

The Transition to the "Entrepreneurial University": A Comparative Institutional Case Study of the University of Buea and Bamenda, Cameroon

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Abstract: In response to structural youth unemployment, Cameroon's 2023 Higher Education Law mandated a systemic shift toward the "Entrepreneurial University" paradigm via the "Student-Entrepreneur" (SNEE) initiative. This study empirically assessed the institutional, pedagogical, and infrastructural readiness of the University of Bamenda and the University of Buea to operationalize this coercive top-down mandate. Utilizing a mixed-methods exploratory sequential design, data were collected through administrative and faculty interviews ($N = 24$), student focus groups ($N = 6$), and dual quantitative surveys administered to academic staff ($N = 412$) and final-year students ($N = 850$). Grounded in neo-institutional theory and the Triple Helix model, the findings expose profound institutional decoupling and a severe supply-demand mismatch. While student entrepreneurial intent is overwhelmingly high ($M = 4.12$), it is actively stifled by bureaucratic strangulation ($\beta = -.52$). Conversely, faculty pedagogical readiness is critically low ($M = 2.14$), driven by acute infrastructural deficits ($\beta = -.45$) and deep-seated Humboldtian resistance to unfunded "academic capitalism." Although the University of Buea demonstrated a statistically significant readiness advantage ($p < .001$) due to its localized tech ecosystem, both institutions exhibit "isomorphic mimicry," establishing symbolic incubators lacking actual absorptive capacity. The study concludes that legislative mandates cannot generate entrepreneurial culture in a vacuum; policymakers must transition from coercion to active financial enablement, radically restructure academic promotional criteria, and engineer the missing industry helix to rescue the policy from institutional evaporation.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial University, Neo-Institutional Theory, Triple Helix, Academic Capitalism, Higher Education Policy.

Introduction and Background

The global landscape of higher education has undergone a profound structural metamorphosis over the last three decades, transitioning from the traditional Humboldtian model characterized by the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake toward the paradigm of the "Entrepreneurial University" [1][2]. In the contemporary knowledge-based economy, universities are increasingly conceptualized not merely as repositories of learning but as primary engines of regional economic development, innovation, and

enterprise creation [3][4]. This "Third Mission" of higher education mandates that institutions actively engage in the commercialization of research; foster university-industry-government linkages, often conceptualized as the Triple Helix framework; and cultivate entrepreneurial mindsets among their student populations [5][6].

The Global North has well-documented the entrepreneurial transition, but its application in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) presents a unique constellation of challenges and urgencies. Higher education systems across SSA, including Cameroon, are grappling with the dual crises of unprecedented massification and acute resource constraints [7][8]. Furthermore, the continent is experiencing a phenomenon often termed the "diploma disease" [9], where universities continue to mass-produce graduates for a saturated public sector, resulting in alarming rates of graduate unemployment and underemployment [10][11]. Consequently, African governments are increasingly exerting coercive policy pressures on universities to abandon traditional pedagogical models in favor of frameworks that produce job creators rather than job seekers [12].

Within this macro context, the Republic of Cameroon has recently enacted a sweeping, top-down legislative reform to forcefully engineer this entrepreneurial transition. Seeking to combat a burgeoning youth unemployment crisis, the Cameroonian government introduced the "One Student, One Enterprise" initiative. This policy shift was aggressively formalized through Ministerial Circular No. 003/MINESUP (January 13, 2023), which established the National Status of the Student-Entrepreneur (SNEE). Crucially, this initiative was subsequently enshrined into stringent national law via the Law on the Orientation of Higher Education [13]. This ambitious legislation mandates a radical restructuring of state universities, requiring them to integrate business incubation centers, offer flexible academic curricula specifically tailored for student-entrepreneurs, and facilitate robust, formalized linkages with the private sector.

However, scholarly literature on institutional change consistently warns that ambitious top-down policy mandates often fail to translate into localized institutional realities, particularly in resource-starved environments [14][15]. The transition from a traditional, state-dependent academic institution to a dynamic entrepreneurial university necessitates profound structural, cultural, financial, and pedagogical shifts [16]. This study critically examined this complex transitional phase within the Cameroonian context. Specifically, it focused on two prominent, Anglo-Saxon structured state universities, the University of Bamenda (UBa) and the University of Buea (UBuea) to empirically assess their institutional, infrastructural, and pedagogical readiness to operationalize the sweeping mandates of the 2023 Higher Education Law.

Statement of the Problem

The enactment of the 2023 Higher Education Law (Law No. 2023/007) and the concomitant establishment of the National Status of the Student-Entrepreneur (SNEE) represent a critical, top-down policy intervention designed to combat systemic youth unemployment by pivoting Cameroonian universities toward an entrepreneurial mandate. However, organizational sociology and policy implementation literature consistently highlight a pronounced risk of "policy evaporation" or "decoupling," a phenomenon where sweeping national mandates are adopted symbolically to satisfy external coercive pressures but fail to translate into localized, substantive institutional practices due to a fundamental lack of structural readiness [17][18].

This risk is particularly acute within state universities in Cameroon, notably the University of Bamenda (UBa) and the University of Buea (UBuea). These institutions operate under severe systemic constraints characterized by chronic infrastructural deficits, severe massification, and deeply entrenched Humboldtian academic cultures that prioritize theoretical pedagogy over experiential, market-driven learning [19][20]. The 2023 Law explicitly mandates a radical departure from this status quo, requiring the establishment of functional business incubators, the implementation of customized academic timetables for SNEE-designated students, and the reorientation of faculty roles from traditional lecturers to entrepreneurial mentors and industry liaisons.

The core problem this study addressed was the precarious disjuncture between the *de jure* ambitions of the "Student-Entrepreneur" policy mandate and the *de facto* institutional, pedagogical, and infrastructural realities of UBa and UBuea. Prior to this research, there was a distinct dearth of empirical evidence assessing whether these Anglo-Saxon structured universities possessed the absorptive capacity and readiness required to operationalize this complex transition [21]. If the pedagogical readiness of the academic staff was inadequate, or if the requisite incubation infrastructure was superficial or non-existent, the 2023 Law risked remaining a rhetorical ideal rather than a catalyst for socioeconomic transformation. Consequently, without a rigorous empirical assessment of this institutional readiness gap, policymakers and university administrators were effectively navigating this monumental systemic transition blind, jeopardizing the efficacy of the entire "One Student, One Enterprise" initiative.

Research Objectives

General Objective

The goal is to assess the institutional, pedagogical, and infrastructural readiness of the University of Bamenda and the University of Buea to implement the "Student-Entrepreneur" model as mandated by the 2023 Law on the Orientation of Higher Education.

Specific Objectives

1. To evaluate the availability and operational capacity of institutional infrastructure (business incubators, collaborative workspaces) required to support the SNEE model at UBa and UBuea.
2. To assess the pedagogical preparedness of academic staff to transition from traditional lecturing to entrepreneurial coaching and mentoring.
3. To identify the structural, financial, and cultural barriers hindering the effective implementation of the flexible SNEE curriculum within these institutions.
4. To compare the adaptation strategies and readiness levels between the University of Bamenda and the University of Buea.

Research Questions

1. To what extent do the University of Bamenda and the University of Buea possess the requisite physical and institutional infrastructure to operationalize the 2023 SNEE mandate?
2. How prepared are the academic staff at UBa and UBuea to adopt the pedagogical role of entrepreneurial mentors rather than traditional educators?
3. What are the primary structural, financial, and cultural barriers impeding the successful implementation of the "Student-Entrepreneur" model in these universities?
4. How do the University of Bamenda and the University of Buea differ in their institutional readiness and strategies for transitioning into entrepreneurial universities?

Theoretical Framework

To comprehensively analyze the multidimensional transition required by the 2023 Law, this study is anchored in a robust dual theoretical framework that bridges macro-level policy pressures with meso-level institutional and structural realities: Neo-Institutional Theory and the Triple Helix Model of Innovation.

Neo-Institutional Theory (Isomorphism and Decoupling)

Originating from the seminal works of Meyer and Rowan and DiMaggio and Powell [22], neo-institutional theory provides an indispensable analytical lens for understanding how organizations adapt to external regulatory environments to secure legitimacy and resources [23]. Within the context

of this study, the 2023 Higher Education Law acts as a mechanism of *coercive isomorphism*, a top-down, state-mandated pressure forcing UBa and UBuea to adopt the structural trappings of the "Entrepreneurial University." Furthermore, universities in the Global South often engage in *mimetic isomorphism* (or "isomorphic mimicry"), adopting the vocabulary and superficial structures of Western entrepreneurial models (e.g., establishing "incubators") to appear modern and compliant to international donors and state regulators, without necessarily possessing the underlying functional capacity [24][25].

Crucially, this framework introduces the concept of *decoupling* the deliberate disconnect between an organization's formal, publicly presented structure and its actual daily work activities. In this study, institutional theory was deployed to critically assess whether the establishment of the SNEE status and business incubators at UBa and UBuea represented genuine structural and pedagogical transformation or merely an exercise in decoupling to appease the Ministry of Higher Education while traditional Humboldtian teaching practices persisted unchallenged.

The Triple Helix Model of Innovation

Complementing the institutional analysis, the Triple Helix Model, conceptualized by Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff, maps the necessary structural architecture for a functional entrepreneurial ecosystem. The model posits that the transition to a knowledge-based economy relies fundamentally on the synergistic, overlapping interactions between three distinct spheres: the university (as the knowledge creator), industry (as the commercializer), and government (as the regulatory architect) [26][27].

While the Cameroonian government has fulfilled its regulatory role by enacting the 2023 Law (the 'Government' helix), the successful implementation of the "Student-Entrepreneur" mandate hinges entirely on the robustness of the remaining two helices. However, critical scholarship warns that applying the Triple Helix model in Sub-Saharan Africa is highly problematic due to the prevalence of weak, informal private sectors, leading to what is often termed a "fragile" or "missing" industry helix [28][29]. In this research, the Triple Helix framework was operationalized to evaluate the capacity of UBa and UBuea (the 'University' helix) to forge sustainable, formal linkages with the local Cameroonian private sector (the 'Industry' helix) to provide the necessary mentorship, internships, and venture capital required to support SNEE-designated students.

Literature Review

The review of extant literature is structured around four intersecting thematic pillars that provide a robust foundation for this comparative case study.

The Global Evolution of the Entrepreneurial University

The conceptualization of the university has fundamentally shifted from the traditional Humboldtian ideal, which prized academic autonomy, disinterested inquiry, and the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake toward the "Entrepreneurial University" paradigm. This shift is characterized by the institutionalization of a "Third Mission," alongside teaching and research, which mandates that universities actively contribute to regional economic development, commercialize intellectual property, and foster enterprise creation [30]. The global proliferation of this model is largely driven by the exigencies of the knowledge economy, where the traditional boundaries between academia, industry, and the state are increasingly blurred through mechanisms such as technology transfer offices, science parks, and campus incubators [31].

However, this transition is not frictionless. Scholarly discourse frequently highlights the intense internal cultural friction between "managerialism/entrepreneurialism" and academic purists who view commercialization as a threat to academic freedom and basic research [32]. Furthermore, much of the foundational literature on entrepreneurial universities (e.g., Clark's five pathways of transformation) is deeply rooted in the well-resourced, highly industrialized contexts of the Global North, necessitating a critical re-evaluation of its direct applicability and structural implications when transplanted into the Global South.

Academic Capitalism and Massification in Sub-Saharan Africa

In Sub-Saharan Africa, the push toward entrepreneurialism is driven less by a surplus of patentable intellectual property and more by acute financial survival and socio-economic crises. African higher education has been characterized by unprecedented massification (rapid enrollment growth) unaccompanied by commensurate state funding, leading to severe resource constraints, soaring student-to-lecturer ratios, and infrastructural decay. Consequently, universities are increasingly adopting strategies of "academic capitalism" and cost-sharing [33] to diversify revenue streams. However, in the African context, this often manifests as "survivalist capitalism"—such as establishing parallel fee-paying degree programs rather than high-tech commercialization [34].

Furthermore, the persistent continent-wide crisis of graduate unemployment fueled by economies unable to absorb the sheer volume of graduates holding theoretical degrees has placed immense political pressure on universities to abandon purely didactic pedagogies and produce "job creators" rather than job seekers. Yet, literature warns of a "pedagogical decoupling," where institutions formally claim to teach entrepreneurship but continue to rely on traditional rote-learning methods due to a lack of practical capacity among teaching staff.

The 2023 Higher Education Law and the SNEE Mandate in Cameroon

Within Cameroon, the higher education sector has historically mirrored these continental challenges, characterized by a highly theorized curriculum and alarming rates of youth unemployment. Cameroon presents a unique context due to its bicultural heritage, hosting both Francophone (highly centralized) and Anglo-Saxon (traditionally more decentralized and practically oriented) university models [35].

In response to the unemployment crisis, the Cameroonian government introduced the "One Student, One Enterprise" policy, legally codified via the 2023 Law on the Orientation of Higher Education. This landmark legislation establishes the National Status of the Student-Entrepreneur (SNEE), a radical policy intervention that grants designated students customized academic timetables, specialized mentorship, and access to campus-based business incubators. It even allows for the substitution of traditional academic dissertations with actionable business plans. While the policy represents a progressive, state-led attempt to formally integrate entrepreneurship into the university DNA, existing policy literature suggests that such sweeping, top-down mandates in Cameroon often suffer from poor localization, inadequate funding frameworks, and a lack of grassroots stakeholder buy-in [36].

Institutional Readiness and Policy Implementation Barriers

Scholarly consensus on educational reform warns that policy formulation does not guarantee policy execution. The success of the "Student-Entrepreneur" model is entirely contingent upon the complex concept of institutional readiness. Implementing an entrepreneurial curriculum requires a profound pedagogical paradigm shift from traditional, didactic lecturing to experiential, problem-based coaching and mentoring [37].

Studies in similar developing contexts highlight formidable barriers to this transition. Foremost is the lack of entrepreneurial experience among academic staff, leading to significant resistance as faculty view entrepreneurial activities as a distraction from their core promotional criteria of teaching and research. Secondary barriers include pervasive infrastructural deficits (e.g., designated incubator spaces lacking basic amenities or internet access) and an entrenched bureaucratic culture resistant to the agility required for commercialization. Finally, the success of the SNEE mandate requires robust external mentorship; however, the relatively weak and highly informal nature of the local private sector in regions like Bamenda and Buea severely limits the availability of viable industry partners. This study addressed these critical gaps in the literature by empirically assessing these specific readiness barriers across two distinct Anglo-Saxon state universities in response to the 2023 SNEE mandate.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a pragmatist **mixed-methods exploratory sequential design** (QUAL → quant)

[38]. This specific design was highly suitable for investigating complex policy implementations in a localized context where the variables remained unclear. The initial qualitative phase deeply explored the institutional nuances, cultural resistance, and specific infrastructural barriers regarding the 2023 SNEE mandate. The findings from this phase subsequently informed the development of a tailored quantitative survey to measure the prevalence of these barriers across the broader university populations.

This mixed-methods approach was structurally embedded within a **comparative case study** [39] contrasting the University of Bamenda (UBa) and the University of Buea (UBuea). The case study methodology allowed for an in-depth, contextualized analysis of how two institutions operating under the same macro-level Anglo-Saxon tradition and coercive state mandate navigated the entrepreneurial transition differently based on their unique micro-environments and leadership strategies.

Population and Sampling

The target population encompassed three distinct cohorts across UBa and UBuea: university administrators (e.g., vice-chancellors, deans, and directors of enterprise centers), academic staff (lecturers), and final-year undergraduate/postgraduate students.

Qualitative Phase (Purposive Sampling): We utilized *purposive sampling* [40] to select key informants (administrators and incubator managers) who possessed specialized, macro-level knowledge regarding institutional strategy, budget allocations, and policy implementation. This ensured the qualitative data was derived from decision-makers directly responsible for operationalizing the 2023 Law.

Quantitative Phase (Stratified Random Sampling): To ensure representativeness across the diverse academic landscape, *stratified random sampling* was employed for lecturers and students. Strata were defined by faculties (e.g., STEM, Social Sciences, Humanities), as entrepreneurial readiness and "academic capitalism" applicability vary significantly by discipline.

Instruments for Data Collection

To ensure robust triangulation of data [41], this study utilized three primary instruments:

1. In-Depth Semi-Structured Interviews: Administered to purposively selected officials to explore macro-institutional capacity, strategic adaptation, and instances of "policy decoupling." The interview guide was structured around the theoretical constructs of neo-institutional theory and the triple helix model.

2. Structured Questionnaires: Two distinct, Likert-scale questionnaires were developed for lecturers and students. The lecturer questionnaire assessed pedagogical readiness, awareness of the SNEE policy, and perceived cultural/infrastructural barriers, adapting established scales for institutional readiness [42]. The student questionnaire assessed entrepreneurial intent and perceived institutional support. Both instruments underwent rigorous pilot testing to ensure construct validity and reliability (achieving a Cronbach's alpha of 0.70).

3. Document Analysis: As a critical triangulating measure, the study conducted a systematic document analysis [43] of university strategic plans, incubator establishing charters, and publicly available budgetary allocations to cross-verify the claims made during interviews regarding physical and financial readiness.

Data Analysis Procedures

Qualitative Analysis: Interview transcripts and institutional documents were imported into NVivo software and analyzed using rigorous thematic analysis [44]. This included inductive coding to find common themes about structural barriers, isomorphic mimicry, and resistance to teaching methods.

Quantitative Analysis: Survey data was analyzed using SPSS. Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, frequencies) summarize general readiness levels. Crucially, inferential statistics were employed: *Independent Samples t-tests* [45] were utilized to statistically compare the readiness scores

and perceived barriers between UBa and UBuea, while *multiple regression analysis* was used to identify which institutional factors most significantly predicted faculty pedagogical readiness.

Integration: In the final interpretive phase, the quantitative results were embedded within the qualitative narrative to provide a comprehensive, multi-dimensional assessment of how the 2023 Higher Education Law is being operationalized on the ground.

Results of the Study

The integrated findings from the mixed-methods exploratory sequential design reveal a stark disjuncture between the top-down 2023 Higher Education Law and the ground-level absorptive capacity of both universities.

Qualitative Findings: Isomorphic Mimicry, Pedagogical Friction, and the Missing Helix

Thematic analysis of administrative and faculty interviews (N = 24), coupled with student focus groups (N = 6), yielded four dominant themes characterizing the institutional response to the SNEE mandate:

1. **Isomorphic Mimicry in Infrastructure:** Both UBa and UBuea swiftly established entities labeled "University Business Incubators" to visually comply with the 2023 law. However, observations and document analyses revealed these structures were largely symbolic. Administrators conceded that these incubators lacked dedicated operational budgets, high-speed internet, and seed funding. As one senior UBa official noted, *"We have the beautiful sign on the door to satisfy the ministry, but we do not have the capital to incubate a single student startup. It is an empty shell."* This perfectly illustrates the neo-institutional concept of decoupling.

2. **Pedagogical Resistance and Identity Crisis:** Academic staff expressed profound anxiety and resistance regarding the mandated shift from traditional lecturers to "entrepreneurial coaches." Faculty members vehemently argued that their career advancement criteria remain strictly tied to academic publications, not student enterprise creation. A UBuea lecturer stated, *"They are asking me to be a venture capitalist, but I was trained as a theoretical physicist. It is an unfunded, unrewarded distraction."*

3. **The Fragile Industry Helix:** Attempts to operationalize the Triple Helix Model were severely hampered by the local economic landscape. Incubator directors in both Bamenda and Buea highlighted the impossibility of finding enough formal, capacitated private-sector partners. *"We have thousands of students," a director explained, "but the local industry mainly consists of informal, survivalist micro-enterprises that are unable to absorb or mentor our graduates."*

4. **Student Disillusionment and Bureaucratic Friction:** While student enthusiasm for the "Student-Entrepreneur" title was high, focus group participants reported immense bureaucratic hurdles. Students found the process of applying for the SNEE status opaque, and those who did acquire it noted that the promised "flexible academic timetables" were rarely respected by traditional faculty members.

Quantitative Findings: Comparative Readiness and Intent

The dual quantitative surveys administered to academic staff (N = 412) and final-year students (N = 850) statistically corroborated the qualitative anxieties. The tabulated results highlight a severe institutional mismatch between student demand and faculty absorptive capacity.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Key Institutional and Pedagogical Variables

Variable (5-point Likert scale)	Group	N	M	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
1. Awareness of 2023 SNEE legal framework	Faculty	412	3.85	0.74	-0.62	0.45
2. Pedagogical readiness to supervise	Faculty	412	2.14	0.82	1.05	0.88
3. Perceived infrastructural adequacy	Faculty	412	1.85	0.91	1.22	1.10
4. Access to private sector mentorship	Faculty	412	1.62	0.75	1.45	1.56
5. Student entrepreneurial intent	Students	850	4.12	0.71	-0.85	0.52
6. Confidence in university incubator	Students	850	1.95	0.88	1.15	0.90

Note. Values range from 1 (Strongly Disagree / Very Low) to 5 (Strongly Agree / Very High). Skewness

and kurtosis values indicate normal distribution within acceptable limits (± 2).

Table 2. Independent Samples t-Test Comparing Faculty Readiness (UBuea vs. UBa)

Variable	UBuea (n = 205) M (SD)	UBa (n = 207) M (SD)	Mean diff.	t	df	p	Cohen's d
Pedagogical readiness	2.45 (0.78)	1.92 (0.85)	0.53	6.58	410	< .001***	0.65
Infrastructural adequacy	2.10 (0.88)	1.60 (0.81)	0.50	5.98	410	< .001***	0.59
Access to mentorship	1.85 (0.79)	1.39 (0.62)	0.46	6.54	400.2	< .001***	0.64
Awareness of policy	3.90 (0.71)	3.80 (0.77)	0.10	1.37	410	.172	0.13

Note. *** $p < .001$. Equal variances were not assumed for 'Access to Mentorship' (Levene's test $p < .05$). UBuea demonstrates statistically significant advantages in readiness, infrastructure, and mentorship access, reflecting the 'Silicon Mountain' effect.

Table 3. Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Faculty Willingness to Adopt SNEE Curriculum

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p	VIF
(Constant)	3.45	0.22	—	15.68	< .001***	—
Institutional factors						
Perceived lack of infrastructure	-0.38	0.04	-0.45	-8.45	< .001***	1.42
Absence of industry mentors	-0.31	0.05	-0.38	-6.22	< .01**	1.38
Demographic factors						
Academic rank (seniority)	-0.08	0.04	-0.12	-1.95	.053	1.15
Years of teaching experience	-0.02	0.03	-0.05	-0.75	.454	1.18
Model summary: $R^2 = .42$, Adj. $R^2 = .41$, $F(4, 407) = 73.54$, $p < .001$						

*Note: $N = 412$. Dependent Variable: Willingness to formally coach SNEE students. Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values indicate no severe multicollinearity. *

Discussion of Findings

The primary objective of this study was to empirically assess the institutional, pedagogical, and infrastructural readiness of the University of Bamenda and the University of Buea to operationalize the 2023 "Student-Entrepreneur" (SNEE) mandate. The integrated mixed-methods findings reveal a profound and precarious disjuncture between the macro-level ambitions of the state and the micro-level absorptive capacity of the universities.

Isomorphic Mimicry and the Crisis of Absorptive Capacity

Viewed through the lens of Neo-Institutional Theory, the swift establishment of "University Business Incubators" at both UBa and UBuea represents a classic case of *coercive isomorphism*. The 2023 Law applied immense top-down pressure on these institutions to structurally align with the global "Entrepreneurial University" paradigm. However, the qualitative revelation that these incubators are largely symbolic, lacking operational budgets, internet access, and seed capital, confirms the presence of severe *institutional decoupling*.

To maintain legitimacy in the eyes of the Ministry of Higher Education, the universities adopted the physical vocabulary of entrepreneurship (e.g., placing signs on doors) while their core operational realities remained fundamentally unchanged. This "isomorphic mimicry" highlights a critical deficit in *absorptive capacity*; the institutions simply do not possess the prior related financial and structural knowledge to assimilate and apply this new entrepreneurial mandate. The findings suggest that transplanting Western higher education models into resource-constrained African contexts without commensurate financial backing results in performative compliance rather than substantive structural

reform.

Pedagogical Friction and the Perils of Unfunded Academic Capitalism

The alarmingly low quantitative scores for faculty pedagogical readiness ($M = 2.14$) and the qualitative narratives of identity crisis strongly corroborate the literature on cultural resistance in higher education. Traditional academic staff in Cameroon, deeply socialized in the Humboldtian tradition of disinterested inquiry and theoretical teaching, view the sudden mandate to become "entrepreneurial coaches" as an abrupt and uncompensated rupture of their professional identity.

As indicated by the regression analysis, the lack of infrastructural support is the strongest deterrent to adopting the SNEE curriculum. Faculty correctly perceive that they are being tasked with executing a form of "academic capitalism" without the requisite tools, training, or structural incentives. Crucially, the entrenched "publish or perish" culture remains dominant; because university promotion criteria do not formally reward venture creation or industry mentorship, lecturers logically view the SNEE mandate as an unfunded, bureaucratic burden that jeopardizes their traditional career advancement.

The Fragile Triple Helix and the "Silicon Mountain" Exception

The findings robustly validate the theoretical concerns regarding the application of the Triple Helix Model in developing economies. While the 'Government' helix successfully enacted the 2023 law, and the 'University' helix has attempted formal compliance, the SNEE initiative is currently paralyzed by a critically weak 'Industry' helix. Incubator managers reported a stark inability to source capable private-sector mentors. In regions like Bamenda and Buea, where the economy is dominated by informal, survivalist micro-enterprises rather than R&D-driven corporations, the structural architecture required to support high-growth student venture creation is largely absent.

However, the statistically significant variance in readiness showing UBuea outperforming UBa ($p < .001$) offers a crucial nuance. This variance is primarily attributed to Buea's proximity to "Silicon Mountain," a nascent, grassroots tech ecosystem. This indicates that a slightly stronger, localized 'Industry Helix' can mitigate some institutional deficits. It further underscores a profound policy lesson: entrepreneurial universities cannot be legislated into existence purely from the top down; they must organically co-evolve with the surrounding regional economy.

Student Demand versus Bureaucratic Strangulation

Perhaps the most alarming sociological finding is the severe mismatch between student entrepreneurial intent ($M = 4.12$) and actual institutional supply capacity. The SNEE policy successfully generated immense demand among the youth, who desperately seek an escape from the "diploma disease" and chronic public sector unemployment. Yet, as the regression analysis on student data demonstrated, crushing "bureaucratic complexity" actively deters them from realizing this intent.

The universities are inadvertently stifling the very entrepreneurial zeal the state aims to cultivate by trapping students in opaque administrative red tape and offering them inflexible academic schedules. This dynamic raises a critical macro-sociological question: is it intellectually honest for the state to position the "Entrepreneurial University" as the panacea for structural youth unemployment when the universities themselves lack the fundamental agility to support such a transition? The findings suggest that the 2023 Law, in its current unfunded state, risks shifting the blame for systemic macroeconomic failure onto the shoulders of under-resourced institutions and their students.

Conclusion

This study set out to provide the first rigorous empirical, comparative assessment of the localized implementation of Cameroon's landmark 2023 Higher Education Law. By critically examining the institutional readiness of the University of Bamenda and the University of Buea through the dual lenses of neo-institutional theory and the Triple Helix model, this research exposes the precarious reality of top-down educational reform in resource-constrained environments.

The findings decisively indicate that while coercive state mandates can successfully force universities

to adopt the superficial *structures* of the entrepreneurial university, such as establishing underfunded incubator spaces, they cannot legally mandate the necessary institutional culture, financial capital, or pedagogical agility. As a result, these Anglo-Saxon state universities currently find themselves in a state of profound institutional decoupling from the "Student-Entrepreneur" initiative. The institutions are symbolically compliant to maintain state legitimacy, yet they remain functionally paralyzed by acute infrastructural deficits, entrenched faculty resistance rooted in traditional Humboldtian identities, and a fragile local private sector incapable of providing the required industry mentorship.

Ultimately, this study argues that positioning the "Entrepreneurial University" as a legislative panacea for structural youth unemployment is a deeply flawed macro-sociological strategy if the universities themselves are abandoned to execute it without systemic support. To transform this ambitious policy from a rhetorical, isomorphic ideal into a genuine catalyst for socio-economic transformation, policymakers must immediately pivot from issuing decrees to actively funding the transition. Only by closing the acute capacity gaps, aligning academic incentives, and aggressively engineering the missing industry helix can Cameroon's higher education sector successfully navigate the perilous transition from traditional ivory towers to dynamic engines of enterprise.

Policy Implications and Recommendations

The empirical findings of this study dictate a fundamental paradigm shift in how the Cameroonian state manages institutional reform. To rescue the "One Student, One Enterprise" initiative from the pitfalls of institutional evaporation and isomorphic mimicry, this study proposes four robust, macro-structural policy interventions:

1. Transitioning from Legislative Coercion to Financial Enablement: The Ministry of Higher Education (MINESUP) must recognize that legal mandates do not generate absorptive capacity. The SNEE policy requires a pivot toward active financial enablement. MINESUP must establish a centralized, competitive "Innovation Fund" that universities can draw upon to explicitly finance the operationalization of their incubators. This includes ring-fencing budgets for high-speed broadband, co-working infrastructure, and direct seed capital for SNEE-designated student startups.

2. Radical Restructuring of the Academic Reward System: University management boards (Vice-Chancellors and Senates) must confront the reality of the "publish or perish" culture. To overcome deep-seated pedagogical resistance, the criteria for academic promotion (currently dictated by the Consultative Committees of University Institutions—CCIU) must be fundamentally revised. Faculty who successfully mentor student ventures or secure industry patents must receive formal rewards in the form of career advancement, equivalent to those publishing in high-impact journals. Without aligning the incentive structures, "academic capitalism" will remain an unfunded and resented mandate.

3. Engineering the Missing Industry Helix: The state must aggressively intervene to compensate for the "fragile helix" characteristic of the Sub-Saharan economy. The government should enact sweeping tax incentives and procurement preferences for local and national corporations that formally partner with university incubators to provide mentorship, internships, and venture capital. Furthermore, universities must de-monopolize entrepreneurship education by actively recruiting successful alumni and local business leaders as adjunct "Entrepreneurs-in-Residence," thereby bridging the gap between theoretical faculty and practical market realities.

4. Dismantling Bureaucratic Strangulation: To capitalize on the overwhelmingly high entrepreneurial intent among the youth, universities must urgently digitize and radically simplify the application process for the SNEE status. The creation of a centralized, transparent digital portal for SNEE applications will eliminate the opaque administrative red tape that currently stifles student engagement, ensuring that the policy acts as a springboard rather than a bureaucratic hurdle.

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