p. 15).”

Furthermore, as recounted by some of the Tertiary Sisters, the purpose and objective they had for creating educational institutions was for professional training, holistic and integral formation of the girl. This, Budze and Banye equally confirm, concerned mostly those with low intelligent Quotients (I.Q.), with the aim of upgrading the status of a woman (Budze and Banye, 2014).

2.2. Infrastructure and Personnel

Infrastructure and personnel are two basic aspects in the running of institutions, which the Tertiary Sisters in Bui Division took seriously from the very moment of inception. What is examined here includes: inner structures, structure of component parts, services and operations within the system. Additionally the issue of personnel (administrators, teachers, and auxiliary workers) involved or employed, is to be considered. The first infrastructure to be considered is that of the *Catholic School of Health Sciences, Shisong*. O. Ngong records that it was started in 1954 with fewer buildings; but at moment it contains lecture rooms for the various departments, an administrative block, library, and an internet and practical laboratory (Ngong, 2010, p. 95). Alongside the initial infrastructure set-up, sisters themselves got involved in the training of midwives and other personnel before the employment of experts, for example, Mr. Gabriel Nula (as director); who died in 2011, and was replaced by another in 2012, currently headed by one of the Sisters (Ngong, 2010, pp. 94-95).

Concerning secondary education, the changes in infrastructure and personnel met with some challenges. Upon creation, the three main schools opened in 1975 were known as *Girl Vocational Schools (GVS)*, with some lecture rooms, a cooking laboratory, a tailoring department, and a handful of sisters in the teaching staff. However, changes were later registered as follows: in 2006, GVS Djottin became *St. Theresia`s Comprehensive College*; GVS Shisong in 2010 became *St. Francis Girl`s Vocational School*, and later *St. Francis Comprehensive College*; and GVS Nkar became *Regina Pacis Comprehensive High School* in 2002 (Ngong, 2010, pp. 95-96). Next to these institutions is *Saint Francis Home for Skills*

Training Centre, Njavnyuy, opened in 2008. It is said to be a center for skills development and vocational education, with training workshops in sewing, knitting, carpentry, motor bike mechanic, and shoe-making shops. These institutions, Yenmole says, were run by the sisters, who helped the girls to learn home craft, nutrition, and knitting (Yenmole, 2014).

Lastly, the infrastructure has changed with the different challenges in the vision. Since it is no longer limited to the education of women or girls, the infrastructure and personnel has also changed. All the institutions now contain two cycles; first cycles (five years), and second cycle (two years). Also, many teachers have been employed to teach the variety of specialties. The average number of teachers in the three main institutions, Yenmole claims, is 35, with the administration, spiritual and counseling affairs carried on by the sisters themselves and some clergy men (Yenmole, 2014). These persons are charged with the control of students and overall maintenance of the lecture rooms, dormitories, refectory, chapel, infirmaries, libraries, laboratories, sports and recreational facilities (Yenmole, 2014). The foregoing discussion leads to the presentation of how finances are raised to manage the infrastructure and personnel.

2.3. Funding and Scholarship Schemes.

Funding or the main source of income used to run the institutions is tuition, levied on each student. That is, from the school fees paid by each student, those running the institutions and centers are able to pay the staff, maintain the infrastructures, and purchase teaching material and to feed the students. Obviously, the material and financial needs are enormous. In most of the institutions, some children are not even able to meet-up the tuition rate; and as such, fund-raising ceremonies are organized for this purpose, and appeals made abroad for sponsorship. Furthermore there is annual supply of subvention from the government, although it is inconsistent, minimal when it is provided. All these sources go a long way to assist in the payment of salaries, carry on maintenance, feed the students and purchase other needs. Equally, Budze and Banye hold that there are scholarship schemes and self-financing from the common fund of the congregation, to assist the vulnerable and desperate children. Farming and selling of farm produce and once in a while, benefactors from abroad or from within Cameroon make little financial and material contributions to finance the institutions (Budze and Banye, 2014). It must be noted too that the Local councils occasionally grant some scholarships and didactic material to the institutions (Budze and Banye).

2.4. Daily Theoretical Aspects of The Horarium.

The daily theoretical aspects of the horarium seem to follow the recommendations of Dan N. Lantum; who rules out in favor of the cognitive domain (memory and intellectual knowledge), and the psychomotor domain: knowledge of skills and performance (Lantum, 2001, pp. 8-9). Alongside these, two particular aspects: course outline and extra-curricular activities, are noticeable.

2.4.1. Course Outline

According to O. Ngong, with the needs of the time and desire of parents, the schools which were initially Girl's Vocational Schools, were up-graded to a high school with both technical and grammar sections (Ngong, 2010, p. 101). Yenmole, corroborates this by asserting that the orientation of courses follows prescriptions and regulations of the Ministry of Secondary Education. However, since there is the search for academic excellence and professionalization, the ministry permits for the inclusion of peculiar courses geared towards their orientation and vision (forming a person to evolve) (Yenmole, 2014). Alongside this, the following courses are taught: English Language, History, Geography, Economics, Commerce, Crafts, Food and Nutrition, Knitting, Religious Studies, Agriculture, Sewing, Embroidery, French Language, Literature, Accounting, Information Technology, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Geology, Physical Education (sports), Citizenship, Education for integrity, Business administration, Marketing Techniques, and Philosophy (Ngong, 2010, p. 102).

2.4.2. Extra-Curricular Activities

In order to ensure that the vision of holistic education is realized, the students are introduced to manual labour, farming, nursing and health care, home management, seminars on topics such as justice, liberty, freedom, and gender equality (Banye and Budze, 2014). Religious activities are carried out to enable the development of the persons concerned. Equally, field trips are organized to enable the students visit some sites, especially industries and companies; this enables them to gain first-hand information (Banye and Budze, 2014). The question to be raised is whether these guarantee a proper orientation towards professionalism.

2.5. Orientation towards Professionalism.

There has been great improvement from the original vision of emancipating the girl or woman from being mere house-wives and farmers, to becoming professionals in various fields. As recounted by the interlocutors, there has been an improved involvement of women in educational leadership and other aspects of the socio-political life. In the economic field, many women are providers due to their acquired skills, and many are motivated speakers; the example in hand is that of Kintarir Victorine, an ex-student who resides in London, and organizes many humanitarian and capacity building seminars (Banye and Budze, 2014). Also, women are represented at all levels; social, economic, political, and religious spheres in Bui Division and Cameroon as a whole. They keep on evolving; even those interviewed bear witness to this, quoting some of the ex-students placed in various fields. The examples abound are: Mary Banye (Faculty officer of the school of biomedical science of the Catholic University, Appolonia Budze (the communications officer for the cardiac centre), and Caroline Nkuh, Principal of St. Francis Comprehensive College, Shisong. (Banye and Budze, 2014). Lastly, it should be noted that the objective of the Sisters to raise the status of women is emphasized by their desire to see them in leadership positions. O. Ngong justifies this thus:

Two young Cameroonians of the Tertiary Sisters of St. Francis have become the first Africans of this congregation to become medical doctors. Sr. Dr Ashoma Helen from St. Agnes Parish, Mbesa in the Archdiocese of Bamenda, and Sr Dr Jaff Caroline, from Shiy in Christ the King Parish, Jakiri, Kumbo Diocese. After 7 years of rigorous studies, these graduated with flying colours from *Universita Catholica del Sacro Cuore, Pollicliico Universitario Agostino Gemelli*, one of the finest medical schools in Italy (Ngong, 2010, p. 61).

The above example is a clear indication that orientation towards professionalism is a reality with the Tertiary Franciscan Sisters. *Their passion of offering wholesome educational training to the youth goes hand in hand with training their own Sisters who can then be dispensers of the desired education.*

2.6. Subsequent Adjustments and Vision.

Eventually, the vision or objective of reversing issues of gender inequality or discrimination against women originally held, has changed, bringing to bear some, adjustments. Also, since these schools are no longer limited only to girls, as was the case in the past years, but co-educational, many changes have been recorded. Amongst many, the important purposes of the sister`s educational institutions and subsequent adjustment and vision include: bringing humanity closer to God and vice versa, honor to who deserves it), integral formation (ensuring the all-round growth of women), and holistic formation (to meet their needs and the demands of the entire society) that enables the women growth out of complexes (Yenmole, 2014).

The subsequent adjustment and vision of educational institutions run by the Franciscan Sisters in Bui Division is determined by O. Ngong as the mission statement of the secretariat. It reads:

We commit ourselves to serve Christ by effective communication and accountability, with the vision: equal distribution of resources to all in word and deed. This is to be carried on with the following values: transparency, accountability, simplicity, confidentiality, availability, and diligence (Ngong, 2010, p. 109).

From the foregoing, it is clear that there has been a remarkable or noticeable adjustment; the institutions that had a very humble beginning as home economic centers, then as girls` vocational schools, are now comprehensive high schools, embracing technical, commercial, and general education. Also, it is worth noting that there are now many professional aspects being introduced.

2.7. Teacher-Student Relationship.

Deducing from the criteria of admission, one is able to already appreciate the cordial relationship that exists between the teachers and students. As Yenmole puts it: “both the teachers and students are encouraged to consider the institutions as their second homes (Yenmole, 2014).” The admission policies are inclusive, irrespective of sex, religion and

ethnic background, stressing always on the fact that everybody has equal opportunities. Although religious activities with moral or ethical components are introduced, non-Catholics are not obliged to participate (Yenmole, 2014). Respect is inculcated into the students; both among themselves and towards authority, which is unconsciously handed down as a central aspect of customs and norms in the institutions. According to M. Yenmole, the sisters responsible for the administration of the schools have a catchy phrase to both teachers and students: “Teachers should assert that they are treated with respect and their responsibility is to ensure that students treat other with kindness (Yenmole, 2014).

Equally, there is insistence on the existence of a cordial relationship between teachers and students. This is considered very important for the students spend approximately 5 to 7 hours daily with teachers for almost ten months. So the constant question asked is: what is considered a good teacher (Yenmole, 2014)? Most often, the response for Yenmole is:

All of us have gone through schooling, and might have been fortunate to have a favorite teacher. A positive relationship between the student and the teacher is difficult to establish, but can be found for both individuals at either end. The qualities for a positive relationship can vary to set a learning experience approachable and inviting the students to learn. A teacher and student who have the qualities of good communications, respect in a classroom, interest in teaching and learning from a student will establish a positive relationship in the classroom (Yenmole, 2014).

The above citation indicates that in the educational institutions run by Franciscan Sisters in Bui Division, teachers are encouraged to establish a positive relationship with their students by communicating with them and properly providing feedback to them. Again, as recounted by one of the school administrators, teachers are encouraged to establish a positive relationship with their students by communicating with them and properly providing feedback to them. Thus, respect between teacher and student with both feeling enthusiastic when learning and teaching, is emphasized. Having established such a positive relationship with students, the Franciscan Sisters think it encourages students to seek education and be enthusiastic in coming to school (Banye and Budze, 2014).

In the final analysis, the sisters claim that majority of their numbers, being ex-students of these very educational institutions, contributes in making them who they are. The student-teacher relations described above is a great contributory factor as they remember their

favorite teacher as role model in their present responsibilities (Banye and Budze, 2014). This is a positive aspect as J. F. Vernon asserts: “Teachers are encouraged to blend their warmth and firmness towards the students in their classroom, but with realistic limits” (Vernon, 1981, p. 111).

2.8. Application and Practical.

The teacher-student relationship seen above and the favorable learning environment in the educational institutions run by Franciscan Sisters in Bui Division has brought about noticeable changes. The effects of what is learnt are felt all around. Equally, since there are workshops and field trips, students are encouraged to exhibit some of the practical things they learn. A good number of the students continue with tertiary education; while others with support from guardians, operate shops, restaurants, and other lucrative businesses around (Banye and Budze, 2014). Furthermore, a noticeable number of ex-student sisters are found in responsible positions. Assessing them as women from these institutions, two particular examples stand-out clearly; Budze who has been described as a role model, with some of them calling her a leader who serves, nurtures, and empowers others in the community; and secondly, Banye: described as a woman of integrity, caring, assiduous, and responsible (Banye and Budze, 2014). These amongst others, form a cream of women or ex-students from the educational institutions, with so much influence. Their characters and output is a reflection of the values imbibed from the institutions. It is worth noting that they have become what they are as a result of certain factors favoring the education of women: academic and professional excellence, which leads to the liberty and inspiration of forming a person to evolve; tapping from the resources of their formation--hard work, discipline, and training for self-reliance, job creators and not job-seekers etc. (Banye and Budze, 2014).

2.9. Social Factors Favoring Women’s Education.

Initially, O. Ngong claims, several factors, including residence in a rural area and the health effects of poverty and malnutrition, originally proved to affect female participation in education much more than male participation in Bui Division. The near-universal fundamental cultural bias in favor of males and economic factors proved to be the biggest obstacles to female participation in this part of the country (Ngong, 2010, p. 133). However, two social factors are associated with this reality: guarantee of academic freedom and fostering of liberty and justice in favour of women’s education.

2.9.1. Guarantee of Academic Freedom

The socio-cultural biases, leading to the arbitrary allocation of women as wives to the king and individuals in the past has been largely stamped out. Equally, the archaic culture of wife inheritance and arranged marriages, which deprived the girl of her right to education, is no more. Socio-cultural orientation and sensitization from political and administrative authorities equally stress and emphasize on the education of the girl. More so, micro financial institutions (Credit Unions for example), exist where the educational institutions are located, thus guaranteeing the possibility of acquiring loans to pay fees and obtain some basic needs for business start-up. Also, the creation of hospitals and health centers near the TSSF Schools act as a booster to education (Yenmole, 2014). Significant initiatives aiming at addressing aspects of the problem of female participation in education have been put in place; although the political will to implement those initiatives and policies are largely lacking, there is a huge improvement. Mentality has changed a lot as many are made to understand that education is not only for male, but for females as well, with a good number doing better than the boys. Scholarships to those of them who perform well also favor the education of women (Yenmole).

2.9.2. Fostering of Liberty and Justice

Aspects of freedom, liberty, and justice are evidenced in the orientation given to students in these educational institutions where prefects are appointed bearing in mind the issue of the necessity of fostering liberty and justice. This, Banye and Budze claim, is done by ensuring that leadership positions are accredited to both genders, equal treatment of the students, provision of a suggestion box, organization of dialogue forums and conferences between students and the administration, creation of societal awareness in matters of gender equality, and general education on human rights and practice of civil duties (Banye and Budze).

2.10. Availability of Moral and Religious Factors.

Religious, moral, and legal factors have only indirect effects. Notwithstanding, these have played an enormous role in promoting the education of women. From our findings, the institutions believe that God's plan has an underlining factor of equality; so no one should pride themselves as being above the others. Emphasis is also on the fact that all the students are caused to accept that they are children of God with the same equality as a sense of the sacred is a common African mindset irrespective of religious orientation. Religion or religious aspects, or doctrines, psychological and social components are present. These are backed-up by the empowering presence of Franciscan Sisters and other clergy men, who practice reverently and inculcate into the students, the teachings and example of Saint Francis, leading to integral education (Banye and Budze, 2014).

Furthermore, inculcating Franciscan values constitutes one of the available moral and religious factors which favour the education of women in Bui Division. These values include contemplation, hospitality, respect for creation or nature, respect for humanity, and drawing strength from the Eucharist. Notwithstanding, the danger of scaring non-Catholics by this last aspect is possible. However, only general ethical principles are insisted upon (Yenmole, 2014).

The task in this second chapter after examining the historical background and inspirational features of the Tertiary Sisters and Women's Education, has been to present the practical situation of education and status advancement of women in Bui Division. The information from documented sources and the interview conducted in December 2014, constituted the bulk of this section. It is evidenced from this, that the effort of the Franciscan Sisters, commencing from their purpose and objectives of creating the institutions bridges the gap of gender prejudice. Chapter three examines the above factors in relation to the application of the directives of UNESCO (UN) and Cameroon government policy of women's education.

Chapter III: Application of UN (UNESCO and Cameroon Government Policy of Women's Education.

The preceding chapter was concerned with examining the efforts of the Franciscan Sisters in ensuring education and status advancement of women, and gender equality in Bui Division. The interviews conducted formed the basis or main source of information. At this juncture, these findings are to be submitted into scrutiny; judging whether their application of the objectives and policies together with other educational elements are in agreement with those of UN (UNESCO) and the Cameroon government. This is to be done by examining: methodology of education, the use of education to change the woman's status, gender equality in the context of religion and education, co-education and its impact, community education, women in educational leadership, and education commission and its role.

3.1. Methodology of Education.

The methodology employed in the educational institutions by the Franciscan Sisters as presented above, encompasses aspects of commercial, technical, and general education. An additional touch of professionalism is employed, and equal advantages to both sexes enforced. These features are feasible in the purpose and objective of the creation of institutions (supra, 2.1.),³ daily theoretical aspects of the horarium (supra, 2.4), and the teacher-student relationship (supra, 2.7.). The methodology in the educational institutions under the Franciscan Sisters, their course outline and extra-curricular activities fall in line with the recommendations of the Cameroonian Government and UN (UNESCO) policies on women's education.

In the first place, the Rights and Freedom of Cameroon lays down conditions for the setting up, opening, operating, and financing of private educational and training establishments in Cameroon. This could be inferred from one of the decrees stating:

Private educational and training activities shall be carried out in nursery, primary, secondary and teacher training establishments, with equal opportunities given to both sexes. Concentration on the curricular should involve commercial, technical, general aspects, leading to

³ Supra means as seen or mentioned above.

professionalism. tuition shall mean the fees paid by a student to cover expenses for training, library facilities, medical care, insurance, student`s fund, sports, and the collective activities of a private establishment (Anonymous,⁴ 1990, pp. 269-278).

From the perspective of the orientation towards professionalism, the aspects of funding and scholarship schemes, it is seen that the Franciscan Sisters are quite in line with the directives of the Cameroon Government; equally stressing on equal opportunities in education for both sexes.

Furthermore, another aspect which gives credit to the efforts of the Franciscan Sisters, is the report of the ministry of women`s affairs on education, corresponding to the objectives and policies of the Sisters. According to it, there is a correspondence to the prescription on the education and training of women as seen above in the aspect of orientation towards professionalism by the Franciscan sisters (Supra, 2.5.). This is in conformity with the following recommendation:

Documents on the organization and operation of Women`s Advancement Centres (CPF) and Appropriate Technology Centres (CTA) for women were signed by the Prime Minister in January 2000. The main task of these Centres, which are specialized technical units of the Ministry of Women`s Affairs, is to provide civic, moral, and intellectual education to women and girls. There are at present 31 operational CPF and one CTA. With a view to achieving equal access to education and in conformity with Goal 2 (universal primary education) of the Millennium Development Goals, a Presidential Decree establishing free primary education in Cameroon has been issued. Activities designed to eliminate illiteracy among women are being conducted by rural and community group leaders who are themselves women. A theoretical and practical guide has been prepared for this purpose and the rural group leaders have received retraining in its utilisation (Anonymous, 2005, p. 56).

⁴ Anonymous implies that there is more than one person who combined the document; but the names are not mentioned in the write-up.

Following from the above citation, it is evident that by admitting both sexes, stressing on the aspect of raising the status of women, fostering liberty and justice (Supra, 2.9.2.), Franciscan sisters have become the rightful partners to the promotion of the values of the education of women, laid down by the government. In line with this, it is also noticed that more than 600 community group leaders have been trained as part of the mobilization of society in favour of sending girls to school (Anonymous, 2005, p. 56). Pictorial teaching aids, O. Ngong contends, have been developed for their use. A ceremony under the name of “Excellency – Feminine Gender” held to distribute prizes to the 152 best girl students of the country’s French-language and English- language general and technical secondary schools in the school year 2002-2003 (Ngong, 2010, p. 59). The Sisters have followed in these footsteps by organizing scholarship programmes.

Equally, going through the social factors favouring women’s education (Supra, 2.9), the programme of the Franciscan sisters fits-in with the recommendations of UNESCO. As seen above, the Franciscan Sisters very much by initially creating and promoting educational institutions for women, bridge the traditional biased gap of non-education for female children. Gender Equality is one of UNESCO's two global priorities, with a commitment to promote equality between women and men across the Organization's mandate. Gender equality, Thomas David (2000, P. 122) asserts, is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for the creation of sustainable and peaceful societies. What *The Division for Gender Equality* responsible for ensuring the promotion of gender equality at UNESCO both in programming and in the Secretariat, T. David holds, is followed by the Franciscan sisters. This work is based on a two-prolonged approach involving both gender-specific programmes and gender mainstreaming within UNESCO’s scholarship guidance. This leads to an examination and analysis of the use of education by the Franciscan Sisters to change the woman’s status.

3.2. The Use of Education to Change the Status of a Woman.

Through its infrastructure, funding and scholarship schemes, course outline, extra-curricular activities, and social factors favouring women`s education, the Franciscan Sisters as seen above, fall in line with the Cameroonian government policy of gender equality and women`s empowerment. The appraisal of achievements and challenges in promoting gender equality and women`s empowerment are seen clearly in the example of the Sisters above. All that is above matches with the report of the Cameroon Ministry of Women`s Affairs and replies to questionnaire on the implementation of the Dakar and Beijing platforms of 2005. It is reported that:

The Ministry responsible for women`s affairs was initially established by presidential decree in 1984. In 1987, with the worsening of the economic crisis, Cameroon adopted a structural adjustment plan, which entailed reducing public expenditures and restructuring the Government. In particular, the Ministries of Women`s Affairs and Social Affairs were merged into a single Ministry by Decree No. 88/1281 of 21 September 1988. In December 1997, the President of the Republic, aware of the special problems of women and anxious to improve their status, set up the new Ministry of Women`s Affairs by Decree No. 97/205 of 7 December 1997 on the organization of the Government. Article 5, subparagraph 8 of this Decree provides as follows (Anonymous, 2005, p. 125).

The above information or moves corresponds with the initiatives and efforts of the Franciscan Sisters that began with their creation of Girl Vocational Schools in 1975 to guarantee the status advancement of women and gender equality in Bui division. This was further strengthened by their orientation towards professionalism and subsequent adjustments and vision. Furthermore, the report indicated above states:

The Ministry of Women`s Affairs shall be responsible for drafting and implementing measures relating to respect of women`s rights and strengthening guarantees of gender equality in the political, economic, social and cultural spheres (Anonymous, 2005, p.127).

So far as the advancement of the status of women in the economic and socio-cultural areas is concerned, the policy declaration on the integration of women in development, the multi-sectoral plan of action on women and development, and the *National Plan of Action on the Integration of Women in Development*, drafted and approved in 1997 and adopted by the Government in 1999, lends credence to the efforts of the Franciscan Sisters in opening institutions to advance the status of women.

Through the creation of *Girls' Vocational Schools* in Bui Division, and their subsequent augmentation, the Franciscan Sisters seem to have properly captured the vision of the Cameroon government policy on women's education. This, as outlined above, is seen in the three initially opened schools (in Shisong, Nkar, and Djottin), and their eventual development into secondary high schools of commercial and technical education (Ngong, 2010, pp. 100-101). According to the government plan, the advancement and protection of the girl constitutes one of the priority elements, with the following action encouraged:

- Establishment of a special fund to provide support to female students of scientific and technical subjects, and other forms of assistance to deserving students of both sexes;
- Abolition of certain restrictive regulations, such as age limits, unfavourable to women in higher education; - Use of informal educational structures (Women's Advancement Centres, Youth and Activity Centres, Social Centres, Vocational Training Centres) to ensure socio-juridical-economic advancement for girls past the age for compulsory education;
- Introduction of a national functional literacy programme and an informal education programme for girls; - Adoption of a declaration on the new educational policy to combat classroom exclusion, reduce regional inequalities and remove existing obstacles to education for girls;
- Adoption of a new school-oriented Education Act emphasizing the compulsory and non-fee paying nature of education in Cameroon and

non-discriminatory access to education for children of both sexes
(Anonymous, 2005, p. 140).

All the above were prepared with the participation of the main actors in the cause of women's advancement - the administration, the private sector (with Franciscan Sisters involved), and civil society. From the purpose and objective of the creation of institutions by the Franciscan Sisters in Bui division, most of the above listed features have been taken on board. Also, the Sisters have been working hard in raising the status of women within the context of religion.

3.3. Gender Equality in the Context of Religion and Education.

By guaranteeing academic freedom and fostering of liberty and justice, which count as social factors favouring women's education as stated above (Supra, 2.9), the Franciscan Sisters encourage gender equality in the context of religion and education. Chia, in relation to this, states:

It is high time the Catholic Education Agency starts impressing upon the general public that school effectiveness is not based only on a 100% pass in public examination, concentration not only mostly on female students, but also on other aspects of student performance and behaviour in the world beyond school. Therefore, it is necessary to nip in the bud, some negative traits or vices (like selectivity especially in relation to females), which our public morality and ethics do not accept and which make one person an enemy to others or nuisance to society (Chia, 1998, p. 65).

The above opinion of Chia, which arises as an attempt towards a solution to the problem of secondary education in Cameroon-the role of the Catholic Education Agency, seems to have been considered seriously by the Franciscan Sisters in their institutions. In relation to this, Ngong presents further steps taken to promote gender equality by emphasizing the following:

To socialise them, that is, raise them up as total human beings to fit the society; to wake up those sleeping talents especially in women and girls who are timid, so that they can grow to levels of excellence, and bring out the great potentialities hidden in them; to stimulate and foster their intellectual, physical, moral, spiritual, and civic development, so that

they can grow up as balanced and responsible individuals, capable of good judgment based on applying several knowledge domains or disciplines; and to inculcate in all, the value of respecting the rights and dignity of each person (Ngong, 2010, p. 103).

The above mentioned efforts by the Franciscan sisters within institutions in Bui division do not only end-up in promoting gender equality in the context of religion and education, but equally leads to the empowerment of women through education. This has led Ngong to conclude that the objective or purpose of the Franciscan Sisters, is not only to promote gender equality, but also to ensure that the end of teaching and learning activities should be for the individual's success in life, his/her self-reliance and readiness to be responsible citizens, who are productive, creative, and God-fearing (Ngong, 2010, p. 106).

To achieve the above, Ngong thinks the review of subject combinations in the institutions operated by the Franciscan Sisters has done much good. Not only is this done, she thinks the availability of chaplains, counsellors, and specialists, who journey along with the students, has created an atmosphere of mutual respect for both sexes (Ngong, 2010, p. 108). The implication of all this is the fact that the religious impact has led to the gradual levelling-out of male chauvinism and discriminations in relation to women. This is justified as attested to by Budze and Banye, that the ratio of male to female heads of services in Bui Division is roughly about 60% to 40%; much improved from the rate of about 90% to 10% before the creation of these institutions (Budze & Banye, 2014, p.3).

3.4. Co-Education and its impact.

According to Yenmole, with the evolved aim of the institutions owned by Franciscan Sisters, from a single-sex school to a co-educational one, taking into consideration the value of training women, not by discrimination or promoting feminism, the idea of enrolling strictly only girls, dropped in the early 1990's; and since mentality had changed, educating girls alongside boys equally registered some balance impacting especially positive values (Yenmole, 2014). Verson asserts in agreement with this view: "Education is one of the most important means of empowering women with the knowledge, skills and self-confidence necessary to participate fully in the development process; girls should kept alongside boys in the learning process (Verson, 1981, p. 87)."

Education is important for everyone, thus also necessary for girls and women; as is a vital step to their emancipation. This is true not only because education is an entry point to other opportunities, but also because the educational achievements of women can have ripple effects within the family and across generations. According to Yenmole (2014) who reflects an opinion presented by Vernon, investing in girls' education is one of the most effective ways to ameliorate living conditions. In relation to this, Vernon thinks this is possible because girls who have been educated are likely to marry later and to have smaller and healthier families (Vernon, 1981, p. 89). Educated women, from the experience of those graduated from institutions run by Franciscan Sisters, Banye and Budze hold, have been largely noticed to recognize the importance of health care and know how to seek it for themselves and their children (Banye & Budze, 2014). Equally, they claim, with the majority of female former students from Franciscan Sisters' institutions, education has been seen to help girls and women to know their rights and to gain confidence in claiming those (Banye & Budze, 2014). However, it is still noticed that women's literacy rate is still as significantly lower than men's in most developing countries.

Notwithstanding, as Vernon holds, which is a replica of the situation in Franciscan run institutions (Yenmole, 2014), education has far-reaching effects. Vernon indicates that the education of parents is linked to their children's educational attainment, and the mother's education is usually more influential than the father's. An educated mother's greater influence in household negotiations may allow her to secure more resources for her children (Vernon, 1981, p. 91). This comparatively holds sway with the situation of women- products from the Franciscan run institutions in Bui division. As a highlight, Yenmole says that it has been commendable in many official quarters and records that educated mothers in Bui division are more likely to be in the labour force, allowing them to pay some of the costs of schooling, and may be more aware of returning to schooling. Moreover, educated mothers averaging fewer children have been noticed to concentrate more attention on each child (Yenmole, 2014).

3.5. Community Education.

The impact of co-education as a new orientation for education and status advancement of women by the Franciscan Sisters in Bui division is backed-up by the community's involvement. As recounted by Banye and Budze, not only are these institutions run by the sisters; the Catholic Education Agency of the Diocese of Kumbo and the Parents Teachers Association (PTA) collaborate with the Franciscan Sisters (Banye & Budze, 2014). This is in agreement with the recommendations of the National Forum on Education in Cameroon (1994) according to which those who are involved in the administration of both public and private institutions should stamp out the bad practice of allowing the student orientation and running of schools solely in the hands of parents, teachers, and at times students themselves; private education teachers are allowed to attend lectures in government teacher training colleges as unregistered students; and the local communities are encouraged to contribute without compulsion to the funding of technical schools, and also to use initiatives in constructions as deemed necessary (Anonymous, 1994, pp. 59-60).

Equally, in connection with the above policy of the Cameroon government, Ahmed and Coombs, employ directives from UNESCO regarding education especially of women for rural development. According to them and as prepared and backed by the world bank and UNICEF, a fundamental aim of the school to the countryside program (such as the case of Bui division under study), is to encourage self-government; that is, the community should be able to run, lead themselves, and participate in both planning and executive program (Ahmed & Coombs, 1999, p. 78). Again, they insist that while guarding against cultural biases that disfavor women, leadership should encourage the students to serve the community and learn from it (*ibid.*, p. 82).

According to Yenmole, the Franciscan sisters do not single-handedly run educational institutions in Bui division; they involve the parents, teachers, guardians, and also harness advice from well-wishers (Yenmole, 2014). This corroborates what Ngong considers as the contribution of extra-curricular organizations (PTA's, various associations, benefactors at home and abroad, and the Catholic Education Agency), in running their schools (Ngong, 2010, p. 109). Therefore, with the advent of the economic crisis, the recommendations of the Cameroon government and UNESCO, the Franciscan Sisters have been able to involve extra-curricular bodies, such as listed above, in the funding of schools towards infrastructures, running costs, recruitment of part-time teachers, and auxiliary staff.

3.6. Women in Educational Leadership.

Following from such a conducive atmosphere, guaranteed by the community, and the strife to eliminate male chauvinism by encouraging gender equality, Banye and Budze hold that a central place is given to women leadership qualities and education. For them, when appointing leaders in the students` government, both sexes are given equal opportunities, and there is the insistence on the declaration of human rights and equality for all (Banye & Budze, 2014). As a result of this, Ngong affirms that the economic power of the division is shifting towards the control of women; there is skills-building; reduction in arranged or forced marriages; increased number of women-motivated speakers; and the three institutions in Bui division are headed by Franciscan Sisters (Ngong, 2010, p. 120).

Accordingly, the Franciscan Sisters in their education policies seem to have captured the recommendations of the Ministry of Women`s Affairs, acting in consonance with prescriptions of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. From the conference, women`s concerns especially in leadership are increasingly taken into account in the major reforms being undertaken at national level (Anonymous, 2005, p. 112). The participatory approach adopted in connection with the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) has made it possible for 30 to 40% of Cameroon`s women to become involved in that process. The millennium declaration served to a large extent as the inspiration for such (ibid. p. 113). This element, that is to say the strengthening of human resources, the social sector and the integration of disadvantaged groups (like women) in the economic circuit, which gives particular attention to gender equality and women`s empowerment, evidenced in the policies of the Franciscan Sisters, accentuates the democratization of education and non-discrimination between the sexes in terms of access to education.

The above policy on education of the Cameroon government, that of educating women for educational leadership, which the Franciscan Sisters strive to promote, works in line with what Ahmed and Coombs relate from UNESCO`s directives. Here, two features are stressed: conscience and commitment; which for them, involves the inclusion of both sexes in leadership roles (Ahmed & Coombs, 1999, p. 83). By giving both sexes equal opportunities in the students` government, the Franciscan sisters as Yenmole (2014) above states, helps in their own way in the implementation of the policies of the government and UNESCO. It must

be noted at this juncture also, that all the above aspects are made possible because of the availability and role of the education commission.

3.7. Education commission and its Role.

Apart from the formation of Parent Teachers Association to manage the affairs of the institutions, Yenmole isolates the role of the education commission. To begin with, she cites the pastoral plan of the Ecclesiastical Province of Bamenda, to which the institutions of the Franciscan Sisters belong, as having a preamble, aim, composition, and role that promotes integral education. According to this plan, Catholic schools are one of the privileged education, inculturation and initiation to the dialogue of life among young people of different religious and social backgrounds; to foster education for all in Catholic and non-Catholic schools; to involve the laity, catechists, religious, clergy, and elected members; to make Catholic schools to be firmly established in society by educating the PTA`s , ex-students associations, of the rights and duties of all; to work for strategies to financially support the institutions; and to promote the human, cultural, and religious formation of the educators themselves (Anonymous, 1999, pp. 35-36).

The above mentioned directives which are followed by the Franciscan Sisters, as an institution under the Catholic Church, fall in line with Lantum`s indications on the task of committees and commissions in the educational process. For him, the practical aspects of the pragmatic educational system which is preferable today as the cure for our social and economic developmental problems, is to move away from broad departmental to instructional objectives (Lantum, 1999, p. 7). The main national data collection institutions charged with sex-disaggregated data known as the Central Bureau for Censuses and Population (BUCREP), is responsible for carrying out operations connected with the collection, analysis and publication of statistical data throughout the national territory, especially in relation to women (Anonymous, 2005, p. 38). According to this, the government has finalized its strategy for the advancement of women, which provides for women`s education and training programmes. This Committee is meant to work for the elimination of discrimination against Women. The commission, as Nwana contends, is responsible for harmonizing the secondary school syllabuses and fostering education for all (Nwana, 2001, p. 9). By following strictly the directives of the diocesan education commission and Catholic Education Agency, the Franciscan Sisters stimulate a greater and efficient management of their schools.

From the above broad perspective which presents the efforts of the Franciscan Sisters in the application of the UNESCO (UN) and the Cameroon government`s policy on women`s education, I have been able to match some of the efforts of the Sisters under consideration. This was done by examining the methodology of education, use of education to change the woman`s status, gender equality in the context of religion and education, co-education and its impact, community education, women in educational leadership, and education commission and its role. This permits me to have a firmer foundation in tackling the next chapter, which is: Paulo Freire and the Education of Women. The method I am to explore in this chapter is the critical analysis.

Chapter IV: Paulo Freire and Education of Women. (Critical analysis)

In carrying on a critical analysis in this chapter, a guiding question ensues: “In the commitment to religious denominational education, in view of advancing the status of women and ensuring gender equality in Bui Division, to what extent have the Franciscan Sisters succeeded in meeting up the essentials of education as guaranteeing freedom and overcoming opposing cultural obstacles?” This is to be done with the assistance of Paulo Freire’s work – *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*;⁵ and it is done under the following headings: justification for the education of women, dangers of a teacher or instructor-centred education, the essentials of education as guaranteeing freedom, and overcoming opposing cultural obstacles.

4.1. Justification for the Education of Women.

As seen above in the insistence of the Franciscan Sisters, the purpose and objective of the creation of their institutions rests on assuring holistic education, leading to status advancement of women and gender equality in Bui division (cf. chapter 2.1). This could be read as in accordance with P. Freire’s position, who opines that the great humanistic and historical task of the oppressed has been to liberate themselves and their oppressors as well (Freire, 1993, p. 26). Although in the case under consideration, the Franciscan Sisters are not the oppressed, they, through their programs, prompt this in the women and young girls of Bui Division as seen above.

In an important sense, P. Freire captures this clearly when he states:

True generosity consists precisely in fighting to destroy the causes which nourish false charity. False charity constrains the fearful and subdued, the “rejects of life,” to extend their trembling hands. True generosity lies in striving so that these hands whether of individuals or entire peoples, need be extended less and less in supplication, so that more and more they become human hands which work and, working, transform the world (Freire, 1993, p. 27).

The Franciscan Sisters, by providing institutions for the education of women (cf. chapter 2), subsequently leading to their emancipation, match the above recommendations of P. Freire.

⁵ This work of Paulo Freire is the new revised edition, translated by Myra Bergman Ramos, Penguin Books, London, 1993. The book is composed of four chapters, expounding on the Pedagogy of the oppressed.

However, they only succeed to an extent in this regard. They, on the other hand, fall short of Freire's recommendation that: "This lesson and this apprenticeship must come... from the oppressed themselves and from those who are truly in solidarity with them." (Freire, *ibid.*). Following from the above, the failure of the Franciscan Sisters is in the fact that everything is initiated by them, before subsequently causing the women to be self-reliant, using their initiatives.

Notwithstanding the above mentioned loophole, the Franciscan Sisters from the history of their foundation, and presentation of the educational history and strata in Cameroon, have every justification engaging in this enterprise (cf. *supra* 1.1.). It is from this that they were able to isolate the causes for marginalization of women. This situation agrees with the prescription of Freire on initial conditions for seeking to address the plight of the underprivileged:

To surmount the situation of oppression, people must first critically recognize its causes, so that through transforming action, they can create a new situation, one which makes possible the pursuit of a fuller humanity. But the struggle to be fuller human has already begun in the authentic struggle to transform the situation. (Freire, 1993, p. 29)

In relation to the above, one would admit that by first of all analyzing and evaluating the statistics and situation at hand of the oppression of women in Bui division (cf. chapter 1), before establishing their institutions, the Franciscan Sisters worked in agreement with the recommendations of any pedagogy of the oppressed. But as Freire notes, they should be more cautious of the fact that: "the oppressed, who have adapted to the structure of domination in which they are immersed, and have become resigned to it, are inhibited from waging the struggle for freedom so long as they feel incapable of running the risks it requires." (Freire, 1993, p.29) Thus, although the Franciscan Sisters timely opened these institutions to improve upon the status of women in Bui division, they ought to lay favorable conditions for them to take things into their own hands.

Ultimately, at the most radical level of practical discourse, although the Franciscan Sisters have been successful to an extent in their endeavors, according to Freire, they ought to be conscious of the fact that: "Liberation is thus childbirth, and a painful one. The man or woman who emerges is a new person, viable only as the oppressor-oppressed contradiction is

superseded by the humanization of all people.” (Freire, 1993, p. 31) The implication here is that the social factors favoring women’s education: guarantee of academic freedom and fostering of liberty and justice (cf. 2.9), should not be done in a hurry. In this regard the position of Freire, that the solution cannot be achieved in idealistic terms (Freire, *ibid.*), is very relevant. As he later asserts:

In order for the oppressed to be able to wage the struggle for their liberation, they must perceive the reality of oppression not as a closed world from which there is no exit, but as a limiting situation which they can transform. This perception is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for liberation; it must become the motivating force for liberating action. (*ibid.*, p.31)

The above proposals of Freire suggests that when working on the infrastructure and personnel responsible for training, consideration of the daily theoretical aspects of the horarium, and carrying on of subsequent adjustments and visions, (cf. chapter 2), the Franciscan Sisters ought to know certain realities. They ought to recognize the fact that the oppressed as Freire contends, can overcome the contradiction in which they are caught only when this perception enlists them in the struggle to free themselves. (Freire, 1993, p. 31)

Furthermore, by ensuring that there is the availability of moral and religious factors (cf. 2.10), the Franciscan sisters work in agreement with Freire’s thoughts, which states:

The pedagogy of the oppressed, as a humanist and libertarian pedagogy has two distinct stages. In the first, the oppressed unveil the world of oppression and through the praxis commit themselves to its transformation. In the second stage, in which the reality of oppression has already been transformed, this pedagogy ceases to belong to the oppressed and becomes pedagogy of all people in the process of permanent liberation. (Freire, 1993, p. 36)

However, it is not enough to set up infrastructure or funding of scholarship schemes as the Franciscan Sisters do (cf. 2.2. & 2.3.). They ought as Freire intimates: “deal with the problem of the oppressed consciousness and the oppressor consciousness, the problem of men and women who oppress men and women who suffer oppression.” (Freire, 1993, p. 37) Thus, it is

incumbent on the Franciscan Sisters and their struggle to raise the status of women in Bui division, to take into account their behavior, their view of the world and their ethics.

4.2. Dangers of A Teacher or Instructor-centered Education.

After seeing the need for the education of women as mentioned above, it is necessary to isolate some dangers that go alongside with it, and need immediate attention. Although there is the introduction of courses which encourage individual or personal skill building in the students: economic home crafts, clothing industry, building and construction, electricity, wood work, food and nutrition (Ngong, 2010, p. 101), with orientation towards self-reliance and being job creators not seekers, the banking system of over reliance on instructors (cf. Chapter 2) is so detrimental. As noticed above in the daily theoretical aspects of the horarium, especially in the course outline (cf. 2.4.1.), there is too much dependence of the students on the teachers, as if they cannot do much on their own.

Freire points out the dangers of this system of education as opposed to the praxis, asserting:

A careful analysis of the teacher-student relationship at any level, inside or outside the school, reveals its fundamentally narrative character. This relationship involves a narrating subject (the teacher) and patient, listening objects (the students). The contents whether values or empirical dimensions of reality, tend in the process of being narrated to become lifeless and petrified. Education is suffering from narration sickness. (Freire, 1993, p. 53)

Together with Freire, and unfortunately the situation in which the daily horarium of the institutions operated by the Franciscan Sisters portray, with a teacher centered learning (banking method), this method is less effective. It should be substituted with the praxis method that gives the students greater opportunity to try things themselves. However, since field trips are equally organized to enable the students visit some sites, especially industries and companies; it should be encouraged, for this enables them to gain first- hand information (Banye and Budze, 2014). The question to be raised is whether these guarantee a proper orientation towards professionalism.

In responding to the problematic above, Freire's assertions are relevant. For him, the truth is that: "the oppressed are not 'marginals;' they are not people living 'outside' society." (Freire, 1993, p. 55) According to Freire, they have always been "inside"; inside the structure which made them "belong for others." (Freire, *ibid.*) Therefore, for him, the solution is not to "integrate" them into the structure of oppression, but to transform those existing structures so that they can become "beings for themselves." (Freire, 1993, p. 55) And this, he thinks, which is applicable also to the method of the Franciscan Sisters in Bui Division, should be done, bearing in mind the following:

The banking approach to adult education, for example, will never propose to students that they critically consider reality. It will deal instead with such vital questions as whether Roger gave green grass to the goat, and insist upon the importance of learning that, on the contrary, Roger gave green grass to the rabbit. The "humanism" of the banking approach masks the effort to turn women and men into automations; the very negation of their ontological vocation to be more fully human. (Freire, 1993, p. 55)

Therefore, flowing from the above, it is advisable for the Franciscan Sisters to re-orientate the method of instruction (banking approach) in the daily horarium, and choose the praxis, for the obvious reasons stated above. More so, Freire sounds another warning to those who use the banking approach, knowingly or unknowingly, as the Franciscan Sisters are fun of; that this leads to dehumanization, as the 'bank-clerk teachers' fail to perceive that the deposits themselves contain contradictions about reality. (Freire, 1993, p. 56)

4.3. The Essentials of Education as Guaranteeing Freedom.

Despite the fact that the approach of the Franciscan Sisters in their institutions in Bui Division, in relation to the pedagogy of the oppressed according to P. Freire is full of dangers of a teacher-centred education, they help in guaranteeing freedom. As observed above with the Franciscan Sisters and their schools, aspects of freedom, liberty, and justice are present in the orientation given in these educational institutions. Prefects are appointed bearing in mind the issue of the necessity of fostering liberty and justice. This is done by ensuring that leadership positions are accredited to both genders, equal treatment of the students, provision of a suggestion box, organization of dialogue forums and conferences between students and

the administration, creation of societal awareness in matters of gender equality, and general education on human rights and practice of civil duties. (Cf. 2.9.2.)

In line with this, Freire underlines the essentials of education as guaranteeing freedom. According to him:

Human existence cannot be silent, nor can it be nourished by false words, but only by true words, with which men and women transform the world. To exist, humanly, is to name the world, to change it. Once named, the world in its turn reappears to the namers as a problem and requires of them a new naming. Human beings are not built in silence, but in word, in work, in action-reflection. (Freire, 1993, p. 69)

By giving equal opportunities to both male and female students, regarding the naming of the student's government and providing a healthy environment for dialogue at all levels, the Franciscan Sisters guarantee freedom. As Freire later insists, dialogue which is the encounter between all, mediated by the world, helps in the naming of the world and elimination of sex discriminations. Accordingly, he thinks: "dialogue cannot occur between those who want to name the world and those who do not wish this naming-between those who deny others the right to speak their word and those whose right to speak has been denied them." (ibid., p. 69) The approach of the Franciscan Sisters named above caters for such situations.

Equally, as noticed above, the Franciscan Sisters in their institutions make available some moral and religious factors: hospitality, respect for creation or nature and humanity, and sharing with others (cf. 2.10). In line with this, Freire insists that certain conditions are necessary for guaranteeing freedom in education. According to him, founding itself upon love, humility, and faith, dialogue becomes a horizontal relationship of which mutual trust between the dialoguers is the logical consequence. (Freire, 1993, p. 72) Thus, the activities of the Franciscan Sisters in Bui division, towards this direction are to be encouraged as these are also essentials of education which guarantee freedom.

4.4. Overcoming opposing cultural Obstacles.

Setting in place the essentials in education as mentioned above does not only guarantee freedom but provides grounds for overcoming opposing cultural obstacles. The effects of what is learnt in institutions created by Franciscan Sisters in Bui Division are felt all around. Equally, since there are workshops and field trips, students are encouraged to exhibit some of the practical things they learn. A good number of the students continue with tertiary education; while others with support from guardians, operate shops, restaurants, and other lucrative businesses around (Banye and Budze, 2014). Furthermore, a noticeable number of former student sisters are found in responsible positions, something which was traditionally reserved for men.

In relation to the above, Freire prescribes that true commitment to the people, involving the transformation of the reality by which there is oppression, requires a theory of transforming action. For him, this theory should not fail to assign the people a fundamental role in the transformation process. (Freire, 1993, p. 107) Because of this, he thinks:

The leaders cannot treat the oppressed as mere activists to be denied the opportunity of reflection and allowed merely the illusion of acting, whereas in fact they would continue to be manipulated, and in this case by the presumed foes of manipulation. (Freire, *ibid.*)

The above situation corresponds with the initiative of the Franciscan Sisters who, through application and practical activities (cf. 2.8), endeavour that the traditional relegation of women to the background, limiting their sphere of influence to domestic affairs, be overcome. That is, cultural obstacles which discriminate the treatment given women be overcome. As recommended by Freire, it is absolutely essential that the oppressed participate in the revolutionary process with an increasingly critical awareness of their role as subjects of the transformation (Freire, 1993, p. 108), so too is the effort of the Franciscan Sisters, through seminars and workshops to get the women involved in shaping their own destiny.

Although there is the goal or purpose of the Franciscan Sisters to liberate women from cultural oppression, thus aiming at their status advancement, and gender equality (cf. Chapter 2), there is always still the temptation to cause the women to be too dependent on the Sisters, via funding and scholarship schemes. These at times in the words of Freire, consciously or unconsciously weaken the oppressed still further. He asserts:

One of the characteristics of oppressive cultural action which is almost never perceived by the dedicated but naïve professionals who are involved is the emphasis on a focalized view of problems rather than on seeing them as dimensions of a totality. (Freire, 1993, p. 122.)

The implication of the above position is that the dangers of divide and rule should be avoided. According to Freire, and as I would apply to the situation of the institutions run by Franciscan Sisters, caution needs to be taken to avoid divisive effects which usually occur in connection with the so-called “leadership training courses.” As he further states: “as soon as they complete the course and return to the community with resources they did not formerly possess, they either use these resources to control the submerged and dominated consciousness of their comrades, or they become strangers in their own communities.” (Freire, *ibid.*) This danger equally, should be taken into consideration by the Franciscan sisters, so that in struggling to raise the status or advancement of the status of women (gender equality), care needs to be taken not to let women become oppressors themselves.

In this brief chapter, the efforts of the Franciscan Sisters in the education of women in Bui Division were placed under the scrutiny or microscope of P. Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. This was done by analyzing critically: the justification for the education of women, dangers of a teacher centred education, essentials of education as guaranteeing freedom, and overcoming opposing cultural obstacles. From P. Freire’s *Cultural Synthesis*, in comparison with the approach of the Franciscan Sisters, it is noticeable that cultural action is always a systematic and deliberate form of action which operates upon the social structures, either with the objective of preserving that structure or of transforming it. On the basis of this preliminary analysis, some wider aspects about the relevance of women’s education by the Tertiary Franciscan Sisters in Bui division are to be considered next.

Chapter V: Relevance and Impact of Denominational Education of Woman in Bui Division (Cameroon)

The reflections of the forgoing chapters enabled us to examine the relevance and impact of denominational education of women by Tertiary Sisters. This is to be done under the following headings: current demographical representations of women in institutions, picture of women empowerment, reformulation of customary and civil laws, enhanced collaboration and alignment of curriculum, gap bridging, extent of emancipation of women, guarantee of sustainability, women leadership qualities, change in men's reaction, the way forward and recommendations.

5.1. Current Demographical Representations of Woman in Institutions.

Initially, as noted above, only few girls were admitted into various Girls' Vocational Schools (Shisong, Nkar, and Djottin). As Ngong states: "It started as a girl's school, and in 2004/2005, the first set of boys was admitted, following the request of the parents of the locality. The first boys were ten in number, all day students." (Ngong, 2010, p. 100) This effort gives a clear indication of what used to obtain. As M. Venyen recounts, sorting out the current demographical representations of women in institutions in Bui division by percentage is rather difficult to ascertain and can only be estimated. This, he thinks, is due to the fact that the factors involved are varied, complex and hard to isolate. (Venyen, 2009, p. 35) He presents the situation prior to 1975 with a ratio of male to female in the secondary schools being 75% to 25%. However, the figures, he claims, brought about the marked difference with the creation of the *Girl Vocational Schools* in Bui division by the Franciscan sisters; with the ratio of male to female in 2009 being 48% to 52%. (ibid., p. 37) The reasons for this reversal arise largely from the creation of the three institutions by the Tertiary Sisters of St. Francis.

Prior to this initiative of the Franciscan Sisters to create institutions incorporating women, gender discrimination in education had prevented the girl from asserting her place in society. As E. Nwana confirms about the general situation in Cameroon in the early 1970's, before 1975, women were discriminated upon in relation to education. In relation to this he states:

Gender-based discrimination in education is both a cause and a consequence of deep-rooted disparities in society. Poverty, geographical isolation, ethnic background, disability, traditional attitudes about their status and role all undermine the ability of women and girls to exercise their rights. Harmful practices such as early marriage and pregnancy, gender-based violence, and discriminatory education laws, policies, contents and practices still prevent millions of girls from enrolling, completing and benefitting from education. (Nwana, 2008, pp. 23-24)

Therefore, if the situation improved after 1975, and is the exact moment of the creation of the Girls' Vocational Schools in Bui division by the Franciscan Sisters, then they too have contributed in narrowing the gap of gender inequality in education. Gender, as Nwana states above, must therefore be integrated at all levels of education, from early childhood to higher education, in formal and non-formal settings and from planning infrastructure to training teachers. The example of the Franciscan Sisters is therefore relevant to the Cameroonian situation as they have improved upon gender equality in education.

5.2. Picture of Women Empowerment.

As seen above, the impact of the initiative of the Franciscan sisters in the education of women, has remarkably improved upon the current demographical representations of women in institutions. Equally, because of noticeable presence of women at all levels of the socio-political life, it could be held that they too have changed the picture of women empowerment in Bui division in particular, and Cameroon as whole. This move by the Franciscan sisters corresponds with recommendations of the Ministry of Women's Affairs captured by E. Nwana as: "Institutional mechanisms," aimed at improving on the status of women. According to Nwana, women empowerment as recommended by the ministry concerned, commands the following resources:

External services in the Provinces, Divisions and Districts, which ensure extensive coverage of the national territory by the Ministry's activities; Rural group leaders, whose role is to provide leadership and guidance to grass-roots women's groups in their various activities; women's advancement centres, neighbourhood structures that provide leadership and training in simple trades and dispense informal education to women

and girls; an appropriate technology centre, which sets out to reduce the hardship of women's work and to popularize appropriate technologies. (Nwana, 2008, p.39)

The recommendations of the Ministry of Women's Affairs above, as reported by E. Nwana seem to be properly implemented by the Franciscan sisters; this, especially through their putting in place of institutions particularly in rural areas, and their orientation of women towards professionalization. With the above moves, and as fittingly put in place by the Franciscan sisters, there is a marked improvement in the empowerment of women in all spheres. And as recounted by Budze and Banye, most of the institutions run by Franciscan sisters are headed by their Sisters; something which was never heard before. (Budze & Banye, 2014,)

5.3. Reformation of customary and Civil Laws.

According to O. Ngong, not only has the education of women by the Franciscan Sisters led to the empowerment of women, but also to the reformation of customary and civil laws. As he recounts, resulting from experience, learning and research, there is the reduction of traditional injustices towards women. He states that practices such as wife inheritance, arranged marriages, and non-education of the female child (or limited access), have considerably reduced with the creation of institutions by Tertiary Sisters of Saint Francis. (Ngong, 2010, p. 111) This situation is attested to by L. Fonka and W. Banboye, describing the situation of women that obtained before, in Bui division:

The *Fon*⁶ of Nso, ` as sanctioned by the marriage custom, is free to inherit his late father's or son's or brother's wife. In fact, it is documented, that Nga` Bifon had 300 wives and a 'school of children.' This is what the Nso` man would call *villem* – marriage by inheritance... Also, if the elderly Fon's wives were interested in any girl, some of them would go to the house of the father of such a girl and rub cam wood on the pillar and centre of the floor of such a girl's home. This is

⁶ This is the appellation for a king in *Nso* (the main clan) in Bui division.

understood as a sign that the man should give one his daughters as wife to the Fon. (Fonka & Banboye, 1978, pp. 22-23)

With the education of the woman by Franciscan Sisters in Bui division, as testified by O. Ngong, the above listed abuses are minimized or almost absent in many areas in aspects such as of freedom, liberty, and justice in the institutions; in fact, these injustices against women are hardly noticeable. (Ngong, 2010, p. 123)

In another dimension, E. Nwana thinks the collaboration of private education (such as the case with the three institutions run by Franciscan sisters in Bui division) with the Cameroonian Government, has helped to curb instances of discrimination upon women. He says this has been made possible with the putting in place of reforms; for example, the *National Women's Observatory*, established by Decree No. 97/068 of 4 May 1998, setting up the Ministry of Women's Affairs, which is responsible for monitoring the development of the situation of women in Cameroon. The document formally establishing the Observatory and defining its remit, he states, has been drafted although not yet fully operational. (Nwana, 2008, p.43) This has helped, to a larger extent, in putting a check on injustices against women and ensuring the reformulation of customary and civil laws.

According to E. Nwana, focal points for the representation of the Ministry of Women's Affairs in certain other Ministries in line with the across-the-board approach; that is, taking into consideration the necessity of inserting and giving a central place to women in general, is stressed. In this context, he says that the ministry also works with women's associations (such as the Tertiary Sisters of St. Francis), which can enter into partnership agreements with it. He also states that certain NGOs and associations participate in monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the Beijing Platform. Thus he cites the example of the *Association Fighting Violence against Women (ALVF)*, which is conducting awareness-raising activities among other associations and NGOs. Again, he says that the ministry's budget allocation has genuinely improved over the last few years, rising from 390 million CFA in the financial year 1996/1997 to 3 538 million CFA in 2004. This budget increase, Nwana contends, reflects the interest taken by the State in reducing gender disparities, most especially in education. (Nwana, 2008, pp. 56-57)

Furthermore, favourable conditions have been put in place to promote the education of women as C. Ndoumba states. According to him, Decree No. 90/1461 of 9 November 1990 lays down conditions for the setting up, opening, operating and financing of private educational and training establishments in Cameroon. Amongst these conditions, he states:

“the maximum number of pupils or students in a nursery, primary, secondary, and teacher training establishment shall be 60 per classroom, and 25 per workshop or specially equipped room, and equal opportunities must be offered to both sexes.” (Ndoumba, 2001, Articles 25&26). It is such favourable conditions as the ones mentioned in this passage that enabled the Franciscan sister’s setting of institutions.

5.4. Enhanced collaboration and Alignment of Curriculum.

With suitable reforms and the reformulation of customary and civil laws as noted above; also with an enhanced collaboration and alignment of curriculum by the Franciscan sisters, much is achieved. The daily theoretical aspects of the horarium, by making provisions for an accommodative course outline and extra-curricular activities (cf. 2.4.), the students are capable of taking praiseworthy initiatives with noticeable positive results. The efforts of the Franciscan Sisters agree with what B. Nsom terms “conditions for the successful management of educational change.” Added to the conditions for the successful management of change as seen in the daily theoretical aspects of the horarium above, he thinks it would be necessary for educational establishments to build a learning organization, more collegiate in character. (Nsom, 1998, p. 43). This seems to be the best description for the course of action taken by the Franciscan sisters in their three institutions in Bui division.

According to P. Whitaker (1993), the five core disciplines for a developing learning organization include:

... team building; personal mastery (recognizes that people are the active force in the pursuit of organizational aims, with a wealth of energy, skill, and talent available for realizing them); mental models (linear and vertical thinking would have to give way to greater creativity, use of imagination and intuition balanced by rationality and logic); building a shared vision; and finally, systems thinking: seeing wholes, people as active participants in shaping reality and creating the future. (Whitaker, 1993, p. 45)

Flowing from the above recommendations, the daily horarium of the institutions run by Franciscan Sisters in Bui Division does not only consider conditions for the successful management of educational change. Equally noticed, is the fact, as O. Ngong says, that the

Franciscan sisters have produced facilitators and counsellors. Also, he reports that these act as supportive staff, as individuals and groups search for new meanings and for problem-solving possibilities. (Ngong, 2010, p. 99)

Freire, in relation to the above, makes a similar relevant observation: “It follows logically from the banking notion of consciousness that the educator’s role is to regulate the way the world ‘enters into’ the students. The teacher’s task is to organize a process which already occurs spontaneously.” (Freire, 1996, p.47). This also, as put in place by the Franciscan sisters, matches with the position of Freire; it also leads to the examination of the extent of emancipation of women.

5.5. Extent of the Emancipation of Woman.

The extent of the emancipation of women as a result of the creation of institutions in Bui division by the Franciscan sisters, relates to two factors: socio-economic emancipation and political emancipation. As indicated in the early chapters, M. Yenmole isolates some efforts of the Franciscan sisters in enabling women leadership qualities and education to take a central place. She does this by presenting the fact that there is promotion of ability to perform, opportunities for growth, and stress on the equality of genders. (Yenmole, 2014)

5.5.1. Socio-Economic Emancipation

It is as a result of the efforts of the Franciscan sisters to emancipate the woman that those products of their institutions in Bui division and members of their congregation have been trained as professionals; such as medical doctors, administrators, nurses, teachers, etc. According to O. Ngong:

Two young Cameroonians of the Tertiary Sisters of St. Francis have become the first in this congregation to become medical Doctors (Sr. Dr. Ashoma Helen and Sr. Dr. Jaff Caroline). After 7 years of rigorous studies, Dr Ashoma and Dr Jaff graduated with flying colours from the *Universita` Catolica del Sacro Cuore, Polliclinico Universitario Agostino Gemelli* in Italy. Sr. Dr. Ashoma did his final research on *Rheumatic Fever and Rheumatic Heart Disease in Developing countries; the experience of Cameroon*, while Sr. Dr. Jaff researched on *Early results and Follow-up after late cardiac surgery in Children and*

Adolescents with natural History of Tetralogy of Fallot in Cameroon.

(Ngong, 2010, p. 61)

The above cited example is one amongst many, in which those who have benefitted from the education of Franciscan sisters in Bui division, not only become a source of economic reliability for the congregation, but also a means of social emancipation. That is, the society benefits both socially and economically from the activities of the two women doctors. Additionally the myth of thinking that only men can become medical doctors is erased.

5.5.2. Political Emancipation

Prior to the education of women in Bui division, Yenmole contends, the role of a woman was limited in the domestic sphere. And as she claims, the landscape of female representation in civil, traditional, and domestic affairs has changed. Instances, she says, due to the holistic formation received from their institutions, indicate a reasonable percentage representation in the social, economic, and political lives. (Yenmole, 2014)

According to G. Wirba, political changes have comparatively been effected as a result of the increased role of women and their involvement in civic and traditional matters. She holds that the establishment of colonial administration and the independent states in Africa led to the abolition of traditional rule and the introduction of new political authorities, which completely replaced or weakened many of the traditional functions of the various social groups. As she states again: “In this political transition, the African woman completely lost her traditional and political power. The patriarchal mentality brought by colonization and Christianity deprived the African woman of her remarkable role in the political organization of her society.” (Wirba, 2012, p. 61) However, G. Wirba, drawing from the experience in Bui Division, Cameroon, and Africa as a whole, claims that nowadays, women are occupying important positions in political and social strata of their nations even as heads of states, ministers, parliamentarians, and civil administrators. In her estimation, this political change is based on their capacities and formation (as contributed also by the Franciscan sisters in their three positions), unlike the traditional setting where authority was based on hierarchy, hereditary, age, and sex. (Wirba, 2012, p. 62) Thus, from the efforts of the Franciscan sisters and citing of G. Wirba, one could say that today much effort is being made to exploit the feminine potentialities of the African woman for the construction of her nation than in the traditional culture, even though there is still a lot to be done.

5.6. Guarantee of Sustainability.

In order to assure sustainability, the Franciscan sisters have put in place certain structures. These, as noted by O. Ngong, include: funds, school fees, sponsorship, loans schemes, and constant sensitization. (Ngong, 2010, p. 112) According to B. Nsom, a number of factors, which favour Catholic Education in Cameroon (including the institutions run by Franciscan Sisters), needs to be guarded judiciously. As he notes, the education secretaries in the respective dioceses, like the one of Kumbo diocese wherein the three institutions run by the Franciscan sisters are located, is well organized and full of collaboration. This flows over to the institutions as well, with its policy of upholding integral education. (Nsom, 1998, p. 58)

In another domain of ensuring or guaranteeing sustainability, B. Nsom intimates that the support of parents has been very vital to the existence of Catholic Education Agency, particularly with the advent of the economic crisis. He notes that after the reduction and final cancellation of subvention by the Government to Catholic Schools, it had to look for assistance elsewhere; this for the simple reason that it is a non-profit making organization. As a result, he says that not only do parents support with Parent Teacher Association (PTA) contributions, but they readily send their children to these colleges. (Nsom, 1998, p. 58). Equally, B. Nsom thinks that the sustainability of the Catholic Education Agency has also been as a result of the devotion of teachers, a factor worth-noting. These teachers, despite the low salaries, have always been made to consider their profession as a vocation, he claims. (ibid.) Lastly, these institutions also receive financial, material and human resource support from the Universal Catholic Church via missionaries and lay volunteers. (Nsom, 1998, p. 59)

5.7. Change in Men's Reaction.

Considering the availability of structures put in place to guarantee sustainability and recent identification of women leadership qualities (cf. 2.9 above), there is a change in men's reaction. As Budze and Banye contend, the reaction of society, especially that of men has changed from the conflict dominated past, full of cultural clashes, to an advanced understanding of complimentary role between men and women; this is more so because the society is more aware of gender equality issues and have a positive attitude, thanks to the policies learnt from the orientation of the Franciscan sisters. (Budze & Banye, 2014)

In conformity with recommendations from UNESCO, and the insistence of the Cameroon Government C. Nyamyele holds that there is much concentrated efforts to transform the violent approach of men towards women. As he states, local Councils, for example in Bui Division, with the collaboration of government officials, are led to work in promoting equal opportunities to quality learning, free from gender biases or other forms of discrimination. (Nyamyele, 2009, p. 44). This has been successful because such values are stressed in the curriculum of the institutions run by Franciscan Sisters.

In particular, and with the background influence of UNESCO and the Cameroonian Government, through local authorities, Nyamyele continues that there is the initiative to mobilize additional funds through the *Better Life Better Future* learning opportunities for girls and women, which seeks to address obstacles to learning; such as gender-based violence. It also seeks to promote gender equality in national education laws and policies; and plans to expand access to learning opportunities, in particular for girls and women in both formal and non-formal education. It develops the capacity of education policy-makers, planners, teachers and other education personnel regarding gender-sensitive approaches. Most of these reforms are said to be promoted mostly by men. (Nyamyele, 2009, p. 48) Therefore, with the initiative of the Franciscan sisters and the support of the Government and the Church, education is made to contain a gender-sensitive and free from discrimination atmosphere.

5.8. The Way Forward and Recommendations.

Although as seen above, the relevance and impact of denominational education of women by Tertiary Franciscan Sisters in Bui Division, is quite impressive, certain factors need to be looked into, for the sake of a better future. Naturally, this leads to the examination of the following: danger of overstress on denominational features together with the risk of limited specialities, necessity of tertiary education as complementary, extremes due to feminist tendencies, and the intensification of counselling guide.

5.8.1. Danger of Overstress on Denominational Features

Conscious of the fact that the Franciscan Sisters are nuns of the Roman Catholic Church; also, despite the fact that they use this background to dig into what it means to be a woman, through psychological, social, and religious components of women; there is the danger of overstress on denominational features. Too much insistence on religious activities

can easily compel students of other religions or denominations to feel forced to conversion. However, the incidences of such are minimal, but must be checked in the daily horarium. In relation to this, and warning against the necessity of working towards self-reliance, G. Wirba states:

The role of African religious women in inculturated evangelization in sub-Saharan Africa today demands a critical consideration of their organization, leadership, and structures. Religious life will never be effectively incarnated in Africa unless communities are organized according to their proper resources and standard of life. Notwithstanding, the plight of women should not be exaggerated and substituted with religious demands. (Wirba, 2012, p. 305)

However, although there could be abuses if denominational features are overstressed in the institutions, the control or moderation, yet introduction of these is very relevant. The reason for this is because by nature, the African woman has profound human and spiritual values and a choice of ideals, which should be given particular and close attention if this woman is to live religious life faithfully, happily and fulfilled. This becomes a decisive moment for the promotion of her human and spiritual maturity as emphasized by John Paul II: “In the spirit of Christ, in fact, women can discover the entire meaning of their femininity and thus be disposed to making a sincere gift to self, to others, thereby finding themselves.” (John Paul II, 1988, No. 31)

5.8.2. Necessity of Extension of Curriculum and Courses

The daily theoretical aspects of the horarium: course outline and extra-curricular activities (cf. 2.4. above), just as the moderation of the implementation of denominational features above, needs to be checked. This would gradually lead to orientation towards professionalism, which at the moment is less felt and so insignificant. Another significance of the extension of curriculum and courses is the avoidance of the risk of limited specialities.

Together with C. Nyamyele, the necessity of extending the curriculum, thus limiting the risk of having limited specialties is feasible. He thinks this could be done through programmers' support from a variety of educational programs, literacy projects, and curricula development with a focus on reproductive and sexual health. For him, because of the sensitivity of these issues, the focus and educational programs should undergo a number of

changes from time to time. Notwithstanding, he holds, gender issues should receive more attention than they did in past programs, and instruction methods must change, from a didactic approach to one emphasizing student participation and communications skills. (Nyamyele, 2009, p. 53)

In a related development, C. Nyamyele cites a few examples, which I think could be relevant to the education project of the Franciscan Sisters in Bui division. Nyamyele, in the first instance, relates the case of Jamaica; through an alliance with the *Women's Centre of Jamaica Foundation*, and funding from the European Union, is the introduction of a support-program that enables thousands of girls to return to school after pregnancies and to acquire technical skills. Secondly, in Bolivia, he presents women as learning to read in their indigenous language while learning about reproductive health, safe motherhood, and health insurance. Thirdly, he indicates, that in Mali, a literacy project reaches adolescents both in and out of school, with a focus on migrant girls, domestic workers, victims of violence and abuse, and those living on the margins of society. Equally, he intimates that this and other initiatives aim at reducing dropout rates by half, and to equip at least 5,000 girls with a range of skills, from home economics and information technology to environmental preservation. (Nyamyele, 2009, pp. 56-57) This is a relevant recommendation that could work well, with positive results in relation to the efforts of the Franciscan sisters in Bui division, as they strive at advancing the status of women and ensuring gender equality.

Furthermore, to achieve the above, leading to a realization of their purpose and goal for educating women, the Franciscan sisters need to consider some aspects proposed by A. N. Njua. According to him, in order to achieve lofty ideals, education needs to encourage the faculties to sometimes deviate from the curriculum routines for teaching regularities to try out mentally provocative ideas; to exert continuous efforts to place all of the arts, from painting and music to poetry and drama, on an equal level of time with other sciences and their allied disciplines in the programme; to encourage the learner who reveals originality in any direction whatsoever by affording the concerned a maximum leeway, regardless of schedule and requirements, in order to nourish and develop the insight of such a learner; and to encourage new approaches, deviate from the routine and thus, make the school a place where the children as well as adults, especially women, are invited to seek outlets for the urge to develop their own talents. (Njua, 2004, p. 23)

5.8.3. Necessity of Tertiary Education as Complementary

An extension of the curriculum and course on its own is not sufficient enough. As seen above, from the moment of the initial inception of Girls Vocational Schools (1975), to their transformation into co-educational high schools in 2006, (cf. chapter 1 above), there still remains a major difficulty of limiting the education of most to the secondary level. Although there is the permission and possibility of extending the education of women to the tertiary stage, the Franciscan sisters have succeeded in operating only in primary and secondary education, as O. Ngong notes. (Ngong, 2010, p. 94) This leads to a break in the ladder of their purpose and objective of creating institutions (cf. 2.1.); as the aspect of holistic education ends almost prematurely, with a good number of women terminating at the secondary level of education. Therefore, it would be my suggestion, that the Franciscan sisters become involved in tertiary education in order to raise the status of the woman to a more competitive level; this would equally check on the problem of personnel and more specialized professionals. As the Cameroon Government targets significant socio-economic emergence by the year 2035, an education that equips and stimulates the students to the maximum utilization of the local natural resources is indispensable. If the Tertiary Sisters are to make a significant contribution towards such emergence, their involvement in the tertiary level of education is mandatory. By the way, they already lay a good technical foundation in their comprehensive Colleges in Bui that could serve as a spring board for such emergence.

Equally, another importance of complementing their educational ladder with tertiary education is that women in general and community of Bui division in particular, would easily become involved in environmental issues. M. Oreilly underlines the importance of tertiary education as a necessary step to safeguarding the environment; insisting that women, as stable domestic educators in Africa, are evermore in need of tertiary education to match-up competition from their male counterparts and women of the West. He thinks this could be made possible if: the government as well as the Franciscan sisters embark upon a process of rational and sustainable management of its forests and natural resources; set out to provide a coherent framework for all activities conducive to the attainment of the country's forestry and fauna preservation policies. Women, she thinks are very often strongly involved in the management of community forests and resources. Thus, he insists, by getting involved in the *National Environment Management Plan* (NEMAP), which includes and involves mostly

those of the tertiary education sector, women would become better promoters. (Oreilly, 2003, p. 26)

5.8.4. Extremes Due to Feminist Tendencies

It is quite possible that in struggling to fight against gender inequality and promotion of the status of women, some exaggerations are noticeable. Therefore, if the Franciscan sisters and the women themselves are not careful, they may create situations of extreme feminism if the right intention and method of asserting the place and role of the woman is not followed. R. Debray in his work *Revolution in the Revolution* sounds a similar warning, which the Franciscan sisters in Bui division must be conscious of. He states:

The oppressed must see examples of the vulnerability of the oppressor so that a contrary conviction can begin to grow within them. Until this occurs, they will continue disheartened, fearful, and beaten. As long as the oppressed remain unaware of the causes of their condition, they fatalistically “accept” their exploitation. Further, they are apt to react in a passive and alienated manner when confronted with the necessity to struggle for their freedom and self-affirmation. Little by little, however, they tend to try out forms of rebellious action. (Debray, 1980, p. 46)

In commenting about the above position, P. Freire warns that in working towards liberation, one must neither lose sight of this passivity, nor overlook the moment of awakening. And he equally insists that the oppressed, after liberating themselves, should not in turn become tyrants; as it has often been noted. (Freire, 1993, p.46)

Equally, Freire warns that political action on the side of the oppressed ought to be pedagogical in action in the real sense of the word, and the action should be taken together with the oppressed. This leads him to contend that those who work for liberation must not take advantage of the emotional dependence of the oppressed; nor must they exhibit feminist tendency. (ibid., p. 48) It is therefore incumbent on the Franciscan sisters to consider such factors in their three institutions in Bui division, in order to avoid any embarrassment.

5.8.5. Intensification of Counselling Guide

The presence of clerics and religious, at the helm of administration, guarantees the positive making of right choices with regards specialization by the women in the three Franciscan sisters' run institutions. Although there are few counsellors, including some teachers, there is still the need and ever increasing demand to pay attention to this aspect. J. Mbomda, in pressing hard on the necessity of intensifying counselling, relates the matter under consideration to the report on the National Forum on Education in Cameroon, with close planning and avenues for school counselling. According to him, in Cameroon generally, and I dare to say in particular, with the case of schools run by Franciscan sisters in Bui division, the organization of school planning and counselling is weak as regards its duties. For example, he advocates for the creation and transformation of school sites at different levels; also the syndrome of inefficiency both in public and private institutions due to the lack of appropriate personnel, lack of harmonization and wastage of available resources, brings about untold problems. (Mbomda, 2003, p. 18)

In line with the above, and equally stressing on the importance of guidance counselling, J. Maritain expresses concern over the proper goal of education in a democracy. In his opinion, counselling should be made to lead citizens to spiritual freedom and to personal and social responsibility. By this, he invites all, and in this situation, the Franciscan sisters are involved, to make a cleavage in education between religious inspiration and secular learning, of which the state's concentration on vocational training and the teaching of secularized character education are evidences. (Maritain, 2004, p. 31)

Aristotle in an earlier move as above held that guided counselling which completes the aim of education should be to make people virtuous. Thus, he insists on the necessity to have three periods of training, fitted to the three periods in the development of an individual. Each period if followed strictly and the proper counselling introduced, the educated would be made integral. (Frost, 1989, p. 211) This is something which the Franciscan sisters need to think about in order to improve upon the ministry of counselling in their educational efforts.

General Conclusion

The general tendency has often been to classify all or most religions as closed-in institutions; thus, they are regarded as promoting anti-democratic values and certain habits and cultural values which nourish inequality between sexes. Religious conservatism is rampant while democratic progressivism is far-fetched. A clear example of such is the confrontation between religious conservatism and democratic progressivism, in relation to the problem of homosexuality and artificial birth control methods. This is extended even in numerous institutions, in which with the same academic profile or qualification, there is still inequality in salaries, occupation of position between men and women. What is more, the case of African societies presents situations of huge discriminations; ranging from the existence of laws dis-favoring ownership of property and land by women, to refusal of inheritance rights.

The education of women by the Tertiary Sisters of St. Francis in this case study, justifies the choice of such a topic. This is as a result of its significance in addressing the above named discriminatory policies and inequalities. Aware of the status quo and traditional or conservatism portrayed of most religions, the choice of the education of women by the Tertiary Sisters, proves the contrary. Also, with the lens of Paul Friere, making use of his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, the conclusion is that such an endeavor is justified. However, it must be emphasized that there are dangers of having a teacher or instructor-centred education; but there must be the underlining fact that the essentials of education guarantee freedom, thus, opposing cultural obstacles are overcome. Notwithstanding, it must be noticed that there are dangers of overstress on denominational features, there must also be a consideration of extending the curriculum and courses, the need for tertiary education to complement, and lastly, the intensification of counseling guide is imperative.

The first conclusion from such a study as seen above is the ability to access or evaluate the contribution of the Tertiary Sisters of St. Francis, in reducing the inequality gap between the men and women of this locality. Secondly, the work isolates some dangers of this research and the approaches involved. The danger of this approach leaves those who prepare future educational or other leaders, with a false impression that they might somehow be doing the job by paying attention only to such a core.

Thirdly, another pertinence or relevance of the study may lead to a feeling of superiority complex on the part of women. The risk involved is that some successful women, whose situation has been improved upon, may tend to intimidate men. In this case, it is central to indicate that the education of women by the Tertiary Sisters is not aimed at reversing the

position and conditions, giving women the position to eventually exert their role and pressure on men; but rather to improve and eradicate the injustices found in traditional systems.

Fourthly, the initiative of the Tertiary Sisters has not only raised the status of women; it has also challenged the men to reconsider their positions and caused them to wake up from slumber to stand the positive competition from the educational emancipation of women.

In the final analysis, the position taken is to the fact that the impact of religious denominational education improves upon the status and advancement of women; it also checks on the balances of gender equality. The educational commitment of the Tertiary Sisters acts as an antidote to the commonly held opinion that religious denominations promote issues of inequality between men and women. The move of the Tertiary sisters as a religious body employs direct means to fight against cases they consider unfair. Thus, that is why this community is very involved in the education of young girls and women in order to offer them the opportunity to live better lives. This for sure as seen above has gone and still goes through lots of difficulties in meeting with society expectations on the injustice caused by inequality between men and women. With more efforts the goal will be achieved though much done already with the help of religion there is still much much more to be done.

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Appendix 1: Interview Guide

The interview guide underneath was the original interview guide. In praxis I found it necessary to change a lot of format in questioning, this varied from question to question depending on the interviewees' reaction, position, ability and knowledge that varied widely. But the main line of the interview guide was kept and focused on.

Sample Questions for interview.

These sample questions are based on Education in the schools or institutions run by the sisters, on educational aspects and equality, on education and woman and on the effects of the life of the nuns on the status of the woman.

A. Education in your schools.

- Can we reflect on the purpose of your educational institutions?
- Will you like to reflect with me about your educational works?
- How many schools do you have all together?
- Are they primary, secondary, or higher educational institutions?
- What is the aim behind your choice of schools when you create them?
- Can you recall the aim of your creation of schools once more this time in line with the kind of students you have and conditions for admissions?
- What is the orientation of the courses?
- What happens to students or those who have passed through your institutions?
- Do you have some sisters who have been fruits of your schools? If yes, how do you access as women?
- Do you need any material or financial up keeps catching up with the objectives of your schools?
- How do the economic and financial situations affect your educational system?

B. Education of women and the effects on Gender Equality.

- Will you like us to reflect on the advancement of women through your presence in the educational set up of our country and Bui division in particular?
- Do you, sisters, pay any particular attention on the issues of gender equality in your educational set up?
- If yes, how has your educational institution constituted a change in the status of women?
- How has this improved the involvement of women in educational leadership and other aspects of life?
- What is the alignment of curriculum to enhance collaboration?
- Do you think action learning and research has reduced the traditional injustices towards women?
- Will you like us to talk about aspects like freedom, liberty and justice in your institutions?
- Do you find any noticeable changes in the economic, social, political, and religious emancipation of the woman after they have passed through your institutions?
- Which structures have been put in place to guarantee sustainability?
- What is the reaction of the society towards all these endeavours you carry to raise the status of a woman?
- Is the society happy or welcome your positions and works to raise the status of woman?
- Is there any indication of imperative conversion in the name of solving inequality problems?
- How or what is the level of insistence for equality and gender issues in your schools?
- Which central place is given to women leadership qualities and education?

c. Education and Religion.

- Knowing that you are nuns of the Roman Catholic Church, will like to tell us more about your status?
- Who are you sisters?
- Does your vocation in the religious life influence your reaction towards the status of a woman?
- As a nun, what is your opinion about gender equality?
- Do you consider gender inequality as discrimination or injustice? If yes, why and if no why?
- Does religion or religious aspects, teachings, and or doctrines influence your views or approaches towards gender issues?
- How do you use religion in your schools?
- Do you use your religious life as an instrument or sample for raising the status of a woman?
- What happens to students or those who have passed through your institutions?
- Do you have some sisters who have been fruits of your schools? If yes, how do you access them as women?
- What do you feel is the most important purpose of your educational institutions?
- What are your hopes and wishes for the status of a woman in Bui division, and in Cameroon as a whole?

Appendix 2: Samples the different stages and evolution of the status of a Woman in Bui by the TSSF.

	
<p>Sister Teaching the Medical students.</p>	<p>Sister teaching girls some sowing skills.</p>
	
<p>Sister teaching children how to pray. A purely religious way of educating.</p>	<p>Sister invigilating medical students during their final examinations.</p>
	
<p>A greater view of the sisters in the chapel during one of their prayer times. The source of their strength to deal with the daily realities affecting society and women in particular.</p>	<p>Sister and student in and audio – video studio for the use modern of equipment in teaching and educating.</p>



Sister in a primary school class concentrating on the upgrading of education.



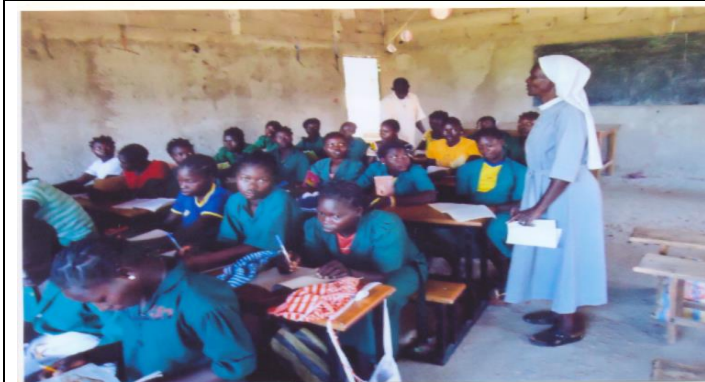
Sister with the Pupils in an early primary school class.



Sisters and cross section of the students in the new school after the change from GVS to common school for both boys and girls.

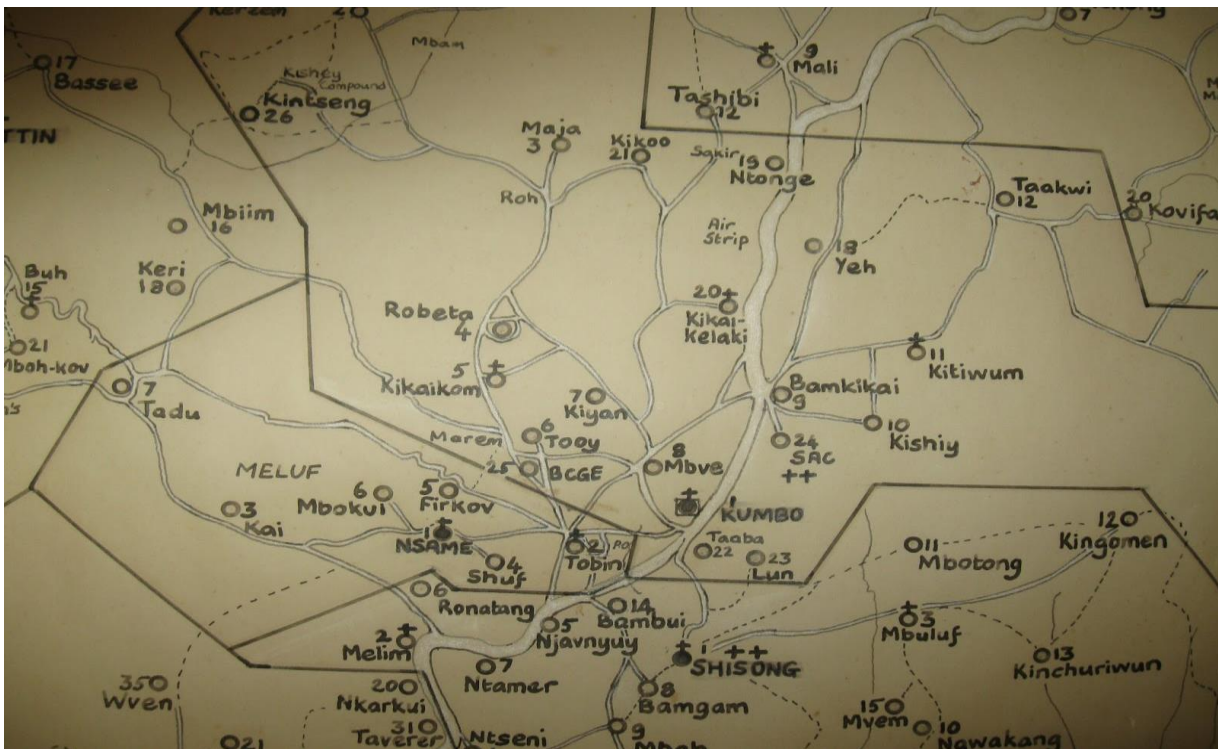


Sister teaching girls hand work. Netting and cross-stitching etc.



Sister with young girls starting basic education and Sister in an open air-assembly with the children.

Appendix 3: Bui Division – North West Region



Appendix 4: The Republic of Cameroon



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<http://www.ezilon.com/maps/images/africa/Cameroon-physical-map.gif>