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DECISION MAKING IN DECENTRALIZED FOREST MANAGEMENT
Cases of Dimako Council and Kongo Community Forests, Cameroon

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ABSTRACT:

Cameroon has since launched a restructuring of its forest resource management in 1994, predicted on the assumption that positive socio economic change, popular participation and, poverty alleviation will be achieved from the transfer of decision making functions and management responsibilities and benefits to local communities.

The local communities saw the advent of the forest legislation which outlined the transfer of the forest management responsibilities to them as a response to their age old demand of access to financial benefit from forest and local development. However, detailed examination proves that decentralized forms of local natural resource management often fail to produce desired results such as responsible representation, democracy and local development.

This study therefore seeks to examine why the implementation of decision making in decentralized forest resource management has failed to achieve desired results of sustainable forest resource management and local development in the Dimako Council and Kongo Community Forests. It further examines the possible implications of the failure of this policy on the development of the local community and country as whole.

The decision theory constitute the framework of analysis in this study and the study is mainly qualitative, based on desk review which consists of survey of existing relevant literature, interviews, selected case studies of Dimako and Kongo Council and Community Forest respectively and document analysis

Findings suggest that, the decentralization of forest management in Cameroon is finally an interrupted process, obstructed halfway by regional level forces who are considered as mid-level actors and by local community chiefs. Most of those who make up members of council and community forest management committees are nominated, co-opted and not voted. The same persons keep rotating and acting as councilors and at the same time as members of the local development committee as well as members of the forest resource management committees. More so, these committees work together with the Mayor and seal deals with the elites and do not feel accountable to the local population. The Mayor serves as the sole decision maker in matters that have to do with council forest management and its proceeds.

Therefore, many factors account for the failure of this new reform to achieve desired results and these include; Limited transfer of decision making functions to the committees and tendencies of centralization, mismanagement of decision making functions, decision making traps among others. Cameroon government should therefore democratize local government first, implement capacity building before devolution of power, develop and enforce an ethical code, institute and implement ethics as part of the management committee training and orientation programs, incorporate ethics as part of performance evaluation and create an ethical environment to ensure that the actions of senior officials are consistent with expectations.

KEY WORDS: decentralization, forest resource management, decision making, Cameroon, forestry

1. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1. Introduction

Cameroon is located within the Congo Basin, and about one third of the territory is sheltered by forest which is marked by its diversity and richness. It is predicted that approximately 4 million people frankly depend on the forests as home and sources of income for their survival. In fact, a vital role is played by Forest in the economic development of Cameroon, making up 6% of the national GDP and yielding some 100 million dollars each year in logging taxes. Cameroon exports roughly 2.5 million cubic meters of timber each year. (Forest transparency info 2013.)

Public administration in the forest sector in Cameroon is implemented through the administration and implementation of the stipulations of the forest policy reform. The forest sector in Cameroon has since been headed and supervised by the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife. Decree No 95/678/PM of December 1995 set up an incentive frame work for the use of forest, with an introduction of the zoning plan for the country's forest. In this respect, the forest sector in Cameroon falls under the ministry of forestry and wild life and which is charged with the responsibility of publishing the map of the Cameroon forest with the zoning plan. Notwithstanding, several ministries also play an administrative role in the management of the Cameroon forest due to the variety of activities that are carried out in the forest. These include the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of commerce, the Ministry in charge of environmental protection, Ministry of mines and power, Nongovernmental organizations and councils and communities. However, the sole responsibility and management of the forest lies in the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife. While the Ministry of Finance is responsible for forest tax, the Ministry of Mines collaborates with the Ministry of forestry to come in and organize mining activities in the forest. (Amariei 2005.)

On the other hand, local administrative offices, headed by appointed officials of the central government are charged with the responsibilities of implementing at the municipal level, decisions and actions adopted by the national government, while,

communes with communal forest receive a percentage of the annual forest tax from the government. These communes are headed by elected mayors who serve as representatives of the local population.

Notwithstanding the administration and or management of the forest by these ministries, the private sector also plays a role in the management and administration of the forest. For instance, foreign forestry companies such as the European and Asian companies, Mining companies and hunting guides all operate in the forest and under the private sector. However, in spite of the numerous actors involved in the administration of forest in Cameroon, the overall activities of the forest are supervised by the central government delegate in charge of the forest which in this case is the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife. (MINEF 1998a; Nguiffo 2009.)

In this regard, the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife is charged with the responsibilities of ensuring the publication of the key texts on forest management. These include;

- *“The 1993 forest policy document,*
- *The 1994 Forestry Law covering the management of forest, wildlife and fisheries,*
- *Decrees implementing the 1994 law and the 1995 decree for the forest sector,*
- *Other statutory texts (decrees, circulas).”* (Nguiffo 2009:14.)

However, as noted by transparency report (2009), the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife has failed in its responsibilities especially in the domain of disseminating information on forest management. As noted in the text, some valuable documents remain invisible from the list of disseminated documents. These include; related tax documents that have to do with forest management such as the text related to the Mining sector, finance law to name a few. Moreover, the text also states that, the manner in which the information is disseminated is not effective as local communities are deprived even of the means to access the document due to the fact that local officials do not have access to the appropriate documents.

Notwithstanding, public administration in the forest sector in Cameroon has gone through a number of reforms. However, it is worthy to note that Cameroon has

witnessed a long history of institutional and regulatory settings in its forest sector. This can be traced to 1884 when the German colonial administrators and later the French and British (1919-1960/1961), introduced and formalized a new form of administrative system within which administrative units were put in place, some of which to regulate the forestry sector to the exclusion of the local population. Even though Cameroon adopted successful forest laws in 1974 and 1981 respectively after its independence, it is worthy to note that it was only later in 1994 that a comprehensive framework that links the concept of sustainable forest management directly with the preparation of forest management plans of all productive forest was introduced and developed following the launching of the new forest legislative law of 1994. (Cerutti et al. 2008:1.)

This new forest reform is contained in the January 1994 Forest Laws stipulated by the Presidential Decree No 94/436/PM on the appliance of the Forest Regime (August 1994). In addition to this, *Système Informatique de Gestion d'Information Forestière* (SIGIF; Digitalized Forest Management Information System) was also set up in 2002 as part of the reform to play a supportive role with respect to the realization of the existing reform (MINEF 2004). As noted by ODI (2004), this forest law was meant to increase efficiency in the forest sector and also to promote active involvement and participation of the local community in forest resource management.

In this respect, the forest law from 1994 coordinates and legislate the relationship amidst the state and other stake holders groups that take part in forest management, collecting, processing and selling of forest products such as concessionaires, industries, private forest owners, forest communities, and communes. In accordance to art 20, of the republic of Cameroon forestry law 1994, Cameroon forest was divided into two; “Land permanently allocated to forests and or wild life habitat, (permanent forest)” such as fauna protecting areas, forest reserves and communal forest, and “Forested land that can be allocated potentially for other users” know as non-permanent forest and include; national forest, community forest and private forest. (COMIFAC 2004; MINEF 2004.) Similarly, the 1994 Forest Law also obligates the production forest, be it community, municipal or national forest to establish a three year management plan but as noted by Amariei (2005), the implementations of forest management plans are delayed due to the

absence of adequate thorough information and human resources at the level of the ministry which serves as the providing body.

She further notes that, the 1994 Forest law/reform which led to the division of the forest into permanent and non-permanent forest, gave rise to the development and establishment of community forest in Cameroon. The PFA has an expansion of 8.9million Ha which includes 2.6 million Ha confined areas, 300,000 Ha as a proportion set aside for community management, and 6 million Ha which is classified as Forest Management Units (FMU). As earlier mentioned, it is obligatory for all forest management units to have a management plan within the initial 3 years of operation (as stipulated by the “Provisional Convention”), with a felling cycle set at 30 years (MINEF 2001). With this new development, it was hoped that the involvement of local communities as actors and users of forest resources would give them the opportunity of developing a sense of ownership and thereby, increase interest in input and partaking in forest management resources as well as guarantee the sustainable utilization of forest resources.

As the Ministry of Environment and Forests (1999) and Amariei (2005) further articulate, the new institutional arrangement which gave rise to the emerging of community forestry sector is a means of decentralizing forest management and putting in place, an ownership right over forest resources that takes into considerations the livelihood of the community living close to or in the forest. In this regard and in accordance with the simple management plan, the rights to manage up to 5000HA of forest on a rotation of 25 years were given to the community. Up to this day, the government has given his approval to 55 community forests with the highest community forest yielding approximately 5-10m/HA/year. (Fomete 2002.)

However, even though the community forest in Cameroon is becoming well established today, the absence of management and technical services remains a key constrain to the rate of change when it comes to the maintenance and sustainability of the community forest. The slow pace of change has often been attributed to mismanagement of decision making functions as a result of corruption and patron client relationship, upward

accountability instead of downward accountability which is a requirement of decentralization as a policy per say. The major reforms and their relation to the 1994 law can be summarized as such;

Table 1. Forest reform procedures and linkages to the forest law (Bureau Veritas Certification 2006:3).

Area of Reform	1994 Forest Law	Bank supported measures
Forest zoning	Classification of the forest estate into permanent production forests, protected areas, and rural areas.	Adoption of a national strategy for forest concession planning, taking into account requirements for sustainable forest management.
Community forestry	Establishment of rights for local communities to manage community or local council forests through a contractual relationship with the administration.	Adoption of a right for the local communities to pre-empt neighbouring forests from being earmarked as <i>ventes de coupe</i> (where logging is permitted on a maximum of 2,500 hectares for a maximum of three years)
Sustainable forest management	Introduction of forest management plans implemented by private firms in permanent production forests and monitored by the Forest Administration.	Adoption of procedures to prepare, approve, and monitor forest management plans. Selection of international nongovernmental organizations to monitor and assess the implementation of forest management plans on the ground.
Forest taxation	Mention of a system to redistribute a portion of the area tax to local councils and communities.	Adoption of reforms in forest taxation, including the creation of a program to enhance forest tax revenue (through better monitoring and recovery of forest taxes) and a system for redistributing annual area revenues (the state to receive 50 percent, local councils 40 percent, and local communities 10 percent).

1.2. Research problem

Since the 1990s, Cameroon has made “bold” public administrative reforms (Ribot et al., 2006:7). One of which was the decentralization of its forest resource management which came as a reaction to demands for “democracy, justice, human wellbeing and donor requirements for good governance”. Cameroon has since then, launched a restructuring of its forest resource management in 1994, predicted on the assumption that positive socio economic change, social justice, popular participation in the management of the forest and environmental sustainability, poverty alleviation will be achieved from the transfer of decision making functions and management responsibilities and benefits to local communities. It was hoped that local authorities or representatives of government by virtue of their proximity to the local population they serve, will improve accountability to the local population and better combine resources to meet the needs, interest and aspirations of the local people. (Ribot et al. 2006:7; Oyono 2005:318.) In this regard, the new administrative reform (decentralization of forest resource management) implied responsible representation, local democracy and downward accountability by local authorities/officials to the local population with the view of achieving equity and improved wellbeing.

However, case studies of such reforms in the natural resource management decentralization in Uganda, Senegal, Nepal to name a few prove that the necessary institutional arrangements for the expected outcomes are scarcely observed as most of such reforms face stiff resistance from different actors which erode their effectiveness (Ribot et al. 2006:2). In this regard, Peters and Jon (1998) note that, administrative reforms are “path-dependent” possibly to a higher extent than it is realized generally because reforms strategies are rooted in systems of administrative practices and norms. As such, administrative reforms are fashioned to a greater extent by what has been in existence long ago than by the preferred model of public administration. Notwithstanding, reviews on natural resource management and decentralization suggest that, the local population could profit from the redistribution of centralized administrative authority. On the other end, detailed examinations of reviews on decentralization research in Sub Sahara Africa in the name of reforms have produced

mixed results since the 1990s as their portrayal brought up parameters of total loss and stagnation in others especially when applied to the case of natural resource management. (Kasfir 1983; Oyugi 1983; Fjeldstad 2002; Kassibo 2002; Bazaara 2003; Lungusile 2003; Etoungou 2003; Mapedza 2003.)

Local communities in Cameroon have long been frustrated by their exclusion from the public system of forest management as far as the colonial period. For these reasons, the local communities saw the advent of the forest legislation which outlined the transfer of the forest management responsibilities to them as a response to their age old demand of access to financial benefit from forest. The administrative policy change was thus perceived by many as; the response by the central government to “environmental injustice and their historical frustrations” (Oyono 2005: 318). However, detailed examination proves that “community-based and decentralized forms of local natural resource management often fail to produce responsible representation and downward accountability and are not democratic”, as the world bank (2000: 107) states “...decentralization is often implemented haphazardly”. This is visible in the East region and most forest zones of Cameroon where poorly structured decentralization and transfer of administrative power to unaccountable local bodies threaten local equity, democracy and environmental management (Ribot 2003:54) to the detriment of the local population.

1.2.1. Objectives and Research Questions

This paper seeks to examine public administration policies in Cameroon with regards to forest resource management. In this respect, it looks at the implementation of decision making in decentralized forest resource management policy in Cameroon. It further describes decentralized forest management and its operational mechanisms in relation to the local population. Particularly, it examines the administrative process of the implementation of this policy in the light of the administrative behavior of the administrators, and the implications of such behaviors on the community and country as a whole. The research questions are;

- 1) Why has the implementation of decision making in decentralized forest resource management failed to achieve the desired results of sustainable forest resource management and local development in the Dimako Council and Kongo Community Forests?
- 2) What are the possible implications and outcomes of the failure of the implementation of these managerial decisions on the development of the local community and country as whole?

1.3. Justification of Study

This topic is carefully selected by the researcher because, forest resource management represent one of such strategic areas in the Cameroon as it serves as one of the country's main source of income. A substantial amount of revenue accrues from logging and fees from the forest. As such, it is very imperative to tackle these area carefully otherwise, huge amounts of money which are meant for the government and the population will not be realized as a result of misuse of managerial decision making functions and corruption.

The goal of this chapter has been to give a general introduction and back ground information on the topic under study. The research problem has been stated and the objectives of the study as well as the question set for the research has been put forward. The study is demarcated geographically to include only Cameroon. The proceeding chapter analyses the central theory and concepts of this study and how they interrelate.

2. THEORETICAL DEVELOPMENT

This section defines the major concepts and their theoretical linkages to the case study. It also summarizes conceptual and theoretical issues that will be relevant in the study.

2.1. Public Administration

It would be difficult, and probably unhelpful, if I were to provide an “overly specific definition” of public administration (Court & Young 2005: 1)., because, as a concept, it has no ‘one-size-fits all’ definition and, in most cases, what is used is a contextual definition of public administration as it is in itself a multi-dimensional concept that has carried very different meanings as it can be situated within a field of practice as well as a field of study.

However, notwithstanding the context of its usage, public administration implies the activity or course of administering public affairs and executing government functions. As a practice, it entails making decisions on the superlative policies with regards to an issue as well as setting principles and processes. As a study, it focuses on the manner in which policy is made and implemented, the attitude and behavior of public officials as they execute their duties, leadership approach of public managers, mechanisms embraced by poverty focused programs, the associations of government and the citizens to name a few. (Waldo 1955.) According to Caiden (1971), Public administration also has practical relevance for government principally in improving government performance. It is therefore liable to public scrutiny, public prospects and demands, political pressure, public expectations of accountability and transparency in transactions. Public administration is open to everyone and is geared towards general public satisfaction which determines progress in the quality of life of the citizens (Bitonio 2012). Its main goal is to advance management and polices to enable government to work. It is worthy to note that contemporary practices of public administration draw major strength from precedent models. One of which is the Neo-bureaucratic model framed upon rational decision making processes. (Denhardt 2003.)

This paper therefore, adopts a working meaning of public administration as, the management of public policies as well as government decision making and the analysis of these policies themselves. In this respect, public administration is analyzed in this paper with regards to the implementation of the forest resource management decentralization policy in Cameroon. For the purpose of understanding, management and administration will be used inter changeably in this study to mean the same thing.

2.2. Decentralization

Decentralization is broadly defined as a “process of shift or transfer of powers, responsibilities and resources from the centre state to lower territorial units and or locally elected bodies and authorities.” (Oyono 2004a; 2005:317; Carney & Farrington 1998; Ribot 2006.) Several forms of decentralization have been identified. They include;

- i. *“De-concentration or administrative/territorial decentralization; when the central state redistributes authority to its own representatives within defined geographical units;*
- ii. *Privatization ; the transfer of powers from the central state to non-state entities;*
- iii. *Delegation; when specific powers are transferred to semi-independent units;*
- iv. *Devolution or democratic decentralisation; a process aimed at transferring powers to the local governments and to authorities representatives of and accountable to, local population.”(Oyono 2004a:92.)*

As noted by Larson (2003: 211), decentralization of central government is a device for enhancing development even though decentralization practitioners and researchers have paid relatively lower attention to other traits of development such as natural resource management. However, Decentralization of forest resource management here refers to the transfer or shift of administrative decision making and management of forest

resource from the center to the local government and to authority's representatives of and accountable to, local population. This is thus, decentralization of natural resources management based on "responsible representation and accountability" by locally elected authorities and decentralized entities representing the local population. It is hoped that through devolution, aspects of decision-making will be transferred to other actors and local population and as a result, "broad based participation, efficiency of public service provisions, empowerment of local citizens and local democracy" will be achieved as theorists believe that "downwardly accountable or representative authorities with meaningful discretionary powers are the basic institutional elements of decentralization that should lead to local efficiency, equity and development." (Oyono 2004b:2; Ribot 2003:53.) As Ribot (2003) further notes, such decentralization through Africa are restructuring the local institutions that manage natural resources in manners that would intensely affect who uses, manages and benefit from these resources.

On the other hand, Tacconi et al argued that "while decentralization is often describe to have a potential to bring about sustainable forest management, the complex linkages existing amongst decentralization, forest management and livelihood imply that it is not possible to state a priori whether decentralization would lead to sustainable forest management and to increased livelihood benefit."(2006: 1.)

Furthermore they went ahead to state that "political and administrative devolution of government authority does not necessary imply devolution of control over forest resources to lower level government or to private stakeholders, including local community rather, decentralized resource management can also be used to refer to "common pool resource management." (2006:2.) They also argued contrary to Ribot and Oyono that it is not because the government fails to transfer sufficient power to local institution that the authorities and officials fail to represent and are unaccountable to local communities but it is due to the fact that representative decision making processes of most developing countries are weak and as a result, it is easier for local elites and vested interest groups to manipulate the institutions and opportunities created by decentralization for their own interest. More so, as Eversole (2011) further notes, awareness in participatory governance takes into considerations the fact that

communities can offer contributions of great value to the management of the community resources and governance but efforts to strengthen community participation face challenges label as incompleteness or failure of participatory democracy and or governance.

They however state that, various studies on decentralization has rarely ever brought about improved governance through the promotion of local accountability and transparency and by promoting local democracy or administrative decision making. To them, the above ramification is an indication that “decentralization cannot be expected to create an ideal democratic and accountable governance system overnight. Therefore democratic decentralization might not lead to the scaling up of community based natural resource management”. (Tacconi et al. 2006:4.) As Steiner (2007) further notes, decentralization is well-thought-out to affect poverty through the provision of opportunities that enable previously excluded people to take part in public decision making and many other services but in most cases like the case of Uganda, these channels often times are not fully realized in practice as a result of restricted local autonomy, patronage relationship, corruption to name a few.

I have defined public administration and have pointed out that it entails making decisions on the superlative policies with regards to an issue as well as setting principles and processes. I have also defined and brief on forest resource management and decentralization to show how public administration policies could work based on the transfer or shift of administrative decision making and management from the center to local authorities. However, some authors have argued that such transfer of decision making power to local entities does not necessarily produce desired results. In this regard, the theory of administration and decision making is further analyzed.

2.3. Principles of administration

According to Simon (1997:1 29-30), administration is discussed simply as “getting things done” with a focus on methods and processes of ensuring keen actions. To this

effect, principles are put in place to ensure and secure concerted actions from groups of individuals. These principles constitute the administrative theory. In line with this view, Simon (1997: 29-30) has further outlined some of the general accepted principles of administration which holds that;

- *“Administrative efficiency is increased by specialization of the task among the group.*
- *Administrative efficiency is increased by arranging the members of the group in a determinate hierarchy of authority.*
- *Administrative efficiency is increased by limiting the span of control at any point in the hierarchy to a small number*
- *Administrative efficiency is increased by grouping the workers, for purposes of control, according to purpose, process, clientele and place”.* (Simon 1997: 29-30.)

However, these well explicit principles have been heavily criticized by authors who argue that their validity cannot be so easily submitted to empirical test. The principle of specialization have been criticized on the claim that, it is not a precondition or condition for efficient administration as it only entails that different individuals are doing different things. As such, the actual challenge of administration is not specialization but specialization in a specific way and path that will influence administrative efficiency. The second principle, unity of command has been criticized for its rigid nature and the fact that it is basically not possible for an individual to obey two contradictory commands. As such, this principle is only feasible if a subordinate is answerable to a specific authority. The third principle has been criticized on the basis of repetition and the fact that the outcomes of the principle in practice are contradictory to its expectations and the last principle has also been criticized for the absence of a criterion of specialization. (Gulick & Urwick 1937.)

Administrative principles more or less demonstrate some sort of decentralization in the administration of activities or policies but as argued by some authors, the objection or critics of these principles drives on to the centralization versus decentralization debate

which usually ends up with the conclusion on the one end that centralization of decision making functions is advantageous and on the other end that there are crystal-clear advantages of decentralization as well. (Urwick 1945.) Faced with such controversy, it would be better and probably wiser to consider the conditions under which one of these approaches is most feasible.

Based on these notes, this author notes that, administrative processes or managerial processes are decisional processes. This makes it of course inevitable for one to study administration and management without going through the decision making process. It is for these reasons that, this author further analyze decision making in administration and management as the center theory of this study.

2.4. Decision theory

According to Buchanan Leigh and O'Connell Andrew (2006:33), the term Decision denotes the conclusion of deliberation and the commencement of action. As they further articulate, the queries of who makes decisions, and in what manner, have molded the world's structures of government, social order and justice. In effect, "Life is the sum of all human choices" and history, by inference, equals the amassed choices of all humanity. As they argued, the history of decision-making and approaches is not one of absolute progress that is headed for flawless rationalism as we have gradually been acknowledging the constraints both psychological and contextual on our ability to make best or ideal choices over the years. Challenging circumstances, inadequate mental computational power and limited time, lessen decision makers to a state of "bounded rationality." Confronted with the decision making imperfectabilities, ways have been sought by theorists to attain, at least acceptable if not optimal outcomes. Some theorists urge us to create a virtue of our limited time and knowledge by grasping simple heuristics, a method they call "fast and frugal" reasoning, others suggest "humble decision making," a collection of non-heroic strategies that comprise delay, tentativeness and hedging while still, some have simply returned to the ancient ways.

Decision making thus has a long history and has since evolved from the prehistoric period where human decisions were directed by interpretations of entrails, dreams, smoke, and even more. During that time, hundreds of cohorts of Chinese depend on the divination instructions and poetic wisdom assembled in the I Ching while the Greeks look up to the Oracle of Delphi and the future was forecasts by seers and prophets and seers of all sorts. Decision making has since evolved from this stage through till the 19th century where Buchanab and O'Connel (2006) note that Chester Barnard was able to split up personal from organizational decision making to clarify why some employees act in the interest of the organizational rather than in their own and till present day where they note that Malcolm Gladwell explores the concept that our prompt or sudden decisions are at times better than those founded on lengthy, rational analysis.

The decision theory thus deals with human decision making in a world of partial information and incomplete human control over events. It is posited on two players; a cognitive human who is refer to as the decision maker who makes calculations, perform analyses and cognitively takes a decision on a course of action in an endeavor to optimize his or her own welfare and a randomizing nature that gleefully selects courses of action solely in a probabilistic way.

State of nature and acts make up the two basic concepts of the decision theory. While state of nature are solely under the control of nature and are beyond the influence of the decision maker, acts on the other end, are subject to the control of the decision maker and the decision maker can select any one of the available acts. The human decision maker therefore provides beliefs and preferences as resolutions of a decision problem. To this effect, the decision theory postulates that, the decision maker has a probability system that confines his or her partial beliefs about the selection of states by nature and a structure of preference over the outcomes. Decision making is therefore composed of a two-step process; first, the acts are ordered by assigning numbers to the acts and secondly, the best act is chosen based on whether the expected outcomes are good or bad. (Clement1990; Bernstein 1996.) Probability sampling of decisions and decision

making rules is what this paper will not go in to reasons being that, decision making in this study is only relevant to administrative organization.

2.4.1. Decision making

As stated by Natale, Libertella, and Rothschild (1995), a decision is a selection between two alternatives. Such courses of action are chosen by administrators and or managers not for themselves but for the administration and entire public. Those at the top of the administration may take decisions or make managerial decisions which have a strong impact not only on everyone who works with that administration but the entire public. In this respect, administrators and or managers cannot afford to make casual decisions. Administrators must therefore learn to approach decisions with importance to the decision process. The primary motive of making any decision is to set up and achieve administrative objectives and goals

Decisions are further categorize in to two. These include decisions that are common to the managers such as scheduling, recruitment, selection and firing. On the other end are uncommon decisions which are taking by public administrators as well as managers on a less frequent basis and have long term effect on the entire population. These may include; changes in strategies such as the case of decentralization policy, allocation of resources to name a few. It is worthy to note that, administration is a continuous process, an ongoing entity and as such, decisions made today might have severe consequences in future. This is why a skillful and knowledgeable administrator must look towards the future effect of a decision before adopting it.

All aspect of administration and management are affected by decision making. Decision making is therefore part of every administrator's job. It is thus, an integral part of the administration of any kind of public policy and as noted by Dawson (1993), competence in this activity is what differentiates the administrator from non-administrators. Decisions for administrators span from relatively unimportant to crucial ones and an administrator can determine the importance of a decision by posing a series of questions such as;

- What will be the effect of this decision on the overall goal and objectives of this policy?
- What proportion of the population will be affected?
- What amount of resources is involved?
- What is the relative occurrence of this type of decision?

Answers to such questions give the administrator or manager the possibility to prioritize the decisions to be made in order of preference or importance. The administrator is then expected to spend more time on the prioritize decisions once this is done (Phillips 1995).

On the other end, Organizational, personnel, program or budgets constitute the more or less general type of problems encountered by the public sector manager and these also laid the foundation for the demands of effective decision making as well as the structure of a regular decision situation. A typical decision situation that pertains to program takes into considerations, administration and cost effectiveness, allocation, efficiency, selection and planning while a typical decision situation that pertains to budgets takes into considerations the policy and structure which includes legislation and operating cost. On the other end, personnel management also constitutes another typical decision which situation which includes decision pertaining to confrontation such as dismissal, retirement, demotion, training, classification and placement. As such, the type of decision situation determines the structure of decisions in the public sector (Clerk & Shrode 1979).

However, decision making at the level of the community and natural resource management is entirely a different thing and requires democracy and community participation in the execution of decisions. Research conducted in two Southern communities with regards to community decision making found community administrators to be highly involved in and dominant over community decision making (Jennings 1963).

2.4.2. Ethical Decision Making

Ethics comprises of the standard of behavior that is accepted by our society. It refers to well established standards of right and wrong that states what individuals should do, generally in terms of right requirements, fairness and benefit of society. Acting constantly in conformity to a set of principles or values give rise to an ethical system. The system is judged to be good or moral to the extent that it empowers and add more value to the community and the individuals who make up the community. (Thompson 1988.) We express ethics in our actions and the decisions we make every day as public administrators to work for the public interest rather than personal gain and interest. As such, ethics entails selflessness and sacrifices which is the major criterion for honesty in public administrators. (Fleishman 1987.) The need of the community to be well-versed such that officials are answerable to the public in theory as well as in reality and the necessity for the citizens to develop a sense of trust in public administrators established on the citizen's conclusion that administrators are inspired in their actions by concern with the wide interest of community and not by constricted interest of self-ambition are the two important standards in a democratic society. (Richter, Burke & Doig 1990.)

The incorporation of this ethics principle constitutes the frame work for an ethical system (York 1988). This includes; conformity to the law and honesty which entails commitment to speak the truth, fulfill promises and abide by the law as fundamental to ethical conduct; democratic responsibility which is essential to encourage and achieve a high level of interaction with groups and citizens that have assorted perspectives in pursuing a public interest; Public interest: here, justice is a principal rule of operation in trailing the public interest and evading any conflict interest. It is the responsibility of public officials to pursue the public interest and understand that the welfare and needs of a majority of citizens are greater than personal needs. Therefore, the dissemination of benefits and the subsequent financial burden should result in the equivalent treatment for all. (Bonczek 1992.) The values of any organizations are thus echoed in the quality of decisions that are arrived at and more so, where a public office happens to be a public trust, the questions of ethics have a specific impact. Administrators with real

responsibilities contend that long term achievement is centrally reliant on credibility, reliability, integrity, and ethics. (Bonczek 2011.)

However, as Van Wart (1996) further notes, the numerous roles and or value sets of administrators constitute the sources for the decisions they arrive at and this is one of the most generally agreed-upon perceptions in the field of public administration. For instance, an administrator may focus quite properly on organizational issues at one point, legal issues at another point, and personal interests on the other end still. However, many scholars have consciously separated the roles to cover all the most important decision-making bases. Following such a distinction, Dobel (1990) defines and identifies three roles of public administrators which include; personal responsibility, regime accountability, and prudence as the solutions to the ethical decision-making fusion. In the same vein, Denhardt Kathryn (1991) distinguishes benevolence, justice and honor as the three "moral foundations," while Cooper (1990) categorizes four sources of ethical decision making which includes; individual attributes, organization structure and culture, societal expectations and individual attributes. On the other end, Warwick (1981) also identified and stated four sources which include personal interest, bureaucratic interest, constituency interest and public interest.

Van Wart (1996: 526) further notes that, whereas the hitches of role identification and role description are mainly intellectual challenges, ethical decision making challenges for practitioners are severe when valid role functions compete. As indicated by empirical studies, "some of management's toughest dilemmas occur in trying to strike a balance between competing objectives". Research has further attests to the fact that, most managers and administrators in various occupations commit the same type of errors after considering or taking an ethical decision. Such errors are refer to as the decision trap.

2.4.3. Decision traps

Natale et al. (1995), define the decision trap as common errors made by administrators or managers after adopting an important decision. Such errors can be identified easily

with various sections of the decision making process. To this effect, Russo and Schoemaker (1990) put forward and elaborated the ten common errors which administrators and or managers repeatedly commit. These include;

Immersion: generating a collection of information and arriving at conclusions without initially taking time off to think about the core of the issue that confronts a manager and or administrator or to think through the process of making such a decision; Structure blindness: attempting to select alternatives for the wrong problems because they have created a mental framework for their decision arbitrarily. Consequently, ignore the best option and lose sight of essential objectives; Lack of perspectives: the inability to define the problem adequately or getting diverted by the opinions of others; over reliance on your judgments: the inability to collect information because the decision maker is exaggeratedly confident of their own opinions and assumptions.

Imprudent shortcut: reliant on extraneous “rules of thumb” such as trusting the most readily available information without questions or basing conclusions on convenient facts only; Lack of organize procedures: neglecting to develop a methodical system to classify the information which has been revealed, thereby hindering the decision making process; Group/process deficiency: entrusting too much confidence in the people involved and assuming that good decisions will be arrive at and therefore failing to manage the group decision process; Fooling yourself about feedback: inadequate interpretation of the result from prior decisions due to the fact that decision makers’ ego will not allowed them to believe that they have previously taking a bad decision; Insufficient analysis: reliant on experience alone and failing to uphold systematic record for analysis which will disclose the problems in the decision making process and; Neglecting to validate the decision process: the absence of an organization structure to audit the decision process thereby exposing the manager and or administrator to all the above mentioned traps. Natale et al. (1995:7.)

It is worthy to not that these decision making traps are responsible to an extent for the inability of administrators and or managers to successfully implement government policies such as the case of the decentralization of forest resource management in

Cameroon where poorly administered policies based on poor decision making mechanisms have had serious effects on the local population. Thus, with the careful avoidance of such decision making traps, managers and or administrators can further initiate or develop a decision making process which will lead to improved decision making and better outcomes.

2.4.4. Strategic decision making

Decision making constitute the core of what managers and administrators do. It always requires more than an individual action and most especially when it has to do with major strategic matters; they execute the decisions as part of a social process involving many others that may become strained over an extensive period. Effective decision making is not something that is always successful in achieving what was envisioned, and what was intended is not always clear, but nonetheless strategic decisions are the core of successful organizations. Three types of strategic decision making process have been identified and include sporadic, fluid and constricted processes.

A sporadic decision-making process is one that is informally intermittent and prolonged. A decision conceived in a sporadic manner is likely to run into more distracting delays, as a result of all sorts of obstacles that might range from having to wait for a report to resistance from the meeting. Also, some scope for negotiation would have taking place following a great deal of on and off informal contact and discussion. It would take even longer to get a decision, and the decision would eventually be made at the highest level.

On the other end, Fluid decision making process is quite the reverse of sporadic process. Not too much informal activity is allowed along the corridors of decision in the administrative block or executive suite, despite the fact that it also creates room for negotiations just like the sporadic process. Most of the decisions in the fluid process are executed in a comparatively formal setting of meetings. More so, most of the discussion is transacted through pre-arranged working parties, project groups, boards, sub-committees to name a few. Delays and impediments are thus less expected. Few sources of expertise are consulted, and there is a relatively unvarying degree of confidence in

their views and information and even though the decision is probably to be taken at a correspondingly high level, it will take a shorter time to arrive at the decisions say within months other than years.

Conversely, constricted processes seem to share some of the delays encountered by the sporadic process even more than the fluids process does at any rate. Like the sporadic process, it draws its conclusion on several sources of information and views, and is not so focused on committees. However, the main difference between the constricted decision process and sporadic as well as fluids is that, it allows very minimal scope for negotiation pertaining to the decision, and the decision is made at a level lesser than the highest authority even though it is still high in the hierarchy considering that it is a strategic decision. The constricted process is however unique in the sense that, it tends to be more restrained and held in than any of the two types. While it draws on the views and information of relatively few external experts and departmental, what is required is readily accessible and requires no excessive effort to get it. More so, the organization does not undertake and special external investigations and there are no undue difficulties internally in merging and blending disparate material. The constricted process is further neither so informally active compared to what the sporadic processes tend to be, nor so formally active within meetings and committees as fluid processes tend to be. It completes with a decision that is arrived at without any requirement from the higher authorities or board, but then, the chief executive can still possibly make the decision without higher recourse. (Hickson, Butler, Cray, Mallory & Wilson 1989.)

2.4.5. Decision making process

According to Natale et al. (1995), a decision making process is thought of as, a series of stages that managers and administrators go through before arriving at a decision. As seen from the definition of decision making, one can quickly conclude that, it is relatively easy to make a decision since all its entails is choosing a course of action within alternatives. However, the decision making process is composed of some fundamental elements which every decision maker is compelled to go through either consciously or unconsciously. This serves as a justification to the reason why the

manner in which managers or administrators make decisions span from spontaneous to highly reason. The spontaneous approach is characterized by judgment, intuition and sometimes emotion while decision making based on the highly reasoned approach takes the form of a highly prescriptive decision or analytic approach because the approach is neat, orderly and structured. (Holloman 1989.) To this effect, the elements which characterize this highly reason or spontaneous decision making are further elaborated. They constitute the decision making process and include;

Recognizing the problem and framing; first and foremost, the acknowledgement of the fact that a problem has risen is imperative for managers and or administrators. Consequently, the manager or administrator frames the question which pertains to the issue at stake; Defining the problem and marshalling data: secondly, there is need for managers to find out the clear facts and the slightest available information necessary to make the decision. Good decision makers deal with intelligent gatherings with premeditated effort because of its extreme significance to the process. (Russo & schoemaker, 1990.); Timing and the changing situation: thirdly, a sense of timing must be developed by managers on when to make a decision or not. For instance, an alternative that is chosen can be affected dramatically by the different modes people express (Mescon et al. 1988).

Assuming too much: it is imperative for managers to be aware of and place proper emphasis on intuition particularly if it should contradict the indication of all the data (Fulmer, 1988).; Chosen alternatives: an orderly approach forces manager to scrutinize many aspects of the problem. It is obligatory for administrators to develop and assess alternative solutions to each problem (Russo & schoemaker 1990).; keeping the decision flexible: administrators must endeavor to avoid a close ended decision that is impossible to reverse or readjust. Modification is a necessity. Decisions occasionally need to be altered along the way. What is essential is flexibility of style and a promptness to change when suitable (Phillips, 1995.); Displaying guts: even though managers aspire to be supported by their peers' fellow employees, it is imperative for them to select the best alternatives when making important decisions and not give in to pressure. It takes guts to stand alone. (Fulmer, 1988.)

Adopting the best alternatives: A logical and rational process usually results in selecting the best alternative. Conversely, managers must rely on instincts in the absence or unavailability of all the facts. The decision usually becomes more intuitive under conditions of uncertainty and risk. Nevertheless, both intuitive and analytical thought processes are imperative. But it is necessary occasionally and when need be to alter a more analytical approach and to take a “leap of faith.” (Holloman 1992.); implementing the decision: judgment is usually a ground work for action. Administrators who are scared of action increase the groundwork. Time is the core, as a result once a decision has been reached, implementation is indispensable (Huse 1979). and; Evaluating prior decisions; lastly, managers need to set up a system of learning from results of previous decisions. This scheme must incorporate tracking all related decisions that have been completed previously (Russo & Schoemaker 1990).

Decision making for decades has been conceived largely as a selection from within alternatives with less focus on the manner in which it is constructed and executed. Nowadays, increasing recognition is ascribed to the decision making process by decision makers in order to anticipate the effects of choices made. In this respect, adopting and adapting the decision making process as elaborated above will lead to more effective decision making and future administrators and or managers will be better placed to adapt and adjust to societal dynamics by initiating decision making skills that can survive in an often unpredicted society.

2.4.6. Decision making and the execution of decisions

It is obvious that the employees at the lowest level of the administrative hierarchy are those who execute the actual physical task of the organizations’ objectives. For instance, the field staff and not the mayor go to the field. The Mayor works by assigning specific tasks to subordinate units. Every organization or administrative unite is therefore composed of two set of people. These are; the supervisory employees and the operative employees. The supervisory employees (non-operative staff) take part in the accomplishment of the organization objectives by exerting control over the decisions of

the employees at the lowest level of administrative hierarchy. As elaborated by Simon (1997: 2), the influence of supervisory employees on operative employees may be direct though further interceded between the supervisors and operative employees in units of any size, numerous levels of intermediate supervisors who are themselves under the control of the supervisory employees but who convey, detailed and amend these influences before they are received by operative employees.

Simon further notes that, the creation of a proficient administrative organization will remain a problem if one consider the above description of the administrative process as accurate because the description seems to him, a task of putting in place an operative staff and over imposing on those staff, a supervisory staff capable of controlling or influencing the operative group towards a model of coordinated and effective behavior. Furthermore, the phrase influencing rather than directing is used. To Simon, the creation of administrative organization takes more than just assignment of functions and allocation of authority. To him, operative employees must constitute the pivot of attention because the success of the structure will be assessed by their performance. Unfortunately, the reverse is true in reality.

2.4.7. Facts, Value, Rationality and the Limit of Rationality in Decision

Individuals' behavior within administrative organization is purposive, geared towards goals or objectives. This purpose provides a basic criterion in determining 'what things are to be done' considering that administration consist of "getting things done" by groups of people. (Simon 1997:3.) Each decision has to do with the selection of goals and a behavior pertinent to it. These decisions are refer to as value judgments so long as they are geared towards the selection of ultimate goals and are as well refer to as factual judgments so long as they involve the implementation of such goals. The notion of purposiveness connotes the idea of hierarchy of decisions. Behavior is purposive so long as it is guided by common goals or objectives and it is rational so long as it chooses alternatives which are favorable to the achievement of the preceding selected goals. As such, good administration is behavior that is practically adapted to its end. However, rationality in decision has its limits especially as it holds that;

- Rationality requires a complete knowledge and expectation of the consequences that will follow on each choice when in essence; knowledge of consequences is always uneven.
- It holds that; since the consequences lie in future, imagination must furnish the absence of experienced in attachment value to them. But value can only be imperfectly predictable.
- Rationality requires a choice amid all likely alternative behaviours when in actual behaviour, only a very few of all these likely alternatives ever come to mind. (Simon 1997: 93-94.)

2.4.8. Decision making in the administrative process

As noted by Delmer (1998), administrative decision-making make up the most significant emphasis of administrative behavior. As one author notes, decision-making is the core of administration (Landau 1962). However, administrative activity is principally a group activity. In this respect, administrative processes are techniques which facilitate the development of processes for the application of organized effort to group task. Administrative processes are thus decisional processes and consist in splitting up a number of elements in the decision of members of the organization and setting up habitual organizational procedures to choose and resolve these elements and to transmit them to the members concerned. The administrative organization further takes some of the decisional autonomy from the individual and substitute for its organizational process of decisional making.

Administrative organization decision making that pertains to individual simply state his or her functions by defining the nature and scope of his activities. It also allocates authority and decides on whom to have powers to make or influence decisions for the individuals within the organization. It further sets limits to these choices as are required to coordinate the duties of groups of individuals in the organization. As further elaborated by Gulick and Urwick (1937), the administrative organization is typified by specialization. Specific tasks are delegated to specific sections of the organization. It is worthy to note that, specializations takes the form of vertical division of labor and a

hierarchy or pyramid of authority can be set up with less or greater formality and the functions of decision making may be specialized among the members of this hierarchy.

Based on the above ramification, the decision making process in administrative process is further divided into sub processes which include; setting the agenda, representing the problem, finding alternatives and selecting and evaluating alternatives (Langley et al.1995). However, as Simon (1997) further notes, these division of the process of decision making into sub process have witness criticism from some authors who describe it falsely as a linear process and thereby rendering the process rigid. To Simon, there is no implication in this division and the sub processes must not follow an established order. Rather, agenda setting and resetting is an ongoing process that is subject to modification so long as there is need for the search for new decisions and alternatives as well as the selection of alternatives or a new occasion for new decisions come up. Moreover, a discovery of an alternative in one decision making process may find it effective usefulness and application in connection with a quite different decision in somewhat later time. As such, the administrative decision making process is not static.

2.3.9 Decision making in Forest Resource Management Planning

According to Knoke, et al. (2010), the development of forest management could be traced to the German speaking countries where forest management used to be a well-developed and recognized discipline in forest science. However, such forest management has since gain prominence following the well-established and elaborated planning techniques and theoretical forest models. This increased development of forest management has since continued in the English speaking countries as demonstrated by high standards and up to date text books such as that of Davis et al. (2001), Bettinger et al. (2009) to name a few.

As noted by Bettinger et al. (2009) forest management planning is viewed as a decision making process in which management activities are coordinated at the enterprise level of the forest over a medium to long term period. As they further note,

the development of a typical management plan is the end result of this process and embodies all activities that can be executed to meet the objectives of the land owners in the best possible way.

Knoke and Weber (2006) further add that, the central objective of forest management planning centers around the integration of stakeholder's interest and sustainability goals, a subject which further addresses social and ecological aspects in addition to economic objectives. In this regard, a forest management plan often follows numerous steps in order to effectively apply a typical decision making process. Such steps unfold with an outline of the management objectives, next by identification of management alternatives and lastly by selection of best or preferred approach. Nevertheless, the validity of the approach is only felt if there is the availability of adequate information regarding the condition of a specific management area, and also if anticipation with regards to the resource development under the distinguish management strategies are possible. (Knoke et al. 2010.)

The values and preference of the decision maker determines the selection of the best planning alternative during the planning process. As such, there may be a distinct objective component in the decision making pertaining to forest resource management, reasons being that preferences and values vary amongst various institutions and persons and may thus show considerable variations. In a nut shell, the decision making stages for forest management planning could be summarized in the form of a circle where the monitoring and updating of the management plan feed back to the structure of goals, to the inventory concepts and to the formulation of management alternatives as shown below.

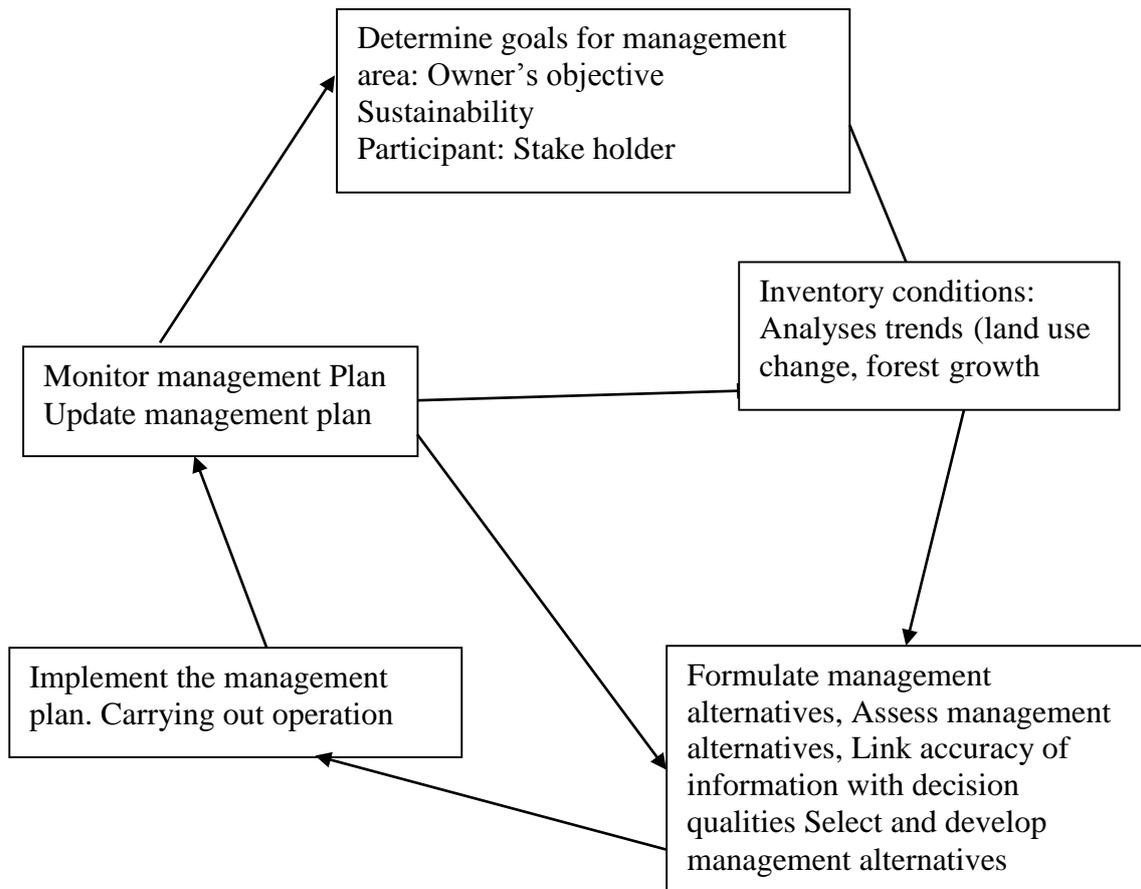


Figure 1. Decision making in Forest Management planning (Knoke et al. 2010: 772).

As noted by Knoke et al. (2010:3), decision making in forest management planning is affected most by the degree of accuracy of information. Thus, accuracy of information is directly connected to the quality of decision making in forest management planning. As they further note, “the value of information is non consumptive by its nature” instead, information creates value because it provides the means for efficient decisions that meet the management objectives. Thus, the availability of excellent information and a sensible use of it might reduce the opportunity cost of making poor decisions. In this respect, most reviews have tended to associate the accuracy of information with the consequences of decisions which has gone a long way to make up a decision oriented approach in forest management planning. (Kangas 2010.)

2.3.10. Management in the context of forest resource

Forest resource refers to “resources and values associated with forests. This includes timber, wildlife, recreation, botanical products, forage and biological diversity” (Forest Practices Code of British Columbia Act). Before now, forest was build to supply “high yield wood” but nowadays, the forest is no longer seen as “agglomeration of trees” conceived mainly in terms of its useful values, but instead as a “complex biological system with intrinsic value.” (Agnoletti & Anderson 2000: 47-48.) Decentralization of forest resources is argued to be necessary for equitable and inclusive development because forest resources serve as a source of local livelihood for the local population and also as a source of wealth to the government through revenue generated from tax fees and logging. (Ribot 2003: 54.)

According to Agnoletti and Anderson, forest resource management is “organized production” and is one aspect of state administration to “transform all sort of activities left to habitatto a science”. The outcome is “the quantification and rationalization of nature and the regulation of economic practices.” (2000:48.) In this respect, forest resource management refers here to precautionary approaches taking to ensure efficient, effective and sustainable use of forests by different actors who have access and or control over it. This involves people, government and NGOs, planning, organizing, establishing rules and regulations governing forests, and respecting forest use norms based on their different interest and for purposes of sustainability. The importance of natural resource management varies according to different forest users or actors. Successful natural resource management would lead to “increased resource productivity, increased conservation and increased access to resource use by local people” (Raik & Decker 2007: 3). Raik and Decker claim that effective and efficient natural resource management has to take into account the linkages between sectors related to natural resources and interaction between people, nature, wealth and power as illustrated below; (2007:6.)

Table 2. An Analytical framework of successful natural resource management (Raik & Decker 2007:7).

Analytical framework	Community	State forest agency	Conservation – oriented NGO
People	Use of forest products for medicinal plants, construction materials, firewood and food	Educate local people about rules and policies governing legal forest use	Ensure that people continue to value the forest and ensure its conservation
Nature	Conserve forest use and cultural values for future generations	Conserve forest use value for renewable use by future generations	Conserve forest biodiversity for future generation
Wealth	Receive financial benefit from the forest	Exploit forest resources for the economic gain of the local people, e.g timber sales and agency, e.g timber permits	Ensure that local people have the necessary resources so that pressure on forest is reduced
Power	Forest agents enforce the laws and keep illegal loggers out of the community forest areas, keep migrants from using local forest resources	Ensure that the communities are adhering to the conditions set forth in contracts, ensure more efficient use of agency staff with respect to forest patrols and monitoring	Ensure that the state forest agency prosecutes illegal forest users

The promoters of decentralization and local democracy are interested in the management of natural resources and use because it serves as a “source of power and revenue and therefore potential legitimacy for new local government authorities” (Ribot 2003:54).

2.5. Summary

This chapter has been on the elaboration of central concepts, theory and a historical review on forest resource management in Cameroon. Major concepts such as forest resource management, decentralization, principles of administration and decision making have been defined and elaborated upon. The decision theory which constituted the framework of analysis in this study has also been reviewed and analyzed from different angles of administration and management but with main focused on decision making in forest resource management. Reviews have shown that the decision making process is always beautifully spelled out by decision makers in management plans. But the problem remains on whether such decisions are implemented as such or they just end up on paper. Secondly, most decision makers are caught in the decision making process by decision making traps making it difficult to achieve the expected results or meet the objectives. These have often led to severe consequences on the part of the beneficiaries and project or policy at stake and this is what this paper intends to examine in the case of the administration of the forest management decentralization policy in Cameroon. This review on the central theory will therefore, enable the researcher to analyze and compare theory and practice. In this respect, the implementation of forest management decentralization policy in Cameroon with respect to decision making is further outlined and analyzed in the subsequent chapter. But before we look into that, it is necessary to state the method and material used in this study.

3. METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION

3.1. Introduction

The earlier section has been on a detailed discussion of the theoretical concepts, with main focus on the theory of administration and decision making wherein, the principles of administration, the decision theory together with the decision making process and decision traps, as well as decision making in forest resource management planning amongst other sub topics have been reviewed and analyzed. The historical review of forest management in Cameroon has also been looked at. The proceeding section therefore outlines the procedures that will be used to carry out the entire research.

3.2. The Research Process

3.3. Qualitative research

This study is mainly qualitative, based on a desk review and online interviews. Here, data are sorted and categorized to comprehend and describe situations and behaviors (Quimbe 2011). It consists of four phases. Phase one consists of survey of existing relevant literature such as journals and books with emphasis on the decision making process in forest resource management planning. As noted by Yang and Gerald (2008) books constitute an excellent source of information but they are generally more dated than journals. However, the greatest strength of books lie in the coverage it can provide over older subjects. In this study, both books and journals provide a qualitative sight and a broader understanding of the subject under study. As noted by Hutton (1990), a survey of such existing relevant literature is imperative to have a qualitative sight and to boost the understanding and level of knowledge of the research theme. In this regard, the review of literature in this study provides an excellent knowledge and understanding of the role of decision making in public administration as a whole and in the management and implementation of forest resource management. Moreover, the review

also points out certain factors that have an impact on the decision making process such as the decision traps which serve as a basis for a critical analysis in phase 3 of the study.

3.4. Document analysis

Survey of ministerial policy documents and decrees with regards to key policies in the area of forest management resource in Cameroon is very important in this study as it provides a lot of detail information with respect to public administration and the implementation and management of decision making within forest resource management in Cameroon. It therefore provides primary data which are very reliable and accurate. These documents also play a vital role in collecting data for the cases under study. Such ministerial documents which are used in this study include Cameroon Law No. 94/01 of January 20, 1994 on the Regime of Forestry, Wildlife and Fisheries and associate articles specifying the enforcement degrees in different areas. These law and associate articles are available online under the Cameroon ministry of Forestry and wildlife.

Other documents used include certifications and articles bearing deliberations on the Dimako municipal council, partnership agreement between the municipality and the government, case studies on legal compliance on the forest sectors by municipalities and communities with forest, reports on seminar carried out on the functioning of community forest in Yaounde, as well as ministerial documents and decrees on the elaboration of forest management plans and procedures for implementation and exploitation of the forest. Other documents also include ministerial reports on the evaluation of forest resources as well as reports on transparency in the forest sector and the country's forestry profile which can be found online.

3.5. Interviews

As noted by Fontana and Prokos (2007), interviewing is one of the most easiest and powerful means in which we endeavor to comprehend our fellow humans. It includes a wide range of forms and array of uses. Most common forms involves individuals, and includes face to face verbal interviews, mail or self-administered close or open ended questionnaires, telephone surveys to name a few. They can be unstructured, semi structured or structured and it can be used for a wide variety of research and academic analysis as in the case of this study.

According to Yin (1994), interview constitutes a very vital source of information in research. In this study, semi structured open ended questions were administered through telephone. The interviewees were mainly Phd students who were actively conducting field research in the same field of study in the field and an expert, the CEO of Erudef, a Non Governmentary Organization in charge of the protection of forestry and wildlife operating in the field. The open ended questions allow the respondents to freely air out their views and or share their perceptions on the issue at stake (Silverman 1993). It also allows the researcher to compare their responses to early research findings on the same subject as well as provide information on the current situation of decision making in forest resource management in Cameroon.

However, it was not at all easy to carry out the interviews in this study as the strength of researcher to effectively carryout the interviews was somehow limited by financial constrains as she could not go to field to make a face to face interview. It was not also easy to find respondents who are willing to take part in the interview as the subject at stake was somehow a technical one and nobody wants to be caught for revealing some one's identity or terming somebody as corrupt. More so, the inhabitants of these areas where the case studies are chosen are French speaking Muslims who are not very hospital and it requires translating the interviews to French language in order for them to understand.

Notwithstanding, I was somehow fortunate as it was easier for me identify and work with the head of an NGO that is operating on the same field and two PHD students who were also actively conducting field research in the same area. These were the only people I believe could give me genuine and unbiased information from the field. The interview was mainly through telephone conversation though it was somehow constantly disrupted by poor network.

The interview questions were as follows:

1. What procedure is used to formulate a forest resource management committee within the council and the community?
2. Who are the sole decision makers?
3. How are proceeds from the forest managed or used?
4. How often do they organize meetings to update and consult the local community?
5. Are they accountable at all to the local community?

The interviews were further used in the subsequent chapter to make a critically analysis of the issue at stake.

3.6. Case Study

Phase two is based on selected case studies. According to Stake (1995), case study remains one of the most commonly used and also the most excellent and well known approaches in qualitative research. He further notes that, it is very receptive to research questions of why and how, and provides the world of academia or the academic community with a flexible framework for investigating a holistic occurrence in its novel state. In the same vein, Yin (1994) further articulates that, a case study can also be qualified as a realistic investigation into an accessible event that happens or take place in actual life situations. It is in this respect that this research uses real life findings from intensive case studies of communities with councils and community forests in Cameroon. The case studies of Dimako and Kongo Council and Community Forest Eastern region are carefully chosen for this study because dimako as confirmed is the

most advanced council forest in Cameroon with a management plan that sets 70% of its area for logging. (Oyono 2004a.)

3.7. The Dimako Council Forest

Dimako is a Sub Division in the upper Nyang Division of the Eastern region of Cameroon. It covers a surface area 36,384km. Dimako is the most advanced council forest in Cameroon with a management plan that sets 70% of its area for logging. This council serves as a source of inspiration for many types of councils. (Oyono 2004a.) However, the creation involves the following steps

Table 3. Steps for the creation of a council forest case of Dimako (MINEF 1994; Oyono et al, 2007:5).

The Creation of Dimako Council Forest
Classification of the forest, for which local communities were consulted
Drafting of a management plan, by a joint French-Cameroonian project, using socioeconomic data and forest inventories;
Organizational arrangements, which led to the formation of the Consultative Management Committee, with a representative of each of the 17 villages that comprise Dimako Rural Council as well as statutory members, and a Monitoring Committee
legal and administrative procedures, including: approval of the management plan by the Ministry in charge of forests (formerly MINEF, now MINFOF) A Prime Ministerial Decree with regard to the official classification of the forest on behalf of the council in June 2001
Official authorization, implying that exploitation of the forest could begin

Although logging operations were meant to take off in 2003, it was until 2005 that effective logging began in the Dimako forest. It is estimated that the forest has generated up to CFA 72, 210, 000 francs till date.

3.8. Kongo Community Forest

Kongo village community like the Dimako is found in Upper Nyong division of the East region of Cameroon. It constitutes part of the Dja forest, found in the ever green forest of Cameroon-Congolese. Kongo is endowed with a high level of biodiversity and has above 1600 species of trees of high commercial value. Kongo has a population of about 500 inhabitants. The forest ecosystem is also known for its rich floristic potentials. The Kongo's community forest occupies 3,000 hectares. It was created officially in 2000 with the endorsement of the management agreement between the village community and the ministry of environment and forestry.

“The ceremony presided by Lazare Mpouel Bala, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Environment and Forests, was the culmination of several years’ work and a long process patiently led by the SNV/SDDL project, with the support of the Community Forestry Unit (MINEF), in the villages of Kongo, Eshimbora/Malen, Koungoulou, Ngola, and Moangé-Le-Bosquet. [...] SDDL’s work was fundamental to a number of village communities finally becoming the direct managers of 16,532 hectares of their own forests [...] Although many questions have still not been answered, particularly those concerning the way in which resources are actually exploited and the revenue from them judiciously allocated, it can be said that the five village communities have taken an important step [...] Euphoria reigns in Lomié, as the five villages plan their future, sometimes with hope bordering on utopia. Each has its own priorities: habitat improvement, construction of roads or schools, the production of new food or cash crops [...] however, just knowing that they will no longer be mere passive spectators of the exploitation of the forest’s resources by outsiders, and unscrupulous outsiders at that, is an undeniable psychological plus and represents a considerable achievement.” (Nchoankwi 2000:20.)

Many expectations were raised in the local community by the establishment of community forest as they saw this as an opportunity for “making a living from the forest”. However, as it was prescribed by the legal procedures and methodological instrument that a legally recognized management body known as “the manager” should be created to oversee the smooth running of the community forest, the Kongo

community forest management committee (KOBANKO) was mandated in 1997 with the guidance of the procedure manual. It emerged as a GIC in 1997 and by 1998; it was uplifted to the status of an association. While this period could be seen as a critical moment in relation to “organizational and institutional arrangements” for local governance of the community forest, the creation of KOBANKO brought several changes which were very significant. The local population was already well informed of the meaning of “community forest”, the “policy reasoning behind it” (more responsibilities to be transferred to the local population and improving on their wellbeing by redressing their aged old demand and socioeconomic injustices), and the role of local governance, through the information and awareness campaign that was organized for them. (MINEF 2001.)

The primary motive of this section has been to develop an empirical design in order to tackle the research problem. In this respect, the section started with a review on the process of the research and tools which had to do with survey of literature, case study, interviews and survey of ministerial documents and decrees. These tools provide the researcher with adequate information that is used in providing answers to the research questions

4. FINDINGS

4.1. Introduction

The procedures used in conducting this research have been provided in the previous chapter. Emphasis is placed on tools used to carry out the research and the research process in general. This chapter therefore presents the results and findings with an effort to analyze them. The chapter focuses on providing answers to the objectives and research question which was to examine why decision making in decentralized forest resource management has failed to achieve desired results of sustainable forest resource management and local development in the Dimako Council and Kongo Community Forests and also to find out the possible implications and outcomes of the failure of the implementation of these managerial decisions on the development of the local community and country as whole. Information on the case studies in the previous chapter therefore give the researcher the opportunity to triangulate with the reviews in Chapter two in order to provide sufficient information on the set back of this policy reform. The chapter further presents the findings based on the literature, cases under study and interviews.

The objectives of this chapter are therefore to:

- Identify and analyse reasons that justify the failure of the implementation of decision making functions in the cases under study in the light of the reviews in chapter two
- Identify and analyse local level outcomes of the process

4.2. The management committee of Dimako forest

As noted by Oyono (2004), deliberation No 01/D/CR/DKO of the Dimako Municipal Council, a decentralized assembly which represents the localities of Dimako Municipal Council led to the creation of Dimako Council Forest Management Consultative

Committee. This committee is made up of 17 members, selected by the 17 communities that make up the council along with “Statutory” members selected and recruited by municipal authorities and state administration (Durrieu de Madron et al. 1998). Membership into the Dimako council forest management consultative committee takes different modes of representation.

The first of which is competitive elections which Overdevest (2000) and Ribot (2001) describe as generally the most efficient and effective means of achieving representative decision making and democracy. This elective mechanism seems to function to a greater extent in a transparent manner in the Dimako Council under expert’s supervision from the Forêts et Terroirs Project (Asembe 200). This mechanism is clearly noted in this committee as members are made up of elective representatives from each of the 17 communities of the Dimako Council.

Appointment of members by a consensus is also another form of representation in the Dimako forest management committee as noted by Oyono (2004) and confirmed by Ofoulhast-Othamot, (2011). In all six communities, a member was appointed to the Dimako Council Management Consultative Committee by consensus, chosen from individuals who volunteered to be the village representatives. According to the locals, these are individuals who owing to their integrity and status are fit or able to negotiate alliances that eventually result in consensus. Statutory appointments also constitute another form of representations. This is usually based on appointments where members are selected and appointed following their existing status and in accordance with the necessary legal provisions. This is the situation in the Dimako council forest management committee where 9 non community members and 17 community representatives became members by virtue of statutory appointments. As Assembe (2000) and Ofoulhast-Othamot (2011) note on the quality of members of this committee, the Mayor is automatically the president and head of the committee, the representative of the Forêts et Terroirs Project is the councilor, other members are leaders of each commission of the municipal council and elected representatives of each community.

Self-appointment is also another mode of representation in which persons such as notables, village chiefs and the elites nominate themselves as members of a committee. As Oyono further notes, a chief of a community in the Dimako district admits to have appointed members of the Forestry fees management committees without the knowledge of the community and there is no specification on the duration and time limit of these committees. Vertical co-option also constitutes another mode of representation where a chief of a community already self appointed as a member, still co-opt his supporters, dependents and individuals who as members are answerable to him. This is common and visible in the establishment of forestry fees management committees as seen in the case of five communities in the Dimako district. It is necessary in this study to elaborate on these different modes of representation because as reviews articulate, these different modes of representation constitute the basis of mismanagement of decision making functions in forest resource management planning in Cameroon.

4.2.1. Objectives of the management committee of the Dimako forest

The Committee members have as objectives the power and discretion to;

“(a) take part in all of the operations arising from the organization of this forest and its profit to the Council; (b) to recommend to the Municipal Council any suggestions toward a healthy, transparent, profitable, and sustainable management of said forest; (c) to put forward to the Municipal Council a balanced plan for the utilization of the income through cautious selection of projects on a village-by-village basis”. The goal of the Committee is to administer the Council forest. This Committee does not act as a replacement for the Municipal Council; rather, it helps the Municipal Council in developing issues that require decision making. It thus, serves as mediator between the populations and the Municipal Council as well as the forestry administration. It ascertains representation of the villages. It formulates and generates questions on the operation of forestry in the Forest. At least on paper, every decisions (of the Committee) are only propositions that are then tabled to the Municipal Council; who can then ratify, modify or discard them” (Deliberation No. 01/D/CR/DKO of the Dimako Municipal Council).

4.2.2. Decision making powers of the local management committee of Dimako Council

The responsibilities and decision making powers of these committees are defined by legal instruments and administrative orders as well as by mandate handed to the committee by the local communities they represent. These decision making powers are stipulated by law No 94/01 of 20 January 1994 and its 1995 enforcement decree. Per this law, it is obligatory for all councils and communities wishing to have access and decision making powers over management of forest and its proceeds, to hold a consultative meeting that includes all mechanisms of the community geared towards selecting and appointing the local body which will be charged with the responsibility to manage the said forest, sets its objectives and define its boundaries. As such, a great deal of decision making power has been devolved to the body in charge of managing council and community forest as the law places the committee in a point of liaison with all external actors. Moreover, the limit of the scope of these responsibilities is not specified. However, two major decision making functions were transferred from the central state and administrative arena. These include that of the interface between the external actors and the population and of monitoring the establishment and implementation of management plan. (Oyono 2004.)

Deliberations and analysis of the effects of different modes of representation in the management committee and the nature and power of this committee will be presented in the proceeding sections after presenting the case of Kongo Community Forest.

4.3. The Kongo Local Community Management Committee

Two preconditions were required for COBANKO to become a management body; the creation of an institutional and executive bureau. The role of the executive bureau was to “implement and regulate” decision making in community forest management. The executive board comprised of a chairman and four appointed (not elected) representatives of the four lineages. The constitution of board of directors was followed by the organization of a consultative meeting during which all internal and external

actors/stakeholders established a unanimous agreement over forests management. This was followed by drafting of a simple management plan which outlines the management of the local community forest, logging plans and micro projects to be executed with revenue accruing from forest (socioeconomic directives of the community). This process was finalized on August 10, 2000, when the Ministry of Environment and Forestry endorsed their management agreement

The executive bureau of COBANKO and its regulations constitute a major department in the organizational framework and institutional arrangements of governance at the local level. With the application of the 1994 Forestry Law, “global powers” were cedes to community forest managers to “represent the local communities”.

4.3.1. Objectives of the Kongo local community management committee

By virtue of the devolved powers vested on the community management committee, COBANKO was charged with the responsibilities of taking decisions on the management of income accruing from forest; following up of the implementation of the Simple management Plan, negotiating with external actors, for the purpose of ensuring socioeconomic development. It is important to note that, no internal rules or regulations, structure, collective code of law, was established with regards to the management of the revenue generated from forest or biophysical management. Rules were less rigid and not explicitly spelled out. No sanctions were put in place for the mismanagement of funds and no framework was established for collective actions regarding expected income generated from the forest and forest management. Moreover, the Annual General Assembly of COBANKO meant to access and evaluates forest management and expected revenue has never taken place. Enyegue (2003a: 6-7) describes the COBANKO structure and objectives as follows;

“COBANKO consists of three bodies. Firstly, there is the general assembly, which is supposed to be held once a year. It should: (i) establish, in general, the way in which the association is run; (ii) evaluate the management plans and the reports of the executive bureau members; (iii) elect the members of the executive bureau; (iv) approve [...] the administrative structure as well as the budget; and (v) draft and modify the association’s basic documents. The general assembly

consists of the founding members (of the association), the executive bureau, the associate members, and all the able-bodied members of the community. Secondly, there is the executive bureau, which consists of the chairman, the deputy chairman, a general secretary responsible for forest operations, a deputy general secretary, and the auditor. Finally, there is a conflict resolution commission, the structure and operation of which have not been clearly established” (Enyegue (2003a: 6-7.)

4.3.2. Decision making powers of the Kongo local community forest management committee.

For the purpose of further discussions in this paper, it is also important to outline the procedures of the “devolved attribute and powers” adapted in local governance units (Government decision making representative entities, the rural council, the community management body) for the management of the community forest. Several parameters were taken into consideration and include; (a) “whether the management committees fulfill their duties; (b) the objective and subjective alliances between the management committees and outsiders, on the one hand, and the structural relationship between the management committees and the rest of their village communities on the other; (c) the functional and morphological changes undergone by the management committees; and (d) the committees’ accountability to the rest of the village”. A description of these parameters is an indication of the local level outcome of devolution and local democracy”. However, before we go into analysis and local level outcomes of the implementation of decision making in decentralized forest resource management planning in Cameroon, it is important to have an overview of the root of public administration in Cameroon and its operational mechanism in the light of decentralized forest resource management. (Oyono et al. 2006: 33-40.)

4.4. Decentralization as a major policy reform in forest resource management in Cameroon

As noted by Oyono (2004:5), decentralization in the Cameroon context refers to “all that is passed from the administrative monolith to diverse managers once territorial

unity is achieved”. That said, three levels of decentralization are dealt with in this study. These include; the central, regional and local level. As noted by Mawhood (1993:19) and Huang (1996:655-659), the central level here refers to the organizing centralizing State, while the “local” level refers to local communities. We also have a regional level, which has an important role to play in this study especially in the area of decision making. It works and collaborates with State representatives, sub-national authorities and council authorities. It thus serves as the connection between the central state and the local bodies.

The decentralization of forest management in Cameroon is built upon three essential values which include;

“the potential for villages to create and manage community, or village, forests; the potential for local governments, more specifically councils, to constitute and manage council forests; and the potential for village communities situated within or bordering logging sites which they have traditional rights, to have access to the profits generated from the forest through a decentralized forestry taxation system.” (Oyono 2004:10.)

4.4.1 Structure of the Cameroon’s Decentralized Forest Resource Management

The 1994 forestry law provides for forestry, wild life regulations amongst others. Modes of implementations of these regulations were outlined in detail by decree (RoC 1995). These varieties of articles, circulars and orders constitute the legal bases for the decentralization of the forest resource management in Cameroon which has as objective to;

*“Promote community participation in forest management (local democracy);
Contribute to poverty reduction;
Contribute to sustainable forest resource management.” (Forestry law 1994; Oyono et al. 2007:3.)*

The 1994 forestry reform further established four basic mechanisms which constitute the foundation of decentralized forest resource management in Cameroon. These mechanisms include;

Council forest

Council forest was the first innovation brought by the new forest policy reform in 1994. Council forest is defined here as “any forest that has been classified and assigned to a council concerned or that was planted by the council on council land.” (RoC 1994.) The boundaries of the designated forest and its management objectives are established by the operation of this classification (Oyono 2004a; Oyono et al. 2007). By the application decree of the 1994 forestry law, ownership rights over biophysical units within a jurisdiction were transferred to the council. Moreover, ownership rights over the financial benefits generated from the exploitation of timber and other forest products were transferred to the council. (RoC 1994; 1995.) As of today, only five council forests have been established and classified in accordance to the law as “council forest”. These councils include, the Dimako, Moloundou and yakadouma Rural Councils in the East region and the Djoum and Sangmelima Rural Councils in the South region. Among these councils, the Dimako council forest is the most advanced council forest (Oyono et al. 2007).

The community Forest

The 1994 forestry law also allows the possibility of village communities to establish community forest. This principle was applied by Forestry Law No 94/01 of January 20, 1994. A community forest is defined according to Article 3 of this implementation decree which was promulgated in 1995 as “a forest of the non-forest permanent estate, subject to a management agreement between a village community and the administration in charge of the forests. The management of such a forest is the responsibility of the village community concerned, with the help or technical assistance of the forestry administration”. The boundaries of the community forest are only set over land which the community concerned has customary rights. On the other hand, the 1994 forestry law further requires the community members wishing to establish a community forest to provide a “simple management plan” in order to have legal recognition. This management plan serves as a contract through which the ministry of

forestry “cedes a plot of the national estate to the village community, for its management, conservation and logging.” (Ministry of Environment and Forests 1999; Oyono et al. 2006:30.)

The community members are further requested to organize themselves to “legal entities” represented by groups of individuals operating with a legal status of an economic interest group, association, common initiative group, cooperatives or non-governmental organization. The mandate to exercise powers transferred to village communities over the community forest and the financial benefit accruing from it is then handed to the “manager” which is the local entity.

The Ministry of Environment and Forestry also developed a manual of “norms and procedures” (a technical tool) for the establishment of community forest. These technical tools together with other circulars outline the methodology and approach for the establishment of the community forest (Bureau Veritas Certification 2006). Conclusions have been made from several studies that a significant contribution to wellbeing and sustainability can be made from community forest management. It is to this effect that the Minister of Environment and Forestry, through the right of pre-emption, under Circular Letter No 518/MINEF/CAB (December 21, 2001), established “priority attribution of any forest likely to be established as a community forest to the neighboring village community”. This was aimed at given priority to village communities over logging companies, when there may be an allocation of forest on auction sales.

Hence priority is given to village community petitions and the forest unit in concern becomes the community forest. This was supposed to be an incentive to enforce the village community’s power over “their” forest while encouraging the creation of community forests. (Oyono. et al. 2006:30; Oyono et al. 2007.) These are very good policies that are however not implemented in practice as shown below in the Manual of Norms and procedures for the attribution and management of the community forest which states that, for a community forest to be established, public awareness and information campaign should be created at the level of the village community that

wishes to apply for a forest; followed by creation of a management entity; marking out of the future community forest description of the community forest; establishment of a simple management plan; agreement and endorsement of the simple management plan by the services of MINFOF and ratification of the management agreement between the village community concerned and MINFOF. (Oyono et. al. 2007:5.)

Parafiscal Community Compensation Mechanism

The village tax and the establishment of socioeconomic amenities to the benefit of the neighboring communities was the second major instrument of the decentralized forestry taxation system. In accordance to Circular Letter No 370/LC/MINEF/CAB), logging companies were obliged to pay FCA 1000 (US \$1.5). This tax which ought to be paid regularly was established by regulations and not included in the finance bill. To further guarantee the effective management of this tax when it was actually paid, new associations were established and village development committees were reactivated. These associations and committee members were elected to serve as representatives of the village communities in all transactions that had to do with finance; deciding on what amount the logging companies will pay, overseeing the implementation of cash registers, making negotiations with entrepreneurs charged with the construction of the agreed-upon socioeconomic infrastructure. (Oyono et al. 2006:31.)

Annual Forest Fees

One of the major provisions of the 1994 Forestry Law is the Annual Forest Fees, though it was only until 1996/1997 that it was implemented. With respect to the annual forest fees, the law states that, “for the development of village communities neighboring the national forest estate, part of the revenue from the sale of the forest product shall be transferred to the local communities according to the mechanism implementing decree” (unofficial translation). This law also provides for the distribution of forests fees which was collected annually as follows; 50% to the state, 40% to the management unit/rural council within the forest community and 10% to the neighboring village. The creation of regional committees or commission for the management of forest fees within each

rural council was also a requirement of the joint ministerial order. In accordance to this order, the village committees were obliged to represent the communities at the regional level/commission within each rural. Regional commission meetings were presided over by the sub divisional officer or mayor while members were made up of village committees. The priorities for socioeconomic development in each village were then established by the commission and village representatives (committee members) after which, a company was contracted for the implementation of the community project. (Oyono et al. 2006:32; Oyono 2004a.)

4.5. Decision making in administration and decentralization of forest resource management in Cameroon

As stated by Natale et al. (1995), a decision is a selection between two alternatives. Such courses of action are chosen by administrators and or managers not for themselves but for the administration and entire public. Those at the top of the administration may take decisions or make managerial decisions which have a strong impact not only on everyone who works with that administration but the entire public. The primary motive of making any decision is to set up and achieve administrative objectives and goals. Decision making in this study is comprised of two categories. These include decisions that are common to the managers such as scheduling, recruitment, selection and firing, and uncommon decisions which are taking by public administrators as well as managers on a less frequent basis and have long term effect on the entire population. They may include; changes in strategies such as the case of decentralization policy, allocation of resources to name a few. It is worthy to note that, administration is a continuous process, an ongoing entity and as such, decisions made today might have severe consequences in future

In Cameroon, decision making connections are initiated by the president of the republic whose political power base is build and consolidated by establishing or putting in place bureaucratic agencies made up of people who share common interest with him. As noted by Mongo (2008), the president achieves this objective through a careful selection

and appointment of ministers, regional governors as well as divisional authorities and director of agencies. This entails that, the president is the sole decision maker in Cameroon.

However, decision making took a new dimension prior to the 1994 Forestry Law which came with the introduction of decentralized forest management. Decentralization of forest management in principle here refers to the redistribution and transfer of decision making powers and rights over resources and management of forest from the central to the local authorities who are representatives of and responsible to the local communities. It was hoped that, this would led to redistribution of decision making functions, promotion of downward accountability, democracy through the provision of arenas for the local communities to participate in decision making of forest management in which they constitute a part (Oyono 2007). It was also meant to empower the local communities by granting access to and control of proceeds accruing from forest.

In this regard, the sole decision makers in the case of the municipal forest in principle are electoral Mayors and Councilors, while at the community level, the management community, made up of elected and appointed individuals are in charge of all decisions with regards to forest management at that level. In principle, these representatives ought to execute their activities and remain accountable to the local population. The policy was thus formulated at least on paper on the bases of non-hierarchical model where the municipalities and local management committees are left with the responsibility to take decisions in the management of their forest.

However, as noted by Oyono (2004), the relationship between the state and central level in the case of decentralization as a whole in practice in Cameroon does not follow this non-hierarchical model of decision making. In practice the relationship is that of upward accountability as opposed to downward accountability which is stipulated by the decentralization policy per say. This is also confirmed by Nkembi Louis; Ndeloh Denis and Mbunya Francis (2013).

As noted in the reviews and confirmed by nkembi et al. (2013), the local government in Cameroon is headed and supervised by the Ministry of Territorial Administration and central government service in addition to regional governors, divisional and district officers. This entails that at the level of the region, the Mayor of the municipality who is an elected representative of the people in principle, reports and take orders from the divisional and district officers who are representatives of the central government, appointed by a presidential decree. As such, these central government representatives do not feel accountable or answerable to the Mayors, worse so to the local population and or community. (Bigombe 2003; Nkembi 2013.)

Oyono (2004) and Ofoulhast-Othamot (2011) describe this wholly upward accountability as an attempt or an indicator by the central government to resist the process of decentralization of decision making process which is meant to give power to the local government. They also describe the situation as an example of the reproduction of the relationship of submission. To them, there is need to focus more attention on the representatives of the central government at the local level as they are likely to hijack the decision making process and claim their right of control over local authorities from the income accruing from the council forest to the disadvantage of the local communities, a situation which Ofoulhast-Othamot (2011) describes as, an attempt by the mayor to establish himself as the “bigman”. As Oyono further notes, such resistance to the decentralization of decision making process ‘at the top’ is common in the forestry taxation system which is the most productive area. This is an indication that decision making in the administration and decentralization of forest resource management in Cameroon is not only caught by the decision making trap but also by egocentric motives and mismanagement of decision making functions.

4.5.1. Decision making traps in administration and decentralization of forest resource management in Cameroon.

Natale et al. (1995), define the decision trap as common errors made by administrators or managers after adopting an important decision. Such errors can be identified easily with various sections of the decision making process. In this respect, decision making in

administration and decentralization of forest management in this study is not an exception. As seen in the reviews above, the decision making process already have some setbacks which include the fact that;

- A) Decision making in administration and decentralization of forest resource management in this case, suffers from group/process deficiency whereby, too much confidence have been entrusted in the people involved as it assumed that good decisions will be arrive at and therefore fails to manage the group decision process. This accounts for the upward accountability as opposed to downward accountability that is stipulated in the decentralization policy in this case and also serves as a justification to why central government representatives do not feel accountable to the Mayor, worse so, to the local population.
- B) Decision making in this case also fails to produce the necessary outcome because the local authorities and representatives of the local population such as the Mayor, Councillors and local management committees as well as the local population deceive themselves about feedback due to inadequate interpretation of the result from prior decisions and the fact that decision makers' ego and greed will not allowed them to believe that they have previously taking a bad decision.
- C) Decision making in this case has also been trapped because the authorities in charge and the local population as a whole neglect to validate the decision process. This is often due to the absence of an organization structure to audit the decision process thereby exposing the manager and or administrator to all sorts of traps. (Samuel et al (1995:7.)

4.5.2. Decision making and the execution of decisions

As earlier stated, it is obvious that the employees at the lowest level of the administrative hierarchy are those who execute the actual physical task of the organizations' objectives. For instance, the field staff and not the mayor go to the field.

The Mayor works by assigning specific tasks to subordinate units. Every organization or administrative unit is therefore composed of two set of people. These are; the supervisory employees and the operative employees. The supervisory employees (non-operative staff) take part in the accomplishment of the organization objectives by exerting control over the decisions of the employees at the lowest level of administrative hierarchy

In the same vein, and in accordance with the guide lines of the decentralization of forest management in Cameroon, the Mayor works by assigning specific task to subordinate units based on the decisions arrived at by the municipal councilors and approved by the central state representative at the local level. In the case of community forest, the community forest management committee is charged with the responsibilities of implementing the decisions arrived at by the general community.

4.6. Decision making in forest resource management planning in Cameroon

As reviewed earlier, Bettinger et al. (2009) note that forest management planning is viewed as a decision making process in which management activities are coordinated at the enterprise level of the forest over a medium to long term period. As they further note, the development of a typical management plan is the end result of this process and embodies all activities that can be executed to meet the objectives of the land owners in the best possible way.

Knoke and Weber (2006) further add that, the central objective of forest management planning centers around the integration of stakeholder's interest and sustainability goals, a subject which further addresses social and ecological aspects in addition to economic objectives. In this regard, a forest management plan often follows numerous steps in order to effectively apply a typical decision making process. Such steps unfold with an outline of the management objectives, next by identification of management alternatives and lastly by selection of best or preferred approach.

In this regard, decision making in forest resource management in Cameroon is not an exception as it seems to be in line with the reviews of theory. First of all, it is worthy to note that decision making in forest resource management planning in Cameroon is a complex process that involves numerous stakeholders with conflicting interest but for the purpose of the subject under study in this case, decision making in forest resource management in Cameroon will be limited to the cases of municipal and community forest. (European Commission 2007) That said, the 1994 law gave local communities in Cameroon access rights and decision making over the management of forest resources around or in their municipalities based on a signed management agreement by the community concerned and the State. It also includes a simple management plan “a management agreement in a contract by virtue of which the services in charge of the services allots to a community, a portion of the national forest estate which the community manages, preserves and exploit in its own interest” (Article 3(16) of Decree No. 95/53//PM of 23rd August 1995). As such, local communities can per this agreement, take decisions on the management and exploitation of forest resources in a participatory manner thereby enhancing livelihood development.

In this respect, implementing decision making in the management planning of forest resources follows a series of steps as seen above. In the Cameroon case, this include; a) taking a decision to reserve a community and or council forest area, b) allocating the forest to the council or community following the preparation of the simple management plan, c) exploiting the forest resource sustainably to the advantage or benefit of the community, d) a technical phase which has to do with decisions on the selection and sustainable logging of forest resources and e) organization which entails accurate and impartial management of large sums of money as contained in the institutional framework. (Cuny, Ango & Ondo 2009.)

In principle, a simple management plan involves six stages which include; the information and planning meeting where the objectives and goals are set, the training of councilors/villagers for data collection, data collection (socio economic surveys, delineation of the forest, forest inventories etc, data processing, training of

councilors/villagers on how to draw up the simple management plan and finalizing the management plan. (Cuny et al. 2009.)

Based on this, implementations of generally agreed decisions are executed solely by elected and appointed local community forest management committee members. The council and local community henceforth has as rights to exercise decisions over a) the exploitation of council and community forests respectively, b) the exploitation of all of the forestry water-based and fauna including products from the entire private forests, c) decisions over the use of income from the exploitation of forestry resources, d) Conservation of resources and d) exploitation of forestry resources (see Articles 7, 16 and 17 of Law No. 94/01; Articles 8, 26(1), 30(2), 36 and 86 of Law No. 94/01; Article 68(2),(3) of Law No. 94/1 and article 85 from the Enforcement Decree; Article 7 from the Enforcement Decree; & Articles 6, 18 and 20 (1) from the Enforcement Decree). Prior to community based forest management, Cameroon has since endorsed 41 council forests covering about 1million hectare and managed by councils. In the same vein, it has also endorsed 178 community forests with accepted management plans for a total of 636752 ha. (Cuny et al. 2009.)

4.7. Local level out comes and analysis

The general objective of this study has been to examine to examine why the implementation of decision making in decentralized forest resource management has failed to achieve the objectives of sustainable forest resource management and local development in the Dimako Council and Kongo Community Forests and also to find out the possible implications and outcomes of the failure of the implementation of these managerial decisions on sustainable forest management and the development of the local community and country as whole. Specifically, the study looks at the implementation process of the decentralized forest management policy by examining the administrative process of the implementation of this policy in the light of the administrative behavior of the administrators and with focus on the execution of decision making functions.

Findings suggest that, the decentralization of forest management in Cameroon is finally an interrupted process, obstructed halfway by regional level forces who are considered as mid-level actors and by local community chiefs (Nkembi 2013). The failure of the central state to set up regulation mechanisms and a way to evaluate or keep an eye on the process has paved way for the decentralization of forest management resources to be captured by mid-level actors operating in a chain of net-works with their sole interest based on financial gains. (MINFOF 2007.) As Oyono (2004:3) further note, this transfer of powers from the center only gave room for the division of forest administration and the establishment of legal “gangsterism” in an arena where abuse of power as a result of mismanagement of decision making functions and corruption was already deeply rooted. This view is also supported by Ofulhast-Othamot (2011) who notes that the Mayor of Dimako, has taking advantage of the new opportunities offered by the forestry law to capture the council forest and utilize it for power-building purposes, thereby earning himself the status of a “Big Man”. However, as the findings from reviews and interviews suggest, many factors account for the failure of the new reform to achieve desired results. These include;

4.7.1. Limited transfer of decision making functions to the committees and tendencies of centralization

As Oyono and Nkembi (2013) further note, even though a great deal of decision making power seems to be transferred at least on paper to the local management committees, in practice no real power has been devolved to the local management committees except that which compels them to serve as representatives of their various local communities. Oyono et al. (2002a) further articulate that, these local committees face stiff competition with customary local authorities where as in other communities; these communities do not have any sense of organizational management and have not been able to set up an organizational base. As such, the decision making powers of the local management committees which seem to have been devolved from above are still held by the central state and administrative authorities. In this respect, the decision making powers of the committees are very limited as these powers are defined by the Municipal Order that

established them. The committee is thus only seen as an extension of the council given that it cohabits with the Municipal Council which generally has its own representational mandate (IFIA 2006).

Moreover, local level forest and forestry fees management committees do not operate independently. All local management committees are headed by a “regional committee” “a committee above committees” (Oyono 2004:21; Nkempi 2013). In essence, Articles 4 and 7 of the Order stipulates that the administrative authority supervises the said “committee above committees” and the committee requires a certifying officer who is in charge of expenses and a controller in order to accomplish its missions. In this regard, the local committees are thus supervised and managed by three external forces that operate in a kind of an executive committee or network. These forces are; the senior or divisional officer himself who presides over the committee and serves as the president, the Mayor who is the certifying officer in charge of local community projects and the controller of the committee who in this case is the municipal receiver (Ofoulhast-Othamot, 2011). In accordance with the joint ministerial order, the committee in principle is obliged to function on the bases of identified community needs; adopt programs, work plans and related budgets; apportion resources to each project/program in accordance with priorities projects and available income, supervise and control implementation of projects financed by income of the community (MINEF 2001). Such programs and work plans are limited and include; conveyance of water, construction and maintenance of roads, bridges, electrification, construction, maintenance and the equipping of educational institutions and sanitary facilities; purchase of works of art or sports equipment; purchase of medicine; and any other projects of interest and value to the community.

As noted by Ofoulhast-Othamot (2011), the decision making functions of these committees have been hijacked by the supervisory authorities as the decisive and constant involvement of the divisional officers and Mayors in the operation of the local forest/forestry fees management committee is worth noting. In all if not most cases, the divisional officer and the Mayors are the ones who take decisions on the management of the forestry fees and the execution of projects for the local communities. The dictatorial

natures of this interference and the numerous cases where committees have been hijacked by these actors have downgraded the process of the decentralization of forest resource management in the face of the local communities (MINFOF 2005). For instance in the District of Ebolowa, the popular and irritating mind-set of the local forest management committee and reports that prompt this attitude are generally negative. This has generated or led to the development of local resistance which include discursive and verbal comments such “we no longer want this policy”, “it is cheating, if forestry income ploughs back to the administrative and council authorities to be managed, they will continue to enrich themselves by it.” (group of young people from Fe-eyop 2001.)

With respect to the Dimako Council Forest Management Consultative committee, it is obvious and visible from the municipal deliberations which gave rise to its creation that, the said management committee is subordinate to the Municipal Council and its responsibilities and decision making functions are very limited. Moreover, as Assembe (2001) and Ofoulhast-Othamot (2011) articulate, the committee responsibilities degrade over time following the deliberations thus relegating and limiting the participation of local communities in the future decision making process and management of the Dimako Council Forest. This could be described as an attempt by the government to recentralized the decision making process of forest management.

4.7.2. Mismanagement of decision making functions (upward accountability as opposed to downward accountability)

Downward accountability has been identified as the fundamental nature of democracy which is one of the objectives of decentralization policy as well as decentralized forest management as it gives room for the locals to take part in the decision making process of forest management and benefits that are accruing from forest. Downward accountability therefore establish an equalizer by given the local people the power to request services from elected representatives who have received powers to take decisions on behalf of the community.

However, in Cameroon, the decentralized system is structured in such a way that the Ministry of Territorial Administration and the central services supervise the local government as well as provincial governors. By virtue of this organizational structure, the local management committee is under the mayor who in turn is supervised by the senior divisional officer, and there after by the Governor. This implies that, the mayor of the rural local government, “in principle an elected representative”, reports to the senior and sub- divisional officer, who are appointed by the central state representatives at the regional level. “These local authorities do not feel accountable to mayors even less so to the local communities”. This rather upwards accountability is a powerful indicator of the central government’s ability to resist the decentralization process through the strengthening of local governments. This is an example of the reproduction of a relationship of submission by local authorities to the centre state. Predicting the future, it can be argued that representatives of the central government at the local level are likely to assert their right of control over local authorities to the income accruing from logging of the Dimako Council Forest to the disadvantage of the local communities (Oyono, 2004a:102-103; Ndeloh 2013).

As noted by Ofoulhast-Othamot (2011), there is evidence of very little downward accountability in the Dimako Council Consultative Management Committee as it relies organizationally and functionally on the council. The Mayor, Forestry Chief of Post, members of the municipal council commission and administrative authorities who serve as statutory members have appropriated decision making functions and powers for themselves relegating those members who are local community representatives to the background and depriving them of any substantive authority. These members who pose as representatives of the local communities and whose actions are subject to the control of the council authorities do not render any accounts with regards to what so ever to anyone in the community.

Also, although local communities are in principle charged with the responsibilities of determining the socio economic prioritized projects to be funded by the community and for supervising their achievements (Bigombe 2003), oftentimes, it is the divisional officer or Mayor who determines and set up prioritize community projects and manages

fund paid by logging companies. The findings of Ofoulhast-Othamot, (2011) are also in line with the findings of Efoua (2000:3-6) who has further articulates on what emanates from local discourse in some communities;

“The mayor is everything: manager, president, treasurer.... We think that, if the local populations are to benefit from the development of the forests, they must truly assume all of the responsibilities that are attached to it. The mayor already manages the 40 percent that is allotted to the Commune, according to the forestry law; now he takes our place in managing the 10 percent allotted to the local communities”. (Efoua 2000: 3-6.)

Never the less, although these committees are dominated by mid level actors, the local community representatives are not left out as they have also network with mid level actors to form an opportunistic alliance with the aim of diverting the forestry fees meant for the local communities for their individual interest (Mbunya 2013). As noted by Oyono (2002b); Bigombe (2003) and Mbunya (2013), none of the members of this deliberate alliance say administrative authorities; municipal authorities or local community representatives bother to render any account with respect to their behaviors, decisions and actions to the local communities. Thus, the captures of local committees by administrative and municipal authorities have degraded them and weaken their functions. On this note, Assembe (2001:3-5) has this to say;

“The committees are not accountable and do not publish reports of expenditures. The most striking example is the case of Toungrelo, in the Dimako District, where the committee, aided by highly placed accomplices, is accused of having diverted around US \$14,000.... There is tacit complicity between the administrative authorities and some committee members.... Judging by what can be observed one could conclude that, from the time the directors actually receive money into their hands, the practice of submitting a public financial accounting is forgotten.” (Assembe 2001: 3-5.)

4.7.3. Misuse of decision making functions and misrepresentation

The primary focus of local committees is to take decisions that meet the interest and aspirations of the local communities. Never the less, the manner in which such

committees are created and operated can have an impact on the degree to which these decision making functions are executed in practice. This is because most of the modes of setting up a committee as stated in the case studies, specifically self-appointment, statutory appointment and vertical co-option are by nature not democratic. As shown by the reviews, competitive elections constitute the only genuine democratic mode of representation which accounted for the selection of just 10percent of committee members while the others; self-appointment accounted for the election of 43percent, statutory appointment and vertical cooptation made up 27percent and appointment by consensus made up 20percent.

The final result is that, most of these members who constitute representatives of the local communities in decentralized forest management belong to the elite group such as those residents outside the local communities, chiefs and the external elite. As the interviewees (2013) note, most community forest committees have been captured by urban base elite who exert influence and control from their city base. As Bouki and Aya'a-aya'a (2002:4-6) note, these elites quite often are the once who take decisions, negotiate and finalize deals with other loggers and Timber companies. As such, local representation in the implementation of decision making in Cameroon decentralized forest management is basically neo-patrimonial in nature as most of these members who pose as representatives of the local communities are motivated and driven by strategies of socio economic mobility. However, mismanagement of decision making functions is most glaring in the COBANKO local community forest management committee of the Kongo community forest as shown on the reviews.

COBANKO (local community forest management committee of the Kongo community forest), had as responsibilities, to represent the interest of the community and act on their behalf. In this respect, various timber companies interested in the Kongo community forest were contracted by COBANKO and successive contracts signed. Financial transactions with regards to "purchase of equipment", for the execution of community projects was also undertaken by COBANKO executive bureau. Although statistical information on revenue collected is inadequate because accounts are inconsistent, a variety of sources confirmed that more than 500 cubic meters of timber

were logged between 2007 and 2009; this would have amounted approximately to \$26,500 and \$29,780. These funds are managed as stated before by the COBANKO executive bureau.

However, it is important to note that members of this management body have failed to respect their decision making functions as the executive bureau and most of their practices do not correspond legally with their official roles. Findings confirm that management of revenue, generated from the Kongo Community Forest is usually marked by “practices of self-remuneration and misappropriation of funds” informal negotiations between some COBANKO officials and logging companies without the knowledge of village community were also reported by many informants. This trend was confirmed by Asembe, (2003b:6);

“The case of Ajeboum and Mbgwamine, known as “the dean,” is informative. When we were staying in the town of Lomié, we came across these two COBANKO officials negotiating the sale of sawn timber with unknown persons. Another buyer, who had already been to Kongo, already had an agreement with the entire COBANKO bureau for the purchase of the load of timber in question. Nevertheless, under the pretext that the first buyer had not paid the full sum due to the village community and had not removed the whole stock of timber sold, the two officials had taken it upon themselves to negotiate new commitments, presumably on behalf of the village. In any case, they were not playing a role appropriate for management committee representatives. They seemed to operate more like a private club rather than representing the objectives, of defending the community, laid out in the committee’s constitution” (Asembe 2003b: 6.)

This goes further to confirm the reviews of Tacconni et al. (2006) and Ofoulhast-Othamot (2011) who state that, it is not because the government fails to transfer sufficient power to local institution that the authorities and officials fail to represent and are unaccountable to local communities but it is due to the fact that representative decision making processes of most developing countries are weak and as a result, it is easier for local elites and vested interest groups to manipulate the institutions and opportunities created by decentralization for their own interest.

Furthermore, the establishment and management of the Kongo Community Forest have been facilitated by many external actors. These actors include the De-concentrated MINEF Services (delegates SDOs), SNVs, SDDL Project, the Local NGO Network of Dja (ROLD), Local NGO the International Centre for Development Support (CIAD), and COBACO and Assene Nkou/Pallisco (logging companies) (MINEF 2004). In spite of the many roles played by these actors in the establishment and management of the forest, consulted documents, simple observations and conclusions drawn from villagers's comments, attest to the fact that the relationship amongst the Executive Bureau of COBANKO and various external actors are subjective, focusing more on the interest of each actor rather than mutually on the Kongo Village Community. The interest of the Village Community is increasingly disregarded by COBANKO, a committee which is in principle, meant to protect the interest of the community. This is evident by their social mobility and move towards the different actors.

A closer examination to the alliance amongst the village management committee officials and external actors prove that there is a disconnection within institutions. "Villagers speak of new alliance between the patrons from towns and the village nouveaux riches". For instance, only 9 brief meetings were held by COBANKO Executive Bureau two years after the inauguration of the Kongo Community Forest. No assessment meeting has been organized to give the villagers feedback on the management of proceeds from the community forest. (Asembe 2003b:6.)

The logging companies started operating in the Kongo village community forest in 2001. Revenue generated from the sale of first planks raise expectations from the local people. They villagers began to devise several strategies to benefit from the sale of timber. The need for transparency in the management of forest revenue led to the creation of a new management committee (KCFMC) by some elites who realized that COBANKO was fast becoming a "free rider" and itself side lined in the "forestry game". After a period of conflict between the two committees, a consensus was reached for the two management committee to jointly exercise control over the forest. While the KCMC serves as the implementation body, COBANKO serves as the decision making body. This new approach had several implications;

“the decision making and implementation process became very complex, dictated by power struggle; strategies for individual accumulation have been duplicated and a local “forestry elite” established; the local population has become increasingly marginalized.” (Asembe 2003b:6.)

This only serves as a confirmation to the reviews of Tacconi et al. (2006) and Ofoulhast-Othamot (2011) who state that, various studies on decentralization has rarely ever brought about improved governance through the promotion of local accountability and transparency and by promoting local democracy on administrative decision making.

4.8. Respondents Critical View on Forest Resource Management in Cameroon

Based on the semi structured questions posed to the interviewees, Nkembi and Ndeloh note with respect to the procedure used to formulate a management committee that, forest management committee members are supposed to be elected representatives of the locals as stated in the Forestry Law but on the contrary, most of those who make up members of council and community forest management committees are nominated, co-opted and not voted. The same persons keep rotating and acting as councilors and at the same time as members of the local development committee as well as members of the forest resource management committees.

With regards to how proceed accruing from the forest is used, both interviewees note that, these committees work together with the Major and seal deals with the elites and do not feel accountable to the local population. They further note that members of these committees are often the few educated persons in the community and as such are the ones who understand the politics of forest management and its proceeds and as such do not see the need to hold meetings to update or consult the local community since they assume that the locals know nothing about forest management. They are the sole decision makers while in the council, the Mayor serves as the sole decision maker in

matters that have to do with council forest management and its proceeds. (Nkembu, Ndeloh & Mbunya 2013.)

The primary motive of this chapter has been to;

- Identify and Analyse the failure of the implementation of decision making functions in the cases under study in the light of the reviews in chapter two
- Identify and analyse local level outcomes of the process

With the elaborations on these objectives and analysis of the result, the research question and objectives have been answered. Based on these reviews and findings from the research, the conclusion and recommendations will then be presented subsequently in chapter five.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1. Summary

This study has been on Decision Making in Decentralized Forest Resource Management in Cameroon with Case studies on Dimako Council and Kongo Community Forests respectively. The general introduction on the study has been given and focus is placed on remarkable administrative reforms in Cameroon since the 1990s. Of interest in this study has been the restructuring of Cameroon Forest Resource Management following these reforms in 1994. This administrative reform was predicted on the assumption that positive socio economic change, social justice, popular participation in the management of the forest and environmental sustainability, poverty alleviation will be achieved from the transfer of decision making functions, management responsibilities and benefits to local communities. However, the research problem suggest that “community-based and decentralized forms of local natural resource management often fail to produce responsible representation and downward accountability and are not democratic” as we have seen in the case studies in this study where poorly structured decentralization and transfer of administrative power to unaccountable local bodies threaten local equity, democracy and environmental management to the detriment of the local population.

Based on these preliminary notes, the focus of the study has was to examine why the implementation of decision making in decentralized forest resource management has failed to achieve the objectives of the decentralized forest policy which is geared towards promoting social justice, inclusive development, democracy through responsible representation and local development in the Dimako Council and Kongo Community Forests and also to find out the possible implications and outcomes of the failure of the implementation of these managerial decisions on sustainable forest management and the development of the local community and country as whole. To this effect, the study has made an observation of the implementation process of the decentralized forest management policy in Cameroon with keen interest on the decision making functions and the administrative process of the implementation of this policy in the light of the administrative behavior of the administrators and the implications of

such behaviors. Specifically, the study has described the politics of decision making in decentralized forest management in Cameroon and its operational mechanisms in relation to the local population. The study has further identified the pitfalls associated with local level management of forest resource as well as the local level outcomes of the process.

Major concepts such as forest resource management and decentralization, decision making have been defined and a brief review has been given to show how public administration policies could work based on the transfer or shift of administrative decision making and management from the center to local authorities. However, some authors have argued that such transfer of decision making power/functions to local entities does not necessarily produce desired results as confirmed by the reviews on the cases under study.

The decision theory which constitutes the framework of analysis in this study has also been reviewed and analyzed from different angles of administration and management but with main focused on decision making in forest resource management. Reviews have shown that the decision making process is always beautifully spelled out by decision makers in management plans. But the problem remains on whether such decisions are implemented as such or they just end up on paper. Secondly, most decision makers are caught in the decision making process by decision making traps making it difficult to achieve the expected results or meet the objectives. These have often led to severe consequences on the part of the beneficiaries and project or policy at stake as seen on the reviews of the cases under study. However, a review on this central theory has been to enable the researcher analyze and compare theory and practice.

Furthermore, the procedures used in conducting this research have been provided with major emphasis on tools used to carry out the research and the research process in general. Case studies have also been presented with an effort to analyze the findings and with main focus on providing answers to the objectives and research questions which seeks to examine was to examine why decision making in decentralized forest resource management has failed to achieve the objectives of sustainable forest resource

management and local development in the Dimako Council and Kongo Community Forests and also to find out the possible implications and outcomes of the failure of the implementation of these managerial decisions on sustainable forest management and the development of the local community and country as whole. Information on the cases has been intended to give the researcher the opportunity to triangulate with the reviews in Chapter two in order to provide sufficient information on the set back of this policy reform. These reviews have been elaborated with the sole purpose of;

- Presenting and elaborating on the cases under study
- Analysing the failure of the implementation of decision making functions in the cases under study in the light of the reviews in chapter two
- Identifying and analysing local level outcomes of the process

Findings on the reviews of these cases under study prove that, the grievances of the local population have been addressed at least on paper as a great deal of decision making power has been devolved to the body in charge of managing council and community forest as the law places the committee in a point of liaison with all external actors. However, even though the community forest in Cameroon is becoming well established today, the absence of management and technical services remains a key constrain to the rate of change when it comes to the maintenance and sustainability of the community forest. The slow pace of change has often been attributed to mismanagement of decision making functions as a result of corruption and patron client relationship, upward accountability instead of downward accountability which is a requirement of decentralization as a policy per say. As such decision making in the administration and decentralization of forest resource management in Cameroon is not only caught by the decision making trap but also by egocentric motives and mismanagement of decision making functions. The policy reform has thus failed to achieve the desired outcomes because the decision making process in this case has also been trapped due to the fact that, the authorities in charge and the local population as a whole neglect to validate the decision process. This is often due to the absence of an organization structure to audit the decision process thereby exposing the committee members and administrative authorities who serve as managers to all sorts of traps.

Findings also suggest that, many factors account for the failure of the new reform to achieve desired results and these include; a) Limited transfer of decision making functions to the committees and tendencies of centralization; b) Mismanagement of decision making functions (upward accountability as opposed to downward accountability); and c) Misuse of decision making functions and misrepresentation. In this respect, the good intentions of government policies have not been able to have an effect on the local population. Village management committees continue to act contrary to the rules spelled out in the simple management plan and the manual of norms and procedures.

As seen in the case of the COBANKO management committee of the kongo village community forest, the executive bureau represents and respect the process of community forest management at least on paper. This is because, as the law requires, it is an obligation and the duty of each village management committee to render accounts to the local population. But as seen in this case, which is the case of most village management committees and as confirmed by the interviewees, no account has been rendered to the community member since 2001 when the first planks were sold. This is justified by the fact that no attempts have been made by the committee officials to organize an assessment meeting to give feedback on the management of the forest revenue despite the fact that, the committee in principle ought to organize an annual general assembly to submit an activity report on the process of forest management to the local population. As such, there is no flow of information; the villagers are kept in the dark as meetings are very irregular as seen in the reviews above. The effect is that, local population is not informed of the management mechanisms used. As such there is no downward accountability.

In addition to this, it is disturbing to see that, a committee which is supposed to take decisions on all financial transactions, sign contracts; control revenue from forest and purchase equipment for the establishment of socioeconomic amenities does not have or keep a cash record or register. One begins to wonder how accounts are kept and managed by the management committee because as it seems, there is no clarity of

accounts. This is an indication of mismanagement and misappropriation of funds to the detriment of the local population.

Moreover, the procedures for establishment and implementation of the village management committee are very weak and less rigid. For instance, representatives of various lineages in this case were not elected but appointed as confirmed by the interviewees (Nkembi et al. (2013). As stated above, no internal rules or regulations, structure, collective code of conduct, were established with regards to the management of the revenue generated from forest or biophysical management. Rules were less rigid and not explicitly spelled out. No sanctions were put in place for the mismanagement of funds and no framework was established for collective actions regarding expected income generated from the forest and forest management. This accounts for the low level of democracy and accountability.

It can be concluded based on the findings that the decentralization of forest management in Cameroon is finally an interrupted process, obstructed halfway by regional level forces who are considered as mid-level actors and by local community chiefs. The failure of the central state to set up regulation mechanisms and a way to evaluate or keep an eye on the process has paved way for the decentralization of forest management resources to be captured by mid-level actors operating in a chain of net-works with their sole interest based on financial gains. As Oyono (2004:3); Ofoulhast-Othamot (2011) and Alemagi (2011) further note, this transfer of powers from the center only gave room for the division of forest administration and the establishment of legal “gangsterism” in an arena where abuse of power as a result of mismanagement of decision making functions and corruption was already deeply rooted.

Thus, the assumption that socio economic wellbeing will inevitably improve as a result of the implementation of decentralized forest resource management has failed. This failure is attributed to several pitfalls within the process of decision making in forest resource management implementation. As seen in the case studies above, local authorities and officials receiving managerial powers are not representative or downwardly accountable to the local population, there is also no democracy due to

dictatorship from management officials who are charge with the decision making powers over forest management and revenue. This is partly attributed to the poor system of management for instance no rules are put in place to caution or place legal sanctions against officials in case of mismanagement or misappropriation of funds

However, the Cameroon government in the area of decentralized forest resource management since 1994 has succeeded in devolving decision making functions and powers to the local authorities by enabling the creation of council forest, community forest, community hunting zones and local village management committee to access and manage forest revenue at least on paper. Due to several pitfalls (upward accountability, irresponsible representation, dictatorship, poor management designs and misuse of decision making functions) within the implementation process of forest management, the impact of this devolution of powers on poverty alleviation, local democracy, equity, social vulnerability and environmental sustainability have not been felt. However, there are still possibilities of improving on this situation.

5.2. Recommendations

This author therefore enumerates the following recommendations aimed at converting the promises of decentralized forest management in Cameroon into reality.

The outcome that is required from decentralization should be downward accountability and responsible representation. However, the most important step is to establish locally accountable representative institutions. This process can be effective by querying the structures of local elections in order to establish downwardly accountable bodies in the local arena. Without an orderly means for public participation and voice in the local decision, transfer of power to the local arena becomes privatization by default. Therefore sustainable and effective decentralization of power on natural resources should occur if there is proper representation. (Ribot, 2003.)

The governments are reluctant to build capacities before devolving power. This is due to inadequate human and financial resources on the part of the government. However, without building the capacity of the local authorities, there is no way they can gain experience to exercise power within their jurisdiction. The capacity of the local authorities should be built through training and workshops on forest resources management in relation to local people. Thereafter, would it be necessary to devolve power.

Government should develop and enforce an ethical code and persistently communicate its meaning as well as update its contents especially when new concerns such as the case in this study arise. It should institute and implement ethics as part of the management committee training and orientation programs as their training in ethics will strengthen and reinforce their ability to face ethical dilemmas and make proper and or suitable decisions. It should also incorporate ethics as part of performance evaluation as well as create an ethical environment to ensure that the actions of senior officials are consistent with their expectations from the community.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX 1. Questionnaire

1. What procedure is used to formulate a forest resource management committee within the council and the community?
2. Who are the sole decision makers?
3. How are proceeds from the forest managed or used?
4. How often do they organize meetings to update and consult the local community?
5. Are they accountable at all to the local community?

Interviewees

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Ndeloh Denis (2013) Postdoctoral research fellow, Antwerpen Zoo. Belgium Antwerp. Personal communication 16.12

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