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ASSESSING THE RELEVANCE OF THE BMD SYSTEM IN ENSURING EXTERNAL EFFICIENCY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF BAMENDA, CAMEROON

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Abstract:
This study sets out to assess the relevance of the Bachelor, Master and Doctorate (BMD) system in ensuring external efficiency in the University of Bamenda. The high level of unemployment among university graduates raises eyebrows about the quality of curriculum design and implementation in higher education in Cameroon over the past years. External inefficiency of higher institutions would only produce unskilled graduates who cannot contribute to societal development. Within the context of this work, the relevance of curriculum, the development of practical skills and the relationship with industry were examined, ascertaining a link to external efficiency. The quantitative approach was adopted in data collection and analysis. Using the purposeful sampling technique, we obtained a sample of 501 for the study. The questionnaire was the instrument for data collection, and Spearman's rank correlation was used for data analysis. The following results were obtained. The correlation coefficients for relevance of curriculum, development of practical skills and partnership with industries were 0.831, 0.472, and 0.620, respectively. This shows that the relevance of the curriculum, the development of practical skills, and partnerships with industry are significant predictors of external efficiency at the University of Bamenda. Based on the findings obtained, it was recommended that the University should ensure that practical skills development is embedded in the curriculum across various disciplines. Significant investments should be made as far as curriculum design and development are concerned. This could involve project-

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based learning and experiential learning opportunities, incorporating hands-on training.

Keywords: relevance of the BMD system, external efficiency, University of Bamenda

1. Introduction

On the 19th of October 2007, Professor Jacques Fame Ndongo, Cameroonian Minister of Higher Education, officially launched the implementation of the BMD reforms in all Cameroonian Universities (Ministry of Higher Education, 2007a). The adoption of this system was a move by the Cameroonian government to solve the Problems University graduates have been going through for decades, and that is the problem of unemployment. This system was seen as a panacea which would permit graduates to find jobs upon graduation and contribute to the socio-economic development of the nation. From 2007 to date, thousands of graduates have left higher institutions annually, but most continue to find it difficult to fit into the job market. The job market, according to Hargesia, Acase, Mahad and Koronto (2024), refers to the demand for employment within specific industries or sectors and the availability of job opportunities.

Graduates continue to show a dearth of relevant professional skills, which is why unemployment remains higher in Cameroon. This poses a major problem as jobless graduates are unable to contribute to the development of society. This may tend to either condition them to travel out of the country to look for greener pastures, while some get involved in menial and petty jobs, and others indulge in crime as a means of survival. This significantly affects the external efficiency of the Cameroon higher education system, as it has not been able to meet the purpose for which it was created. This study will focus on the extent to which the Bachelor, Master and Doctorate (BMD) program launched since 2007 has been able to affect graduate employability in the University of Bamenda.

2. Statement of the Problem

The higher education system in Cameroon has undergone significant reforms in recent years, with a focus on improving the quality and relevance of education. One of the main objectives of higher education in Cameroon is to promote research, the employability of graduates and sustainable development. This intention was translated into the adoption of the Bologna process in Cameroon through the BMD system. However, despite these efforts, concerns remain about the external efficiency of the system, particularly in terms of its ability to produce graduates who are equipped with the skills and knowledge needed by the labor market. The level of unemployment among university graduates it high. This makes us question the quality and the effectiveness of the BMD in ensuring or facilitating professional integration of graduates. For a graduate to be fully equipped with relevant skills, he must have been trained and equipped with cognitive skills,

affective skills and psychomotor skills in a specific area where he can possibly harness the acquired skills to systematically solve concrete problems. The dearth of professional and technical skills among graduates would certainly reduce graduates' abilities to find jobs, and as such, they would not be able to significantly contribute to sustainable development in society.

This study aims to assess the relevance of the BMD system in ensuring external efficiency in Cameroon's higher education, with a specific focus on the University of Bamenda. The relevance of the curriculum could affect the external efficiency of graduates if resources are not used efficiently. Aligning the taught curriculum with the needs of the industry and labour market would certainly augment graduate employability. The development of practical skills through quality internships would enable students to easily fit into the world of work. Employers' feedback could influence the nature of skills development in the university system.

Teacher quality is another factor that could significantly affect external efficiency. However, it is right to say that any educational system that does not produce skillful graduates who can contribute for sustainable development in the society, that educational system is meant for underdevelopment. It is against the above backdrop that we want to investigate those elements in the BMD system that cause external inefficiency of university institutions.

2.1 Research Questions

- To what extent does the relevance of the curriculum influence the external efficiency of the University of Bamenda?
- How does the development of practical skills affect the external efficiency of the University of Bamenda?
- In what ways does partnership with industry affect the external efficiency of the University of Bamenda?

2.2 Research Hypotheses

- There is a relationship between the relevance of the curriculum and the external efficiency of the University of Bamenda.
- The development of practical skills affects the external efficiency of the University of Bamenda.
- Is there a link between partnership with industry and the external efficiency of the University of Bamenda?

2.3 Research Objectives

- To study the relationship between the relevance of the curriculum and the external efficiency of the University of Bamenda.
- To assess the influence of the development of practical skills on the external efficiency of the University of Bamenda.

- To investigate the link between the relationship with industry and the external efficiency of the University of Bamenda.

3. Literature Review

3.1 The Relevance of the Curriculum

For Hargesia, Acase, Mahad, and Koronto (2024), the relevance of curriculum refers to the extent to which the learning content, programs, and skills provided by higher learning institutions relate to the needs of the current and future labor market. Relevance is important when developing interesting learning activities that link with student interests and applications outside of learning. Determining curriculum priorities involves evaluating the relevance of the learning content to ensure that it satisfies the needs and expectations of students and stakeholders. The most important group of people who participate in the development of curriculum, which includes lecturers, as well as people from within the community, deeply involve themselves in determining the aspects relevant to learning experiences within the student fraternity.

Curriculum planning is an important ingredient for a well-functioning education system, as it directs the planning, delivery, and assessment of educational programs for the benefit of students and according to the demand from the industry (Clarito, 2024). Some models have been discussed for improved curriculum planning, focusing on important factors like flexibility, skill-based learning, and employability (Clarito, 2024).

In the context of education, curriculum planning involves matters regarding how the learners will be instructed, what they have to learn, and how the learning process will be evaluated (Fang, 2022). This definition seems inadequate as it does not include the kind of problems that the learners should be able to solve after acquiring training. It is quite paramount to note the importance of curriculum planning based on educational objectives, which will ensure the competencies acquired by the students have been met (Carranza et al., 2024). This will also involve the clarification of appropriate educational objectives through the use of appropriate strategies based on the involvement of the contents and methods based on the appropriate alignment with the expectations of society, making it relevant for the job market (Marzuqi& Ahid, 2023).

Medina (2024) emphasizes that the process of developing the curriculum must involve relevance and contextualizing, flexibility and adaptability, integration or interdisciplinary learning, continuous assessment and feedback, cultural responsiveness, and reflection and improvement. The methods involved may range from subject-focused learning to problem-solving learning and competency-based learning to social reconstructionist learning and experiential learning to project-based learning. It must define the curriculum focused on the development of purposeful and productive learning and on enabling students to learn for the challenges of the future and to develop a love for learning (Chhatria et al., 2024).

Involvement of external parties with regard to curriculum design at a higher educational institute, such as individuals representing permanent advisory boards or

temporary working groups, often contributes to knowledge with regard to educational collaboration, quality, and alignment with labor market needs (Fagrell et al., 2020).

The major aim of public expenditure in education is to make sure that people equip themselves with the skills and attitudes that are required in order to obtain greater productivity and qualitative development. This indicates that the level of inputs exerted in the field of education, as well as the effective manner in which scarce resources are managed, determine the attainment of objectives. In accordance with the major principle of the human capital theory, the success of society will not be gauged merely on the basis of natural resources and physical capital, but the achieved individual skills will act to utilize natural resources and capital to produce consumable goods (Rasha, 2016). All these factors will have to be contemplated in the design of the curriculum. This indicates that the planning of education will have to contemplate the societal demands and mobilize the entire resources of society to meet these demands. Education represents an important component of the human capital theory, in that it represents the major source to effectively harness knowledge and skills. In addition to this, the level of educational attainment indicates a more precise manner to quantify the value of the labor force (Schaffner, 2013). In case the curriculum does not allow graduates to meet societal demands, then the curriculum will not be relevant and will rather create and foster underdevelopment.

3.2 Development of Skills

There are two main types of skills that could be developed, viz, technical and soft skills. Technical skills are related to the practical know-how that could be applied to realize a project for solving a specific problem; soft skills relate to attitudes, communication, and professional behavior. In work-based learning environments, the acquisition of relevant skills is primordial in enhancing effective students' professionalism. However, developing practical and employability skills encompasses the mastery of job-specific hard and soft skills as purported by Zegwaard et al. (2017). Employability skills refer to the abilities that employers consider to be critical and necessary for newly hired graduates to effectively perform in the new work environment, as purported by Geel (2017). Employability skills encompass a set of crucial abilities that must be cultivated in each person to establish a productive and competent labor force.

Vocational training also essentially involves imparting practical skills, asserts ILO 2020. Since disruptions have caused problems with the delivery and measurement of practical skills, it becomes challenging to ensure continuity in terms of access to students' technical infrastructure, devices, connectivity, or even uninterrupted electricity. Hargesia, Acase, Mahad and Koronto (2024) pointed out that practical training refers to the experiential learning opportunities, such as internships, apprenticeships, fieldwork, and practical projects, enabling them to put theory into practice in real-life situations.

In the competitive job market, young graduates from different higher educational institutions encounter several challenges. For instance, the number of graduates continues to increase, and employers look for more factors other than academic

qualifications to hire students. At the same time, getting a good job is a significant goal for many individuals, especially among the youth, and employers consider various factors in labour hiring decisions. Earlier, technical abilities, otherwise known as hard skills, were the only kinds of competencies considered essential for professional employment. Despite this, modern workplaces have proven that technical skills per se are insufficient to guarantee job security, especially when companies are downsizing and abolishing jobs (Hajjaj & Mandysova, 2017).

As a result, the standard of knowledge, skills, and abilities that every future professional is expected to master and acquire during higher education has considerably increased. In this respect, the role of "soft skills" has likewise grown, and these are essential for reaching an ultimate level of professional ability and practice that is attained by a professional (Vasylenko et al., 2022). Even though both soft and hard skills are needed for a successful career, soft skills are often believed to be much more important; at least, this is because they may be considered applicable across many different jobs or professions, and the importance of which will be perceptibly increased in the foreseeable future (Pranic et al., 2021). Soft skills are a set of personality traits, attitudes, habits, and manners that define the way people interact with others and base their work performance as employees. In general, it is possible to distinguish between two skill groups, namely, hard and soft ones. While hard skills fit the technical job performance that requires specific job input, soft skills fit the purpose of effective workplace communication. Soft skills are thus defined as personal and interpersonal qualities that supplement job performance, career growth, and human interaction (Vasanthakumari, 2019).

3.3 External Efficiency

External efficiency for Lockheed & Hanushek (1987) is generally the subject of cost-benefit analyses: that is, the relationship between financial outcomes and financial inputs. Expressed generally, it has to do with the social and economic functionality that school leavers have as productive units. Thus, the notion of employability is crucial to the measurement of external efficiency, and employability for Hargesia, Acase, Mahad, Koronto (2024) is defined as the skills, knowledge, and competencies required by employers that make a new entrant an attractive employee or enable a new entrant to seek and retain employment. External efficiency in higher education is defined as the ability of the education system to produce competencies that possess the key skills and knowledge demanded by the market. The importance of higher education in relation to the market is a crucial determinant for the measurement of external efficiency, as put by Teichler (2009). The BMD system has been largely employed in Cameroon since 2007, but is relevant to the market as reported by Touna (2017). It was the subject of inquiry because a system developed or used to address unemployment, underdevelopment, etc., especially among the youth, has not been able to solve the problem.

4. Theoretical Framework

4.1 Human Capital Theory

This theory stipulates that education indicates the quality and probable productivity of applicants for jobs to employers. The labour market is the supply of and the demand for labor. It is based upon employees providing the supply, whereas employers provide the demand. It is a major part of any economy, and it is intricately tied to markets for capital, goods, and services. According to this theory, labor market demand and supply are essential in determining the relevance of higher education to the labor market. In actual fact, higher education is supposed to supply the labour employers demand and the higher the skills obtained by labourers, the higher the returns and vice versa. The Human Capital Theory is important in emphasizing the significance of education and training that has relevance for the labor market.

5. Research Methodology

The quantitative approach was used in data collection and analysis. The study was carried out in Bamenda town, and the target population consisted of first-degree graduates from the University of Bamenda. The population of interest was university graduates who are expected to be ripe for the job market. The instrument utilized in the collection of data was the questionnaire. The validity and reliability of the instrument were established. Using the proportionate, purposive and snowball sampling techniques, 501 respondents were selected for the study. The statistical tool used was Spearman's rank correlation formula.

6. Results

Table 1: Respondents' Background Information

Items	Modalities	Frequency	Percentage
Sex	Male	220	43.9
	Female	281	56.0
Schools/faculties	NAHPI	95	18.9
	FEMS	177	35.3
	HICM	154	30.7
	HITL	75	14.9
Age	20 -25 years	74	14.7
	26 -30 years	302	60.2
	31 years and above	125	24.9

Table 1 presents respondents' background data by gender, age, and school/faculty attended. The majority of the respondents are females, and most of the students come from FEMS (Faculty of Economics and Management Sciences); most of the graduates are less than 30 years.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics on Relevance of Curriculum

	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Dev.
The curriculum aligns with the needs of the industry, profession and community.	498	1.00	4.00	2.8755	1.16305
The curriculum provides students with practical skills relevant to the workplace.	501	1.00	4.00	2.8064	1.20185
The curriculum incorporates emerging trends of technology in respective fields.	501	1.00	4.00	2.1214	1.22206
Feedback from stakeholders is used to inform curriculum development.	501	1.00	4.00	2.7743	.06376
The course content is up to date and applicable to real-world problems	501	1.00	4.00	3.2463	1.23545
Students are part of the curriculum development process of the university	501	1.00	4.00	3.2224	1.15210
Teachers design and deliver effective instructions	501	1.00	4.00	2.8463	.16241
Valid N (listwise)	**498**				

Respondents' data on the relevance of the curriculum reveals a number of issues. In the first item, most of the respondents disagreed (mean = 2.8755) that the curriculum aligns with the needs of the industry, profession and community. In the second item, they disagreed (mean = 2.8064) that the curriculum provides students with practical skills relevant to the workplace. In the third item, most of them agreed (mean = 2.1214) that the curriculum incorporates emerging trends of technology in respective fields. However, this incorporation is limited to theoretical orientations and seldom incorporates the development of practical skills, as highlighted previously. In the fourth item, respondents disagreed (mean = 2.7743) that feedback from stakeholders is used to inform curriculum development and innovation ventures. A curriculum developed without industry involvement is unlikely to meet the expectations of the world market. A curriculum that does not focus on addressing concrete population needs through its feasible application to the real world would certainly condition the educational system to maintain the society in underdevelopment and stagnation. Summarily, a curriculum that does not align with the exigencies of society and the market world is obsolete and cannot influence the job placement of graduates positively to a greater extent.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics on the Development of Practical Skills

	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation
Students are provided with opportunities for hands-on activities and practical experience in their field of study regularly.	501	1.00	4.00	2.5547	1.30431
Students are assessed on their practical skills, and feedback is provided to help them improve.	501	1.00	4.00	2.0254	1.23028
There are partnerships with industry partners to provide students with practical experience and exposure to real-world scenarios	501	1.00	4.00	2.2413	1.13024
Students are engaged in project-based learning that requires them to apply theoretical knowledge to practical problems.	501	1.00	4.00	3.2642	1.14254
There are programs or initiatives in place to develop specific practical skills, such as workshops, certification programs	501	1.00	4.00	2.7723	.03028
Valid N (listwise)	**501**				

The development of practical skills in higher education is crucial to determining the external efficiency of the system in the sense that it is the exhibition of these skills that permits society to have its problems solved, and based on it, society evaluates the educational system. In the first item, most of the respondents disagreed (Mean = 2.5547) that students are provided with opportunities for hands-on activities and practical experience in their field of study regularly. This is an action that prevents the acquisition of technical and practical skills necessary for professional integration in the world of work. In the second hypothesis, most of the students agreed (Mean = 2.0254) that students are assessed on their practical skills, and feedback is provided to help them improve. This assessment can only take place in scenarios where practical skills are developed. The problem here is that assessments are done and feedback provided, but a real-world application is still lacking. In the fourth item, most respondents disagreed (mean = 3.2642) that students are engaged in project-based learning that requires them to apply theoretical knowledge to practical problems. Even though there are practical skills acquisition scenarios, they are limited, and the majority of them do not align with industry expectations. This explains why most graduates find it difficult to integrate into most enterprises upon graduation.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics on Partnership with Industry

	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Dev.
Industry partnership collaborates with University authorities in the curriculum, development, teaching and innovations.	501	1.00	4.00	2.9122	1.09191
There are many partnerships between university and industries.	501	1.00	4.00	3.0878	1.00810
Industries provide funding to some programs in the university.	501	1.00	4.00	3.0146	1.00020
The internship placement of students is good and orientates students towards The acquisition of professional skills.	501	1.00	4.00	3.1038	.99056
The skills you acquired have permitted you to find satisfactory employment.	501	1.00	4.00	3.1916	.98955
Valid N (listwise)	**501**				

Partnership with industry is an important scenario where students are expected to put into practice the theoretical knowledge they have learned in school. This helps students blend cognitive, psychomotor and affective skills in the specific professions. However, in the first item, respondents disagreed (mean = 2.9122) that the industry collaborates with university authorities in curriculum, development, teaching and innovations. This lack of collaboration alone creates a great chasm between theory and practice, and further renders the education system irrelevant in terms of providing possibilities for graduates to obtain jobs. Lack of collaboration between universities and partnerships denotes a lack of partnership and funding as well. In the same vein, the placement of students for an internship will not be based on outstanding procedures.

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics on External Efficiency

	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation
Employers have a good perception about graduates in relation to skillfulness.	501	1.00	4.00	3.1240	.10399
Graduates easily find jobs after graduation and equally experience proper career	501	1.00	4.00	3.3254	.06342
Graduates find it easy to move from one job to another(job mobility).	501	1.00	4.00	3.1111	.16342
You are proud that as a graduate you possess the skills needed by employers.	501	1.00	4.00	3.3353	.76376
Valid N (listwise)	**501**				

The external efficiency of an educational system refers to the ability of that school system in training graduates who are able to integrate into the job market. In the first item, respondents disagreed (mean = 3.1240) that employers have a good perception of graduates in relation to skillfulness. This explains why most employers may not want to recruit graduates who have been retrained instead of offering their skills directly in the production of goods and services. This means that the human capital produced by the university is not qualified for most jobs according to most employers. This explains why

graduates do not easily find jobs, as indicated in the second item. Based on all of these, students disagreed (mean = 3.3353) that they are proud that they possess the salient skills needed by employers. The lack of jobs for graduates and graduates' inability to create jobs cast a great question mark over the educational system that trained them. That is why an externally inefficient educational system, rather than leading to sustainable development, leads to underdevelopment.

Table 6: Correlations

			Relevance of Curriculum	Development of Practical Skills	Partnership with Industries	External Efficiency
Spearman's rho	**Relevance of Curriculum**	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.786**	.597**	.831**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000	.000
		N	498	498	498	498
	Development of Practical Skills	Correlation Coefficient	.786**	1.000	.879**	.472**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000	.000
		N	498	501	501	501
	Partnership with Industries	Correlation Coefficient	.597**	.879**	1.000	.620**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.	.000
		N	498	501	501	501
	External Efficiency	Correlation Coefficient	.831**	.472**	.620**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.
		N	498	501	501	501
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).						

The correlations table above measures the relationship between the relevance of the curriculum, the development of practical skills and partnership with industries and external efficiency of the University of Bamenda. The correlation coefficient between the relevance of curriculum and external efficiency is 0.831. This result reveals that the relevance of curriculum accounts for 83.1 percent of the variations that take place in external efficiency. In the second hypothesis, the development of practical skills influences external efficiency by 47.2% while partnership with industry significantly influences external efficiency by 62.0%. Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that the BMD system applied to universities lacks relevance as far as the professional integration of graduates is concerned. However, the proper manipulation of significant variables such as the curriculum contents, the development of practical skills and partnership with industry could be significant in influencing external efficiency of the university.

7. Discussions

In the first hypothesis, the relevance of the curriculum constitutes 83.1 percent of the variations in external efficiency of the University of Bamenda. The results corroborate with Fagrell et al. (2020), who indicated that the curriculum for education in higher institutions needs to show a lot of relevance of the programs to the labor market.

Hargesia, Acase, Mahad, & Koronto (2024) supported the idea that the current government policies on graduate employability are seldom implemented. They laid emphasis on the fact that the curriculum of universities, to a large extent, is irrelevant to the needs within the labor market.

This irrelevance of the educational system concerning the job market is one of the factors that leads to students dropping out, as learners' commitment and engagement keep reducing. Any curriculum that fails to facilitate the development of the job market in the 21st century is considered useless and is meant for underdevelopment. A relevant curriculum addresses the needs of society when graduates acquire skills to solve society's problems. The curriculum does not provide possibilities for students to have a meaningful internship. From this, we see that there is a wide difference between the job market and higher education, which is justified by the understanding that job marketability is not embedded within the curriculum of higher education. It is clear that there is a need for a revision of the curriculum in order to enhance possibilities for the development of skills within the job market for graduates. The findings indicate that the technical instructions within the universities play a vital role in the improvement of job market outcomes. This research emphasizes that there is a skills problem, which is evident by the consideration that most of the youths lack the required technical skills within the job market. Therefore, there is a need for a drastic change within the current high theory focus within the learning program so that more skills instruction is placed within the focus of work-based learning within the job market. This is consistent with the human capital theory, which emphasizes the importance of investments in education and training that are relevant to the needs of the labour market.

In the second hypothesis, the result showed that the development of practical skills has an influence on external efficiency by 47.2%. The result is in line with the result obtained by Hargesia, Acase, Mahad, and Koronto (2024), who emphasise the importance of having a partnership between the industry and higher education because it plays an essential role in improving the employability of graduates. This is due to the skill gap between the knowledge graduates gain from university and the knowledge in the market.

Marijani, R., Katomero, J., Hayeshi, A., &Kajerero, J. (2023) argued that although the students are eager to gain new experiences and learn in the workplace, particularly during internships, the provision for practical field experience for the students is marred by factors related to the host institutions as well as the institutions of higher learning, including the lack of funds to facilitate the students during field practical experience, complicated workload, lack of human resources, lack of working equipment, lack of capacity, lack of time from the supervisors in the host institutions for the students' guidance and direction, lack of a budget to facilitate practical experience supervision, lack of a guiding document on field experience, divergent interests, and expectations between the curricula and the host institutions. These are some of the factors that hinder students' development of practical experience during internships.

In the third hypothesis, the partnership with industries affects external efficiency by 62.0 percent at the University of Bamenda. This finding validates the findings put

across by Ngesi, Wamba, Kongnyuy, and Laoungang (2024), who identified that the level of the partnership between the institutions of higher learning and the industries exerts a strong and significant influence on the employability of the graduates. In fact, the level of partnership with industries does not affect the employability of the graduates in a greater extent. The relationship between industry partnership and external efficiency of the University of Bamenda implies that industry partnerships may present specific opportunities that would enable students acquire relevant skills that can help them within the labor market. This is argued by the Human Capital Theory, which asserts the significance of industry partnerships and collaboration that improve the standards of education.

Eduarda & Pilar (2020) analyze skills frameworks for youth employability, presenting an up-to-date panorama regarding policies, practices, and tools connected to the qualification framework within Cameroon, establishing that human capital and the education system are the foundation of all basic development.

8. Conclusion

The findings of the study reveal that curriculum relevance, the development of practical skills, and partnerships with industry are significant predictors of external efficiency at the University of Bamenda. Given the crucial role of curriculum in determining the employability and productivity of graduates, it is essential to allocate enough funds to support curriculum development and innovation. This includes investing in staff training and development, curriculum design and development, and infrastructure and equipment to support the delivery of relevant, up-to-date curriculum content that reflects work-based learning.

The results of this research indicate that the University of Bamenda should improve external efficiency by implementing a curriculum which is project-based oriented, focusing on the relevance of the curriculum, skills acquisition, and links with industry. This will enable the university to improve the efficiency of outputs and outcomes and thereby generate beneficial effects at the micro and macro levels.

Moreover, the study emphasizes on the need for a more strategic approach to funding higher education. Rather than relying solely on government funding or tuition fees from students, institutions could explore alternative funding sources, such as industry partnerships, grants, and endowments. This could help to reduce financial constraints and enable institutions to invest in curriculum development and other initiatives that support external efficiency.

9. Recommendations

- The University should ensure that practical skills development is embedded in the curriculum across various disciplines. Significant investments should be made as far as curriculum design and development are concerned. This could involve

project-based learning and experiential learning opportunities, incorporating hands-on training. This would make learning more attractive to students and foster students' engagement.

- The University should strengthen partnerships with industry partners to provide students with opportunities for practical training, internships, practicum and work experience. This could help students develop relevant practical skills employers need.
- Higher institutions should prioritize funding for initiatives that support curriculum development and innovation, such as staff training and development, curriculum design, and infrastructure and equipment.
- Institutions should foster partnerships with industry partners to provide input on curriculum development and to support the delivery of relevant and up-to-date curriculum content.

Conflict of Interest Statement
The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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