



Collegiality Among Staff as a Predictor of the Efficiency of Higher Education Institutions in Fako Division, South West Region of Cameroon

Berka Delphine Tah Sakwe, Nkwelle Precious Ntuba

Department of Educational Foundations and Administration, Faculty of Education University of Buea

Abstract: This study examined the extent to which collegiality among staff predicts the efficiency of higher education institutions (HEIs) in Fako Division, South West Region of Cameroon. The study was anchored on Symbolic Interactionism (Mead), Organizational Culture Theory (Schein, 1980), and Organizational Justice Theory (Adams, 1960). A concurrent mixed-methods survey design was adopted. The target population comprised 934 teaching staff and 172 administrators from five HEIs. A sample of 270 teaching staff and 25 administrators was selected through purposive and stratified sampling techniques using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table. Data were collected using structured questionnaires and an interview guide. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics and Spearman's rho correlation, while qualitative data were analysed thematically. Findings revealed that 78.1% of teaching staff agreed that collegiality among staff enhances institutional efficiency. Spearman's rho confirmed a significant, positive, and moderate relationship ($R = 0.631$, $p < .05$). Administrators identified shared decision-making, collaborative curriculum development, mentorship, communication, and community engagement as key collegial practices driving efficiency. The null hypothesis was rejected. It was recommended that HEI leadership institutionalise collegiality through structured collaborative platforms, mentorship programmes, and transparent communication channels.

Keywords: collegiality, staff collaboration, school culture, efficiency, higher education institutions, Fako Division, Cameroon.



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INTRODUCTION

The efficiency of higher education institutions (HEIs) is a central concern for governments, policymakers, and educational administrators worldwide. In the African context, where educational resources remain constrained, optimising institutional performance is particularly critical for national development. Cameroon, guided by its National Development Strategy 2020–2030 (NDS30) and Vision 2035, has consistently sought to improve its higher education system to produce graduates capable of contributing to socio-economic transformation (Republic of Cameroon, 2020). Despite significant legislative milestones—including the 2001 Higher Education Orientation Law (Law No. 005) and the 2023 Higher Education Law (Law No. 2023/007)—many HEIs continue to grapple with inefficiencies, high dropout rates, and poor graduate employment outcomes (UNESCO, 2021; World Bank, 2022).

Among the factors that determine institutional efficiency, school culture has emerged as a significant yet underexplored dimension. School culture encompasses the shared norms, values, beliefs, traditions, and practices that shape the social environment of an educational institution and give meaning to the activities of its members (Dimmock, Goh & Tan, 2021; Karadag, Kilicoglu & Yilmaz, 2014). One critical component of school culture is collegiality—defined as the collaborative relationships, mutual respect, shared decision-making, and professional cooperation among staff members that foster a supportive academic environment (Glickman, Gordon & Gordon, 2001; Hargreaves, 1994). Unlike formal institutional structures, collegiality operates through interpersonal interactions and shared professional norms, making it a powerful but often invisible driver of institutional performance.

Fako Division, South West Region of Cameroon, hosts 24 higher education institutions including the University of Buea, Biaka University Institute of Buea (BUIB), and the Catholic University Institute of Buea (CUIB). Despite growing enrolment figures, many of these institutions report resource deficits, low stakeholder engagement, and graduate unemployment rates approaching 30% in the South West Region (MINEFOP, 2022; World Bank, 2022). Understanding how school culture—particularly collegial staff relationships—influences institutional efficiency is therefore both theoretically important and practically relevant for improving higher education outcomes in this context.

Background to the Study

Interest in school culture as a determinant of institutional effectiveness emerged prominently in the late 1960s and 1970s. Brookover et al. (1978) and Edmonds (1979) demonstrated that school-level cultural and organisational characteristics independently influenced student performance beyond socio-economic background. Rutter et al. (1979) further established the concept of school ethos as a guiding principle of institutional effectiveness. By the 1980s, Schein (1985) and Deal and Kennedy (1982) had developed influential frameworks for understanding organisational culture as a layered system of artefacts, values, and underlying assumptions shaping member behaviour. In Cameroon, higher education has evolved significantly since the 1961 establishment of the National Institute for University Studies, through the 1993 decentralisation reforms, to the 2023 Higher Education Law. Despite these milestones, institutional efficiency remains a pressing concern. The NDS30 underscores the need for HEIs to enhance both internal efficiency—measured through completion rates and academic performance—and external efficiency, reflected in graduate employability and social impact. Within this reform backdrop, collegiate staff relationships represent an under-investigated institutional resource for enhancing efficiency.

The Concept of Collegiality

Collegiality originally referred to the sharing of authority among faculty colleagues within a university (Tapper & Palfreyman, 2010). In contemporary literature, it encompasses the professional relationships, collaborative practices, and mutual obligations among teaching staff. Hargreaves (1994) defined it as professional relationships marked by mutual support and respect, while Little (1990) described it as processes through which teachers collaborate to enhance professional skills. Gappa, Austin, and Trice (2007) conceptualised collegiality as an opportunity for faculty to feel they belong to a mutually respected community of scholars. Macfarlane (2007) describes collegiality as the 'glue' holding an academic community together, encompassing intellectual engagement with peers, participation in institutional governance, and mentoring of newer staff. In the context of higher education, collegiality encompasses shared decision-making, peer mentorship, joint curriculum development, resource sharing, and open professional communication—dimensions that collectively constitute what Schein (2010) terms a strong organisational culture.

The Concept of Efficiency of Higher Education Institutions

Efficiency in education refers to achieving the greatest educational outputs from available inputs of time, money, and human capital (Hanushek, 1986; UNESCO, 2015). Internal efficiency focuses

on maximising learning outcomes per unit of spending, measured through dropout rates, completion rates, and academic performance (Levin, 1976). External efficiency refers to the system's ability to produce graduates meeting labour market demands, measured through graduate employability, curriculum relevance, and social contribution. Contemporary frameworks incorporate both quantitative metrics (graduation rates, test scores, student-staff ratios) and qualitative assessments (stakeholder satisfaction, institutional responsiveness, and pedagogical innovation) (Hanushek, 2016; McKinsey & Company, 2010). Within this framework, institutional culture—specifically collegial staff relationships—represents a social resource through which HEIs can enhance coordination, improve teaching quality, reduce staff turnover, and improve both internal and external efficiency indicators.

Collegiality Among Staff as a Determinant of Institutional Efficiency

The relationship between collegiality and institutional efficiency operates through several interconnected mechanisms. Collaborative curriculum design eliminates content redundancy, ensuring programme coherence while saving resources. Knowledge sharing prevents duplication of effort, enabling faculty to leverage collective expertise (Lieberman, 1986). Structured mentorship accelerates the integration of new faculty, maintaining consistent instructional quality. Participatory decision-making promotes faculty ownership of institutional goals, increasing commitment to implementation (Lambert, 2003). Open communication reduces interpersonal conflicts and administrative delays (Tourish, 2013). Furnham and Gunter (1993) argued that organisational cultures fulfilling internal integration and coordination functions enhance efficiency. Tschannen-Moran (2001) confirmed empirically that collegiality significantly increases institutional trust, which improves operational efficiency. Reported outcomes of teacher collegiality include enhanced job satisfaction, reduced burnout, professional growth, lower staff turnover, improved student engagement, and higher institutional performance (Brownell et al., 1997; Nias, 1999; Abdullah, 2009).

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Several empirical studies have examined the link between collegial cultures and institutional effectiveness. Leithwood and Jantzi (2008), in a cross-sectional study of 1,165 teachers across 75 schools in Ontario, Canada, found that transformational leadership operating through collegial organisational conditions had a significant indirect effect on student engagement, recommending that administrators prioritise building collaborative cultures as the primary pathway to institutional improvement. Lambert (2003), in a multi-site qualitative case study of American schools, found that schools with high leadership capacity—characterised by participatory decision-making and collective responsibility—demonstrated stronger student achievement and institutional coherence. Lambert recommended embedding collegial structures to build institutional efficiency over time.

Moolenaar, Daly, and Slegers (2010), using social network analysis across Dutch schools, demonstrated that teachers with strong collegial ties were significantly more likely to adopt innovative practices and contribute to organisational change. The study showed that structural properties of collegial networks predict institutional adaptability and improvement capacity—going beyond the mere presence of collaboration to emphasise quality and density of professional ties. Huffman and Hipp (2003), in a multi-site qualitative study of American schools, identified shared leadership, collective creativity, shared personal practice, and collegial support as defining characteristics of effective professional learning communities, confirming that trust, open communication, and collective responsibility are foundational to efficiency-driving collegial

cultures. Despite this evidence, most studies have been conducted in Western contexts, leaving a significant empirical gap in the collegiality-efficiency relationship within Cameroonian higher education that the present study addresses.

THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

Symbolic Interactionism by George Herbert Mead

Symbolic Interactionism, developed by George Herbert Mead (1863–1931), holds that individuals act toward things based on the meanings those things have for them, and that meanings are created and modified through social interactions (Carter & Fuller, 2015). This theory is relevant to the study in that it explains how teaching staff construct shared meanings around collaborative practices, professional norms, and institutional participation. The meanings faculty members attach to collegial relationships—whether as genuine professional solidarity or administrative obligation—determine their motivation to collaborate and invest in collective institutional goals. Symbolic Interactionism therefore provides a framework for understanding why the quality and authenticity of collegial interactions, rather than their structural presence alone, determine whether collegiality translates into measurable efficiency gains. This theory helps us understand what happens within HEIs and how staff interactions are relevant to broader institutional outcomes.

Organizational Culture Theory by Edgar Schein (1980)

Organizational Culture Theory, formulated by Edgar Schein (1980), posits that every organisation possesses a unique, layered culture comprising artefacts (visible signs), espoused values (stated ideals and goals), and underlying assumptions (taken-for-granted beliefs). A strong organisational culture enhances internal coordination, promotes consistency in practice, and fosters collective commitment—all of which contribute to efficiency. The theory is applicable to this study in that it reflects how a strong, cohesive school culture can enhance collaboration among stakeholders and foster innovation. Results suggesting that developing a positive organisational culture—specifically through collegial staff relationships—is essential for improving the efficiency of HEIs are directly supported by Schein's framework. In higher education, a collegial culture characterised by shared academic values, trust, and participatory governance represents a specific cultural configuration that measurably enhances institutional performance.

Organizational Justice Theory by John Adams (1960)

Organizational Justice Theory, advanced by John Adams (1960), refers to employees' perceptions of fairness in workplace procedures, interactions, and outcome distributions across three dimensions: distributive justice (fairness of resource allocation), procedural justice (fairness of decision-making), and interactional justice (fairness of interpersonal treatment). These perceptions significantly influence staff motivation, job satisfaction, and performance. The theory's implication for this study is that a collegial work environment promoting equitable participation in decision-making, transparent communication, and respectful professional interactions enhances staff perceptions of organisational justice—leading to greater motivation, reduced conflict, and improved institutional productivity. By promoting fairness and transparency, collegial culture can create a positive institutional environment that enhances efficiency and student outcomes.

Statement of the Problem

Higher education institutions in Fako Division are expected to deliver quality education, produce employable graduates, and contribute to regional development. However, over 60% of HEIs report resource deficits (MINEFOP, 2022), only 35% of students feel motivated to participate in extracurricular activities (Njeuma, 2021), 40% of students do not complete their programmes (UNESCO, 2021), and graduate unemployment in the South West Region stands at approximately 30% (World Bank, 2022). These indicators reflect persistent internal and external efficiency deficits. Collegiality—encompassing shared decision-making, collaborative curriculum design, peer mentorship, and open communication—has been linked to improvements in teaching quality, resource efficiency, and student outcomes across educational contexts. However, limited empirical evidence exists specifically on whether collegiality among staff significantly predicts institutional efficiency in Fako Division HEIs. This gap constrains policymakers and administrators from developing evidence-based interventions targeting collegial culture as an

efficiency lever. The present study investigates collegiality among staff as a predictor of the efficiency of higher education institutions in Fako Division, South West Region of Cameroon.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study was to examine the extent to which collegiality among staff predicts the efficiency of higher education institutions in Fako Division, South West Region of Cameroon. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Determine the level of shared decision-making among teaching staff in higher education institutions in Fako Division.
2. Assess the role of collaboration and mentorship among staff in enhancing the efficiency of higher education institutions.
3. Examine the effect of collegial communication and resource sharing on institutional efficiency.

Establish whether there is a significant relationship between collegiality among staff and the efficiency of higher education institutions in Fako Division.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a concurrent mixed-methods research design, enabling simultaneous collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data to allow triangulation of findings. The quantitative component measured the statistical relationship between collegiality and institutional efficiency, while the qualitative component provided in-depth perspectives from administrators on how collegiality drives efficiency in practice. The study was conducted in Fako Division, South West Region of Cameroon, which hosts 24 HEIs (MINESUP, 2024). The target population comprised 934 teaching staff and 172 administrators from five purposively selected institutions: University of Buea (UB), Biaka University Institute of Buea (BUIB), Catholic University Institute of Buea (CUIB), Higher Institute for Business, Management and Technology (HIBMAT), and Higher Institute of Business and Management Studies (HIBMS). These were selected based on having the highest teaching staff populations and most diverse academic programmes among the 24 HEIs.

Using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table, 270 teaching staff were sampled through proportional stratified sampling: UB (n=171), BUIB (n=39), CUIB (n=24), HIBMAT (n=17), HIBMS (n=19). Twenty-five administrators (n=5 per institution) were selected purposively. Of the teaching staff sample, 153 (56.7%) were male and 117 (43.3%) female; 51.1% had less than five years of service, and 58.5% held the rank of Senior Lecturer. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire (four-point Likert scale: SA=4, A=3, D=2, SD=1) for teaching staff and a semi-structured interview guide for administrators. Face, content, and construct validity were established through expert review (CVI: 0.8 to 1.0); reliability was confirmed through Cronbach's Alpha on pilot data ($\alpha > 0.70$). Quantitative data were analysed with SPSS Version 27 using Multiple Response Set descriptive statistics. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test confirmed significant deviation from normality ($p < .05$), justifying Spearman's rho correlation for hypothesis testing. Qualitative data were analysed thematically. Ethical standards were maintained throughout: voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality, and participant anonymity.

RESULTS

This section presents findings from 270 teaching staff (quantitative) and 25 administrators (qualitative) across five HEIs in Fako Division. Results are organised by descriptive statistics, inferential statistics, and qualitative findings.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1: Teaching Staff Opinion on the Effect of Collegiality Among Staff on the Efficiency of Higher Education Institutions

Test Items	Agree	Disagree	Mean	SD
Shared decision-making processes exist among teachers	264 (97.8%)	6 (2.2%)	3.21	0.457
Collegial relationships foster innovative curriculum development	261 (96.7%)	9 (3.3%)	3.15	0.442
Administration encourages collaboration → improved teaching	232 (85.9%)	38 (14.1%)	3.04	0.566
Collegiality reduces workplace stress and enhances job satisfaction	226 (83.7%)	44 (16.3%)	2.89	0.445
Collegial culture improves overall institutional efficiency	211 (78.1%)	59 (21.9%)	3.04	0.732
Regular communication fosters a positive work environment	208 (77.0%)	62 (23.0%)	2.92	0.609
Mentorship enhances professional development and growth	184 (68.1%)	86 (31.9%)	2.78	0.613
Supporting peers enhances student engagement and outcomes	182 (67.4%)	88 (32.6%)	2.78	0.625
Opportunities for staff collaboration in problem-solving	172 (63.7%)	98 (36.3%)	2.72	0.609
Joint research initiatives lead to higher quality outputs	169 (62.6%)	101 (37.4%)	2.76	0.709
Multiple Response Set and Overall Mean	2109 (78.1%)	591 (21.9%)	2.93	0.581

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The descriptive findings revealed that in aggregate, a majority of teaching staff (78.1%) agreed that collegiality among staff contributes to the efficiency of higher education institutions, while 21.9% disagreed. The overall mean score of 2.93 (SD = 0.581) exceeded the midpoint of 2.5, indicating a generally positive assessment of collegial practices. The most strongly endorsed item was shared decision-making among teachers (264; 97.8%), followed by collegial relationships

fostering innovative curriculum development (261; 96.7%). The administration's encouragement of collaboration leading to improved teaching effectiveness was endorsed by 232 (85.9%), while collegiality's role in reducing workplace stress and enhancing job satisfaction was affirmed by 226 (83.7%). A collegial culture's contribution to overall institutional efficiency was supported by 211 (78.1%), and regular communication as a contributor to a positive work environment endorsed by 208 (77.0%). Items on mentorship (68.1%), peer support (67.4%), staff collaboration opportunities (63.7%), and joint research (62.6%) recorded majority but comparatively lower agreement, indicating these collegial practices exist but could be further strengthened.

Table 2: Administrators' Opinion on Specific Practices Implemented to Promote Collegiality Among Teaching Staff

Theme	Frequency, n (%)	Illustrative Quotations
Meetings and collaborative workshops	24 (96.0%)	"We organise annual departmental retreats for collaborative curriculum development and team-building." "We have end-of-month staff evaluation meetings to probe institutional happenings."

Collaboration and teamwork	25 (100%)	"Together we stand and divided we fall. When faculty and staff work together, the prospect of growth is higher." "We encourage co-teaching and peer observation."
Social and informal interactions	22 (88.0%)	"We organise casual social events like coffee breaks and cultural celebrations to encourage informal relationship building."
Mentorship and professional support	23 (92.0%)	"Experienced faculty are paired with new hires to provide guidance and integration." "We publicly recognise faculty who demonstrate exceptional collegiality."
Resource sharing and development	21 (84.0%)	"We have a common resource centre where faculty share materials and best practices." "We fund staff to attend conferences and training programmes."
Communication and conflict resolution	20 (80.0%)	"We maintain transparent communication channels and emphasise respectful communication among faculty."
Research and innovation	22 (88.0%)	"We host cross-disciplinary seminars for research exchange." "We support faculty-led journal clubs and prioritise collaborative grant proposals."
Community engagement	19 (76.0%)	"We encourage faculty to collaborate on community service projects and offer flexible arrangements to support balance."

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The findings reveal a multifaceted approach by administrators to fostering collegiality. All 25 administrators (100%) cited collaboration and teamwork as the most central collegial mechanism. Regular meetings and workshops (96.0%) were identified as foundational platforms for both curriculum co-development and interpersonal bonding. Mentorship (92.0%), resource sharing (84.0%), and social interactions (88.0%) were emphasised as complementary dimensions sustaining collegial engagement beyond formal academic settings. Transparent communication and conflict resolution (80.0%) were highlighted as prerequisites for the psychological safety necessary for authentic collegiality. Community engagement (76.0%) demonstrated that administrators in Fako Division HEIs understand collegiality as extending beyond the institution to encompass wider stakeholder relationships.

Inferential Statistics

Table 3: Spearman's Rho Correlation Between Collegiality Among Staff and the Efficiency of Higher Education Institutions

Variable	R-value	p-value	N
Collegiality Among Staff	.631**	.000	270

****.** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Dependent variable: Efficiency of Higher Education Institutions.

The null hypothesis (H_{01} : Collegiality among staff does not significantly enhance the efficiency of higher education institutions in Fako Division) was tested using Spearman's rho. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test confirmed that all variables significantly deviated from normality ($p < .05$), justifying the use of Spearman's rho over parametric alternatives. The results indicated a significant, positive, and moderate relationship between collegiality among staff and the efficiency of higher education institutions ($R = .631$, $p = .000 < .05$). The positive direction

indicates that increasing collegiality is associated with corresponding improvements in institutional efficiency. The null hypothesis was accordingly rejected, and the alternative hypothesis—that collegiality among staff significantly enhances the efficiency of higher education institutions in Fako Division—was accepted.

Qualitative findings

Table 4: Administrators' Opinion on How Collegiality Among Staff Enhances Efficiency Within the Institution

Theme	Frequency, n (%)	Illustrative Quotations
Collaboration and teamwork	25 (100%)	"Collegiality fosters unity within departments, leading to more effective teamwork." "Once there is collegiality there is hardly any failure." "Collegial departments respond more effectively to challenges."
Improved communication	23 (92.0%)	"Collegiality minimises conflicts and delays through open communication." "Shared beliefs enhance coordination among faculty and administrators."
Resource efficiency	22 (88.0%)	"Collegial faculty collaboratively design curriculum, avoiding duplication and saving resources." "Faculty share expertise, preventing redundancy."
Enhanced student outcomes	24 (96.0%)	"Sharing teaching strategies results in higher quality instruction and better student performance." "Tasks done on time and students' complaints attended to promptly."
Professional development	21 (84.0%)	"Experienced faculty guide new colleagues, reducing the learning curve and accelerating contributions." "Collegial environment boosts morale, reducing absenteeism."
Administrative efficiency	22 (88.0%)	"When faculty take ownership of departmental tasks, it reduces the burden on department heads." "Collegial faculty meetings are more productive."
Research and funding	20 (80.0%)	"Collaborative research leverages expertise of multiple faculty, yielding higher quality outputs and greater grant funding."
Innovation and adaptability	19 (76.0%)	"Collegial faculty more readily embrace innovations." "Faculty collaborate on effective technology integration in teaching and research."

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The qualitative evidence in Table 4 demonstrates that administrators consistently experience collegiality as directly translating into institutional efficiency across eight thematic dimensions. The unanimous endorsement of teamwork (100%) and the near-universal affirmation of enhanced student outcomes (96.0%) as efficiency consequences of collegiality reinforce the quantitative finding. The administrator observation that 'once there is collegiality there is hardly any failure' captures the holistic view of collegiality as an institutional efficiency enabler. Resource efficiency (88.0%) was highlighted through administrators' descriptions of collaborative curriculum co-design eliminating redundancy, confirming the theoretical mechanism proposed by Lieberman (1986). Administrative efficiency (88.0%) and professional development (84.0%) extend the

efficiency benefits of collegiality beyond teaching quality to governance and organisational learning. These qualitative findings explain why the quantitative correlation is moderate rather than strong: while collegiality is a powerful predictor, it operates within a broader institutional ecosystem that includes physical infrastructure, governance structures, and financial resources.

DISCUSSION

The finding that 78.1% of teaching staff agreed that collegiality enhances institutional efficiency, confirmed by Spearman's rho ($R = .631$, $p < .05$), aligns strongly with the extant literature. Leithwood and Jantzi (2008) similarly found that collegial structures operating through participatory decision-making significantly enhanced institutional outcomes. The particularly high consensus on shared decision-making (97.8%) and collegial curriculum innovation (96.7%) corroborates Birnbaum (1988), who established that participatory governance promotes institutional adaptability and faculty ownership—prerequisites for operational efficiency. The all-administrator endorsement of collaboration and teamwork (100%) as the primary efficiency mechanism directly confirms Organisational Culture Theory (Schein, 1980): a strong, cohesive institutional culture enhances collective commitment to shared goals and reduces coordination costs that impede efficiency.

The finding on administration's facilitation of collaboration (85.9%) aligns with Bryk et al. (2010) and Leithwood and Jantzi (2000), who emphasised that supportive leadership is a prerequisite for authentic collegial cultures. A contextually important observation is that, unlike many Western studies examining voluntarily emergent networks, Cameroonian HEIs appear to rely significantly on administrative intentionality in creating collaborative structures. In resource-constrained environments where formal collegial traditions may be less established, institutional leadership must actively construct and sustain collegial platforms. This aligns with Schein's (1980) argument that organisational culture must be deliberately shaped through structural arrangements endorsed by institutional leadership.

The strong endorsement of collegiality's role in reducing workplace stress and enhancing job satisfaction (83.7%) corroborates Moolenaar, Daly, and Slegers (2010), who identified collegial ties as buffers against occupational stress. In Fako Division, where over 60% of HEIs report resource deficits (MINEFOP, 2022), collegial support serves as a critical informal welfare mechanism. This finding aligns with Organizational Justice Theory (Adams, 1960): perceived fairness in collegial interactions enhances staff motivation, reduces conflict, and contributes to institutional productivity. The qualitative finding that resource efficiency (88.0%) and administrative efficiency (88.0%) are both driven by collegiality demonstrates that the efficiency benefits extend beyond teaching quality to encompass governance and resource management dimensions, confirming Lieberman's (1986) theoretical mechanism and Lambert's (2003) empirical observation.

The moderate correlation ($R = .631$) appropriately reflects the multifactorial nature of institutional efficiency. While collegiality is a significant predictor, other contextual variables—including physical infrastructure, financial resources, curriculum relevance, and governance quality—also play substantive roles. This is consistent with Schein (2010) and Anderson (2010), who argue that while collegial cultures foster knowledge sharing and reduce redundancy, their impact is mediated by structural and resource conditions. For Fako Division HEIs, maximising the efficiency benefits of collegiality therefore requires concurrent attention to infrastructural and resource constraints alongside deliberate collegial culture development.

Contribution to Knowledge

This study makes several theoretical and empirical contributions. Theoretically, it extends Organizational Culture Theory (Schein, 1980), Symbolic Interactionism (Mead), and Organizational Justice Theory (Adams, 1960) into the domain of collegial culture and institutional efficiency within Cameroonian higher education, demonstrating that these frameworks have explanatory relevance in Sub-Saharan African HEI contexts. The quantitative finding ($R = .631$, p

< .05), combined with qualitative evidence identifying eight efficiency-generating mechanisms of collegiality, produces a richer evidence base than either method alone could provide. Empirically, the study offers the first context-specific concurrent mixed-methods evidence on the collegiality-efficiency relationship in Fako Division HEIs, filling a significant gap in the regional higher education literature. Practically, the study equips institutional administrators, curriculum developers, and MINESUP policymakers with an evidence base for designing collegial culture interventions aligned with the efficiency mandates of the 2023 Higher Education Law (Law No. 2023/007) and the broader NDS30 education efficiency objectives.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- University administrators and heads of department should institutionalise formal collaborative platforms—including regular inter-departmental retreats, co-teaching schemes, peer observation programmes, and faculty research clusters—to embed collegiality as a structural institutional norm, ensuring that collaborative practice is resourced, recognised, and evaluated as part of academic governance.
- Given that over 51% of teaching staff have less than five years of service, HEIs in Fako Division should implement structured mentorship programmes that formally pair experienced faculty with newer colleagues, with clear institutional objectives, timelines, and recognition mechanisms to accelerate professional integration and maintain instructional quality.
- Institutional leaders should establish transparent, bi-directional communication systems—including open-door policies, regular staff consultations, accessible feedback mechanisms, and clear conflict resolution protocols—to build institutional trust and sustain a collegial climate that minimises interpersonal conflict and strengthens collective commitment to efficiency goals.
- The Ministry of Higher Education (MINESUP) should incorporate collegial culture requirements into national accreditation standards and quality assurance frameworks, requiring HEIs to demonstrate evidence of structured collaborative staff practices as a measurable performance indicator under the 2023 Higher Education Law (Law No. 2023/007) and NDS30 reporting mechanisms.
- Future research should employ longitudinal designs to examine the causal direction of the collegiality-efficiency relationship in Cameroonian HEIs, while also investigating interaction effects of leadership style, institutional size, financial resources, and governance structure to develop more comprehensive and context-sensitive models of higher education institutional efficiency prediction.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the extent to which collegiality among staff predicts the efficiency of higher education institutions in Fako Division, South West Region of Cameroon. Findings revealed that 78.1% of teaching staff agreed that collegiality contributes to institutional efficiency, and Spearman's rho confirmed a significant, positive, and moderate relationship ($R = .631$, $p < .05$). Qualitative evidence from 25 administrators identified eight thematic dimensions—collaborative workshops, teamwork, mentorship, resource sharing, communication, student outcomes, research collaboration, and administrative efficiency—as the mechanisms through which collegiality generates measurable performance improvements. The null hypothesis was rejected.

The study concludes that collegiality among staff represents a critical yet systematically underutilised institutional resource for enhancing the efficiency of higher education institutions in Fako Division. Consistent with Organizational Culture Theory (Schein, 1980), Symbolic Interactionism (Mead), and Organizational Justice Theory (Adams, 1960), shared cultural norms, collaborative professional relationships, and perceived workplace fairness collectively drive institutional performance. The moderate correlation appropriately reflects the multifactorial nature of institutional efficiency, acknowledging concurrent influences of infrastructure, resources,



governance, and national policy. Strengthening collegial culture within Fako Division HEIs should therefore be understood not merely as a cultural aspiration but as a measurable institutional efficiency strategy with direct implications for teaching quality, resource optimisation, and graduate outcomes in Cameroon's higher education system.

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