ACADEMICS' EXPERIENCES OF UNIVERSITY LEADERSHIP IN CONSTRUCTING THEIR PROFESSIONAL IDENTITIES: A CASE OF A UNIVERSITY IN CAMEROON

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SUPERVISOR'S AUTHORISATION

As the candidate's supervisor, I agree with the submission of this thesis:

Signature: █████

Date: 12 December 2022

DECLARATION

I, Folabit Lena Novel, declare that:

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2.   This dissertation has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.

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DEDICATION

I am grateful to God Almighty for bestowing upon me the strength, discernment, fortitude, tenacity, and mind necessary to complete such a significant piece of academic research.

My father, Ba Folabit Matthew Gabila, my Mother, Mrs. Mbotiji Rose Folabit, words cannot adequately explain how grateful and appreciative I am for the value you have instilled in me regarding the necessity of education. Through the years, you were committed and made sacrifices. I am sincerely grateful. My loving son, Kenan Boniah Tengen for enduring this journey with me.

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ABSTRACT

Teaching, research, and community engagement are the three main pillars of higher education institutions, and academics construct their professional identities by translating these pillars into teaching programmes across departments, research projects, and the provision of skilled labour to the general public. However, academics' roles and responsibilities are shifting, reforming, and being reviewed, making it difficult for them to interpret these roles and responsibilities accurately, calling into question their conceptions of their own professional identities in relation to their experiences of the influence of university leadership practices on the construction of those identities. Furthermore, professional identity research indicates that there is little literature on the conceptualization of academic professional identity, and the available literature only theorises concepts related to professional identity in general rather than academic identity in higher education. This study recognises the manner in which leadership practices negatively influence academics' roles and responsibilities in higher education in the context of a Cameroon university. To understand academics' conceptions of their professional identity and to address the question of why their experiences of university leadership influences the construction of their professional identity in the way that they do, this thesis focused on a Cameroonian university as a case study.

Eleven permanent academics from the research site were purposively selected. A case study design within a pragmatic paradigm, where both qualitative and quantitative methods of data generation were used to explore the three research questions that underpinned this study. Distributed leadership theory and the force field model for teacher development were used to frame and generate data through semi-structured individual interviews and focus group discussions. A survey questionnaire was used to generate quantitative data with 170 academics through simple random sampling to find out how academics' experiences of university leadership influence the construction of their professional identity.

The findings show that academics' conceptions of their professional identity are ingrained at three levels. At the micro-level, academics conceive of their professional identities based on individual forces, which establishes three distinct approaches to conceptualising academic professional identities in higher education. The study established that academics' professional identities are conceptualised as self-conceptions of their professional identities embedded in the relationality of self, discipline, and context. Secondly, professional identity refers to

academics' personal beliefs about their profession. This is demonstrated by the distinction between individuals' personal beliefs about their field of specialisation within their professional context and others' beliefs within the same professional context. The third perspective is that professional identity is defined by the roles and responsibilities of belonging to an academic profession, which are characterised by their capacity to ensure visibility, effective teaching skills, teaching and research ethics, and the deontology of the academic profession. At the meso-level, academics conceive professional identities based on institutional forces, which establishes that university leadership's incompetency, discrimination, egocentrism, and political leanings, among other things, negatively influence the construction of their professional identities as they undertake teaching, research, and research-led community engagement as their key performance indicators. At the macro-level, academics conceive of their professional identities based on external forces, which establishes that government interference in the pedagogical activities of the study context negatively influences academics' professional identities through its appointment policy for the university leaders and external political control. The study concludes with several recommendations and the contention that a blended bottom-up-top-down leadership approach is necessary to address issues related to corruption, discrimination, inconsistent and ineffective leadership, appointment policy, funding, external interference, and a mismatch between theory and practice in university policy implementation. This will significantly contribute to the development of a sustainable higher education system in Cameroon.

Keywords: Teaching; Research; Community engagement; Higher education Professional identity; Leadership practices; University leadership; Academics' experiences; Force Field Model; and Distributed Leadership Theory.

ABBREVIATIONS

ASTI: Advance School of Translators and Interpreters

CA: Central Africa

CAM: Cognitive Apprenticeship Model

CCIU: Consultative Committee of University Institutions / Comité Consultatif des Institutions Universitaires

CMS: Church Missionary Society

CoP: Commissioner of Police

CoT: College of Technology

DL: Distributed Leadership

D.O: Divisional Officer

DVC: Deputy Vice-Chancellor

EA: East Africa

ECAs   Early Career Academics

FAVM: Faculty of Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine

FET: Faculty of Engineering and Technology

FFA: Force Fields Analysis model

FFM: Force Field Model

FGD: Focus Group Discussions

HE: Higher Education

HEI: Higher Education Institutions

HOD: Head of Department

HTTTC: Higher Technical Teachers' Training College

NGOs: Non-Governmental Organisations

MINESUP: Ministry of Higher Education

MM: Mixed Methods

NW: North West

QH: Quarter Head

SA: Southern Africa

SADC: Southern African Development Community

SDF: Staff Development Grant

SMS: Social and Management Sciences

SPSS: Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

SW: South West

UEIP   University Education Induction Programme

UKZN: University of KwaZulu-Natal

USA: United States of America

VC: Vice-Chancellor

WB: World Bank

WWI: World War One

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CHAPTER ONE
OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

This introductory chapter provides the background and context of this research project, which examines academics' experiences of university leadership in constructing their professional identities in a Cameroonian university. This section provides the background to this study, further highlights the problem statement for this study, and then looks at the research questions that guide the study and research objective. It goes on to look at the definition and contextualisation of key terms. This section further summarises the theoretical framework, research methodology and design, ethical considerations, validity and reliability, limitations of the study, organisation of the study, followed by the chapter conclusion and an introduction to the next chapter of this study.

1.2 Background to the study

Cameroon is located in central Africa, on the Gulf of Guinea. Cameroon's education system was established following the German annexation of Cameroon in 1884 and continued until 1916, while World War I (WWI) was ongoing. At the Paris Peace Treaty of Versailles in 1919, after Germany was defeated, it was asked to pay reparations to the British and French. All German colonies were seized, including Cameroon, and the country was handed over to the British and French. Cameroon was later partitioned between these two colonial powers. The British occupied the former West Cameroon, administered as part of the eastern region of Nigeria, and France occupied the then East Cameroon (La République du Cameroun), reflecting a linguistic divide that informed the education system. Despite the merger of the two education systems, the linguistic divide still exists within the higher education system today (Lee & Schultz, 2011). Upon the independence of the Cameroons in 1960, the federation plebiscite in 1961, and the reunification agreement of 1972, these two territories maintained their colonial education systems but merged the political, administrative, and economic systems (Schamp, 2018).

Historically, in the respective annexation and colonial eras, Cameroonians pursued university studies in Germany, France and Britain (Doh, 2012). It was only in 1962 that France assisted the then president of Cameroon, President Amadou Ahidjo to establish the National Institute for University Studies, known as the University of Yaoundé (Schamp, 2018). When the

university first opened its doors in September 1962, there were 600 enrolled students, all of whom were enrolled in the faculties of arts and social sciences, science, and law and economics (Samfoga-Doh, 2009). Eta et al. (2018) claim that from 1962 to 1993, the University of Yaoundé was the only tertiary institution in Cameroon. As a result, the government established schools in provincial centres as branches of the mother university in 1977 in response to the increased enrolment and need for higher education in applied sciences (Schamp, 2018). These centres were later transformed by the 1993 reform into established universities (Chimanikire, 2009; Hyasinth, 2018). The Buea University Centre for Language (Translation and Interpretation), the Douala University Centre for Business Studies and the Training of Technical Education Teachers, the Dschang University Centre for Agricultural Sciences and the Ngaoundéré University Centre for Food Sciences and Food Technology. Safotso (2018) contends that the establishment of the universities resulted in the transfer of academics from the University of Yaoundé to the newly created universities. This forced move resulted in disgruntled academics who subsequently distanced themselves from their students and their roles in their new institutions (Safotso, 2018).

Adding to the disgruntlement of academics, the 1993 reform also put in place a new administrative leadership structure in those newly created universities (Doh, 2012). The management team of leaders were the rectors, chancellors (university president) and all faculty deans who were appointed directly by the head of state. Given that these state universities are government-created, they are first and foremost political and then professional institutions (Ngenge, 2020). The political nature of the university subsequently influences the setting of these universities' mission, staff constitution, and professionalization rules among others. Furthermore, Ngenge (2020) highlights that the hierarchical flow of decision-making in these universities commences from the government to the Ministry of Higher Education, via the minister, the deputy (pro-chancellor), and the vice-chancellor. The Vice-Chancellor then communicates these rules and regulations to his or her subordinates through the Senate and University Council, including other administrative staff, academic staff, and students (Ngenge, 2020). Moreover, Law No. 005 of April 16, 2001[1] organising HE in Cameroon states that the government has overall control over the academic and pedagogic activities of universities (Guiake & Tianxue, 2019). Further, the head of state has the power to appoint and dismiss all ministers, the governors, the head of the judiciary, and even the

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[1] http://www.minesup.gov.cm/ipescam/en/textes/1_LOI_N%C2%B0_005_du_16_avril_2001.

heads of parastatals and universities. There are no accountabilities given to the general public whose taxes fund these universities (Ngenge, 2020).

It is alleged that often, those appointed and / promoted to leadership positions at universities and other state institutions are either party loyalists or people from the same ethnic group (Beti and Bulu) as the head of state (Fombad, 2000; Awah, 2018). Fombad (2000) claims that appointment "is so arbitrary that a junior civil servant in one ministry could be appointed a director in another ministry, and that in some extreme cases, ministers have given civil service appointments to persons with no working experience whom they had first recruited" (p. 225). In agreement, Djeudo (2013) makes the claim that those who are appointed by the political process exhibit great wealth and status as they are driven around in flashy cars while being protected by security officers and receive other benefits like mansions, cars, medical care, and travel and sitting allowances. According to Djeudo (2013), creating clientelistic and patrimonialistic networks is the quickest route to the "national cake" or "state cake," and as a result, "Cameroonians have diverted their energies away from labours of love to create these clientelistic networks, which have a negative impact on the economy" (p. 7).

Additionally, the state provides Cameroonian voters with a variety of tangible commodities and access to public services in exchange for their political support (Djeudo, 2013). What this may mean is that the route to working in the public service is through the exchange of one's vote in favour of the state political party. Furthermore, it is in light of this that Kah (2010) contends that the "culture of appointment in Cameroon breeds arrogance and consumption of the state's resources without any conscience from the state functionaries" (Kah, 2010, p. 23). Kah (2010) adds that these appointments are frequently anticipated because individuals are anxious to transfer allegiance from the ousted to the new person so that they may continue to parade in the halls of power. A study on "endemic corruption in Cameroon: insights on consequences and control" argues that those who are appointed into leadership positions in government institutions and attempt to criticise the regime have been "purged and replaced by pliable political sycophants, with little regard for their experience, competence, or merits" (Fombad, 2000, p. 244). However, there is bound to be a spill over in the public service due to political corruption because it has always been a feature of Cameroonian politics and has been used as a means of acquiring and maintaining political power such that political appointments infiltrate all the public services (Fombad, 2000).

Similarly, the academic promotion process within the higher education sector is hierarchical. Academic promotion is the process that eases upward staff mobility. Although in recent years it has been dominated by different constraints that the academic needs to negotiate in order to progress along the career path (Callaghan, 2015), Szromek and Wolniak (2020) argue that while traditional academic career processes remain strong, they differ by country. In the context of Cameroon, academic promotion is subject to superiority in the candidate's initial grade, along with other conditions such as publications, obtaining a higher educational qualification (a doctorate, authorization for supervision, a competitive examination), and the administrative application of the candidate (Ngwé & Prince Pokam, 2017). New academics are hired as assistant lecturers regardless of their degree (doctoral or master's) or where they obtained it.

Furthermore, Cameroonian universities are established based on the "triple mission," namely, teaching, research, and community engagement (Alemu, 2018; Andoh, 2017; Ntui, 2018; Schamp, 2018). Therefore, academics working in these universities are expected to execute this triple mission in their key performance areas (Ntui, 2018, p. 52). However, some scholars have highlighted the growing contention around the academic fulfilment of the triple mission (Preece, 2017; Kah, 2014; Andoh, 2017). In many institutions, teaching dominates research and community engagement (Andoh, 2017). Preece (2017) claims that community engagement is at the bottom tier. These authors highlight the need to enhance the "triple mission" which has been neglected in universities (Mugabi, 2014; Pinheiro et al., 2015). In the context of Cameroon, universities have thus far tried to enforce the triple mission (Amvela, 2011). However, some Cameroonian scholars argue that teaching has received more attention than research and community engagement (Signing & Nguiessi, 2009).

Despite the establishment of these universities and their structural and pedagogic underpinnings, like most countries in the world, Cameroon's universities have faced different challenges. The expansion of student numbers was just one of the many challenges experienced (Hyasinth, 2018). The language divide is another factor that is evident in the education system in Cameroon (Ndille, 2016; Schamp, 2018; Nyoh, 2018; Guiake & Tianxue, 2019). Although Cameroon has close to 19 ethnic groups and over 250 indigenous languages, education and the medium of instruction operate based on the colonial English and French languages (Mehler, 2014; Kuchah, 2016; Guiake & Tianxue, 2019). The debate of the language of instruction and communication at Cameroonian universities remain current since

there are no language policies that have been passed to this effect (Kouega, 2018). Arguably, Cameroon is one of the few nations in Africa still holding on to most of its colonial heritage (Ngwé & Prince Pokam, 2017).

Given this background on the establishment of universities and their leadership in Cameroon, this study explored how the academics located at a university in Cameroon relate their experiences of university leadership to the construction of their professional identities. The next section presents the problem statement for this study.

1.3 Problem statement

The university's role in teaching, research, and community engagement in national socio-economic progress and development is growing in Africa. As a result, African universities need leaders who can encourage and actively follow up institutional policies that foster conditions that develop and support quality teaching, research, and community engagement—essential for developing the next generation of university leaders (Hanson & Léautier, 2011; Ashcroft & Rayner, 2011; Bakuwa & Mouton, 2015). These leaders also need to encourage and motivate their followers by posing challenges that provide opportunities for personal growth and development (Smith & Hughey, 2006). In the Cameroonian context, the managerial structure of the university where the proposed research was undertaken has changed to incorporate a new management board. This management team of leaders comprises the rectors, chancellors, university president, and all faculty deans who are appointed by the head of state (Guiake & Tianxue, 2019). These executive deans have removed decision-making from faculty (Lyken-Segosebe & Braxton, 2021), with the vice-chancellor in some cases being solely responsible for effecting policy-making (Meenyinikor & IgocharachaEme, 2016). As a result, academics are rarely consulted in decision-making processes, even when it comes to policies governing teaching and learning, research, and community engagement (Sall & Oanda, 2015).

Academics in Cameroon are expected to construct their professional identity through teaching, learning, research, and community engagement as they translate these missions to teaching programmes in different departments, research units, and the provision of skilled labour to the general public (Ntui, 2018; Schamp, 2019). There appears to have been a shift in some of the academics' roles and responsibilities in recent times since the national government, through the university leadership, is emphasising research productivity over

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teaching and learning, research, and community engagement. Due to economic policy, academics are expected to increase their research output. Further, these academics are also questioning their roles and responsibilities in universities, since in addition to teaching, research, and community engagement, other managerial responsibilities have been handed to them by the leadership of the university. This pressure on academics to produce specific research outputs, to teach and undertake managerial responsibilities, as well as to participate in mandatory community engagement, is causing tension between what academics perceive as their own professional identities and those prescribed by their employing institutions through the university leadership.

Although there is substantial evidence in the literature on professional identity development in higher education, there have been few or no comprehensive studies done in the context of this study on academics' experiences of university leadership in constructing their professional identities. In view thereof, even though this study may not be entirely novel in a global context, it did concentrate primarily on topics that have either been the focus of prior research, are not covered in the current curriculum on identity construction literature or continue to be hidden and ignored because political cultures continue to permeate all facets of teaching, research, and community engagement. With the foregoing in mind, this study aimed to explore how academics' experiences of university leadership relate to the construction of their professional identities.

1.4 Research questions

This study examined how academics experiences of university leadership influence the construction of their professional identities. Based on the four objectives mentioned below, three critical questions were developed:

1. What are the academics' conceptions of their own professional identities at a University in Cameroon?

2. What are academics' experiences of university leadership at a University in Cameroon?

3. How do academics' experiences of university leadership at a University in Cameroon influence the construction of their professional identities?

4. Why do academics' experiences of university leadership at a University in Cameroon influence the construction of their professional identities in the way that they do?

1.5 Aims and objectives of the study

The purpose of this study was to understand academics' conceptions of their professional identities. It aimed at exploring academics' experiences of university leadership in constructing their professional identities in a Cameroon university. To achieve this aim, four objectives were developed:

1. To understand academics' conceptions of their own professional identities in a University in Cameroon.

2. To examine academics' experiences of university leadership at a University in Cameroon.

3. To determine how academics' experiences of university leadership at a University in Cameroon influence the construction of their professional identities.

4. To investigate why academics' experiences of university leadership at a University in Cameroon influence the construction of their professional identities in the way that they do.

1.6 Operational definition of terms

1.6.1 University leadership

The term "leadership" is used differently depending on the context to which it is referenced. In this study, university leadership is equated to university executives who have overall responsibility for the operations and management of the university (Finkelstein et al., 2009). According to Black (2015), the vice chancellor/president, deputy vice chancellors/deputy presidents, deans, academic leaders of departments and faculties, department chair, and other individuals make up the leadership structure of universities. This study was located at a university in Cameroon and focused on the following university leaders: the chair of the board of directors, the rector (vice chancellor), the secretary general (registrar), the technical adviser, the faculty deans and directors of schools, and the heads of departments.

Scholars have indicated that the universities in Africa require committed leaders who can take on the task of fostering institutional leadership by translating leadership competencies into strategic assets (Hanson & Léautier, 2011; Ashcroft & Rayner, 2011; Bakuwa & Mouton, 2015). Literature also indicates that HEIs in Africa lack a model type of institutional leadership that can respond to the challenges that these institutions face (Sall & Oanda, 2015). As a result, African university leaders should encourage and motivate their followers by posing challenges that provide opportunities for personal growth and development (Smith & Hughey, 2006). In addition to finding techniques that work best in the HE setting or the most successful leadership approach, university leadership has a duty to consider how to effectively lead their organisations (Black, 2015). Moreover, given that universities in Africa have three missions: teaching, research, and community engagement**,** these African universities require leaders who can encourage and actively pursue institutional policies that promote and support quality teaching, research, and community engagement—all of which are critical to developing the next generation of knowledge producers in Africa (the graduates). Such graduates should be able to deal effectively with the complex set of problems and opportunities that Africa is presented with (Hanson & Léautier, 2011).

1.6.2 Academic professional identity

Studies show that academic identity is complex, evolving, increasingly diverse, and polarised (Quigley, 2011; Ylijoki & Ursin, 2013; Billot & King, 2015; Madikizela-Madiya & Le Roux, 2017). According to Drennan et al. (2017), the definition of academic identity in higher education is limited, and existing literature only theorises concepts related to professional identity in general, rather than academic identity in higher education. Quigley (2011) agrees that academic identity lacks exactness in terms of description because it is complex and composed of various competing influences. As a result, it is regarded as a moving target that differs for each academic (Quigley, 2011).

Furthermore, little is known about the psychological mechanisms underlying academic identity construction and the barriers that obstruct it (Bentley et al., 2019). Understanding academic identity, on the other hand, necessitates a discussion of the complex changes in higher education. Working conditions, curriculum, student profiles, the promotion of entrepreneurial programmes, and the impact of leadership on academics, personal life, and professional life are examples of these changes (Drennan et al., 2017). In this study, academics' professional identities are likened to the threefold field of academia: research,

teaching (McCune, 2021; Trautwein, 2018) and community engagement (Ćulum, 2014), which are embedded in the values, beliefs, and commitments an individual holds towards being an academic at a university (Hsieh, 2010).

1.6.3 Experience

Experience is derived from the Greek term "empiria" and the Latin word "experientia" or "experimentum" (Lennon, 1960). In Latin, to experiment (experiri) means to try, put to the test, or prove. In this sense, many other classical authors employ the word, making it synonymous with proving or testing. To test (tentare) anything means to put it to the test (experimentum). A trial of something can be conducted in order to learn more about it; thus, the immediate and every tester is knowledge. Observing everyday life presents various examples of viewing experience as a trial or test with the immediate purpose of gaining knowledge (Lennon, 1960). To further illustrate experience, Lennon (1960) used a little child, arguing that a small infant feels, touches, handles, and manipulates objects in his environment to familiarise himself with them. As a result, it would not be long until he discovers, through his senses, that hot things burn, sharp things hurt, and not everything is edible. He learns the shape, size, hardness, and position of objects in space through experience. He learns the hard way, by trial and error, when progress is slowed by the amount of fumbling, tripping, and repetition. According to Lennon, "Aristotle and St. Thomas' explanations corroborate the etymological definition of the term "experience" as a trial or testing" (p. 316). However, while experience has different meanings for many different people, some of the meanings are similar enough to be almost synonymous, while others are contradictory enough to be almost mutually exclusive (Lennon, 1960). "Experience is adequate to the whole of reality, to all that was, is, and shall be; to ignorance, knowledge, and imagination" (Lennon, 1960, p. 315). Thus, experience seems to be the most universal of all concepts.

Alternatively, Lunenberg and Korthagen (2009) assert that people develop experience through interaction in the real world. It has to do with one's surroundings as well as one's own inner reality. This internal reality is complicated since it can include the right and wrong ways of doing things (know-how). Moreover, as events unfold, experience is in constant motion, so one's experience, beliefs about practice, and sense of professional identity grow through inherent encounters with the "I" that goes through the experience (Lunenberg & Korthagen, 2009). It is worth mentioning that experience is informed by the before and after, a retrospect and a prospect, foresight gained by perception, and a link between the past and

the present. According to Roth and Jornet (2014), experience is "the mutual transactional relationship that affects people's intellectual, affective, and practical individualities within a social environment" (p. 107). Vyas and van der Veer (2005) support the idea that an individual's experience is a subjective process that is constructed based on the context in which they find themselves. There is no doubt that the context of the interaction has a profound impact on the experience. Vyas and van der Veer (2005) define experience as "meaning that is created, communicated, and maintained by users during their interaction with the system" (p. 1). In this study, "experience" refers to academics' perceptions of the effect of their relationships within the university context (of leadership in particular) on their intellectual, affective, and practical personalities that then shape how they construct their professional identities.

1.7 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework is made up of lenses that a researcher uses to see the world in a specific way or lenses that a researcher uses to examine a study. The theoretical framework is critically important to all research studies, quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods (Lederman & Lederman, 2015). Osanloo and Grant (2016) concur that it is a blueprint for the entire dissertation inquiry that serves as the foundation upon which a researcher develops and supports his or her study by defining how the research will be approached philosophically, epistemologically, methodologically, and analytically. According to Osanloo and Grant (2016), despite being the most significant component of the research process, the theoretical framework is only briefly discussed in some doctoral programmes. The theories used for this study were Spillane's (2006) Distributed Leadership Theory and Samuel's (2008) Force Field Model (FFM) of Teacher Development.

1.7.1 Distributed leadership theory

Distributed Leadership (DL) is a theory situated in school leadership that indicates the "product of the interaction between the leaders, followers, and their situations, such as routines and tools." This study used the concept of "distributed leadership" (DL) practice to explore how academics' experiences of university leadership shape the construction of their professional identity in the context of Cameroon. In Cameroon, there is little literature that explores what distributed leadership is, and there is certainly a dearth of literature on how leadership is distributed in the universities in Cameroon. This is because, generally, the leadership style in the context of Cameroon is centralised (Konings, 2009). Further,

university leaders in Cameroon are appointed by presidential decree due to the political affiliations of these appointees (Ngenge, 2020). The ideology of distributed leadership practice in the context of Cameroon higher education is thus called into question.

Distributed leadership practice according to Spillane (2006), discusses how university leaders can negotiate their practice of leadership in a more shared manner. This can be done by adopting an interactive approach to leadership to ensure that academics handle the courses assigned to them, that they meet the research agenda internally and externally, and that they engage in community engagement. It further highlights that leadership practice also informs situations (weekly assessment routine) or tools (student test data). Spillane (2006) continues that in the practice of leadership from a distributive perspective, the leaders, academics, and their situations are described in such a manner that all the components can be equal, any change to one aspect may affect the others, and the distributed leadership practice may not generate the right effect.

Thus, the three components of distributed leadership practice are leaders, followers, and their situations. These three components were used to address the leadership style and to understand academics' conceptions and experiences of leadership in the context of a Cameroonian university. In the context of this study, such a lens was useful in exploring the leadership styles adopted by the Cameroonian university leaders as experienced by the academic staff.

1.7.2 Force Field Model for Teacher Development

Samuel's (2008) force field model assumes that there are different push and pull forces that influence the teacher's roles and identities in different directions. These forces that constrain or enhance teacher development are inertia forces (Samuel, 2008)**.** Although Samuel's (2008) force field model (FFM) for teacher development displays the interacting forces that shape a teacher's life history in the context of the development of student teachers in a school system, this model was considered relevant for this study because:

- The model best explained how academics make sense of their understanding of their professional identities by identifying the forces that drive or constrain the development of their professional identities in Cameroon,

- It assisted me in understanding why the push and pull leadership practices unique to the current case university influenced academics' construction of their professional identities in the way that they did.

This study aimed to explore how these forces influence academics at a university in Cameroon as they construct their professional identities in teaching and learning, research, and their engagement with the community. As a result, the constructs of biographical personal or internal forces, macro-contextual external forces, institutional internal forces, and programmatic internal forces—considered as major tenets of Samuel's (2008) FFM for teacher development—were used to explain the push and pull forces that influence academics' construction of their professional identities at a university in Cameroon.

1.8 Research methodology and design

The study was a case study within a pragmatic paradigm, where both qualitative and quantitative methods of data generation were used to explore the three research questions that underpinned this study. Semi-structured individual interviews, focus group discussions and questionnaire survey formed the instruments that were used for generating data for this study. The manner in which these instruments were used to generate data in an attempt to address the research questions guiding this study is outlined in section 4.4 of Chapter 4 of this study. Data were presented in two ways: first, the qualitative data was presented thematically, wherein themes and sub-themes were sorted from the literature and theoretical frames, and data were organised using an analytical framework; second, the quantitative data was analysed statistically. The techniques for generating and analysing data are presented in Sections 4.4.2 and 4.4.3, respectively, in Chapter 4.4 of this study. The findings from both data sets were further theorised in order to investigate the significance that participants ascribed to their experiences with university leadership in terms of their professional identity construction.

1.9 Research Paradigm

A paradigm is a general way of thinking shared by a community of scientists. Kristiansen (2014) defines a paradigm as "a shared foundational set of theoretical beliefs and priorities that govern the way one or several disciplines interpret their data" (p. 22). This study was guided by a pragmatic paradigm. According to Shields (1998) and Kaushik and Walsh (2019), a single scientific technique cannot be employed to gain knowledge in social science.

Researchers can use pragmatism to extend beyond objectivist conceptualisations in order to examine and understand the relationships between knowledge and action in context.

Kelly and Cordeiro (2020) postulate that pragmatism is the belief that researchers can avoid abstract debates about the nature of truth by focusing on "practical understandings" of concrete, real-world issues. Pragmatism recognises that people in social environments might experience activity and change in a variety of ways, which encourages them to be adaptable in their investigative strategies. Rather than debating the validity and intrinsic value of specific methods and methodologies, Kelly and Cordeiro (2020) argue that researchers who embrace pragmatism as a worldview should be encouraged to choose methods and methodologies that are relevant in terms of transporting us from the realm of practice to the realm of theory and vice versa. As an alternative epistemological framework that explores a diverse set of research methodologies and approaches, pragmatism was used in this study to make sense of the impact of leadership practices on academics' professional identities in the context of a university in Cameroon. This paradigm was used as an alternative framework for understanding this phenomenon, and its strong philosophical grip on mixed methods explains academic leadership experiences in the context of a university because its focus is on the problem to be researched and the consequences of the research (Feilzer, 2010).

1.10 Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues have a significant role to play in a study, especially when it has to do with humans. Thus, to obtain ethical clearance from the University of KwaZulu-Natal, I first obtained a gatekeeper's permission from a university in Cameroon, where this study was conducted. When the University of KwaZulu-Natal approved my ethical clearance, I then identified the participants for this study and explained the purpose of my study to them and that their participation was voluntary. I also assured them of the confidentiality of their identities and the data they provided. This is because Cohen et al. (2011) argue that data generated from participants should be treated with confidentiality. Hence, the identities of the university and the participants were kept anonymous, and the names were replaced with pseudonyms. After explaining the purpose of the study to each participant, I invited them to the Zoom interview. An informed consent form was then mailed to the participants to be read and signed before data generation commenced. In addition, details of how the data was to be generated and used were outlined, and any implications for participants were also made

known. It was stated on the form that their confidentiality and anonymity were guaranteed and that they had the right to withdraw from the research at any time without negative consequences. Thus, confidentiality and anonymity were ensured when the data was presented and analysed using pseudonyms (numerals in ascending order).

1.11 Validity and Reliability

To evaluate truth value, application, consistency, and neutrality in quantitative research, construct validity is used (DeCuir-Gunby, 2008). DeCuir-Gunby adds that "validity is often referred to as trustworthiness, credibility, dependability, confirmability, and understanding" (p. 131) because it is important to qualitative research. It is my view that in research, validity and reliability can be related to precision and the investigator's capacity to gather and record information truthfully. Giddings and Grant (2009) argue that the "application of validity and reliability to mixed methods research seems logical, particularly as the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection in a single study has been viewed as a way to ensure rigour" (p. 121). What this means is that, applying validity and reliability in mixed methods research can be considered normal. Giddings and Grant (2009) further assert that validity, reliability, and generalisability are applicable to a study that uses a questionnaire with descriptive statistical analysis and a semi-structured interview with descriptive content. This study used a questionnaire survey and semi-structured interviews for generating data, which was then analysed using descriptive analysis.

Onwuegbuzie and Johnson (2006) contend that while validity is common and critical in quantitative research, the emphasis on validity in qualitative research is for the researcher to reliably capture the lived experiences of participants. DeCuir-Gunby (2008), on the other hand, contends that trustworthiness is essential for mixed methods design because it addresses the same issues as qualitative and quantitative research. Furthermore, to ensure statistical interpretation, the quantitative portion of this study was informed by validity and reliability. Through member check, validity was conformed to trustworthiness in the qualitative section of this study to ensure participants' trust (Cho & Trent, 2006).

1.12 Limitations

Since this study was conducted at a Cameroonian university, I was unable to travel for data generation for this study due to financial constraints. As such, the interviews were conducted via Zoom. Given the challenge that comes with conducting cross-border research using

virtual means for data generation, identifying the participants was a challenge. Thus, I used snowball sampling to recruit the participants for this study. This was after I had identified someone who was not a lecturer but who could assist in recruiting the first sets of participants. I then credited their phone to contact some academics at the case study university. After a few participants were identified, I was able to recruit others for the interviews through these participants. However, due to the socio-political conflict in that region of Cameroon, the participants did not want to be interviewed via Zoom for security reasons, which delayed the process. Although I explained the ethical considerations that had been taken, some participants insisted on being anonymous on the Zoom call because they did not want their identities disclosed on the call. Furthermore, some participants declined the invitation, while others insisted on being interviewed via WhatsApp. Moreover, during the interviews, some participants left the Zoom call and did not return. To ensure anonymity, some interviews were conducted with the participants' videos turned off, and they preferred to be referred to by numbers.

1.13 Organisation of the study

This study comprises eight chapters, which are organised as follows:

Chapter one provides an introduction and the background to the study; the problem statement; the research objectives and critical questions that guided the study; the operational definition of the terms; the theoretical work; research methodology and design; validity and reliability; ethical consideration; organisation of the study; and the chapter conclusion.

Chapter two reviews the literature, and the chapter is divided into eight sections. The first section starts with an introduction and then shifts to give an overview of the universities in Africa by tracing the first established universities that were created in Africa, explaining that universities have transitioned through three heritages and further highlighting these three periods: the pre-colonial heritage, wherein higher learning institutions were embedded in the African cultural context, maintaining and preserving the African heritage, adapting people to their physical environment, and perpetuating community institutions, laws, languages, and values inherited from the past. The colonial era saw the annexation of African countries, which was accompanied by the establishment of colonial overseas campuses in Africa with a curriculum identical to that of the colonial states and instruction in the colonizers' language. All of this was done not to help Africa but to function as an extractive tool for the colonial

country's economic demands. The post-independence era, which has transitioned to contemporary universities with established African universities and an African curriculum for Africa, is meant for Africans. The chapter then looks at the conceptual understanding of leadership, specifically academic leadership in higher education, holistically and then narrows it down to the context of Africa. The chapter further looks at academics' professional identity construction, academics' professional identity in African universities, and academics' professional identity construction based on teaching, research, and community engagement. The last section is a summary of the entire chapter.

In chapter three, the theoretical frameworks that underpin this study are discussed. These theoretical frameworks are Spillane's (2005) distributed leadership practice and Samuel's (2008) force field model for teacher development. This chapter is divided into three sections. It starts by introducing the theories for this study. The next section discusses the theoretical underpinnings of this study, which starts by giving an explanation of a theoretical framework. It further deconstructs the term "theoretical framework" by defining both constructs separately. It then looks at their origins and why it is important to use a theoretical framework as a blueprint in a research study. As lenses for this study, the section examines the distributed leadership theory, which states the interaction between leaders, followers, and their circumstances, as well as the force field model, which premised the push and pull forces that influence school teachers in developing their identities in a school system. The last section in this chapter concludes and introduces the next chapter.

Chapter four discusses the research paradigm with reference to ontological, epistemological, axiological, and methodological assumptions, followed by an overview of the mixed method approach that is used in the data production phase. The exploratory sequential mixed-methods research design is then discussed in detail. Furthermore, the chapter looks at the data generation and data analysis methods: semi-structured individual interviews, focus group discussions, and questionnaire surveys. It then looks at the study's ethical considerations as well as issues pertaining to the credibility and limitations of the study, and then concludes the chapter.

Chapter five is titled "Academics' ways of experiencing leadership practices." It deals with data presentation and the descriptive analysis of the academics' experiences of university leadership in constructing their professional academic identities. This chapter presents phase one of the analysis process, which is the qualitative phase. It starts by presenting the

demographic information of the participants. It then presents the themes and sub-themes that were generated from data and literature, which are the main focus of this chapter. The quotes from the participants' descriptions of their experiences with university leadership practices on the construction of their professional identities are used to present and analyse an in-depth analysis of the themes and sub-themes. This chapter concludes by summarising the main findings that emerged from the data and then introduces the next chapter.

Chapter six is titled "Relating academics' experiences of leadership practices to the construction of their professional identities." It presents and analyses the quantitative data, focusing primarily on the data that was generated using a quantitative survey questionnaire. This quantitative data is presented to expand on the results from the semi-structured individual interviews and focus group discussions discussed in Chapter 5. For reference, this chapter uses pie charts, bar graphs, and tables to summarise some of the responses. The data's findings demonstrate that the sample was fairly representative of all permanent academics working at the university under investigation. The results also show that the most important factors shaping academics' professional identities were their biographical and programmatic forces based on their experiences of university leadership practices. The chapter concludes by synthesising the results and introducing the next chapter.

Chapter seven is titled "Understanding academies' professional identities in a Cameroonian university." This chapter discusses three broad themes and eight subthemes that emerged from the findings in chapters 5 and 6 in aggregate, with the key research questions, objectives, literature, and theoretical lenses. Theme 1 discusses the micro-level of academics' conceptions of their professional identities based on individual forces. It establishes that academics' conceptions of professional identity are built on three constructs. Theme 2 focuses on the meso-level of academics' conceptions of their professional identities based on institutional forces. This theme, which is subdivided into three subthemes, discusses leadership practices and their influence on how academics undertake teaching, research, and research-led community engagement as their key performance indicator areas. Theme 3 discusses the macro-level of academics' conceptions of their professional identities based on external forces. This last theme is equally subdivided into two subthemes to indicate why government interference in the pedagogical activities of the study context influences academics' professional identities through its appointment policy for university leaders and external political control. This chapter concludes by showing that there are inconsistencies in the findings from chapters 5 and 6.

Chapter eight is the last chapter that concludes this study. It provides a summary of the findings of this study on academics' conceptions of their professional identities in relation to their experiences of university leadership and the construction of their professional identities in the context of a Cameroonian university. The chapter discusses the key findings, presents arguments using literature and insights drawn from the data analysis, and uses key theoretical constructs from the theoretical framings to theorise the findings. This last chapter starts by providing an introduction, and then it puts forward a summary of the findings that answered the research questions used in guiding this study. It then provides the limitations, research contributions, and recommendations based on the findings. In addition, it stresses the suggestions for future research and concludes the chapter with some important findings discussed.

1.14 Chapter summary

This chapter gave a concise background to the study and explained the problem statements, purpose and aims, and research questions of the study. The major aspects of this chapter also included the theoretical framework used to frame the study, the research design and methodology, ethical issues, validity and reliability, limitations, and organisation of the study. Next, Chapter 2 presents the literature review.

CHAPTER TWO
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the study blueprint by providing the background, aims, and critical research questions for the study. This chapter presents a review of the literature that is relevant to the phenomenon under study. The aim of the review was to identify the conceptual and contextual gaps in the knowledge that the current study envisages to contribute towards. The review of the literature is organised into six broad thematic areas. The chapter begins with an overview of the higher education landscape in Africa, followed by a conceptual understanding of the term leadership, with specific references to leadership in African universities and academic leadership in higher education. The focus then shifts to a general overview of academics' professional identity construction and follows with a discussion of academics' professional identity construction in African universities, with special emphasis on academics' professional identity construction based on teaching and learning, research, and community engagement and the extent to which these key performance areas shape how they construct their professional identities.

2.2 An overview of Universities in Africa

History shows that African universities have transitioned through three heritages: the pre-colonial higher learning system, the establishment of universities in Africa as branch campuses of colonial higher education institutions (HEIs), and the struggle for African universities to be rooted in the African culture (Nyanchoga, 2014; Alemu, 2018). In the pre-colonial era, centres of higher learning were founded as a result of societal dynamics that were constantly shaped by the interactions of social demands (Mosweunyane, 2013). Local learning was embedded in the African cultural context, and there were no formal, established higher learning institutions producing and disseminating knowledge (Mosweunyane, 2013). The goal of these centres of higher learning was mainly to "preserve African heritage, adapt people to their physical environment, and perpetuate community institutions, laws, language, and values inherited from the past" (Nyanchoga, 2014, p. 57).

The pre-colonial higher learning institutions of Al-Quarawiyyin in Morocco, Sankore in Timbuktu, and Al Ahzah in Egypt were founded around the 14th century to address demands such as African sustainability, technology, industrial knowledge, and the transition from food

and hunting economies to food-producing economies in order to sustain humanity (Woldegiorgis & Doevenspeck, 2013; Nyanchoga, 2014). Learning programmes were rooted at different degree levels. However, the most sought-after level was the highly specialised degree level that may be compared to a PhD degree. This is because students were guided by professors for ten years at this level, and at the completion of their training, they were admitted as professors based on their academic performance (Nyanchoga, 2014). There were also well-known academics in the pre-colonial universities that had scholars, such as Ahmad Babu as-Sudane, who published volumes in the fields of medicine, law, philosophy, astronomy, and mathematics. Some of these scholars were even awarded honorary doctorate degrees (Nyanchoga, 2014). Despite these enormous advances in the pre-colonial period, the evolution of higher education was hampered by the large-scale slavery system. The transatlantic slave trade, which began in the 15th century, established the groundwork for colonialism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which resulted in the eventual establishment of colonial universities in Africa as branch campuses (Woldegiorgis & Doevenspeck, 2013; Assié-Lumumba, 2016).

Although Lulat (2005) and Assié-Lumumba (2016) argue that there is no continuity from pre-colonial to colonial to contemporary higher education in Africa, literature suggests that Fourah Bay College in Freetown, Sierra Leone, founded in 1827 by the Church Missionary Society (CMS) of London, is one of the first higher education institutions in Africa (Woldegiorgis & Doevenspeck, 2013). Furthermore, with the conclusion of the Berlin Conference on the Scramble for Africa in 1885, the already-colonized African continent was inundated with European colonial presence. From 1829 to 1952, more universities were established in Africa, including Cape Town (1829), Stallenbosch (1866), Khartoum (1902), Cairo (1908), Algeria (1909), Makerere (1922), Egerton (1939), Ghana (1948), Ibadan (1948), Addis Ababa (1950), and Zimbabwe (1952) (Woldegiorgis & Doevenspeck, 2013; Mackatiani et al., 2016; Assié-Lumumba, 2016). Rather than focusing on Africans' professional training, these colonial institutions in Africa focused on training African clerics and schoolmasters, teaching African students the foundations of reading, writing, and arithmetic, and grooming the elite for leadership. In addition, rather than committing to academic education, vocational and industrial education were established to train Africans as artisans to work on European farms (Mackatiani et al., 2016).

Furthermore, based on the leadership structure of these colonial higher learning institutions, it appears that the colonial state's structure has always been pyramidal, with the administrative hierarchy informed by the superiority of the white race (Nyanchoga, 2014). Even though it was explicitly stated that Africans would be taught administrative skills, they exclusively filled the lower levels of administration. In such universities, Europeans held the top levels of leadership, while Africans were at the bottom. Furthermore, colonial forces shaped the type of education supplied to Africans. The curriculum was nearly identical to that of the colonial states, and instruction was given in the language of the colonisers. All of this was done not to help Africa but to function as an extracting tool for the colonial country's economic demands (Nyanchoga, 2014). Woldegiorgis and Doevenspeck (2013) concur that colonial officials set the selection of academics, the design of curricula, and the programmes based on colonial powers rather than the interests of African communities. This is comparable to the situation in most Sub-Saharan African universities today, where decisions are made from the top-down, teaching is dictated by the state, and university heads are often appointed rather than elected. Given that these universities were linked with the majority of universities in the home countries of the colonial rulers, it is reasonable to presume that the teaching faculty were also from these colonial countries. In view thereof, Fomunyam (2020) concurs that universities established in Africa between 1930 and 1960 acted as branch campuses of selected universities in the colonial country, particularly because these universities did not operate autonomously as African institutions.

It is also argued that the colonial powers used various mechanisms to subjugate Africans, such as designing education to provide Africans with the technical skills required for colonial economies and ensuring that the education provided to Africans did not enlighten them to use it to challenge and fight the colonial system (Assié-Lumumba, 2016). Africans from various countries who had travelled to European countries for further studies, on the other hand, used their European knowledge in a variety of ways when they returned home. These educated elites recognised the importance of communicating with the locals in their own local languages. As a result, they began to reject Eurocentric education. They asserted their right to build their own destiny, protect the general population, and defend their ethos, beliefs, and customs by rejecting European schools (Assié-Lumumba, 2016). The curriculum, which was designed to prevent Africans from obtaining critical information and thinking, became a driving force in the 1940s towards decolonization and the beginning of African state independence (Assié-Lumumba, 2016).

According to Wiseman and Wolhuter (2013) and Darvas et al. (2017), the political independence of most African countries in the late 1950s and early 1960s, among other things, resulted in the establishment and expansion of a number of African universities. Post-independence universities, such as Uganda's Makerere University, Nigeria's University of Ibadan, Senegal's University of Cheikh Anta Diop, and Sudan's University of Khartoum, have emerged as Centres of Excellence (Mohamedbhai, 2014). It is argued that these universities serve as development agents, a tool for creating African identity, and a duty to uphold nation-building (Woldegiorgis & Doevenspeck, 2013). Furthermore, because universities were linked to the mother countries of the colonial masters, aspects such as quality staff development, quality assurance, and funding were improved (Hlengwa, 2019). In this context, the university is defined as a higher learning institution and an academic environment where a community of scholars engages in teaching and learning, research, and community engagement (Alemu, 2018). Its establishment is then dependent on a society's socioeconomic and political advancement (Alemu, 2018).

Although HE in Africa requires a clear definition to ensure that it is aligned with both local and global needs, it has been politically driven since its inception during the colonial era (Mackatiani et al., 2016). Thus, colonial legacies, internal political squabbles, and international donor and aid agency agendas have shaped and influenced post-independence higher education institutions (Cloete et al., 2018). In view thereof, governments regard these HEIs as sites of opposition because they are embroiled in political and ideological debates about the development of decisions made by their governments (Cloete et al., 2018). In Africa, the post-independence establishment of HEIs and reform changes created a significant demand for institutional structures and leadership to accommodate the changes in higher education. However, a few colonial loyalists who had studied abroad and returned home with little or no knowledge of leadership or the African context (Woldegiorgis & Doevenspeck, 2013) ran post-independence universities. This was similar to the political leadership inherited by African state leaders, which was based on preconceived colonial ideologies (Igue, 2010; Jallow, 2014). Having discussed the background of universities in Africa, the next section provides a conceptual understanding of leadership.

2.3 Conceptual understanding of Leadership

Leadership is a multifaceted concept (Aquinas, 2008; Ahlquist & Levi, 2011; Herbst & Conradie, 2011; Marion, 2012; Chemers, 2014; Tracy, 2014; Silva, 2016; Northouse, 2018;

Ntui, 2018). As a result, it is difficult to provide a precise definition. However, various scholars have theorised leadership based on what they understand in terms of context or the type of belief to which it refers. According to Chemers (2014), "leadership is defined as a social influence process in which one person is able to enlist the aid and support of others in the completion of a task" (p. 1). Leadership in the context of higher education may refer to group activity based on social influence that revolves around a common task. When people are assigned tasks and responsibilities, the leader's primary responsibilities include, but are not limited to, guiding and motivating them. The leader is also expected to set expectations as well as facilitate and encourage goal achievement. In short, leaders should be able to delegate relevant tasks to their followers. According to Chemer's (2014) definition of leadership, university leaders are expected to delegate relevant tasks to academics, such as assigning courses to various lecturers who are qualified to deliver them and ensuring that students attend the courses that have been assigned to them. They are also expected to ensure that academics do not only respond to internal and external research demands at the institution but also combine and integrate teaching and learning with community engagement. Moreover, it is stated that the success of a higher education institution is dependent on its academic leaders. Their academic roles and responsibilities are essential instruments for the smooth and successful operation of the university. As a result, the significance of academic leadership cannot be overemphasised (Madugu & Manaf, 2018).

Similarly to Chemers (2014), leadership can be defined as "a psychological process of influencing followers (subordinates) and providing guidance, directing, and leading the people in an organisation towards the attainment of the objectives of the enterprise" (Aquinas, 2008, p. 340). This definition expands leadership beyond changing behaviour to include emotional states or empathy. When university leaders assign tasks to their staff, they must ensure that the staff is emotionally stable enough to carry out the tasks that have been assigned to them. Chemers (2014) and Aquinas (2008) agree that followers must be directed and guided toward goal achievement, but they disagree on how to influence these followers. For example, while Chemers' (2014) context of leadership is informed by its social influence process, which involves changing one's behaviour to accommodate others in the completion of a common task, Aquinas's (2008) argument is that it is a psychological process in which the leader uses emotional traits to influence his or her followers. Thus, in the context of this study, leadership within a university system is viewed through the psychological influence it has on academics' identity construction. The leadership practices used by university leaders

in the process of directing and guiding staff toward the achievement of the university's mission of teaching and learning, research, and community engagement were investigated in terms of how such practices affect academics' emotional, spiritual, or mental well-being or strength. Thus, in this thesis, leadership is viewed as both a psychological process (Aquinas, 2008) and a social influence (Chemers, 2014) within the university system.

Leadership is the ability to elicit extraordinary performance from ordinary people by motivating followers to collaborate with one another, regardless of the socio-dynamic context (Marion, 2012; Tracy, 2014; Northouse, 2018). However, in a changing context, it can be defined as the ability to form relationships and collaborate for long-term success (Herbst & Conradie, 2011). Thus, leadership is not about a leader's personality but about how to motivate people to perform beyond their abilities in changing environments. Leaders in a university, which is a socio-dynamic institution exposed to challenges, should be able to ignite significant competence from the institution's staff and students. Furthermore, as a result of the transition from colonial to post-colonial education, universities in Cameroon have faced a variety of challenges, including teacher and student strikes (Ngenge, 2020). Typically, these strikes disrupt the smooth operation of universities. As a result, university leaders are expected to develop an unwavering collaborative relationship with the university's staff and students in order to avoid instances of instability. While university leaders may be able to maintain a stable university environment in the face of strikes, the purpose of this study was to explore how academics' experiences of being led in particular ways by university leaders influence the way they construct their professional identities.

As an alternative definition, leadership involves an interactive process (Ahlquist & Levi, 2011). Silva (2016) concurs by noting that leadership is a process of interactive influence that happens when, in a certain context, some individuals choose someone as their leader to accomplish shared objectives. In this view, leadership is a process rather than a personal quality, characterised by not only the leader's influence but also the interactive influence between the leader and the followers in a given context, and if the context changes, so will the leadership process. On the other hand, Ntui (2018) defines leadership as "people who bend the motivations and actions of others to achieve specific goals" (p. 51). Thus, while Silva (2016) believes that a leader must be accepted by the followers before interaction can be effective, Ntui (2018) argues that leaders must be able to exploit the motivations and actions of followers in order to achieve set goals. Therefore, the term "leadership" in the

context of university leadership could relate to the leaders' interaction with faculty and students.

In order to achieve good teaching and learning, research, and community engagement inside the university, leaders must be able to build trust with staff and students. These could mean that university leaders take into account the numerous approaches and concepts put forth by academics for accomplishing effective teaching and learning. I contend that university leaders should be able to strike a balance between serving the requirements of the university and those of the state, even though in the setting of this study, the head of state appoints university leaders and decision-making is given to that higher order. Similarly, leadership is thought to be interactive and multidimensional (Ahlquist & Levi, 2011). This definition states unequivocally that there can be no leader without followers. In general, people cannot understand the role of leaders unless they are familiar with their followers' goals and resources (Ahlquist & Levi, 2011). Although Higgs (2017) agrees that leadership can be multidimensional, Higgs argues that power and mandate should be grounded in relationships, responsibilities, and challenges within a given space. Higgs may be referring to the fact that power is granted to a leader within a specific timeframe in a given context that includes interactions, responsibilities, and challenges. Van Wart (2013) emphasises the importance of complex functions by defining leadership as a complex and difficult process to master because it involves complex functions. According to the definitions of leadership stated above, leadership is embedded in interaction with followers in a context, implying that leadership is inseparable from its context and that its effectiveness is dependent on its followers. However, Alabi (2012) contends that examining the contributions made by its graduates in society is the only way to determine the effectiveness of such HE leadership.

In the context of this study, leadership can be defined as a multidimensional interaction between leaders and followers within a university context, considering the perspectives of Ahlquist and Levi (2011) and Higgs (2017). This study investigated the extent to which Cameroonian university leaders exhibit such leadership traits, skills, and competences as they interact with academics (from the academics' perspective) while driving the university's vision and mission. The next section examines the literature on leadership in African universities.

2.4 Leadership in African universities

Universities around the world are facing institutional challenges around matters of leadership. Scholars have indicated that the universities in Africa require committed leaders who can take on the task of fostering institutional leadership by translating leadership competencies into strategic assets (Hanson & Léautier, 2011; Ashcroft & Rayner, 2011; Bakuwa & Mouton, 2015). Literature also indicates that HEIs in Africa lack a model type of institutional leadership that can respond to the challenges that these institutions face (Sall & Oanda, 2015). As a result, African university leaders should encourage and motivate their followers by posing challenges that provide opportunities for personal growth and development (Smith & Hughey, 2006). Abugre (2018) studied the institutional governance and management systems of a Ghanaian research university with all of the deans, heads of departments, and directors. According to the findings, there is no institutional policy in place that allows the university leaders to make their own decisions without intervention from the government. Lyken-Segosebe and Braxton (2021) also add that there is a lack of information on leaders' decision-making approaches, backgrounds, and how they use internal and external scholarly research to address recurring challenges in some Southern African Development Community (SADC) higher education institutions. The current study aimed to contribute to this body of knowledge by focusing on academics' qualitative experiences with such university leadership and how this relates to their professional identity construction.

The university is unique in terms of teaching, research, and outreach activities (community engagement), and it operates in a specific environment. According to studies, university leaders are required to build relationships with a variety of groups and stakeholders, as well as be able to effect change in learning and teaching through specific role distribution (Smith & Wolverton, 2010; Jones et al., 2012). In Africa, for example, the university's role in teaching, research, and community engagement in national socioeconomic progress and development is expanding. In view thereof, African universities require leaders who can encourage and actively pursue institutional policies that promote and support quality teaching, research, and community engagement, all of which are critical to developing the next generation of knowledge producers in Africa (the graduates). Such graduates should be able to deal effectively with the complex set of problems and opportunities that Africa is presented with (Hanson & Léautier, 2011). This calls into question the role of university leaders, who are responsible for executing the academic project in ways that effectively produce the next generation of leaders. As previously stated in this study, the modern African university, like most universities worldwide, has a clear mandate, roles, and responsibilities.

However, these mandates and responsibilities are rarely fully implemented, resulting in a decline in the university's mission achievement (Muriisa, 2014). Furthermore, with global competition forcing African universities to compete for new knowledge creation that is relevant and innovative, university leaders require strategic thinking in order to compete and outwit their competitors (Dampson & Edwards, 2019).

Sall and Oanda (2015) assert that the majority of African institutions have new management boards and executive deans who have taken decision-making away from the faculty. These management team leaders in some African universities are the rectors, chancellors (university presidents), and all faculty deans, who are chosen by the head of state in some African institutions (Guiake & Tianxue, 2019). Furthermore, the titles of academics and administrative officers at universities vary around the world, with the vice-chancellor in some cases being solely responsible for policy implementation (Lyken-Segosebe & Braxton, 2021). However, academics at many of these African universities are rarely consulted or involved in decision-making processes, even when it comes to policies governing teaching and learning, research, and community engagement (Sall & Oanda, 2015). In order to understand how this lack of power shapes the development of academics' professional identities, this study took into account academics' experiences of such leadership approaches where they were excluded from decision-making and contributions regarding matters of teaching and learning, research, and community engagement. The discussion of academic leadership in higher education follows.

2.5   Academic leadership in higher education

Joyce and O'Boyle (2013) define academic leadership as incorporating the main academic tasks of teaching and learning, research, and scholarship, as well as a larger focus on academic values and identity. Although previous research studies argue that academic leadership has received less attention than other areas of leadership, possibly due to its unique peculiarities (Madugu & Manaf, 2018), academic leaders are at the core of the entire higher education process (Mohnot & Shaw, 2017). Black (2015) argues that academic leadership positions often combine the duties of teacher, scholar, researcher, and institutional citizen, all of which have some amount of leadership duty, either explicitly or implicitly implied in the function. Moreover, these academics take on additional outside leadership roles in subject discipline peer organisations, research collaboration project teams, and external professional

organisations (Black, 2015). These academic leaders are not only supposed to define the vision, support the strategies, and act as promoters for workforce development and retention; they are also accountable for fostering an institution-wide culture of strong values and ethics (Mohnot & Shaw, 2017).

Similarly, these academic leaders are also expected to ensure academic freedom because it guarantees the freedom to express oneself without fear of retaliation, the freedom to select the teaching methods one wants to utilise, the freedom to share information with others, and the freedom to conduct original research in one's field (Ong, 2012). According to Bolden et al. (2012)

> Academic leaders (such as a course or research director) may be able to influence and inspire group members to perform group relevant tasks (like teaching, research and/or administration) without resorting to hierarchical power. In contrast, formal academic managers/leaders (such as Vice-Chancellor (VC) or Dean of Faculty), who may define their role identities in terms of corporate goals associated with profit or productivity, may need to exert the power associated with their control of resources and/or to issue rewards/sanctions in order to get the same outcomes. Such issues are important in defining appropriate and acceptable styles of leadership and of ensuring 'credible', 'trustworthy', 'authentic', and 'inspiring' approaches, and are likely to impact upon the desirability and experience of taking up a leadership role within higher education (p.5).

Bolden and colleagues tried to balance the responsibilities of informal academic leaders and formal academic leaders by explaining that the difference between the two is that informal academic leaders might be able to motivate and inspire group members to carry out duties that are important to the group (such as teaching, research, and administration) without using hierarchical power. To achieve the same results, however, formal academic leaders may need to use the authority that comes with their control of resources to either reward or sanction followers. However, considering that these leaders are typically chosen based on their adherence to the governments that set the institution's pedagogical priorities, as was discussed earlier in this study, this may not be the case. As a result, in order to keep their position of authority inside the university, these leaders may follow the directives made by that higher authority (hierarchy).

It is against this backdrop that Cetin and Kinik (2015) contend that academic leadership is highly complex and demanding, which leads to stress and burnout on the part of the academic leaders. Frantz et al. (2022) agree that this complexity, most especially in the African context, is partly due to the colonial history of African countries and because segregation is deeply

rooted in most of these institutions. Based on the findings of their study on an analysis of academic leadership behaviour from the perspective of transformational leadership, Cetin and Kinik (2015) assert that it is challenging to find the best candidate to fill that post because of a lack of such leadership qualifications. In addition to finding techniques that work best in the HE setting or the most successful leadership approach, university leadership has a duty to consider how to effectively lead their organisations (Black, 2015). However, Cetin and Kinik (2015) claim that academics without basic leadership skills are still filling these positions, and department heads are frequently picked based on their reputations for brilliance in research or other fields of competence—qualities that are not equivalent to successful leadership abilities. Thus, the current study was interested in how the lack of these academic leadership abilities influences the professional identity construction of academics in the Cameroonian context.

However, Ayee (2014) postulates that although progressive academic leadership is the hallmark of a world-class university, in the context of African universities, for instance, academic leadership is still largely underexplored. Ayee contends that, despite this, the problem is to understand the role of academics in administration, as well as their competency and capacity to do so, given that they have not generally acquired the skills and abilities to embark on such a profession. It is stated that the existence of academic development leadership programmes that can aid leaders in perfecting their capacities to influence and engage with the university system will be of significant relevance (Frantz et al., 2022). Thus, the challenge in the African context is not only for higher education institutions to take on the responsibility of training academics in leadership development but also to encourage leadership development research (Frantz et al., 2022) as it relates to academics' professional identity construction. Haven discussed academic leadership. The next section is a review of the literature on academics' professional identity construction.

2.6 Academics' professional identity construction

It is argued that literature does not often define professional identity properly which may result in misunderstandings and presumptions that complicate research and confuse experts when guiding people (Fitzgerald, 2020). Fitzgerald argues that most studies even use different terms such as "self-concept" and "professional specialization" to arrive at the same meaning that defines the process rather than the concept itself. Most scholars have defined professional identity as an individual's professional self-concept based on ideas, values,

motives, qualities, and experiences (Eason et al., 2018). Haghighat et al. (2019) have also defined professional identity as a "professional self-perception based on attitudes, beliefs, feelings, values, motivations, and experiences that are related to a specific profession" (p. 139). Haghighat et al. (2018) add that for an individual to have self-confidence, self-esteem, and improved interpersonal communication skills, it will depend on whether the person has a positive professional identity and, hence, job satisfaction. This may imply that a person defines their professional identity based on the abilities necessary to understand and identify oneself as well as their overall life's purpose. Schwartz et al. (2017) argue that because individuals usually have professional identities that guide their behaviour, one's self-conceptions within a particular professional area may influence how one chooses to pursue identity-related goals.

Professional identity is a person's subjective construction that is influenced by the interpersonal interactions they have with other people regarding their work (Caza & Creary, 2016). Professional identity construction, according to Bentley et al. (2019), is the process of creating and building a new future and is an essential part of a person's professional career development. Academics' professional identity can be formed around group membership, social class, professional attributes and positions, or educational, cultural, as well as national background, and individuals may have different identities pertaining to different contexts (Nevgi & Löfström, 2014). Castelló et al. (2020) classify the definition of identity into different dimensions and values in a comprehensive way by stating that, because critical realists believe identity is a dynamic biographical process rooted in history, "agency and trajectory are central to understanding identity within this framework, which provides a means to balance unity and change" (p. 576). What Castelló et al. may mean here is that, in order to understand identity, individuals' actions or activities, as well as the manner in which those actions and activities are carried out, may be placed at the centre of identity construction. Neary (2014) contends that professional identity refers to how people see themselves in the context of their occupations and how they express this to others. Neary (2014) adds that academic conceptions of professional identity differ widely.

Scholars from various disciplines, including the social sciences, medicine, social media communication, and others, have investigated academics' professional identity construction in relation to their gender (Mählck, 2016; Silander et al., 2021), sexuality (McAllister, 2016), religion (Zaver, 2017), and race (Shah, 2017). Their findings indicate that, as a result of

managerial and structural changes in higher education, academic identity is complex, evolving, increasingly diverse, and polarised (Quigley, 2011; Ylijoki & Ursin, 2013; Billot & King, 2015; Madikizela-Madiya & Le Roux, 2017). Drennan et al. (2017), on the other hand, argue that the definition of academic identity in higher education is narrow and that the available literature only theorises concepts related to professional identity in general rather than academic identity in higher education. Quigley (2011) agrees that academic identity lacks exactness in terms of description because it is complex and composed of various competing influences. As a result, it is regarded as a moving target that differs for each academic (Quigley, 2011). Furthermore, little is known about the psychological mechanisms underlying academic identity construction and the barriers that obstruct it (Bentley et al., 2019).

Understanding academic identity, on the other hand, necessitates a discussion of the complex changes in higher education—working conditions, curriculum, student profiles, the promotion of entrepreneurial programmes, and the impact of leadership on academics, personal life, and professional life are examples of these changes (Drennan et al., 2017). As a result, because academics construct multiple identities, this conceptualisation fits academics as they move between contexts and take on different roles and positions, such as teacher, life coach, parent, friend, researcher, general public service provider, and administrator (Achirri, 2020).

According to Leišytė and Wilkesmann (2016), academic identities have traditionally been linked with disciplines and related to the main academic roles of teaching and research, to the point where, in the global perspective today, universities place great demands on every activity and professional work of academics, expecting them to fulfil multidimensional roles. These roles and responsibilities include "teaching, researching, managing, and leading various developmental and administrative tasks" (Jogi et al., 2020, p. 83). According to Ylijoki and Ursin (2013), an academic's identity construction is rooted in the social stock of knowledge unique to each institutional and cultural context.

The identity of an academic is continually changing because of institutional and societal forces, and this must be emphasised. As new roles, fields, and methods of working arise, these pressures are forcing academics to reframe their identities away from the monolithic notions of academics as researchers or educators and toward a flexible and dynamic identity (Drennan et al., 2017). Academics may be juggling multiple identities as they contribute to

their roles and responsibilities in institutional research and development, research, enterprise, and community partnerships (Lamont & Nordberg, 2014). Hence, the extent to which academics negotiate between competing interests may contribute to inequality in career outcomes.

Furthermore, it is argued that the role of the self, such as self-reflection, agency, and self-authorship, is influenced during the process of an academic's professional identity construction. van Lankveld et al. (2016) and Žydžiūnaitė et al. (2019) argue that an academic's professional identity can be a combination of the construction of both the personal self and the profession, which is constantly shifting and made up of many competing influences that vary depending on the academic and social context. According to Billot (2010b), academics' roles and responsibilities are shifting, reforming, and being reviewed, requiring them to perform more tasks than ever before, making it difficult for them to interpret their roles and responsibilities accurately. Quigley (2011) points out that in some higher education institutions, academics construct their identities as either teachers or researchers because they are not permitted to take on both roles. Thus, the current study was interested in the shift in academic identity construction in the Cameroonian context and the role leadership plays in influencing how academics construct their identities as teachers or researchers.

Academics, in general, have their own set of values and beliefs shaped by their experiences, which inform how they construct their identity when they take on university positions. It is argued that if institutional changing dynamics do not align with these values and beliefs, the academics' identity construction will be hampered (Lamont & Nordberg, 2014). This study looked at how academics construct their professional identities in relation to their leadership experiences as well as the philosophy that guides leaders in their actions. Another factor to consider is that most leaders at Cameroon University are party loyalists who support the ruling party (Ngenge, 2020). Ngenge (2020) contends that there has rarely been an appointment of a university leader who does not align with the ideologies of the ruling party. Academics' identity construction in these universities is likely to be influenced by the type of political ideologies that are infused into the institution through the leadership of such individuals who have been appointed on the basis of their political ideologies.

Drennan et al. (2017) assert that since governments view higher education as increasingly important to the economic development of society, academics are under pressure to

reconfigure their identities, roles, and responsibilities in line with the government's views. Lamont and Nordberg (2014) postulate that academics' output and performance are assessed, and their pay and promotion are becoming dependent on the achievement of such tasks that are determined by government priorities. For example, in African universities, the conditions or criteria for academics' promotion are based on the number of research publications that an academic has to their credit, and Cameroon is no exception. Altbach (2015) agrees that an academic's success in the competitive environment of global HE is dependent on publication in refereed journals and that academics all over the world are required to "publish or perish." Taking this into account, this study reported on the extent to which the pressure to "publish or perish" (Altbach, 2015) influences or shapes the professional identity construction of academics at a Cameroonian university.

A study conducted by Flecknoe et al. (2017) in Australia highlights that academics construct their identities based on the education-focused academic's framework, which identifies teaching and research on an equal scale to avoid imbalance. These education-focused academics differ from their teaching and research colleagues in that they demonstrate leadership through teaching excellence, implement and evaluate pedagogical innovation, and engage in the scholarship of teaching and learning through these activities (Flecknoe et al., 2017). Alternatively, Billot and King (2015) and Zambrell (2016) contend that, because scholars have also informed workplace experiences as an important perspective of professional identity construction, the current academic identity shift is about the ability to reshape identities to align with one's working domain rather than identities that are needed in changing times. Given this, it may mean that academic identity shift is about the ability to reshape identities to align with one's working domain, making workplace experiences an important aspect of professional identity development, as was the case in the current study.

According to Berger and Lê Van (2019), while academics have various self-components, such as their roles and responsibilities, subject matter, and students' learning, that influence the construction of their professional identities, it is critical for university institutions to understand how academics' experiences with these factors shape their identities. Thomas (2019) contends that academics' professional identities are influenced not only by their socio-cultural, socio-economic, and linguistic backgrounds but also by their teaching environment, community, socio-cultural background, and students' sex or gender. Fitzmaurice (2013) and Van Lankveld et al. (2016) agree that emotional and intellectual workplace influencers have

an impact on academics as they negotiate their various roles of professional identity construction and deconstruction. Quigley (2011) and Billot and King (2015) also concur that culture and community can influence academics' identity construction based on their goals, values, and interests. They go on to say that in the context of activities, an academic's identity construction changes and is subjectively interpreted in terms of one's individuality. This resonates with García-Martínez et al.'s (2018) argument that although identity is influenced by social and cultural factors, the school system, and leadership influences on academics' professional identity development, each academic constructs their professional identity in a unique way because their experiences are negotiated differently.

However, Drennan et al. (2017) claim that, while other factors influence academics' professional identity construction, their discipline or subject has the greatest influence on academics' identity construction in higher education. The foregoing authors' arguments indicate that although this study is interested in leadership as experienced by academics in constructing their professional identity within a university context, other factors such as academics' self-components, the teaching environment, socio-cultural background, and students' sex or gender, as well as academics' emotional and intellectual workplace, amongst others, may influence the construction of their professional identity. This section has provided a general overview of academic professional identity construction. The next section focuses particularly on academics' professional identity construction in African universities.

2.7 Academics' professional identity construction in African universities

The focus of this research is on academics' professional identities in relation to their leadership experiences at a Cameroonian university. A review of the literature on academics' professional identity construction from the perspective of an African university that has undergone various systemic changes is therefore appropriate. Academics are assigned many roles, and these variations have been described most notably in terms of the extent to which they identify as teachers (Kreber, 2010; Nevgi & Löfström, 2014; Nevgi & Löfström, 2015; Van Lankveld et al., 2015; Korhonen & Torma, 2016; Trautwein, 2018; Steinert et al., 2019), researchers (Jawitz, 2009; Ylijoki & Ursin, 2013), and / or service providers to the community (Ogunsanya & Govender, 2019). It is argued that since colonial independence, some recurring changes have occurred regarding the structure of the curriculum or programmes, leadership, massification, the pressure on academics to publish, and mandatory community engagement for academics. As a result, such constant changes in higher education

have an impact on academics' professional identity construction (Madikizela-Madiya & Le Roux, 2017). This section sought to understand how academics define themselves as teachers, researchers, and community service providers, as well as how they see themselves carrying out these roles and responsibilities in the context of a Cameroonian university.

2.7.1 Academics' professional identity construction based on teaching

This section reflects on academics' professional identity construction through teaching. Although it provides insight into other studies that have investigated how academics construct their identity as teachers and is significant in the context of teaching, this section discusses how academics' experiences of leadership influence how they construct their professional identity as teachers in the context of a university in Cameroon. It is worth noting that the terms "teacher" and "lecturer" may be used interchangeably throughout this section to refer to university academics.

Generally, university teaching is a learning process that takes place in an institution with the goal of seeking, acquiring, and constructing knowledge. However, colonialism-related financial, socioeconomic, historical, and geographic inequities continue to plague HEIs in the global south, notably in Africa, having a detrimental effect on staff morale and dedication to teaching (Leibowitz et al., 2015). This argument is predicated on the idea that these differences might be the reason that, for instance, South Africa is classified as having one of the worst educational systems, despite dedicating 20% of the state budget to it (Leibowitz et al., 2015).

Although extensive research has been conducted on school teachers and their identity construction (Beijaard et al., 2004), little has been researched on how academics construct their teacher identity in the university context (Nevgi & Löfström, 2014; Nevgi & Löfström, 2015; Van Lankveld et al., 2015; Shelton, 2018), particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa. It is argued that teacher identity should not be considered a professional identity for academics because it is only a part of their identity. Hence, academics need to be supported in developing their teacher identity through instructional development programmes (Löfström et al., 2015). It is in line with this argument that the concept of professional academic teacher identity construction is brought to the fore (Henkel, 2005; Kreber, 2010; Leibowitz et al., 2015; Nevgi & Lofstrom, 2015; Van Lankveld et al., 2015; Korhonen & Torma, 2016;

Trautwein, 2018; Steinert et al., 2019; Reeves, 2019; Hong & Cross Francis, 2020; McCune, 2021). Thus, this thesis attempts to fill a knowledge gap by delving deeper into the subject.

Academics' teacher identity has arguably been a challenge to conceptualise over the years (Zembylas & Chubbuck, 2018) because it is easily misinterpreted and rarely articulated, particularly when distinguishing teaching identity at the school level from teaching identity at the university level (Olsen, 2008; Harness & Boyd, 2021). Richardson and Watt (2018) define teacher identity as a career choice motivated by goals, the degree to which academics characterise their personalities and profession as someone who enacts the roles required of a teacher, and by engaging with the social ties of the profession while remaining true to this profession throughout a lifetime as university teacher experts. According to Richardson and Watt, academics' teacher identity in the context of this definition is all about maintaining teaching as an individual choice, in which university academics decide to identify themselves as teachers in their community of practice and discipline based on their personal choices rather than being forced to take on an identity they do not want to. Hence, what motivates them to teach shapes their teacher identity in a variety of ways as they negotiate their professional teaching role. To that end, how they organise their teaching activities and content delivery will be determined by how they perceive their roles as teachers (Barbato et al., 2019).

Nevin et al. (2014) contend that the process of constructing academic teachers' identities is difficult because they are constantly competing for recognition, particularly at the university level. For instance, it is argued that academics' teacher identities are only a subset of their professional identities as academics, and only a few factors influence their teacher identities (Nevgi & Löfström, 2015; Trautwein, 2018). Academics in Cameroon, for example, do more than just create a teaching identity. It is argued that the teaching body in Cameroon is referred to as "teacher-researchers" (or "enseignants-chercheurs" in French) because their role in the university is not only to impart knowledge but also to participate in scientific research, as stated in their employment contract (Atindogbe, 2019). This implies that academics may not be able to pursue only a teaching, research, or community outreach career if they wanted to, since they have to maintain both their teaching and research identities. Olsen (2008), on the other hand, contends that academics can constantly reconstruct their self-image in relation to workplace characteristics, professional goals, values, and beliefs.

In the global HE context, the academic teacher's role is central to the institution's primary education mission (Hamrick, 2008). These academics are expected to be subject matter experts in their fields when developing teaching roles and new pedagogical skillsets to aid students' learning (Hamrick, 2008). However, there is growing concern about these academics' ability to deliver high-quality instruction (Teferra, 2016). Shawa (2020) argues that despite this, simply because academics have pedagogical expertise (which is sometimes deficient) for mediating topic content does not mean that they can be effective in their teaching and learning processes (Shawa, 2020). In addition, there are other issues affecting teaching in Sub-Saharan African universities besides the ongoing pressure from governments on universities to enrol more students than academics (Mushemeza, 2016) and an increase in the number of students from various socio-cultural backgrounds. Additionally, the academic deficit in sub-Saharan Africa has been made worse by the exponential expansion in the number of new universities. Because of this, academics struggle to sustain top-notch university instruction, even at renowned universities (Hayward & Ncayiyana, 2014). Hence, a lack of qualified academics may have an adverse effect on the quality and depth of knowledge provided to students, given the challenge of an extremely unequal student-staff ratio in different faculties across African universities (Hlengwa, 2019).

According to Hayward and Ncayiyana (2014), the first universities in sub-Saharan Africa were comprised of high-quality teaching academic staff. With funding from governments and other stakeholders, these academics taught in small, student-centred teaching and learning classrooms (Hayward & Ncayiyana, 2014). When the global economic crisis hit the world and Africa in the 1990s, African governments cut HE funding, which impacted the smooth operation of these universities, thereby affecting teaching quality (Hayward & Ncayiyana, 2014). Given the importance of academics in the development of a well-functioning university, there was a need for universities to recruit, train, and retain quality academics with teaching abilities (Mushemeza, 2016).

However, in modern-day universities, most senior lecturers and professors with the necessary skills and competencies are overburdened with administrative and research duties, leaving them with little or no time to prepare for lectures and/or mentor students (Mushemeza, 2016). It is even argued that these academics should de-skill their courses so that they can be delivered on a regular basis by assistant lecturers or part-time instructors (who are sometimes lacking in teaching skills). As a result, universities tend to hire less skilled and less expensive

faculty members to fill these teaching positions (Foley & Masingila, 2014). Because of this lack of teaching experience, most African universities have introduced or developed staff development programmes. For instance, in 2012, a South African university, specifically the University of KwaZulu-Natal, established the university education induction programme (UEIP) (Reddy et al., 2016). This programme was meant to achieve the strategic goal of the institution by developing early career academics (ECAs) with the skills necessary for accessing, teaching, and learning, evaluating curricula, and supervising research in HE (Reddy et al., 2016). Furthermore, this induction programme is essential because, among other things, it produces academics with the capacity to reflect through engagement and ownership, provides them with continuous intellectual development, exposes the ECAs to institutional cultures, and gives them the chance to develop new academics through this interaction (Reddy et al., 2016).

Scholars such as Nevgi and Löfström (2015) and Trautwein (2018) have studied academics' identity development as teachers on a global scale. Both studies were exploratory in nature, with the goal of understanding how academics develop their teacher identity over time through staff development programmes. The former study focused on the development of teacher identities among academics over a five-to-six-year period, whereas the latter study examined eight academics enrolled in a teaching development programme in terms of their development in teaching and as teachers based on individual experience. Furthermore, both studies reported different findings; for example, the former identified four teacher identities: a renewing and reflective university teacher and researcher; a pedagogically skilled subject expert teacher; an educational developer reflecting on how to improve university teaching; and an educational developer focusing on research on university teaching with no reflection on teaching, whereas the latter reported three thematic phases of academics' development as teachers, such as academics taking on the teaching role, settling into the teaching role, and academics finding a new role as a teacher.

Van Lankveld et al. (2015) conducted a qualitative synthesis of 59 studies on university teacher identity in order to better understand the factors limiting and strengthening university teachers' development at English-speaking universities. They found that while the overall university context has a negative impact on academic teachers, psychological processes such as a sense of appreciation also developed teacher identity. Furthermore, the study discovered that workplace features, on the other hand, have an influence on academic teacher identity,

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either favourably or adversely, depending on whether teaching is valued. Although Van Lankveld et al.'s (2015) study identified a sense of appreciation as a factor that influences teacher identity; it did not explain how university teaching is appreciated or how this lack of appreciation influences academics' construction of their professional identity based on teaching. This is evident in Cameroon, where promotion and tenure for university teaching are not valued (Roettger et al., 2007). Thus, as the dynamics of identity construction in higher education continue to surge, so does the need for further discussion on the type of message that university leaders portray on the value of teaching and how it influences university teachers' identity construction.

According to Steinert et al.'s (2019) research, longitudinal programmes, networking and communities of practice, mentorship, reflection, identity workshops, and institutional support strengthen academics' professional teacher identity. Chitanand (2015) concurs that these programmes serve as an enabler that improves teaching, learning, and assessment policies in higher education, particularly because different cohorts of academics with varying levels of teaching experiences are employed in higher education. Chitanand goes on to say that in South Africa, for example, each HEI has a programme for new academics that ranges from a few days of orientation or induction to a semester-long programme that is mostly facilitated by teaching and learning centres or Academic Development Units. Given that Chitanand's (2015) study of an induction programme for new academics in a higher education institution discovered that academics who participate in the induction programme develop additional strategies to improve learning and teaching, Ozurumba and Amasuomo (2015) suggest that such induction programmes should be encouraged because they benefit academics by changing their knowledge, skills, values, and beliefs, to name a few.

In contrast, Teferra (2016) claims that the multi-country, multi-institutional, and multi-research methodology study he conducted on induction into the teaching praxis in the context of early-career academics in seven universities from six African countries discovered that no efforts are made in those institutions to train academics to teach or lecture. Furthermore, he adds that there are no known comparative studies on early-career academics in the context of teaching induction in African universities, despite the fact that most academics may require training in required teaching skills, as is done with research during doctoral and postdoctoral studies. Teferra (2016) concludes that most early-career academics lecturing in most universities in Africa are hardly endowed with teaching opportunities. Although studies on

academic induction have been conducted in Africa, there is a scarcity of literature on the long-term impact of these programmes on academics' teaching, with no consideration given to how instructional practices shape academics' professional identity as teachers.

Samfoga-Doh (2009) explains that in Cameroon, though not explicitly stated as a faculty development programme, measures were put in place more than a decade ago through what is known as the University Brain Trust (UBT) by the Ministry of Higher Education, or otherwise known as the Staff Development Grant (SDF) initiated in 2001 at the University of Buea. She argues that the academics' low profile influenced the quality of their teaching, despite the fact that the majority of them held master's degrees. As such, this type of grant mechanism aims to improve academics' teaching, research productivity, upward mobility, and competitiveness. According to Samfoga-Doh (2009), the Ministry of Higher Education in Cameroon sets aside funds to sponsor university teachers and postgraduate students for capacity-building at home and in foreign universities. However, due to the prevalence of tribalism and favouritism in Cameroon, such initiatives rarely benefit everyone. Furthermore, rather than being a system-wide scheme for Cameroon's entire university body, the SDF programme was the initiative of a single university.

Furthermore, funds for the capacity-building programme are awarded based on a rigorous selection process in which applicants go through various stages and only those who meet the required criteria are chosen (Samfoga-Doh, 2009). This stringent selection process may deter academics from participating. It is well acknowledged that institutional processes and norms have a significant impact on academic identity in higher education, and individuals who hold teaching positions are frequently the first to feel the practical effects of change (McNaughton & Billot, 2016). This study hoped to contribute to the body of knowledge in this regard by drawing on the academics' experiences of how they constructed their professional identities.

Against this backdrop, academics' schooling experiences may have an impact on their professional identity as teachers. Subbaye and Dhunpath (2016) contend that, in the absence of relevant policy and appropriate teacher development programmes, academics can acquire seemingly indelible imprints from their own experiences as students. What Subbaye and Dhunpath may be referring to here is that academics' experiences with the way they were taught by their undergraduate teachers may influence the way they teach because they primarily draw their resources for teaching from their schooling experiences as students and their personal and professional identities inside and outside of the schooling system (Samuel,

2008). As a result, as identity is constructed, one moves from one identity to another (Bentley et al., 2019), creating an identity shift and reconstruction from a student identity to a new identity as a teacher in this context (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2011). To that end, academics negotiate their experience and the sense that emerges from it in order to inform their identity as teachers, given that the process of constructing their identity is not fixed. Hence, academics' identities are defined not only by who they are as teachers but also by how they are identified in terms of how their experiences as students influence how they work as teachers (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2011). Therefore, this thesis investigated how academics develop their identities through teaching, their experiences of how they were taught, and how these experiences served as resources for their own teaching.

Within the context of teacher academics and their identity development in HEIs, Komba and Kira (2013) postulate that, while research and consultancy are important institutional factors influencing academics' professional identities, teaching is the most important institutional factor influencing academics' professional identities. As a result, academics' professional identity in teaching and learning practices is rooted in their discipline's teaching and learning requirements (Berthiaume, 2008). However, Nevgi and Löfström (2015) contend that academics struggle to understand what constitutes good teaching, what is expected of them as teachers, and how they can develop as teachers in a university setting. According to Fomunyam (2014), this state of misconception may result from changes in institutional practices such as curriculum change, which compels academic teachers to change themselves and meet the outlined principles initiated by policymakers. As a result, these academic teachers may be required to make changes that they regard as impossible and inappropriate, despite the fact that they certainly have professional experience (Fomunyam, 2014). Clearly, the nature of academics' teacher identity construction is complex because the academics' teacher self and agency are combined with their personal and professional identities (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2011).

A study by Mathe and Hapazari (2019) provides a relevant context for further understanding the identity of teacher academics within discipline-based cultures and the profession at university. According to the findings of the study, academics in a university setting are unable to separate their professional identities from their academic identities due to their primary responsibility to engage in the triple mission (Mathe & Hapazari, 2019). According to the authors, discipline-based culture, which is an important factor in the academic's construction

of self and profession at a university, may either improve or hinder professional identity development as leaders interact with the staff and their tasks (Mathe & Hapazari, 2019). Thus, it can be argued in the context of this claim that academics identify their roles as teachers, personal beliefs, and professional practices.

Some studies have also found that teaching and research are the key elements influencing academics' professional identity development at the university. Turk and Ledić (2016) conducted a qualitative study with 60 academics with the preconceived assumption that academics primarily construct a teacher identity. These academics, when interviewed, disagreed with this viewpoint since, according to them, they only build a teacher identity as a result of unfavourable external factors such as increased teaching workload, inadequate teaching personnel at institutions, and engaging in teaching as a responsibility. These 60 academics reported that their research work is more valuable to their professional development than teaching and that they only identify as teachers to fill a teacher vacuum rather than for personal motivation (Turk & Ledić, 2016). To that end, even if they consider personal motivation important, these academics believe that external circumstances, rather than personal drive, shape their professional identity. Thus, external factors in this context may influence academics' career satisfaction, personal productivity, and motivation (Triemstra et al., 2021).

Kreber (2010) argues that the pressure for accountability and growing levels of administrative tasks are increasing the complexity of the academic workplace, hence constraining their identity as teachers. Leibowitz et al. (2015) concur that institutional context matters, such as leadership and administrative process, socio-economic features (history of the institutions, geographical location, and resources), beliefs about quality teaching and professional development, the research-teaching relationship, recognition, and appraisal, which are salient factors that affect the development of academics in their teaching roles within an African university context (Leibowitz et al., 2015). These outlined characteristics can be perceived in this study as important indicators to explore in academic identity teaching with regards to workplace demands or norms. As such, it is necessary to research a combination of these characteristics when exploring academics and their professional identities as teachers. Concentrating on the combination of these characteristics might reveal differences between individual teachers, for example, in terms of their personal values and behaviours, whereas looking at a lone characteristic may not produce quality results.

Academic teachers have different personal values that inform how they construct their teaching in their workplace, although they might be teaching in the same institutional context with the same institutional values. Thus, institutional and workplace demands may have an impact on academics' development of teacher identities. This thesis sought to explore how these characteristics influence academics individually as they construct their teacher identities in the context of a university in Cameroon.

Ultimately, it is suggested that teacher identity is established not just when teachers assert their self-positioning but also when external parties assign identities to them (Reeves, 2018). Academics, according to Reeves, might construct their teaching identity based on an identity position constructed by others or by constructing a new identity position. However, Kreber (2010) challenges this viewpoint, arguing that teachers can only construct their teacher identity based on what they find important in their professional work, their personal lives, personal experiences, and personal socio-cultural and discipline-based backgrounds, rather than the influence of other people's conceptions and beliefs. This could imply that academics have the freedom to develop their teaching identities as they see fit, unless they allow external forces to dictate and influence their professional teacher identity. This section has looked at the intricacies of academics' teaching roles in higher education as well as the factors that influence the construction of their professional teacher identities. The part that follows demonstrates how academics' professional identities are constructed based on research demands.

2.7.2 Academics' professional identity construction based on research

The arguments over the role of research in contemporary higher education globally and in Africa have resulted in academics developing numerous identities (Borlaug et al., 2022). While teaching is prioritised in academics' professional identity construction, research also influences academics' professional identity construction in universities. Prior to the 19th century, academics worldwide, particularly in African institutions, were purely committed to teaching; but by the late 19th and early 20th centuries, they had created a dual profession when they were compelled to add research to their careers (Pather & Remenyi, 2019). Universities initially paid less attention to academics participating in research in the second half of the 20th century. Because there was less emphasis on research activities, academics had successful careers despite having few publications to their names (Pather & Remenyi, 2019).

However, in the early twenty-first century, academics were under pressure not only to generate more publications to maintain universities' competitiveness and enhance funding sources, but also to increase their exposure through grant bids and raise awareness of the benefits of academic research (Pather & Remenyi, 2019). This continuous pressure resulted in low research quality (Olenick et al., 2019), as academics were now trying to meet the research requirements of the university. Although Pather & Remenyi (2019) argue that current research activities provide the type of value that they should, university leaders continue to put pressure on academics to publish quality research in prestigious sustainable peer-reviewed journals on a regular basis as one of the criteria for their promotion (Altbach, 2015; Pather & Remenyi, 2019). As a result, it is a clear indication that research universities worldwide, and particularly in Africa, are at the pinnacle of the HE hierarchy (Altbach, 2011). According to the Herana study, such universities include, among others, the Universities of Cape Town, Makerere, and Ghana, which were put in this position due to the large number of publications achieved each year (Cloete et al., 2018).

A World Bank (WB) and Elsevier report on a decade of development in sub-Saharan Africa, which was adopted by African governments' ministers in Kigali in 2014, agreed on a strategy that uses strategic investments in science and technology to accelerate Africa's transition to a developed knowledge-based society (Lan et al., 2014). According to the study, the quality and quantity of research production in Sub-Saharan Africa have considerably grown, with the areas of West and Central Africa (WC), East Africa (EA), and Southern Africa (SA) more than doubling their annual research output from 2003 to 2012. Furthermore, Sub-Saharan Africa now accounts for 0.44 percent of worldwide research, up from 0.72 percent at the time the paper was written. According to Lan et al. (2014), the number of citations in papers is continuously increasing, from 0.06 percent to 0.16 percent for each area and from 0.12 percent to 0.28 percent for South Africa and East Africa. In view thereof, Lan et al. (2014) continue that, between 2003 and 2012, they outperformed the global average in terms of the citation effect of their study. Despite this recorded improvement in the quality and quantity of research, Africa nevertheless contributes "less than 1 percent of the world's research output, which remains a far cry from its share of the global population at 12 percent" (Lan et al., 2014, p. 3).

It can be argued that the fact that most governments do not allocate adequate funds for research may be the cause of this lack of publication, as this drives African scholars to look to

the global north for funding, which is often geared to meet the needs of the donors. Furthermore, most academics may have chosen to migrate to countries such as the UK, Germany, the United States of America, and others where academics are highly compensated in comparison to Africa, owing to poverty and low pay at African HEIs. As a result, their publications are always represented in the research indexes of their affiliated universities overseas rather than in their home nation. Furthermore, the political characteristics of some nations, particularly party politics, may require academics to focus on political duties at the expense of research, and if they must publish, it must be regime-titled research (Nsah, 2016). This is likely to be the situation in Cameroon, as most university leaders are appointed by the state, as previously stated in the background of this study (see Chapter 1).

Based on the aforementioned, several requirements for HEIs to fulfil all stakeholder needs and perform better in all roles and responsibilities, including research productivity, have stretched the definition of what constitutes "research," how it is organised, and when and which academics should engage in this research activity (Billot, 2010a). Academics are also requesting, "What does it mean to be a researcher?" Is a researcher the same as a scholar? Do I perceive myself as a researcher...? "Do I belong here?" (McLeod & Badenhorst, 2014, p. 67). Despite these concerns, research is seen as an important component of university production that drives a component of academic identity.

According to Büyükgöze and Gün (2017), universities are also supposed to promote academics' professional and personal lives by providing answers to social problems through their faculty members' research output. In addition to these responsibilities and the need for government research funding, universities expect academics to be research-active by conducting high-quality and quantity research (Brew et al., 2018). As a result, HEIs are not just concerned about conducting high-quality research; Kinchin et al. (2018) argue that the tension is in determining whether research should be conducted by research-active academics or by colleagues who work purely as service providers or non-academics. It is against this framework that academics' experiences of university leadership at a university in Cameroon are deemed vital to explore.

Similarly, Büyükgöze and Gün (2017) claim that research efforts spurred by the desire to boost university financing, productivity, and quality have an undeniable impact on academics' construction of their professional and personal self. These research outputs contribute to the funding and prestige of institutions and academics' research activities (Olenick et al., 2019).

This is shown in Cameroon through an academic's career path and promotion to a higher grade. This event underscores the importance of this study in understanding academics' experiences with university leaders' pressure on their professional identities through research activities. As stated previously in this study, academics' research productivity is increasingly being measured in terms of production and performance; tenure, promotion, and salary progression are becoming more contingent on achieving these goals (Drennan et al., 2017). Thus, this study sought to explore how this contention between research benefits and research publications as criteria for promotion shapes academics' professional identity construction in the context of Cameroon.

Despite the fact that universities have assigned importance, space, and time to research and that it is stated in the institutions' mission statements due to its wealth of relevance, the challenge has been to develop new knowledge, enhance current knowledge, and address human issues (van Winkel et al., 2017; Vurayai & Ndofirepi, 2020). As a result, investment in higher education research has pushed governments, particularly those in developing nations, to compete in the knowledge economy. According to Barbarà-i-Molinero et al. (2017), contextual changes at these universities and their purpose have opened the way for academics who participate deeply in research to develop interrelated changes to their research identities. Although government statements have always stressed the importance of international basic research, there has been some inconsistency in the statements because the government also expects universities to contribute to economic growth by undertaking applied research (Kyvik, 2013). Because of this discrepancy, academics have been split between conducting practical or applied research and conducting basic research. As a result, academic independence is limited, especially when the government emphasises the need to prioritise research in order to achieve economic growth (Drennan et al., 2017).

Furthermore, the driving force behind academic research has been income generation, to the point that universities are under intense pressure to develop applied research through academics in order to encourage and establish collaborative relationships with the research world (van Winkel et al., 2017). This has also resulted in tension between basic and applied research, as mentioned above, therefore linking to the phrase "think global, act local" (Kearney, 2009, p. 7). It is in this context that academics' roles and professionalisation are developing. Consequently, an area of importance for academics' identity construction can now be concentrated on academics' identity construction in research. This thesis examines the

contention between applied and basic research and how it has influenced academics to construct their professional identities based on research.

McLeod and Badenhorst (2014) argue that a collaborative environment will influence the process of identity development, particularly among academics, because it will nurture researchers who do not only produce research but also find meaning in what they do. Similarly, Olenick et al. (2019) agree that academics will have more opportunity to improve as researchers if they can effectively form and sustain a collaborative workgroup in which everyone contributes. They will be able to produce good publications and funding proposals that have been authored collaboratively, edited, and combined with solid research methodologies and data analysis (Olenick et al., 2019). Hence, collaborative research will assure a primary review within the institution, allowing members of the collaborative team to proofread or evaluate the paper before it is submitted for publication (Olenick et al., 2019). However, joint research is hindered by the ambiguity surrounding publication in Cameroon. For instance, although Nsah (2016) claims that academics in Cameroon and those abroad publish in various scholarly journals such as *Google Scholar*, *Researchgate*, and others, Nsah's (2016) assertion is purely hypothetical because Cameroon lags behind other nations in terms of the number of Cameroonian scholars' publications in esteemed journals, book reviews, and articles, especially research that considers the Cameroonian context.

Agreeing, Atindogbe (2019) contends that, while studies show that research is expanding in Cameroon, the situation on paper does not represent reality on the ground since the country has few publishing journals that publish primarily at the national level with little or no international visibility. Nsah (2016), on the other hand, claims that the reasons for this difficulty are "publishing hurdles/conundrums, limited online presence of university annals and journals, absence of student journals within Cameroonian universities, limited funding/lack of incentives, and little or no collaborative vertical research projects" (p. 55). These issues might explain why there is a dearth of collaboration between senior and junior academics, lecturers, and/or professors and junior lecturers. As a result, the absence of such research cooperation among academics in the context of Cameroon may have an influence on their research growth and development, consequently limiting their capacity to build a research-based identity. Considering this gap, the current study attempts to acquire a better understanding of the challenges.

In some countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, the department of education has mounted pressure on academics to produce at least 1.25 articles every academic year (Schulz, 2013). In addition, these publications must be of high quality and contain technicalities that indicate if the phenomenon has been thoroughly researched, whether the technique has carefully investigated the phenomenon, and whether the study is unique. McLeod and Badenhorst (2014) argue that HEIs continue to focus entirely on the output of research rather than academics' satisfaction and a sense of fulfilment. Although Clegg (2008) claims that academics can develop different identities that are less constrained by the rules of research in the university, an academic's personal career development in research activities can be hampered by the intense pressure to publish (McLeod & Badenhorst, 2014), particularly if research funding is insufficient (Clarke et al., 2013). Academics' research identities may fragment as a result of funding rivalry, demand for more publications, and institutional and academic career life cycles (Achirri, 2020).

While having a perspective on research techniques and finding a good research problem is crucial for academic researchers' success and professional growth, there are many additional aspects that academic researchers need to be aware of as they construct their research identity (Pather & Remenyi, 2019). For example, Shams (2019) contends that academics should uphold their professional values by adhering to normative principles of academic research and meeting the management requirements of their university of affiliation. Furthermore, research and publishing reputation have always been essential criteria for choosing the top academics. Consequently, academics have received many research prizes or awards in recognition of their exceptional research achievements and services to research (Pather & Remenyi, 2019). These honours have inspired other academics to advance in their careers as researchers by staying active and disseminating their research (Vurayai & Ndofirepi, 2020). Academics are now defined as research academics, such that the more they publish in referenced journals, the more they are recognised for promotion and tenure (Vurayai & Ndofirepi, 2020), the more their identity is represented in research activities, and the more they keep their professional values. Because of their publications and research results, academics may be promoted to a high rank, getting job contracts, greater pay, and allocations to teach graduates and post-graduate students.

Olenick et al. (2019) assert that the challenge for academics to maintain their appointment is dependent on their consistency in publishing and staying true to their research activities.

Academics' contracts may be terminated if they fail to meet the terms of their appointment. However, in the context of Cameroon, the need for academics to fund their research in order for it to be published in prestigious peer-reviewed journals, poor research infrastructure to create an enabling environment for scholarly publishing, and almost non-existent research funding (Nsah, 2016) in universities all pose challenges to academic research development, thus impeding their professional growth path and limiting their chances for promotion to superior grades. This is seen in some under-funded universities, particularly in the areas of capacity building and research grants, forcing these universities, as in Nigeria, to rely on external agencies for research funds (Baro et al., 2017). Therefore, this thesis tries to explore further how academics in the context of a university in Cameroon perceive the struggle to maintain their tenure by fulfilling scholarly publishing obligations and how it shapes their identity in research.

Academics throughout the world are tasked with teaching a new generation of researchers. According to Kyvik (2013), academics are intended to teach master's and doctoral students how to employ theory, methodology, fieldwork, and data reporting through supervision. However, the structure of African universities is such that the majority of these qualified academics are assigned administrative jobs. As a result, their workload has increased, leaving less time for supervision (Akala, 2021). Furthermore, academics also encounter tension with the students due to their lack of progress in their research work (Wisker & Robinson, 2016), which may heighten student-supervisor tensions. According to an assessment of the literature, the student-supervisor ratio in South Africa grew from 1.3 to 1.9 between 2000 and 2007 (Akala, 2021). According to Akala, this may mean that academics may be required to supervise at least nine (9) students until completion every academic year. As a result, the students' completion time may be pushed back, leading to feelings of inadequacy and compromising the academic's professional identity (Wisker & Robinson, 2016). Furthermore, it has been said that, owing to the nature and structure of PhD education in African institutions, university leaders have been unable to solve these supervisory difficulties. As a result, the issues that come with supervision are heightened, as is the inability of university leaders to consider the wellbeing of supervisors in terms of workload. Hence, considering how this increase in academics' workload, the existing tension in the supervision process, and the inability of the university leaders to solve this supervision problem influence academics' professional identity, this knowledge gap informed this study.

A recent study on the mentorship of early-career academics in Tanzania using the Cognitive Apprenticeship Model (CAM) by Mgaiwa and Kapinga (2021) discovered that early-career academics face challenges in terms of their research productivity growth, which also influences their research professional identity growth. HEIs need to provide mentorship programmes that allow older academics to teach younger academics how to do research so that students can establish excellent research skills early in their research careers and later when they construct their research identities (Ambler et al., 2016). This is because a body of research highlights that a researcher's identity construction starts at the doctoral level (Matthews et al., 2012). To that end, mentoring can help novice researchers better prepare for work in a demanding academic environment, as well as improve their effectiveness and commitment to research output. A doctoral degree, on the other hand, does not always prepare one for a career in research (Pather & Remenyi, 2019). Most PhD graduates are unlikely to be well-equipped with the research knowledge and research competencies that would qualify them to pursue a career in research. This lack of abilities might also be attributed to insufficient time allotted for research supervision or the students' unwillingness to devote themselves to the research process. Although this thesis does not specifically focus on early-career academics, it does consider how beginner academics construct their identities as researchers when they begin their careers in a university that values research in order to further this perception by drawing attention to how early-career academics construct the meaning of their researcher role in the context of a Cameroonian university.

While mentorship may be required to promote academics' research progress, it may also be dependent on the personal values that encourage academics to engage in research and attain excellence. According to Pather and Remenyi (2019), value is an essential factor that determines academics' professional identities since it changes academics' behaviour and identities. Although academics are under pressure to perform research, reflecting on their values, goals, and beliefs while conducting research may result in them creating a researcher identity at the same time (Achirri, 2020). Given that values may underpin aspects of an academic's professional life, Winter and O'Donohue (2012) assert that the relationship between values and an academic's identity is a vain activity. In the last 20 years, values related to academics' identity have changed considerably, such that the traditional principles of academic freedom no longer apply. Hence, academic research activity is subjected to greater scrutiny and control than ever before (Drennan et al., 2017). This section has provided an understanding of academics' professional identity construction based on research. The next

section discusses community engagement as a factor that informs academics' professional identity construction.

2.7.3 Academics professional identity construction based on community engagement

A review of relevant literature shows that university-community engagement brings benefits to the host communities, but it has nonetheless received less attention in universities than teaching and research. This has influenced countries to develop mechanisms that will link the HEIs with their surrounding communities. In the global space, the United Kingdom's (UK) HE funding community, for example, has invested in community engagement initiatives, such as the Beacons of Public Engagement and the RCUK Catalysts, as actions to transform its HE system from an "ivory tower" to a "public institution" (Watermeyer, 2015). In Africa, particularly South Africa, the 1997 White Paper for the Transformation of Higher Education laid the foundation for making community engagement an integral part of HEIs (Netshandama & Mahlomaholo, 2010). According to Netshandama and Mahlomaholo (2010), the White Paper for the Transformation of Higher Education stated that "one of the goals of higher education is to promote social responsibility and awareness among students of the role of higher education in social and economic development through community service programmes" (p. 4).

Similarly, some universities in Cameroon have developed mandatory student internship programmes through the Division of Internships, Lifelong Learning, and Business Relations (Schamp, 2018). However, this has resulted in students becoming less interested in such internship programmes, especially if they have to do a voluntary internship (Schamp, 2018). Further, government funding policies and discourses about university relevance inform the need for universities to align with stakeholders and society through community engagement (Shore & McLauchlan, 2012). Thus, for HEIs to bridge the gap that exists between universities and the community in their surroundings, there is a need to create new disciplines that can act as proxies for the exploitation of academic knowledge in the new context. As a result, academics can now produce research that will impact the community rather than decorate the bookshelf (Adekalu et al., 2018). How this community engagement informs academics' construction of their identity was interrogated further in the context of Cameroon.

Although the university context has seen a growth in community engagement over the past ten years, concerns have been expressed concerning the role and contributions to the social

impact of the university on the community (Koekkoek et al., 2021). Boyer (1996) began to explore the notion of community engagement through his discourse of *"Scholarship of Engagement"* in the 1990s. The focus of his study was on the need for universities to serve as an epicentre for intellectual and civic progress and to collaborate with the immediate community to resolve the most pressing problems in society. A later study by Zomer and Benneworth (2011) admitted that universities have new roles that consist of creating significant and innovative knowledge for the economic development of a community or society through university-community partnerships. Furthermore, community engagement activities enable institutional social responsibility towards the public. As such, HEIs have a duty and responsibility to design knowledge meant for the growth and development of society.

However, this has led some critics to question whether the university is using the partnership for financial gain or not. It is in this regard that Bhagwan (2018) and Koryakina et al. (2015) caveat that efforts should be made to ascertain that the university-community partnership is genuine, considering that it is geared more towards a means for universities to secure additional funding and not to achieve the purpose for which it is constituted (Koryakina et al., 2015). Thus, what Koryakina and colleagues may imply here is that the university may be using community engagement as a funding mechanism or an income expansion scheme, and since academics are expected to narrow this gap through continuous knowledge production, it is vital to understand how the nature of the funding mechanism supports knowledge production within the community. Surprisingly, very few studies have articulated the standards for promotion and tenure based on community engagement in Africa. Therefore, community engagement is a relatively new area of research, particularly in the framework of academics' professional identities. This thesis sought to fill this knowledge gap.

Zomer and Benneworth (2011) postulate that while questions are arising about what constitutes the appropriate tasks, duties, privileges, and resources, as well as the notion of the "third mission," the third mission represents universities' consciousness and strategic contribution to the developmental growth of the community. It also informs the need for the "extension of the learning community to include community members, community service partners, students, and academic staff" (Bhagwan, 2018, p. 33). It further posits the social, entrepreneurial, and innovative activities that universities carry out alongside their teaching and research activities (Zomer & Benneworth, 2011), while taking cognizance of the

stakeholders involved in the activities. To add to the foregoing, there is a need for universities to consolidate community engagement as a system through which they engage with the developmental needs of the community (Johnson, 2020). However, Netshandama and Mahlomaholo (2010) contend that there is no discipline called "community engagement" in HE in the context of Africa because it means something different in different disciplines. As such, it has to be an integral part of all disciplines at different institutions of learning for it to be effective.

Further, there have been some concerns about whether community engagement contributes to information or to what form of knowledge, especially because the construct lacks theorization (Netshandama & Mahlomaholo, 2010). Additionally, if engagement has to do with the university partnering with the community to generate knowledge with the community and not for the community, then it goes beyond "traditional university attitudes that offer expertise rather than an appreciation for indigenous knowledge" (Olowu, 2012, p. 100). Therefore, it is necessary to understand the clear meaning of "community engagement" to differentiate whether the partnership between university and community is for knowledge generation with the community or for the community. Hence, it is in this gap that the present study tries to gain an understanding of these issues and how they influence academics' professional identity construction in the context of a university in Cameroon.

Agreeing with the earlier scholars that community engagement is a civic responsibility, Bhagwan (2018), Adekalu et al. (2018), and Bidandi et al. (2021) posit that it brings about behavioural and environmental change, and the partnership between the university and its communities enables academics to plan their professional identity growth paths (Fitzgerald et al., 2012). For instance, a group of academics working within a university who are committed to working together can develop their identity by finding solutions to problems affecting the welfare of their surrounding community (Bhagwan, 2018; Adekalu et al., 2018). However, Olowu (2012) maintains that academics lack motivation, encouragement, and support structures to engage in community activity. Furthermore, there is still a paucity of information on community engagement as a career path for academics' professional identity (Lawrence et al., 2012).

Kopelyan (2017) and Ogunsanya and Govender (2019) purport that community engagement has gained ground and visibility. As it stands, it is considered one of the pillars of academia. This increased visibility has led universities to engage with their larger community through

faculty, necessitating the university to not only articulate their interest in teaching and research in the university's mission statement but also align with the immediate communities around them, as expressed by Ernest Boyer. On the other hand, Boyer (1996) emphasised that while teaching and research are highly valued in higher education, the "scholarship of engagement," as he decided to refer to community engagement, had been overlooked at the time. For example, he argued that the priorities of academics were teaching, research, and service, yet service was rarely acknowledged during promotion and tenure (Boyer, 1996), a remark that may still be valid today (Boyer, 1996).

In addition, a recent study reiterates that being a scholar who engages in community scholarship may jeopardise the chances for tenure and promotion (Sobrero & Jayaratne, 2014). It is widely acknowledged that academics are seldom awarded or recognised for their contribution to the scholarship of engagement programmes. While academics usually receive funding for publications from research activities, their engagement in practical contributions to improving "livelihood, public awareness, agrarian development, and social conditions" (Olowu, 2012, p. 90) is not funded. To this end, academics' community engagement is only an additional activity they engage in for the wellbeing of the community and to achieve their research role (Watermeyer, 2015; Bidandi et al., 2021), and not a factor that shapes their professional identity development.

Further, Watermeyer (2015) argues that academics' professional development through community engagement is greatly limited and, in most cases, absent, contributing to a considerable knowledge gap in universities' engagement with the external environment. Its impact on internal governance and management has been recorded (Koryakina et al., 2015). Consequently, the inability of the university-community partnership to shape academics' career paths through promotion and tenure brings in a new debate given that the university considers community engagement as a key performance indicator that can shape academic identity growth. Given that one goal of this study is to better understand academics' perceptions of their own professional identities, the purpose of this thesis was to investigate how academics perceive the inability of promotion and tenure in the context of university-community partnerships in the construction of their professional identities.

Interestingly, but not unexpectedly, the existing research not only lacks sufficient information on how this community engagement affects academic work, but it also fails to reflect on how academics overcome any difficulties in interpreting their engagement practices (Kopelyan,

2017). Mtawa et al. (2016) agree that there is a scarcity of literature on the impact of community engagement on the core functions of university teaching and research, given that the university needs to develop a reliable relationship with the community through fluid engagement (Bhagwan, 2018) in order to demonstrate its relevance when developing solutions to increasing social inequalities (Kromydas, 2017). Watermeyer (2015), on the other hand, contends that the disparity between the various interpretations, beliefs, commitments to, and practices of community engagement by academics, HEIs, and even the entire education system persists. Adekalu et al. (2018) assert in this context that "academics do not regard community engagement as a strategy that may enrich their grasp of scholarship; nor do they perceive it as a valid approach that may be beneficial for their research advancement" (p. 111). As a result, community engagement may be considered a meaningless activity in terms of an academic's career path (Watermeyer, 2015). To that end, community engagement might be considered an individual activity that each academic may choose to participate in based on how relevant it is to their discipline.

Mtawa et al.'s (2016) study, which used Ernest Boyer's (1996) scholarship of engagement model as a framework to interrogate the community engagement practices at a university, reported that while some universities have acknowledged community engagement in their HE policy discourse, its frame of action is unclear because different contextual particularities affect academics' professional identities based on community engagement. In the same vein, Mugabi (2014) states that there is no concrete data on the condition of community engagement in universities. Mtawa et al. (2016) and Bhagwan (2018) highlight that political, social, economic, and technological development in different contexts may influence university-community engagement activities in each community. This might be due to a lack of contextual awareness of how the elements influence engagement, given that, while there may be uniform methods for engaging with the community, there seems to be no well-defined standard community engagement policy that guides practice. As a result, researching the Cameroonian university context was inspired by how these elements influence academics' professional identity construction in the context of community outreach.

In their study on university-community engagement: current tensions and future trends, Ogunsanya et al. (2019) noted that through community engagement, teaching and research can be expanded by equipping people outside the university with skills and experiences that can contribute to the quality of the university's scholarly agenda in ways that

produce solutions to societal problems. The community may be viewed as a learning laboratory in which faculty members, students, and other knowledge co-producers can work to establish long-term projects (Cohen et al., 2011). It is critical to note that the presence of a university in a community adds value to that community and its immediate surroundings. However, most studies that have reported on the university-community partnership have focused on the benefits for the communities and the institutions involved without highlighting potential drawbacks, obstacles, and complications (Fitzgerald et al., 2012) and its impact on academics' professional growth. Adekalu et al. (2018), for example, argue that factors such as the educational gap between academics and community members, a lack of funds to carry out community development projects, time constraints due to multiple engagements, and community members' resistance to change have all been shown to constrain and challenge academics in achieving success in community outreach. As such, this inevitable tension due to the complex university-community partnership may also influence academics' identities within the context of community engagement, and this present thesis intends to contribute to knowledge in this gap.

2.8   Conclusion

This chapter provided a review of the literature related to the focus of this study. The chapter has illustrated an overview of the universities in Africa by tracing the first established universities that were established in Africa. It was stated that universities have transitioned through three heritages, and these three periods are as follows: pre-colonial heritage wherein higher learning institutions were embedded in the African cultural context that was aimed at maintaining and preserving the African heritage, adapting people to their physical environment, and perpetuating community institutions, laws, language, and values inherited from the past. The second era was the colonial era, which saw the annexation of African countries, and this was followed by the establishment of colonial oversea campuses in Africa with a curriculum that was identical to that of the colonial states and instruction given in the language of the colonizers. All of this was done not to help Africa but to function as an extracting tool for the colonial country's economic demands. The third and last era discussed is the post-independence era, which has transitioned to contemporary universities with established African universities and an African curriculum for Africa meant for Africans. Furthermore, it has also discussed the conceptual understanding of leadership, followed by a discussion on academic leadership in higher education holistically, and then it was narrowed down to the context of Africa. The chapter also examined academics' professional identity

construction, academics' professional identity in African universities, and academics' professional identity construction based on teaching, research, and community engagement. I have discussed the literature in this chapter; the next chapter deals with the theoretical framework that underpin this study.

CHAPTER THREE
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1   Introduction

The foregoing chapter presented the literature on the concepts relevant to this study. This chapter discusses the theoretical framework used to frame the present study. The theoretical frameworks are the distributed leadership theory of Spillane (2005) and Samuel's (2008) Force Field Model for teacher development, which appear as ideal frameworks to justify and give a clear insight into understanding and exploring academics' conceptions of their own professional identities at a university in Cameroon. The frameworks were also used to examine academics' experiences of university leadership in the context of a university, to determine how academics' experiences of university leadership influence the construction of their professional identities, and lastly, to investigate why academics' experiences of university leadership influence the construction of their professional identities in the way that they did.

The chapter starts with a brief discussion on the meaning, significance, and components of a theoretical framework in research. Secondly, it provides the theoretical framework of Spillane's (2006) distributed leadership theory and Samuel's (2008) force field model for teacher development as lenses for this study by showing their origins, assumptions, attributes, applications, and relevance. The chapter then presented the justification for using these theories and the chapter summary.

3.2.   Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework is made up of lenses that a researcher uses to see the world in a specific way or lenses that a researcher uses to examine a study. The theoretical framework is critically important to all research studies, whether quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods (Lederman & Lederman, 2015). The words "theory" and "frame" are two crucial ideas that make up the phrase "theoretical framework." According to Kerlinger (1986), a theory is a collection of connected concepts, definitions, and assertions that offers a systematic interpretation of occurrences by outlining the relationships between variables in order to explain and predict phenomena. The Greek word theos, which means "god," is where the word "theory," sometimes known as a theoras, originates. According to Shields (1998), it

is concerned with the divine and the immovable elements of nature, where working hypotheses lead to novel outcomes. A theoretical framework, on the other hand, is a blueprint for the entire dissertation inquiry that serves as the foundation upon which a researcher develops and supports his or her study by defining how the research will be approached philosophically, epistemologically, methodologically, and analytically (Osanloo & Grant, 2016). According to Osanloo and Grant (2016), despite being the most significant component of the research process, the theoretical framework is only briefly discussed in some doctoral programmes. The next section discusses the distributed leadership theory.

3.2.1 Distributed Leadership Theory

While various theories can be used to investigate the influence of leadership practices on academics' identity construction in a university, this study relied on the concepts of distributed leadership (DL) practice to understand academics' experiences of university leadership in constructing their professional identity in the context of a Cameroonian university. Among the various theories that can be employed to analyse leadership in the setting of a university are implicit leadership, strategic leadership, self-leadership, servant leadership, authentic leadership, transformational leadership, and charismatic leadership, among others. However, these theories, while essential, have a common characteristic that underpins the assumption that leadership is a vertical process that separates leaders from followers and is influenced by roles and duties rather than the practice of leadership based on distribution (Spillane, 2006; Van Ameijde et al., 2009). According to Lumby (2013), such leadership has been criticised for the nature of its ethics and efficacy. When the values of integrity, humility, and stewardship are ingrained in an organization, leaders should be given not only the moral authority to demand the same from their subordinates. Leaders must be equipped with the necessary skills to demonstrate to their followers how to put those values into practice (Mango, 2018). Distributed leadership, in this context, illustrates an approach with a larger meaning tied to its concept than concepts in other leadership theories. As a result, embracing distributed leadership practice in exploring leadership as experienced by academics in constructing their professional identities at a Cameroonian university was critical. This is a result of the tension between teaching and research, community engagement, and administration, which has been a source of concern in African higher education and figuring out what academics' conceptions of their identities may be in a context where they are not only under pressure to "publish" or "perish," but also to combine multiple identities in constructing their professional identities. Before discussing in depth the

distributed leadership (DL) theory and relating its constructs where appropriate to the current research, the origin and definition of the theory were considered in this section.

Distributed leadership can be traced back to the field of organisational theory in the late 1960s (Wan, 2014). However, it is emphasising current leadership ideas because leadership has evolved from a single leader to a collective perspective (Harris, 2013). According to Gronn (2000), Gibb first mentioned the concept of distribution in 1954. Cecil A. Gibb was an Australian psychologist who specialised in organisational human behaviour. He attended a series of seminars on authority, hierarchy, and leadership[2] and argued that in the context of changing situations, leadership can be passed from one individual to another (Gronn, 2000), so that leaders and followers can be viewed as collaborators in completing tasks. This is demonstrated by the ability of university leaders, academics, and students to collaborate in order to achieve the university's mission. Given that the university is a complex, evolving institution with diverse individualistic and competitive behaviours, leaders in this context may need to develop a collaborative leadership approach in order to avoid imbalances and conflicts (Lozano, 2008).

Although DL is no longer "the new kid on the block" (Lumby, 2013, p. 583), there appears to be no universal definition for the concept, particularly in higher education, given that it is rarely investigated in this context (HE). Several authors, however, have attempted to conceptualise DL. Thorpe et al. (2011), for example, attempted to define DL as "a social phenomenon with a context integral to its understanding and, indeed, constitutive of leadership practice, concerned with thinking and actions in situ" (p. 4). According to Wan (2014), DL is defined as an "all-encompassing division of labour and social activity" (p. 324). Referring to division of labour as "the means by which the sum of the work of an organisation is arranged into roles, activities, and tasks, involving an active distribution of leadership authority and agency" (p. 324), Gronn (2002) concurs by positing DL as a framework that takes paradigms and the practice of division of leadership into account. According to the foregoing authors, leadership is a complex phenomenon that addresses some important concerns at the personal, social, and organisational levels (Ramakrishnan & Abukari, 2020) and can span to assume a more distributed perspective, thereby addressing some of the shortcomings inherent in traditional forms of leadership that depict heroism.

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[2] https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/gibb-cecil-austin-cec-414

According to Mayrowetz (2008), distributed leadership theory is related to learning theories such as sociocultural and constructivism, as well as teaching practices such as the use of inquiry science modules, which can be seen in the classroom context as students and teachers interact with tasks and materials. It is argued that theories that focus on organisational structures and leadership roles do not adequately frame the relationship between leadership and innovation in schools (Spillane et al., 2004). Spillane et al. (2004), for example, used distributed cognition and activity theory as perspectives that have proven particularly generative in understanding human action and as theoretical foundations for framing a distributed conception of leadership practice.

Spillane et al. (2004) argue that the inattention placed on the practice of leadership has lessened the framework for studying leadership activity; the available studies, for instance, focus more on individual agency or the role of micro-structure in shaping what leaders do. This assertion resonates with Bolden et al.'s (2008) argument that the processes and practices by which leadership is distributed and the implications for leadership practice and development in universities are neglected. Although the interpretation of DL varies and it has gained popularity over the years (Harris & Spillane, 2008) both in the practitioner and academic literature in several practiced-based social sciences, business, and health, it has, however, received less attention in HE. Concerns have been raised about the concept, which is seen as part of a linguistic manoeuvre by universities to avoid consulting their staff and students (Thorpe et al., 2011). Probably because decisions about pedagogy and university operations are made at the top. For instance, in the case of Cameroon, decisions are made hierarchically from the head of states to the ministry through the minister of higher education to his or her deputy vice chancellors, who then delegate these decisions through tasks to academics, students, and support staff. Scholars like Timperley (2009) argue that the hierarchical leadership style, which is a horizontal process of top-down decision-making, no longer appeals.

Leadership should be able to promote the ideas of empowering academics, students, and support staff and accept their influence on the leadership practiced within a university context. This viewpoint is appropriate in the context of this thesis because one of the objectives of this study was to examine academics' experiences of university leadership in the context of a university in Cameroon. Bolden et al. (2009) note that:

It could certainly be argued that the bureaucratic nature of HE organisations, with their imbalances of power, authority, and resources, combined with recognition and career paths that tend to reward individual over collective achievement are largely at odds with the principles and premises of distributed leadership. Furthermore, the somewhat abstract representations of such dispersed forms of leadership make them difficult to convey in ways as compelling as the tales of heroism and achievement recounted from more individualistic perspectives (p. 6).

Gronn (2009) postulates that DL is an attractive leadership style such that, even if it may not be synonymous with democratic leadership, it at least lays the groundwork for it. To explain further, one can contend that DL increases the sources and voices of influence in an organisation beyond just one leader, thus widening the scope of the participation of everyone within the university context. In this way, academics may have professional autonomy and judgement in teaching or conducting research with students on knowledge important for their professional growth, the students' competencies, and not rely on state-driven teaching and learning materials or state-designed curricular alignment or programme, types of assessment formats, teaching methods and techniques, and so on.

Although the literature review identifies a few studies (Bolden et al., 2009; Thorpe et al., 2011; Wan, 2014; Ramakrishnan & Abukari, 2020) that have been carried out on distributed leadership in HE, there is a dearth of literature that explores what DL is, and certainly a dearth of literature on how leadership is distributed and practiced in the universities in Cameroon. This is because, largely, the leadership style in the context of Cameroon is centralised (Konings, 2009). Further, university leaders in Cameroon are appointed by presidential decree due to the political affiliations of these appointees (Ngenge, 2020), such that it may be difficult to assert with certainty that leadership type within the university is practice from a distributed perspective. Thus, the ideology of DL practice in the Cameroonian higher education context was called into question. It is against this backdrop that Spillane's (2006, 2008) distributed leadership was believed appropriate in a study of this nature as it sought to explore how academics experience the distribution of leadership practice and how this influences the way they construct their identities in teaching and learning, research, and their role in community engagement in the context of a university in Cameroon.

In the disposition of this framework, the work of every individual who contributes to leadership practice should be acknowledged whether they are formally appointed or distinct as leaders or not. As such, based on their expertise, leaders, academics, and students can

collectively contribute to leadership in ways that can lead to achieving tasks in the university (Ramakrishnan & Abukari, 2020). In that way, members of a team can, through DL leadership, be given the opportunity to be involved in the decision-making process and not only focus on achieving the goals of the leader but also work collectively to achieve the goal. Harris and Spillane (2008) opine that since distributed leadership's main focus is on teamwork between the leaders, academics, students, and even support staff, ideas can be shared collectively, especially when programmes are being designed, timetables drawn, modules allocated, and even administrative activities (such as the enrolment of students and recruitment of staff). However, Lumby (2013) cautions that although academics need autonomy while performing their roles, distributed leadership increases their workload and accountability. This echoes the literature review in this study, which argues that academics are overwhelmed with not only their duties as teachers, researchers, and service providers to the public but also the added administrative responsibility, their role in student welfare and student supervision.

Spillane and Diamond (2007) argue for two aspects of distributed leadership: the leader plus and the leadership practice. The leader-plus concept informs us that there is a leader plus other leaders working at the organisation (Spillane, 2006). Though this "leader plus" is important, it is not enough to capture the complexity of the practice of leadership. According to Wan (2014), leadership practice at the university level is enacted and supported through a mentoring scheme and peer observation, among other strategies. Importantly, some proponents of DL agree that the practice of DL is the collective interaction among leaders, followers, and their situations (Spillane, 2006; Gronn, 2009; Spillane et al., 2004; Harris, 2013; Goksoy, 2015). This form of distribution that extends leadership beyond a leader may support a suitable and accommodating learning environment for academics and students. According to Spillane (2008), the situation and routine of leadership in the context of a university are the defining elements, such as academics' teaching of courses assigned to them within a semester, weekly evaluation, trimestral research publications, or monthly public services. According to the author, it may also involve leaders working with academics and students to design community development projects.

However, in the DL perspective, university leaders can consider, among others, socio-cultural, material contexts, and language as forces that may enable or constrain their interaction with academics' teaching and learning, research, community engagement, and

students' pedagogy. It notes that leadership practice is the primary and anchoring concern of DL; second, it is formed through interactions between leaders, followers, and their contexts; and third, the situation both defines and is defined by leadership practice (Spillane, 2008).

Harris and Spillane (2008) further outline the reason this framework is of prime importance in the present disposition to indicate that DL has normative, representational, and empirical power. That is, within the current changes in the contemporary HE system to achieve its triple mission through research output, collaboration, and networking, distributed leadership practice can be a powerful tool to merge the relationship between distributed leadership and positive change in the university. However, research collaboration in the context of Cameroon is still very much lacking and obscured.

Spillane (2006) argues that leadership practice in an organisation is not only based on what the leadership of the organisation does but how it is done. In other words, the interaction between the university leaders, academics, students, and programmes or courses that includes teaching, learning, research supervision, student welfare, and academics' engagement with the public through community research activities, among others, informs the interpretation of their various roles as members of a community within the university system. Moreover, one may contend that changing dynamics within and outside the university—whether in functioning, strategies, or technological know-how—now produce an imperative for universities to have the ability to respond to those changes quickly and adaptively. As such, leadership needs to move to a form that can cope with collective endeavour, where individuals can contribute to the establishment and development of the university's mission.

In the foregoing, Bolden et al. (2008) argue that DL goes beyond the boundaries of the university to consider the contributions of parents, students, academics, support staff, the government, and policymakers for the achievement of tasks. This understanding resonates with the literature in this study that suggests government-funding policies and discourses about the relevance of universities should align with stakeholders and society through community engagement and by equipping people outside the university with skills and experiences that can contribute to the quality of the university's scholarly agenda in ways that produce solutions to societal problems. However, it also contends that these commitments are constrained by forces such as the educational gap between academics and community members, the lack of funds to execute community development projects, time constraints due

to multiple engagements, and resistance to change by community members. Hence, challenging academics and students to achieve these tasks.

The complex and complicated processes of the management and operations of the university make it difficult for a single leader or leadership approach to manage complex tasks effectively. For instance, the university is made up of different disciplines, and every faculty member approaches their discipline (teaching, research, relationship with students' learning, interaction with the community) based on their personal experiences and know-how. As such, it becomes difficult for top university leaders to understand the substance of matters related to those fields and what really goes on within the university. Reponen (1999) argues that university leaders can create shared values that align with the goals of the university. In practice, a university leader should be able to "combine the management of many issues and professional groups and at the same time be able to retain a close contact with researchers and possibly influence them" (p.238). Reponen (1999) continues that:

> In addition to research and teaching staff there is also administrative and service staff at a university. The challenge with leading them is in guiding each one to perform the tasks most important to the organisation and in helping everyone to understand his/her share in the making of the final products (research and development). Leading these people differs partly from leading the specialists of the core know-how. Administrative staff are also specialists, but not in the same way as researchers and teachers. It is their job to keep the daily routines rolling and to make research and teaching possible... Motivation factors are therefore different, and many complementing approaches to leadership and incentive mechanisms are needed in the management (p.239).

Gronn (2002) argues that every individual or multi-person unit to whom influence is attributed includes, potentially, all organisation members, not just the decision-making executives. What Gronn may imply is that leadership roles should not only be given to individuals with formal roles. Anyone within a university context can be a prospective leader based on his or her expertise. For instance, leaders, academics, and students in a university can, through DL, form a collective leadership in which they develop know-how by functioning together. The prime focus at this point is not about leadership but about the skills needed to complete tasks. Spillane (2006) and Harris (2013) approve the above position by arguing that DL offers an alternative way of understanding leadership in that its practice reinforces multiple sources of influence within an organisation through the interaction that exists between the leaders, academic staff, and students and their routines.

The foregoing perspective of DL practice closes the gap in the literature where it is believed that leadership should be centralised and only a single leader should manage the hierarchical system and structure of an organisation (Gronn, 2009). In the context of this study, such a lens was useful in exploring the leadership styles adopted by Cameroonian university leaders as experienced by the academic staff. This is because, theoretically, it sought to provide an opportunity for universities to consider how leadership can be distributed and the differences that distribution may or may not make, thereby challenging the tacit understanding of the relationship between university leadership, academics, and students and how that relationship interacts with programmes, courses, evaluation, and students' test scores.

Bolden et al. (2008) outline two distinct types of DL as classified by the participants in their study on distributed leadership in HE: rhetoric and reality, which was aimed at exploring:

> How leadership is perceived, enacted and developed in HE in UK, specifically to investigate the extent to which leadership in HE can be considered as distributed and if so, what is distributed, what are the mechanisms by which it is distributed and what are the benefits for practice, analysis and/ or policymaking? (p.64).

"Devolved" and "emergent" leadership were mentioned by the participants as related to DL. Devolved leadership is associated with top-down influence, while emergent leadership is linked to bottom-up and horizontal influence. Bolden et al. (2008) continue that organisational structures and processes inform devolved leadership, while emergent leadership instead functions outside these boundaries.

To contextualise these concepts and explain them better in the context of HE, these authors argue that academics within the HE system, by virtue of their reputation and connections, can exercise considerable influence in terms of leadership, whether they are formally recognised within the university management structure or not. However, Bolden et al. (2008) contend that although the two leadership styles may be considered distributed, only the emergent leadership type can be closer to distributed leadership. This may be because "emergent leadership" recognises that it is through the interactions of the group that one or more individuals emerge to perform the leadership behaviours that the group requires (Misiolek et al., 2005, p. 3). Figure 1 sums up Bolden and colleagues' illustration of the two leadership styles that consistently surfaced in their study as an outcome of their research on DL in higher education.

Distributed/shared leadership

Forms

Formal
Pragmatic
Strategic
Incremental
Opportunistic
Cultural

Benefits

Responsiveness
Transparency
Convenience
Teamwork

Challenges

Fragmentation
Lack of role clarity
Slow decision making
Individual capability

Experiences

Dislocated
Disconnected
Disengaged
Dissipated
Distant
Dysfunctional

Leadership may be formally 'devolved' or informally 'dispersed'

Form taken depends on nature of task, organisational structures/processes & personal preferences

Leadership in higher education is shared but within constraints

Complements rather than replaces individual/ hierarchical leadership

Ability to act is strongly linked to control of/access to resources

Leadership in higher education requires a combination of both shared and hierarchical leadership. To this extent 'distributed leadership' may be more powerful as a rhetorical device than as an accurate description of leadership practice

Figure 1: [Adapted from] "Developing collective leadership in higher education," (p.45), R. Bolden., G. Petrove., & J. Gosling, 2008, Leadership Foundation for Higher Education.

Furthermore, Bolden et al. (2008) maintain that although HE may be considering DL where it is conceived of as dispersed across the university rather than residing within the individual traits and capabilities of formally recognised leaders, there is no clear articulation of what is actually distributed (power and accountability), the process by which it is distributed, and whether the concept itself offers substantial benefits for either practice, analysis, or policy-making. This echoes Gronn's (2009) argument that although DL calls for leadership to be shared and it has been conceptually and empirically tested, a gap in DL is that it does not

make mention of whose interests are being served by distributions, whether they intend to enhance teaching and learning, research productivity, or institutional improvement (Dampson & Edwards, 2019). It is also significant to remember that the findings of the study by Bolden et al. (2008) were based only on the distribution of leadership among the formal leaders in HE. This understanding is consistent with Spillane et al.'s (2004) claim that leadership has mostly been concentrated on the formal executives of the institution over time. Even though they suggested that academics might take the reins in research, they did not elaborate on how such a bottom-up style of leadership could be applied in teaching, research, research-led community engagement activities, or the role of students in this context.

Distributed leadership practice should not only be about the interactive nature of the leadership that exists between the leader and academic staff and students plus their situation, but also about how the practice of collective power may influence the action taken concerning the situation that provokes leadership rather than the action of a single leader (Spillane, 2006). It discusses how university leaders can negotiate their practice of leadership in a more shared manner. This can be done by adopting an interactive approach to leadership to ensure that academics handle the courses assigned to them, that they meet the research agenda internally and externally, and that they engage in community engagement. It further highlights that leadership practice also informs situations (weekly assessment routine) or tools (student test data). Spillane (2006) continues that in the practice of leadership from a distributive perspective, the leaders, academics, and their situations are described in such a manner that all the components can be equal, any change to one aspect may affect the others, and the distributed leadership practice may not generate the right effect. Thus, the three components of distributed leadership practice are leaders, followers, and their situations. These three components were used to address the leadership style and to understand academics' conceptions and experiences of leadership in the context of a Cameroonian university.

To summarize, for leadership practice to be effective, it has to be well planned and purposefully coordinated by leaders, as they play a critical role in creating a safe environment for distributed leadership to occur within a university system. In that context, the DL perspective may need to focus on engaging skills wherever they exist within the university rather than seeking them only through a formal position or role (Mayrowetz, 2008). However, there is no certainty as to whether the concept of distributed leadership is being used in a

"primarily descriptive or normative manner and whether or not it exerts any influence on the effectiveness of leadership practice within HE institutions" (Bolden et al., 2008, p. 4).

Figure 2 illustrates the interaction between the leader, followers and situation revolving around the leadership practice as posited by Spillane and colleagues.

Leaders
University executives, experts, academics, students, parents

Interaction

Interaction

Leadership Practice

Followers
Academics, university executives,

Situation
Tools and routines, task

Interaction

Students, support staff, parents, experts
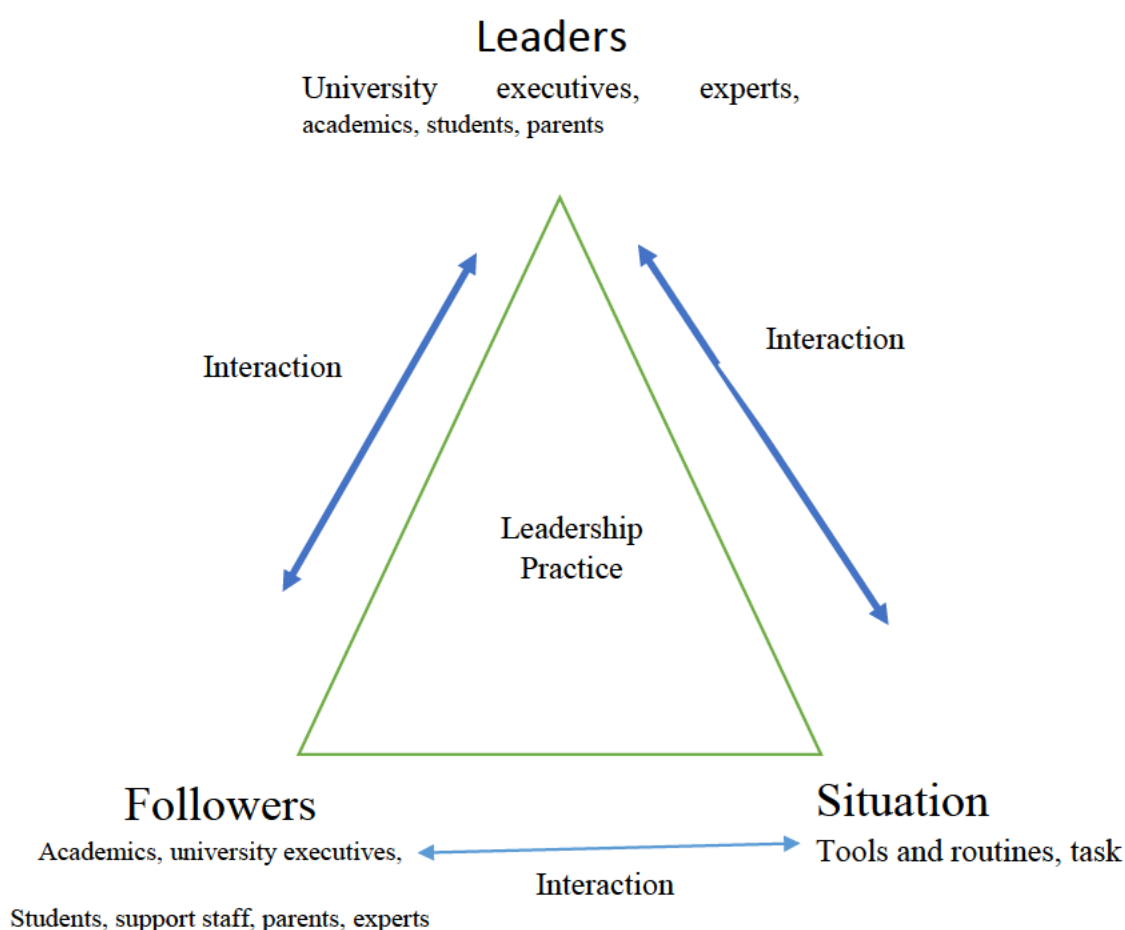
Figure 2: *[Adapted from] "The nature of the beast," by J. P. Spillane, in J. P. Spillane (Ed.), Distributed leadership (para. 2), 2006, San Francisco, United States: Jossey-Bass. Copyright 2006 by John Wiley & Sons.*

While leadership is as important as its practice between the leaders and followers and their situations or actions, the personal values of the academics, the policies (mission, vision) of the university, the background of the institution, the discipline, or courses that they teach, and their interactions with colleagues, students, and support staff are also important with regards to how these components influence the way academics construct their professional identity. Therefore, in the context of these components, the force field model for teacher development

was deemed an appropriate frame to understand other forces apart from leadership that push and pull academics within the university context as the leaders of the institution task them.

3.2.2 The Force Field Model of teacher development

The second theory that was used to understand academics' experiences of university leadership in constructing their professional identities is the force field model. The force field concept has developed over the years, as reported by MacDuffie and DePoy (2004) from Kurt Lewin's Force Field Analysis (FFA), initiated in 1951 in his work on social psychology. It is useful for making decisions by analysing the forces that drive or restrain the decision-making process in an organisation in times of change. Given the nature and characteristics of this model, several other scholars have built their theories in different fields of study based on Kurt's force field analysis, and this model thus provides a lens through which organisational change can be systematically planned. Lewin's theory provides a more detailed explanation of human behaviour during change and methods for improving these behaviours when introducing change in the workplace (Bozak, 2003). Bozak (2003) adds that there are two dynamic, yet opposing forces that inform Lewin's model, such as the driving forces, which encourage change to occur, while the restraining forces try to maintain the situation or prevent change from occurring by using barriers. These driving forces may either be external forces compelling the change or internal problems trying to improve the situation (Bozak, 2003). Although the FFA has also been used in higher education to analyse adult learning and in healthcare, it was used in the current study to give a background on the origin of the concept of a force field and not as a lens that was used as a blueprint in the current study.

Although Samuel's (2008) force field model (FFM) for teacher development displays the interacting forces that shape a teacher's life history in the context of the development of student teachers in a school system, I considered this model relevant for this study for two reasons. First, this model best explains how academics make sense of their understanding of professional identity conceptions by identifying the forces that drive or constrain the development of those identities in Cameroon. Second, it helped me understand why the push or pull leadership practices unique to the context of the current case university influenced academics' construction of their professional identities in the way that they did. Therefore, the aim of this study was to explore how these push and pull forces influence how academics at a university in Cameroon construct their professional identities in terms of teaching and

learning, research, and community engagement. In order to explain the push and pull forces that influence academics' professional development, the concepts of biographical personal or internal forces, contextual external forces, internal institutional forces, and programmatic internal forces—which are regarded as major tenets of Samuel's FFM for teacher development—were used.

Samuel (2008) built his FFM based on his own history and redefined his role as a teacher. He tried to illustrate how novice students' and teachers' biographical experiences of learning and teaching in different school contexts influenced their understanding of teaching English (Samuel, 1998). Samuel (2008) notes that teachers are different, and in their diversity, "no two teachers are identical in their experiences, personalities, training, and interpretations of their role as members of a community involved in the practice of teaching and learning" (p. 8). Samuel (1998) drew a connection between his own biographical experience working with student teachers as a teacher educator in both public and private schooling systems and as a professor at the university in the faculty of education to show the types of biographical influences that teachers and teacher educators have over their students. Everyone has goals, according to Samuel, and those aspirations should be respected. The National Context for Teacher Education in South Africa and his historical examination of the changing function and identity of teachers over five decades, as characterised within the framework of the apartheid and post-apartheid eras, served as further inspirations for him to create the FFM.

Samuel's (2008) FFM for teacher development has been applied in some research areas in higher education. However, there is a paucity of research on how this theory is applied within the context of academics' identities in higher education and in Cameroon. A well-defined example of a study that applied the FFM is that conducted by De Villiers (2017), which investigated a teacher training framework for music education in the foundation phase. The study by Jacob (2005), which investigated the myth of caring and sharing: teaching and learning practice in the context of HIV/AIDS education in the intermediate phase, showed that the teaching and learning situations are outcomes of a process set in motion by external contextual and internal institutional, biographical, and programmatic forces. The study by Poonsamy (2013), which investigated diverse school contexts and novice teachers' professional development, and Singh (2015) also used the FFM to investigate teacher agency with a prescribed curriculum: the case of math teachers' experiences of implementing the CAPS curriculum.

Samuel's (2008) force field model posits the interactive forces that shape the identity of teachers in a school system. The model is constructed to understand how student teachers' development shapes their professional identity. This model was deemed relevant because one of the aims of the study was to understand how academics' experiences of university leadership influence their identity development in the context of a university in Cameroon. Samuel's (2008) force field model assumes that there are different push and pull forces that influence the teacher's roles and identities in different directions. The forces that either constrain or enhance teacher development are inertia forces (Samuel, 2008). Samuel argues that although teachers are required to be accountable to the larger system, the learners, and the discipline or curriculum at the same time, they can have autonomy and excel in their profession provided they grasp the push and pull forces that encroach on their professional identity. This model was based on how student teachers' biographical schooling experiences influenced their understanding of teaching and the need to redefine their role as teachers (Samuel, 1998).

In addition, he based his model on how his own personal biographical experience traced his own development as a teacher educator, drawing on his experiences as a schoolteacher in apartheid-era public and private secondary school systems. Samuel (1998) posits biographical forces such as students' experiences with family members, gender, race, ethnicity, religion, and cultural and linguistic heritage; contextual forces such as macro context (government changing educational policy, political influence); programmatic forces or micro context (which constitutes the culture of how curriculum is enacted in the classroom through the teaching methods, teaching and learning materials, and subject disciplines); and institutional forces (school experiences, programmes, people, philosophies, teaching, and socio-constructivism). Figure 3 illustrates a diagrammatical representation of the push and pull forces of the force field model in higher education in the context of academics' professional identity construction.

Biographical
forces/
Inertial/personal

Force-push from

Force-pull towards

Personal values
and beliefs

Leadership
constitution

Institutional forces

Contextual forces

Curriculum sequence
(Teaching policies,
research policies, and
community
engagement policies)

Culture /history of
university (macro-
social, political and
cultural

Force –push from

Force-pull towards

Programmatic
forces
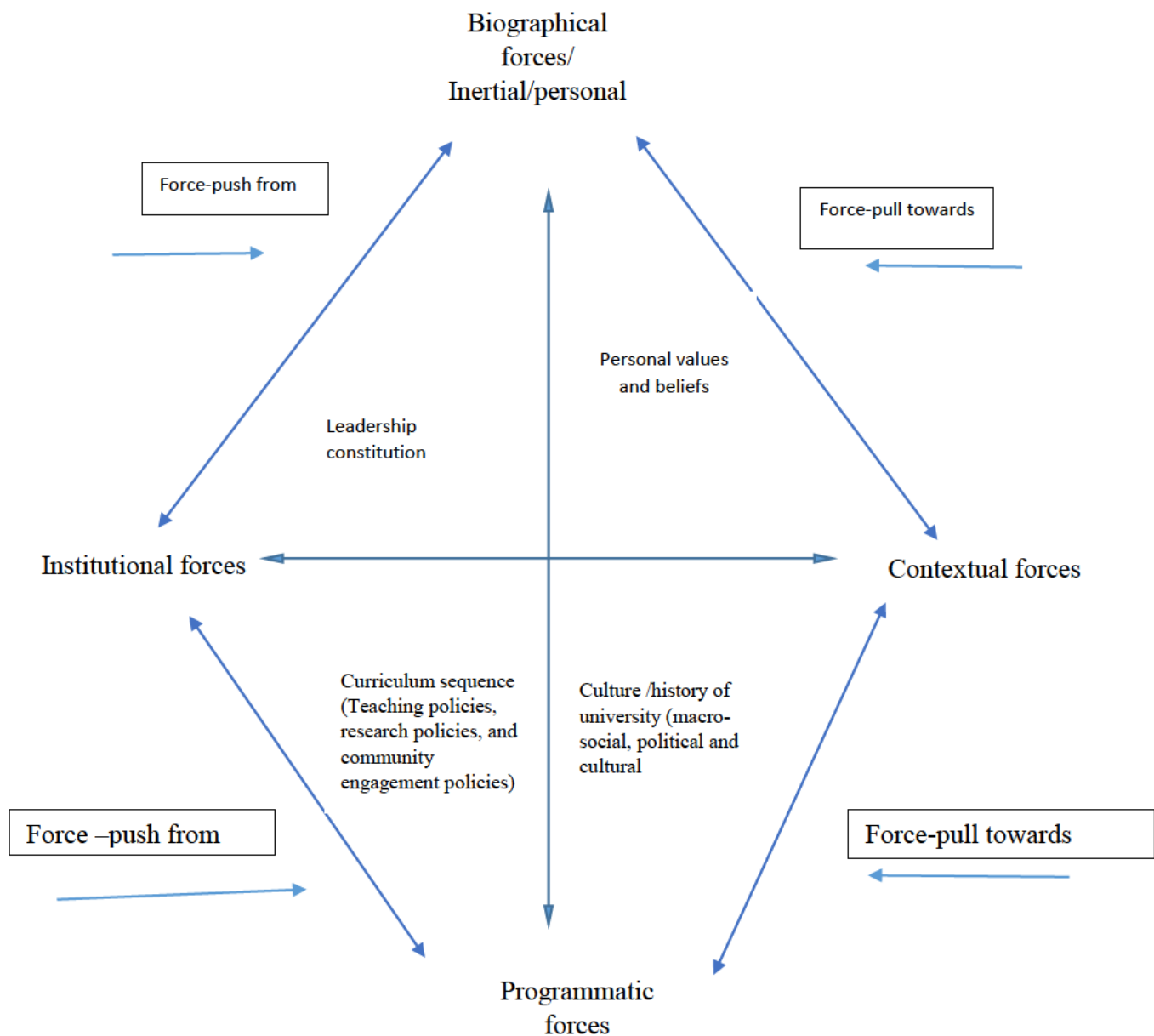
Figure 3: Force field model for teacher development Samuel (2008)

The four forces of biography, programmatic/curriculum, contextual, and institutional interact at different instances and contribute to the teacher's professional identity development. Samuel (2008) highlights that each of these forces has the capacity to have both positive and negative effects, or to be "measured on a scale." He continues that while certain forces might prevent the teacher identity from shifting, others might serve as a trigger for new roles for teachers. Furthermore, some teachers may lose interest in teaching if, at one point, the culture of the school context is uninteresting (Samuel, 2008).

Although Samuel (2008) opines that several other forces influence a teacher's development within an institution, this study relied on the biographical, contextual, institutional, and programmatic forces to understand academic identity construction. Therefore, the components of the four forces were used as constructs to investigate how academics identify themselves as teachers, researchers, and service providers to the public through community engagement. The rationale for using this model stems from the South African apartheid era and how this impacted teachers' professional identity development. Similarly, in the context of this study, the academics from the selected university in Cameroon have experienced many changes brought about by the colonial legacy, the differences in cultural, political, and ethnic diversity within the university under study, and how this has shaped modern higher education across Africa and Cameroon in particular.

Samuel's model is designed to be used to guide research on schoolteachers' development. I used this model in the university context because it explains that academics' professional identities are constructed by negotiating different forces that influence the process or any practical purpose of research; after all, numerous factors were identified in the review of the literature to constrain academics' professional identity construction. It is argued that theory borrowing is allowed in research, whereby a theory can be taken out of its original context and applied to explain a phenomenon essential to another discipline (Murray & Evers, 1989). What this means is that researchers are free to use constructs that they think are most adequate for handling their problems. The force field model was initially designed for teacher professional development identities, and I adapted this model to look at university academic professional identities. That was the adjustment I made because the original force field model was not designed for academic professional identity but was designed for teacher identity development.

3.2.2.1 Biographical or Personal Forces

According to Samuel (2008), the biographical forces, also known as the inertia forces, pull teachers towards teaching in the manner in which they were taught as learners. Samuel (2008) further states that this force is "an inertia force towards which teachers can retreat when other external forces begin to exert too forceful a control over their identity" (p. 12). These biographical forces are developed over different periods and contexts in the academic's life. These academic-influencing forces, however, are not obtained solely through the traditional teaching and learning school system. Samuel believes that personal experiences brought from different backgrounds, such as family, geography, race, gender,

religion, and ethnicity, into the teaching and learning school system, where teaching and learning are negotiated informally, also shape teachers' identities. Samuel (2008) adds that in each of these forces lies an understanding of how it relates to the teacher's professional development. Given that other external contextual forces such as government funding, changing policies, technology, and political parties can influence teachers, Romylos (2018) argues that teachers may sometimes rely on their personal beliefs about what they believe the learner should know and how courses can be implemented. According to Singh (2015), teachers' various backgrounds influence their understanding of the students they teach.

Samuel (2008) suggests that biography forces are very significant to the teacher's teaching because they provide the teacher with a sense of security and comfort and serve as a point of return after other forces have been washed away. De Villiers (2017) argues that teachers always end up teaching in the area where they are proficient and have great knowledge. In this current study, given that academics are supposed to fulfil their professional roles and responsibilities or obligations of teaching, research, and community engagement, and given that literature highlights that in the context of Cameroon, academics are required to combine teaching and research, this could be a challenge for academics who find comfort in either research or teaching but not both. This challenge may lead to a negative charge toward their personal forces, which may influence the way they construct their identity within the context of their university. However, it may also refer to the academics' choice in terms of programme content, methods and techniques with which they are comfortable (De Villiers, 2017), and even classroom interaction. Day and Gu (2010) argue that the unique nature of personal forces shapes the way academics construct their professional identity in an institution where they are employed. According to Day and Gu, the biography and life experiences of the teacher outside of the schooling system, which reflect society's and policy's expectations of what a good teacher is, working circumstances and relationships, and the teacher's educational beliefs, all have an influence on professional identity.

Samuel (2008) considers the biographical forces to be internal because he believes they are components of the individual's culture and background. This assertion is consistent with Akyeampong and Stephens' (2002) understanding that teachers bring teaching experiences with them into the school system, which they may have developed through years of interaction with teachers in various positions as well as their own previous teaching experiences. Linking how teachers grew up with their family and community to their teaching

and learning experiences in various school systems, for example, determines how they experience their profession (Samuel, 1998). In order to understand these assumptions in the context of this current study, the academics' personal experiences with leadership as they informed their identity construction were understood through their narratives.

Given that this study was located within a pragmatic paradigm, I tried to understand how academics' beliefs and actions that originate from their past experiences (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019) shape their skills and competence to teach, conduct research, and be a part of community development, and how their identity is constructed. It is critical to note that academics' biographical experiences normally differ among colleagues, and how academics handle tasks assigned to them may also depend on how their personal and professional identities are developed based on how their experience was constructed. This study drew on its data to respond to the research question through semi-structured individual interviews and focus group discussions to elicit academics' descriptions of how their own backgrounds (personal values and beliefs) and the core values of the university influence the construction of their professional identities. This was to understand how academics' biographical or historical development of their professional roles and responsibilities, developed within a specific contextual socio-historical educational landscape (Samuel, 1998) that they bring into their university, affects the way they develop their identity as teachers, researchers, and service providers to the community.

3.2.2.2   *Contextual Forces*

Academics' professional identities are influenced by the macro-social, political, and cultural context in which they work. This is referred to as the "historical forces of multiculturalism, multilingualism, and multiracialism" by Samuel (2008). According to Samuel, the post-apartheid era is rich not only with educational policies that are believed to have influenced and brought about certain changes in the South African educational environment, but also with political ideals imbedded in the system that impact teachers' evolution. This stance is consistent with the 1993 reforms, which resulted in new pedagogical improvements in Cameroon's higher education as well as the manner in which university heads are appointed.

De Villiers (2017) posits that internal institutional or micro-contextual forces influence teachers in HEIs, which may be applied to the roles and identities of music education lecturers. According to De Villiers, the historical and political circumstances are equally important in the context of the continuous and multiple changes imposed on HEIs. Assuming

that the only external forces imposing a force charge from outside the institution are contextual or bureaucratic variables (Salinas, 2017), De Villiers (2017) asserts that the remaining three forces are internal force charges exerted within the system. Thus, internal institutional forces are the university's micro-contextual push and pull forces; internal biographical push and pull forces are individuals' authentic, unique, and personal forces; and internal programmatic push and pull forces are curriculum conception and implementation.

In the context of the current study, it may be stated that macro-contextual forces are linked to educational demands from educational policymakers such as the state and minister of higher education, and that this is directly derived from reform changes. According to Salinas (2017), micro-contextual forces comprise cognitive and emotional or affective components that indicate academic engagement with students and the curriculum in the educational system. Salinas (2017) believes that although teachers may need to perform administrative tasks as a responsibility or role, the excessive load of tasks may work against their teaching time and availability for teaching innovation. This macro-contextual forces' impact is mostly seen in the context of state-subsidised institutions such as public universities. This administrative role may cause the teachers to construct a weaker teacher identity. Therefore, interviews were deemed most appropriate to understand how the macro- and micro-contextual forces embedded in political and cultural forces influenced the way academics constructed their professional identities. The study also explored how these diversities within the unique environmental constructs (macro-social, political, and cultural) shape academics' construction of their professional identities.

3.2.2.3   Institutional Forces

Samuel (2008) posits that "institutions have their distinctive values, vision, stated missions, and theoretical underpinnings that influence the role and identity of the members belonging to that institutional community" (p. 13). This simply means that higher education, like other educational systems, has established institutional policies that regulate the day-to-day operations of the institution, and these policies have a direct influence on the general practices of the institution. The institutional forces also take into account the motivation that outstanding leaders with a clear purpose, a vision for the future, and a great desire to realise high academic standards may offer to the institution. In this study, institutional forces were defined as leadership practices, institutional policies, and standards (values, norms, and mission). Despite these institutional policies, Jawitz (2009) contends that everyone's

experience within the institution would be unique due to the inevitable negotiation between the workplace norms and practices and individuals' subjectivities and identities. As such, these unique experiences have paved a pathway for identity formation that links the past and present with future possibilities (Jawitz, 2009). In the context of the selected university, the types of leaders, the vision and direction, the stated missions, and the theoretical underpinnings of the institution are guided by specific issues meant to shape how academics' experiences belonging to a community of practice within the university influence the construction of their self and professional identity.

An institutional biography, building on the idea of prosopography (Stone, 1971), consists of exploring the history of an individual and exploring how they have influenced and been influenced by an institution's biography. Of significance is the fact that institutions can and do influence the way people act and behave. Samuel (2008) argues that a variety of elements are likely to have an impact on this institutional ethos or culture. He states that institutional cultures are instilled in the teachers who teach in this institutional context, thereby influencing how they view themselves, their roles, and their identities within that institutional community. As people move into these institutions, they are shaped by them, but they are also recursively shaping the institutions as well. An institutional biography traces the institutions from which people have come and identifies how these institutional forces influence individual choices and decisions. It was also noted that institutions that individuals inhabit or have inhabited significantly influence these individuals as they build and maintain their institutions through language use and the enactment of organisational practices (Petrieglieri & Petiglieri, 2010). The goal of research on institutional biographies is to identify the key institutional forces that may constrain and enable individual opportunities to engage in organisational practices. Samuel (1998) believes that everyone has their own goals as they move into an institution, and such goals should be acknowledged. Academics enter the university institution with their personal philosophy of life and religion, but these values and beliefs may frequently clash with those of the institution, the student, and the norms.

3.2.2.4   *Programmatic Forces*

Programmatic forces, also known as "curriculum intervention forces," control and direct the sequence of a curriculum's teaching and learning content in an institution (Samuel, 2008). It also refers to the construction of high-quality teaching and learning materials. Samuel argues that if this force exerts a charge on teachers, they may end up interpreting their roles and

identities in different ways. The purpose of this study was to explore how the content, order, and direction of curriculum delivery influenced academics' construction of their professional identities. Thus, Samuel's (2008) forces, which were grouped into four broad thematic constructs: biographical forces, macro-contextual forces, institutional forces (leadership), and programmatic forces, were used to guide data production and analysis for the study.

3.3   Chapter summary

This chapter discussed the different theories that underpinned this study. Spillane's (2006) distributed leadership theory, which argues that leadership is the interaction between the leader and followers and their situation, was used as a lens for data generation to understand the leadership practiced as experienced by academics in the case study of this research. The chapter further discussed Samuel's force field model for teacher development to understand the push and pull forces exerted on academics' professional identity construction. The force field model states that there are different forces that work together to exert influence, which may direct individuals to follow predictable trajectories but may also cause them to follow opposing pathways at times. This model suggests that inertia forces such as biographical forces exerted by culture, religion, gender, linguistic, and racial heritages push and pull against contextual forces exerted by university leaders, university policies, and the environment, programmatic forces such as education policies, curriculum policies, and classroom practice, research policies, teaching policies, and community engagement policies, and institutional forces such as socio-political culture. All of the forces have an impact on an academic's professional identity, and they are likely to report several sources of influence from each force, with different interpretations of their impact. The next chapter discussed the research design, methods, and methodology.

CHAPTER FOUR
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

4.1   Introduction

The previous chapter presented the theoretical framework that was anchored by distributed leadership theory and the force field model for teacher development. The purpose of this chapter is to describe and justify the paradigmatic location of the current study and to present the research design and methods that were employed to produce data on how university leadership was experienced by academics and how these experiences influenced the way they constructed their professional identities at a Cameroonian university. The objectives of the study were to examine academics' experiences of university leadership, how university leadership influences the construction of their professional identities, and why their experiences of leadership influenced the construction of their professional identities in the way that they did.

The chapter starts with an overview of the research paradigm, then moves on to an overview of the mixed methods approach used in the data production phase. The exploratory sequential mixed methods research design is then explained in detail. The sampling strategy, data generation techniques, and data analysis approaches follow. This is followed by an explanation of the study's ethical considerations as well as issues pertaining to validity and reliability and the limitations of the study.

4.2   Research Paradigm

A paradigm is a general way of thinking shared by a community of scientists. Kristiansen (2014) defines a paradigm as "a shared foundational set of theoretical beliefs and priorities that govern the way one or several disciplines interpret their data" (p. 22). It can also be theorised as a loose collection of logically related assumptions, concepts, or propositions that guide thinking and research in a particular area of science or engineering. The definitions put a focus on the suppositional assumptions that scholars make in an effort to comprehend the nature of reality. The paradigm, according to Feilzer (2010), is a structured model that refers to the characteristics of social phenomena as well as social structures. In his 1962 book, "The Structures of Scientific Revolution," Thomas Kuhn introduced the idea of a paradigm (Eckberg & Hill Jr., 1979). Kuhn's research was closely focused on identifying some of those

patterns of activity from antiquity in natural science that drove the advancement of science (Bhattacherjee, 2012). The "cognitive character of paradigms and the communal structure in which they develop" (Eckberg & Hill Jr., 1979, p. 926) also piqued his interest. He asserted that a "paradigm" is a worldview built on the beliefs of various scientists. As a result, scientists have a tough time reaching a consensus, especially when their viewpoints on reality differ (Orman, 2016). These disparities in paradigm conceptualization may cause a paradigm shift, and as a result, multiple meanings emerge as different researchers interpret them depending on their own worldviews.

Although Kuhn laid the foundation for future theorists to build on, Eckberg and Hill Jr (1979) contend that the entire concept of a paradigm and how Kuhn conceptualised it are misunderstood. The scholars contend that, while Kuhn has been acknowledged as a source of reference by numerous theorists, these theorists have continuously taken traits that Kuhn opposed, undercutting his paradigmatic positionality. Kuhn, on the other hand, did not have a clear explanation of how he regarded the notion and did not hesitate to recognise his failure to unpack the complexity in order to grasp the confusion related to the concept of a paradigm (Eckberg & Hill Jr., 1979). As a result, social scientists may approach the concept of a paradigm in different ways (Morgan, 2014). This implies that researchers may approach a phenomenon based on their understanding of the nature of reality. The researcher was not only interested in understanding academics based on their experiences of leadership on their professional identity construction, but also in how leadership shaped their roles and responsibilities as academics in a Cameroonian university.

For instance, Morgan (2007) examines four alternative worldviews in relation to the meaning of "paradigm." According to Morgan, some social scientists consider a paradigm to be a framework for thinking about research, measurement, analysis, and personal involvement as well as a worldview and views about the nature of reality, knowledge, and values. Despite the fact that they are currently dominating social-scientific debates over what a paradigm is, he asserts that these conceptualizations were not included in Kuhn's description of a paradigm. According to Morgan (2007), a paradigm similar to Kuhn's version is one that analyses the philosophy of knowing as having an impact on how research questions are asked and answered. As a result, he contends that this method is based on the recognition that research is fundamentally concerned with epistemological issues regarding the nature of knowledge and knowing.

Furthermore, Kuhn (1970, 1974) preferred the definition of "paradigm" as "shared beliefs" within a community of researchers who share a consensus about which questions are most meaningful and which procedures are most appropriate for answering those questions. This is the most common form in the fields that comprise science studies, but it has received little attention in discussions of social science methodology. The third and most detailed form considers paradigms to be model instances that serve as models for how research on a given topic is carried out. Morgan (2007) uses paradigm examples to show new researchers how a field addresses its central issues. Morgan goes on to say that, while Kuhn was particularly interested in this version of paradigms, it has received little attention in subsequent work. However, it is pertinent to the topic of merging qualitative and quantitative methodologies because many social science books and articles employ concrete examples to demonstrate the broader concepts they propose (Morgan, 2007). This argument is relevant to this study since a mixed methods approach was used to not only understand academics' conception of leadership but also how their experiences of leadership shaped the way they constructed their professional identities in the context of a Cameroonian university. This technique of employing research projects as case studies to serve as paradigmatic examples is especially common in discussions of designs that use many methods (Morgan, 2007).

Creswell and Creswell (2017) define a "paradigm" as a worldview. According to them, a researcher brings to a study a philosophical viewpoint on the universe and the nature of research, such that every researcher's worldview may be informed by their philosophical orientation as they engage in the world of developing new knowledge through research. Furthermore, in what appears to be a conglomeration of the numerous conceptualizations of what a paradigm may signify as proposed by the preceding researchers, Cohen et al. (2011) summarise this by saying:

> a paradigm is a shared belief system, or set of principles, the identity of a research community, a way of pursuing knowledge, consensus on what problems are to be investigated and how to investigate them, typical solutions to problems, and an understanding that is more acceptable than its rivals (p. 5).

Cohen et al.'s (2011) belief about how a paradigm can be understood is based on the previous authors' conceptualization of a paradigm, as they summarise bits and pieces of what other scholars have asserted a paradigm to be. For example, this definition emphasises the researcher's role in investigating problems by developing appropriate philosophies to understand the solutions to the problems under study. Thus, pragmatism was used as a

philosophy in this study to understand academics' conceptions of leadership and the nature of their leadership experiences on the construction of their professional identities.

Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) define a paradigm as a collection of assumptions held by a researcher that shape how they view and interpret study data in the context of educational research. Kivunja and Kuyini continue by stating that it is the researcher's lens through which he or she perceives the world, as well as how he or she interprets and acts within the world in which he or she lives. A paradigm, according to Kivunja and Kuyini, is a researcher's abstract beliefs and how they influence how he or she sees the world. To summarize, Kivunja and Kuyini believe that a paradigm establishes a researcher's philosophical perspective, which has significant implications for every decision made during the research process, including methodology and method selection. As a result, the definitions, and conceptualizations above of a paradigm aided me in deriving meaning from the data that I produced based on my personal interactions with the study participants. In other words, a paradigm reflects a researcher's abstract views that direct how he or she understands the nature of reality while developing procedures and methods for research.

According to White (2011), while addressing paradigms, rejection is unavoidable since paradigms bear the seed of their own eventual rejection, and a paradigm cannot provide a solution to every problem it meets because there will always be a shift in paradigm owing to various realistic viewpoints. As a result, while it can be used to explain the framework within which scientists work, it can also be used to generate new difficulties. According to White, these scientists with opposing viewpoints are not knowingly responsible for a paradigm shift as an attempt to overthrow philosophy. They are, on the contrary, attempting to address an issue within the framework of the paradigm (White, 2011). Since the Enlightenment, shifts in theoretical and philosophical priorities have thus oscillated between "modern" and "postmodern," or "rationalistic" and "romanticist" perceptions of the world (Kristiansen, 2014). White (2011) contends that explaining paradigm shifts based on equilibrium is difficult because it "creates the impression that they are the function of a single set of insights by one individual, the consequences of which are immediately apparent both to that individual and to others" (p. 22). The constant shift in what constitutes a paradigm has also allowed researchers to bring their various worldviews to research, such as positivism, post-positivism, constructivism, and pragmatism (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Cohen et al. (2011) claim that there has been a paradigm shift over time. According to them, a paradigm shift has occurred from Newton's view of the mechanical universe to Einstein's view of a relativistic evolving universe and, most recently, from positivist science to a post-positivist critical realist view that incorporates phenomenology, qualitative research methods, critical theory, and feminism, as well as research methodologies and principles. The "paradigm wars" of the 1970s and 1980s were the result of this continual paradigm shift. This paradigm war began when social scientists who supported qualitative research and proposed constructivism as an alternative paradigm criticised quantitative research's positivist paradigm (Hall, 2013).

This paradigm shift has forced researchers to use paradigms as a means of guiding their research based on their assumptions about reality and the nature of things, especially taking into consideration their own views and values. In other words, a researcher's ontology, epistemology, axiology, technique, and procedures are all governed by their paradigm, which is their philosophical orientation. According to Cohen et al. (2011), in the research process, ontology leads to epistemology, epistemology leads to methodology, methodology leads to instrumentation, and instrumentation leads to generating data. It should be recognised that ontology and epistemology inform axiology.

The next sections provide an overview of the different paradigms and make an argument for why I classified this study as belonging to the pragmatist paradigm, which is, in my opinion, the most appropriate paradigm to support this study. Analysing the paradigm or philosophical foundation that is acceptable for a certain research topic is said to be the first step in research (Imegi & Wali, 2017). This is because it offers the researcher a wide range of methodological choices that might produce accurate results for the given research aims. Thus, it was important to evaluate and comprehend the various paradigms and how they may inform distinct research approaches, as well as the rationale behind why the current study was founded on a pragmatist paradigm.

4.2.1 Positivism

Auguste Comte, a French philosopher who developed sociology as a subject in the nineteenth century by aiming to integrate rationality with empiricism, is credited with the founding of the philosophy of positivism. Rationalism is described as the source of knowledge or justification, and it claims that the criteria of truth are intellectual and logical rather than

sensory, whereas empiricism is defined as the acquisition of information in the real world by observation (Bhattacherjee, 2012). Comte's justification for this philosophy was built on observation and reason as a means of understanding behaviour. It should be emphasised that the argument over quantitative and qualitative research paradigms resulted in opposing views or assumptions, resulting in "purists" on both sides (Onwuegbuzie, 2000). Onwuegbuzie claims that quantitative "purists" have assumptions that are consistent with positivist philosophy, but qualitative "purists" have assumptions that are consistent with post-positivist, post-structuralism, and post-modernist philosophy. The study based its assumptions on the pragmatist philosophy, which is consistent with mixed methods, such that different ways were used to describe leadership as experienced by academics in constructing their professional identities at a Cameroonian university.

According to Wahyuni (2012), positivists believe that when a large sample is examined by different researchers who observe the same factual phenomenon using carefully designed statistical tests and following similar research procedures, a similar result will be generated. Positivists generally believe that only observable phenomena are credible. This means that no study can be generalised if it is not scientific in nature and lacks objectivity. As a result, research from one context may be applicable in another (Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017). This type of knowledge generalisation is referred to as "naive realism" by Wahyuni (2012). Positivists, according to Kivunja and Kuyini (2017), believe that human behaviour can only be understood through reason and observation. Thus, human behaviour is interpreted in terms of observable facts or measurable ethics.

Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) postulate that:

> Research located in this paradigm relies on deductive logic, formulation of hypotheses, testing those hypotheses, offering operational definitions and mathematical equations, calculations, extrapolations and expressions, to derive conclusions. It aims to provide explanations and to make predictions based on measurable outcomes (p. 30).

According to Kivunja and Kuyini, "the choice of the positivist paradigm means that the data to be gathered will be quantitative in nature and are most likely to be analysed using quantitative procedures" (p. 36). What this may mean is that positivists believe that in order for a research result to be accurate, the data that is gathered, analysed, and interpreted must be quantifiable. In the context of a positivist paradigm, a researcher's judgement is based on fieldwork results rather than personal opinions. As a result, the researcher is isolated from

observable reality. However, post-positivists may have evolved to question positivist perspectives on research, perhaps because people are involved in research, the social world or behaviour cannot be investigated in the same way as the scientific world, and also because casual nature cannot be explained by the natural world.

4.2.2   Post-Positivism

Although post-positivists believe in knowledge generalisation, they reject the positivists' belief in absolute truth. Wilhelm Dilthey was a German philosopher best known for his distinction between the natural and human sciences, arguing that the natural sciences' task is to arrive at law-based causal explanations, whereas the human sciences' task is to provide an understanding of the organisational structure and dynamic forces of human and historical life. Dilthey claims that because of the fundamental difference in subject matter, physical science methods cannot be used to conduct social science research (Onwuegbuzie, 2000). To understand the social sciences, post-positivists acknowledge realism (known as critical realists) while rejecting realism entirely (known as constructivists and interpretivists) (White, 2011). Relativism, hermeneutics, humanism, constructivism, idealism, and some postmodernism, according to purists, are superior to positivism (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) note that:

> while the positivist paradigm maintains the belief that reality is out there to be studied, captured and understood, the post-positivist cousin accepts that reality can never be fully understood; but at best, only approximated. Accordingly, the post-positivist paradigm has tended to provide the worldview for most research conducted on human behaviour typical of educational contexts (p.32).

While Kivunja and Kuyini's interpretation indicates that post-positivism has tended to provide the worldview for the majority of research on human behaviour in educational contexts, positivists believe that reality exists to be studied, captured, and understood; they recognise that reality can never be fully understood but can only be approximated. However, despite the fact that positivists believe reality exists and that post-positivists agree, post-positivists believe reality can never be fully understood. Furthermore, contrary to positivist studies in the natural sciences, post-positivist research focuses on human behaviour within an educational system.

4.2.3   Pragmatism

Pragmatism employs both qualitative and quantitative research methods, as well as positivist and post-positivist paradigms. In contrast to the positivist paradigm, which relies on surveys and observation, and the post-positivist paradigm, which relies on interviews, pragmatists mix data sources from both paradigms to develop results and inferences. As an alternative epistemological framework that explores a diverse set of research methodologies and approaches, pragmatism was used in this study to make sense of leadership practices among academics and how they shaped the construction of their professional academic identities in the context of Cameroon. This paradigm provides an alternative lens as a framework for understanding this phenomenon, and its strong philosophical grip on mixed methods may explain experiences of academic leadership in the context of a university better because it focuses on the problem to be researched and the consequences of the research (Feilzer, 2010). However,

> there are, legitimate questions about the extent to which MMR has actually made use of the intellectual foundations of pragmatism as a philosophy. MMR has emphasized the practical aspect of research methods in ways that both introduced pragmatism as a paradigm for social research, largely avoiding serious contact with the philosophical foundations of pragmatism (Morgan, 2014, p.1045).

Morgan is attempting to show here that pragmatists have frequently focused on the practical features of the paradigm rather than its theoretical parts. Many proponents of pragmatism, for example, see it as a tool that aids a researcher's design and approach to research without emphasising its philosophical component. He goes on to suggest that, over time, pragmatism has been left out of the debate that has resulted in a comprehensive knowledge of constructivism and post-positivism as paradigms for the social sciences, limiting our understanding of pragmatism as a philosophy. Morgan believes that clarifying the significance of pragmatism as a philosophy for social science necessitates moving beyond a concentration on practicality.

However, Shields (1998) reminds us that pragmatism is a:

> Philosophy of common sense. It uses human inquiry as a focal point. Inquiry is viewed as a continuing process which acknowledges the qualitative nature of human experience as problematic situations emerge and are recognised. Recognition involves the doubt associated with questioning existing belief systems. Doubt is resolve through critical reasoning and ultimately tested in action. It is the philosophy of common sense, because actions are assessed in light of practical consequences.

Finally, inquiry is not necessarily limited to individual effort, rather it often incorporates a "community of inquiries" (p.197).

Shields raised a number of critical points in the preceding reference. Shields begins by explaining that pragmatism is a philosophy of common sense that centres on human inquiry. He goes on to describe inquiry as a continuous process that recognises the qualitative dimension of human experience. This mind-set necessitates the researcher experiencing the study participants' experiences alongside them rather than on them. Second, the reference implies that one scientific method cannot be used to examine human experiences but that multiple methods can be used to test actions because actions are the outcome of experiences. That is, people's actions are influenced by their previous experiences. Shields justified his concept of pragmatism using the pragmatic reasoning of Charles Sanders Peirce and John Dewey. Shields considers these two thinkers' explanations of pragmatism to be the most important because they both engage in practical-based inquiry. This is consistent with the idea that one can only gain knowledge by understanding other people's experiences.

Kaushik and Walsh (2019) contend that human conduct is thought to be guided by beliefs, which determine how the researcher interprets the world or influence the researcher's worldview. In light of this, social science research could be defined as the study and comprehension of humans. In this study, pragmatism was considered a relevant paradigm to understand how academics experience leadership and how these experiences shape the way they construct their professional academic identities in the context of a Cameroonian university.

Kaushik and Walsh (2019) argue that pragmatism often assumes that human behaviours can never be isolated from prior experiences and the ideas formed as a result of those experiences. As a result, human ideas and actions are inextricably intertwined. People make decisions based on the potential consequences of their actions, and the outcomes of those decisions are used to predict the outcomes of future-like decisions. The significance of human acts and beliefs, according to pragmatic philosophy, may be found in their effects. Humans are not determined by external circumstances; they have the ability to mould their own experiences through their actions and intelligence. It might be claimed that humans are not determined by external causes; they can shape their own experiences through their actions and intelligence. Pragmatists think that reality is not static, and that the world is always changing. Given that activity changes existence, actions also modify the world. According to

Kaushik and Walsh (2019), activities serve as a bridge between what has occurred and what will occur in the future.

The key ideas of pragmatism are said to have emerged during a discussion at a metaphysical club founded by philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce, psychologist William James, philosopher and mathematician Chauncey Wright, jurist Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., and philosopher and lawyer Nicholas St. Johns Green in 1970 (Shields, 1998; Kaushik & Walsh, 2019). These scholars argue that a single scientific technique cannot be employed to gain knowledge in social science. Researchers can use pragmatism to extend beyond objectivist conceptualizations in order to examine and understand the relationships between knowledge and action in context. Kelly and Cordeiro (2020) postulate that pragmatism is the belief that researchers can avoid abstract debates about the nature of truth by focusing on "practical understandings" of concrete, real-world issues. This argument resonates with the reason I employed semi-structured interviews to understand the academics as they described their experiences of how the practice of leadership at their university or department has influenced the way they develop professionally.

Researchers are better prepared methodologically to deal with complicated, dynamic organisational processes in which actions, even when precisely planned, can have shifting spatial or temporal characteristics (Kelly & Cordeiro, 2020). Thus, pragmatic inquiry recognises that people in social environments might experience activity and change in a variety of ways, which encourages them to be adaptable in their investigative strategies. Rather than debating the validity and intrinsic value of specific methods and methodologies, these authors argue that researchers who embrace pragmatism as a worldview should be encouraged to choose methods and methodologies that are relevant in terms of transporting us from the realm of practice to the realm of theory and vice versa. Furthermore, it has been established that a pragmatic approach to research, with an emphasis on the inquiry process and practicality, is more effective than approaches that rely solely on abstraction or the production of philosophical theory.

Feilzer (2010) postulates that pragmatism as a paradigm avoids the contentious concerns of truth and reality, admits that there are unique and numerous realities subject to empirical inquiry, and focuses on solving practical difficulties in the "real world." Furthermore, pragmatism is the concept that researchers are not required to adhere to a particular study approach or technique. Pragmatists argue that their approaches to investigation are strikingly

similar. A pragmatic paradigm, according to Feilzer (2010), addresses certain methodological challenges at the level of transforming epistemological concerns into research procedures and, ultimately, the selection of research methodology. She continues her argument by asking, "How can diverse layers of events be quantified or observed if they have different layers?" She does, however, argues that mixed-method research may bridge this divide by measuring certain parts of the event quantitatively and others qualitatively. This is consistent with the qualitative (individual interviews and focus groups) and quantitative (questionnaire survey) data generation methods I used in this current study.

The pragmatic paradigm, in contrast to other philosophies that focus on the nature of reality, emphasises the nature of experiences. All knowledge is based on experience, according to the core assumption of pragmatic epistemology. Furthermore, quantitative and qualitative methodologies are compatible, so gathering numerical and text data concurrently or sequentially may aid in a better understanding of the research problem. According to Maarouf (2019), pragmatism takes into account how the truth in what works is related to addressing research challenges, providing a philosophical justification for using mixed methods research. As a result, researchers can use a wide variety of procedures, data generation strategies, and data processing approaches. Based on this premise, Mackenzie and Knipe (2006) argue that a single scientific methodology cannot be used to research the truth about the real world.

While reality is true and the truth is in what works for pragmatists, Teddlie and Tashakkori (2011) believe that many mixed-method researchers, particularly applied scientists, are driven to the pragmatist paradigm because they apply a form of daily pragmatism to their research answers. According to Wheeldon (2010), this paradigm can accept a more flexible abductive approach than positivist and constructivist worldviews, which rely on deductive reasoning to obtain specific findings or an inductive method to reach general conclusions based on generic premises. That is why I used both deductive and inductive reasoning to analyse the qualitative data that was generated through interviews and focus groups in this study. Although pragmatism is often associated with mixed methods research, some mixed methods researchers prefer to conceptually align with the transformative paradigm, which addresses issues of social justice and marginalised people (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). This is most likely why Hall (2013) claims that pragmatism is not the sole philosophical paradigm compatible with mixed-methods research.

In pragmatism, Maarouf (2019) distinguishes between ontological, epistemological, and axiological viewpoints. An ontological attitude is founded on the notion that there is only one reality in a given environment at a given point in time, with social actors having numerous perspectives on that reality. In this sense, pragmatic research is intersubjective. As a result, my ontological assumptions were based on both subjective and objective perspectives as I attempted to understand how, within a single reality, individual academics have multiple interpretations of that truth. On this premise, I conducted individual interviews to learn about their individual experiences and a focus group to learn about their collective experiences. According to the epistemological stance, any sort of knowledge might be observable or unobservable based on the pragmatic researcher's immediate ontological perspective. Thus, the philosophical nature of epistemology is concerned with the meaning of knowledge, how it is obtained, and the "relationship between the knower and that-which-would-be-known" (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2011, p. 230).

Thus, in this study, based on my epistemological viewpoint, survey data was used to examine the relationship between academics' experiences and university leadership in developing their professional identities, thereby maintaining an impartial stance. I used the methodology to connect epistemological issues to the study design. This is because pragmatists say that the ideal research method is the one that is most successful in delivering the desired outcomes of the inquiry. Furthermore, my axiological assumptions enabled me to link my epistemological positions to ethical concerns. Thus, the experiences of academics at the chosen university influenced my knowledge and perception of their professional identity construction in that institution. To get the best of both worlds and avoid missing significant relevant themes from both the raw data and the framework, I analysed data by sorting out themes both deductively and inductively. As a result, both deductive and inductive reasoning were employed to overcome some of the shortcomings associated with either deductive or inductive reasoning during data analysis. Therefore, the pragmatist philosophy was appropriate for this investigation. My aims were not to dismiss the importance of quantitative and qualitative approaches in research, but rather to draw strengths from both to mitigate the weaknesses of a traditional single strategy. Figure 4 depicts a diagrammatic representation of the researcher's orientation and beliefs in the context of this study. The reflection demonstrated how the various components demonstrated a top-down approach at the epistemological level and an interactive relationship at the methodological level.
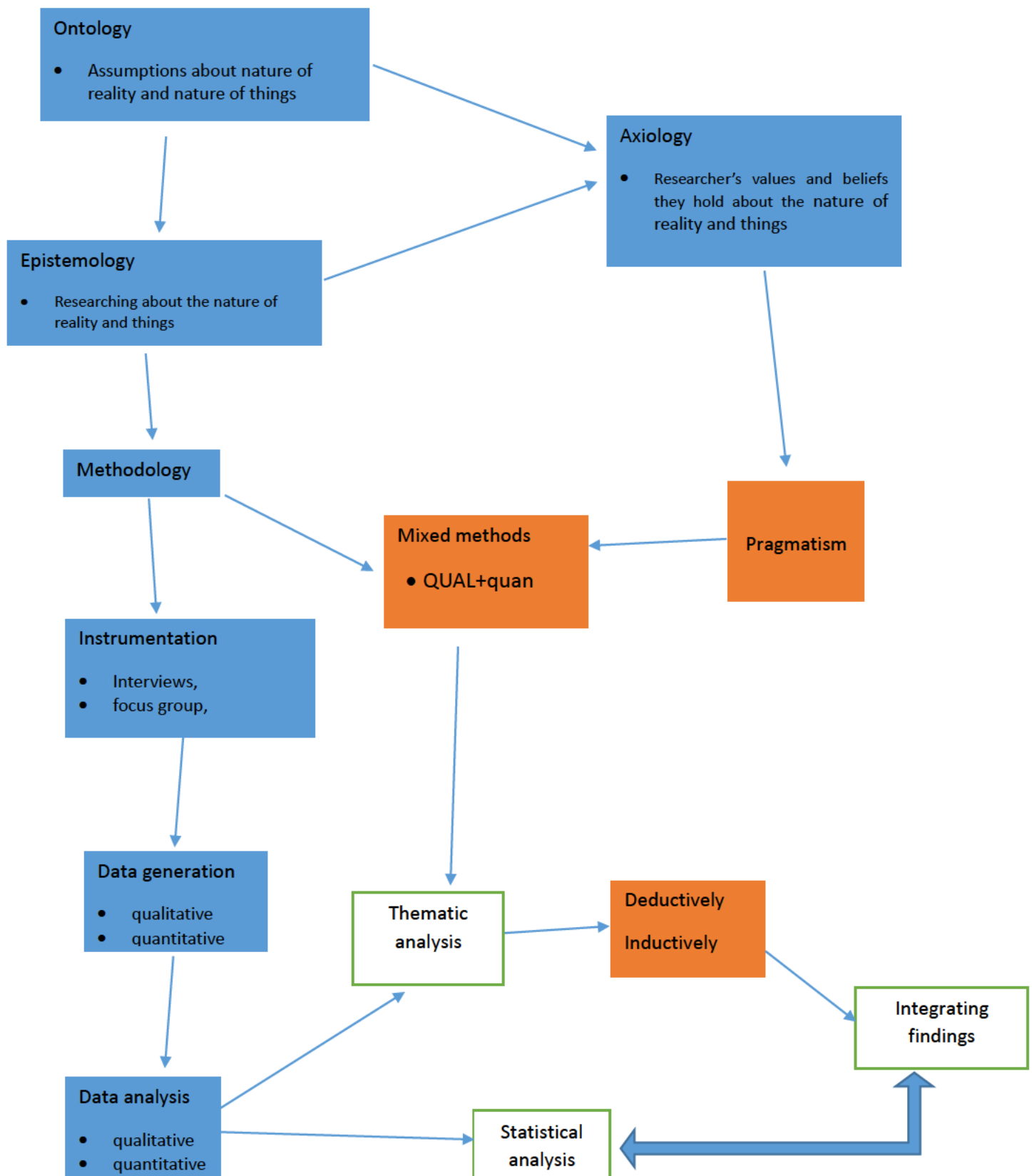
Figure 4: *A virtual representation of the research method.*

Source: (Author's collation)

However, Morgan's (2014) question is: does arguing for a broader application of pragmatism to social research require a clarification of its specific relationship to MMR? An issue here is the idea that pragmatism is somehow uniquely related to MMR. This confusion is reminiscent of some paradigmatic claims that qualitative methods must be connected to constructivism and quantitative methods must be connected to post-positivism. In all of these cases, "there may be an affinity between paradigms and methods, but there is no deterministic link that forces the use of a particular paradigm with a particular set of methods" (Morgan, 2014, p. 1045).

Morgan (2014) makes some important comments in the above quotation. To begin, he questions whether clarifying pragmatism's specific link to MMR is important in order to argue for a larger application of pragmatism to social research because he believes that the assumption that pragmatism is somehow specifically related to MMR is an issue here. Second, Morgan contends that this ambiguity reflects some paradigmatic assumptions that qualitative approaches must be associated with constructivism and quantitative methods with post-positivism. Finally, while there may be an affinity between paradigms and techniques in all of these circumstances, he feels that there is no deterministic link that requires the use of a certain paradigm with a specific set of methods. Thus, regardless of the strategy, pragmatism can function as a philosophical programme for social scientific research (qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods). Feilzer (2010) argued in her study that:

> Mixed methods research pragmatically has highlighted the practical relevance of philosophical pragmatism to research methodology, in particular, but not exclusively, to mixed methods research. Thus, it may not only help synthesise the different interpretations of pragmatism as underlying mixed methods research but also help rediscover pragmatism as a practically relevant research paradigm for all types of research (p.7).

Thus, according to Feilzer, mixed-methods research has highlighted the practical relevance of philosophical pragmatism to research methodology. She further adds that mixed-methods research may also assist in rediscovering pragmatism as a practically relevant research paradigm for all types of research. Thus, in the context of this study, I employed pragmatism to study mixed methods.

4.3   Research design

I used a case study with a mixed methods approach as my design. I chose a single case study because I wanted an in-depth description and analysis of the participants' perceptions based

on the narrative of their leadership experiences as they constructed their professional identities in teaching, research, and community engagement. According to Yin (2009), one method of conducting social science research is the case study. Other types of study include, but are not limited to, surveys, experiments, and epistemological research. I used a case study methodology approach within the pragmatic paradigm to produce data on the experiences of university leadership practice and how those experiences shaped the construction of academic identities of those who participated in this study using a single case.

Yin (2009) states that a case study design must deal with a technical and unique scenario. As a result, because there was more than one variable of interest in my study, I used multiple data sources that were later combined through the results of interpretation. In this study, semi-structured individual interviews, focus group discussions, and a questionnaire survey were used to generate data. Cohen et al. (2011) postulate a case study as a unique example of real people in actual situations. A case study allows readers to understand ideas better than abstract theories or principles. Academics from a Cameroonian university offered realistic perspectives on their experiences of leadership practice and how it influences the way they construct their professional identities within their university.

This design was also used because it is critical to understand why social science research is being imported, as suggested by Neuman et al. (2013). They believe that engaging in social science research is exciting because it allows researchers to learn through discovery. However, engaging in this type of research, according to Neuman et al., necessitates:

> persistence, personal integrity, tolerance for ambiguity, interaction with others, and pride in doing top-quality work. It also requires logical thinking, carefully following rules, and repeating steps over and again. In the research process, we join theories or ideas with facts in a systematic way. We also use our creativity. To conduct a study, we must organise and plan. We need to select research methods appropriate to a specific question. We must always treat the study participants in an ethical or moral way. In addition, we need to communicate to others how we conducted a study and what we learned from it (Neuman et al., 2013, p.2).

Neuman et al. (2013) provide an in-depth explanation of how to do social science research. They think that research is a process that must be carefully considered by the researcher. It also emphasises that the process of developing meaningful information is systematic, as each stage of the research process is interconnected.

According to White (2011), a research design is a logic that connects methodology to specific strategies and methods. A research design is a method that progresses from the underlying philosophical assumptions to the specification of respondents, data generation techniques, and data analysis. This study employed a mixed research design that is pragmatic in nature in order to understand university leadership from the standpoint of academics and how it influenced their professional identity construction. In fact, Kothari (2004) defines a research design as the conceptual framework within which research is carried out; it serves as the blueprint for data generation, measurement, and analysis. As a result, the design includes an outline of what the researcher will do, from writing the hypothesis and its operational implications to final data analysis.

Furthermore, a good research design is beneficial to a study since it serves as the foundation of the overall structure of the research activity by assisting the researcher in organising his or her ideas in a form that allows the researcher to check for errors and inadequacies (Kothari, 2004). According to Sileyew (2019), a research design is meant to offer a suitable framework for a study. The decision to be made about the research approach is particularly important in the research design process since it affects how pertinent information for a study will be gathered; yet, the research design process contains several interrelated decisions. To understand the experiences of the participants in this study, I needed to grasp their particular stories based on their descriptions. As a result, I explored a variety of ways to gather more information for my study. However, the case study design has recorded some criticisms over the years. Cohen et al. (2018) suggest that a case study may have a common drawback, which is biased case selection. This bias can be attributed to several factors, such as a lack of formal criteria, limited empirical evidence, subjectivity, and subjective conclusions. The authors also assert that reliance on impressionistic and self-reported information can be problematic due to potential biases from both participants and researchers. This issue may arise as participants' responses are not readily verifiable and thus may be selective, biased, personal, and subjective. Despite these disadvantages, as previously stated, the case study was relevant for this study because it allowed me to collect data in different ways that led to similar conclusions, and approaching the same issues from different perspectives helped me develop a holistic picture of academics' experiences of leadership practices on their professional identity construction in the study context.

4.3.1   Mixed methods approach

According to Creswell et al. (2003) and Creswell and Creswell (2018), a mixed methods study is the generation or analysis of both quantitative and/or qualitative data in a single study in which data generated concurrently or sequentially is prioritised and involves data integration at one or more stages of the research process so that both approaches are in conversion with each other (Mihas & Institute, 2019). Wisdom and Creswell (2013) agree, arguing that methodically integrating both data sets within a single inquiry allows for more complete and collaborative data generation and analysis. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) postulate that mixed methods research is a subcategory of research in which the researcher integrates quantitative and qualitative research methodologies, methods, approaches, concepts, or languages into a single study.

Teddlie and Tashakkori (2011) posit mixed-methods research as being characterised by the addition of qualitative components to a study that was initially qualitative in order to make more sense of the study. To that end, one could argue that mixed methods is the bridging of two distinct methods to make justifiable meaning of a problem by combining different data sources and analysis techniques together. Teddlie and Tashakkori (2011) agree that combining quantitative and qualitative approaches results in a more complete understanding of the research problem than using only one type of method. Thus, I used a sequential-mixed-methods approach whereby data was generated sequentially in different stages. That is, I conducted semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions to engage academics in an attempt to generate data. This technique was a means for me to understand academics' subjective experiences regarding identity construction as influenced by their experiences of leadership practice. I then used a questionnaire survey as a follow-up data generation strategy to build directly on the results of the initial data generation methods. This helped me generate data from a larger population based on the single case study.

The qualitative and quantitative methodologies provided a more significant meaning to the phenomenon in this study. For example, while mixed-methods research entails generating quantitative and qualitative data, integrating the two types of data, and employing distinct designs involving philosophical assumptions and theoretical frameworks, the mixing of both methods allows data to yield additional insight beyond what either qualitative or quantitative data could provide alone (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Thus, while combining both methodologies, I had the freedom to decide at what level the mixing occurs, which is

fundamental for this study, keeping in mind what was being mixed and at what philosophical level the mixing occurs because, according to Hall (2003), mixing at the philosophical assumption level should not be considered because pragmatism is a philosophical assumption in and of itself, creating some irrelevance at the level of philosophical compatibility. Especially when other aspects of mixed methods research, such as theoretical assumptions, methodological traditions, data generation, analysis approaches, personalised understandings, and value commitments, are taken into account by pragmatism (Hall, 2013).

Previously, mixed-methods research began in the social and behavioural sciences rather than the pure human sciences because social science disciplines require a pragmatic, wide-angle lens that uses all available data sources to find answers to practical questions (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2011). Maarouf (2019) argues that the approach is increasingly recognised as the third methodological movement in the last two decades, as the need to teach graduate students grows. This is also confirmed by the fact that, until recently, research approaches were only classified into two categories: quantitative (positivism) and qualitative (non-positivism) or post-positivism (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Maarouf, 2019). However, Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) argue that, after all, if one has to "think categorically, mixed methods research sits in a new third chair, with qualitative research sitting on the left side and quantitative research sitting on the right side" (p. 15), with these two approaches each having their own set of advantages and disadvantages.

While the quantitative approach is grounded in realism and a dualistic epistemology, which would have required me to distance myself from the study's participants, post-positivism, with its relativist stance, would have allowed me to create multiple realities and a realistic epistemology in which I and the participants would have interacted and probably been bound together (Cameron, 2009). The mixed method, on the other hand, allowed me to combine both epistemologies, allowing me to take an objective stance in interpreting participants' experiences in the context of leadership practices on the construction of their professional identities. As a result, I was able to take an impartial perspective in interpreting participants' experiences in the context of leadership practices on the development of their professional identities thanks to the mixed approach, which allowed me to combine both epistemologies. Because of this, the community of post-positivist academics has had to alternate between quantitative and qualitative research. These researchers have discovered that case study, interview, ethnographic, narrative, and biographical methodologies are all worthwhile. They

sought to combine or include these approaches in their research (Denzin, 2010). To comprehend the participants' explanations of their experiences, I used interviews, a single case study, and biographical techniques in this study.

Although the rationale for adopting mixed methods research is growing, it is also crucial to emphasise the controversy about the right nomenclature for this technique, as raised by Maarouf (2019). According to Maarouf, there is debate about whether the phrase should be "Mixed Methods Research," "Mixed Research," or "Multiple Methods." She hypothesises that, on the one hand, some are discussing the phrase "mixed research" without inserting the word "methods," while others are clinging to the original term, "mixed methods research." Other researchers, however, claim that, while the phrase "mixed methods research" is often used, the term "mixed research" more accurately expresses the core of this approach.

Maarouf (2019), who postulates the mixed research and multiple methods approach, concludes that the relationship between the two terms is unclear because, for example, multiple methods researchers use different data generation methods that all belong to the same type, either quantitative or qualitative, and do not face the same philosophical debate that the mixed research approach does. While the other half feels that employing more than one technique of generating data, which might be totally quantitative, entirely qualitative, or a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches, is a form of mixed research methodology, they describe the mixed research methodology as a form of multiple methods approach. The previous discussion raised complexities around the terms "mixed methods research" and "mixed research." However, Creswell et al. (2003) contend that although this methodology has been described in a variety of ways by various authors, the terms multitrait-multimethod research, integration of qualitative and quantitative approaches, interrelationship of qualitative and quantitative data, methodological triangulation, multimethodological research, multimethod designs, linking qualitative and quantitative data, and combining qualitative and quantitative research seem to capture the essence of this approach, which I considered in the context of this thesis.

Cohen et al. (2011) postulate that mixed methods research recognises and works with the fact that the world is not exclusively quantitative or qualitative; it is not an either/or world but a mixed world, even if the researcher discovers that the research has a predisposition to or requirement for numbers or qualitative data. For me, mixed-methods research was going to assist in investigating how the strengths and weaknesses of various data sources that I used in

this study, when combined, were going to give me an in-depth understanding of the research problem. This idea is central to a relatively new method known as "mixed-methods research." I thus aligned my rationale for choosing a mixed methods approach with that of Johnson and Onwuegbuzie's (2004) five rationales for conducting mixed methods research, outlined as follows:

1. **Triangulation**: seeking convergence and corroboration of results from different methods and designs studying the same phenomenon;

2. **Complementarity**: seeking elaboration, enhancement, illustration, and clarification of the results from one method with results from the other method;

3. **Initiation:** discovering paradoxes and contradictions that lead to a re-framing of the research question;

4. **Development:** using the findings from one method to help inform the other method; and

5. **Expansion:** seeking to expand the breadth and range of research by using different methods for different inquiry components.

A strength of mixed methods studies is that descriptions from qualitative inquiry can enhance statistics to express meaning and provide further understanding, whereas numbers from quantitative research can supplement pictures and words to add precision, scope, and generalizability. This study required a mixed-methods approach not only because the complexity of social problems cannot be handled only by quantitative or qualitative approaches but also because the study is interdisciplinary. This approach contributed to my training as a novice researcher on how to use a range of methodological interests and approaches to produce wide-ranging results and create diverse outcomes. According to John (2009), integrating qualitative and quantitative methodologies offers more insight than either method alone since they provide a more complete knowledge of the study problem when used jointly. As a result, the groundwork for the strength of mixed-methods research in this study was laid. Furthermore, the fact that qualitative and quantitative approaches address distinct and specific research questions contributed to the overall goal, which is why mixed-methods research was appropriate for this study. After defining the overall purpose and procedures for this study, a clear plan for the interaction between the two approaches was required (Regnault et al., 2018).

I also considered a mixed-methods approach to research because of the practicality of the approach. It was a suitable choice because I had access to both quantitative and qualitative data via interviews, focus group discussions, and surveys. It served as a suitable strategy to have a more complete understanding of the research problems and questions (Creswell & Creswell, 2017), given that combining both data sources added more weight to the results. Therefore, in this study, I began by generating and analysing the qualitative data, followed by quantitative data generation and analysis that built on the results from the first qualitative phase. To neutralise all the biases that come with either qualitative or quantitative approaches, this study adopted an exploratory-sequential mixed methods design to generate and analyse data.

4.3.1.1 Exploratory sequential mixed methods design

An exploratory sequential-mixed-methods approach is defined by Mihas and Institute (2019) as a method for generating and analysing qualitative and quantitative data in stages. I used this method to generate and analyse qualitative data, and the quantitative approach was built from the results of the first qualitative phase. The data was mixed by carefully integrating the qualitative data results to construct the quantitative instrument (questionnaire) that was subsequently used to generate data for the quantitative phase (Creswell, 2009; Mihas & Institute, 2019) to ensure that other comprehensive variables were used (Bryman, 2007). This second phase included a larger sample of different participants than the qualitative phase.

Schoonenboom and Johnson (2017) assert that the most challenging aspect of this design is determining where the point of integration should be and how the result can be integrated. Mihas and Institute (2019) argue that the rationale for using this design is to first explore a topic before deciding which variables need to be measured. Mihas and Institute (2019) postulate that an exploratory sequential design can be regarded as a template that is used for a particular research circumstance, albeit each context may employ this design in a different way. The second thing to consider, according to Mihas and Institute (2019), is what is already known based on the body of literature that is already available. In other words, the point of departure for researchers using this design may differ according to these authors. When the researcher's literature review yields few findings to guide the researcher, the qualitative phase may be useful in allowing the researcher to identify a new dependent variable (Mihas & Institute, 2019). The rationale why this design was used in this study, therefore, was to determine how the phenomenon is experienced within the chosen population of this study.

According to Bhattacherjee (2012):

> exploratory research is often conducted in new areas of inquiry, where the goals of the research are: (1) to scope out the magnitude or extent of a particular phenomenon, problem, or behaviour, (2) to generate some initial ideas (or "hunches") about that phenomenon, or (3) to test the feasibility of undertaking a more extensive study regarding that phenomenon (p. 5).

Generally, the mixed methods researcher needs to decide which type of data has methodological dominance or whether qualitative and quantitative data are equivalent or not. Morse (2003) claims that a variety of factors influence this decision, including the researcher's discipline's epistemological base and the theoretical impetus underpinning the investigation. This study also took into account time as a component that influences the sequential design. As a result, sequential time entails two phases, each of which informs the other. It is largely dependent on the overall aim and whether qualitative or quantitative data generation and analysis comes first. For example, is the intent to explore (QUAL first) or to explain (QUAN first)? According to John (2009), sequential mixed approaches have three distinct phases. The first phase is concerned with generating and interpreting qualitative data. The second phase involves identifying themes and variables that are used in the design of an instrument for generating data. The third phase is to generate quantitative data and analyse it. The process then concludes with the interpretation of the results, as shown in figure 5.
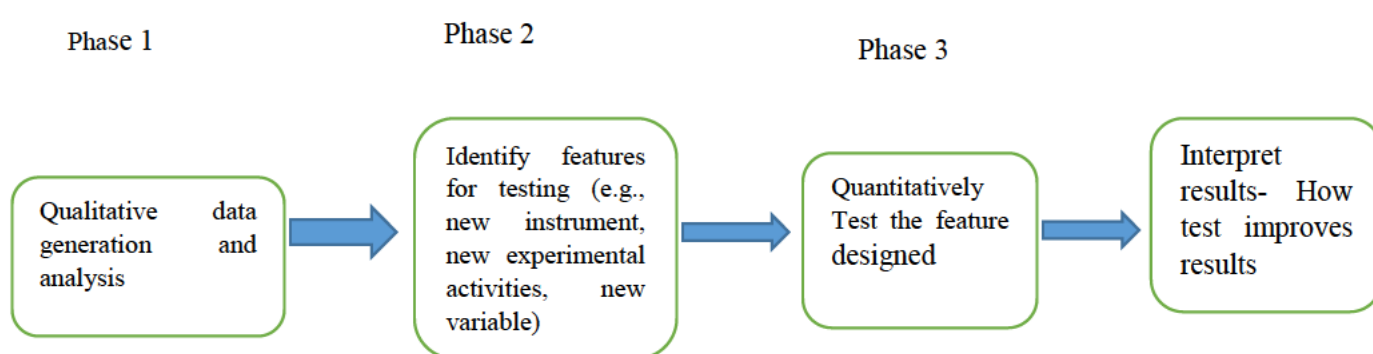
Figure 5: [Adapted from] "Three core Mixed Methods Design," by J. W. Creswell & J. D. Creswell, in J. W. Creswell & J. D. Creswell, Research Design, Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approach (p.342), 2018, California, United States: SAGE Publication, Inc. Copyright 2018 by SAGE Publication.

Although this type of testing better measures a sample of a population to generate informative data, it does have some drawbacks. Creswell (2014), for example, emphasises the importance of time when conducting a sequential exploratory mixed methods design. This is because the

two phases of producing and analysing qualitative and quantitative data take more time to implement. Moreover, designing the tools necessary for generating and analysing the quantitative design takes time to integrate and interpret the two data sets.

Phase 1:   The qualitative approach

According to Williams (2007), qualitative research is a comprehensive method of discovery that takes place in the natural environment. Qualitative research approaches are used to shape the research strategy in a range of study designs. These techniques have a significant impact on the research methodologies being considered (William, 2007). White (2011) argues that qualitative research does not strive to understand how people form the nature of their own worlds and does not describe pre-existing facts about the world. According to White, academic inquiry requires a different methodology than quantitative research. Although the techniques are comparable, Creswell (2014) contends that qualitative methods rely on text and picture data, apply various data processing phases, and employ a range of designs. Thus, qualitative researchers generate data in the field at the location where participants encounter the experience or problem under investigation. The aim of this phase was to generate themes to inform and contribute to the development of a quantitative instrument that would be applied in phase two of the research process.

Interviews, documents, and audio-visuals are used to acquire various types of data. The qualitative researcher then looks at all the data, making sense of it and categorising or thematically organising it. Data can also be analysed in qualitative research using inductive and deductive data analysis methodologies. Qualitative researchers build patterns, categories, and themes from the ground up. The data from these themes is then reviewed by the researchers to determine if more evidence can be produced to support each theme or if more information is needed. The meanings of a problem or issue as represented by participants are more relevant to researchers than the meanings brought to the research by researchers or expressed by writers in the literature. Throughout the qualitative research process, the researcher focuses on learning the meaning people have for the problems or issues they are discussing (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Creswell, 2014).

The primary goal of qualitative research is to gather information from people about a problem or topic and then conduct research to learn more about it. For qualitative researchers, the research process is emergent, which means that some or all aspects of the process may

change or shift after the researcher enters the field (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). In qualitative research, the inquirer analyses how their involvement in the study, as well as their personal background, culture, and experiences, may influence their interpretations. This component of the procedure is more than just pushing biases and values in a study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). It also discusses how the researchers' backgrounds may have influenced the study's direction.

Denzin and Lincoln (2011) postulate that there are:

> three interconnected generic activites that define qualitative research process. They go by a variety of different labels including theory, methods, and analysis; or ontology, epistemology and methodology. Behind these terms stands the personal biography of the researcher, who speaks from a particular class, gender, racial, cultural, and ethnic community perspective. The gendered multiculturally situated researcher approaches the world with a set of ideas, a framework (theory, ontology) that specifies a set of questions (epistemology), which are then examined (methodology, analysis) in specific ways (p.11).

According to the citation above, the researcher's biographical forces may inform his or her ontological, epistemological, and methodological perspectives when investigating qualitative phenomena. This concept lends support to the qualitative component of this study, which tries to analyse and understand how academics experience university leadership in the construction of their professional identities through semi-structured interviews. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011), by fusing their own observations with the self-reports offered by respondents through interviews, life stories, personal experience, and case study papers, qualitative researchers can accurately, concisely, and objectively capture people's experiences. Creswell and Creswell (2017) define qualitative research as an approach for examining and comprehending the significance that individuals or groups assign to a social or human problem. Therefore, the act of establishing and analysing a person's experience is a component of qualitative research. This method entails formulating research questions and procedures, gathering data in the participant's environment, and inductively moving from specifics to broad concepts. As a result, the structure of the final written report is adaptable and might differ significantly from that of a quantitative report (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Phase 2: The quantitative approach

Williams (2007) postulates that researchers who needed to quantify data drove the development of quantitative research around 1250 A.D. Since then, quantitative research has

dominated Western culture as a means of uncovering new meaning and knowledge. Creswell and Creswell (2017) define quantitative research as a technique for testing objective theories by examining the relationship between variables. Furthermore, these variables can then be measured using instruments, and the resulting numerical data can be statistically analysed such that the final written report adheres to a predetermined structure, which includes an introduction, literature and theory, methods, results, and discussion. Creswell and Creswell (2017) add that those who conduct quantitative research make assumptions about testing theories deductively, incorporating bias protections, controlling for alternative or counterfactual explanations, and being able to generalise and replicate the findings.

4.4 Research Method

According to Cohen et al. (2007), a research method is "that range of approaches used in educational research to gather data that are to be used as a basis for inference and interpretation, for explanation and prediction" (p. 47). Different techniques were used to generate the data that was used to respond to the research questions that informed this study.

4.4.1 Sampling

Since this study is mixed-method research that employed a sequential technique, some scholars have argued that there is a dearth of literature on mixed-method sampling (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). However, Teddlie and Yu (2007) argue that although there is no widely accepted classification of mixed methods sampling strategies, the units of analysis in a sequential mixed methods (MM) study can be recruited through the sequential use of purposive sampling and probability strategies, or vice versa. This justifies the use of a non-random and random sampling design in this study. Thus, as mixed-methods research, both non-probability and probability sampling were used in this study, given that more than one sampling technique can be used in a single study. For this study, the population in this sample frame was considered because of its larger size and representativeness. Thus, the sampling frame consisted of all lecturers employed on a full-time basis at the selected university.

Leavy (2017) defines a sample as a process whereby individual cases are selected from a larger population. This implies that a researcher selects a sample from a larger group of the population in a study and draws data from the individual cases of the sample. This section outlines how the participants for my study were chosen and how many there were. In phase 1 of this study, I used a non-probability snowball sampling, which is typically linked with the

case study research design, to recruit academics at a Cameroonian university who are teaching, researching, and engaged in community outreach. Purposive sampling is carried out, in accordance with Cohen et al. (2011), to achieve representativeness, provide comparisons, concentrate on particular issues or cases, and develop theory through the accumulation of data from many sources. Purposive sampling, according to Cohen et al., is used to acquire access to informed people with in-depth knowledge of specific issues, such as their professional role, power, and access to networks, expertise, or experience. Purposive sampling, according to Merriam (2009), is founded on the idea that the investigator wants to learn, comprehend, and acquire insight and must therefore choose a sample from which the most can be learned. My general objective in defining the sample for this study was to find academics who have demonstrated effectiveness in their roles and responsibilities as teachers, researchers, and service providers to the community.

Although this is a mixed-methods study, non-probability sampling can be employed in the qualitative phase and probability sampling in the quantitative phase. I understood the challenge involved in recruiting transnational participants, which is why I used snowball sampling as a technique to recruit participants. Snowball sampling, also known as chain referral, involves researchers identifying a small number of people who have the traits in which they are interested. These individuals are then used as informants to identify others or to connect the researchers with others who qualify for inclusion; they, in turn, identify others (Leavy, 2017). I employed snowball sampling to find participants during the qualitative interview phase. This is due to the difficulty in locating individuals due to their geographical position. It is said that the researcher can ask the participants during the interview session to recommend people who they believe could be a useful source of information or who may be in contact with future participants (Leavy, 2017). I asked those who had agreed to participate in the study to find more participants for the study after I had selected possible samples from the population. In order to do this, it was necessary for me to persuade them to come forward on their own while assuring them of the ethical considerations taken to guarantee anonymity for this study. The participants continued recruiting others until the necessary sample size was reached.

Given that it is nearly impossible to include all of the relevant population in a study and that sampling is the best way to understand the population that produced the data, the study's target population involved full-time academics who were chosen based on their permanent

employment contracts at a Cameroonian university. Moreover, since the academic career pathway is made up of three stages, namely the early career stage, the mid-career stage, and the advanced career stage, I interviewed academics from the university's faculties to understand how leadership at their university shaped their teaching, research, and community engagement activities. The participants in this case were all from the same university. Academics were chosen based on their permanent appointment for more than a year in order to gain experience in university leadership on the development of their professional identity. In order to attain this aim, a semi-structured individual interview with a sample (N = 11), representative of the various academics from the faculties, was employed in this study.

In their study, Malterud et al. (2016) contend that in order to understand participants' experiences, a purposive sample of six to ten participants with varied experiences might provide enough information for descriptions of the phenomenon. This is because an exploratory analysis is not intended to cover the entire spectrum of the phenomenon but rather to present selected patterns pertinent to the study's aim. Thus, this study employed 11 participants to generate qualitative data. In addition, the participants in this study were lecturers who had an understanding of the context. Although the selected context for this study comprises nine faculties and two schools with an approximate 300 permanent lecturers, snowball sampling was used to select academics from six faculties. The population for this study was as follows: three participants were from the field of education, one from the field of science, two from the field of the arts, two from the field of social and management sciences, one from the field of law and political sciences, and one participant came from the field of agriculture and veterinary medicine. The academic staff is required to have at least a Master's degree or hold the positions of assistant lecturer, lecturer, senior lecturer, associate professor, and professor.

Prior to the interviews, I emphasised to the participants why I was conducting the interviews and that I would be using Zoom because I wanted to record their descriptions. To further assure them of confidentiality, I sent the informed consent letter through email, which spelled out the ethical considerations and informed them of their right to withdraw at any point when they felt uncomfortable because participation was voluntary. I informed them that I had secured gatekeeper approval from their institution, allowing my university to issue me an ethical clearance certificate to generate data.

Given that the qualitative phase of this study used non-probability snowball sampling to generate qualitative data, simple random sampling with probability was used in the quantitative phase, with each academic having a chance of being selected to complete the questionnaire online. Since it was nearly impossible for me to have direct contact with the targeted population because of the challenge of conducting a cross-border study, I contacted the female participants who had refused to take part in the interview but had accepted to respond to the questionnaire. They informed me that there are different WhatsApp platforms meant for academics in the study context. They agreed to share the link on those platforms. Following that, a Google Doc link with the structured questionnaire was sent to all academics who had been teaching full-time at the university for more than a year. Through the continuous accumulation of data from the questionnaire survey (Teddlie & Yu, 2007); each academic on those WhatsApp platforms had the potential to provide information regarding university leadership practices that shape their professional identities in teaching, research, and community engagement. Cohen et al. (2011) state that the respondents selected have specific characteristics considered relevant for this study based on the researcher's judgment. Thus, these respondents were academics at a Cameroonian university.

At the beginning of this study, I was hoping to receive a response rate of 200, which was in accordance with De Vallis' (2013) claim that a sample size of 200 is fair and allows for more than 40 variables in the questionnaire. Even though I received 173 responses from the respondents, there were certain instances when the total number of responses did not equal the number of respondents, indicating that not all of the respondents submitted responses. However, according to Kothari (2004), the response rate of 170 is representative of the total population (N = 300) in this study, which requires at least a 169 for the 95% confidence interval level or reliability level of the population of 300. Thus, after removing all potential errors, I arrived at 170 respondents as the returned rate for the quantitative phase of this study, out of a population of 300 permanent academics in the study context.

4.4.1.1   Biographical information

Given that this was an exploratory study aimed at studying academics' experiences of university leadership in constructing their professional identities, biographical information about the participants was necessary. As such, participants' gender, age, grade, qualification, programme, number of years of teaching at their current university, first language, and language of instruction experience were gathered on a biographical information sheet.

Table 1: Biographical information of participants

Participants	Gender	Age	Grade	Qualification	Faculty / Department	No of teaching years at current University	Language of Instruction
Participant 1	Male	36	Lecturer	PhD	Education/ Educational Leadership	2	English
Participant 2	Male	44	Associate Professor	PhD	Arts/ Literature and Philosophy in History	12	English
Participant 3	Male	39	Instructor	Masters+4	Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine/ Fisheries and Applied Aquaculture	6	English
Participant 4	Male	34	Assistant Lecturer	PhD	Education/ Educational Psychology	1	English
Participant 5	Male	34	Lecturer	PhD	Education/ Educational Psychology	6	English
Participant 6	Male	35	Assistant lecturer	PhD	Social and Management sciences/ Economics and Accounting	2	English
Participant 7	Male	37	Lecturer	PhD	Sciences/ Environmental Sciences/ occupational Health and Safety	5	English
Participant 8	Male	52	Associate Professor	PhD	Arts/ History and African Civilisation	16	English
Participant 9	Male	33	Assistant lecturer	PhD	Law and Political Sciences/ English Law	4	English

Participant 10	Female	37	Lecturer	PhD	Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine /Agricultural Economics and Agribusiness	5	English
Participant 11	Female	34	Assistant lecturer	PhD	Social and Management Sciences/ Geography	1	English

4.4.2 Data generation

According to Zohrabi (2013), data generation tactics or procedures include examinations, questionnaires, interviews, classroom observations, diaries, and journals. The data for this section was gathered in two stages: semi-structured individual interviews and focus group discussions. Interviews, for example, can be generated individually, collectively, or in groups (Zohrabi, 2013). Semi-structured interviews with academics were conducted to understand their leadership experiences in constructing their professional identities, followed by focus group discussions to reveal participants' attitudes, feelings, beliefs, experiences, and reactions through interaction in the focus group. The themes, quotes, and categories that emerged from the data analysis were used to design the instrument that was used to generate quantitative data.

4.4.2.1   Semi-structured individual interviews

The primary method of generating data was interviews. I employed a purposive sample of eleven (11) participants for one-on-one semi-structured interviews to explore academics' in-depth perspectives and experiences of university leadership as they develop their professional identities. Interviews were used to understand experiences and personal perceptions because there is value in interviewing participants. In addition, one-on-one interviews were conducted to further understand the potential disparities in academics' experiences with university leadership and how these experiences influence their professional identity construction in the study context. In this study, I employed semi-structured individual interviews and focus group discussions to discover the reality of how their truth was experienced. This is because, to make sense of reality, there must be truth in its construction.

Although face-to-face interviews are the most typical and frequently used method for gathering qualitative data, the ability for a qualitative researcher to examine nonverbal cues like evasive glances, fidgeting, or an eye roll (Reñosa et al., 2021), coupled with COVID-19, as well as continuing lockdowns and social distancing at the time I was gathering data for this study, all compelled me to gather data through social media platforms (Zoom and WhatsApp), which was a challenging process. According to Leavy (2017), video conferencing, Skype, phone, or email can be used to conduct interviews because video-conferencing and Skype interviews provide many of the same benefits as in-person interviews. They allowed me to talk to the participants that I could not reach as if it were face-to-face.

Due to the COVID-19 protocol, I used the Zoom platform to generate qualitative data, which also gave me the same quality of data that I needed while examining the nonverbal attitudes of the participants as they described their experiences of leadership and how it shaped their professional identities. This resonates with the assertion that qualitative research is not "experimentally measured or examined in terms of quantity, frequency, amount, or intensity" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 8). That is, qualitative researchers do not bring people into laboratories or assign people to complete instruments. Information is generated by talking to people and observing their behaviour. These types of researchers do not generate information using questionnaires or instruments created by other researchers. Although I had developed an interview guide with important details that were necessary for generating the needed data for this current study, the flexibility of the guide enabled me to probe the academics for further questioning and clarification.

During the process of producing the data, I encountered several issues. I had to find people, for instance, who were willing to take part in the interviewing process. Second, despite having read and signed the informed consent form, which addressed anonymity and ethical concerns, several participants declined to have their faces broadcast on the Zoom call due to the socio-political instability in Cameroon. As a result, they turned off their videos throughout the interview and signed in to Zoom using numbers. Third, even though some participants agreed to be interviewed, some of them left the interview as soon as it began, which required me to begin the time-consuming process of looking for new participants to interview. The majority of the female academic staff members who were contacted for the interview abruptly declined, resulting in only two females taking part in the interview. At the end of the interviews, however, the individual interviews were transcribed, and each transcribed interview was mailed to the participants for member check (Goldblatt et al., 2011). According to Goldblatt et al., asking participants to review the interview transcription to confirm its accuracy before coding and analysis is the first step to member checking because it is an important methodological, moral, and ethical procedure intended to enhance study credibility.

4.4.2.2 Focus Group Discussions

Focus groups are a type of group interview in which the researcher depends on group interaction to generate a collective rather than an individual point of view on a discussion topic presented by the researcher (Cohen et al., 2011). In contrast to the semi-structured

interviews that I first did, in which I interacted with the participants through in-depth interviews, in a focus group, participants interacted with each other. It was through this interaction between the participants that the data emerged. Thus, the focus group assisted me in obtaining relevant information from the participants because, as a rich source of data, I could explore the participants' inner feelings and attitudes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) as they interacted within the single focus group of six (6) academics who had taken part in the semi-structured individual interviews. Furthermore, the focus group also assisted me in triangulating with the individual interviews and the questionnaire (Cohen et al., 2011).

In the FGD session, I introduced myself to the participants and explained the purpose of the focus group. In addition, I explain to them that they have been invited to share their experiences of university leadership influence on their professional academic identity construction. I then proceeded to explain the guided rules for the FGD, as seen below:

- Participation in the focus group is voluntary. It is all right to abstain from discussing specific topics if you are not comfortable.

- All responses are valid—there are no right or wrong answers.

- Please respect the opinions of others even if you do not agree.

- Try to stay on topic; we may need to interrupt so that we can cover all the material.

- Speak as openly as you feel comfortable.

- Help protect others' privacy by not discussing details outside the group.

After I had outlined the guidelines, I asked the participants if there were any issues to address before we commenced the discussions. I further asked them if they would wish to use pseudonyms during the discussion. However, instead of using names as pseudonyms, participants preferred to be assigned numbers. As a result, participants were assigned numbers in ascending order from one to six.

4.4.2.3 Quantitative questionnaires

The perspectives of academics on their experiences of leadership were gathered through administering a questionnaire. Zohrabi (2013) states that in a mixed-methods approach, quantitative data is generated through closed-ended questionnaires (numerical data). The themes and quotes that emerged from the qualitative phase were used as variables to create items on a five-point Likert type scale, with the midpoint representing a neutral level of

opinion (Chyung et al., 2017). The rationale for this quantitative questionnaire was to expand the information that was generated from phase one of the data production process. According to Zohrabi (2013), a questionnaire is one of the instruments that can be used for data generation in research. In this study, I used a questionnaire in phase two to generate quantitative data. Although there are also different types of questionnaires, such as closed-ended, open-ended, and questionnaires that are both closed-ended and open-ended (Zohrabi, 2013), I used a closed-ended type of questionnaire. Thus, a structured questionnaire was used to easily gather quick and straightforward data. However, it should also be noted that a structured questionnaire has a way of forcing participants to choose alternatives that might not represent some of their opinions. It sought to understand why different forces influence the way academics construct their professional identities in the way that they do.

The questionnaire sought to find out the leadership practices that are practiced at the university and the institutional push and pull forces that shape professional identity construction. It also tried to find out the biographical, programmatic, and contextual push and pull forces that influence academics' construction of their professional identities in a Cameroonian university. The questionnaire was based on key issues that were highlighted during the review of literature in Chapter 2, such as leadership in African universities and academic professional identity construction in African universities, specifically based on teaching, research, community engagement, and administration. I also constructed the questionnaire based on the premises of the theoretical lenses in Chapter 3 of this study, namely, distributed leadership and the Force Field Model of teacher development. With the inputs, feedback, and comments from my supervisor and the PhD cohort support group, I then revisited the questionnaire, and corrections were made. This was very important for me to ensure the validity and reliability of the instruments. It is argued that the response rate of a questionnaire should have a mean rate of 30 percent, but this has to be achieved with a lot of hard work. For a given population, there is a need to achieve a certain sample size to reduce the likelihood of sampling error. The questionnaire was exported to a Google Form after being reviewed by my supervisor and the PhD cohort facilitators. This was because it was flexible for me to either email the form or send it directly to the respondents' mobile phones. There were six sections to the questionnaire:

- a note explaining the instructions and brief information about the phenomenon under study;

- respondents' information; the influence of leadership practice and institutional forces on academics' construction of their professional identities;

- the influence of biographical forces on academics' construction of their professional identities;

- how contextual forces also influence academics in constructing their professional identities in the way that they do; and

- The concluding section, in which respondents were thanked for responding to the survey (see Appendix).

4.4.3 Data Analysis

In the context of this study, qualitative data was analysed separately from quantitative data. Ivankova and Plano Clark (2018) argue that in mixed methods research, data analysis entails either examining quantitative data using quantitative methods first and qualitative data using qualitative methods independently. It also entails merging both databases using mixed-methods analytical procedures that blend or integrate quantitative and qualitative data and outcomes.

In order to summarise and arrange the generated data in a way that responds to the research objectives, data analysis entails a variety of interrelated tasks (Kothari, 2004). Data analysis, according to Cohen et al. (2011), is the process of interpreting data in light of how participants perceive the situation and identifying trends, themes, categories, and regularities. Mihas and Institute (2019) posit that the process of analysing qualitative data entails identifying meaningful quotations, categorising them with relevant topics, and possibly developing larger themes. To Mihas and Institute, a quotation can be a phrase, a sentence, a paragraph, or a longer section of text; a code is a topic from the literature or an inductively constructed topic from a close reading of data; a theme is a more abstract conceptual topic than a typical code. Furthermore, when a qualitative analysis is transformed into a quantitative analysis, the codes become variables, the themes become scales, and the quotations become survey items. In the quantitative data generation process, open-ended and scale-based questions can be used. This, however, is dependent on what is already known from the literature review and the qualitative phase (Mihas & Institute, 2019). Graue (2015) adds that qualitative data analysis "is a process of the description, classification, and interconnection of phenomena with the researcher's concepts" (p. 8).

4.4.3.1 Thematic Analysis

There are several approaches that researchers can use to analyse qualitative and quantitative data. In the context of qualitative data, approaches such as narrative analysis, thematic analysis, discourse analysis, and semiotic analysis can be used (Liamputtong, 2009). Given that there is no one single or correct way to analyse and present qualitative data and that it should be guided by the issue of fitness for purpose (Cohen et al., 2011), in order to address the study questions, the qualitative data was processed using thematic analysis as a data analysis tool for this study. Braun and Clarke (2006) assert that thematic analysis identifies and reports patterns or themes within data. Therefore, themes and categories were sought using an inductive and deductive approach as proposed by Pearse (2019) and Xu and Zammit (2020), Inductive and deductive forms of developing codes and themes have been applied by many scholars in thematic analysis in the field of education. I sorted the themes and codes by using the theories that underpin this study as the points of departure and inductively from the raw data. This allowed the research conclusion to not only emerge from the raw data but also to avoid constraints imposed by organised methodologies. I employed inductive and deductive reasoning as data analysis methodologies because some important themes are often hidden in the data generation and data analysis processes required by deductive data analysis (Thomas, 2003). As a result, employing both strategies to retrieve data enabled me to have the best of both worlds. It also assisted me in identifying themes that I would have missed if I had used only one strategy. Thus, my goal was not to discredit the values of either reasoning but to draw strength from both and to minimise the weaknesses of a single argument.

To ensure credibility, I employed several steps in the data analysis process of this current study. I started by deductively examining the different theoretical lenses discussed in Chapter 3 of this study to extract the tenets of the theories. I then proceeded to use these tenants as broad themes and sub-themes. In the next step, I transcribed all the interviews verbatim into text by listening to the audio segments of the Zoom recordings to understand what was being said. This was the first step in familiarising and engaging myself with the raw data. The next thing I did was to compare the transcribed data from the audio with the Zoom video recording of the same data to make corrections and understand how the participants' narratives were done, especially the non-verbal expressions. This was also done to check for accuracy (Ivankova & Plano Clark, 2018). Then I read the individual transcripts many times to immerse myself in the data, this time making notes and comments in the margins. In the second phase, I reviewed all of the data to reflect on the overall meaning, get a general feel

for the data and participants' perspectives, and understand the comments I made in the margin. In the third phase, I moved to the thematic or inductive coding process by taking the text data and segmenting phrases into codes. I labelled the codes with themes based on the participants' actual language and then selected extracts, relating the analysis back to the research questions, literature, and producing reports (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Similar concepts were grouped into categories and further developed according to their properties or characteristics. The significant themes that appeared across most or all interviews were identified. These themes were contextualised further in an analytical framework by making connections to theories and literature. The coding process focused on the area of perception of leadership in identity construction. The information gathered from this section was essential to informing the qualitative aspects. Some of the themes and sub-themes that emerged in the data were at the micro-level: academics' conceptions of their professional identity based on individual forces; the meso-level: academics' conceptions of their professional identity based on institutional forces; and the macro-level: academics' conceptions of their professional identity based on external forces.

4.4.3.2 Descriptive Statistical Analysis

The second phase of data generation consisted of generating and analysing quantitative data. This data set usually measures numerically. "These numbers are used to understand the relationship between variables or explain social phenomena" (Bergin, 2018, p. 66). In quantitative studies, numbers are employed to offer information about our world. However, according to logical positivists' assumptions, numbers do not exist in a vacuum waiting to be found; rather, they are social creations (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2006). That is, researchers convert data into numbers, and by imposing the organisation of the number system on the data, they provide structure to empirical data. Although it is said that quantitative approaches are rigid and limited to evaluating theories, they nevertheless attempt to capture reality. This method is used to conduct significant research into facts regarding natural phenomena in a systematic, controlled, and empirical manner. In addition, the themes that emerged from the qualitative results were used as variables to measure if the statistical analysis was generalizable (Arkes, 2019). This point is known as the "point of an interface" when there is a transition from the qualitative mode of inquiry to a quantitative one focused on measuring variables (John, 2009). As a result, it provided insight into how leadership and other factors influence the development of academics' professional identities. Along with delivering data in an Excel file, Google Forms also computes descriptive statistics and creates visualisations.

The spreadsheet of coded responses from this survey was imported into the statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS), which was used to perform the more thorough analysis and produce supplemental visualisations.

4.5   Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues have a significant role to play in a study, especially when it has to do with humans. Thus, to obtain ethical clearance from the University of KwaZulu-Natal, I first obtained a gatekeeper's permission from a university in Cameroon, where this study was conducted. When the University of KwaZulu-Natal approved my ethical clearance, I then identified the participants for this study and explained the purpose of my study to them and that their participation was voluntary. I also assured them of the confidentiality of their identities and the data they provided. This is because Cohen et al. (2011) argue that data generated by participants should be treated with confidentiality. Hence, the identities of the university and the participants were kept anonymous, and the names were replaced with pseudonyms. After explaining the purpose of the study to each participant, I invited them to the Zoom interview. An informed consent form was then mailed to the participants to be read and signed before data generation. In addition, details of how the data was to be generated and used were outlined, and any implications for participants were also made known. It was stated on the form that their confidentiality and anonymity were guaranteed and that they had the right to withdraw from the research at any time without negative consequences. Thus, confidentiality and anonymity were ensured when the data was presented and analysed through the use of pseudonyms.

4.6   Validity and Reliability

Although the ways in which validity and reliability are used in qualitative and quantitative research differ, Cohen et al. (2007) contend that both types of research can benefit from these concepts. Validity is a prerequisite for both strategies. The truth value, applicability, consistency, and neutrality of a hypothesis are evaluated using construct validity in quantitative research (DeCuir-Gunby, 2008). DeCuir-Gunby adds that "validity is often referred to as trustworthiness, credibility, dependability, confirmability, and understanding" (p. 131) because it is important to qualitative research. It is my view that in research, validity and reliability can be related to precision and the investigator's capacity to gather and record information truthfully. Giddings and Grant (2009) argue that the "application of validity and reliability to mixed methods research seems logical particularly as the use of both qualitative

and quantitative methods of data collection in a single study has been viewed as a way to ensure rigour" (p. 121). What this means is that applying validity and reliability in mixed-methods research can be considered normal.

Giddings and Grant (2009) further assert that validity, reliability, and generalisability are applicable to a study that uses a questionnaire with descriptive statistical analysis and a semi-structured interview with descriptive content. This study used a questionnaire survey and semi-structured interviews for generating data, which was then analysed using descriptive analysis. Onwuegbuzie and Johnson (2006) contend that while validity is common and critical in quantitative research, the emphasis on validity in qualitative research is for the researcher to reliably capture the lived experiences of participants. DeCuir-Gunby (2008), on the other hand, contends that trustworthiness is essential for mixed methods design because it addresses the same issues as qualitative and quantitative research. Furthermore, to ensure statistical interpretation, the quantitative portion of this study was informed by validity and reliability. Through member check, validity was conformed to trustworthiness in the qualitative section of this study to ensure participants' trust (Cho & Trent, 2006). In order to ensure the trustworthiness of this study through a commitment to seeking the truth, I developed research questions that were informed by the force field model and distributed leadership theory, as posited by Cho and Trent (2006). By doing so, I was able to assess how these theories were relevant to the study context and how they pertained to the phenomenon being investigated. Furthermore, to create trust between the participants and myself, I explained the objectives and purpose of the study. I also explained to them that the transcript would be sent to them for accuracy to ensure that their responses were captured. Thus, member checks were utilised to ensure trustworthiness. Specifically, after conducting and transcribing the interviews, I shared the transcripts with the participants to confirm their accuracy "in terms of a vis-à-vis agreement with participants" (Cho & Trent, 2006, p. 328).

4.7   Methodological Limitation of the Study

Since this study was conducted at a Cameroonian university, I was unable to travel for data generation for this study due to a lack of financing; therefore, the interviews were conducted via Zoom. Given the challenge that comes with conducting cross-border research using virtual means for data generation, identifying the participants was a challenge. I used snowball sampling to recruit the participants. This was after I had identified someone who was not a lecturer and credited their phone to contact some academics in the case study

university. After a few participants were identified, I was then able to recruit others for the interviews through these participants. However, due to the socio-political conflict in that region of Cameroon, the participants did not want to be interviewed via Zoom for security reasons, which delayed the process. Although I explained the ethical considerations that had been taken, some participants insisted on being anonymous on the Zoom call because they did not want their identities disclosed on the call. Furthermore, some participants declined the invitation, while others insisted on being interviewed via WhatsApp. Moreover, during the interviews, some participants left the Zoom call and did not return. To ensure anonymity, some interviews were conducted with the participants' videos turned off, and they preferred to be referred to by numbers.

Another challenge was the issue of connectivity, and due to that, some interviews were rescheduled. For instance, some participants who agreed to be interviewed kept postponing the date and time of the interview. Some continued to make excuses for failing to keep agreed-upon appointments. Furthermore, a significant effort was spent on the data generation and analysis operations. The intensity of the data generation and analysis for both phases 1 and 2 of the research study, combined with some participants' failure to complete the interviews, posed some challenges. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, men made up the vast majority of interviewees. Only a few female academics who had been identified accepted the invitation to participate in the interview. Most of them expressed concerns about time and family responsibilities but stated that they could respond to questionnaires because they were less time-consuming. As a result, during the generation of quantitative data, I contacted these female lecturers and shared the questionnaire with them for completion. Despite some delays, the participants were able to fill out and return the questionnaire after several reminders.

4.8   Chapter summary

I began Chapter 4 by focusing on the research paradigm. I provided an overview of alternative paradigms that justified why pragmatism was the best philosophy for this study. This was followed by a graphical representation of how I perceived my entire research process. I then discussed the research design. The chapter then discussed the mixed methods design, emphasising its strengths and limitations, rationale, timing, and data emphasis and integration. The study then focused on discussing qualitative phase 1 and quantitative phase 2 by focusing on the sample technique, data generation, data analysis, ethical consideration, validity, and reliability. Following that, the remainder of the chapter concentrated on the

limitations. The next chapter discussed the qualitative findings that were deductively and inductively analysed.

CHAPTER FIVE

ACADEMICS' WAYS OF EXPERIENCING LEADERSHIP PRACTICES

5.1   Introduction

The previous chapter dealt with the research design and methodology underpinning this study. This chapter is the first of three analysis chapters and responds to the first critical research question that sought to understand academics' conceptions of their professional identity in relation to how they experienced leadership at their university. What follows is a presentation of the qualitative results. Data was produced through semi-structured individual interviews and focus group discussions conducted with 11 participants who are academics at the university under study. The critical research question that the chapter aligns to is as follows:

1. What are the academics' conceptions of their own professional identities at a University in Cameroon?

2. What are academics' experiences of university leadership at a University in Cameroon?

For this qualitative phase, I used two data production methods: semi-structured individual interviews and focus group discussions (FGD). Individual interviews with 11 participants were performed online via Zoom. The semi-structured interviews were conducted during a four-month period, from December 4th, 2021, to March 15th, 2022. Due to connectivity issues, one interview with a participant was conducted on two different days, while another was conducted at two different times on the same day. The remaining nine interviews were conducted only once. While two participants kept to the scheduled time and day of the interview, the other nine were rescheduled more than thrice. The total duration of the 11 semi-structured interviews was 903.36 minutes. Three interviews lasted 1 hour and 40 minutes, four lasted 25 to 45 minutes, three lasted 45 minutes to 1 hour, and one lasted 2 hours. The longest semi-structured interview lasted 2:07:26 minutes, while the shortest was 25:06 minutes. To acquire a better understanding of the phenomenon, one focus group discussion with six participants was held on the same platform as the individual interviews. The FGD lasted one hour and thirty-two minutes. All interviews (semi-structured and focus

group discussions) were recorded using Zoom and transcribed once the recordings were received. The transcripts from the 11 interviews were 130 pages, whereas the FGD transcript was 21 pages.

An interview guide was sent to the participants before the semi-structured individual interviews were conducted. There were three components to the interview guide. The first section requested biographical information from participants (gender, age, academic qualification, academic grade, first language, language of instruction, faculty or department, and number of years teaching at the university); the second section outlined the title of the study and briefly explained the purpose of the study; and the third section included a list of questions that guided the interviews. Qualitative data analysis is "a process of the description, classification and interconnection of phenomena with the researcher's concepts" (Graue, 2015, p.8). In my preparation for the data analysis, the data was organised and categorised according to codes. The data was then reduced to manageable amounts while still remaining meaningful. This process is essential for a scientific study and for ensuring that I have all relevant data for analysis (Graue, 2015).

5.2   Demographic Information of Participants

 This section addresses aspects of the demographic information regarding sex, age, and teaching experience of the participants. The demographic profile of the research participants is given in Table 2.

Table 2: Demographical information of participants

Participant No.	Gender	Age group	Rank	Academic Qualification	Faculty / Department	Experience as an academic	Language of Instruction
1	Male	35-40	Lecturer	PhD	Education/ Educational Leadership	2-5 years	English
2	Male	40-45	Associate Professor	PhD	Arts/ Literature and Philosophy in History	12-15 years	English
3	Male	35-40	Instructor	Masters+4	Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine/ Fisheries and Applied Aquaculture	6-10 years	English
4	Male	30-35	Assistant Lecturer	PhD	Education/ Educational Psychology	2-5 years	English
5	Male	30-35	Lecturer	PhD	Education/ Educational Psychology	6-10 years	English
6	Male	35-40	Assistant lecturer	PhD	Social and Management sciences/ Economics and Accounting	1-5 years	English
7	Male	35-40	Lecturer	PhD	Sciences/ Environmental Sciences/ occupational Health and Safety	5-10 years	English
8	Male	50-55	Associate Professor	PhD	Arts/ History and African Civilisation	Above 15 years	English
9	Male	30-35	Assistant lecturer	PhD	Law and Political Sciences/ English Law	4-5 years	English
10	Female	35-40	Lecturer	PhD	Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine /Agricultural Economics and Agribusiness	5-10 years	English
11	Female	30-35	Assistant lecturer	PhD	Social and Management Sciences/ Geography	1-5 years	English

From table 2, the majority of the participants were in the 35–40 year old age category, with the 30-35 year old making up the second largest. Males dominated the research sample (82%), with females making up 18%. In short, males between 30 and 35 years of age dominated the study. There were 9 (82%) males and 2 (18%) females who were interviewed for the qualitative study. Two participants had 1–5 years of experience, two had 2–5 years, two had 5–10 years, two had 6–10 years, one had 12–15 years, and another had 15 years or more. As shown in table 5.1, ten participants have PhDs and one has a master's degree and is pursuing a PhD. There were two associate professors, four lecturers, four assistant lecturers, and one instructor among the participants. There were five participants from the humanities, two from agricultural and veterinary medicine, two from social and management sciences, one from law, and one from science. At the university, English is the only medium of instruction. Instead of using names as pseudonyms, participants preferred to be assigned numbers. As a result, participants were assigned numbers in ascending sequence from one to eleven as they were interviewed.

5.3   Presentation of the Findings

The findings of this study are presented into three constructs that emerged from the data: the participants conceptualised their professional identities according to three layers as follows: the micro, meso and macro levels. The micro level is concerned with understanding the participants' individual or group behaviour in everyday direct interaction with their context; the macro-sociological level is concerned with national processes of social integration; and the meso-social level is concerned with organisation as a level of analysis intermediate between the micro and macro levels (Serpa & Ferreira, 2019). During the analysis of the data, it was noticed that conceptions of professional identity were not only informed by the academics' experiences with the leaders at the institutional level, but also at their personal or individual level and at an external or state-controlled level. As such, in the current study, the micro-level contributes to our understanding of participants' conceptions of their own professional identity by allowing them to account for their unique experiences inside a university setting; at the meso-level, university structures that develop and achieve academic's priorities in teaching, research, and community engagement programmes were considered. While the third level covers the macro-level experiences of the participants' conceptions of their professional identity in terms of state/government control over the academic project at their university.

All references to specific individuals in the quotations or the name of the institution (university) being researched have been omitted in order to protect anonymity in the quotes and replaced by ellipsis marks (...). All quotations have been reproduced verbatim in order to maintain the participants' authenticity. All quotations have been replicated verbatim in order to maintain the participants' trustworthiness. The participants were asked to choose pseudonyms for anonymity and confidentiality, but they preferred to be given numbers in ascending order beginning with one (1) as described above. Italics are used to highlight the quotes provided by the participants because they were voiced by them in their own words. First, the micro-level: academics' conceptions of their professional identity based on individual forces are presented with the sub-themes as follows: self-conception of professional identity, academics' personal beliefs about their professional identities, and academics' roles and responsibilities of belonging to a profession. The second theme emerges from the meso-level: academics' conceptions of their professional identity based on institutional forces, and the sub-themes are as follows: teaching workload as a key performance indicator; undertaking research as a key performance indicator; and undertaking research-led community engagement as a key performance indicator. The third theme emerges from the macro-level: academics' conceptions of their professional identity based on external forces, and the sub-themes are as follows: academics' professional identity and the nature of the appointment of university leaders and academics' professional identity and external political control, and concludes with a summary of the chapter.

5.3.1 Micro-level: academics' conceptions of their professional identity based on individual forces

It was revealed in the interviews and focus group discussions that the participants' understanding of the conception of their own professional identity is grounded in a more micro-personal experience level; that is, from an inner personal point of view, they conceive their professional identity to be subjective. The concept of professional identity can be seen as a way of defining what people think about themselves in terms of their profession (Reid, 2015). Essentially, the conception of professional identity is capable of taking on a wide range of meanings. In this regard, it will obviously have different meanings in different contexts. Therefore, conception in the context of this study refers to what the academics conceive their professional identity to be. That is what they think about their professional identity suited to the context in which they find themselves. This also has to do with what

people conceive or believe their professional identity is or their beliefs about what they are doing in a particular context. In the more general literature, the concept of professional identity is often used without a clear definition or with conflicting definitions (Fitzgerald, 2020). For instance, the concept of professional identity in the academic context has been linked to "self-concepts, experience, and social image" (Fitzgerald, 2020, p.21) such that self-concepts or self-images substantially influence how academics carry out their role and responsibility, and how they develop as academics. According to Clarke et al. (2013), in the context of higher education, professional identity is not a static concept; it is complex, personal, and can be influenced by external variables. Three sub-themes emerged from the data that was produced qualitatively for this study to understand academics' conceptions of their professional identity: self-conception of professional identity, academics' personal beliefs about their professional identity and academics' roles and responsibilities of belonging to a profession.

5.3.1.1 Self-conceptions of professional identity

This subtheme presents the self-conceptions of the participants' professional identity. When asked about their understanding of the conceptions of their own professional identity, the participants tended to believe that professional identity refers to one's self-conception and one's personality, which thus describes how they perceive themselves within the professional context. Participants indicated that professional identity is individualising one's self in a profession, as evidenced in the statements below:

The issue of academic identity...has a lot to do with the issue of self-concept, how generally individuals think about themselves... within an academic confines or domain and the dimensions of academic identity...academic identities are quite context-specific and are actually determined by how the environment in which you studied (meaning working environment) and the way you perceive, you know, how such environment influences your ability to navigate through your professional career. So, in a nutshell, academic and professional identity could be like two, two sides of the same coin, if I may use such a word. But then it evolves around an individual's ability to understand himself first and the people that he or she...work with (Participant #2, FGD).

An observation from the above was that professional identity is how people think and understand themselves first before understanding others within academic environment and how this environment influences the ability to navigate their profession**.**

One participant's view of professional identity was defined by his personality in his area of specialisation. The participant noted:

I think academic professional identity refers to my personality as a lecturer or as an academic, which will include my domain, my personal, my domain in which I specialize, my personal convictions about life, including socio-economic and political issues, and my in yeah, including socio-economic and political issues and even cultural issues (Participant #5, FGD).

There are some participants who conceived their professional identity in several ways. Participant #2 said that:

It's the ability to, for an individual to create an image for himself within the area of work or specialization that he belongs. Or the effort that you put in as an individual, if it is in administration, you stand out as an individual positively. To me, that is my understanding of professional identity. Making a mark for myself in an area where I operate and it's, eh, yeah, virtually that is what I think it is. Trying to stand out and leave a name, a legacy within the context in which you operate is especially challenging since it is a professional identity (Participant #2).

Another participant shared the similar conception as the one above but linked his understanding to making a difference in society:

I think it is making a, making a mark in the profession I find myself. That's, uh, making myself outstanding, leaving a mark in my, in my, in the domain I find myself, so that when people see me or when I talk, they should identify. Or my activities, my characteristics, my behaviour in society, it should reflect what I am doing in life. For instance, as a lecturer or as a university worker, or as a teacher in the university, my activities in society, the way I interact with people, the way I give knowledge to people within the community, it should be able to make them try to identify where I am coming from, even without me telling them that I am coming from so-and-so profession. That is what I think. My behaviour within the society, my contribution to knowledge within the society, should make them to identify where I'm coming from even without me telling them where I'm coming from (Participant #1).

Identifying the self and having that authority in a particular domain was another participant's conception of professional identity:

When we talk about professional identity, what comes to your mind is the fact that you have identified yourself in a particular sphere (meaning domain), or area of study (meaning subject discipline) and you are grounded, you are an authority in that area.

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For instance, if they say you are a clinical psychologist or they say that they are looking for a clinical psychologist; somebody can refer someone to you that this guy is a clinical psychologist (Participant #5).

Participant #5 above identified himself, as being an expert in his field and that is how he understood his professional identity to be.

To summarize the above responses, the participants indicated that their conceptions of professional identity is an individual's self-conception, and it is context-specific. In addition, the findings also revealed that an individual's self-conception of their professional identity enables them to have that authority in their disciplines. Thus, it can be concluded in this section that professional identity is the relationality between the self, the profession and the context. The next section discusses the participants' personal beliefs about their profession.

5.3.1.2 Academics' personal beliefs about their profession

Professional identity is an individual's professional ideas, values, motives, qualities, and experiences (Eason et al., 2018). It is argued that if institutional change dynamics (in this case, the university) do not align with these values, beliefs, ideas, motives, experiences, behaviour and even qualities, this misalignment may impede academics' identity construction (Lamont & Nordberg, 2014). The data revealed that professional identity within the academic setting is experienced subjectively. Participants repeatedly stated that personal beliefs and values in performing their core responsibilities in an institution define their professional identity. They also added that personal beliefs and values are subjective because humans are different and experience situations differently. Reflecting on this, participant #9 asserted that, "*So I think...that the aspect of, eh, professional identity, it deals with aspects of your beliefs, aspects of your, your commitment of you being a teacher.*" The participants also remarked that academics see themselves and their professional paths very differently. This is because no two experiences are alike and *"all human beings are not the same, even though we find ourselves in the same academic environment"* (Participant #5, FGD). Human beings differ and certainly encounter experiences in different ways and their personal beliefs has a bearing on their careers. Academics' experiences, personalities, training, and interpretation of their role as members of a community involved in the practice of teaching and learning, research, and community engagement are not identical (Samuel, 2008). In reality, people have their personal beliefs, which shape their work performance especially when they have to carry out multiple tasks. These were the sentiments of one of the participants:

I have my beliefs, which may... in one way or the other, influence the way I will perform my job as an, as a researcher, which will influence the way I will think as a researcher, which will influence the way I could write as an academic, which will influence the way I could approach situations, approach my students, and even approach administration as a researcher, which is different from another academic. That's what I think about...professional identity (Participant #5, FGD).

In the same vein, participant #4 maintained that the way academics in one department interpret professional identity would undoubtedly differ from colleagues in another department. The participant observed:

So, I believe that the way I see it or the way I perceive it will not be the way another co-lecturer will perceive it. The way those of us in a particular department will perceive it probably will be different from that of another department. So there are, it exists at the personal level. It exists at departmental level; it exists at faculty level; it exists at university level; and even exists within the level of specific subject areas and specialities. So that is what I think it is (Participant #4).

A conclusion drawn from the foregoing is that, despite being subjective, professional identity is dynamic in its construction and is constantly formed and reformed by the manner in which individuals co-opt their environment, negotiate interactions, and externalise themselves to others. This somewhat supports the argument made by Caza and Creary (2016) that a person's professional identity is a subjective construction that is influenced by the interpersonal interactions they have with other people over their workplace.

Another participant asserted that:

The way I see or the way a particular academic sees his or her career path within the framework of higher education, which involves what they think about their competencies, what they think about their networks, how they see themselves in respect to the other senior staff who are already there, how they perceive the politics of higher education, how they perceive the remuneration system of higher education, how they perceive their networks, their research as well as resources within higher education, how they see the, the socio-cultural factors of the higher education system, and then their own personnel ideology now that are void of the higher education system, and how all these factors and many others impact the way they function within this higher education framework (Participant #4, FGD).

The participant avowed that an academic's career path is defined by the way they think about their competencies, their networks, their research, and their remuneration. The socio-cultural factors of the higher education system and their own personnel ideology, all of which determine how they perform their roles and responsibilities within the context of a university.

This resonated with Olsen's (2008) argument that academics can constantly reconstruct their view of themselves in relation to workplace characteristics, professional goals, values, and their beliefs. This is seen through its subjective sense. Supporting this assertion, a participant affirmed that:

> *It's very subjective. Because identity...it's not universal, it's context specific. And a lot of issues that come into play... when we start talking about issues of values, of knowledge, it simply means that there are others that will respect particular values or would adhere to some values and others might not, maybe because of their own orientation, academic orientation, and all what not. When we talk about issues of knowledge, you know, not everyone, you, you build your professional identity around..., your academics sphere. So somebody, somebody who has a PhD in law, the way you look at things the orientation of issues will be different from somebody you know, with a PhD in history, or maybe educational psychology as it is its very subjective* (participant #2, FGD).

Professional identity, while subjective, is influenced by a variety of conditions and causes. The participant went on to suggest that value influences how individuals perceive professional identity.

Participant #4 added that:

> *...professional identity includes knowledge. It includes skills. It includes value. It includes training background. And sometimes responsibilities, and how they all interplay in the in the workplace, and how they relate with other colleagues, either senior or junior* (Participant #4).

The above view concurred with that shared with Eason et al. (2018) in their argument that individuals with stronger professional identities may communicate their professional responsibilities, attitudes, and approaches to others both within and outside of their disciplines.

Speaking on factors that facilitated workplace relationship as a conception of professional identity, a participant noted that:

> *... when we talk about professional identity, what comes to mind are individuals' attitudes, maybe beliefs, values, knowledge, and skills that are shared with others within a professional group. You know, the way an individual is able to interact. You know, with colleagues is greatly been determined by the person's attitudes, values, knowledge, beliefs, and skills* (Participant #2, FGD).

In light of the above understanding, participant #11 agreed by stating that, "*to my own opinion, I think they are values, habits that people in a particular professional group they believe in....that's people of a particular profession hold on to*".

Another participant noted that, professional identity,

means that, this person has carved out a niche for him or herself, in terms of research, in terms of...either advocacy... even the teaching, learning, which means that they, you'll be honest enough to reject courses that are given to you that maybe you think that are not within that your sphere (Participant #5).

Meanwhile participant #7 also noted that,

I think a professional identity should be what speaks out for you. Should be what identifies you in any professional world. It should be your direction in professionalism that could be picked out amongst the numerous people. Your, your professional performance, your professional vision, your profession in line of activities (Participant #7).

The above section revealed the participants' personal beliefs about their profession. The next section discusses participants' roles and responsibilities of belonging to a profession.

5.3.1.3   Academics' roles and responsibilities of belonging to a profession

Participants established their roles and responsibilities of belonging to a profession in their interpretation of what their conceptions of professional identity is in a university milieu. Participants #3 and #9 affirmed that the conception of their own professional identity is,

"*Taking up your role as a professional... to understand what it takes to be a teacher and the role of a teacher and to carry out the functions as a teacher, assuming that responsibility* and the*, "manner in which you would...passing your information in teaching and, equally, you know, the idea is that you want to build in a particular type or a particular way of, eh, of, eh, reasoning amongst...your students.*

Belonging to a class of academics or a specific group of professionals was participant #10's conception of professional identity, "*I think professional identity means belonging to...a certain profession.*" While Participant #6 affirmed that, it is not about belonging to a class of academics but, "h*aving all the necessary academic requirements to belong to that class; and being able to be assimilated by the ethics of (the profession) and then being absorbed by the university; and having a career path ahead that you diligently follow.*"

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Making sure that teaching and learning capacity was excellent through the active learning of students was Participant #8 conception of professional identity:

Professional identity is about accepting your profession. Because if you don't accept it, the identity will not, it will not show on you. It has to show by teaching, making sure that your aptitude for teaching should be high, and it is not only about doling out knowledge, because degrees in the higher education they are awarded with the cross of content in character formed they find worthy. So the issues of ethics and deontology must accompany the imparting of knowledge to students. So I think, when a teacher has all this, I mean, that is when you can say, "That is my identity." And you impact on the students, and it's something that your evaluation too also comes from your products. Your visibility, you cannot just be a local champion. When you talk about higher education, it's universal. So, this identity of visibility, teaching with good aptitude, then ethics and deontology it is very, university ethics and deontology is very, very important in a teacher's or in a lecturer's identity. Teaching, research, ethics, and deontology. Those are things that I think make the identity of a profession like ours (Participant #8).

As noted by a participant, professional identity is a vocation:

So, basically, I think, I'm looking at it more as a vocation. I'm doing this, because I like it. I'm doing it because I want to see some changes. The people with whom I'm working specifically the students whom I'm training. So when I take my attention, my profession as a vocation, gives me hope from the perspective of the students (Participant #1, FGD).

Basically, the participants maintained that being in an academic career gives them the need to not only love what they do in their chosen profession, but also have the responsibility to train those for whom they have the reason for being in that profession. This is seen when Achirri (2020) argues that in constructing their multiple identities as they move between contexts, academics also take on different roles and positions, such as teacher, life coach, parent, friend, researcher, general public service provider, and administrator. In addition, Leišytė and Wilkesmann (2016) and Jogi et al. (2020) argue that academic identities have historically been linked to disciplines and related to the primary academic roles of teaching and research. As a result, from a global perspective, universities today place high demands on every professional activity and work of academics, expecting them to fulfil multidimensional roles, including teaching, researching, managing, and leading various departments.

5.3.2 Meso-level: academics' conceptions of their professional identity based on institutional forces

It was revealed by the participants of this study that their conceptions of their own professional identity are also rooted in a meso-level of experiences based on institutional forces. This is evident in their roles and responsibilities in their teaching workload, how they undertake research, and their community engagement activities.

5.3.2.1 Teaching workload as a key performance indicator

The participants seemed to have a strong knowledge and understanding of the teaching policy at their university. They noted that, teaching is structured according to academic rank (instructors, lecturer, senior lecturer, associate professor and professor) For instance, the participants said, "*The teaching and learning policy as seen within...University context...are structured according to the rank.*" The participants also added that "*the teaching load as well is divided according to those ranks*" such that an incoming assistant lecturer is not expected to have the same workload as a lecturer, an associate professor or a professor who had been in the profession and/ or institution longer. The participants also revealed that *"teaching...is structured according to a timetable which everyone is supposed to follow"* and they are supposed to have co-teaching. To the participants, "*it is difficult to teach a course alone except in rare cases where the human resources is limited but the tendency is for two or more...lecturers to teach a particular course*" but also, they are given the latitude to use the teaching methods that is appropriate for them as they teach their different courses (reference the participant who said this). The teaching is done such that they "*should be able to cover at least 80% of the course content*" (Participant #4) before assessing the students. Participant #2 stated that teaching in the faculties are controlled by the dean and vice dean in charge of programme and academic affairs while the head of department ensures that it is implemented:

> *I think it is the dean and vice dean in charge of academics, in charge of programmes and academic affairs who are directly in control of teaching in the faculties, and these decisions of teaching are implemented by, by the head of department in each case who also has his own collaborators who supervise teaching and all that.*

Asked about their experiences with the leaders when it comes to teaching, the assertions by some participants indicated that the leaders provided oversight in the participants teaching by engaging with student representatives on their experiences of learning. Participants #2 said, "*I think my experience with leadership as far as teaching is concern is quite a positive one.*" Another participant supported, "*I think the leaders are doing their best to supervise us at the*

level of teaching...because they have to tender reports to their hierarchy (Participant #4). This participant added that:

> *So, administratively they supervise my teachings by passing through the course delegates. In each course I teach there is a course delegate. So, the head of department liaises with the course delegate to ask questions about what I am doing, how I am doing it and if there are any worries or if it is affecting them.*

Speaking on the provision of resources and ensuring a conducive learning environment for both the learners and the lecturers, and putting in place measures for their professional growth**,** Participant #1 noted that:

> *They have been providing the necessary resources that I need to teach, and also trying to create the enabling environment to ensure that I teach well and also…. putting in place the necessary measures to ensure that I grow in my career.*

Similarly, Participant #3, #10 and #11 observed that there are good leaders who are like role models who encourage the junior lecturers to grow. According to the participants, "*you have good leaders...There are some that we look up to them like role models we want to, we look at them and we want to be like them... Like you come into a field you are new in the teaching field they will try to groom you. They say okay this is what we do in this type of situation this is what we do you should in order to change your rank you should concentrate do this...and grow.*

Despite the participants' explanations that the leaders collaborated, supervised teaching and ensured a conducive teaching and learning environment, some participants still expressed concern and dissatisfaction with their leaders' failure to ensure that the university teaching policy was enacted by all the academics irrespective of their ranks (Lecturer, senior lecturer, associate professor, professor). They further asserted that the failure of the leaders to implement policies on teaching have had an influence on the development of their careers. Because of these negative experiences with the leaders, participants expressed a variety of opinions. Most participants said that because the leaders were politically committed to the ruling party in power, they controlled what was taught in the classroom, thereby engendering an unconducive teaching and learning environment. When it came to course distribution, the participants said that the leaders were biased, ruthless, crooked, and tribal. Another factor identified by participants in the findings was that most lecturers did not receive constructive feedback from their senior colleagues as expected since there was no set process by the

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leaders to ensure that mentoring and co-teaching were supervised. Intimidation was one of the reasons why most junior lecturers are unable to report their departmental heads to dean. This is because the university structure requires these leaders to sit on the same council to deliberate on issues. Therefore, it would be unwise for them to become enemies with either of them due to the negative impact this would have on their professional development. As a result, they must accept the status quo and keep quiet. Participants shared such negative experiences as follows:

In this case, as an assistant lecturer, I should be paired with a full lecturer or with an associate professor in the same field in a particular course who would co-mentor me while we co-teacher… So, that I can attend some level, I can gain some certain skills, I can have some certain experience and all of that …But I will tell you for sure that most senior lecturers feel that…they have attained a level where they should not come down again. So, they now use you as they want to carry out the work, you go to class on your own and you teach and they only show up, uh, how can I say it, they only show up occasionally. So that intellectual grooming and nurturing that is supposed to take place does not take place. To think that I can go ahead and report him is something unbelievable because the news might go back to him, in fact it will go back to him and knowing fully well that...your career progression is incumbent on his reference signatory or recommendation. So, you see where there's a complication you are forced to swallow certain things and move on (Participant #4).

Participants claimed that the head of department (HOD), who is their immediate leader, discriminates against certain groups when allocating courses. The participants clarified that each permanent lecturer is allocated 200 hours of lessons annually; any additional hours are considered extra hours and are compensated accordingly. However, because these leaders are corrupt (in their view), they provide the extra hours to academics who are prepared to share the earnings with them. Participant #5 noted:

Because as a lecturer, you only get,...in contact, frequent contact with your head of department, who is a person who decides what course you teach per semester, who decides what, how many students you have for supervision, who decides, and you see, even the structure, even the distribution of courses, and the distribution of students for thesis supervision, it's, it's done in such an unscientific way.... We have this slogan here at the university that, eh, "a goat can only eat grass where it's been tied." So, if you are like the head of department, it means that you can only eat grass in the department. So every opportunity that you get, so because every, every lecturer, every permanent lecturer in the university, is entitled to 200 hours a year. So what they do at the university is that any hour above 200 is paid. What we call "extra hours." So, so it depends now how you negotiate with your head of department. While the head of

department will see whether they are able to, they are able to how you can reward him. So he will give you more courses. So that at the end, you have so much money for extra hours. You know, it's like a favour, it's like, I mean, it's not, it's not based on meritocracy, or like, based on the rank that you have, you will have people that won't even come to class, but they have hours allocated to them. So, so, so, at the end, when you, when you try to interact with, with leadership, it's, you find a lot of impediments, partly because it's a whole, it's a system that is, that is so confused. And you can't just walk to the dean and say something about the head of department because when they sit in the faculty executive council, everybody tries to protect his, their interests. So you might end up being, being victimized. So it's better, you just, so my experience in the nutshell with the university leadership. There's nothing good about it. There's nothing good about it. It's just that you just have to do what you have to do and make sure you do your best, at your own level, and ensure that what course or courses you've been assigned to teach, you teach them well and ensure that the students learn appropriately and follow up those that have been assigned to you for thesis writing and all what not (Participant #5)

Another participant noted along similar lines,

You know, higher education is a replica of the military. You understand? Did you get that? The classification. A professor is an academic general. And it is not taken, you don't just get it for nothing. It is because you've shown your worth in terms of research and in terms teaching, and in terms of publication and outreach. So all these things are put together. Now when it becomes a politicised system, then you get to "man know man" (Participant #8)

Corruption and favouritism is another issue that the participants raised. Some academics are assigned and paid for teaching hours but they do not attend class to cover those hours. They also expressed that some of their colleagues "*are favoured; there are some that don't come to work...or receive queries" (Participant #5)* yet they still receive payment for extra hours of teaching. Participants also shared that they were unable to report such activities since they were aware of the connections that some of their senior colleagues had with those in the top positions in the capital city of Yaoundé. Thus, they feared being victimized. Participant #4 noted:

And then you have this same professor, moving around and teaching in different universities, teaching so many courses. And because he's too occupied with research and teaching, he becomes incompetent not because he is incompetent, but because he cannot handle a heavy load. And because of the absence of quality mechanisms to measure his productivity, students suffer in the background. He's supposed to teach in a case, and he does not go there he is a professor who can talk to him, it's only Yaoundé

that can talk down to him. And because he's only is the only intellectual in the field, it is difficult to even handle him.

Moreover, there is this fear and mistrust even within the classroom. Lecturers teach with caution because they do not even have confidence in the students they are teaching; *"because the students themselves fall, become victims, and you know, end up, end up being used either, can either, being used by...the administrators who are normally supposed to be, to be protecting...these students"* (Participant #2, FGD).

> *But the issue is that in as much as you are free... to teach the manner in which you are supposed to teach, but there are equally limits that you cannot go across, the aspect of, we are Africans and you have to know your social and political context. There are some issues that you may not necessarily want to dive in. The teacher's immunity is not that too, too solid when it comes to delivering some types of sensitive lectures, particularly in the law, wherein we find ourselves, knowing that the department, or the teaching process, or the material, or the notes evolve according to how society changes* (Participant #9).

The above statement show that were concern about the lack of academic freedom of critical intellectual opinions in the classroom because of the socio-political nature of the system. The following comment was expressive of the general view:

Another participant noted,

> *There is some air of intimidation such that you are in that bracket of lecturers who are not courageous. They may tend to change their, their language or their manner of teaching. There are certain examples they will have to run away or shy away from which are real examples you can cite for your students to understand better simply because you're afraid that if you give the example it will be said that you are citing separatists (referring to the Anglophone crisis in the country)...* (Participant #6).

Participants observed that university leaders are involved in politics at all levels. These leaders are more concerned about retaining their leadership positions than they are about creating a collegial and supportive teaching and learning environment, which includes things like maintaining teaching materials and supporting staff development programmes. The participant stated:

> *Well the thing is that everything now will go to politics. You see a lot of things that are supposed to be directed towards a convivial and enabling environment to facilitate teaching, people spend their time thinking on how they can make some money and make sure they maintain those post. So really a lot is not put into the teaching field in the*

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university any longer or like when I just came and met the university. You had staff development Plan, we write and they support them...but what you call chalkboards... those halls, the blackboards are almost white difficulty in teaching. And then, eh, no enabling environment really because I think people are thinking about themselves (Participant #8).

Participants in this study also reflected on their experience with the university leaders when it came to undertaking research as is presented below.

5.3.2.2 Undertaking research as a key performance indicator

The participants indicated that both internal and external sources of financial support were provided for their research activities. A number of participants revealed in both the interview and the focus group discussions that the, "*leaders to an extent are able to motivate research*" (Participant #4, FGD). The participants stated that the university leaders make an effort to provide finances to support academic staff every semester for research. Another participant noted that, "*university leaders have...made an effort to support research by also putting some ... amounts that they pay to me as a staff every semester to support my research which means they are concern of, about me doing research as a university staff.*" Moreover, "*the ministry of higher education is paying... some amount of money to support research to lecturers*" (Participant #1). This amount is given quarterly and generally it is "*a structured system nationally governed by the ministry as instituted by the President of the Republic*" (Participant #4, FGD).

It is against this backdrop that the participants expressed the following sentiments:

When it comes to research, when it comes to publication, we have, uhm, the government gives, ehm, what they call research modernization, after every three months to, to university lecturers, and we still have internal research allowances that are given every semester to all university lecturers. So with that you're able to, to do your publications, you can equally if you're innovative or creative...you can also...galvanize your post-graduate, postgraduate students to come up with research, uhm, papers, so that you can send out for review (Participant #5).

Similarly, participant #7 echoed that:

...there are research allowances that are being set for lecturers at different levels. You know the allowances for assistant lecturers, the allowances for lecturers, for associate professors, and for professors, which are given quarterly. That is mostly an issue of the state and an issue of the ministry of Higher Education they know when to give their

allowances to different lecturers in all the universities of the state. So it is a situation that is national. When the allowances are ready announcement are being made and people have to go and collect their research allowances.

Apart from allocating research allowances, the participants also stated that leaders organise research seminars and workshops on research methodology skills. Participant #1 asserted:

They also organise seminars and workshops to, on research methodology… both for lecturers and postgraduate students, so I think that they have been doing their best within the … framework of the resources at their disposal.

However, participants noted some administrative bottlenecks, discrimination, and corruption as barriers to accessing these research allowances. Reflecting on this, participant #2 noted, *"You would've love to get financing, local financing for a project, and then you don't have it...simple administrative bottlenecks which delay your actions. Those are the kinds of challenges I'm talking about."* Similarly, another participant agreed that the resources are available, but many of them are unable to use them due to the demanding procedures they must follow. The participant expressed his concerns:

...the only problem is getting research allowance. For instance, you know when it comes to money it's a bit of a problem. People have to do a lot of things that that go through a lot of procedures and bottlenecks and to an extent, some lecturers tend to be, they tend to ignore the part of it because if you want to get, get some of those grants that comes to, you have to take some time you struggle (Participant #5).

Another participant noted:

I like things done when they are supposed to be done and I get a little bit tepid and probably offended if I get to a place and I am expecting my documents to have reached the VC's table and it's dancing around one head of service or another's table around. That's one of the things. I also do not believe that I need to give a financial token, pay for services that are not supposed to be paid for and this sometimes get me offended especially when those who are supposed to treat your document require you to maybe give them a little tip and all that for them to carry your file around for the boss to sign and all that (Participant #2).

Participant #3 noted that:

Challenge might be sometimes finances. Yeah. Because there are times that, you may not really excel well, in terms of research, based on the limited resources that we have. I'll just put for example, if say, for example, you need to use say, 2-3 million francs to carry out a particular research within say five, six months and you apply for that. At

times the money may come all, but very often, they may not grant all so, in this light, you may find yourself working in difficult moments.

Another participant noted that:

So, my research experience is just a little bit above average with leadership. But it also has to, if I put things like conferences, conferences and participation in research opportunities, I will also put the leaders somewhere around a little bit just above average, because facilities and resources for undertaking research, attending conferences, I don't think we always have been sponsored, although the ministry has a budget that it disburses to each lecturer according to his rank every three months to ensure that your research is going on well....so, my experience, but with my immediate leadership, like my dean, my vice dean, or vice dean in charge of research, I don't think I have had much to benefit from them (Participant #2).

Participant #3 and #4 highlighted that the failure to obtain complete funding is sometimes due to biases: "if *you do not belong to let's just say the 'winning team'* (Participant #3) when the allowances are allocated *"...you may not really have the full benefit of that.*" Thus, "*most assistant lecturers are kind of stalled on so many issues"* (Participant #4).

Participant #11 affirmed that:

The experience over time has shown that there is some discrimination in, in, in allocating the funds for research. So, in the end, it discourages many people from even applying for these grants. So, just for the little time that I have been there, that is what I have experienced. Some of the discrimination even comes at the level of the department, because, you submit, the head of department will take upon himself to, to do selections at his own level, which is not supposed to be so. Everything is supposed to be sent to the, the, the quarters that be. They should decide whether, uh, what you are applying for can pass for a grant or not. But some, it has occurred over time that some will take, since they want their own article to pass, or their own grant to go through, they have to suppress others so that there will be fewer grants that go in front and the the competition will be reduced so their own can go through. So, leadership wise, research is not really encouraged.

Inadequate and obsolete research resources was another negative impact of their research activities. As voiced by Participant #2, "*I think we've had quite some challenges, because we have a library but the things you may want to get from that library you will not get them easily, because probably the books are a little bit of age or there are not available. And then the internet supply in the school is not very good, and even sometimes of recent we've had a lot of electricity problem...caused by a fault.*"

Participants also claimed that younger colleagues are discriminated against when it comes to allocating students for supervision. Participant #4 maintained that:

At the Masters level, you are assigned students and you are a co-supervisor, and the main supervisor is normally an associate professor or a professor. But for co-supervision because it has a huge financial implication, there is the tendency that they want to place individual supervisors and they leave out the younger doctors because if the younger doctors join a supervision team it will affect the final financial outcome of the supervision process.

Similarly, participant #2, FGD, added that:

When it comes to the allocation of PhD theses master theses, they will give other people, you know, less than what they require. Some of the things that, you know, constructs that give a very, poisons the minds of, uhm, of younger colleagues who still have the energy, who still have that mind-set to do the right thing... it affects the way research is done. There is no spirit of trust; there is mistrust all over the place. You see people doing, undergoing research projects independently, without involving others, because of, because of this spirit of, of fear and mistrust. You see people having opportunities, you know, but they can't share with others because of these kinds of things. So, so it constructs very bad identities and mind-sets among, among people and makes the working environment very unhealthy and, and poisonous for growth. And that is why we keep, you know, doing things in a routine form. I think basically that's what I can, I can say.

Discrimination in the workplace develops mistrust. People will not want to share their research ideas and projects with their leaders if they are not acknowledged to the point of being given the opportunity to advance in their research careers. As a result, negative feelings are created in the work environment thereby limiting research collaboration and opportunities. McLeod and Badenhorst (2014) are of the opinion that a collaborative environment will influence the process of identity development, particularly among academics, because it will nurture researchers who do not only produce research but also find meaning in what they do. Similarly, Olenick et al. (2019) agree that academics will have more opportunity to improve as researchers if they can effectively form and sustain a collaborative workgroup in which everyone contributes. They will be able to produce good publications and funding proposals that have been authored collaboratively, edited, and combined with solid research methodologies and data analysis (Olenick et al., 2019).

Based on the data, participants encountered a range of challenges working with university leaders to carry out their research responsibilities. Below is the presentation of findings on the participants' experiences of undertaking research-led community engagement.

5.3.2.3 Undertaking research-led community engagement as a key performance indicator

Given that the participants were from different faculties and departments, they expressed different views with regards to their community engagement activities. They noted that community engagement as a key performance indicator varies by faculty. For instance, one participant observed that, "*in some…faculties, where we have like uh, Faculty of Agriculture, Faculty of Law and political science. I mean, their own outreach activities are quite different depending on the programme. There are those who go to the law courts to do their practice there. There are others that go to…agricultural conglomerates, and, and so on, those doing fisheries, I mean, so, outreach activities are diverse, and this diversity is based on the kind of programme that the particular school is offering*"(participant #5). It also emerged in the findings that, there is a "*…well-structured criteria in each faculty to engage in community development, or community engagement*" (Participant #5, FGD) and "*every faculty has a vice dean who is in charge of corporation*" (Participant #4). According to the participants, the vice dean's duty is to endorse their community engagement activities by producing an official letter for them to send to the community in which they desire to interact with. They will be unable to undertake their community activities until this approval is granted. The participants also stated that once this letter is authorised and issued to them, they must obtain approval from the head of the community, whether it is the quarter head, the divisional officer, or any authority in the locality where they intend to carry out their activities. A participant spoke about this in the following words:

> *I must get the approval of the vice dean in charge of corporation who is going to give me something like a formal letter that I will take to the community where I want to engage in with so as to identify myself and then have access. But at some level, that authorization can only be given by the deputy vice-chancellor in charge of corporation. Yes, now if it comes to engaging with other academic institutions, it is still the same process. The faculty must approve of it, the university must approve of it. If not, I'm not doing it as an, a staff of that particular university. Now at the level of teaching with the community, no let me not say teaching. For example, carrying out research with the community, you normally have to start with the quarter heads of a particular quarter in which you want to engage in. So, you must have to create something like a rapport with*

them to make sure that they understand you before they welcome, before they accept what you want to do (Participant #4).

I enquired further because I wanted to know if they obtained authorization from the community first and then presented it to university officials, or if it was the other way around. The participant gave the following response:

No, it starts...with your faculty. It's your faculty that permits you for particular kinds of research that are within the faculty level. If not, the other authorization only comes from the deputy vice chancellor for corporations. Yes. Now it is the document that they give you that gives you an identifier which you can take to the community, specifically to the quarter head. If it were in the quarter head's area that you want to work with or if you were in a level where you want to work within a council area, then you will have to see the mayor. If you were doing something that required some other administrative procedure, you would have to see the D.O (divisional officer) for that subdivision. If it is something that requires security, you will certainly have to meet with someone like the commissioner of police, yes. So, all these respective leaders depending on what you want to carry out.

Despite these explanations and the fact that community engagement is well-structured, participants claimed that leaders do not actively encourage it. When asked about their experiences with the leaders in terms of community engagement, a participant stated, "*that is where I will say that the university, the leaders have not really been…active in supporting outreach*" (Participant #1). The participant added that, "*there are no policies in place that really define the outreach activities of lecturers and so lecturers just decide to engage with outreach activities that falls within their qualifications, or within their hobbies. For instance, I am a lover of politics and development and I love participating in public debates that promote politics and the development of the nation as part of my outreach activities. So, when doing that now... some of the university leaders are not comfortable seeing their lecturers talking about government activities on television, especially when they are critical*" *(smiles)*.

Another participant agreed that,

Apart from my own personal interactions like when I'm trying to do my research. Sometimes I try to impact on NGOs like... Apart from that I don't really see anything that with my colleagues that will really directly touch the community, the immediate community, or even community nearby or far away, I don't see with the humanities.

In light of these participants' experiences, they stated that community engagement is a personal engagement.

To validate this claim, Participant #5, FGD, asserted that,

Since that is not really available, I do it in the following ways. First, I see myself as an elite someone who has acquired knowledge and experience to the extent that I should be able to have a say, in the community, in different community projects. So I do engage in community projects, not only in terms of financial contributions, but using the university wide experience or knowledge systems and my discretion to contribute to different structures of my community. In terms of their development, at the same time, I make sure that my research is geared towards bringing changes to the community, and to the different institutions of the community. And that happens at the level of research publications, that happens at the level of participation in seminars, in workshops, where I share knowledge, and, and, and many more.

Participant #7 felt frustrated *"because for you to move to another rank...you must do outreach, that's one of the recommendation for you to change rank. You don't only need publications"* *"you need to show proofs that you have done some outreach activities"* (participant #11). In some faculties and departments, community engagement is very important for academic growth and is the backbone of those faculties and departments. However, according to participant #7, leaders do not take this aspect of their role very seriously:

At the level of community engagement, ehm, the leaders definitely do not, eh, have much. Our relationship with them will not really, uh, will not really, uh, impact. It affects our community engagement in the sense that when we do not have enough resources to carry out, to execute our engagements, at times, we are not able to commit to the engagement we take with the communities. And this is because some leaders don't have, they've not been to the field, they don't know what is happening within the communities, especially in a situation that is difficult... and at the level at which we are, where we spend most of our time on the field trying to engage with the community trying to, you know, you cannot really commit, you cannot even give the community a promise because you don't know when any commitments could be kept. It's quite a challenging one.

These participants claim that leaders disregard community engagement because they do not go to the ground to learn about the circumstances there and the financial difficulties that they have when connecting with the community. As a result, leaders have no positive influence on academics' career progression in terms of community engagement.

As previously stated, participants agree that, while community engagement is one of the pillars of academic professional development, there is a policy governing it, and the deans and vice deans in charge of corporations are expected to implement this policy, some faculty

and departmental leaders are not particularly enthusiastic about it.. For instance; *"in the faculty of arts I don't think we have, our community engagement here has been limited to, for us in history, our responsibility has been to sustain the national archive here"* (Participant #2). *Now, we may not have a community based project per se, in our department, because I'm in the department of law"* (Participant #9). "*Community engagement, uh, uh, I've not really seen any. I've not really seen any. I don't know of any* (Participant #11). *When it comes to community outreach, we just try our best to see* (Participant #3).

Although there is a policy guideline, a deputy vice chancellor, and vice deans in charge of corporations who are supposed to sign their authorization to undertake their community engagement, it was observed that the participants' university leaders do not support community engagement. For instance, some participants asserted that they were unaware of any community engagement initiatives being carried out by their faculty or department, whereas others mentioned that they lacked the financial means to complete the project. Additionally, they remarked that because the leaders do not go to the field to oversee their work, they are unaware of their difficulties there. These findings demonstrate that the participants' professional selves are ineffective for community engagement. Against this backdrop, Watermeyer (2015) argues that academics' professional development through community engagement is greatly limited and, in most cases, absent, contributing to a considerable knowledge gap in universities' engagement with the external environment.

5.3.3 Macro-level: academics' conceptions of their professional identity based on external forces

This study also revealed that the participants in this study perceived their own professional identities as being rooted in a macro-level of experience based on external forces. This is evident in the nature of the appointments of university leaders in the study context, as well as the external political controls that influence the institution's activities.

5.3.3.1 Academics' professional identity and the nature of appointment of university leaders

It was important to understand the normal process for appointing university leaders in the context of Cameroon as a footstool to understand this subtheme. Participants noted that, nomination is the standard procedure for selecting university leaders in Cameroon universities.

There is that due process; people who work hard, who have attained some experience in terms of the number of years spent at university, in terms of research publications, in terms of rank, and then, looking at their hard work, the university nominates them to the ministry... In Cameroon, there are two commissions. There is a commission that sits at the level of the university. It is like a top committee that sits to validate the candidatures of individual staff to permit them to move to higher levels. If you know the members of that commission when they're sitting, and you can push your way through them, then you can move... There is CCIU, which meets at the level of Yaoundé. To select after having appreciated the files that have been sent from the university level when CCIU meets in Yaoundé, and you are able to have someone in that commission that you can influence whether your file is correct or not. That person can influence the movement of your file. So, there are two things involved; people who have a genuine background, who are duly selected at the level of... the university, and then sent to the CCIU in Yaoundé; and then you have people who are unduly selected at the university level because of political, economic, and other influences and sent to Yaoundé, where that same mechanism takes place. And then there are people who follow these due processes; their documents are clean, their documents are clear, everything about them is good, and then they are selected at... the university level and CCIU in Yaoundé. But I must tell you that this process is difficult for it to just go smoothly like that without you visiting someone somewhere to handle your file because you find people who have all the qualifications or what it takes for them to grow. But you just hear that someone, somewhere, held up their file (Participant #4).

Another participant supported:

No, it's a whole policy of promotion before you're promoted from one rank. You'll need to prove what you have done for outreach, but very few people write sincerely about what they do because you want to get promoted. The CCIU is the promotion board, which is under... the Ministry of Higher Education (participant #8)

According to the participants, the majority of leaders are not appointed based on their aptitude and experience. Instead, most leaders are chosen based on political, financial, tribal, and personal ties. One participant referred to this as, "*patron-client"* or "godfatherism" where "*people have to pay some due somewhere in order to earn their appointment.*" (Participant #8). In addition, "*if you don't have a godfather...it limits me or limits my potential to excel"* (Participant #3).

...the University of... does not practice a static or a fixed leadership configuration where you can actually say, okay, after this person, after this person, this person will be next, like in some universities where they look at longevity in service, experience, and maybe rank. No, it's not, it's not like that here. (Participant #5).

Participant #4 and #5 supported:

There are people who have the political connections or financial connections, and you have other top officials in government, who hand them down to the ministry, and the ministry has no other alternative than to place them where they have been asked to place them. And in this case, whether there is competency or not, you just have to obey

If I know somebody in the presidency now, or somebody that protects me at the presidency, and I just tell the person that I need to be the Vice Chancellor, he can just do it, do some magic, and tomorrow you will hear, they will call over the radio that eh. So that's how the system is (laughs)

Participants also stated that appointment in the university is a political reward. For instance, *"You have fought for the party. Okay, okay you're an associate professor let's give you this position.* And when "*people get into position with that kind of mind set, that you're being rewarded, so they do any kind of thing there without looking at the, thinking about the growth of the institution"* (Participant #5). The participant continued, "*you cannot bring somebody who is, maybe somebody who has never govern, somebody who has never taught in the university to come and, and head the university. Or to come and head the faculty. It becomes problematic because such a person will not even know what to do."* The participant added, "*It will suffice you to know too, one of the twists that I didn't mention to you is that the Minister of Higher Education can decide to appoint a primary school teacher or a secondary school teacher to head a position in a university. We have several such cases."*

 A participated said:

There is also the tribal factor. If you have to do a statistics of appointments that are carried out, you see the tendency that there is a number of people from a particular tribe who have the upper hand specifically within the university context and within the higher education framework in the entire country (Participant #4, FGD).

Participant #8 supported:

A good number of North Westerners it was seized like that. People that they know they're hard working. So they took from them and gave it to the people that you think are from my own side of the country.

The participant added that most of these leaders are vindictive and arrogant,

...you are in the department... then you see decisions being taken without your consultation, and when you are productive in the International World...because of your feasibility. But somebody does not just like your face because he thought that the previous HOD was your own friend. Now it is our time... that thing is very common.

Now it is our time. So you can get those types of statements, how do you expect productivity to come from now is our time?

Participants highlighted that it is difficult for such leaders to be effective, in part because the majority of appointees come from fields that have little or nothing to do with education or the university setting. A participant noted:

That's already a challenge... because you are not appointed to come and start learning the system, you are appointed to implement, you know, some of those things. So I think those are some of the challenges... there will be no collaboration because those that have the capacity to build the institution won't collaborate with you. And you yourself you won't be able to collaborate with them because... you find yourself, I mean, getting confused with the whole process." (Participant #5).

In addition, this lack of experience is largely because, "*these leaders have not received mentoring*" (Participant #8). And when leadership "*is not given by experience and by qualification... when you don't pass through the strict mentoring regime of the seminars from the departmental to the faculty and at times the university, how do you expect somebody to give out what the person does not know?*"(Participant #8). Moreover, Participant #5 added that, given that appointments are done "*following the political line, so this normal training does not come up because university lecturers don't have schools for training... It is by mentoring.* As a result, "*this has a lot of implications not just on research, outreach, and professional development, but it shapes the mind set of lecturers...*

Participants highlighted that leaders who are promoted to leadership positions through illicit means either have a hidden financial agenda or an intention to subjugate followers:

A university leader who has been appointed through crooked means... will hardly be a true model for the upcoming or the younger generation. Because before somebody before somebody works out his or her recruitment, he or she already has an agenda: either an agenda to make money, an agenda to extort money, an agenda to subjugate or suppress oppressed younger colleagues, in terms of, you know, suppressing their promotion, you know those kinds of things (Participant #2, FGD).

Similarly, a participant noted leaders' personal benefits rather than supervising the teaching-learning process by stating that:

Thy take advantage of the teaching-learning process be it in classroom teaching or in research supervision, for personal aggrandizement. They get financial rewards from it,

they get... how do I put this? They get other material benefits from it, and it's sad to say they get sexual benefits from it (Participant #4).

The participant continued by expressing dissatisfaction with how the state, politics, and ethnicity influence innovation and creativity at the university:

There is a lot of control by the state. To add that, at that level of autonomy, you know when you are too dependent on something, you tend to outline your goals to satisfy that sources where you are leaning on. And it kills a lot of innovation and creativity that is necessary for a university system and the individuals of that university. So there are projects that you may want to work on. There are things that you believe you can do as an individual that can enhance your professional identity, but because the university system does not support it since it is reliant on a government that gives it firm instruction, it creates a lot of dormancy across the board. That's the outcome of the non-autonomous nature of the university.

Reflecting on this, participant #1 noted:

Leadership in this era is supposed to be inclusive and, when leadership is inclusive, it gives the opportunity for everyone within the university to be part of the decision-making process, which means decision-making process will be participatory, and when that takes place, it gives an, it gives the opportunity for the lecturers to be able to be part of every decision that is being made and that affects... their professional development within the institution, and so, it creates an atmosphere of peace (Participant #1).

The clutch of external influence on the leadership structure of the university creates a self-governing void, which affects the creativity and innovation of the academics within the university system. In light of this, Cloete et al. (2018) argue that colonial legacies, internal political squabbles, and international donor and aid agency agendas have shaped and influenced post-independence higher education institutions.

5.3.3.2 Academics' professional identity and external political control

The findings from the interviews suggest that although there was some difference in understanding among the research participants, their explanations revealed a great deal of common ground. They articulated their experiences to navigate tensions between political leanings and their professional identities at their university. Participants in both interviews and FGD agreed that they work in a system that is flawed by a single state political group that cannot be criticised or opposed. The participants stated that only those who support the state and its political party can write articles about the state and the ruling party. The participants

also added that the presence of state politics at the detriment of mainstream academic politics within the university context frustrates their intellectual abilities. This is evidenced in the following quotations by participants:

We live in a system where a single political group has taken hostage of the country and of its institutions and they turn to use the phrase "you cannot bite the finger that feeds you" which means the ruling political party in the country is the master and anyone who works for the government controlled by that party is a slave. And you don't have the right to belong or to express any other political opinion that is contrary to the status quo. Therefore, in the university setting, I cannot, I repeat, I cannot express opposition-like political ideologies or affinity (Participant #4).

The participant is referring to how one state political party controls all institutions in the country, including the academic system. In addition, no one has the ability or bravery to criticise the government. As such, governments regard these HEIs as sites of opposition because they are embroiled in political and ideological debates about the development of decisions made by their governments (Cloete et al., 2018).

The participant further added,

Because the administration sometimes considers political affiliations, for example, if I am of the opposition, and it is widely known, it is absolutely normal that I will not go anywhere. No matter how I teach, no matter how I carry out research, you will stay where you are. On the contrary, there are some of your colleagues who don't have that competency that you have, who don't have the experience you have, and all of that, but who can move ahead more than you, because of certain connections, financial, political, and otherwise, that they have. So the entire leadership of the university in Cameroon is so complex. It's really complex. It's really complicated. So all you can do is just work hard, do your best, follow the process even if it does not go through you have the fulfilment that you have something in you, which you have attained, because the essential thing is to have the theory, to have the skill, to have the competencies to have the knowledge to have the experience (Participant #4).

Participant #1 noted that because university leaders are appointed based on their political affiliation to the ruling party, *"there is little room for critical thinking and critical…assessment of leadership."* Only those lecturers who, *"support the ruling party and you are very conspicuous about it, you can say it openly, write articles about it, definitely you are protected, you are well placed. But when you are not, if you are of the opposition, you should be very careful because you can be trapped, you know you can be trapped"* (Participant #5).

Participants #5 further espoused:

When you oppose some of their actions, and it's time for them to write either departmental scientific report to support your promotion file, or an administrative report, they will nail you. So at the end, your promotion actually is not dependent solely on your research output. You see, so the, the, the whole system, there're, there're, there're angles, where they can always hook you and make you reason or toe the line... I cannot speak against government actions, government decisions, government projects even if it means raising an intellectual critic because it has a bearing on your career you are best or you are only tolerated to clap your hands and to speak in the positive perspective about everything political around you because a contrary view means that you are opposing those who have employed you or you are opposing your employer which is not the case.

Supporting this assertion, Participant #9 corroborated that "...*you don't touch some areas which may be considered taboo, which may be considered taboo. Because it all boils down on, on, on dealing with those non-taboo subjects.*

I probed the participant to learn more about the subject areas that their institution's leaders considered taboo, and why? The participant maintained that:

When I talk about some aspects being taboo, it is not that there is no express, there is no written aspect, or... there is no document that will tell you that this is what you are supposed to teach, and this is what you are not supposed to teach. But now the issue is that, if you look at our system particular if you are, if you really put your ears on it particularly, you must have heard what is happening in Cameroon today. This NW SW conflict which we are in for over five years now. Those are...some of the topics or some of the issues that you are not really expected to really elaborate on, because...you don't know who is, you don't know who is who in class. We had one of our senior colleagues whom I'm sure that was around two years ago, there was a test or an exam wherein he set a question that was, that dealt with some aspect of this particular...conflict and he was suspended. We equally had another situation too, one professor, it was in another different department...he too was fired. That was around two years ago. There was also an associate professor who was fired, dismissed from the public service... You are not expressly told that you cannot teach this, but in disseminating your knowledge, in carry your research, in publications, you should be able to know areas that you yourself you cannot go base on your realities in your country.

Supporting this assertion, a participant maintained:

The university is a free environment... made up with intellectuals who are supposed, who are not supposed to be limited in their thinking... I believe that intellectuals are the

ones who are supposed to debate the issues and provide solutions and provide directions for policy makers to move the country forward. So, facing a situation where the university administration, does not, your political values are in conflict with those of the university administration, you are bound to toe the line and see how you can manage and work within the context of the political values of the administration to be in their good books (Participant #1)

5.4   Conclusion

This chapter discussed the findings on the understanding of participants' conceptions of their professional identities in relation to their experiences with leadership practices at their university. Three broad themes and eight subthemes emerged in the data: micro-level: academics' conceptions of their professional identity based on individual forces; meso-level: academics' conceptions of their professional identity based on institutional forces; and macro-level: academics' conceptions their professional identity based on external forces. It can be concluded that the subjective conceptions of professional identity showed a strong presence in the qualitative data. The findings demonstrated that participants' conceptions of professional identity are not limited to their experiences of leadership at their university. Their conceptions of professional identity are also discerned on a personal or individual level as well as on an external level. For instance, participants provided evidence as to why their conceptions of professional identity are embroiled in "self," which was expressed reflexively in the "I," which epitomises self as an object of experience, and the "Me," which epitomises self as the subject of experience. The chapter also emphasised that university leaders serve as an intermediary between the state and academics as they construct their identities through teaching, research, and community engagement. This chapter also highlighted that state politics has taken over mainstream academic politics to the point where there is no freedom of academic expression while carrying out their responsibilities and roles. The next chapter presents findings that were generated through a quantitative process using a survey questionnaire.

CHAPTER SIX

RELATING ACADEMICS' EXPERIENCES OF LEADERSHIP PRACTICES TO THE CONSTRUCTION OF THEIR PROFESSIONAL IDENTITIES

6.1   Introduction

The previous chapter discussed academics' conceptions of their professional identity in light of the university leadership practices that they experienced. This chapter, which is the second of three chapters of data presentation and analysis, discusses the participants' experiences of how university leadership practices influenced the construction of their professional identities. The method engaged for the generation of data that this chapter presents was a quantitative questionnaire. The demographic information of the respondents is covered in the first section of this chapter. In order to determine the frequency distribution of the responses to my questionnaire, I employed descriptive statistical analysis. I used pie charts, bar graphs, and tables to display the findings. The percentage of respondents who agree or disagree with a given response is indicated by the frequency distribution of replies.

At the beginning of this study, I was hoping to receive a response rate of 200 from the 300 questionnaires that were sent out, which was in accordance with De Vallis' (2013) claim that a sample size of (N = 200) is fair and allows for more than 40 variables in the questionnaire. Even though I received 173 responses from the respondents, there were certain instances when the total number of responses did not equal the number of respondents, indicating that not all of the respondents submitted responses. However, according to Kothari (2004), the response rate of 170 is representative of the total population (N = 300) of this study, which requires at least 169 for 95% confidence interval level or reliability level of the population of 300. This chapter, therefore, presents findings from the perspective of 170 respondents as the returned rate for the study. The findings were presented according to the specific research objectives that guided the study. Findings for each test item was first stretched to reflect the five-point scale. Thereafter, the responses were collapsed/merged with strongly agree and agree merged together and disagree and strongly disagree collapsed/merged together as well. The reason for collapsing strongly agree and agree and disagree and strongly disagree was to facilitate the interpretation of the findings and to better appreciate the weight of the responses. Decisions were made for each item, and for each construct, 50% was used as the cut-off point.

6.2 Demographic information of respondents

The demographic characteristics of the study participants are reported below:

6.2.1 Distribution by gender

Figure 3 illustrates the representation of male and female respondents that responded to the survey questionnaire for this study. It is observed that males were more represented with a percentage representation of 57% as opposed to females with a percentage representation of 43%. This distribution gave a 14% gender gap over-representation of male participants over females, and this maybe a limitation of this study.

Figure 6: Distribution by gender

DISTRIBUTION BY GENDER

	Male	Female
percent (%)	57,1	42,9
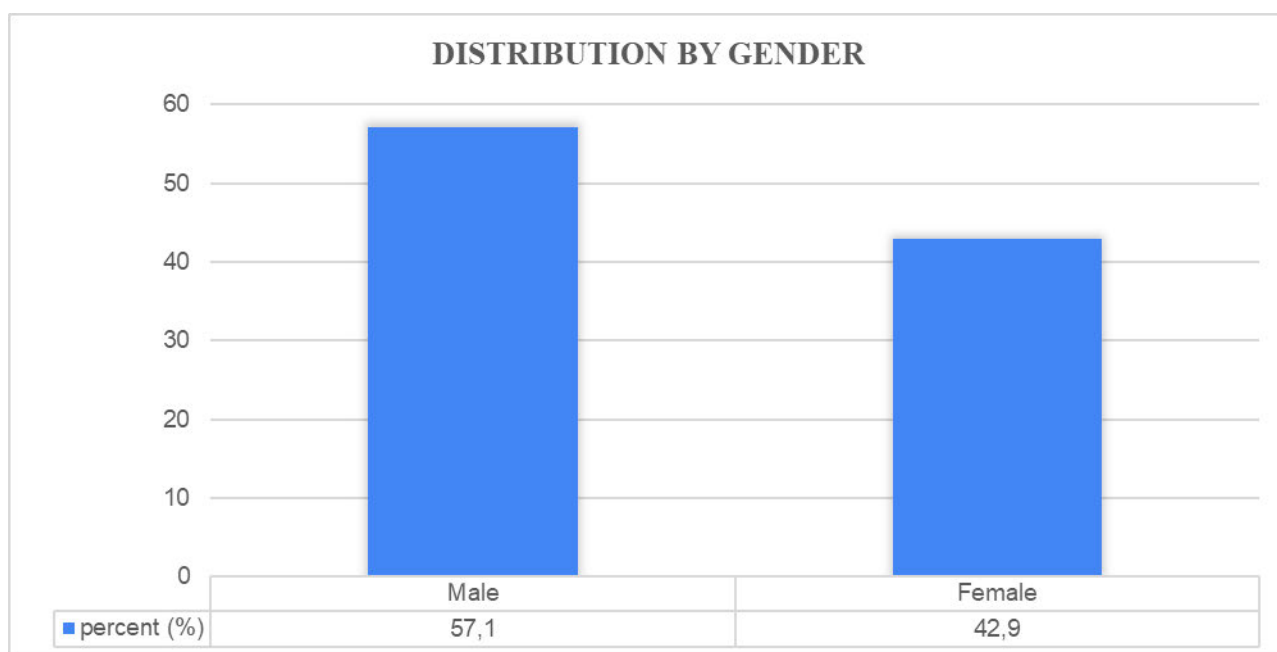
Figure 6: Distribution of respondents by gender

6.2.2 Distribution of respondents by faculty

The most represented faculty was the faculty of Education with a percentage representation of 26.3% while Advance School of Translators and Interpreters (ASTI) was the least represented faculty with a percentage representation of 0.6%. Because the questionnaire

survey was created using a Google doc, the link was distributed to the many social media platforms that the respondents belonged to, making it impossible to obtain an equal number of responders per faculty and institution. In addition, I asked several of the participants whom I conducted semi-structured interviews with to help me to administer the questionnaire to their colleagues. The frequency of reminders that I sent via email also affected how widely the questionnaire was distributed. As a result, some faculties or schools were inaccessible, most likely because the academics from those faculties or schools were reluctant to respond to the questionnaire survey. Details of the distribution of respondents by faculties are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Distribution of respondents by faculty

Faculties and Schools	Frequency	Percent (%)
ARTS	22	13.2
Advance School of Translators and Interpreters (ASTI)	1	0.6
College of Technology (COT)	9	5.4
Education	44	26.3
Faculty of Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine (FAVM)	10	6
Faculty of Engineering and Technology (FET)	4	2.4
Health Science	14	8.4
Higher Technical Teachers' Training College (HTTTC)	3	1.8
Law	10	6
Science	23	13.8

Social and Management Sciences (SMS)	27	16.2
Total	**167**	**100**

6.2.3 Statistical representation of the age of the respondents

The minimum age of the respondents was 30 years and the maximum age was 58 years while the mean age was 40.6 years with a standard deviation of 6.1 years (Table 4). With the use of this representation, it was made clear that there were younger academics with significant experience working in the institution alongside some not too aged academics.

Table 4: Summary statistics of the age of the respondents

N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
170	30	58	40.6	6.1

6.3 Influence of leadership practices and institutional forces on the construction of academics' professional identity

This section provides respondents' perceptions of how institutional forces and leadership practices influence the development of their professional academic identities. It was believed that addressing this question would establish a baseline from which future studies could assess how leadership practices and institutional forces influence academics as they carry out their duties of teaching, research, and community engagement. The respondents were questioned about their level of agreement, strong agreement, disagreement, and strong disagreement with a number of statements on institutional pressures and leadership practices that affect their professional academic identities at their university. As illustrated in Figure 7, overall, respondents agreed that leadership practices and institutional forces influence the

construction of their professional identities, as indicated by an overall agreement rate of 56% as opposed to a disagreement rate of 44%.

Figure 7: Percentage of leadership practice and institutional forces' influence on professional identity construction
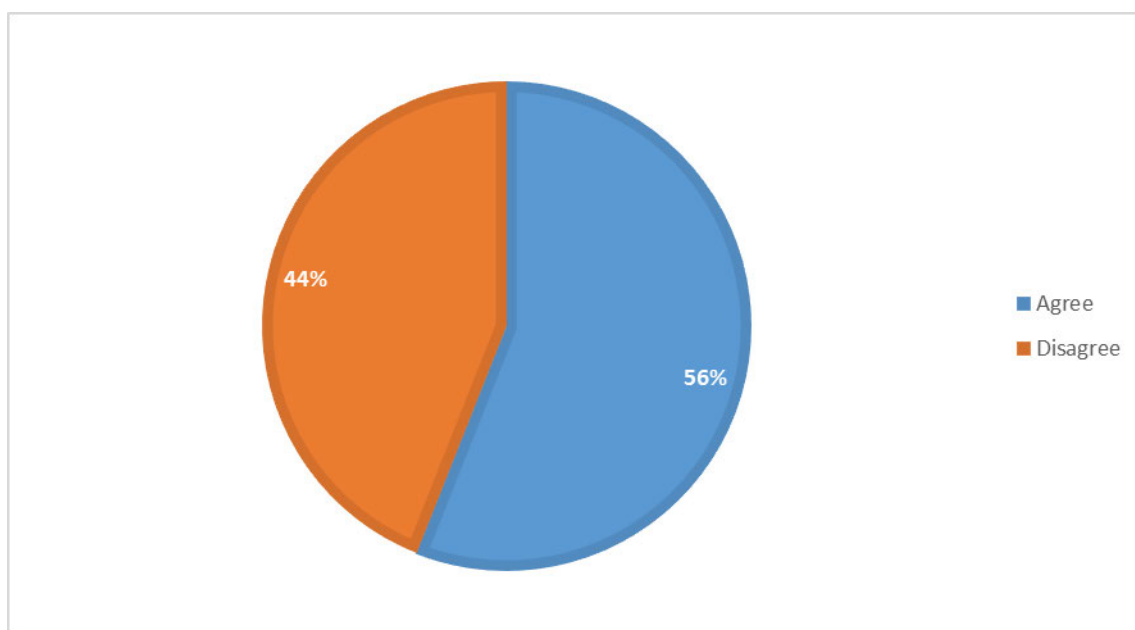
Figure 7 illustrates respondents' overall opinion of the influence of leadership practices and institutional forces on the construction of their professional identity

Institutional context matters, such as leadership and administrative process, and other aspects such as the socio-economic features and history of the institutions, geographical location and resources, beliefs about quality teaching and professional development, the research-teaching relationship, and recognition and appraisal are salient factors that affect the development of academics within an African university context (Leibowitz et al., 2015).

As reported in the data on how university leadership practices and institutional forces influence academics' professional identity construction, respondents agreed with eight and disagreed with four out of the 12 items used to evaluate this construct (Table 5). Describing on an item-by-item basis, the findings showed that 72% of respondents opined that the leaders accept their participation and engagement with them as they practice their leadership roles at their institutions while 28% of respondents thought otherwise. Further, based on the view of an overwhelming majority (90%) of the respondents, leaders have confidence and

trust towards them in performing their task (teaching, research, community engagement) while a few (10%) of the respondents disagreed.

In accordance with the view of 62% of respondents, they have the liberty to talk to the leaders about problems or challenges in achieving their responsibilities (teaching, research, community engagement) while 38% of respondents opposed this point of view. According to 53% of the respondents, leaders sometimes encourage their ideas and use them constructively by assuming the position of followers while 47% of respondents disagreed. Based on the view of 60% of the respondents the leadership practiced at their university encourages their professional growth while 40% of respondents thought otherwise. This feeling shows a sense of collaboration between the leaders and the academics as shown by the leaders' confidence in them to perform their core responsibilities of teaching, research, and community engagement. In a way, the views offered reflects an environment where the academics can be leaders in their subject area. Thereby, strengthening a positive relationship between the academics and the university leaders. Leaders are expected to encourage and actively pursue institutional policies that promote and support quality teaching, research, and community engagement (Hanson & Léautier, 2011).

In addition, if leaders can encourage ideas and even take on the position of followers sometimes, then leadership is distributed (Spillane, 2006). Smith and Wolverton (2010) and Jones et al. (2012) mentioned that university leaders are required to build relationships with a variety of groups and stakeholders, as well as be able to effect change in learning and teaching through specific role distribution. Based on Gronn's (2009) claim that distributed leadership, though not synonymous with democratic leadership, may lay the groundwork for it, I argue that it increases the sources and voices of influence in an organization, widening the scope of participation of everyone. As such, academics can have professional autonomy and judgement to teach or be allowed to carry out research with students on the knowledge that this is important for their professional growth and the students' competencies, and not depend on the state-driven teaching and learning materials or state-designed curricular alignment or programme, types of assessment formats, teaching methods and techniques, among others.

Although it has been stated that traditional academic positions have been associated with teaching and research, academics are now required to carry out a number of tasks, including administrative responsibilities, in addition to their conventional ones (Leiyt & Wilkesmann,

2016; Jogi et al., 2020). It emerged in the findings that majority (83%) of the respondents opined that besides teaching, research and community engagement, there are other administrative responsibilities delegated to them by the leaders of the institution while 17% of the respondents refuted the claim. According to 51% of the respondents, leaders' interaction with their tasks such as student assessments and student test scores constrains their professional identity construction while 49% of the respondents disagreed.

This study also found that majority (74%) of the respondents were of the opinion that leaders are often not aware of the challenges they face in the teaching and learning process while 26% of the respondents thought otherwise. Another defining majority (80%) of the respondents opined that leaders are often not aware of the challenges they face with research and publications while 20% of respondents disagreed. A compelling bulk (83%) of respondents opined that leaders are often not aware of the challenges they face in community engagement while a few (17%) of the respondents did not uphold this point of view. Based on the results, 64% of respondents were of the opinion that leaders are often not aware of the challenges they face in performing administrative roles while 36% of respondents disagreed. Going by the view of a landslide majority (95%) of the respondents, the university institutional policies (workplace norms) influence their professional academic roles and responsibilities (teaching and learning, research, and community engagement) but this point of view was not upheld by 5% of the respondents.

Table 5: Respondents' opinion of the influence of leadership practices and institutional forces on the construction of their professional identity

Items	Stretched					Collapsed		Dec.
	SD	D	N	A	SA	SD/D	SA/A	
The leaders accept your participation and engagement with them as they practice their leadership roles at your institution.	6 (3.5%)	37 (21.8%)	17 (10%)	82 (48.2%)	28 (16.5%)	43 (28%)	110 (72%)	A
Leaders have confidence and trust towards you in performing your task (teaching, research, community engagement).	2 (1.2%)	15 (8.8%)	8 (4.7%)	103 (60.6%)	42 (24.7%)	17 (10%)	145 (90%)	A
You have the liberty to talk to the leaders about problems or challenges in achieving your responsibilities (teaching, research, community engagement).	7 (4.1%)	52 (30.6%)	15 (8.8%)	74 (43.5%)	22 (12.9%)	59 (38%)	96 (62%)	A
Leaders sometimes encourage your ideas and use them constructively by assuming the position of followers.	13 (7.6%)	54 (31.8%)	27 (15.9%)	68 (40%)	8 (4.7%)	67 (47%)	76 (53%)	A
The leadership practiced at your university encourages your professional growth.	4 (2.4%)	58 (34.1%)	15 (8.8%)	69 (40.6%)	24 (14.1%)	62 (40%)	93 (60%)	A
Besides teaching, research and community engagement there are	1	25	21	75	48	26	123	A

other administrative responsibilities delegated to you by the leaders of the institution.		(0.6%)	(14.7%)	(12.4%)	(44.1%)	(28.2%)	(17%)	(83%)	
Leaders' interaction with your tasks such as student assessments and student test scores constrain your professional identity construction.		4 (2.4%)	74 (43.5%)	12 (7.1%)	70 (41.2%)	10 (5.9%)	78 (49%)	80 (51%)	A
Leaders are often not aware of the challenges you face in performing some of the following responsibilities. (reverse coded)	Teaching and learning	45 (26.5%)	77 (45.3%)	5 (2.9%)	5 (2.9%)	38 (22.4%)	122 (74%)	43 (26%)	D
	Research and Publications	53 (31.2%)	75 (44.1%)	10 (5.9%)	4 (2.4%)	28 (16.5%)	128 (80%)	32 (20%)	D
	Community engagement	55 (32.4%)	65 (38.2%)	25 (14.7%)	2 (1.2%)	23 (13.5%)	120 (83%)	25 (17%)	D
	Administrative roles	22 (12.9%)	60 (35.3%)	41 (24.1%)	11 (6.5%)	36 (21.2%)	82 (64%)	47 (36%)	D
The university institutional policies (workplace norms) influence your professional academic roles and responsibilities (teaching and learning, research and community engagement).		1 (0.6%)	7 (4.1%)	7 (4.1%)	71 (41.8%)	84 (49.4%)	8 (5%)	155 (95%)	A
Multiple response		213 (10%)	599 (29%)	203 (10%)	737 (36%)	288 (14%)	812 (44%)	1383 (56%)	A

SD: Strongly disagree, ***D:*** *Disagree,* ***N:*** *Neutral,* ***A:*** *Agree,* ***SA:*** *Strongly agree,* ***Dec.:*** *Decision*

6.4 The influence of biographical and programmatic forces on the construction of academics' professional identity

Because they have to do with how personal values intertwine with curricular enactment to construct identities, biographical and programmatic forces may have a high likelihood of influencing how academics construct their professional identities. To ascertain these tendencies, respondents in this study were asked to indicate whether they agree, strongly agree, disagree or strongly disagree that biographical and programmatic forces influence the construction of their professional identity. In aggregate, respondents agreed that biographical and programmatic forces influence the construction of their professional identities as indicated by an overall agreement rate of 78% as oppose to a disagreement rate of 22% (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Percentage of biographical and programmatic forces' influence on professional identity construction
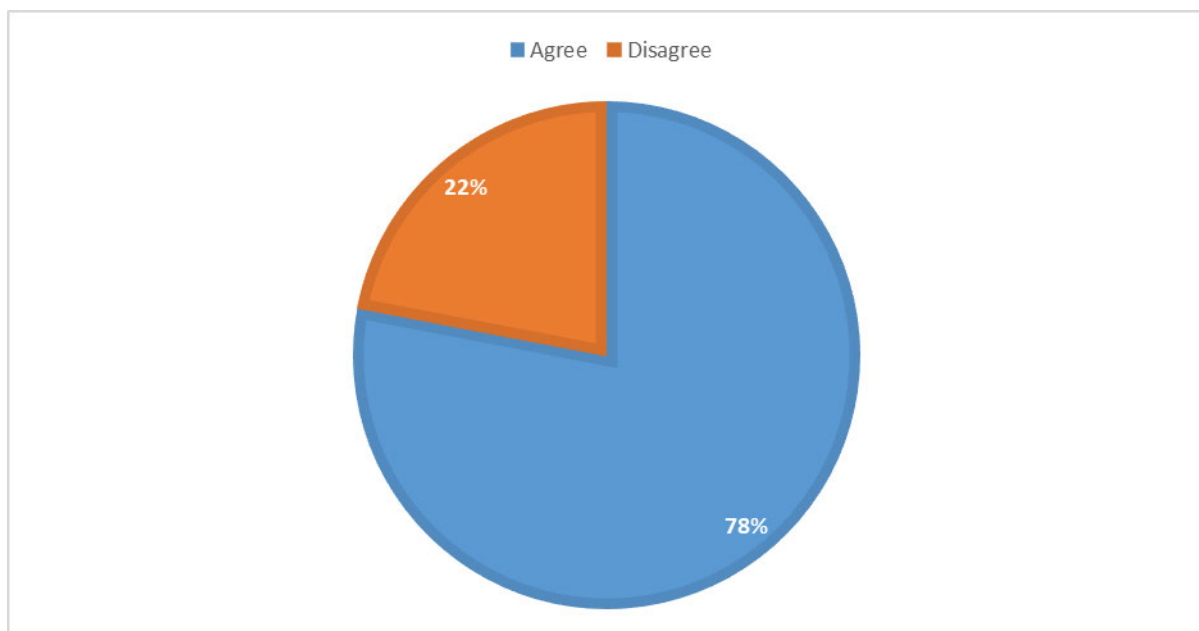
Figure 8 illustrates respondents' overall opinion of the influence of biographical and programmatic forces on the construction of academics' professional identity

The focus of this chapter is on how academics' experiences of university leadership influence the construction of their professional identities. This section focuses on academics' perceptions of how university leadership has influenced their biographical and programmatic forces (how they disseminate information in the classroom) as they construct their professional identities.

Samuel's (2008) Force Field Model for teacher development asserts that biographical forces are very significant to the teacher's teaching because they provide the teacher with a sense of security and comfort and serve as a point of return after other forces have been washed away. Therefore, assessing the leadership practice on academics', would give an indication of the level of influence on their biographical forces that in turn would have an impact on how they disseminated information (programmatic forces) in the classroom.

Table 6 highlights three observations from the findings. Out of the 17 items used to evaluate this construct, the results show that respondents agreed with fifteen, disagreed with one, and remained neutral on one. On an item-by-item basis, based on the observation from the data, 78.7% of respondents opined that their values and beliefs have been influenced by the form or type of leadership practiced in their current institution, while 21.3% of respondents thought otherwise. In addition, in the view of a compelling absolute majority (93.1%) of the respondents, their past experience in the way they were taught influences their current teaching, while a few (6.9%) of the respondents disagreed.

In this study, it emerged according to 75.2% of respondents that they are experiencing a shift in their identity construction now more than before because they are under pressure to publish and engage in mandatory community outreach, while 24.8% of respondents opposed this point of view. In accordance with the view of 50% of the respondents, they are consulted in decisions concerning aspects of teaching, research, and community outreach, while 50% of the respondents disagreed—implying that respondents were neutral regarding this item.

According to an overwhelming majority (98.2%) of the respondents, teaching and learning influence their identity construction at their institution, while very few (1.8%) of the respondents disagreed. Based on the view of a landslide majority (98.8%) of the respondents, internal and external research influenced their identity construction at their institution, while very few (1.2%) of the respondents thought otherwise. The majority of respondents (80.6%) believe that community outreach influences their identity construction at their institution, while 19.4% disagree. According to 69.9% of the respondents, administrative roles influence their identity construction at their institution, while 30.1% of the respondents disagreed. The majority (57.8%) of the respondents were of the opinion that consultancy roles influence their identity construction at their institution, while 42.2% of the respondents thought otherwise.

The bulk (75%) of the respondents opined that family background shapes the way they perform their core responsibilities at their institution, while 25% of respondents disagreed.

It also emerged that 77.5% of respondents declared that culture/ethnicity shape the way they perform their core responsibilities at their institution while a few (22.6%) of the respondents did not uphold this point of view. Based on the results, 69.9% of the respondents opined that linguistic background (their first language) shape the way they perform their core responsibilities at their institution while 30.1% of respondents disagreed. Going by the view of 68.3% of the respondents, political affiliation shaped the way they perform their core responsibilities at their institution while 31.7% of the respondents disagreed with this opinion. According to a defining majority (91.5%) of the respondents, promotion at their institution is based on the number of publications while a few (8.5%) of the respondents thought otherwise. Most (86.9%) of the respondents were of the view that promotion in their institution is based on the quality of publications (H Index of journal) while this opinion was not upheld by a few (13.1%) of the respondents. Going by the view of a compelling majority (93.6%) of the respondents, promotion at their institution is based on educational qualifications but 6.4% had a contrary opinion. Contrary to 10.7% of the respondents, 89.3% of the respondents were of the opinion that promotion in their institution is based on the number of students you have supervised to graduation. Opposing the view of 76.5% of respondents, 23.5% of the respondents were of the opinion that promotion at their institution is based on competitive examination.

According to this study's findings, a sizable majority of respondents claimed that they are under pressure to publish and to do so in reputable journals because their promotion might be based on the calibre of publications. This resonates with the literature that states that academics' success in the competitive environment of global HE is dependent on publication in refereed journals, and that academics all over the world are required to 'publish or perish' (Altbach, 2015). An above-average proportion of respondents claimed that they construct their professional identities through consulting, while a sizable portion of respondents claimed that they construct their professional identities through teaching, internal and external research, community outreach, and administrative tasks. This assertion is in line with other studies that argue that academics construct multiple identities. And these multiple identity constructions can be associated with the fact that academic identity lacks exactness in terms of description because it is complex and composed of various competing influences that   differ   for   each   academic   (Quigley,   2011).

Table 6: Respondents' opinion of the influence of biographical and programmatic forces on the construction of academics' professional identity

Item		Stretched					Collapsed		Dec.
		SD	D	N	A	SA	SD/D	SA/A	
Your values and beliefs have been influenced by the form/type of leadership practiced in your current institution.		4 (2.4%)	28 (16.5%)	20 (11.8%)	56 (32.9%)	62 (36.5%)	32 (21.3%)	118 (78.7%)	A
Your past experience in the way you were taught influences your current teaching.		1 (0.6%)	10 (5.9%)	10 (5.9%)	70 (41.2%)	79 (46.5%)	11 (6.9%)	149 (93.1%)	A
You are experiencing a shift in your identity construction now more than before because you are under pressure to publish and engage in mandatory community outreach.		1 (0.6%)	35 (20.8%)	23 (13.7%)	70 (41.7%)	39 (23.2%)	36 (24.8%)	109 (75.2%)	A
You are consulted in decisions concerning aspects of teaching, research and community outreach.		10 (5.9%)	66 (38.8%)	17 (10%)	66 (38.8%)	10 (5.9%)	76 (50%)	76 (50%)	U
The following aspects influence your identity construction at your institution.	Teaching and learning	0 (0%)	3 (1.8%)	3 (1.8%)	65 (38.2%)	99 (58.2%)	3 (1.8%)	164 (98.2%)	A
	Internal and external research	0	2	5	74	88	2	162	A

		(0%)	(1.2%)	(3%)	(43.8%)	(52.1%)	(1.2%)	(98.8%)	
	Community outreach	1	25	35	61	47	26	108	A
		(0.6%)	(14.8%)	(20.7%)	(36.1%)	(27.8%)	(19.4%)	(80.6%)	
	Administrative role	6	35	33	60	35	41	95	A
		(3.6%)	(20.7%)	(19.5%)	(35.5%)	(20.7%)	(30.1%)	(69.9%)	
	Consultancy	15	39	41	42	32	54	74	A
		(8.9%)	(23.1%)	(24.3%)	(24.9%)	(18.9%)	(42.2%)	(57.8%)	
The following values shape the way you perform your core responsibilities at your institution.	Family background	3	35	18	57	57	38	114	A
		(1.8%)	(20.6%)	(10.6%)	(33.5%)	(33.5%)	(25%)	(75%)	
	Culture/ethnicity	6	30	10	61	63	36	124	A
		(3.5%)	(17.6%)	(5.9%)	(35.9%)	(37.1%)	(22.5%)	(77.5%)	
	Linguistic background (your first language)	7	36	27	62	38	43	100	A
		(4.1%)	(21.2%)	(15.9%)	(36.5%)	(22.4%)	(30.1%)	(69.9%)	
	Political affiliation	19	27	25	34	65	46	99	A
		(11.2%)	(15.9%)	(14.7%)	(20%)	(38.2%)	(31.7%)	(68.3%)	
Promotion at your institution is based on the following	The number of Publications	3	11	6	65	85	14	150	A
		(1.8%)	(6.5%)	(3.5%)	(38.2%)	(50%)	(8.5%)	(91.5%)	
	The quality of publications (H Index of journal)	7	12	23	82	44	19	126	A
		(4.2%)	(7.1%)	(13.7%)	(48.8%)	(26.2%)	(13.1%)	(86.9%)	
	Educational qualifications	3	7	12	88	59	10	147	A
		(1.8%)	(4.1%)	(7.1%)	(52.1%)	(34.9%)	(6.4%)	(93.6%)	

		SD	D	N	A	SA	U		Dec.
	Number of students you have supervised to graduation	5 (2.9%)	11 (6.5%)	20 (11.8%)	82 (48.2%)	52 (30.6%)	16 (10.7%)	134 (89.3%)	A
	Competitive examination	37 (21.8%)	41 (24.1%)	68 (40%)	19 (11.2%)	5 (2.9%)	78 (76.5%)	24 (23.5%)	D
Multiple response set		128 (4.2%)	453 (14.9%)	396 (13.0%)	1114 (36.5%)	959 (31.4%)	581 (22%)	2073 (78%)	A

*SD: Strongly disagree, **D**: Disagree, **N**: Neutral, **A**: Agree, **SA**: Strongly agree, **U**: Undecided, **Dec.**: Decision*

6.5 The influence of contextual forces on the construction of academics' professional identity

This study also examined how contextual forces influence academics' construction of their professional identity. Contextual forces in the context of this study refer to macro-social, political, and cultural ideals embedded in the university system that influence academics' professional development. Generally, literature suggests that identity is established not just when academics assert their self-positioning but also when external parties assign identities to them. Thus, they might construct their identity based on an identity position influenced by external factors or by constructing a new identity position. In the empirical findings of this study respondents agreed that contextual forces influence the construction of academics' professional identity as indicated by an overall agreement rate of 58% as opposed to an overall disagreement rate of 42% (Figure 9).

Figure 9: **Percentage of contextual forces' influence on professional identity construction**

Figure 9 illustrates respondents' overall opinion of the influence of contextual forces on the construction of academics' professional identity

Out of the four items employed to test this construct, the data revealed that respondents agreed with two and disagreed with two of the items (Table 7). The respondents were asked to rate their degree of agreement with the statement that contextual factors influence their professional identity. The majority of respondents generally evaluated the leaders' political

ideology as having a strong influence on their professional identities within the framework of the study context. It appeared that 72.9% of the respondents opined that they have challenges balancing the political ideologies of the leadership of their institution with the way it has influenced their teaching, research, and community engagement and their own political ideologies while a few (27.1%) of the respondents held a contrary point of view. This high rating can be associated with an inauspicious influence on their professional identity construction.

In this study, it was found that contrary to 14.8% of respondents, 85.2% of the respondents were of the view that the community of practice (department) that they belong to has shaped their identity. As opposed to 72.3% of the respondents, 27.7% of the respondents opined that they find difficulties interpreting their role as an academic because of the diversity of their students (language, religion, culture and political affiliation). Contrary to 55.4% of the respondents, 44.6% of the respondents were of the view that they find difficulties interpreting their role as an academic because of the difference in diversity of their colleagues and leaders (language, religion, culture and political affiliation)
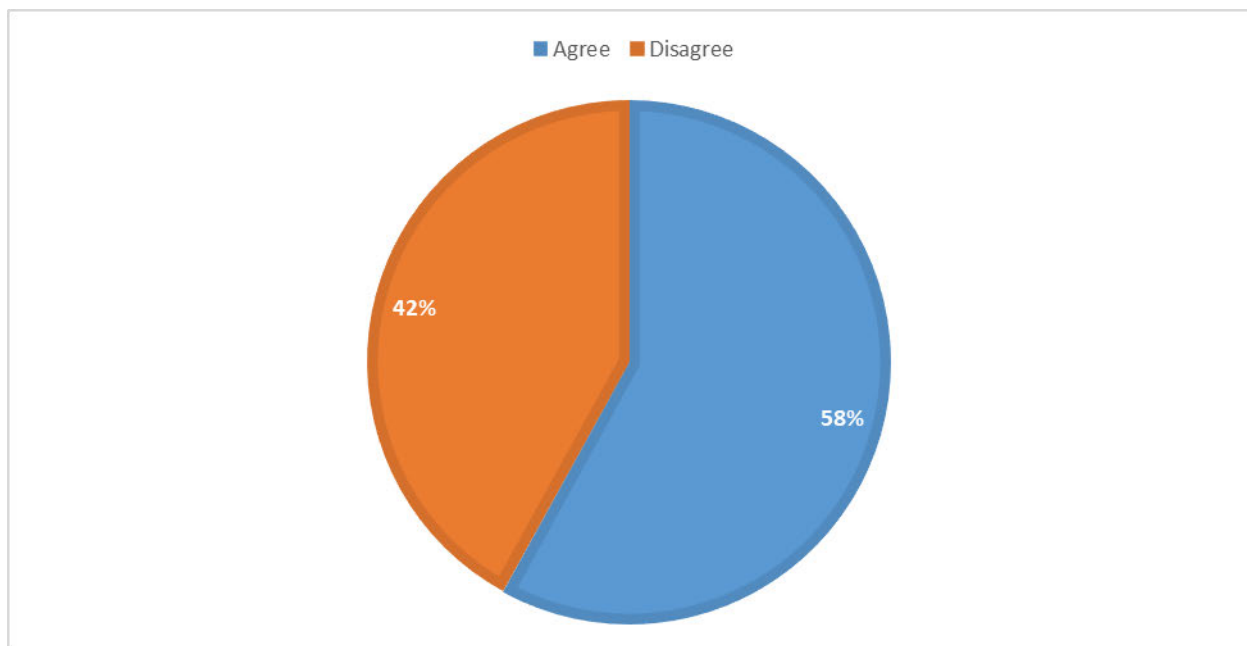
Table 7: Respondents' opinion of the influence of contextual forces on the construction of academics' professional identity

Item	Stretched					Collapsed		
	SD	D	N	A	SA	SD/D	SA/A	
You have challenges balancing the political ideologies of the leadership of your institution with the way it has influenced your teaching, research, and community engagement and your own political ideologies.	4 (2.4%)	34 (20%)	30 (17.6%)	39 (22.9%)	63 (37.1%)	38 (27.1%)	102 (72.9%)	
The community of practice (department) that you belong to has shaped your identity.	2 (1.2%)	21 (12.4%)	14 (8.3%)	76 (45%)	56 (33.1%)	23 (14.8%)	132 (85.2%)	
You find difficulties interpreting your role as an academic because of the diversity of your students (language, religion, culture and political affiliation).	30 (17.8%)	77 (45.6%)	21 (12.4%)	27 (16%)	14 (8.3%)	107 (72.3%)	41 (27.7%)	
You find difficulties interpreting your role as an academic because of the difference in diversity of your colleagues and leaders. (Language, religion, culture and political affiliation).	21 (12.4%)	61 (35.9%)	22 (12.9%)	42 (24.7%)	24 (14.1%)	82 (55.4%)	66 (44.6%)	
Multiple response set	57 (8.4%)	193 (28.5%)	87 (12.8%)	184 (27.1%)	157 (23.2%)	250 (42%)	341 (58%)	

*SD: Strongly disagree, **D**: Disagree, **N**: Neutral, **A**: Agree, **SA**: Strongly agree, **Dec.**: Decision*

6.6 Perceived influence of academics experiences of university leadership on the construction of their professional identities

Based on respondents' agreement ratings, biographical and programmatic forces were the most (41%) influential forces contributing to the construction of academics' professional identities, followed by contextual forces (30%) and leadership practices and institutional forces (29.2%) in that order (Figure 10).

Figure 10: **Perceived influence of academics experiences of university leadership on the construction of their professional identities**
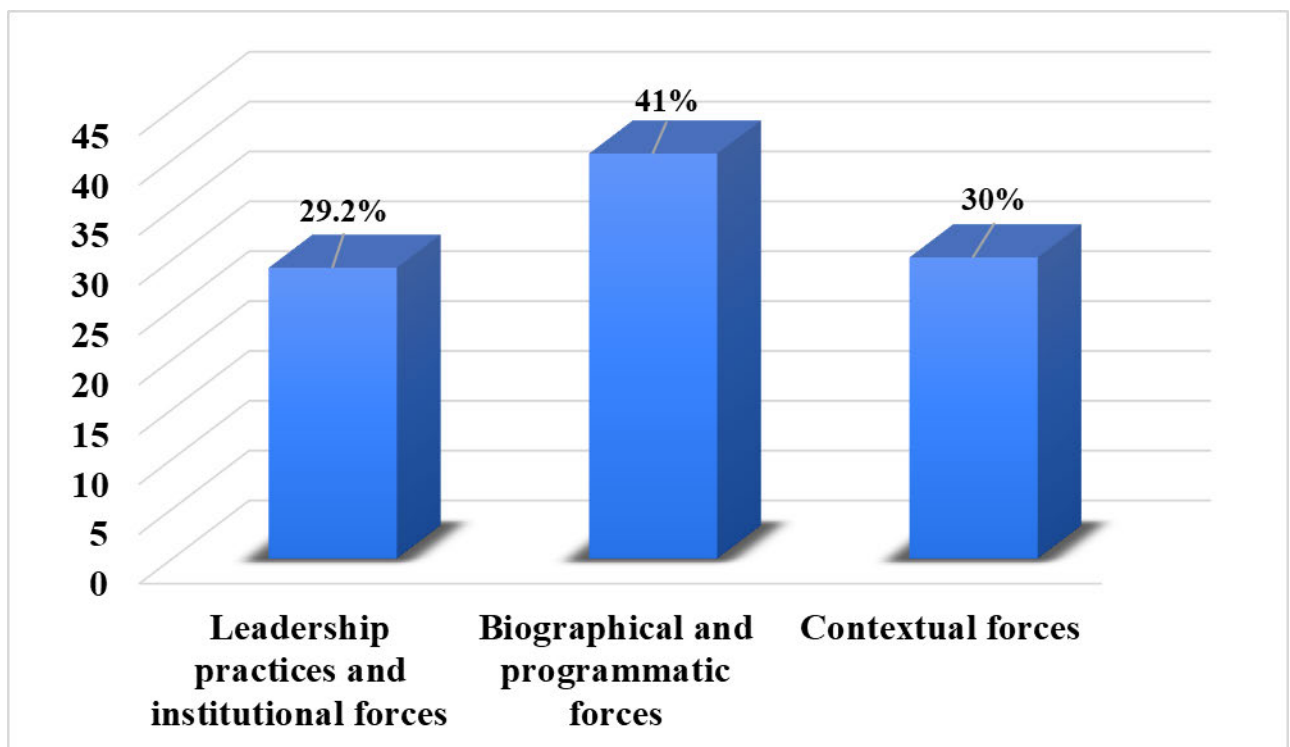
Figure 10 illustrates perceived influence of academics experiences of university leadership on the construction of their professional identities

6.7 Conclusion

An analysis of the results from the questionnaire survey was provided in this chapter. The data was sought to expand the results from the semi-structured individual interviews and focus group discussions that were presented in Chapter 5. Pie charts, bar graphs, and tables with summaries of the responses were used for references during the findings chapter. The data's findings demonstrated that the sample was fairly representative of all permanent academics working at the university under investigation. The results showed that although leadership has both a positive and negative role to play in shaping academics' professional

identity in the context of institutional, contextual, programmatic, and biographical forces, the study found   that most important factors shaping academics' professional identities were their biographical and programmatic forces based on their experiences of university leadership. Again, the conclusions in this section were limited to respondents' perceived influence rather than influence based on inferential statistics. In other words, it was based solely on the respondents' perceptions of leadership influence on their professional identities and not on any objective measures of influence that could be statistically validated. The results are discussed and synthesised in the next chapter based on the research questions and the key themes, as well as how they fit into the body of knowledge and theory on leadership in higher education contexts and academic identity constructions.

CHAPTER SEVEN
UNDERSTANDING ACADEMICS' PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY IN A
CAMEROONIAN UNIVERSITY

7.1   Introduction

The analysis of data sets that were obtained using a variety of approaches was provided in the chapters that preceded (Chapter 5 and 6). Several important findings were drawn from the analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data sets. These findings were divided into three main categories: the individual levels of identity construction (micro), institutional levels of academics' experiences of university leadership (meso), and external levels (outside the university) of academics' experiences of university leadership (macro level). In this chapter, I discuss the key qualitative and quantitative findings in aggregate using evidence that resulted from and through detailed analyses, informed by relevant literature as well as the theoretical lenses (see Chapter 3) that underpin this study. In doing so, I assess the data that has been found and obtained in the framework of this study in light of its purpose statement, context, and research questions. This study purpose was to explore academics' experiences of university leadership practices in constructing their professional academic identities in a Cameroonian university. Three critical questions were developed:

1.   What are the academics' conceptions of their own professional identities at a University in Cameroon?
2.   What are academics' experiences of university leadership at a University in Cameroon?
3.   How do academics' experiences of university leadership at a University in Cameroon influence the construction of their professional identities?
4.   Why do academics' experiences of university leadership at a University in Cameroon influence the construction of their professional identities in the way that they do?

7.2.1 Micro-level: academics' conceptions of their professional identity based on individual forces

Given that there is no set definition of a professional identity in the context of higher education, the intention of this section is to explore how participants perceive their own

professional identities in higher education. In an attempt to fully understand the phenomenon of academics' professional identities and their experiences with university leadership in the context of this study, I assume that academics' conceptualised their professional identities as their participation in teaching, research, and community engagement activities and how they translate these missions into teaching programmes in various departments, research units, and the provision of skilled labour to the general public (Ntui, 2018; Schamp, 2019). Unexpectedly, the findings of this study that emerged in chapters 5 and 6 show that participants' conceptions of professional identity are subjectively intertwined in self, discipline and context. Employing individual interviews as a technique for producing data in this study gave the participants a space where they could reflect on their own conceptions of professional identity by expressing their reality and not what their institution required them to be as university lecturers. The ability to define one's identity in the context of their work was essential in the context of this study to illustrate how different participants view themselves in their discipline and work context. Thus, the findings under this theme identify three subthemes, namely self-conception of professional identity, academics' personal beliefs about their profession, and academics' role and responsibilities belonging to a profession. In order to maintain a more consistent and comprehensive analysis of this study, the next section discusses the above subthemes as an extension of what has been discussed in chapters 5 and 6.

7.2.1.1 Self-conception of professional identity

The findings indicated that participants' conceptions of their own professional identity is characterised by their self-concept. This study's findings support the suggestions by Eason et al. (2018) that professional identity is an individual's professional self-concept based on ideas, values, motives, qualities, and experiences. The self includes "the mental capacity to think of oneself as a thinking actor ("I") that reflects on oneself as an object and, in doing so, forms the content of the thoughts ("me")" (Wehrle & Fasbender, 2019, p.2). Schwartz et al. (2017) argue that self-concept is a sense of one's identity and how one comes to be where they are in life. One of the participants explicitly addressed self-conception in the context of discipline and work context. The participants thus conceive of self-conception as the way they think about themselves within their discipline and work context. The participants also described that in negotiating or conceptualising their professional identity, they have a

responsibility to understand that their work environment and colleagues have a role to play in their professional identity.

In addition, participants' self-conception is about self, discipline and work context, but also their relationships with people, intelligence level, and success in their career. This indicates that the participants' personalities are absorbed by their professional identities. People develop notions about themselves and their place in their discipline and work environment because of their self-conception. In other words, because humans act and interact based on meaning, the emerging identity is the result of a social and interactive process that involves ongoing interpretation and negotiation of interactions, transactions, and objects (Cross & Hong, 2009). Even after the self has been constituted, societal pressures can cause it to change. Literature on "self" and "identity" has emerged, sparking some dispute over whether self and identity are distinct or overlapping. Self-conception embodies how academics see themselves or their personalities within their work context as they construct and reconstruct their professional identity. Schwartz et al. (2017) argue that although the process of the "self-concept" is more complex, a useful exploration could be to describe identity as the artiste and the self as the image. The decisions and commitments that one makes shape the portrait that portrays who one is. As such, self-concept clarity symbolises, to some extent, how well one's multiple identity contents (e.g., identity elements chosen from different domains) fit together to form a coherent whole (Schwartz et al., 2017). Schwartz et al. (2017) add that, because individuals usually have professional identities that guide their behaviour, one's self-conceptions within a particular professional area may influence how one chooses to pursue identity-related goals. Thus, the participants paint a picture of the relationality between self, discipline, and context.

Self-conception may be dynamic and can be understood through one's personality in a profession. Personality reflects one's distinctive characteristics or traits. Personality in the context of professional identity is informed by the influence of those characteristics on one's profession. Participants' conceptions of professional identity was revealed in this study as one's personality in their area of specialisation. According to the participants, it reflects the notions of personal-distinctive characteristics and subject specialisation. It also deals with issues such as socio-economic, political, and cultural realities. This supports a portion of Thomas' (2019) claim that professional identities are influenced by a variety of factors, including sociocultural, socioeconomic, educational, and other factors. It is characterised as a

combination of both the self and the profession, which is constantly shifting and made up of many competing influences that vary depending on them and their social context (van Lankveld et al., 2016; Žydžiūnaitė et al., 2019). Thus, it appears that a professional identity in the context of a university can be thought of as knowing how personality traits, subject specialisation, and the overall reality of existence relate to one another.

Some participants' conceptions of professional identity also reflect five indicators: identifying a profession, making a mark in the profession, making oneself outstanding in the profession, having authority over the profession, and leaving a mark in the profession. The study also found that the participants' conceptions of their professional identity is characterised by their knowledge of how their behaviour and contributions to knowledge will reflect their profession. Another finding was that their activities, interactions, and knowledge dissemination with the community would also reflect in their profession. Participants are of the view that it is only when they have achieved those five indicators that they can leave a legacy in their profession or domain they find themselves in.

The section has discussed academics' self-conceptions of their professional identities and came to a conclusion on the essential elements that characterise them. One may say that participants had unique conceptions of their professional identity. What emerged is that they based their conceptions on self, professional domain, and work contexts, a characteristic that causes academics' professional identity conception to differ greatly. The next section delves on academics' personal beliefs about their profession

7.2.1.2 Academics' personal beliefs about their profession

The notion of academics' personal beliefs about their profession also emerged in this study as participants' conceptions of their professional identity. It turns out to them that personal beliefs towards their teaching in the classroom, their interaction with their students, how they engage in their research activities or their projects with the community influence their performance; which to them characterise their professional identity. This finding resonates with Neary's (2014) own conception of professional identity, which states that it is a persons' perception of themselves and how they communicate this to others in their work context. However, taking a step back, as observed from the findings, the conceptions of professional identity in this subtheme are not consistent with those of 7.2.1.1 discussed above. Participants have quite different notions of what a professional identity is in the context of a university

(Neary, 2014). This is because there is no established definition of academics' professional identity (Drennan et al., 2017). In addition, because academics' identities are complex and made up of competing influences, they lack exactness in terms of their conceptualisation (Quigley, 2011).

This study also supports Haghighat et al.'s (2018) conceptions of professional identity as a "professional self-perception based on attitudes, beliefs, feelings, values, motivations, and experiences that are related to a specific profession" (p.139). By approaching their point of view, the participants underlined the importance of their personal beliefs with the area of specialisation in a profession and other peoples' beliefs. A person's professional identity may be grounded in their personal beliefs, yet due to differing orientations, some beliefs may not be taken into account. People link their beliefs to the perspective they desire to adopt when it comes to their area of specialisation. Participants distinguished the idea of professional identity into two main directions as noticed from the data. The first orientation focuses on an individual's personal beliefs towards their area of specialisation within their professional context. The second orientation is about other people's beliefs in the same professional setting. These orientations within the university setting represent how participants viewed their professional identities at a department or subject-specific level differently from another individual or individuals in the same department or subject-specific. Therefore, even though it is subjective in this argument, professional identity may also change when contrasting two things as a whole. Given that people are not the same, their thoughts and actions differ, and they might perceive and experience situations differently, though they may work in the same environment. Thus, to the participants, their personal beliefs as academics influence how they view their profession within the context of higher education. This includes how they evaluate their networks, their connections with other co-workers, and their perceptions of their own competencies, according to the study's participants. Additionally, it covers their opinions on the political climate, pay policies, academic research, and available resources in higher education. They all influence how they carry out their professional duties, in addition to a number of other issues.

This section has dealt with participants' conceptions of their professional identity based on personal beliefs. The next section discusses professional identity conceptions based on the roles and responsibilities of belonging to a profession.

7.2.1.3 Academics' role and responsibilities of belonging in a profession.

Similar to the findings by Trautwein (2018) and McCune (2018), the conceptions of professional identity in this study reflects the role and responsibility of belonging to a profession. Academics have a role and responsibilities in teaching, research, and engagement in community service. Participants felt that when assuming a professional role and responsibilities, they must be aware of what it takes to be an academic. Whether their role requires them to engage in teaching, research, or community service (Ntui, 2018; Schamp, 2019), they must take on that responsibility. Academics' professional identity relates to the threefold field of academia – research, teaching (Trautwein, 2018; McCune, 2018) and community engagement (Culum, 2014) embedded in the values, beliefs, and commitment an individual holds towards being an academic at a university (Hsieh, 2010). Therefore, to them, it has to do with how they share information, whether it is through classroom instruction, student supervision, or fieldwork for a community project. That is to say, their roles and responsibilities extend beyond the realms of instruction, research, and community engagement activities. Mayrowetz (2008) posits that distributed leadership theory is related to learning theories such as sociocultural and constructivism, as well as teaching practices such as the use of inquiry science modules, which can be seen in the classroom context as students and teachers interact with tasks and materials. The participants believed that their role and responsibilities of belonging to their academic profession has to do with how they develop their students through the knowledge they impart on them. The participants also noted in this study that their conceptions of their professional identity in the context of role and responsibility was characterised by their ability to ensure visibility, good teaching aptitude, teaching and research ethics, and deontology (that is; the relationship between duty and morality) of the academic profession.

The research results in this section show that participants conceptualise their professional identities from several perspectives. It emerged that this was dependent on their individual experiences, which relate to their personal self, personal beliefs and values, area of specialisation, and the environment in which they construct their identities. An observation from the findings further shows that professional identity conceptions are individualistic, context-specific, and established based on one's ability to navigate through the influence of the working environment. According to the participants, it is the ability of an individual to understand his/her behaviour first before understanding other peoples' behaviour in the work environment. I argue that professional identity conception is a micro-internal experience that

is characterised by self, discipline, and context. This section has discussed the micro-individual levels of professional identity conceptions. The following section discusses academics' experiences of university leadership practices on professional identity at the meso-institutional level.

7.2.2 Meso-level: academics' conceptions of their professional identity based on institutional forces

This study has highlighted that academics construct their professional identities in teaching, research, and community engagement. However, some scholars argue that there is growing contention around the academic fulfilment of these roles. This is because, while teaching dominates research and community engagement in some universities (Andoh, 2017), community engagement is at the bottom tier (Preece, 2017). Hence, Mugabi (2014) and Pinheiro et al. (2015) suggest the need for universities to enhance the triple mission. However, participants in this study claimed that institutional (leadership) forces influence their conceptions of their professional identities in terms of teaching workload, research, and research-led community engagement.

7.2.2.1 Teaching workload as a key performance indicator

Teaching refers to a process of engaging students formally or informally with the goal of seeking, acquiring, and co-constructing knowledge in a higher learning institution. Literature highlights that it is a primary role of academics in a HEI. In addition, they are expected to be subject matter experts in their fields when developing teaching roles and new pedagogical skillsets to aid students' learning (Hamrick, 2008). Academics also have their personal goals and beliefs when performing their teacher role within the university context. Thus, maintaining a collaborative relationship with the leaders can create a conducive environment not only for the students but also for the academics to perform their teaching role if such goals and beliefs are balanced with the leadership practices. According to the findings, participants rate their interactions with the leadership in terms of teaching as satisfying. They claimed that some of the leaders maintain a collaborative relationship with them and this is seen through the provision of some teaching resources; leaders try as much as possible to maintain a conducive environment for teaching and learning; and leaders have tried to establish measures for their professional growth. This view corresponds with the definition by Herbst and Conradie (2011) that describes leadership as the ability to form relationships and collaborate for long-term success. Smith and Wolverton (2010) and Jones et al. (2012)

also agree that university leaders are required to build relationships with a variety of groups and stakeholders, as well as be able to effect change in learning and teaching through specific role distribution. This is confirmation of claims that the practice of DL is the collective interaction among leaders, followers, and their situations (Spillane, 2006; Gronn, 2009; Spillane and Halverson, 2009; Harris, 2011; Gosksoy, 2015).

A construct of Samuel's (2008) FFM for teacher development asserts that institutional (leadership) forces have an impact on teacher professional identity. In the quantitative survey of this study, 72% of respondents opined that the leaders accept their participation and engagement with them as they practice their leadership roles at their institutions, while 28% of respondents thought otherwise. It also emerged that 62% of the respondents maintained that they have the liberty to talk to the leaders about problems or challenges in achieving their responsibilities (teaching), while 38% of respondents opposed this point of view. 53% of the respondents said that leaders sometimes encourage their ideas and use them constructively by assuming the position of followers, while 47% of the respondents disagreed. Based on the views of 60% of the respondents, the leadership practiced at their university encourages their professional growth, while 40% of respondents thought otherwise (see Table 5). It has been noted in this study that leadership practices and institutional forces influence academics' professional identity construction.

However, the leaders' unscientific and corrupt nature seems to contrast with the participants' opinions already mentioned above. The participants claimed that their heads of departments (HODs) were very corrupt and money-minded. They claim that at the university under study, permanent lecturers are entitled to 200 hours of instruction annually and that any additional hours are paid accordingly. It emerged in the findings of this study that the HODs are in charge of role distribution —that is, they decide who teaches what course per semester, the number of students, and the levels they have to teach—amongst others. This is in line with Wan's (2014) definition of distributed leadership as "an all-encompassing division of labour and social activity" (p. 324). However, participants argued that the manner in which those roles are distributed is very unscientific. They also felt that the leaders were corrupt, lacked integrity, and were money-minded in allocating extra teaching hours.

Leaders do not share those extra hours based on meritocracy but to the lecturers who are ready to reward them. The participants validated their claim by stating that they use slogans such as *"a goat can only eat grass where it's been tied." So, if you are like the head of a*

department, it means that you can only eat grass in the department." For these participants, this view meant the leaders were money-minded. It appears the leaders are interested more in their personal benefit than the collective benefit. It appears from the participants' claims that there is no system in place for accountability because most lecturers who have been paid for those extra hours hardly come to class to cover those hours. For the participants, the leaders' attitudes do not come as a surprise because within the Cameroonian context such attitudes are very normal, especially in government institutions. In addition, they cannot complain about their leaders for fear of being victimised.

It also emerged in the findings that participants are afraid to report their leaders because it might jeopardise their career growth because these leaders work in collaboration with each other. As a result, they cannot afford to offend any of them for fear of having their career stalled. Evidently, the participants are not only marginalised; it appears they are also victimised. The bias of leadership practice is seen when some of their colleagues leave their duty stations, and as long as they can work out a deal with the leaders, they are covered; favourable reports are written about them. In the survey of this study, 78.7% of respondents opined that their values and beliefs have been influenced by the form or type of leadership practiced in their current institution (Table 6). This goes against the body of research that contends that HEIs' leaders must use the power that comes with their control of resources to either reward or punish subordinates (Bolden et al., 2012). Additionally, according to Lumby (2013), such leadership has been criticised for the nature of its ethics and efficacy. Drawing from the distributed leadership lens, leaders, academics, and students can collectively contribute to leadership in ways that can lead to achieving tasks in the university (Ramakrishnan & Abukari, 2020). This means that leaders can use the experiences of their followers to build a robust leadership structure. When values of integrity, humility, and stewardship are embedded in an organisation, leaders should not only be given the moral authority to demand the same from their subordinates. Leaders must be equipped with the necessary skills to demonstrate to their followers how to put those values into practice (Mango, 2018). It appears in this study that morals, integrity, and ethics have been thrown out of the window by the leadership of this university under study.

The context of such leadership practices leaves students with knowledge gaps and influences the way these participants without access to extra teaching hours construct their professional identities in light of their experiences of a corrupt leadership. Samuel's (2008) FFM for

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teacher development posits interactive push and pull forces that influence a teacher's role and identities in different directions in a school system. For the participants in this study, institutional forces such as the leaders' attitudes towards course distribution are exerting a force charge on them that in turn influences their professional teaching identity (Samuel, 2008). Based on the study's findings, it appears that leaders' biased, corrupt, and dishonest tendencies during course distribution are reflected in their leadership practices.

It emerged in this study that leaders in the university under study rarely implement the mandates, roles, and responsibilities that are required of them, thereby engendering the degeneration of the university's mission achievement (Muriisa, 2014). These institutional processes and norms have a major influence on academic identity construction in their university, and participants who are in teaching positions are frequently the first to feel the practical effects of change (McNaughton & Billot, 2016). The implementation of teaching and learning policies is an issue that needs responsiveness from those in charge of making sure that theory is practiced. Cameroonian universities may be failing because there is an imbalance between policy and practice. As shown in the FGD and interviews, teaching policies are well-structured, and teachers are supervised by leaders. There is a need for university leadership to sort out collaborative mechanisms for supervising teaching performance in the classroom since Teferra (2016) questions academics' ability to deliver high-quality teaching given that academics do not have such pedagogical training. Shawa (2020) adds that even if they had the pedagogical training (which is often lacking) for mediating subject content, it does not imply that they could be effective in their teaching and learning processes. The results found that the HODs, who are in charge of putting teaching policies into practice, collaborate with colleagues to supervise teaching. To provide feedback on the knowledge shared, they typically work in collaboration with the class delegates. However, this supervision is always for political reasons. It emerged that when lecturers realise the intentions behind this supervision, which are mostly political, it influences their relationship with the students and the students' learning. Thus, it may cause frustration on the part of the lecturers and withdrawal on the part of the students who are likely to abandon those lecturers' courses.

Steinert et al.'s (2019) study found that mentorship was one of the indicators that strengthened academics' professional teacher identity. However, this study found out that leaders do not have a mechanism to carry out intellectual supervision. Participants maintain

that mentoring and co-teaching are not effective at their university. For the participants, leaders do not supervise or ensure that the senior lecturers who are supposed to mentor early-career academics through co-teaching actually do so. It appears that these senior lecturers only show up occasionally; as such, the normal grooming that is supposed to take place does not. Additionally, the participants observed that these senior academics believe they have reached a point in their careers when no one can touch them. Moreover, as junior lecturers, they cannot even think of reporting the failure of those senior colleagues to mentor and give them feedback "*because the news might go back to him, in fact it will go back to him and knowing fully well that...your career progression is incumbent on his reference signatory or recommendation. So, you see where there's a complication you are forced to swallow certain things and move on*" (Participant #4). This finding reflects Callaghan' (2015) view that academic promotion is still dominated by different constraints that the academic needs to negotiate in order to progress along the career path.

It was found that the leaders in the university under study are politically motivated and strongly loyal to the state party in power. As such, to maintain their leadership position, they manipulate the students by asking them to keep an eye on the content and provide feedback that falls well short of evaluating both the teaching and the wellbeing of the students. Instead, they want to secure their own interests by making sure that content disseminated does not go against government's activities. The study survey contradicts this notion. For instance, 90% of respondents believe leaders have confidence and trust in them to perform their tasks (see Table 5), while 72.9% of respondents believe it is difficult to balance the political ideologies of their institution's leadership with how it has influenced their teaching and their own political ideologies (see Table 7). Both the quantitative and qualitative data seem to have some discrepancies within them and between them. According to the findings, the participants seem to be expressing opposing opinions. These dissonances could represent three different viewpoints; perhaps the participants in the FGDs and interviews developed a sense of trust and felt that they were in a different, safe environment where they could open up and confide in confidence about some of the actual details of their leadership experiences without worrying about being victimised. Furthermore, the respondents were required to quantify their responses. Perhaps out of a sense of caution given the political nature of the university and its leaders, the respondents gave the leaders high ratings for their leadership practices. Another possibility is that maybe some of the respondents support the leaders, the political system, and the government. As a result, they gave the leaders high approval ratings

in order to create an impression of good and competent leadership practices. This discrepancy is evidenced below:

So administratively they supervise my teachings by passing through the course delegates. In each course I teach there is a course delegate. So the head of department liaises with the course delegate to ask questions about what I am doing, how I am doing it and if there are any worries or if it is affecting them (P#4, interview)

because the students themselves fall, become victims, and you know, end up, end up being used either, can either, being used by...the administrators who are normally supposed to be, to be protecting...these students" (Participant #2, FGD).

There are certain examples they will have to run away or shy away from which are real examples you can cite for your students to understand better simply because you're afraid that if you give the example it will be said that you are citing separatists (referring to the Anglophone crisis in the country)... (Participant #6, interview).

The quotes above are from the findings and they can be found in Chapter 5 (see 5.3.2.1). The impression from the quotes above reverberates intimidation from the leaders. If opportunities are not given to the academics to teach without fear of reprisal and intimidation, then maybe their ability to deliver quality teaching becomes problematic (Teferra, 2016).

Supervising and providing teaching feedback may be important to ensure teaching effectiveness. This is valuable in the context of academics' professional development. Academics can be assessed by their students, their peers, or external bodies for the purpose of constructive feedback and accountability meant to shape their teaching output. This is in line with literature from Samuel's (2008) FFM for teacher development, which states that teachers are required to be accountable to the larger system, the learners, and the discipline or curriculum at the same time. However, it emerged from the findings of this study that, although teaching is supervised at the university under study, it is not done for pedagogical enhancement but rather it is politically grounded.

The results of this study showed that, despite the fact that teaching at the university under study is supervised; this supervision is not carried out to improve pedagogy but rather has political underpinnings. When lecturers use real-world examples from their teaching setting to help students understand, teaching is meant to be engaging. The findings of this study demonstrated the contrary. For instance, the participants asserted that they lack the freedom to share specific knowledge in their classes because they are afraid of being victimised since

they are unsure of who is actually in their class. As one of the forbidden subjects that cannot be discussed in the classroom, they discussed the socio-political crisis that has been raging in the North West and South West areas of Cameroon for about six years at this point. In this study, it was found that another reason why teaching is supervised is to make sure no mention of the crisis is made in class; otherwise, it would suggest that lecturers are imparting knowledge to students that criticises the acts of the government. As a result, the leaders use class representatives to monitor lecturers under the guise of wanting to verify that the students are happy with the lesson, even though this is more political than pedagogical. The participants claimed that they are apprehensive of their teaching environment and hence proceed cautiously. I argue that the inclusion of political views in the classroom demonstrates that university administrators place general material interests above the interests of the academic community and students. Participants concurred that creating an unfavourable learning environment based on political convictions can affect students' academic performance and possibly lead to conflict between them and their lecturers because of a lack of trust in the classroom.

As indicated in Chapter 3, the FFM argues that political encroachment into the teaching and learning process seems to have an inauspicious influence on academics' personal biographies about what they believe the learner should know and how courses should be implemented (Romylos, 2018). In addition, Samuel (2008) argues that biographical forces are very significant to the teacher's teaching because they provide them with a sense of security and comfort and serve as a point of return when all other forces have been washed away. The teaching performance of academics can be effective, efficient, and enhanced if their teaching is supervised for pedagogical feedback and not for political leanings. Distributed leadership theory challenges this practice by stating that leaders need to develop a collaborative leadership environment in order to avoid imbalances and conflicts (Lozano, 2008).

The research also highlighted other leadership issues that hinder academics from carrying out their teaching duties, such as the terrible state of classrooms and chalkboards, which has an impact on efficient teaching and learning. In the study survey, 74% of the respondents revealed that leaders are often not aware of the challenges they face in the teaching and learning process (see Table 5). It is possible this university is no longer investing as much in education or that there is not enough money to keep these teaching aids up to date. Participants in the interview explained that rather than creating an atmosphere that is

conducive to teaching and learning, the leaders are preoccupied with maintaining their positions of authority. I argue that either the leaders are oblivious to the day-to-day management of the university, there are no checks and balances, their collaborators do not communicate or provide accurate information on the state of affairs, or they are simply inefficient. Because anyone can operate however, they choose without being held accountable as long as they do not criticise the ruling regime, such leaders represent a dysfunctional system that gives little hope for the future of academics who have the morality and integrity to honourably develop in their profession.

Furthermore, different studies on how academics develop different identities through staff development programmes have shown that academics will develop renewing and reflective teaching, pedagogically skilled subject experts, educational developers who can reflect on how to improve university teaching, and educational developers who can focus their research on university teaching (Nevgi & Löfström, 2015). In the same vein, Chitanand (2015) concurs that these programmes serve as an enabler that improves teaching, learning, and assessment policies in higher education, particularly because different cohorts of academics with varying levels of teaching experience are employed in higher education. Reddy et al. (2016) support these claims by noting that this induction programme not only produces academics with the ability to reflect through engagement and ownership, but it also provides them with continuous intellectual development, while exposing ECAs to institutional cultures and allowing them to further develop new academics through this interaction. Therefore, prioritising personal gain over the staff development plan (programmes), according to the findings, will not only exacerbate the rate of inefficient teaching performance but will also influence the professional identity construction in teaching. Participants noted that this programme existed in the past, but that things have changed with the current university leadership, who do not provide the necessary financial support to foster this academic staff development programme.

A study by Samfoga-Doh (2009) in Cameroon demonstrates that this programme was established and running. However, the programme failed because Cameroon is noted for its tribalism and favouritism tendencies. Furthermore, the study also found that funds for the capacity-building programme are awarded based on a rigorous selection process, in which applicants go through various stages and only those who meet the required criteria are chosen (Samfoga-Doh, 2009). The findings of this study contrast with those of Ozurumba and

Amasuomo (2015), who suggest that such induction programmes should be encouraged because they benefit academics by changing their knowledge, skills, values, and beliefs.

The results of this study did reveal some inconsistencies. These inconsistencies could be seen both between the qualitative and quantitative data as well as within the qualitative data. Overall, the results of this study revealed a variety of factors that influence academics' construction of their identities when they are teaching. The willingness and motivation of participants to participate as teachers were shown to be somewhat constrained by a number of variables. The study's conclusions indicate that these variables are centred on the university's leadership practices. Leaders are political, ineffective, dishonest, egotistical, and threatening. According to the study survey's findings, leaders involve them in leadership activities and have trust in them to complete their tasks. Additionally, the leadership activities at their university encourage their professional development. Although not all-inclusive, these findings already point to certain discrepancies between the data sets.

7.2.2.2 Undertaking research workload as a key performance indicator

Both in the FGD and in the interviews, the study's participants disclosed that they received internal and external funding streams to support their research efforts. They noted that while one financial stream emanates from the institution (internal), the other financial stream emanates from the ministry (external), as mandated by the head of state. In addition, while the external stream is awarded every three months, the internal stream is awarded every semester. They acknowledged that this funding is meant to support research and publication for those who are scientifically creative and innovative, and to galvanise post-graduate research and publications, as well as the organisation of research seminars and workshops. It has been noticed in this study that 98.8% of respondents reported that internal and external research influenced their identity construction at their institution (see Table 6). Clarke et al. (2015) state that academics understand the importance of being actively involved in research and also securing research funding and engaging in research publication. For academics who want to pursue a career in research, research workshops and seminars are crucial to their professional development. This is so that it will give them research knowledge and skills. Although studies suggest that academics may begin constructing a research identity during their doctoral studies (Matthews et al., 2012), this may not always be the case since earning a doctorate does not guarantee that a person is ready for a career in research (Pather &

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Remenyi, 2019). It also does not guarantee that a person has the research skills and abilities required to progress as a researcher. University leadership needs to initiate, organise and encourage academics to take part in these research programmes and by encouraging academics to attend conferences, workshops and seminars. There should be an accountability mechanism to ensure that the allowances that are set for research are actually disbursed accordingly. This will build a strong research identity for academics.

Although the participants held the same opinions that both financial streams are common practice in the Cameroon university context, they also asserted that these allowances were minimal in comparison to those of other nations. They pointed out that there is significant discrimination during the process of disbursing these funds, in addition to their being unevenly distributed. I argue that the university may be operating on a meagre budget that prevents it from meeting its financial responsibilities, including staff salaries, facility maintenance, and general institutional operations. As a result, research receives less funding because it is not a top priority. This statement is consistent with the literature, which states that Cameroonian universities face challenges not only due to the limited online presence of university annals and journals, but also due to a lack of funding and research incentives (Nsah, 2016). Nsah (2016) argues that insufficient research funding and incentives are barriers to producing high-quality research results. Without adequate research funding, academics' research performances cannot be of excellence. HEIs have a history of not only pressurising academics to 'publish or perish', but also of increasing their exposure through grant bids and raising awareness of the benefits of academic research (Pather & Remenyi, 2019). If academics lack the necessary research resources, not only will their research performance not be of quality, they will also not receive the international visibility and reputation they need, and as a result, their personal career development in research activities can be hampered (McLeod & Badenhorst, 2014), particularly if research funding is insufficient (Clarke et al., 2015).

In the study survey, the respondents contradicted those of the qualitative participants above. According to 75.2% of respondents, they are experiencing a shift in their identity construction now more than before because they are under pressure to publish, while 24.8% of respondents opposed this point of view. In addition, 50% of the respondents claim that they are consulted in decisions concerning aspects of research, while 50% of the respondents disagreed—implying that respondents were neutral regarding this item (see Table 6). As seen

in the findings, there is no doubt that the participants from the qualitative data produces contrary opinions from the quantitative respondents. As already mentioned (see Chapter 2.7.1), academics in the Cameroonian universities, do more than just create a teaching identity. It is argued that the teaching body in Cameroon is referred to as teachers-researchers (or 'enseignants-chercheurs' in French) because their role in the university is not only to impart knowledge but also to participate in scientific research, as stated in their employment contract (Atindogbe, 2019). Due to this study's setting, the findings of this study may not be consistent with the literature. The participants may be creating several identities through their work in teaching, research, community engagement, and possibly administration. These various perspectives might influence their construction of their professional identities. However, the leadership and political climate of the university may also play a role in why these two data sets are incongruent. For instance, it has been stated in this study that research funding is insufficient, unfairly dispersed, and biased. It is possible that, those who obtain these grants are under pressure to publish because they have funding for their research. However, those that experience discrimination may not experience that same pressure.

In addition to limited resources, the findings of this study also revealed factors such as administrative bottlenecks and corruption that thwart the participants from accessing their research allowances. The argument for the complexity of Cameroonian public services is supported by the difficulties in applying for funding for research, which are characterised by administrative bottlenecks. Participants complained that people's files were constantly piling up at the leaders' secretariat, where they were supposed to be processed before being given to their executives for signatures. It appears that these secretaries want to be bribed before processing the files. Furthermore, administrative procedures were always arduous. Due to the seemingly endless obstacles, some lecturers seem to give up on the endeavour. This demonstrates just how flawed and unregulated the system is. It appears that those who have integrity and are unbending to corruption end up abandoning the process. Inability to publish, attend conferences, or participate in workshops that are intended to shape academics' research productivity as well as fill a gap in new knowledge creation as a result of the administrative bottleneck brought on by the system's complexity has a negative influence on how academics construct their identities in research. In the study survey, 80% of the respondents opined that leaders are often not aware of the challenges they face with research and publications (see Table 5). I argue that an institution marred by such challenges and leaders' detached attitude towards research productivity does not only affect the institution but also negatively

influences academics' research development. As such, leadership in this university under study does not have the capacity to compete for new knowledge creation. This finding contrasts with the contention made by Dampson and Edwards (2019) that African universities require leadership with the ability to strategize for the innovative knowledge creation required to compete in the global space.

The difficulties are frequently noted at the level of the department, when the leadership, acting in their own self-interest, pre-selects and discards some grant application files. This is undoubtedly not the typical procedure, as shown by the study's findings. This finding is significant because, as was argued above, about the rigorous challenges that come with accessing research funds, it shows that these discrimination and corruption are frequently recorded with the department heads. Some participants were very vocal about this issue of discrimination. "*If you do not belong to, let's just say, the 'winning team'...you may not really have the full benefit of that.*" They shared their reality as to how leadership influences their professional development at their university. As explained above, the excerpt that follows (see 5.3.2.2) portrays an accurate impression of how the HODs block academics' files at the level of the department for their own self-interest.

> *The experience over time has shown that there is some discrimination in, in, in allocating the funds for research. So, in the end, it discourages many people from even applying for these grants. So, just for the little time that I have been there, that is what I have experienced. Some of the discrimination even comes at the level of the department, because, you submit, the head of department will take upon himself to, to do selections at his own level, which is not supposed to be so. Everything is supposed to be sent to the, the, the quarters that be. They should decide whether, uh, what you are applying for can pass for a grant or not. But some, it has occurred over time that some will take, since they want their own article to pass, or their own grant to go through, they have to suppress others so that there will be fewer grants that go in front and the the competition will be reduced so their own can go through. So, leadership wise, research is not really encouraged.*

The foregoing excerpt demonstrates that the leaders are unethical at work, do not encourage academics with the opportunity to grow in their careers, and lack a culture that respects the academic profession. Thus, contradicting the body of knowledge which states that leaders are not only supposed to define the vision, support the strategies, and act as promoters for workforce development and retention, they are also accountable for fostering an institution-wide culture of strong values and ethics (Mohnot & Shaw, 2017). Spillane's (2006) distributed leadership theory argues that leadership practice in an

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organisation is not only based on what the leadership of the organisation does but how it is done. Thus, there is supposed to be a balance between what the leaders intend to achieve and how they achieve it to make sense of their effectiveness.

In addition, it was found in this study that, the university leadership does not sponsor facilities and resources for undertaking research, attending international conferences, organising workshops and seminars at their institution, publication in reputable peer reviews, and participation in research activities, although the ministry has a budget that it disburses. Participants did mention a number of issues that stalled their research activities, including: insufficient funding and other resources (internet, obsolete library, electricity); administrative bottlenecks; bias and corruption in the distribution of students for supervision; and disputes over co-supervision. The findings of this study echo those of Nsah's (2016) study, which found that insufficient research funding and incentives are barriers to producing high-quality research results. Significantly, the results of this study also show that if academics wish to excel in their profession, they have no choice but to fend for themselves. They are left with no option but to fund their own research activities, such as publications and conferences, because there are not enough resources available for such activities. Participants believe that paying for their research endeavours, including publication in esteemed peer-reviewed journals, is already a challenge. Their ability to conduct research is hampered by their inability to access research infrastructures, a dearth of favourable conditions for scholarly publishing, and a dearth of research financing (Nsah, 2016). Consequently, they face obstacles to their professional development and have fewer opportunities to advance to higher academic ranks. They believe that you cannot develop in a setting that offers no opportunity for learning or personal development.

7.2.2.3 Undertaking research-led community engagement workload as a key performance indicator

Community engagement as one of the pillars of the HEIs has gained ground and visibility (Kopelyan, 2017; Ogunsanya & Govender, 2019), necessitating the university to not only articulate their interest in teaching and research in the university's mission statement, but also align with the immediate communities around them (Ogunsanya et al., 2019). As such, academics have a responsibility to undertake it as a key performance area. Scholars such as Zomer and Benneworth (2011) agree with Boyer's (1996) "Scholarship of Engagement" that universities, through their partnership with the community, can create significant and

innovative knowledge for the development of a community. This is because it informs the need for the "extension of the learning community to include community members, community service partners, students, and academic staff" (Bhagwan, 2018, p. 33). Moreover, while it brings about behavioural and environmental change, it also enables academics to plan their professional identity growth path through the university-community partnership (Fitzgerald et al., 2012; Adekalu et al., 2018; Bidandi et al., 2021).

Community engagement, as demonstrated in the literature (see Chapter 2.7.3) and the foregoing scholars, has debated its strength as one of the pillars of the university, and its importance has been emphasised. Cameroon universities also theoretically understand the importance of partnerships to drive university-community partnerships. This is seen through the well-structured nature of the community engagement policy in Cameroonian universities as identified by the participants of this study. The policy is in fact well-organised, much like the policies governing teaching and research. The policy, according to participants, is actually well organised, much like the policies governing teaching and research. This is demonstrated by the offices of the DVC in charge of corporations and vice deans in charge of corporations in each faculty, who have the authority to approve community engagement activities from the institution to the community. Moreover, the host community must also give its approval before any project can be carried out in that community. The approval can either come from the divisional officer (D.O.) of that subdivision, the council mayor, the quarter head (QH), or the commissioner of police (CoP) of that jurisdiction. This will depend on the type of activity that the participants want to undertake. It also emerged in the findings that before community engagement activities or projects are carried out, these two institutions (university and community) must sign an authorisation, which is taken to the community and an approval must be given by any of the authorities of the host community as mentioned above. Thus, community engagement, if it has to be undertaken, is not done in isolation as per its policy guidelines. Authorisation must be given first by the university, which is then taken to the community, and the head of that community must approve before any project can be accepted.

However, the study's findings revealed the impracticality of the community engagement activities. This is shown through university leaders' lack of interest and the lower priority given to community engagement activities, as perceived by participants' differing opinions. Although participants portrayed a somewhat bleak picture of university-community engagement, they also demonstrated a sincere enthusiasm and commitment to the tasks and

responsibilities they have as academics. However, the university leaders' disinterest, reluctance, and passive attitudes towards community engagement, which is one of their core responsibilities, constrained their professional growth. Additionally, there were specific instances of participants feeling disappointed with their university leadership role in the workplace environment. They were concerned at the leaders' tendency to distance themselves from community engagement activities and exhibit a lack of motivation. For instance, the findings indicated that only three of the 11 participants who were interviewed did not think that community engagement was an oddity that had no influence on their professional responsibility. They felt the leaders were not encouraging the activity as much as they should. In light of this, it is reasonable to say that participants who described community engagement as an important key performance indicator for their professional development expressed frustration at how disinterested the leaders regard it. In light of this study's findings, participants expressed the need for leaders who are devoted to their cause and prepared to collaborate with them if they are to interact with the community and give it their all. If leaders want to produce work that is excellent and well known, they must forge close ties with academics. A university needs leaders who are willing to collaborate with them and allow individuals with special skills the chance to perform and achieve results if it wants to be known as a credible institution of excellence. It needs leaders who are ready to change their behaviour to accommodate others for the completion of common tasks (Chemers, 2014).

The general discrepancy in this study is that, in the absence of university leaders' support for community engagement activities, participants viewed community engagement as a personal endeavour or hobby because there were no policies that defined the academics' community engagement activities in their faculty or department. As a result, as long as it was meaningful to their career and professional self, they could pursue anything they were motivated to do as their professional identity. This is consistent with a study by Netshandama and Mahlomaholo (2010), which asserts that there is no discipline in higher education (HE) in Africa referred to as "community engagement" because the term has different connotations in various disciplines and needs to be incorporated fully into all disciplines at various institutions for it to be successful (Netshandama & Mahlomaholo, 2010).

The participants in this study indicated that for change of rank or promotion, they must show evidence of their community engagement activities, especially in the faculties of Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine, Sciences, Health Science, Education, and Law. However, surprisingly, some participants noted that they are not aware of any community engagement

in their departments. They felt community engagement was a personal endeavour. This study could not find evidence that shows how academics' community engagement activities were supervised as they should be. Participants in this study described community engagement as a political debate. One participant maintained, "*I am a lover of politics and development, and I love participating in public debates that promote politics and the development of the nation as part of my outreach activities.*" However, the participants felt that the leaders who do not usually care about them undertaking community projects were always uncomfortable with those who engaged in political debates or activities that criticised the government's projects or activities. Participants also felt that some of the university leaders were viciously determined to stay in their positions of leadership or hoped to be appointed to a higher position; as such, seeing some of them talking about government activities on television, especially when they were critical, did not go well with the leaders who, in most cases, would call them to order. This finding is consistent with a study by Sobrero and Jayaratne (2014), which contends that academics who engage in community engagement may jeopardise their chances of promotion and tenure. On the other hand, other participants engage with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) as their personal initiatives that can be considered, according to them, as their own way of carrying out community engagement.

These findings show that there is no consistency in how community engagement is undertaken at the researched site. The study also revealed that community engagement projects were not only about the finances that came with them, but the knowledge, experience, and contribution to the community's development. What stands out in this finding is that, while the leaders were nonchalant about community engagement activities, whether the participants engaged in community engagement activities or not, they were not supervised. However, when they want to apply for promotion, they must present evidence of their community engagement activities. Promotion, on the other hand, may be difficult for those who participated in opposing political debates that were not supported by the leaders. In this study, I contend that social academic discussions that produce valuable feedback and increase community understanding of socio-political issues should be supported rather than suppressed. The mission of the university-community partnership is to address societal issues through the engagement of knowledgeable stakeholders. Engaging the community to address socio-economic or socio-political issues, among others, contributes to knowledge that is valuable to the community. This can be done by supporting academics' engagement in addressing these issues if they can do so based on their areas of specialisation and can

produce valuable solutions. This view is in line with a study by Ogunsanya et al. (2019) that argues that through community engagement, teaching and research can be expanded by equipping people outside the university with skills and experiences that can contribute to the quality of the university's scholarly agenda in ways that produce solutions to societal problems.

In the quantitative survey, (see Table 5) 83% of the respondent opined that leaders are not often aware of the challenges they face in community engagement. This result is consistent with what the participants said in the interviews and FGD. In addition to the leaders' lack of interest, participants who consider community engagement as their primary activity complained about a lack of resources to carry out community projects. They felt that leaders were not aware of the difficulties they had on the field because leaders did not come to the field to supervise their activities. Therefore, engaging with community projects without resources was a challenge for them and the members of the community. This lack of support from university leaders contributes to a considerable knowledge gap in universities' engagement with the external environment, which also greatly limits their professional development (Watermeyer, 2015). With this lack of support and motivation from the leaders, it appears that community engagement may not be valued and be at the bottom tier of teaching and research (Preece, 2011; Andoh, 2017) in the context of the university under study.

7.2.3 Macro-level: academics' conceptions of their professional identity based on external forces

The findings of this study indicate that there are multitudes of factors that influence academics' conceptions of their own professional identities through macro-external factors. The nature of the appointment of university leaders and external political control were examples of macro-external forces. This study found that the state used these forces to interfere in the affairs of the institution.

7.2.3.1 Academics' professional identity and the nature of appointment of university leaders

This section discusses how the nature of appointments of leaders in a Cameroonian university influences academics' professional identity construction. The study found that those who are not of the ruling party, or who do not support the regime and have no political, financial, or ethnic-tribal connections happened to be the most marginalised in the context of the

university under study. Participants stated that, while some of them had attained professorial rank through hard work and academic accomplishments, experience, and longevity, and had acquired the skills that justified them submitting their files for leadership positions; this is illusory and impracticable in Cameroonian universities. They claimed that ascending to the helm of leadership in the public service is a narrow road for those who have integrity. The nature of leadership in Cameroon is mostly by appointment through unconventional methods. Those who had the financial resources or influence or who were ready to be "*hand clappers*" for the regime in power were the privileged few who benefited from the regime's benevolence or compensation for serving the political party in power diligently. These were, amongst others, some of this study's findings.

However, there is a due process (rarely practical) for the selection of qualified candidates in leadership positions in Cameroonian universities. It emerged from this study's findings that there are two commissions for the selection of candidates for administrative and academic appointments. The first commission is at the level of the university, where the university is supposed to select people who work hard in terms of teaching, research publications, and engagement with the community, in terms of rank, experience, etc. The university then nominates them, and their complete files (files must be completed before selection) are sent to the ministry of higher education (MINESUP) in Yaoundé, where every administrative process or decision is centralised. When these files get to the ministry, the Consultative Committee of University Institutions (CCIU), or Comité Consultatif des Institutions Universitaires (CCIU) that is lodged at the ministry, is supposed to sit, appreciate the files, select, and then the list of those who are to be appointed by President Paul Biya is sent to the presidency (very thin possibility to just appoint people like that except the person is extremely fortunate and in rare cases).Then the minister also appoints those that he is supposed to appoint at his own level. However, that due process is marginally followed because there are certain people who are unethically nominated due to the external influences (political, tribal, financial resources) that thwart the process, despite the fact that their files may be incomplete (which is not supposed to be so) and they are not qualified to assume any administrative positions. When the files reach the CCIU, those who have the power to affect their appointment at that level can do so. Those with presidential connections can also influence their file from the presidency. This finding is consistent with Samuel's (2008) macro contextual forces (see Chapter 3.2.2.2).

Despite how alarming it may appear, this study's findings also show that some qualified individuals' files never reach the ministry in Yaoundé, "*You find people who have all the qualifications or what it takes for them to grow. But you just hear that someone, somewhere, held up their file.*" This indicates that those academics who have put in the hard work with honesty cannot grow in their profession. These findings show that academics who have chosen to be honest by not engaging in unorthodox methods to further their will hardly grow in a corrupt system. Their professional careers may stagnate in one way or another. This study also found that with the country's political structure most leaders are appointed based on connections. These groups of people are seldom competent to handle the position that is given to them because they have little or no knowledge of the sector. As a result, the system is full of loopholes that are supposed to be filled by the skills, competencies, and aptitude of those appointed to those positions. Yet only those with connections and no competencies are appointed to fill those positions.

It emerged in the study survey that 91.5% of the respondents claimed that promotion at their institution is based on the number of publications. While 86.9% of the respondents were of the view that promotion in their institution is based on the quality of publications (H Index of journals), another 93.6% of the respondents further claimed that promotion at their institution is based on educational qualifications (see Table 6). However, although these results support the promotion guidelines that were indicated in the interviews, in fact, those guidelines are not followed. This is because of the political nature of the country, where politics is used to control the activities of public institutions; most of the institutional policies appear to have been left on the shelves.

The results of this study may not come as much of a surprise to those who are familiar with the operationalization and context of leadership in Cameroon. The nature of appointments in Cameroon predates Paul Biya's accession to the supreme magistracy of absolute power of the nation of Cameroon as president in 1982. Appointment is an idiosyncratic culture of Paul Biya's Cameroon and his public service. It has been argued from numerous standpoints that the majority of individuals chosen are sometimes close friends, family members, and ardent supporters of the supreme regime (Djeudo, 2013). Some Cameroonian scholars (Fombad, 2000; Kah, 2010; Djeudo, 2013; Awah, 2018; Guiake & Tianxue, 2019; Ngenge, 2020) have debated this issue of political appointment in Cameroonian public services in their studies and its aftermath. Ngenge (2020) argues that most leaders at Cameroonian universities are

party loyalists who support the ruling party, and there has rarely been an appointment of a university leader who does not align with the ideologies of the ruling party. Thus, academics' identity construction in these universities is likely to be influenced by the type of political ideologies that are infused into the institution through the leadership of such individuals who have been appointed based their political ideologies. These are the odds of university leadership that contradicts distributed leadership interpreted by Bolden et al. (2009),

> It could certainly be argued that the bureaucratic nature of HE organisations, with their imbalances of power, authority, and resources, combined with recognition and career paths that tend to reward individual over collective achievement are largely at odds with the principles and premises of distributed leadership. Furthermore, the somewhat abstract representations of such dispersed forms of leadership make them difficult to convey in ways as compelling as the tales of heroism and achievement recounted from more individualistic perspectives (p. 6).

For university leaders to tackle prospective internal and external challenges, they must have relevant skills and competencies. However, it is concerning to find that Cameroonian universities' leadership lacks the leadership abilities and knowledge requisite to govern a university system. This study's findings indicated that this lack of skills, competencies, experience, or leadership knowledge is because these leaders are not nominated, selected, and appointed on the premise of policy, procedure or merit, nor are they appointed based on competencies, experience, skills, or training. One participant noted that these leaders are appointed based on "*Patron-client*" or "*godfatherism.*" "*People have to pay some due somewhere in order to earn their appointment.*" "*If you don't have a "godfather"...it limits me or limits my potential to excel.*" *Therefore, with these financial connections, most of these leaders are just handed down to the university.* "*Whether there is competency or not, you just have to obey.*" In this case, power has the upper hand over merit. These excerpts are a clear indication that those with the competencies and skills, those who have worked hard and deserve to be promoted, are marginalised and their professional development is stalled.

The choice of political appointment over meritocracy explains why the participants place their leadership in the category of inefficient, incompetent, and political and why it stalls their professional development. This gives an understanding to explain academics' experiences of why the nature of appointment influences academics' professional identity construction in the way that it does. In Africa, Cameroon is one of the few countries that still holds on to its colonial heritage (Ngwé & Prince Pokam, 2017). Cameroon's leadership structure has always

reflected the colonial state's structure of its former coloniser. It has always been pyramidal, with the administrative hierarchy informed by the superiority of the white race (Cameroon government and cohorts) and the Africans (marginalised Cameroonians) at the bottom of the administration (Nyanchoga, 2014). Woldegiorgis and Doevenspeck (2013) argue that the colonial officials would set the selection of academics, the design of curricula, and the programme based on the coloniser's interests as opposed to the colonised. This mirrors the Cameroonian system of education today, whereby the government has overall control over the academic and pedagogic activities of universities (Guiake & Tianxue, 2019).

The participants assert that these newly appointed university leaders not only have no knowledge of how higher education functions but also have no understanding of leadership and have never held a leadership position before, which may prevent them from ever knowing what to do or how to do it if they are faced with a complex situation. Additionally, they assert that the minister has appointed individuals from elementary schools to lead a university or faculty where there are qualified professors who may have the requisite abilities and competencies. This echoes Fombad's (2000) claims that appointment "is so arbitrary that a junior civil servant in one ministry could be appointed a director in another ministry. In some extreme cases, ministers have given civil service appointments to persons with no working experience whom they had first recruited" (p. 225). The participants observed that most of these individuals arrive and begin to learn how the systems work instead of bringing in new ideas and strategies. I contend that people should not be appointed to come in and learn a system; instead, they should be appointed to offer their expertise, knowledge, skills, and experience for the development of the university. Because leadership encompasses multiple functions, I believe it is a complex and difficult process to master (Van Wart, 2013). As such, universities need leaders who can take on the responsibility of fostering institutional leadership by translating leadership competencies into strategic assets (Hanson & Léautier, 2011; Ashcroft & Rayner, 2011; Bakuwa & Mouton, 2015), rather than leaders who lack the skills to lead and mentor people.

Since mentoring nurtures, instils skills, builds confidence, and develops people to their full potential, it is crucial to people's careers in an organisation. People might not be able to learn how to make those they lead their best selves without mentoring. According to this study, the majority of newly appointed university leaders in Cameroonian universities lack this mentoring ability. It was made clear by the participants that achieving the status of a

professor requires many years of extensive training, mentoring, and hard work. They noted that, "If *you don't pass through the strict mentoring regime of the seminars from the departmental to the faculty and at times the university, how do you expect somebody to give out what the person does not know?"* Mentoring is an approach to preparing academics for future administration positions, even though it seems like there are no institutions for training university executives in management abilities. Perhaps this is why such leaders are incompetent—they have not gone through the grooming process where their senior colleagues who have already gone through the same process to prepare them as they develop in their careers to mentor them. Leadership is multifaceted, and in order to overcome obstacles, it requires leaders with strategic expertise, as has already been argued in this study. Without the mentoring and preparation necessary for leadership, people cannot just "skyrocket" themselves into a position of authority and expect to perform well. There is a critical need for mentoring to occur if someone is to be an effective leader. Drawing from the lens of distributed leadership, Wan (2014) postulates that leadership practice from the university level through the different departments is enacted and supported, among others, through different strategies, such as a mentoring scheme and peer observation. However, in Cameroonian institutions, young doctors without mentoring have been appointed as HODs to lead professors without completely completing the required mentoring and grooming. Moreover, the participants also noted that political appointments without mentoring have "*a lot of implications, not just on research, outreach, and professional development, but it shapes the mind set of lecturers."* This may result in a lack of collaboration, conflict, and insubordination.

It emerged from the study's findings that university leaders appointed based on their ardent support for the regime in power acted rashly. The participants asserted that the mentality of being politically connected makes these leaders act rashly, intimidate, frustrate, and oppress others without considering how their actions and behaviour affect the functioning of the university and the output of those who work there. According to the findings, the university leaders harbour resentment towards other employees whom they perceive to have had their own people in positions of authority before. To them, the balance of power has switched, and they are now in charge. They are in a position of authority, they have political influence, and Yaoundé is the only place they can account for. These leaders' attitudes, according to the participants, can be seen when they make decisions without seeking advice from senior colleagues with higher academic standing who have been in the system for a long time,

understand the system, and have amassed considerable experience. These leaders take significant decisions without consulting other faculty or department members because, according to them, *"Now is our time." "Our moment has come*." Such statements and mind-sets may cause people to become distracted, forget their obligations, and begin seeking out their own connections, which are undoubtedly political. With such a mind-set, there is no hope for collaborative and inclusive leadership because these leaders cannot promote teamwork, which is essential for productivity. These are the bedrock of a chaotic and unstable working environment.

This research supports Kah's (2010) claim that the culture of appointment in Cameroon encourages arrogance and exploitation of the state's resources without any conscience from the state employees. Cameroonians in the public sector/service constantly look forward to and anticipate appointments. When there are rumours about appointments at 5 PM, they will tune in and pay close attention to the national radio channel because that is when the announcements are made. When one of them is appointed, people will switch their allegiance from the individual who was expelled to the new appointee, allowing them to continue to walk the halls of power (Kah, 2010). They will organise costly parties and celebrations to mark such appointments. However, in my view, it is appalling that those appointed lack the knowledge and abilities to be good leaders. I further contend that at their appointment, they are simply filled with pride and arrogance. They are unable to work hard and produce good results. This section has dealt on academics' professional identity and the nature of appointment of university leaders. The next section discusses academics' professional identity and external political control.

7.2.3.2 Academics' professional identity and external political control

According to Ashforth and Schinoff (2016), life in an organisation is deeply embedded in political complexities that are intricately connected to individual lives. Frantz et al. (2022) agree that this complexity, especially in the African context, is partly due to the colonial history of African countries and because segregation is deeply rooted in most of these institutions. There are external influences in the public sector in Cameroon. This is demonstrated by the political party's influence over all Cameroonian public sectors. As argued in this study (see Chapter 1), directors, university leaders, and ministers are among the senior officials that are all affiliated with the ruling party. The state has used this party to sway Cameroonians by promising appointments and promotions. The majority of

Cameroonians think that the only way to advance professionally in the country's public sector is to be a member of the ruling party. This argument resonates with a study by Djeudo (2013), which states that the state provides Cameroonian voters with a variety of tangible commodities and access to public services in exchange for their political support.

In Cameroonian higher education, management hierarchy and decision-making flow top-bottom, starting with the head of state, Paul Biya, moving down to the minister of HE through the ministry to the pro-chancellor, who serves as the chair of the university's board. The vice chancellor then assigns these decisions to the deputy vice chancellors, deans and vice deans of faculties, directors of schools, HODs, academic staff, non-academic staff, and students (see Chapter 1, page 18). According to the findings of this study, these decisions, which are meant to be pedagogical, are more political. This assertion is consistent with the research by Ngenge (2020), which asserts that because Cameroonian universities are state-created, they are first and foremost political institutions before becoming professional ones (see Chapter 1, page 18). These universities' political leanings have an influence on their missions, staff structures, and professionalisation responsibilities. This result is in line with the macro-contextual forces of Samuel's (2008) FFM for teacher development (see chapter 3.2.2.2.).

Ong (2012) argues that university leaders are expected to ensure academic freedom because it guarantees the freedom to express oneself without fear of retaliation; the freedom to select the teaching methods one wants to utilise; the freedom to share information with others; and the freedom to conduct original research in one's field. An aspect that needs to be taken into account in this regard is the wide range of restrictions on intellectual expression that the study's participants described. This is actually one form of intimidation, which influences their professional growth. In the contemporary age, the freedom to pursue, receive, and disseminate information and ideas of one's liking without deterrent and without regard to borders is of the highest concern regardless of one's racial or ethnic background, linguistic heritage, political connections, or social convictions. Every person should have unrestricted access to the fundamental human rights of freedom of speech and expression. People should have the right to express their thoughts because a system needs to change, and such a change can only occur when there is a variety of opinions. The results of this study do emphasise, however, that Mr. Paul Biya through his political faction is holding hostage key Cameroonian institutions due to political dominance. People are prohibited from expressing their

disgruntlement. The participants also bemoaned the fact that because they work in the public sector, it appears as though the government is the master and everyone in these government sectors is a slave, such that affiliates of the state party frequently employ the adage, "*you cannot bite the finger that feeds you.*" *Which means the ruling political party in the country is the master and anyone who works for the government controlled by that party is a slave* (Participant #4). People do not have the right to voice any views that are contrary to the status quo. Participants also felt that, it is ironic that members of the ruling party are free to speak for their party on university campuses, but opposition parties are not allowed to provide opposing viewpoints on the same campus. I contend that, because people are not allowed or are unable to express opposing viewpoints, they must navigate their duties inside a system intertwined with politics and power.

Because of their opposition-like political feelings or viewpoints, individuals have lost their jobs in Cameroonian HEIs (English-speaking institutions). The results of this study show that certain scholars have been arbitrarily suspended, dismissed, and jailed due to their forthrightness regarding the ongoing crisis in Cameroon. In the midst of the continuing socio-political instability (Anglophone problem or NW/SW conflicts), some scholars have been suspended because "*there was a test or an exam wherein he set a question that was, that dealt with some aspect of this particular...conflict and he was suspended*" (Participant #9). They are not allowed to elaborate on issues pertaining to the crisis, even if it pertains to their discipline. Participants of this study stated that they are not permitted to use the crisis as an example in the classroom. Perhaps political scientists, historians, or other academics cannot even use the crisis to further knowledge in the classroom or write scholarly articles that discusses its impact because the consequence will be that they are *"citing separatist"* tendencies. It is my view that they might not be able as an economists to elaborate or describe the effect of the crisis on the economy of the nation. Maybe only those who support the regime in place can write scholarly articles, and those articles must certainly praise the regime. One participant shared that only those lecturers who "*support the ruling party and you are very conspicuous about it, you can say it openly, write articles about it, you are definitely protected, you are well placed. But, when you are not, if you are of the opposition, you should be very careful because you can be trapped* (Participant #5). *You know you can be trapped.''* The political characteristics of some nations, particularly party politics, may require academics to focus on political duties at the cost of research; if they must publish, it must be regime-titled research (Nsah, 2016). The way the Cameroonian system is, even if

someone is appointed and is in a leadership position, if the person attempts to criticise or have a contrary view of the state's action, they will be purged out and replaced with political sycophants (Fombad, 2000).

It is on this backdrop that it is important to state that academics have a duty to disseminate knowledge for the advancement of society through their teaching, research, and community service activities or projects. They are also supposed to be promoted to a higher grade based on their scientific contribution to knowledge. However, although participants in this study stated the standard procedure for promotion (see 7.2.3.1), in some Cameroonian universities, they felt that their promotion was not only determined by those factors. The leaders of Cameroonian universities appear to be ruthless; academics are not even allowed to express intellectual criticism and cannot criticise the conduct of the leaders or oppose government initiatives. Universities in Cameroon seem to be so deeply ingrained in politics that scholars are forced to "*reason or toe the line.*" "*Clap your hands and speak positively about everything political around you, and see how you can manage and work within the context of the political values of the administration to be in their good books.*" Otherwise, when the leaders are required to prepare a departmental scientific report to support their promotion files, the leaders obstruct their promotions using their political stances. Politically, it may be said academics at the university under study have been reduced to, or subjected to, a group of diffident and wary individuals because the system forbids freedom of speech. As a result, political views override the typical politics of academia.

7. 2   Discussion of Findings

This section is organised according to three themes that emerged from the findings of this study as mentioned above, which are arranged according to the following subheadings. Micro-individual levels of professional identity conceptions, meso-institutional levels of academics' experiences of university leadership practices on professional identity construction, and Macro-external levels of academics' experiences of university leadership practices on professional identity construction. This study has demonstrated that the micro, meso, and macro levels of individual, institutional and external experiences influence how academics construct their professional identities. The main findings of this study emphasise that a variety of factors influence academics' conceptions of their professional identities many of which have emerged in other studies are also present in the findings from the current study. These themes are discussed in depth in the following sections.

7.3   Concluding Remarks

In this chapter, I discussed the findings from the data generated from semi-structured individual interviews, focus group discussions, and a questionnaire survey. The findings of this study identified three main themes and eight subthemes, which were organised and discussed based on key research questions, objectives, and theoretical lenses. There is no attempt to consolidate all of the findings that emerged from the data in this study. Instead, it puts a particular emphasis on the key components that, in my opinion, were important, if only to address the research objectives that were raised earlier in this study. The findings revealed that academics' conceptions of their own professional identity provide a wealth of knowledge on how their notion of identity could be looked at in the context of the university under study. Evaluation of the literature, though limited, revealed common characteristics among those studies that give a near-unambiguous conception of professional identity. Despite some common ground in the views of participants in the qualitative and quantitative data within the same institution, there are also important discordances amongst them. References to the relevant literature were infused in the discussion of the findings. This chapter has dealt with the second level of abstraction. The next chapter deals with the summary, recommendations, implications, and limitations of the study. It describes the study's contribution to the body of knowledge.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

8.1 Introduction

The previous chapter offered in-depth discussions of the key findings of this study and some theoretical explanations of the key findings. I discussed the key findings, presented arguments using literature and insights drawn from the data analysis, and used key theoretical constructs from the theoretical framings that informed this study. This last chapter provides a summary of the findings that responded to the critical research questions that guided the study. The limitations of the study, research contributions, and recommendations from the findings are then presented. In addition, I stressed the suggestions for future research and conclusions.

In exploring the research questions for this study, I used a mixed-methods research approach within a case study design that was located in the pragmatic paradigm. This was to enable me to make sense of leadership practices and how they influence the construction of academics' professional identities in the context of a Cameroonian university. I employed qualitative semi-structured individual interviews with eleven (11) participants who were purposively selected through snowball sampling. A single FGD was also conducted. In addition, I used probability-based simple random sampling to recruit 170 participants for the survey questionnaire. While engaging the participants in the individual interviews and FGD, the participants pondered their conceptions of professional identity and the influence of university leadership practices on the construction of their professional identities. I argued in this study that university leadership practices negatively influence academics as they construct their professional identities in the context of the Cameroonian university. This is seen, especially, in the fact that they have to toe the line and follow the status quo of political encroachment as was declared by the participants of this study.

8.2 Summary of the key Findings

In this study, the participants were able to articulate their conceptions of their own professional identity. They revealed that the conceptions of their professional identities are at a micro-level: academics' conceptions of professional identity based on individual forces;

meso-level conceptions of academics' professional identities based on institutional forces; and macro-level academics' conceptions of their professional identities based on external forces. The following sections give a summary of the findings based on these broad themes.

8.2.1 Micro-level: academics' conceptions of their professional identity based on individual forces

The university under study has a diversified faculty and departmental staff that approach their respective roles and responsibilities in their various disciplines in different ways. As a result, the conceptualization of their professional identities is set by their diverse experiences with leadership practices. The results of this study, therefore, showed that the individualistic conceptions of their professional identities are influenced by their personal beliefs, values, motivations, characteristics, and experiences with leadership practices in their teaching, research, and engagement with the community. This finding embraces the force field model for teacher development, which argues that teachers are different and that in their diversity "no two teachers are identical in their experiences, personalities, training, and interpretations of their role as members of a community involved in the practice of teaching and learning" (Samuel, 2008, p. 8). Given that the available literature only theorises concepts related to professional identity in general rather than academic identity in higher education, the findings of this study show that participants from diverse backgrounds and experiences conceptualised their professional identity in the context of higher education differently. This shows that academics' conceptions of their own professional identities are not fixed but rather develop through time and cannot be seen as an undeviating process. Consequently, employing the Cameroonian context, where political corruption has always been a feature of Cameroonian politics and has been used as a means of acquiring and maintaining political power such that political appointments infiltrate all of the public service (Fombad, 2000), coupled with government influence on institutional policies, demonstrates that a single concept cannot suffice to understand how academics conceive of their professional identities. It can be concluded then that in the study context, the academic and professional identities in higher education are therefore too complex to be fully captured by a single concept.

The study's participants offered an assortment of meanings that are intertwined as they discussed how they perceived their own professional identities in the context of leadership practices on their roles and responsibilities at the university under study. In light of this, the results indicated that participants' conceptions of academics' professional identity are

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multitudinous. The participants conceive of professional identity as a self-conception that is subjectively intertwined between self, discipline, and context thus highlighting the influence of their work context's socioeconomic, political, and cultural realities on their unique personal attributes and discipline. Samuel's (2008) FFM for teacher development posits such influences as different push and pull forces that can either constrain or enhance teacher professional development in different directions. He further adds that in each of these forces lies an understanding of how it relates to the teacher's professional development. Furthermore, each of these forces according to the FFM has the capacity to have both positive and negative effects on teachers' professional development. As such, while some of these forces might prevent the teacher identity from shifting, others might serve as a trigger for performing new roles for the teacher profession.

The findings also demonstrated that participants' conceptions of their professional identities are characterised by the need for them to outshine by distinguishing themselves in the ways that they conduct, engage, and disseminate knowledge within their discipline from their colleagues. The results further demonstrated that participants' conceptions of their professional identities included the ability to establish a symmetry between their own personal beliefs and those of other individuals regarding their discipline within their professional context. This included their perspectives on their skills, networks, institutional politics, compensation scheme, research, available resources, and interactions with other colleagues in the higher education context. Importantly, the findings in the context of this theme also suggested that participants, in conceptualising their professional identity, also considered their roles and responsibilities of belonging to a profession defined by their ability to ensure visibility, good teaching aptitude, teaching and research ethics, and academic deontology within their profession.

8.2.2 Meso-level: academics' conceptions of their professional identity based on institutional forces

The findings in this theme were very significant for academics' conceptions of their professional identities based on institutional forces because they were addressed taking cognizance of three constructs: teaching workload, research, and research-led community engagement. The results showed inconsistencies in leadership practices on policies governing teaching, research, and community engagement. Like every organisation, HEIs have policies that outline, support, and emphatically state what is expected of the entire staff in a university

setting. Policies also provide direction, responsibility, efficiency, and clarity for the operationality of a university. These inconsistencies are likely the reason why distributed leadership theory argues that the focus of leadership is more on individual agency or the role of micro-structure in shaping what leaders do than on their practices (Spillane et al., 2004). Bolden et al. (2008) contend that the processes and practices by which leadership is distributed and the implications for leadership practice and development in universities are neglected. The academics who participated in this study made it clear that while their university has well-structured policies governing teaching, research, and community engagement, the leadership of the university seldom follow these guidelines. In light of this, the influence of leadership practices on teaching, research, and research-led community engagement was examined, and numerous conclusions were drawn as follows:

Firstly, this study asserted that some leaders ensured academics' professional growth by providing some teaching resources, maintaining a favourable teaching and learning environment, fostering a collaborative relationship, and including academics in decisions pertaining to their performance areas, which is in line with Spillane's distributed leadership theory. The aforementioned, however, are minor in comparison to the plethora of challenges academics face because of leadership practices that influence their teaching performance. In view thereof, this study asserted that through the unscientific and corrupt tendencies of the leadership of this study's context, there is always that slogan that permeates the Cameroonian public sector that *"a goat can only eat grass where it is being tied*." According to the participants in the context of this study, most leaders are money-minded, such that they use the above slogan as a tool to negotiate their share of the proceeds from the allocation of extra paid teaching hours. Thus, it can be concluded that only academics who follow through on the promise to split the profits with them are therefore qualified for additional hours of compensated instruction. Given that it is a win-win situation, some of these academics who have been allocated those extra hours spend more time lecturing in different institutions (mostly private) and hardly ever cover the extra hours, yet are paid without teaching. It becomes precarious in the sense that the leaders cannot sanction them or give written complaints against them because they have shared the earnings with them.

The findings of the study also show that, in the context of the leadership practices discussed in the study, academics who still want to grow in their career while maintaining their integrity must adhere to the status quo. Hence, academics cannot write complaints against their leaders' practices for fear of being victimised and having their career stalled since these

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leaders work in a clique. Distributed leadership criticises the nature, ethics, and efficacy of such leadership practices (Lumby, 2013) because it argues that leadership should be premised on teamwork between the leaders, academics, students, and even support staff when designing programmes, drawing timetables, allocating modules (courses), and conducting administrative activities (such as enrolment of students and recruitment of staff) (Harris & Spillane, 2008).

It was also revealed by the participants that the supervision of teaching exhibits a mismatch between policy and practice. This is relevant to the study since it indicates the leaders' political allegiances to the state party in power. Based on this knowledge, the study found that leaders claim that they are monitoring teachers' performance in the classroom for the benefit of the students, when in reality they are doing so for political purposes to maintain their leadership positions and to demonstrate their loyalty to the government that appointed them. In light of these assertions, administrators use students as informants to make sure that the curriculum does not criticise governmental programmes. The findings of this study revealed that it is prohibited to talk about the socio-political conflict that has been raging in Cameroon's northwest and southwest regions for the past six years. It was also found that one of the reasons teaching was monitored was to ensure that this conflict was not discussed or cited in any form in the classroom by academics. According to the participants, for fear of victimisation, academics are apprehensive in their classrooms when disseminating content because they can never be sure of who is listening. This fear of victimisation from university leaders is one of the institutional forces in Samuel's (2008) FFM for teacher development that can cause some teachers to lose interest in teaching if the culture of the school context is uninteresting at any given time. In addition, mentorship and staff development programmes were identified in the literature and this study's results as fundamentally significant for early career academics. The findings revealed that the leaders of the study's context did not oversee mentoring or provide support for staff development programmes.

Furthermore, the intellectual oversight that is meant to take place in the framework of mentoring young academics through co-teaching and feedback from older lecturers is not actually ensured by leaders. Additionally, the leaders do not provide funding for a coordinated staff development programme designed to foster renewing and reflective teaching, pedagogically skilled subject experts, educational developers who can reflect on how to enhance university teaching, and educational developers who can focus their research

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on university teaching (Nevgi & Löfström, 2015). In view thereof, this study found that not only do leaders not fund these programmes, but they also devote little attention to the instructional infrastructure, like teaching aids and classrooms. It was revealed that content knowledge could not be properly disseminated with the poor state of the classrooms and teaching aids. It can be concluded that leaders were selective of what they prioritised and placed their energy on which include preserving their leadership positions

Like every public university globally, Cameroon is no exception to the research grants that are awarded to academics. However, how these grants are awarded in this study's context proved unsettling. It was revealed by the participants that two research financial streams exist at the research site. The government, through the ministry of HE, provides the external stream, and the institution grants the internal stream. However, according to this study's participants, several issues were listed as obstacles to accessing these grants. Findings from this study indicates that inconsistencies in the selection of grant awardees, administrative bottlenecks that encourage bribery and corruption, and discrimination in grant disbursement all contributed to academics' inability to be research active and productive. Leadership in the context of this study according to the participants has demonstrated a lack of an ethical culture that respects the academic profession through how these *leaders preselect and discard some academics' files for research grants*. HODs are responsible for gathering files in their offices and sending them unaltered to the office that handles grant proposals when it comes to research grants. However, *some HODs choose to submit their files for grants.* Hence, there are fewer opportunities for other academics whose files may have been discarded. Furthermore, as revealed in this study, *the leaders have neglected other research incentives; for instance, there is a lack of internet, the books in the library are obsolete, and sometimes there is a poor electricity supply*; all of these prevent academics from attending virtual conferences and workshops.

Community engagement is one of the pillars of the HEIs, and academics have a responsibility to undertake it as a key performance area, which enables academics to plan their professional identity growth path through university-community partnerships. As a key pillar of the academic's role, this study context has a well-defined policy through the office of the DVC and vice deans in charge of corporations. In view thereof, these offices authorise academic engagement with the community, and the community in turn approves the authorization. Although these policies are available, this study found that they exist only in theory and are

not implemented. The study further established that the leaders are not aware of the challenges that they faced in the community because they have disregarded community engagement, much like they have with teaching and research. According to the study's findings, some academics participate in community engagement on a personal level by doing things that are important to them because leaders do not generally encourage it and *there are rarely any policies governing academics' community engagement activities*. Naturally, as a criterion for academic promotion, academics are supposed to *present proof of their community engagement activities before they are promoted to a higher rank*, although leaders neither finance nor supervise it. This lack of support contributes to a considerable knowledge gap within the community, which also limits academics' professional development (Watermeyer, 2015).

8.2.3 Macro-level: academics' conceptions of their professional identity based on external forces

Cameroon is one of the few nations still holding on to its colonial heritage, and Cameroon's leadership structure has always reflected the colonial state's structure of its former colonisers (Ngwé & Prince Pokam, 2017). It has always been pyramidal, with the administrative hierarchy informed by the superiority of the government and its cohorts and the marginalised Cameroonians at the bottom of the administration (Nyanchoga, 2014). To ground this discussion further in the context of external government influences on academics' conceptions of their professional identity, study particularly focused on the nature of appointments of leaders and external political control in this study's context. Even though there are commissions at the ministry of higher education and the university selects and nominates candidates for administrative and academic promotion based on hard work, academic achievements, longevity, and experience, according to the participants, the due processes have been overlooked. They further state that leadership *appointment is an idiosyncratic culture of Cameroon's public service, and those who are appointed are regime supporters and state political affiliates who lack the skills, competency, experience, or leadership knowledge or training to head the university*. Those with many years of accumulated academic experiences and achievements but who are not supporters of the state political party or do not have other forms of unorthodox connections are rarely appointed to those big leadership posts. Importantly, this study revealed that some of these qualified academics' files are sometimes not forwarded to Yaoundé because they are honest and have

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chosen not to engage in unorthodox methods to further their careers. Thus, there is bound to be friction between these political leaders and such academics.

The results of this study also revealed that several of the leaders lacked knowledge of the HE system in addition to their lack of competency. This is so because some of them are appointed from other sectors. This study identified a scenario where the minister, for political or familiarity reasons, *appoints unqualified individuals from the primary school to govern a university with qualified academics who could handle the positions better*. With this lack of knowledge of the system, *the appointees spent more time learning the system than bringing their knowledge and management skills to the fore.* Additionally, some of these appointed leaders have *an arrogant attitude due to their political ties, and they have used them to oppress, intimidate, and frustrate other staff without giving them any thought.* It was also found that most of these leaders assumed their positions with a great deal of resentment toward other colleagues who had friends who had previously held those positions. As a result, *they make important pedagogical decisions without consulting those experienced colleagues because, in their eyes, it is their time and they are in charge; power has changed hands.*

In addition, this study found that mentoring can impart knowledge, instil confidence, and help people reach their full potential. It was found to be vital to the participants' careers because it could bring out the best in them. According to the participants, without the mentoring and preparation necessary for leadership, *people cannot be in positions of authority and expect to perform well without proper preparation,* especially in a complex system like a HEI. There is a need to pass through the *strict mentoring regime* of the seminars if academics aspire to be in leadership positions and be effective leaders. It was also found in this study that early-career academics who have not gone through the normal grooming and mentoring process that every academic goes through *have been appointed as HODs to lead a department that has professors* with the knowledge and experience to be in that position of governance. Furthermore, the participants noted that there are mentoring seminars that academics are supposed to pursue in the context of this study to foster their career paths. However, because of political and other ties, some young academics have been appointed, justifying some of the incompetency and offshoots this study has highlighted regarding leadership.

External political control exhibits complexity and segregation that are deeply rooted in most institutions due to the colonial history of African countries (Frantz et al., 2022). This study's findings revealed that there are external influences in the public sector in Cameroon,

demonstrated by the political party's influence over all Cameroonian public sectors. Directors, university leaders, and ministers are among the senior officials who are all affiliated with the ruling party. According to the participants, *working in the public sector is one thing, but being promoted is believed to be mostly through political affiliation.* This study also found that *management hierarchy and decision-making flow top-to-bottom,* starting with the government and moving down to the vice chancellor through the minister of higher education, and that these *decisions, which are meant to be pedagogical, are more political.* These universities' political leanings influence their missions, staff structures, and professionalization responsibilities.

Furthermore, there is one tendency in the Cameroonian system: *either you toe the line, support the ruling party and be very conspicuous about it, write articles and say good things about it, and you are protected, or you criticise the state with opposition-like viewpoints,* and you are arbitrarily arrested and jailed. It has been amplified by the current NW/SW conflict in Cameroon. It was also revealed that quoting the ongoing socio-political conflict in the NW and SW regions of Cameroon during lessons is *taboo content,* as it will be considered by the leadership that academics are likely citing it to incite separatist feelings in the classroom. It was further revealed that, because of this "*taboo content,*" some lecturers have been arbitrarily arrested, others have been suspended, and some have been dismissed from academia in the context of this study. The academics have no other choice but to reason, be "*hand clappers,*" and *speak positively about everything political around them.* That is the only way to work within the context of the political values of the administration and to be in their "*good books.*" Otherwise, when the leaders prepare a departmental scientific report to support their promotion files, they may obstruct their promotions based on their political stances.

8.3 Limitation of the study

Before going into the study's contributions to knowledge, it is important to emphasise some of the limitations that I faced as a researcher. These limitations were experienced not just due to my personality as a researcher but also due to the sample size, the gender imbalance between the male and female participants, and the methodological limitations, which are discussed next.

8.3.1 My positionality as a researcher

The study's research site was a good fit for me because I was familiar with the academic environment, had contacts with and interactions with the participants, and had attended these Cameroonian universities. Additionally, because I was familiar with some of the participants and they knew who I was; they felt comfortable with me during the research process. Despite the possibility that my personal experiences as a former student of the university under study and my understanding of the political structure and challenges within the educational system could lead to bias, I made sure to immerse myself in the participants' context both qualitatively and quantitatively as a mixed-methods researcher. Despite the possibility that my personal experiences would introduce bias into the study, I made an effort to take an impartial stance that would allow me to understand and evaluate each participant's experiences objectively.

8.3.2 The participants

The mixed-methods study that explored the exploratory sequential design was conducted using purposive snowball and probability simple random sampling, limiting the possible generalisation of the findings. The sample size for the qualitative part of the study was limited to 11 qualitative participants, with just two female participants selected from five out of seven faculties and schools at one university in Cameroon. Quantitatively, some faculties dominated the return responses. In addition, the study did not engage with all the academics lecturing at this particular university. Furthermore, although the demographic information of participants provided me with important insights into the characteristics of the sample population, these demographic characteristics did not affect the findings in any way because the study was interested in exploring the experiences of leadership on their identity as academics and not how their demographic characteristics influenced their experiences. Moreover, my intention was not to generalise the findings of the study but rather to engage in-depth with a small category of knowledgeable participants in ways that I could explore the issues or phenomena, evoke questions, and gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of academics' experiences of university leadership and how this influences their professional identity construction.

8.3.3   Methodological limitation

Since this study was conducted at a Cameroonian university, I was unable to travel for data generation for this study due to a lack of financing; therefore, the interviews were conducted via Zoom. Given the challenge that comes with conducting cross-border research using virtual means for data generation, identifying the participants was a challenge. Thus, I used snowball sampling to recruit the participants. This was after I had identified someone who was not a lecturer and credited their phone to contact some academics in the case study university. After a few participants were identified, I was able to recruit others for the interviews through these participants. However, due to the socio-political conflict in that region of Cameroon, the participants did not want to be interviewed via Zoom for security reasons, which delayed the process. Although I explained the ethical considerations that had been taken, some participants insisted on being anonymous on the Zoom call because they did not want their identities disclosed on the call. Furthermore, some participants declined the invitation, while others insisted on being interviewed via WhatsApp. Moreover, during the interviews, some participants left the Zoom call and did not return. To ensure anonymity, some interviews were conducted with the participants' videos turned off, and they preferred to be referred to by numbers.

Another challenge was the issue of poor internet connectivity, and due to that, some interviews were rescheduled. For instance, some participants who agreed to be interviewed kept postponing the date and time of the interview. Some continued to make excuses for failing to keep agreed-upon appointments. Furthermore, a significant effort was spent on the data generation and analysis operations. The intensity of the data generation and analysis for both phases 1 and 2 of the research study, combined with some participants' failure to complete the interviews, made the semi-structured interviews and FGD necessary to be conducted over a four-month period, from December 4th, 2021, to March 15th, 2022. Finally, yet importantly, a majority of the interviewees were men. As previously stated, the majority of the female academics who had been identified did not accept the invitation to participate in the interview. They expressed concerns about time and family responsibilities but stated that they could respond to questionnaires because they were less time-consuming. As a result, during quantitative data generation, I contacted these female lecturers and asked them to complete the questionnaire. Despite significant delays, a few responded to the questionnaire after many WhatsApp call reminders. All of these factors contributed to the interview delay. However, to address these delays, I followed up with participants on a regular basis,

reminding them of the importance of their participation and the impact it has on the study's findings, given the phenomenon's relevance in their context.

8.4 Contribution to Knowledge

Numerous studies have been undertaken on the ways in which academics in higher education perform their roles and responsibilities in teaching, research, administration, and/or community engagement. Factors that influence these roles and responsibilities are made more apparent by the current discussions on professional identity and what it really means to be an academic in higher education. As a result, this study contributed to both the field of academics' professional identity construction as well as leadership practices in higher education contexts. The study: "Academics' experiences of university leadership in constructing their professional identities: A case of a Cameroonian university," makes a significant contribution in that it is one of the first studies to have examined in-depth academics' conceptions of their own professional identities in higher education; academics' experiences of leadership practices on their professional identities; through the lenses of distributed leadership and the Force Field Model for teacher development.

This study has produced other new perspectives through which academics' conceptions of professional identity can be understood in the context of higher education. The micro-level: academics' conceptions of their professional identity based on individual forces, the meso-level: academics' conceptions of their professional identity based on institutional forces, and, and macro-level: academics' conceptions of their professional identity based on external forces were revealed to influence academics professional identities at a Cameroonian university. For instance, in the context of the micro-level, which embodies academics' conceptions of professional identity based on individual forces, this study found three approaches to conceptualising academic professional identity in higher education. Figure 11 shows a representation of academics' conceptions of academic professional identity.
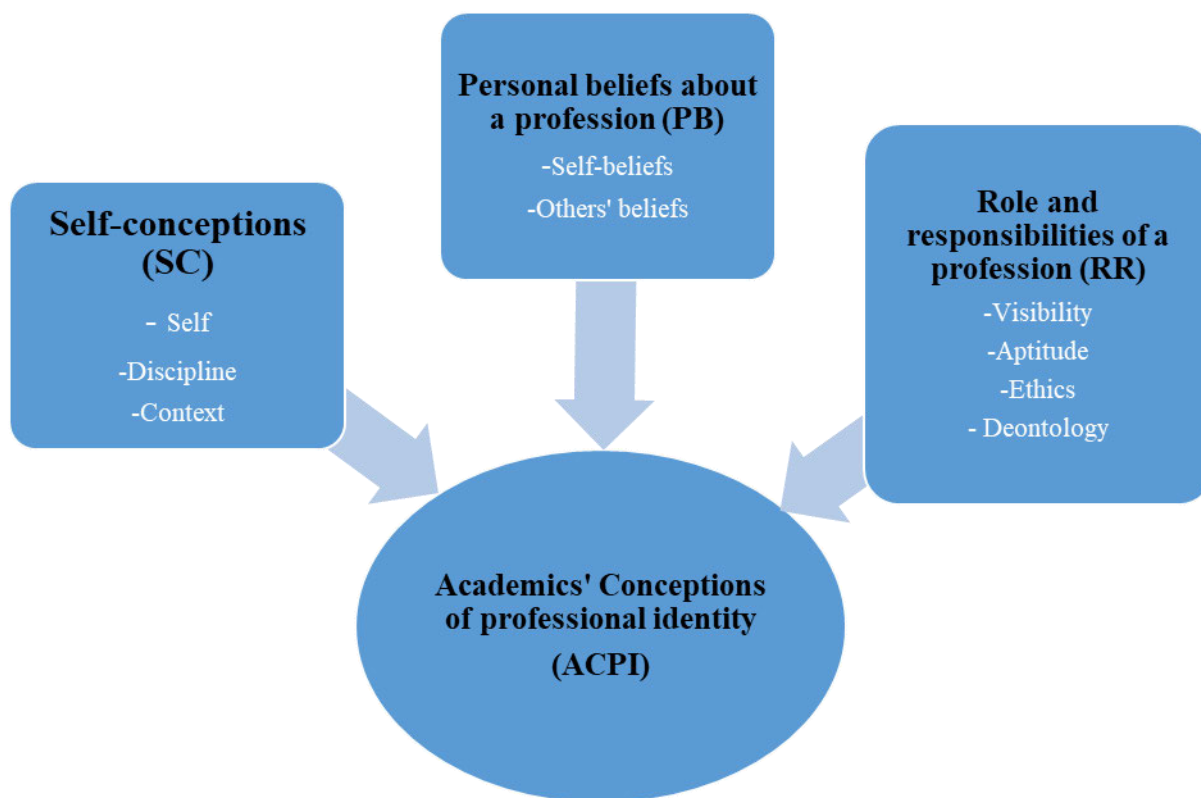
Figure 11: *A virtual representation of Academics' conceptions of academic professional identity (Source: Author)*

It has been mentioned in this study (Chapter 2.6) that there is a dearth in the literature on conceptualization of academic professional identity in higher education (Drennan et al., 2017). This study has demonstrated meaningful ways in which academics view their own professional identity and provided an understanding of the phenomenon from their own perspectives. Therefore, they brought their contextual understanding of academic professional identity, which has contributed to the literature conceptually. This suggests that there are differences in how Cameroonian academics view their professional identities. They conceptually build on three broad ideas to understand the phenomenon, stating firstly that professional identity is academics' self-conceptions of their professional identity in higher education, as seen in figure 8. It looks at academics' self-conceptions of their professional identity as the relationality of self, discipline, and context. This is seen through the lens of the subjective "I" and the objective "Me" to signify that professional identity is first an individualistic perspective that embodies the person's discipline in a profession and the context of the profession. Secondly, professional identity is an academic's personal beliefs about their profession. This is demonstrated by the distinction between individuals' personal beliefs about their field of specialisation within their professional context and others' beliefs within the same professional context. The third perspective is that professional identity is

defined by the roles and responsibilities of belonging to an academic profession, which is characterised by their capacity to ensure visibility, effective teaching skills, teaching and research ethics, and the deontology of the academic profession.

In addition, in the context of meso-level structures of academics' conceptions of their professional identities based on institutional forces, this study found that leadership as an institutional force negatively influenced teaching, research, and research-led community engagement as key performance indicator areas for academics. In this regard, the study has made a contextual contribution to the literature.

This study also found that at the macro-level, academics' conceptions of their professional identity are based on external forces, and the government influences academics' professional development through the nature of the appointments of the leaders and the power issues of the political party in power. In view thereof, this study contributed to the knowledge that university leaders serve as an intermediary between the state and academics as they construct their identities through teaching, research, and community engagement.

Two theories were used as lenses to explain the phenomenon under study. The distributed leadership theory was developed for school systems and has now been adapted for use in higher education institutions worldwide, including the UK (Bolden et al., 2008). Therefore, this study used DL theory to understand academics' experiences with university leadership in constructing their professional identities in a Cameroonian university and discovered that DL is theoretical but not fully implemented due to the political nature of the university leadership and the government's interference with the institutional policies and practices. Thus, this DL theory is not applicable in the context of Cameroon, where the university is not autonomous because of political and government encroachments on decision-making. Furthermore, the FFM for teacher development, which was also developed for school teacher professional identity, was also employed in this study to explore the push and pull forces that influence academics' professional identities. Thus, it was found that biographical forces (personal background or experiences); contextual external forces (government changing educational policy, political influence); programmatic forces (course distribution and the culture of how curriculum is enacted in the classroom through the teaching methods, teaching and learning materials, subject disciplines); and institutional forces (leadership practices) exert push and pull forces that influence academics' professional identities in this study's context. The study therefore makes a theoretical contribution.

Methodologically, studies have been done on professional identities that have either used qualitative or quantitative approaches to research. This study did not only integrate both qualitative and quantitative approaches; it used a combination of interviews, focus group discussions, and a questionnaire survey to generate data to validate the results, but it also used deductive and inductive reasoning to analyse the data that was generated for this study to increase the depth and breadth of the findings. Thus making a methodological contribution.

Lastly, this study's contribution was also made at the level of the instruments for data generation. The researcher of this study designed the interviews, FGD, and questionnaire survey instruments. The researcher's supervisor, PhD peers, and PhD cohort facilitators also reviewed, suggested changes, and validated the instruments before they were taken to the field.

8.5   Recommendations

The results of this study have highlighted several interpretations of academics' conceptions of their professional identities in relation to how they experienced leadership at a Cameroonian university. The study revealed some peculiar and unexpected findings, including the need to address issues like corruption, discrimination, inconsistent and incompetent leadership, funding, government and political interference, and a mismatch between theory and practice in policy implementation. The practice of policy implementation in the context of political influence is complex due to the political structure and government interference in HEIs' decision-making. While there may be data to prove that other studies may have provided recommendations to policy experts that can transform the higher education sector, it seems that some of these recommendations may not be implemented. However, there may be leeway and a prospect for developing more pragmatic implementation approaches. Furthermore, what is needed are skilled individuals with the drive to put such theory into practice. Moreover, adopting a more blended bottom-up and top-down approach to policy implementation may be a point of departure for addressing the gaps that already exist in theory and practice. The results of this study led to the following institutional policy recommendations that are aimed at government officials, stakeholders in higher education policy, university administrators at all levels, and academics.

Due to the previously mentioned vices outlined to demonstrate that this study's context is not autonomous with ongoing governmental and political encroachment, the findings of this study revealed numerous complexities within the context of teaching, research, and

community engagement policies' implementations. The effectiveness and efficiency of teaching, research, community engagement activities, issues with infrastructural development (classroom aid), financing, governance, and/or quality assurance mechanisms are just a few of the many issues that higher education policy makers may need to address to ensure quality output. This study found that university policies do not address the needs and wellbeing of the academic staff. The higher education policy gap between theory and practice must therefore be bridged, and policymakers may need to work closely with all stakeholders to build robust monitoring and assessment procedures. They should also be able to provide transparent and straightforward strategies to address the challenges that may surface during the policy implementation process.

The university should be free of all forms of party politics, including those supported by the government and the opposition leaders. This study's findings indicated that it is a place for the construction and co-construction of knowledge. In view thereof, there should be a definite line between state political ideologies and mainstream academic political beliefs for the government, university administrators, and academics. This study thus recommends that the various stakeholders mentioned keep their political ideologies separate from the academic community. If academics must impart political knowledge to students, they should do so in the context of the material that needs to be taught, not to inflame partisan sentiments.

As presented in this study, there is no contesting that university leaders have the responsibility to ensure the operations and management of the university and are required to foster institutional leadership by translating leadership competencies into strategic assets. However, the study found that in the absence of competency, integrity, and ethical leadership, there is a lack of collaboration between the leaders and the followers. This lack of collaboration results in a dysfunctional system where there is no consultation in the decision-making process. Therefore, there is a critical need for university leaders to adopt leadership tactics and philosophies that put teamwork, shared leadership, and internal decision-making first in order to succeed in the face of complexity. The decentralisation of power, which encourages creativity and enables leaders to act quickly in the wake of challenges, is something that the leader must embrace. Moreover, this study also calls for a critical review of the appointment policy of the university leaders to ensure that those who are appointed have gone through the mentoring and grooming process and have acquired some leadership skills. Furthermore, university leaders should enrol in leadership capacity-building programmes that foster ethics and leadership competence in university leaders.

Staff development programmes (plan), mentoring, and co-teaching help academics develop personally and professionally while also renewing reflective academics with pedagogical expertise and educational developers with the capacity to reflect on ways to improve their teaching, research, and community engagement activities. This study, however, revealed that the university leaders in the study's context do not support and fund these initiatives. The university leaders should thus create training opportunities, establish an impartial, well-coordinated workforce to train academics, and improve their performance and capacity, in addition to providing the funding necessary to build and maintain these programmes.

Additionally, the ministry of higher education has to reactivate its inspectorate division, which should oversee the conduct and performance of university administrators. Additionally, the ministry of higher education's supervision department should help ensure that institutional programmes are consistently carried out effectively. The results suggest that the difficulties faced by academics in terms of insufficient funding for teaching, research, and publications, as well as community engagement activities, may have a negative impact on university rankings and academics' visibility, in part because academics are also unable to attend international conferences.

8.6   Suggestions for Further Research

According to this study's findings, academics' construction of their professional identities within the context of the university under study is clearly influenced by university leadership, which raises questions about the effectiveness of leadership practices in this regard. As a result, the following suggestions for future research are included below:

➢ Further studies exploring leadership practices and the professional identity construction of academics should be undertaken through the lens of ethical and status quo leadership perspectives and critical theory.

➢ Since the study was only focused on the academic staff of one English-speaking university, it is essential to conduct a study that is focused on academics from French-speaking universities in order to include their voices and use a comparative approach. This will allow us to gain a comprehensive understanding of how university leadership practices influence academics in the context of French-speaking universities.

➢ More advanced studies should also be conducted on how university leadership practices influence academics' construction of their professional identities in other contexts or countries, globally as well as in private institutions or universities.

➢ Cameroonian universities may be failing because there is an imbalance between policy and practice. Thus, further studies should specifically examine how the implementation of teaching and learning policies is an issue that needs responsiveness from those in charge of making sure that theory is practiced.

➢ Given the findings of this study, I found that institutional policies are seldom implemented by leaders, and the only information about policy implementation was derived from the participants. Further studies should also use policy documents as a source for data generation to gain an in-depth understanding of the various policies, strategies for implementation, and feedback mechanisms.

8.7 Conclusion

The aim of the study was to explore academics' conceptions of their professional identity in relation to how they experienced leadership at a Cameroonian university. The academics' conceptions of their own professional identities at the micro-, meso-, and macro-levels are based on individual, institutional, and external forces. The study also revealed that academics' conceptions of their own professional identity were made evident through the visual representation of their different perspectives. Academics conceptualised their professional identity as their self-conception of their profession, personal beliefs about a profession, and the roles and responsibilities of belonging to a profession. This study also found that although universities require leaders who are committed to foster institutional leadership by translating leadership competencies into strategic assets that address institutional challenges, such leadership competencies are largely lacking in the context of this study. For instance, participants noted that leaders are not only using their political leanings with the state party to intimidate and oppress them but that they are also not competent in performing their duties. The leaders' inability to balance the theory and practice of institutional policies was highlighted by the participants. This was seen through the leaders' unscientific methods of course distribution, the dishonest measures adopted to allocate extra paid teaching hours, the discriminatory way of allocating research grants, and their lack of interest in encouraging community engagement activities. The foregoing, according to the participants, negatively

influences the way academics construct their professional identities in the context of this study.

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Protocol reference number: **HSSREC/00003429/2021**

Interview Guide

Information sheet:

Dear participant,
Thank you for accepting to take part in this interview and contributing to this research.
Participant's Personal Information

Gender	
Age	
Qualification	
Grade	
First Language	
Language of Teaching	
Years of Teaching at the institution	
Faculty/programme	

Interview Guide
Topic: Academics' experiences of university leadership in constructing their professional identities.

Interviewer: In this research I want to understand your personal narrative of how you experience leadership at your university and how university leadership has influence how you construct your professional identity as an academic. But I won't dash into that, I'll start off by asking if you could just maybe start off by giving me some biographical information about you because It will assist me to understand your narrative based on your background.

1**.** What is your understanding of how the leadership at your university is configured?

2. In your view how are the university leaders appointed to their positions?

3. Describe your experiences with the leaders when it comes to your teaching.

4. Describe your experiences with the leaders when it comes to you undertaking research.

5. Describe you experiences with the leaders when it comes to engagements with the community. 6. Describe how the university leaders delegate administrative and other university tasks to you and your colleagues.

7**.** Explain the extent to which your experiences of leadership have influenced your role and responsibilities as an academic in the following roles?

a) Teaching,

b) Research and

c) Community outreach

8. What is your understanding of a professional identity?

9. What has contributed to your development of a professional academic identity?

10. How would you relate your experiences of leadership to your construction of a professional identity?

11. What are some of the opportunities/challenges that you experience when it comes to interacting with the university leaders?

12. What are your personal values and beliefs that may be conflicting with the institutional culture of your university and/or university leaders?

13. How does the above impact/influence the way you identify as an academic?

14. In what ways do you experience diversity (religion, culture, political affiliation, race, language, gender, age, socio-economic status) within your faculty?

15. How has diversity within your current institution influenced the way you construct your identity?

Appendix 2: FGD Guide

Protocol reference number: **HSSREC/00003429/2021**

Focus group discussion

Dear participant,
Thank you for accepting to take part in this focus group discussion and contributing to this research.

Participant's Personal Information

Gender	
Age	
Qualification	
Grade	
First Language	
Language of Teaching	
Years of Teaching at the institution	
Faculty/programme	

- Participation in the focus group is voluntary. It is all right to abstain from discussing specific topics if you are not comfortable.

- All responses are valid—there are no right or wrong answers.

- Please respect the opinions of others even if you do not agree.

- Try to stay on topic; we may need to interrupt so that we can cover all the material.

- Speak as openly as you feel comfortable.

- Help protect others' privacy by not discussing details outside the group.

To guide the discussion please give your reflections on specific questions.

Focus group discussion/Activities

In small groups (one academic from each discipline) please respond to the following tasks:

1. Discuss among each other what your understanding of the academic professional identity is.

2. Discuss in your group how you think the leaders of the university are appointed to their positions.

3. Discuss how these leaders influence the way you construct your academic professional identity?

4. Discuss in your group the following:

   Your background (family, culture, ethnicity) then say how each of the above has shaped/influenced you to become an academic.

4. In what ways has your socio-political environment influenced your academic professional identities?

5. In the group discuss the following institutional policies:

5.1 Teaching and Learning Policy

5.2 Assessment Policy

5.3 Research Policy

5.4 Community Engagement Policy

5.5 Academic Promotions Policy

6. In your view as a group, do you think that the university leaders are following what is written in each of the policies? Explain

In what ways does the above influence how you perform your roles and responsibilities as academic?

7. Do you consider the above policies when it comes to teaching, research, and community engagement? Explain.

8. What are the other factors that influence your profession as an academic?

9. In what ways does your experience of your interaction with the leaders (if any) in your institution influence how you teach, assess, conduct research and perform community engagement?

Protocol reference number: **HSSREC/00003429/2021**

Questionnaire Survey

Instructions: Place a tick (↓) in the column that most closely describes your opinion of the values below in respect of the conception of your professional identity and your experiences of how university leadership influences the construction of your professional academic identity in your current institution.

What is Professional identity?

Professional identity is one's understanding of being a member of a profession based on their work activities. The professional identity of academics relates to teaching and learning, research, and community engagement (Culum, 2014; Trautwein, 2018; McCune, 2018). Academics have their values, beliefs, understanding and commitment that they hold as academics at a university (Hsieh, 2010). However, universities do not expect academics to only teach, research, and engage in public service. They are also expected to fulfil multidimensional roles including, leading various developmental and administrative tasks. As a result, they find difficulties in interpreting their role and responsibilities perfectly because they might be performing conflicting identities as they contribute to their role and responsibilities to institutional research and development, enterprise and community partnership.

Scale: 5= Strongly Agree (SA), 4= Agree (A), 3=Neutral (N) 2= Disagree (D), 1= Strongly Disagree (SD)

	Questions	**5**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
A	**Leadership practiced and institutional forces**	SA	A	N	D	SD
1	The leaders accept your participation and engagement with them as they practice their leadership roles at your institution					
2	Leaders have confidence and trust towards you in performing your task (teaching, research, community engagement)					
3	You have the liberty to talk to the leaders about problems or challenges in achieving your responsibilities? (teaching, research, community engagement)					
4	Leaders sometimes encourage your ideas and use them constructively by assuming the position of followers?					

5	The leadership practiced at your university encourages your professional growth?					
6	Besides teaching, research and community engagement there are other administrative responsibilities delegated to you by the leaders of the institution?					
7	Leaders' interaction with your tasks such as student assessments and student test scores constrain your professional identity construction?					
8	Leaders are often not aware of the challenges you face in performing some of the following responsibilities?					
	Teaching and learning					
	Research and Publications					
	Community engagement					
	Administrative roles					
9	The university institutional policies (workplace norms) influence your professional academic roles and responsibilities (teaching and learning, research and community engagement)?					
B	**Biographical and Programmatic forces**	SA	A	N	D	SD
10	Your values and beliefs have been influenced by the form/type of leadership practiced in your current institution?					
11	Your past experience in the way you were taught influences your current teaching?					
12	You are experiencing a shift in your identity construction now more than before because you are under pressure to publish and engage in mandatory community outreach?					
13	You are consulted in decisions concerning aspects of teaching, research and community outreach?					
14	The following aspects influence your identity construction at your institution.					
	Teaching and learning					
	Internal and external research					
	Community outreach					
	Administrative role					

			SA	A	N	D	SA
	Consultancy						
15	The following values shapes the way you perform your core responsibilities at your institution?						
	Family background						
	Culture/ethnicity						
	Linguistic background (your first language)						
	Political affiliation						
16	Promotion at your institution is based on the following						
	The number of Publications						
	The quality of publications (H Index of journal)						
	Educational qualifications						
	Number of students you have supervised to graduation						
	Competitive examination						
C	**Contextual Forces**	SA	A	N	D	SA	
17	You have challenges balancing the political ideologies of the leadership of your institution with the way it has influenced your teaching, research, and community engagement and your own political ideologies?						
18	The community of practice (department) that you belong to has shaped your identity?						
19	You find difficulties interpreting your role as an academic because of the diversity of your students? (language, religion, culture and political affiliation)						
20	You find difficulties interpreting your role as an academic because of the difference in diversity of your colleagues and leaders? (language, religion, culture and political affiliation)						

School of Education,

College of Humanities,

University of KwaZulu-Natal,

Edgewood Campus, KwaZulu Natal

Date: 20th August 2021

Dear Participants

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER FOR ACADEMICS

My name is Novel Lena Folabit, a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) student in Higher Education Studies, under the School of Education, College of Humanities at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. I am conducting a research titled **'Academics' experiences of university leadership in constructing their professional identities: A case of a University in Cameroon'.**

Studies show that academics' professional identity relates to teaching and learning, research, and community engagements. Academics have their values, beliefs, understanding and commitment that they hold as academics at a university. However, universities do not expect academics to only teach, research and engage with the community. They are also expected to fulfil multidimensional roles including, leading various developmental and administrative tasks. As a result, they find difficulties in interpreting their role and responsibilities perfectly, because they might be performing conflicting identities as they contribute to their role and responsibilities to institutional research and development, research, enterprise and community partnership.

In view of the statement above, I intend to explore academics' experiences of university leadership in the construction of their professional identities at a University in Cameroon. The objectives of the research are as follows:

- To understand academics' conception of their own professional identities at a University in Cameroon.
- To examine academics' experiences of university leadership at a University in Cameroon.
- To determine how academics' experiences of university leadership at a University in Cameroon influence the construction of their professional identities.
- To investigate why academics' experiences of university leadership at a University in Cameroon influence the construction of their professional identities in the way that they do.

You are invited to please participate in the study since your responsibility as an academic in a university context is to construct your professional identity as a teacher, researcher, and your engagement with the community. For this reason, I am kindly requesting you to participate in this study by describing your experiences with the university leaders when it comes to your teaching, undertaking research and engagements with the community. If you agree to participate, I will ask you some questions during one group, one individual interview, and to fill out a questionnaire form that each will take about 30-45 minutes duration. The interviews and focus groups will be recorded so that I can accurately capture your response.

If you agree to participate, but then at a later time you feel that you would like to withdraw from the interview, or not participate any more, that is fine. You can say so and we will stop the interview. There will be no penalties from withdrawing at any time. Also, there are no foreseen harm by participating in this study, however, I will also make an arrangement for Counselling to provide support should the study provoke some emotions. All interviews, focus group discussions and filled questionnaire forms will be confidential and will respect the autonomy of participants.

The information collected in the research process will also be used to write research articles and to present at conferences so that other people may learn from the experience of our research.

This study has been ethically reviewed and approved by the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (approval number: **HSSREC/00003429/2021**).

Please note that:

- Your participation is voluntary. If you do not participate you will not be penalized in any way. It will also have no bearing on your academic role.

- Your confidentiality is guaranteed as your inputs will not be attributed to you in person, but reported only as a population member opinion. Pseudonyms or coded names will be used.

- The focus group, individual interviews, and questionnaire survey (1 of each) will last for about 25-30 minutes and may be split depending on your preference.

- Any information given by you cannot be used against you, and the collected data will be used for purposes of this research only.

- Data sets of the hardcopy will be stored in a locked cupboard in the supervisor's office. Digital data will be password protected. The password will only be known by my supervisor and myself. Digitally recorded data will be deleted after five years. After five (5) years, transcripts and other such data will be shredded and digital data will be deleted.

- You have a choice to participate, not participate or stop participating in the research. You will not be penalized for taking such an action.

- Your involvement is purely for academic purposes only, and there are no financial benefits involved. However, it is expected that you will gain insight into the academics experiences of university leadership in constructing their professional identities at a university.

Thank you

Yours faithfully

Novel Lena Folabit

My contact details are as follows:

My supervisor is Professor S Reddy. She is a lecturer in the School of Education, College of Humanities, Edgewood Campus, University of KwaZulu-Natal

My supervisors' contact details are:

Supervisor: Prof S Reddy

Email: reddys15@ukzn.ac.za

You may also contact the Research Office at:

University of KwaZulu-Natal

Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics

Govan Mbeki Centre

Tel +27312604557

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Thank you for reading this document about this research.

DECLARATION OF CONSENT

I ………………………………………………………………………… (Full names of participant) hereby confirm that I have been informed about the study entitled 'Academics' experiences of university leadership in constructing their professional identities: A case of a University in Cameroon' by Novel Lena Folabit. I understand the content of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand the purpose and procedures of the study (add these again if appropriate).

I have been given an opportunity to answer questions about the study and have had answers to my satisfaction.

I declare that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without negative consequences.

I voluntarily give permission for the interviews to be audio and/or video-recorded.

My identity will not be disclosed and pseudonyms will be used to protect my identity

If I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study I understand that I may contact the researcher at ████████████/ lenafolabit@yahoo.com

If I have any questions or concerns about my rights as a study participant, or if I am concerned about an aspect of the study or the researcher, then I may contact:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building

PrivateBagX54001
Durban
4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Additional consent, where applicable

- I am willing to be part of the academics professional identity construction study and interviews. I am also willing to allow recording by the following equipment, and the use of other data:

Interview Protocol	Yes	No
Digital audio recording of interviews		
Digital video recording of interviews		
Hand written notebook		

………………………………...

Name of Participant

…………………………………   **…………………………………**

Signature of Participant   **Date**

Appendix 5: Gatekeeper's permission

UNIVERSITY OF BUEA

P.O. Box 63
Buea, CAMEROON
Tel: (237) 233 32 21 34/233 32 26 90/23332 27 06
Fax: (237) 2332 22 72

PRO-CHANCELLOR: **Professor Edward Ako Oben**
VICE-CHANCELLOR: **Professor Ngomo Horace Manga,**
DVC/Teaching, Professionalisation and Development of
Information and Communication Technologies: **Professor Nol Alembong**
DVC/Research, Cooperation and Relations
with the Business World: **Professor Lucy M. Ayamba Ndip PhD**
DVC/Internal Control and Evaluation: **Professor Moukengue Imano Adolphe**
REGISTRAR: **Prof Eneke epse Beehem Tambe**

REPUBLIC OF CAMEROON
PEACE – WORK – FATHERLAND

Your Ref: _____

Our Ref: 2021/ 426 /UB/DVC/RCB/RPD/HOS/R   Date: 17 NOV 2021

Novel Lena Folabit
No. 2201 10433
School of Education
College of Humanities
University of KwaZulu Natal, South Africa

Authorisation to Undertake Research at the University of Buea

In reference to your letter on the above subject, requesting for authorisation to undertake a research on **"Academics' experiences of University Leadership in Constructing their Professional identities: A case of a University in Cameroon"**, we are pleased to grant you authorisation.

The authorisation has been issued on condition that the data collected shall be utilised strictly for the purpose of your research. Please, remember to seek the consent of your research participants by presenting them with the consent form. Also, the focal persons for your study will be recommended by the Deans of the Faculties concerned.

Lucy M. Ayamba Ndip, PhD
Deputy Vice-Chancellor/RCB
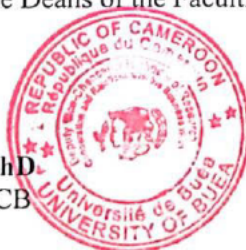
Appendix 6: Ethical approval

UNIVERSITY OF ™
KWAZULU-NATAL
INYUVESI
YAKWAZULU-NATALI

25 November 2021

Novel Lena Folabit (220110433)
School Of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear NL Folabit,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00003429/2021
Project title: Academics' experiences of university leadership in constructing their professional identities: A case of a University in Cameroon.
Degree: PhD

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 26 August 2021 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL.**

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

This approval is valid until 25 November 2022.
To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

All research conducted during the COVID-19 period must adhere to the national and UKZN guidelines.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours sincerely,

Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/dd

INSPIRING GREATNESS

Appendix 7: TURNITIN Report

Academics' experiences of university leadership in constructing their professional identities: A case of a University in Cameroon.

Appendix 8: DECLARATION OF PROFESSIONAL EDIT

SLS Editorial & Proofreading Services

Durban, 4001. KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa
Email: lukongstella@gmail.com | lukongstella@hotmail.com

09 December 2022

To Whom It May Concern

CERTIFICATION OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDITING

This document serves to acknowledge that the thesis titled: *Academics' experiences of university leadership in constructing their professional identities: a case of a university in Cameroon*, has been edited for correct English language usage, syntax, spelling, punctuation, and overall style.

The author's ideas, research content, and context were not altered during editing. Where meaning was not explicit, recommendations were suggested and the responsibility of implementing them rests with the author of the thesis.

Sincerely,

Lukong Stella Shulika