Youth advocacy for efficient hostel management and affordable university students' housing in Buea, Cameroon

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Abstract

Purpose – Given the importance of hostels to students' welfare and academic performance and recognition of the roles youths can play for affordable university housing, this study aims to investigate hostel management problems in the Buea Municipality, an educational hub in the South West Region of Cameroon. It explores potentials for youth advocacy for affordable university housing within the process of efficient hostel management.

Design/methodology/approach – The data were collected through a descriptive survey design from May to July 2015 via reconnaissance surveys, field observation, photographs, administration of questionnaires to hostel tenants (students) and interviews with hostel managers and law enforcement officials. The data have been presented and analysed using descriptive statistical techniques involving frequency tables, charts and percentages. Cartographic techniques have also been used to locate the study area.

Findings – It was found that hostel management problems in Buea stem from flaws arising from both hostel managers (landlords and/or caretakers) and hostel tenants (students) in contravention to affordable student housing and good governance principles of rent control, accountability, transparency, equality, participation and fairness. The notable hostel management problems found are indiscriminate rent increase, lack of transparency in billing and non-functional sub metres and non-refund of caution deposits by hostel managers, as well as violation of hostel rules, damage of hostel facilities and "selling of rooms" by hostel tenants.

Originality/value – This paper contends that youths have to be mainstreamed in the hostel management process with better platforms of advocating for affordable university students' housing through rent control and other good governance practices in their hostel setting. It is hoped that the proposed efficient hostel management system and mainstreaming youth-led advocacy activities in affordable university students' housing will go a long way to enhance students' welfare and academic performance, help in rent control, fight against bribery and corruption and other governance problems.

Keywords University, Affordable housing, Buea municipality, Hostel, Hostel management, Youth advocacy

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

Hostel accommodation according to Ezeukwu (2009) cited in Melody *et al.* (2014) is the pivot around which nearly all the activities of students revolve. It is perceived by Alaka *et al.* (2012)

and Melody *et al.* (2014) as one of the social, psychological and physiological needs that are pre-requisite to the quality survival of students in terms of health, academic performance and learning. It is equally a setting in which biological and social processes are necessary to sustain life, permitting the healthy growth and development of the mind (Aluko, 2009 cited in Aluko, 2011). Hassanain (2008) champions that suitable residential facilities provide cooperation, security, responsible citizenship, intellectual stimulation, mutual composition and inspiration. Residential systems help enlarge students' perspective and knowledge of disciplines other than his own through contacts with roommates of different backgrounds who are specialised in other fields of study (Zahran, 1972 cited in Hassanain, 2008). This assertion was corroborated by Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs postulated in 1943 in which he identified three fundamental needs crucial to survival: food, clothing and shelter.

Although higher education around the world is intended to help students attain intellectual competence, enliven personal character and aid in forming patterns of behaviour, thought and imagination which should lead to a fulfilling living experience, campus housing as an integral component of the university plays a major role in promoting these activities (Hassanain, 2008). Round the world, most universities provide student hostels in the forms of residential halls, apartments, dormitories, etc. for their students, as it is expected of every university to house not only the academic activities but also the students seeking knowledge in the various fields (Alaka *et al.*, 2012). In the views of Alaka *et al.* (2012), the entire hostel building is as important as the respect of internal space requirements and facilities to ensure comfortable living, health, safety and quality sanitary standards of the hostel. In the same light, Onyike and Alukochi (2010) and Egwuom (2010) cited in Alaka *et al.* (2012) have identified the minimum hostel facility requirements to include: bed/mattresses, writing/reading chair and table, share or individual toilets and bathrooms, water supply, electricity supply, gas supply, wardrobe, recycling or waste disposal room(s), shared or individual kitchens, cable TV services, etc. A good number of these facilities are either absent or dilapidated in most hostels in sub-Saharan Africa.

Hostel management can basically take five forms, namely, private hostel managed by the private sector property managers; institutional hostels managed by private sector property managers; institutional hostels managed by institutional property managers; institutional hostels managed by students; and institutional hostels in a build-operate and transfer (BOT) arrangement (Uche, 2008 cited in Onyike and Alukochi, 2010). A situation in which students' associations own and manage their hostels has not gained grounds around the world. However, an experiment at managing students' hostel by students of Bagalkot and Gulbarg Zilla Panchayat in India proved successful (Sivanandan, 2005). Ideally, hostel management like any other business enterprise is concerned with fairness to tenants by consulting, informing and encouraging them so that a sense of win-win partnership is established (Onyike and Alukochi, 2010). This is vital for students' welfare and performance, as they are the dominant tenants of hostels as they are assured of paying their rents and getting a room.

Youths have an important role to play to sanitise the poor hostel management status quo through organised youth advocacy activities. A critical building block for constructing a nation which is transparent, accountable and open to all is mobilising youths' sustained commitment to get actively involved in solving the problems that affect them. Getting a country's youths involved in these efforts at an early stage and as an active stakeholder offers an immense opportunity to shift how governments view their obligation to create societies grounded in ethics and integrity rather than corruption and abuses in the long run. Young people have the potential to transform this present reality (poor hostel management) and make a lasting impact as tomorrow's leaders and present citizens by creating a country that fully respects affordable housing principles (transparency, accountability, effective

participation and equality, etc.). Effective youth-led activities that challenge and change the status quo are the best ways to end the issue of poor hostel management that currently plagues too many countries across the globe. Youths have always been a force of change within countries, whether by daring to ask pointed questions, pushing civilian movements of resistance or promoting social issues. Their energy, strength, inventiveness and hopefulness have led to the transformation of societies within a generation. Young people are equally calling for ambitious agendas and innovative ways to shape them on a whole array of areas ranging from education, health care and labour conditions through to the environment, trade relations and global governance. Readying young people to say no to poor hostel management both at present and tomorrow is a pivotal step towards making real progress in the fight against abuses from bribery and fraud in Cameroon and the world at large.

2. Problem statement

The main problem stems from the deficiency of institutional hostels to accommodate the ever-increasing number of students by higher institutions of learning. This pushes many university students to seek accommodation off-campus. This scenario results in challenges between off-campus students and families living in established neighbourhoods, as is the case with the University of Maine in the city of Orono (Hatch *et al.*, 2015). Secondary data from some of the different institutions responsible for educational advancement of the students for the 2014/2015 academic year in Buea show a total number of 21,963 students, with only 100 students (girls) residing within the campus in only one of the institutions (UB). The rest (21,863) are forced to reside off-campus (private, non-institutional) hostels in Buea and beyond. Hence, the importance of campus hostels as an integral component of the university as elaborated by Hassanain (2008) remains far-fetched in Buea. Buea being one of the rapidly urbanising educational towns in Cameroon has seen the strewing of hostels within the Municipality in response to the ever-increasing higher institutions of learning and student population. The hostels in Buea are dominantly masterminded by the private sector (individuals, financial institutions and real estate firms). Currently, Buea plays host to major higher institutions of learning with their respective student population for the 2014/2015 academic year being as follows: University of Buea, UB (19,240); Higher Institute of Management Sciences (1,316); Higher Institute of Business Management and Technology (900); Saint Francis Advanced School of Health Sciences (177), Higher Institute of Applied Medical Sciences (170), Higher Institute of Technology and Professional Management (TRUSTECH) (136); and Achas University Institute of Sustainable Tourism and Business Management (24); etc. The situation in Buea with regards to hostel accommodation supply is that these aforementioned institutions (except for UB) do not provide any accommodation facility for their students. The UB campus hostel (Hall of Residence) with a capacity of accommodating just 100 girls is insignificant *vis-à-vis* the 19,240 students in the institution by 2015. An overwhelming majority of students in Buea thus seek accommodation in private sector (non-institutional) hostels that do not seem to be subjected to any uniform or effective legal instrument guiding their management.

3. Purpose of the study

This study which delves into the litany of conflicting issues concerning hostel management and affordable university students' housing experienced in Buea (Cameroon) was motivated by several reasons. To begin with, society is made up of rules, norms and standards by which people live and are governed. A bridge in these generally acceptable standards is indicative of a social problem. The management of people in any social space has to take into consideration good governance principles such as transparency, equity, accountability and participation and the respect of human right. In the Buea Municipality, the state of hostel management, especially by the private sector hostel providers (the overwhelming majority),

has been that of constant direct and indirect ways of exploiting students. Notwithstanding, students on their own part have equally contributed to hostel management problems. Dishonest caretakers even go as far as collecting annual rents from two or more tenants for a particular room, thus stirring an atmosphere of confrontation as only one person can occupy the said room. The absence and non-functional nature of individual and group water and electricity meters in a good number of hostels is indicative of the fact that students are been billed based on imaginary consumption. In cases where these meters are functional, some caretakers inflate the meter readings for their own economic gains because of the inability and ignorance of students of how to read these meters. Others go to the extent of hiding the general meter bill. Most often, before the year runs out, they are asked to deposit additional sums of money which often range from FCFA 5,000-30,000 (£10-60) to their initial deposit of about FCFA 50,000 (£100) for light and water bills, without even knowing their past consumption rate. If the student does not comply with such additional charges, he/she is disconnected from the light and water sources.

Furthermore, rents paid per room by students are not regulated by them, and their opinions are not being sought after. The private sector property managers often decide to increase rents when they want. Such soared rents regrettably do not often match up the quality of services provided for users. Several attempts to regulate rents by the defunct University of Buea Student Union (UBSU) in cooperation with the Governor's office in 2007 were abortive. Before full occupancy of a hostel, a caution fee which ranges from FCFA 20,000-50,000 (£40-100), depending on the quality of the hostel facility, has to be paid, and the amount was refunded based on the degree of damage done in the facility. Unscrupulous caretakers play tricks such as accusing the student to have dilapidated the facilities to not refund this money. Moreover, the constant increase in rents without a concomitant increase in the hostel facilities is a call for concern.

Moreover, the poor state of housing (hostels) in student residential areas in Buea has resulted in high competition for higher standard housing facilities. Students pay the sum of FCFA 10,000-30,000 (£20-60) as "illegal" reservation fee/gain room tenure either to the care taker or the occupant who aspires to leave a particular room. In the local parlance, this phenomenon is called "selling of rooms" and is often to be done before full rent is paid by the new tenant. This is very common between the months of September and October, which is the mad rush period for rooms given that October marks the reopening after closing in July. In most cases, the room is given to the highest bidder, causing delay in the process of procuring a room. This is an act of corruption which undermines the principle of equity in the access to hostels.

Finally, the absence of a mechanism setup by youths to ensure quality management of student residential areas has resulted in an increase in the number of problems faced by youths in their housing milieu. There is a quasi-absence of student hostel representatives and Students' Residential Area Council that can play a strong leadership role in ensuring a good quality of life of students. The defunct UBSU was not actively involved in ensuring good hostel management standards even though it played a minor conflict resolution role between tenants and managers and was involved in an attempt to regulate hostel rents in 2007. As a result, each youth who has a problem often relates with the Commissariat and State Counsel on an individual basis. Their problems might be solved, but this will be of a minute impact. There is lack of any hostel governing council or committee that can address such problems.

All these problems have enormous socio-economic, psychological and physiological ramifications on both students and parents, as they are both being exploited. Students depend on their parents, who have to pay extra money which has not been budgeted for, to pay unjustifiable sums of money demanded by caretakers. Self-sponsored students find it

difficult to cope with such conditions. These problems often bring about confrontation between students and care takers, which might affect the students' ability to study effectively. These render the learning environment not conducive for optimum student performance. It is as a result of these disputable issues that the concept of youth advocacy in hostel management and affordable university students' housing has been examined, as youth advocacy could be an effective measure to handle rent control and other bad governance issues in student hostel settings, as shown in Table I.

4. Literature review
Several studies have been done all over the world in the domain of students' accommodation that cover issues such as student accommodation problems, students' satisfaction with accommodation, management issues in student hostels, the contribution of private hostel providers to housing needs, the non-residential policy on some State universities especially in Nigeria, environmental hazards and student accommodation problems and psychological constraints attributed to student housing (Sivanandan, 2005; Onyike and Alukochi, 2010;

Activity	Rationale
Know your power	Your voice is valuable and influential. As a young person, you are in a key position to reach your peers with information and insight that impacts their lives
Engage peers and build a network	Social change takes time and teamwork. You can bring friends along, ask for help and inspire others to get involved. You can have a positive influence by being a role model of healthy behaviours
Partner with supportive adults	You can also build relationships with trusted adults for support. In a healthy partnership, both adults and young people learn from and teach one another. All voices are given space and respect. Adult allies can be members of your family, neighborhood, community, school or faith group
Connect with your community	It is important to discover resources in your community. You could possibly identify individuals and organizations working for social change in your community
Seek out alternative sources of resources	No one has all of the answers, but we do not have to look far to find great resources. Think of other places where you can get help looking for information, such as the library and trusted adults
Take a stand against oppression and lead creatively	Social change is about shifting negative dynamics, and it is important to remember how issues are connected. Oppression takes place whenever one group has power over another and often includes inequality, silenced voices and abuse of power. Working towards positive social change means challenging oppression. Always think about how your interests and skills can educate and inspire others
Take one step at a time	Whether you are looking to start small or reach for the stars, it is important to take change step-by-step. Approach challenges as an opportunity to problem solve and learn

Source: National Sexual Violence Resource Centre (2014)

Table I.
How youths can become agents for affordable university students housing through advocacy

Aluko, 2011; Alaka *et al.*, 2012; Pat-Mbano *et al.*, 2012; Nimako and Bondinuba, 2013; Melody *et al.*, 2014).

Student accommodation in tertiary institutions is largely insignificant and overcrowded (Olusegun, 2015; Oladiran, 2013; Department of Higher Education and Training, 2011). This was equally noticed by Tabet (1971) in the University of London. Morgan and McDowell (1979) explain that insufficient student accommodation is because majority of students study far away from home. The first-generation tertiary institutions in Nigeria, Olusegune (2015) asserts, built hostels befitting the image of undergraduate students, because the student population was under control. However, the increase in the number of students seeking higher education has made the housing situation to be precarious. The works of Adegbile (1987) and Adelaja (1992) cited in Olusegun (2015) indicate that, on the average, the occupancy ratio has increased by 300 per cent, that is, 14 persons are occupying rooms designed for four persons. In Nigeria, Onyike and Alukochi (2010) and Olusegun (2015) revealed that the problem of hostel accommodation revolves around the excessive increase in student population without a corresponding increase in hostels and hostel facilities, leading to unhealthy competition for the limited hostels spaces, high hostel fees, overcrowding and frequent breakdown and deterioration of amenities, as well as social consequences in the form of cultism and the existence of crime syndicates, prostitution and other vices nurtured in these run down hostels. According to Olusegun (2015), the students' accommodation crisis has made hostels lose its original purpose of providing a conducive academic atmosphere, good for learning and social integration. In South Africa, inadequate student housing has been identified as the cause of campus unrest and poor performance of students.

Najib *et al.* (2011) and Oladiran (2013) summarised several studies from the USA, Malaysia, Turkey, Nigeria and Saudi Arabia that outline parameters for determining satisfaction level with students' accommodation. These parameters include high quality facilities, positive roommates' relationship, strong floor, community and quiet study environment, students' attachment to housing, thermal comfort in non-air-conditioned rooms, room size and crowding, thermal comfort, room layout and furniture, level of crowding and privacy, characteristics of residence halls, rules, fees and attitude of hostels' employee. However, these authors did not mention the fact that positive relationship with hostel managers as well as their management practices can equally be used to determine the satisfaction level with students' accommodation. Oladiran (2013) equally examine accommodation problems but failed to mention problems like indiscriminate rent hikes, poor billing system and mode of securing rooms and non-respect of government regulations which this paper addresses. It is evident that where there is good management, there are also effective structures for students to engage with management. On many campuses, formal structures exist but have limited impact (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2011). They went further to recommend that all universities should establish a board, council or similar body which represents all residences, meets regularly with the university's housing officials, provides a forum where issues and grievances can be debated and discussed and generally oversees residence life.

In an analysis of students' accommodation facilities, Olusegun (2015) made use of direct observation, structured questionnaires and personal interviews to collect data through a mixture of systematic and purposive sampling techniques. Data analysis was done using descriptive and inferential statistics. In the same kind of study, Sawyerr and Yusof (2013) used questionnaires in data collection through a cluster sampling technique. The data collected were then analysed using descriptive statistics such as the mean score and standard deviation. Bondinuba *et al.* (2013) in an attempt to develop a student housing quality scale for higher institutions used self-administered, structured questionnaires for

data collection through a convenience sampling technique. The responses to the questionnaire items were a five-point Likert scale ranging from very unimportant, unimportant, neutral, important to very important, coded from 1 to 5, respectively. He made use of the factor analysis and exploratory factor analysis as data analysis methods. For his theoretical framework, he probed into the various conceptualisations of service quality by explaining the service quality (SERVQUAL) model originally proposed by Parasuraman *et al.*, in 1985 and modified in 1988 in the extended service quality (GAP) model and that of Grönroos in 1984. Oladiran (2013) made use of semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and questionnaire survey which were administered in through a random sampling technique. Data were collected from both facility managers and students and analysed with the use of mean, mode, ranking and spearman correlation.

Other studies have also analysed issues associated with affordable housing for students in Europe, Australia and the USA (Wiewel *et al.*, 2000; Macintyre, 2003; Ostrander, 2004; Rofe and Macintyre, 2007; Hatch *et al.*, 2015). Wiewel *et al.* (2000) addressed the experience of university-community partnerships designed to tackle the issue of affordable housing. They contextualised the housing issue, because housing problems at the community level are determined significantly in the wider political economy. They further provided a brief background on the recent rise in university-community partnerships in the housing area and discussed the more general issue of partnerships, their strengths and weaknesses and their political significance. Their conclusion offered an outline of an optimal model of partnership between academy and community.

On his part, Macintyre (2003) examined recent developments in the provision of student housing and considers their impact on local communities and patterns of urban regeneration. His study offered an assessment of traditional models of student housing and showed how and why universities are increasingly turning to collaborative arrangements with private developers while considering the consequences of this change for universities, students and local communities. He argued that the new student housing developments must conform to certain specific criteria if they are to assist in the processes of urban regeneration and serve the interest of the universities.

Using a comparative study of civic engagement on five campuses based on site visits, interviews on campuses and in host communities, document analysis and literature reviews, Ostrander (2004) emerged with four key findings:

(1) shifting and varying emphases on main components of engagement;

(2) local factors that facilitate and present barriers to engagement;

(3) intellectual rationales and projects to drive new knowledge, involve faculty and institutionalize and sustain engagement; and

(4) new organisational structures to link the campus and community and share power and resources.

He argued for a dynamic and developmental framework that acknowledges multiplicity and flow and concluded with an initial mapping of changing relationships between local factors and civic-engagement programme emphases and an articulation of three main current theories of engagement that a developmental framework would take into account.

In Adelaide City (Australia), the Adelaide City Council has identified students as a key strategic resource in the revitalisation of the inner-city area. Rofe and Macintyre (2007) investigated educational entrepreneurialism in Australia and reports on competing community perspectives derived from large-scale questionnaire sampling of 31 per cent of households within the city of Adelaide. They noted that Australian universities have long

recognised the importance of international education markets. In the face of reduced Commonwealth funding, international students have been perceived as one means to generate much needed capital. However, international students must be seen as more than "cash cows". International students assist in the creation of transnational partnerships tying Australian universities with international institutions. Recently, an awareness of the benefits derived from international student markets has entered the policy considerations and planning agendas of local government bodies. Increasingly, local government perceives international students equally as international linkage facilitators and local development generators. Their paper is significant not only in critically examining local community perceptions of and responses to educational entrepreneurialism policies but also equally in theorising more socially equitable and sustainable strategic planning pathways.

Hatch *et al.* (2015) notes that since its creation through the passing of the Morrill Land-Act, the town of Orono became home to Maine's flagship University since 1865. Currently, the University of Maine remains the town's largest employer and serves as an epicentre for attracting attractions among surrounding communities that are overwhelmingly inhabited by faculty and students. The town is tied economically to the university in many ways. However, the constant influx of students into Orono's neighbourhoods may be presenting challenges that, in the long-term, will prove unmanageable. The combination of an institutional mandate to increase university enrolment each year and limited on-campus housing has introduced challenges for both off-campus students and families living in established neighbourhoods. The increasing presence of these students alongside long-term residents has led to challenges in many Orono neighbourhoods. Moreover, this is happening alongside a longer-term trend whereby single-family homes have been purchased, often by the parents of students, and converted into multi-unit student rentals in residential neighbourhoods. This has prompted many to worry that an economic, cultural and aesthetic "tipping point" could be looming just over the horizon, where the character of those neighbourhoods is irreparably changed and they are no longer attractive destinations for families looking to buy a home.

As youth advocacy for hostel management and affordable university student housing is yet to be known, this study seeks to address the situation. It seeks to categorise the student hostels, evaluate the current hostel management systems and propose an efficient management and youth advocacy framework for affordable university student housing in Buea (Cameroon) in particular and the developing countries at large. This seems to be vital information for all stakeholders so as to be able to ensure an efficient and effective student residential environment that responds to the needs of both parties within the context of renting a room (I pay rent, I get a commensurate room).

5. Research methods

This paper adopted a case study research (Buea). Gerring (2004) holds that a case study research is one in which the researcher chooses a single unit and studies it in detail to generalise the findings of the study. Case study research is good, because it immerses the researcher into the topic by giving him/her the opportunity to experience first-hand what he/she is about to study. In addition to the above, case study research gives room for the study to carry out a much more detailed analysis of the phenomenon it seeks to uncover. Therefore, case study research remains an important methodology in social science research considering the fact that it is expensive to study every single unit of analysis in a study like this one. This is why we have chosen a case study and carried out a detailed analysis of the management of student residential hostels in Buea, which is an academic hub in Cameroon, after which the outcome of the study will be used to draw conclusions and recommendations

that apply to other developing countries in general. However, one major weakness of the case study research includes the fact that it uses data gathered from a single case to generalise its results. This can be misleading, because not two organisations are exactly the same. Such study fails to take into consideration the unique nature of different units amongst which one is chosen for the study (Gerring, 2004).

The study area (Buea) is an urban settlement situated at the foot of Mount Fako. It is located between latitude 4°14′ north of the Equator and longitude 9°20′ east of the Greenwich Meridian. Figure 1 shows the location of Buea in Fako Division in the South West Region of Cameroon. The Buea Municipality was the first colonial capital of Cameroon under German rule from 1901 to 1909. After independence, Buea served as the capital of West Cameroon in the Federal Republic of Cameroon from 1961 to 1972 and is currently the headquarters of the South West Region. The importance of this medium-sized town has shifted over the years from a political setting to an educational milieu. This was marked by the construction of institutional and non-institutional hostels to accommodate the student population. The Pan African Institute for Development-West Africa was the first tertiary institution to be opened in the Buea Municipality in 1954 with a hostel to house both nationals and foreign students. This was followed by the Local Government Training Centre (CEFAM-*Centre de Formation pour Administration Municipale*) in 1977, and 27 years later (in 1993), the State University of Buea was created with its own hall of residence. It is worthy of note that the State university of Buea has acted as a growth pole that has attracted a myriad of tertiary institutions of learning with remarkable demand for housing. This has extended the student residential areas with tremendous consequences on the urbanisation process. Before the creation of the State university of Buea in 1993, the Municipality was dominantly rural with few in-migrants who were civil servants.

In addition to the above, a descriptive survey research design was used to categorise the hostels and the hostel management challenges. This design was considered suitable, because it is aimed at collecting data on, and describing in a systematic manner, the characteristics, features or facts about a given population. This design necessitated the use of
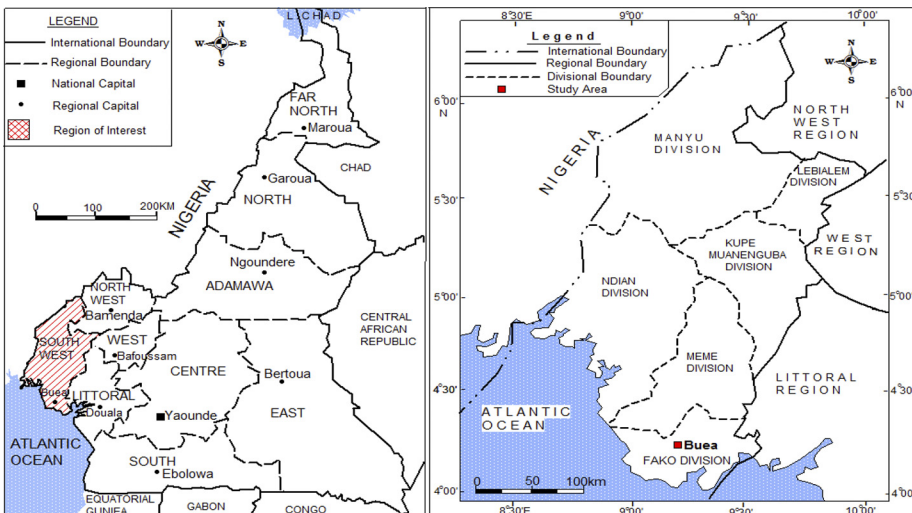

Source: Adapted from School Atlas for Cameroon (1985)

Figure 1.
Location of the study area

reconnaissance surveys, structured questionnaires, interviews, observation and data analysis (Olusegun, 2015; Sawyerr and Yusof, 2013; Bondinuba *et al.*, 2013; Rofe and Macintyre, 2007) in a bid to ascertain the categories of student hostels in Buea and hostel management challenges. However, as with all research methods, questionnaire surveying is not without its limitations. Foremost amongst these are appropriate questionnaire design, effective distribution as to avoid selection bias, reliability of results and the maximising of response rates (Rofe and Macintyre, 2007). In total, 250 structured questionnaires were administered to hostel residents (Appendix 1) through a stratified systematic sampling technique, and 212 were successfully retrieved, giving a response rate of 84.8 per cent. Strategically, questionnaires were administered after every three hostels in the UB (Dirty) South, Molyko, Sosolisso, and Check point, Bonduma, Mile 17 and Bomaka neighbourhoods with the first hostel chosen randomly. In each hostel, three questionnaires were administered randomly. The administration of questionnaires was in a bid to investigate the management challenges and the level of students' satisfaction with the status quo of management and accommodation facilities. Student respondents were asked to rate their perception of management standards and accommodation quality on a five-point Likert scale (Bondinuba *et al.*, 2013). This was in a bid to determine the severity of management challenges and student accommodation quality (SAQ). The questionnaire was pre-tested using a sample of ten students for refinement to identify any ambiguous items and get a more effective instrument.

Furthermore, ten hostel presidents (Appendix 2) and ten caretakers/landlords (Appendix 3) were interviewed through a semi-structured interview technique (Ostrander, 2004) so as to understand their role in hostel management and some of the challenges they face. A semi-structured in-depth interview was equally conducted with the State Counsel and her assistant (all magistrates by profession), as well as the Commissioner of the Molyko Commissariat (Second District Police Station, Buea) (Appendix 4). This was to ascertain the nature of poor management cases that have been reported and how they were handled. For the validity and reliability of the instrument, the face and content validity were verified and established by two experts in management and research methods. Secondary data were obtained from extensive literature review of relevant international peer reviewed journal articles, online news articles and other articles from various internet sources. Also, the Student Admission and Records Services of some major higher institutions of learning in the Buea Municipality provided statistics on the evolution of student population.

The data collected from structured questionnaire were analysed using Microsoft Excel and other descriptive techniques such as tables, percentages and charts. The five-point Likert scale was used to determine students' perception of management problems and SAQ. To a large extent, analyses and interpretation of results were based on field work conducted and our personal intuition.

6. Conceptual framework
The concepts of hostel management and youth advocacy constitute the bedrock of this study.

6.1 The concept of hostel management
Management consists in guiding human and physical resources in a dynamic manner so as to attain its objectives to the satisfaction of those served and with a high degree of morale and sense of attainment on the part of those rendering the service (www.newagepublishers.com/samplechapter/000951.pdf). Management can also be defined as the coordination of all resources through the process of planning, organising, directing and controlling to attain the stated objectives. The concept of management has been interpreted as an activity, a process, a group, team, an academic discipline and an economic resource that controls money,

manpower, materials and machinery (www.newagepublishers.com/samplechapter/000951.pdf).

Hostel management can be defined as the process of ensuring that students respect the rules and regulations that govern the hostel and to ensure optimum SAQ that responds to their needs through adequate facility provision and maintenance, as well as ensure a healthy and sanitary environment (Nimako and Bondinuba, 2013). Within the context of hostel management, this paper will focus on management as a process. That is a social process (management involves interaction amongst people so as to achieve results); integrated process (management brings human, physical and financial resources together to put into effort, it also integrates human efforts so as to maintain harmony among them); and as a continuous process (management involves continuous identifying and solving problems).

The management of hostels can basically take five forms, namely, private hostel managed by the private sector property managers such as real estate companies; institutional hostels managed by private sector property managers; institutional hostels managed by institutional property managers; institutional hostels managed by students; and institutional hostels in a BOT arrangement as Uche (2008) cited in Onyike and Alukochi (2010) stated. Another category, the management of private hostels by individuals (owner or caretaker) with poor managerial skills, can be noticed in the Buea Municipality. Furthermore, some hostel caretakers/owners who leave and work out of Buea always liaise with and rely on matured student presidents to oversee hostel management and report any cases to them. No matter the form of hostel management, there is a need for good governance principles such as transparency, accountability, participation of tenants in decision-making processes, equality and fairness to be mainstreamed in the management process.

6.2 The concept of youth advocacy
The term advocacy is viewed as "taking action to help people, say what they want, secure their rights, represent their interests and obtain services they need" (The National Lead for Advocacy, Valuing People Team, 2009 cited in Enabling Living Independently Today and Every day, 2015). Advocacy is speaking, acting and writing with minimal conflict of interest on behalf of the sincerely perceived interests of a disadvantaged person or group to promote, protect and defend their welfare and justice. Advocacy promotes social inclusion, equality and social justice. This often leads to a social change, which is defined as a process of shifting attitudes, values and actions to address social problems in a positive way. Youth advocacy can take the form of self-advocacy, undertaken by a person or a group that share the same characteristics or interests on behalf of the same person or group that face challenges. The difficulty with this form of advocacy is that sometimes those undertaking advocacy and speaking up for themselves are likely to be further exposed and be more vulnerable to abuse, discrimination and ridicule as a result of speaking up for themselves (Queensland Advocacy Inc., 2015). For youths to be able to cause social change within the student residential milieu, they have to perform the following activities as shown in Table I.

It is also the role of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to critically look at such management problems, lobby and advocate so as to bring about sustainable solutions to these problems in a participatory manner. Youth advocacy can produce tangible benefits, including: rent control, young people become prepared for future responsibilities in their community; young people are encouraged to take responsibility for their own actions; young people's knowledge of democracy increases; bridging of the intergeneration gap as there will be greater adult support of young people's initiatives and possible cooperation; more representative decision-making processes, as young people's voices are heard; and new approaches and ideas for solving local issues. Local officials benefit, and they are able to

identify the needs of young people more accurately; provide better services to young people; improve young people's situation in the local context; prevent social problems; and increase in formal youth representation in national and international bodies. One way through which youths can advocate and realise positive changes in the society is their mainstreaming or involvement, in this case, in hostel management.

7. Presentation of results, interpretation and discussion
In the face of growing enrolment of students in tertiary education globally (Sharma, 2012), student accommodation has become one of the teething problems faced by higher institutions in developing countries (Centre for Global Education, 2002 cited in Nimako and Bondinuba, 2013). From time immemorial, governments have been the main providers of student accommodation for public higher institutions in sub-Saharan Africa. However, as a result of limited government resources, they have been unable to adequately meet the accommodation demand for a galloping higher institution population. It is for this reason that over the past two decades, governments have encouraged private hostel providers to participate in building hostels (halls of residence) for students to meet the backlog for more student accommodation infrastructure (Centre for Global Education, 2002 cited in Nimako and Bondinuba, 2013). This has attracted many private sector operators into investment in hostels. Worthy of note is the fact that the growth of student residential zones (dominated by hostels) is an important character of the urbanisation process in many countries, as it has intensified land development and conversion of land uses around institutions of higher learning (Alaka, 2010 cited in Alaka *et al.*, 2012). In Cameroon, this has been noticed in major educational towns such as Yaoundé, Douala, Ngaoundéré, Maroua and Buea. With regards to the Buea Municipality, the creation of UB in 1993 and the subsequent establishment of over 53 professional schools (higher institutes and vocational training centres) by 2015 in and around the Molyko neighbourhood (seat of UB) have played a major role in shaping the urban landscape of Buea.

The accommodation of students within the immediate environment in which they study has always been an integral part of the layout and design of tertiary institutions (Onyike and Alukochi, 2010). In Nigerian universities, on-campus students' accommodation has remained grossly inadequate, leading to the readjustment of the previous bed space arrangements into bunk spaces and previous room spaces into bed spaces, without actually reducing the rent charged per space readjusted (Okebukola *et al.*, 2004 cited in Alaka *et al.*, 2012). Despite this rearrangement by the university management, most students do not benefit from the school accommodation provision. As a result, they are forced to seek off-campus accommodation. The situation is even worse in the Imo State University (IMSU) with her non-residential policy (Alaka *et al.*, 2012). Consequently, all the students of IMSU reside outside the campus, irrespective of their gender, population and familiarity with the neighbourhoods. The long-lasting periods of strikes in Nigerian universities has negatively impacted on the lives of students who are often demanded to pay additional rents or be evicted from their rooms without adequately consuming their rents for the intended purpose. This goes further to reinforce the views that there is a need for universities to embark on massive low-cost housing projects for students' accommodation. The notable problems facing student accommodation around the world include growing overcrowding of students that is actualising to congestion that mounts increasing pressure on infrastructures, social amenities; rapidly deteriorating environment; high rents/indiscriminate increase in rent; poor SAQ; and other malpractices that go against the good governance principles of transparency, accountability and equity.

7.1 Categorisation of student hostels in the Buea Municipality
There are essentially two broad categories of hostels in the Buea Municipality, namely, the institutional and non-institutional type of hostels. Only about 7 per cent of the hostels in Buea are of the institutional category, which refers to hostels that are constructed and managed by institutions, as is the case of mission bodies, financial institutions, real estate companies and state and international organisations, as shown in Appendix 5.

It was realised that hostel construction by financial institutions in Buea is a fairly recent trend by virtue of the fact that the Lobe Cooperative and P&T Credit Union hostels were constructed just within the past five years, unlike the other hostel categories. Appendix 6 shows the Baptist Girls Hostel in the Great Soppo Neighbourhood, which is a hostel owned by the Baptist Mission of Cameroon.

7.2 Hostel management challenges in the Buea Municipality
Hostel management problems in the Buea Municipality result from both hostel managers (landlords, caretakers and real estate firms) and hostel tenants (students). There are also some observed variations in the management systems and problems between the institutional and non-institutional hostels in the Buea Municipality. Some of these challenges have flourished because of the lack of political will to engage in the sector. These challenges work against students' welfare and academic performance, as well as good governance principles.

7.2.1 Increase in student population and accommodation problems. There has been an increase in student population (Appendix 7) without a commensurate increase in institutional housing facilities in the Buea Municipality. The population of students in the State University of Buea for the 2014/15 academic year was 19,240 students, meanwhile the school hostel (Hall of Residence) can only house 100 girls. Lamentably, an agreement by the UB authorities to build a 5,000-capacity hostel was signed in 2013, but work has not begun till date (Nkeze, 2013).

The outcome of this scenario explains the surge in private sector and other emerging categories of institutional hostels in Buea, commonplace in other sub-Saharan countries. In Ghana, with an estimated 9.7 per cent enrolment rate in the Ghanaian tertiary education (Ghana Education Performance Report, 2010 cited in Nimako and Bondinuba, 2013), the government has been encouraging the concept of private participation in socio-economic development in many areas of her economy, including provision of student accommodation infrastructure (Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda, 2010 cited by Nimako and Bondinuba, 2013). The quest for South African universities to provide accommodation for their students has led to the development of public–private partnerships and lease agreements between universities and private landlords (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2011). Lease agreements with universities are not known in Cameroon. The over 50 universities, higher institutes and professional schools in the Buea Municipality currently have all contributed to increasing the student population and accommodation needs, a scenario which breeds hostel management problems such as indiscriminate rent increase, service congestion, degradation of facility and "selling of rooms". This backlog of hostel supply in the Buea Municipality is much reminiscent of other universities in sub-Saharan Africa (Lyizoba, 2009, Sharma, 2012, Centre for Global Education, 2002 cited in Nimako and Bondinuba, 2013).

7.2.2 Legal framework governing hostel management. As evident in Nigeria (Federal University of Technology, FUT Minna, n.d.; FUTO Senate, 1993) and Ghana (Ghana Education Performance Report, 2010; Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda, 2010), many tertiary institutions have policy guidelines regarding the sharing and use of

student accommodation facility. Institutional hostels in the Buea Municipality such as the UB Hall of Residence, ENAP, CEFAM and Pres hostels have well laid out hostel rules. This is, however, not the case in most of the non-institutional hostels (private sector managers constituting the majority) in Buea given that there is non-specified or enforceable government regulation that governs the construction, serviceability, rating and operation of hostels in the Buea Municipality. This far, there is no existing government regulation on hostels, and that it is only the Tenancy Agreement document signed by the tenant and landlord that is enforceable by law. As such, operations are left at the mercy of demand and supply forces, leading to problems related to either the lack or non-respect of hostel rules and in turn indiscriminate rent hikes, amongst others. Despite the joint meeting by the UB authorities (Student Affairs Office), the local administration and representatives of landlords to undertake a rents harmonisation policy in Buea based on the comfort, structure and content of the hostels, there has been non-enforcement (Appendix 8) given that there is no effective legal instrument and political will to back up the harmonisation scheme.

Given the dominance of private sector hostels in Buea, 48.4 per cent of the sampled hostel tenants do not have any laid-out hostel rules and regulations for their hostels as against 51.6 per cent who attested to have. It is, however, worth noting that for the sampled 51.6 per cent of the hostel tenants who accepted to have such rules, some were noted to be living in the same hostels, while in others, the rules exist only on the notice boards, if not on paper, with little or no enforcement or sanctions levied to defaulters. Hence, the statistics does not give a true picture as to the problems of hostel rules and regulations evident in the Buea Municipality. This is also a reflection of lack of government regulation to guide students' behaviour in hostels, thereby making it difficult for some of the landlords to enforce their respective rules. Further examination at some sampled Tenancy Agreements revealed that 90 per cent of them did not cover issues of students' behaviour and conduct in the hostels, as well as clauses stating that students will add additional sums of money if their annual bills for light and water are exhausted. Also, some of the caretakers interviewed said that they have no outlined rules and regulations *per se* but went ahead to say they work hand-in-glove with hostel presidents and landlords to check excessive behaviours.

7.2.3 Indiscriminate rent hikes. Following from the background of limited hostel supply and lack of meaningful government intervention in the hostel management sector, the free forces of demand and supply have seen landlords capitalise on the situation to increase their rents with little or no rehabilitation works or communicable reason to their tenants, in contravention to good governance principles such as transparency, fairness and participation. Nevertheless, some hostel managers indicated that rent increase was in response to renovation works, extra charges for utility, rising building material prices and as a way to chase undesirable old tenants. Up to 35 per cent of the sampled hostel tenants in the Buea Municipality had witnessed increase in their hostel rents for the two or more years they have lived there. As revealed by the Moki and Diony (2007), a case in point of the non-respect of the rents harmonisation effort was the Ndolo Citadel Hostel (non-institutional) wherein the hostel was rated as Category B at FCFA 12,000 (£24) per month, but instead, the landlord increased the rent from FCFA 15,000 to 17,000 (£30-34) instead of reducing it (www.fakonewscentre.com/studentsandlandlords.htm). The landlord sealed the rooms of the students when they decried his rent increase *vis-à-vis* the rents harmonisation. Appendix 9 shows the net change in rents of sampled hostel tenants with over 30.4 per cent of the respondents witnessing an increase of over FCFA 40,000 (£80) per annum.

7.2.4 Billing system. Away from the rents situation, the billing system for hostel tenants in the Buea Municipality goes contrary to good governance principles of accountability, transparency, fairness and participation. The billing rates and billing systems varied with

the sampled hostels: 40 per cent of the sampled hostel tenants deposit $\leq$ FCFA 30,000 (£60) annually for utility (water and electricity), 41.3 per cent between FCFA 31,000 and 50,000 (£62-100) and 18.8 per cent over FCFA 50,000 (£100). Also, 53 per cent of the sampled hostel tenants said that their billing is being calculated on an individual basis (private sub metres), and 47 per cent identified with the block or mass billing system for all tenants in the hostels. These practices breed problems of governance in the sense that at the end of the academic year (July), students are taken aback as to how much they are owing for have exceeded their initial utility deposits in the course of the year. Even though some sampled Tenancy Agreements did cover articles or clauses on this, the tenants emphasised on the lack of transparency and participation in the calculation of their successive monthly bills for those under the individual billing system. In some cases, the sub metres are either inaccessible to tenants (lack of transparency) or are non-functional, and so hostel managers tend to overestimate the bills. For the block billing system, some tenants overuse their utility and other tenants or sometimes the landlords (usually when students protest extra bills at the Police or State Counsel) bear the brunt of extra bills they were not supposed to be accountable for. Interviews with officials of the Buea State Counsel and the Second District Police Station, Molyko, revealed that hostel tenants unlike the hostel managers often file in complaints regarding disagreement with utility.

Moreover, there are conflicts regarding the reimbursement of caution deposits between the hostel managers and the hostel tenants; 76.6 per cent of the sampled hostel tenants indicated that in their former hostels, the reimbursement of caution deposits was not being respected as against 23.4 per cent who accepted that caution fees were reimbursed once they vacated their former hostels. In addition, about 60 per cent of the tenants who indicated that their caution fees were not being reimbursed contended that there are no valid reasons for this refusal, whereas others identified with damages of hostel property, staining walls and confiscation to cover holiday rents (August and September) or extra bills. Hence, hostel managers tend to overestimate damages or use the pretext of damages to refuse reimbursing caution deposits. For the hostel tenants, some put up uncivil behaviour such as to make away with hostel property or damage property with the belief that they have been cheated regarding their caution deposits.

7.2.5 Modes of securing rooms. Hostel tenants in Buea usually by pass hostel managers to "sell out" their room tenures (averagely from FCFA 10,000 to 50,000 (£20-100) to incoming tenants before vacating under claim of being dissatisfied with the non-refund of their caution or that they had also "bought" their room tenures before occupation. This thus adds to the expensive nature and difficulty of accessing student accommodation in the Buea Municipality. Appendix 10 indicates that 23.20 per cent of sampled hostel tenants secured their rooms through a former tenant and 3 per cent through the hostel presidents. The problem with this is that some of these tenants usually "sell out" their room tenures to the incoming tenants against the knowledge and consent of the landlords and caretakers. Hence, former tenants or some hostel presidents choose which tenant to take over their room or to recommend for a hostel room based on their willingness to bid higher than other aspirants, rather than on willingness of the tenant to comply with certain prescribed hostel rules, in cases where they do exist.

Appendix 11 indicates the perceptions of sampled hostels regarding some of the management problems; 26.5 per cent of the sampled tenants strongly agreed that their caretaker exploits students regarding utility; 36.4 per cent strongly agreed that their hostel managers charge extra rents for more than two persons per room; 18.1 per cent strongly agreed with the practice of "selling" rooms in their hostels; 30.5 per cent strongly agreed that

there is no transparency in the way bills are calculated; and 30.9 per cent strongly agreed that extra bills are levied.

Appendix 12 presents the assessment of hostel management problems as reported by sampled tenants in their respective hostels. Noise pollution in hostels reflected in loud music and indiscriminate shouting is a serious problem, as indicated by 27.4 per cent of respondents. In terms of confrontation between tenants and landlord, on one hand, and tenants and caretakers, on the other, 8 and 13.5 per cent, respectively, perceive it as a serious problem in their hostels by virtue of the fact that it is very recurrent and sometimes escalates into a fight. It is worthy of note that confrontation between tenants and caretakers is more recurrent, because caretakers are massively involved in hostel management as compared to landlords. Hygiene and sanitation, theft and insecurity, electricity supply and water supply are viewed as very deficient by 18.6, 12.7 and 28.9 per cent of respondents, respectively. The fact that only a small proportion sees these problems as serious does not mean that the problems can be neglected. The scale of these problems is even better understood when those who view them as serious, moderate and minor problems are taken into consideration.

7.2.6 Hostel maintenance. Hostel maintenance is a very vital hostel management activity giving its enhancing effect on SAQ. Up to 65 per cent of the sampled hostel tenants in the Buea Municipality agreed that their hostels are in need of repairs. This finding is in line with that of Olusegun (2015), who assessed accommodation facilities in Polytechnic Ibadan, Nigeria, and concluded that housing facilities in the study location revealed not too impressive conditions under which students live, as some facilities were in deplorable conditions, whereas some were grossly absent, others were not sufficiently provided. This statement was equally corroborated by Oladiran (2013) in his article on "A post occupancy evaluation of students' hostels accommodation" in the University of Lagos, Nigeria. In spite of this, total annual rents are usually increased with little or no renovation works or repairs effected. The dominant types of repair that need to be identified by hostel tenants in Buea included repainting; repair of toilet facilities, sink, ceiling, electricity connections and showers. According to Seelay (1981) cited in Aluko (2011), maintenance can be broad divided into two kinds, namely, planned and unplanned. In planned maintenance, work is organised and executed with fore thought, control and use of records in accordance with a predetermined plan. The author further identified three types of planned maintenance: preventive running maintenance work done while the facility is in service; preventive or corrective shut down maintenance work done only when the facility is taken out of service; and corrective breakdown maintenance in which work is carried out after a failure but for which advance provision been made in the form of spares, materials, labour and equipment. In unplanned maintenance, on the other hand, work is necessitated during an unforeseen breakdown or damage.

In some of the hostels in Buea, students are charged with handling repairs despite their deposit of caution fees that were meant for the purpose. Some of the hostel managers interviewed, however, indicated that they have over time undertaken some renovation works (usually during vacation before the start of the new academic year) to make their tenants comfortable and attract new tenants. It should, however, be noted that in most cases, repairs or maintenance works are unplanned, as hostel managers mostly react when complaints are persistent, to the extent that some tenants finally end up being responsible for the repairs. Field data showed that 54.7 per cent of the sampled hostel tenants channel their repair needs or complaints to the caretaker, 30.2 per cent to the landlord, 14.2 per cent with the hostel president and 0.9 per cent to real estate firms. In spite of these complaint handling modes, 58.8 per cent of the respondents as against 41.2 per cent indicated that at the end, it is the tenants themselves who end up handling their repairs or maintenance works. Results in

Appendix 13 indicate varying levels of satisfaction of sampled hostel tenants in Buea on the degree to which their complaints are handled by their hostel managers, with the majority being slightly satisfied (32.7 per cent).

7.3 Alternative hostel management framework and youths (students) as agents of affordable university students housing in Buea
The above hostel management problems in the Buea Municipality points to the fact that an alternative management approach is entailed, which is efficient and will improve students' welfare and academic performances, improve current hostel governance and improve relations between managers, authorities and students (Figure 2). In the Buea Municipality in particular and Cameroon in general, different actors (landlords, caretakers and the government) have been championing hostel management actions with little and/no intervention from youths and NGOs. This has contributed to the present unsatisfactory state of current hostel management. Youths need to get engage in hostel management through advocacy, accountability, lobbying and engagement in organised youth groups such as NGOs. The effective integration of the youths (students) in hostel management activities will thus help address the hostel management challenges for the enhancement of student welfare and academic performance, as shown in Figure 2.

The current hostel management problems offer a good platform for youth advocacy in affordable university student housing. According to the Department of Higher Education and Training (2011), student representative structures and access to decision-making aid the resolution of problems and conflict and facilitate communication between students and management. Representative structures which do not have regular meeting, reporting and feedback mechanisms result in a lack of communication between representatives and residents and a feeling of frustration from students that their needs are not being attended to. In our efficient hostel management framework (Figure 2), students (youths) have the opportunity to develop and learn good governance principles such as accountability, transparency, fairness and participation. Some students who are in the position of hostel presidents can be very strategic in instilling youth advocacy against the exploitation of fellow tenants by hostel managers. Field information revealed that hostel presidents are examples of youths who have taken up leadership roles amongst their peers: channelling complaints of their mates to the hostel hierarchy, ensuring disputes amongst tenants are settled, organise hostel team work such as social activities such as hostel cleaning, check excessive student behaviour, monitor hostel property and in the search of new tenants, amongst others. Though about 30 per cent of the sampled hostel presidents noted they do not receive any form of compensation for being the hostel president, they have been able to still perform their functions of liaising with their fellow tenants (through hostel notice boards, meetings and door-to-door communication) and the hostel managers to ensure SAQ. Some hostel presidents helped to reveal some of the hostel management problems in their hostels, namely, excessive behaviour of some fellow tenants (such as alcoholism, noise especially from loud music and disrespect), lack of collaboration of some tenants in hostel team activities, damages of hostel property and poor waste disposal methods, amongst others.

7.4 Conflict management system between hostel tenants and managers in Buea
Given the lack of any formal government regulation to regulate hostel activities and the dominance of private property managers in hostel supply, conflict management has become more herculean. The following are dimensions of conflicts between the hostel tenants and hostel managers:

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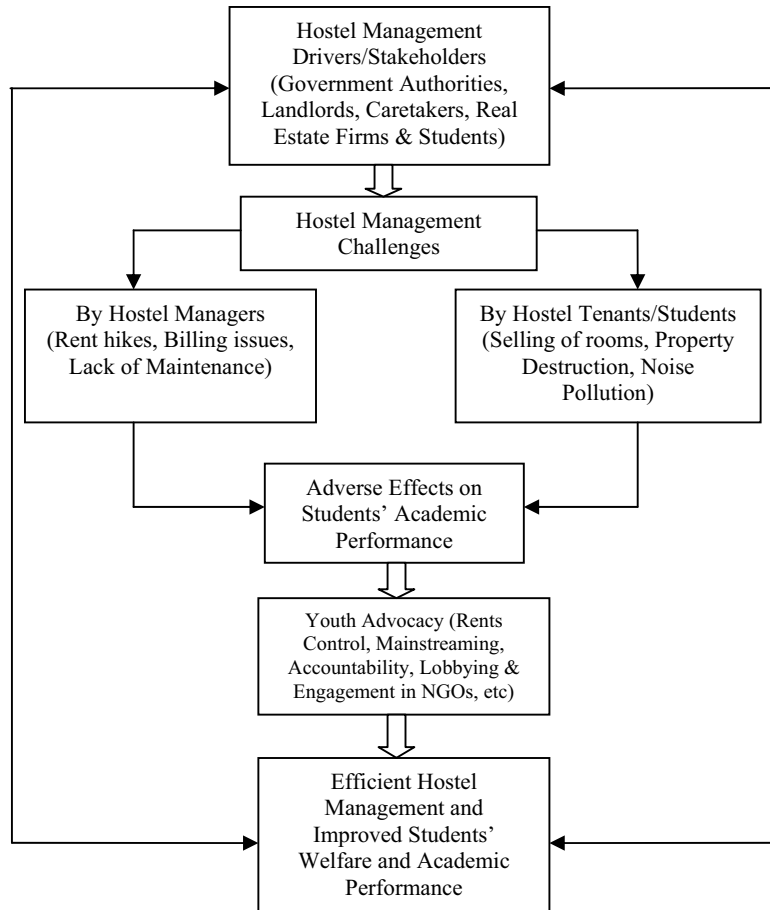
Figure 2.
Alternative hostel
management
framework in the Buea
Municipality

Source: Authors conception (2015)

- tenants unlike the landlords/caretakers file in majority of the complaints;
- focus of most of the complaints brought by tenants on utility rather than house rent *per se*, which is often fixed in the course of the year: issues of extra bills, non-transparent billing systems;
- tenants dissatisfaction with regards to caution deposit, non-refund and poor evaluation of students' damages;
- issues of security (theft) and lack of guards; and
- issues of quit notices within a shorter period and a wrong procedure than the required.
- On the part of the few landlords who come with complaints, they usually complain about tenants destroying or misusing the property of the hostel and for some who move house without officially handing over their keys; pushing them to incur extra costs in breaking down doors and replacing locks.

- The yearly payment of house rents makes it difficult to see complaints pertaining to house rent. It is for bills that the issue of extra bills or over-used deposit that is more of a problem.

The State Counsel office and the Police noted that though they advocate for amicable settlement of complaints between hostel tenants and managers, hostel management complaints are civil matters, and it is only when the Tenancy Agreement was signed between both parties that legal action (involving the Police, State Counsel and the court) can be taken to protect the victim. However, as most students are minors (below 21 years), they cannot represent themselves in court. In some cases, the parents who are far cannot come to attend to such calls. When tenants come with their complaints to the State Counsel or Police Station, the landlords are summoned to explain the situation. The field information revealed that the tenants are usually right, and in some cases, the landlords go back and resolve the conflicts upon the advice of the State Counsel office or Police so that the matter does not need to take legal procedure. With regards to Quit Notices, landlords are usually advised by the State Counsel to follow the rightful procedures and duration through the court and a bailiff wherein the Quit Notices are sent to the Court of First Instance for stamping before being delivered to the tenant through a bailiff. Such Quit Notices take 30 days, and so it cannot just be issued to tenants in an erratic manner.

8. Conclusion and recommendations
Hostels of varying categories have emerged to be one of the most noticeable features in the Buea urban space. The influx of students into Buea, especially after 1993 when the University of Buea was established as the lone English-speaking University in the country, stimulated the need for the private sector to step in to improve on hostel supply. However, most of the hostels in Buea have for long been plagued by several management problems, which run contrary to affordable university students housing and good governance principles; outcomes which can be blamed on both hostel managers and tenants. The various hostel management problems have not only been due to the limited supply but also due to the lack of political will to regulate or harmonize the management of hostels.

There is thus the need for government intervention in the hostel management sector to set up rules and regulations guiding hostel ratings, rents and codes of conduct by hostel managers and tenants. The code of conduct or hostel regulation needed for hostel management should aim for rent control and win-win interactions between hostel managers and hostel tenants. It must be well communicated to all parties and enforceable by law to check issues of fraud, dishonesty, bribery and corruption in the hostel management process. Also, the Tenancy Agreement, which for now remains the only enforceable document in hostel management, should cover certain minimum aspects (such as rents allocation, transparent billing system, caution deposit conditions, maintenance of facilities like sub metres, security and complaint handling procedure, amongst others) that will help check against bad governance, and every student should endeavour to sign a Tenancy Agreement before occupying a facility.

In addition, the UB authorities and the government should speed up plans to construct student hostels in a bid to improve hostel supply and to set in competition with the currently monopolistic private-sector hostel dominance in Buea. With such competition, the indiscriminate increase in hostel rents will be checked. This study thus makes a clarion call for students (hostel tenants) to be more actively involved in the management of their hostels (participation, equality and fairness) by having platforms such as a "Student Residential Area Council" or "Hostel Management Committee" that will raise awareness and protect their rights against hostel managers and fellow students as the case may be. There is thus the

dire need for a Hostel Governing Council or Committee for strong, united, focused and sustained actions geared at improving the quality of life of youths. By so doing, they become active members of their society who can influence decisions that affect them. It is worthy of note that youths should take up active roles in influencing decisions that affect them on a small scale so as to be efficient in influencing policy at the local and international levels. The solutions to the problems that affect youths have to come from the youths. At the initial stage, this council/union/committee will carry out an investigation of the problems that students face in their various hostels so as to be able to better lobby and advocate for improved management system. This framework will empower youths to take responsibility in addressing issues affecting them (housing in this case). It will also give them insights into the adult world of decision-making and the exercising of authority and enhances their understanding of legal process. Moreover, the leaders of each hostel could form a Regional Youth Advocacy Group, which will meet once a month to discuss how to improve service delivery in hostels. If this measure is extended to all student residential areas in Cameroon, each Regional Youth Advocacy Group can send a representative to have meetings with stakeholders such as Commission Nationale Anti-Corruption (CONAC), Transparency International Cameroon, Governors or their representatives, judicial authorities and law enforcement agents; hence, youth advocacy can start from the lower to the national levels.

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Appendix 1. Questionnaire for hostel tenants
TOPIC: Hostel management in student residential areas in the Buea Municipality, Cameroon: alternative management framework and youth advocacy in property management

Dear Respondent,
This study **aims** at examining the current management (governance) systems of student hostels/mini-cités in the Buea Municipality with the view of exposing the management and governance problems. We sincerely plead for your support in responding to the questions by placing a tick (√) in the appropriate boxes and providing answers for the blank spaces provided. Your responses will be treated confidentially and used only for academic purposes.

1. Name of Hostel………………………………………………...
2. Neighbourhood/Quarter of hostel……....………….......……………………....………………
3. Duration of stay in your hostel…………...………......…………………………...……………….

Section A: Characteristics of Student Hostels in the Buea Municipality
4. Which of the following building materials is your hostel made of?
   Wooden/plank wall ☐   Cement/concrete wall ☐   Tiles ☐
   Both concrete & plank walls ☐   Mud or Brick Walls ☐   Flattened cans ☐
5. Identify the height of your hostel?
   Bungalow (Ground Floor) ☐   One Storey ☐
   Two Storey ☐   Three or More Storey ☐
6. Which of the following facilities do you have <u>inside</u> your hostel room or apartment? ☐
   Internal Tap ☐   Kitchen ☐   Internal Sink ☐   Bathroom ☐
   Wardrobe ☐   Balcony/Veranda ☐   Cable TV ☐   Door Bell ☐
   Others…………………………………………………………………………
7. Which of the following items or facilities are found in your <u>hostel premises/compound</u>?
   Outdoor Sporting & Relaxation Ground ☐   Hostel Notice Board ☐
   Security Post & Guard Reading Room ☐   Hostel Canteen/Provision store/Bar ☐
   Security Lighting ☐   Internet Facilities/Cyber Café ☐   Mail Box ☐   Security Camera ☐
   Others………………………………………………………...
8. Which of these describes the capacity of your hostel space?
   One Room ☐   Two Rooms (Living and Bedroom) ☐   Three or More Rooms ☐
9. What is your total yearly rents (including all bills and caution) for your hostel room?......................
9.1 How often do you pay your rents?
   Monthly ☐   Twice a Year ☐   Yearly ☐   Others (specify)……………...………...……….
9.2 Which of the following modes of rents payment is practised in your hostel?
   Bank ☐   Former Tenant ☐   Caretaker ☐   Real Estate Firms/Agents ☐
   Directly to Landlord ☐   Hostel President ☐   Others……………...………………..………………...…
10. Is your hostel accessible by a car?   Yes ☐   No ☐

Section B: Hostel Management (Governance) in the Buea Municipality
11. Through whom did you secure your room in your hostel?
   Owner (Landlord) ☐   Caretaker ☐   Former Tenant ☐   Hostel President ☐
11.1 If you did not secure it directly from the Landlord, did you have to pay any extra charges beside the normal rents for the hostel?   Yes ☐   No ☐
11.2 If yes, please specify (selling of rooms)………….......….…….......………………………………..
12. To what extent are the following aspects of your hostel a problem?

Aspects of Hostel	Not a problem	Minor problem	Moderate problem	Serious problem
Water supply				
Electricity supply				
Theft/Insecurity				
Hygiene and sanitation				
Clashes between tenants and caretaker				
Clashes between tenants and Landlord				
Noise (loud music) from fellow tenants				

13. Is your room or hostel in need of any major repairs or renovation works?   Yes ☐   No ☐
13.1 If Yes, please specify the kind of repairs……………..…………………………………………..
……………………………………………………………………………………………………
14. To whom do tenants in your hostel channel their complaints or problems to?
   Directly to Landlord ☐   Caretaker ☐   Hostel President ☐   Real Estate Firm ☐
15. Are complaints in your hostel addressed by the hostel managers or by tenants themselves? ……….
……………………………………………………………………………………………………
16. How satisfied are you with the way the problems of tenants in your hostel are being managed?
   Not at all Satisfied ☐   Slightly Satisfied ☐   Moderately Satisfied ☐
   Very Satisfied ☐   Extremely Satisfied ☐

17. How far do you agree with the following aspects of your hostel?

Opinions	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Caretaker exploits students regarding utility (bills)					
Extra rents charged for more than one person per room					
Former tenants always sell their rooms to new tenants					
There is no transparency in the way bills are calculated					
Extra bills are levied					

18. How much do you pay for electricity and water bill in a year?...

18.1 Are the bills in your cite managed in block or each person is responsible for his or her own bills?..

18.2 Are your water and electricity meters working well?___ Yes ☐   No☐

19. Have you ever moved out of a hostel before?   Yes ☐   No ☐

19.1 If yes, for what reason(s)?…..

....……...................

19.2 Was your caution fee reimbursed?   Yes ☐   No ☐

19.3 If no, for what reason? ....

....

20. During your stay in any hostel has your rents ever been increased?   Yes ☐   No ☐

20.1 If yes, state the former and latter amount……………………...…………………………

20.2 What was the reason for the rent increase?..

....…...................

21. Is your hostel having clearly laid out rules and regulations guiding the behaviour of tenants?

    Yes ☐   No ☐

Section C: Recommendations

22. In your opinion, what can you propose as a solution to some of your hostel problems?

i...…...

ii...

iii..…..

Section D: Demographic Information

23. Sex: Male ☐   Female ☐

24. Age group: 10-25 ☐   26-30 ☐   31-45 ☐   45+ ☐

25. Marital status: Single ☐   Married ☐   Divorced ☐   Widowed ☐

26. Specify School:...…..

27. Level of Study: First Year ☐ Second Year ☐   Third Year (+) ☐   Post-Graduate ☐

28. How many of you live in your hostel room or apartment?...

Thank You Very Much for Your Cooperation

Appendix 2. Questionnaire for hostel presidents

TOPIC: Hostel management in student residential areas in the Buea Municipality, Cameroon: alternative management framework and youth advocacy in property management

Dear Respondent,

This study aims at examining the current management (governance) systems of student hostels/mini-cités in the Buea Municipality with the view of exposing the management and governance problems. We sincerely plead for your support in responding to the questions by placing a tick (√) in the appropriate boxes and providing answers for the blank spaces provided. Your responses will be treated confidentially and used only for academic purposes.

1. Sex: Male ☐   Female ☐

2. Age group: <20 ☐   21-25years ☐   26-30years ☐   31 and above ☐

3. Specify name of school if student…..………………………………………………………

4. Level of study: First Year ☐ Second Year ☐ Third Year (+) ☐ Post-Graduate ☐

5. Name of hostel……..………….……………………………………………………………...

6. Neighbourhood/quarter of hostel………..…………………………………………………...

7. Duration as a hostel president…………….………………………………………………….

8. Who appointed you the hostel president?

   Landlord ☐   Tenants/Students ☐   Caretaker ☐

9. What are your functions, duties or role as a hostel president? ....
…………………………………………………………………………………………………..
…………………………………………………………………………………………………..
…………………………………………………………………………………………………..

10. What are the benefits or advantages (earnings, salary, compensation) you get from being a hostel president?...
…………………………………………………………………………………………………..

11. Do you operate in collaboration with the hostel caretaker or Landlord? Yes ☐ No ☐

11.1 Please explain……..……………………………………………………………………….
…………………………………………………………………………………………………..

12. How often and by what medium do you communicate with the landlord and/or caretaker?
…………………………………………………………………………………………………..
…………………………………………………………………………………………………..

13. How do you communicate with your fellow tenants?

   Notice Board ☐   Door-to-Door Communication ☐
   Announcement ☐   Door-to-Door Notices ☐

14. What are the challenges you face as a hostel president?...
…………………………………………………………………………………………………..
…………………………………………………………………………………………………...
…………………………………………………………………………………………………...

15. What are some of the problems caused by the tenants of your hostel?...................................
…………………………………………………………………………………………………..
…………………………………………………………………………………………………..
…………………………………………………………………………………………………...

16. How do you think some of the problems faced by the tenants can be addressed or prevented from happening?...
………………………………………………………………………………………………….
……………….………………………………………………………………………………….
…………………………………………………………………………………………………..

Date: …………………………

Many Thanks for Your Cooperation

Appendix 3. Questionnaire for hostel landlords/caretakers

TOPIC: Hostel management in student residential areas in the Buea Municipality, Cameroon: alternative management framework and youth advocacy in property management

Dear Respondent,

This study aims at examining the current management (governance) systems of student hostels/mini-cités in the Buea Municipality with the view of exposing the management and governance problems. We sincerely plead for your support in responding to the questions by placing a tick (√) in the appropriate boxes and providing answers for the blank spaces provided. Your responses will be treated confidentially and used only for academic purposes.

1. Sex: Male ☐   Female ☐

2. Age Group: <40 Years ☐   40-50 ☐   50-60 ☐   >60 ☐

3. Occupation:……………………………………………………………………………….

4. Name of hostel…………………………………………………………………………....

5. Neighbourhood/quarter of hostel……………………………………………………….....

6. In which year was the hostel constructed? ……………………………………………….

7. Responsibility in hostel: Landlord ☐   Caretaker ☐   Caretaker & Landlord ☐

8. Has there been any form of renovation or repairs since this hostel was first constructed?
    Yes ☐   No ☐

8.1 If Yes, please specify the kind of repairs or renovation works that have been carried out?
    Outward cite painting ☐   Rooms painting ☐   Security lights ☐   Public tap ☐
    Internal leakages (ceiling, taps, and toilet pot) ☐

8.2 When do you do repairs/renovation works?
    During the academic year ☐   Before the start of an academic year/During Vacation ☐

8.3 What is your main reason for doing repairs/renovation works?
    To attract new tenants ☐   Make tenants comfortable ☐

8.4 Who is responsible for undertaking repairs in your hostel?
    Caretaker ☐   Landlord ☐   Students ☐

8.5 If No, why…………………………………………………………………………………...
………………………………………………………………………………………………..

9. What is the cumulative/total yearly rent for your hostel (FCFA)?...

10. How do you receive rents from your tenants?
    Personally ☐   Bank ☐   Hostel President ☐   Real Estate Firm ☐

11. Are your tenants required to pay extra rents for living more than one in a room or apartment?
    Yes ☐   No ☐

11.1 If yes why?……..………………………………………………………………………..
………………………………………………………………………………………………..

12. Is your hostel having rules and regulations to guide student or tenants' behaviour?
    Yes ☐   No ☐

12.1 If yes, do you think these rules are respected by your tenants?   Yes ☐   No ☐

12.2 What is put in place to see that tenants respect them?...
………………………………………………………………………………………………..

12.3 If no, why?……...……………………………………………………………….............
………………………………………………………………………………………………..

13. How do you communicate with or pass on information to your tenants?
    One-to-one communication ☐   Cite meeting ☐   Through caretaker ☐
    Through cite president ☐   Through information pasting ☐   Others ☐

13.1 Name the others…………………………………………………………………………

14. What role do you play in managing the affairs of your hostel?...

……………………………………………………………………………………………………..

15. How do you ensure that the problems of your tenants are well, speedily addressed?

……………………………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………………………..

16. Do you have a student representative/hostel president?   Yes ☐   No ☐

16.1 If yes why?……………..………………………………………………………………..

17. If you are a landlord, how do you see into it that the caretaker is doing his/her job well?

   Regular calls ☐   Monthly reports ☐   Meeting with tenants ☐   Regular cité visits ☐

17.1 Is there any form of benefit for the caretaker or student representative?

   Yes ☐   No ☐

17.2 If yes, which of these do you practice?

   Monthly salary ☐   Reduction of rents ☐   Free room in hostel ☐   Others ☐

17.3 Name others………..……………………………………………………………………

18. What are the challenges you face with students/tenants in your hostel?

………………………………………………………………………………………………….

……………………………………………………………………………………………………..

19. What do you suggest can be done to solve these problems?..

……………………………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………………………..

20. What role or influence does the government have as far as your hostel management is concerned?

……………………………………………………………………………………………......................

……………………………………………………………………………………………………..

Date: …………………..……..

Many Thanks for Your Cooperation

Appendix 4. Interview guide for police and state counsel

TOPIC: Hostel management in student residential areas in the Buea Municipality, Cameroon: alternative management framework and youth advocacy in property management

Dear Respondent,

This study aims at examining the current management (governance) systems of student hostels/mini-cités in the Buea Municipality with the view of exposing the management and governance problems. We sincerely plead for your support in responding to the questions by placing a tick (√) in the appropriate boxes and providing answers for the blank spaces provided. Your responses will be treated confidentially and used only for academic purposes.

-Sex: Male ☐   Female ☐

-Age Group: <40 Years ☐   40-50 ☐   50-60 ☐   >60 ☐

-Occupation:……………………………………………………………………………………….

-Highest qualification:………………………………………………………………………………..

-Post of Responsibility……………………………………………………………………………….

-Duration in the office………………………………………………………………………………

-Are there any laws or norms regarding hostel rents regularisation and management in Cameroon or Buea?

Yes ☐   No ☐

-If Yes, please specify………………………………………………………………………………..

……..

-What kind of conflicts or problems have been reported to your office as far as hostel management problems are concerned?...

……..

…………………………………………………………………………………………………..…………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………..

-How did you resolve such conflicts?...

…………………………………………………………………………………………………..…………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………..

-In your opinion, how can some of the problems of hostel management be addressed?............

……..

……..

Date:…………………………….

Thank You Very Much for Your Cooperation

Appendix 5

Categories of institutional hostels	Date of construction
International institutions	
Pan African Institute of Development-West Africa (PAID-WA)	1954
Mission bodies	
Baptist Girls Hostel	/
Preshostel	/
Financial institutions	
P&T	2011
Lobe Hostel	/
State-owned	
CEFAM	1977
University of Buea (UB)	1993
ENAP	2000
Real estate firms	
Happicam Hostel	/
Source: Field survey (2015)	

Table AI.
Institutional hostel subcategories and dates construction

Appendix 6

Plate A1.
Baptist Girls Hostel in Great Soppo, Buea

Source: Field survey (2015)

Appendix 7

Academic years/higher institutions	UB	HIMS	HIBMAT	SFASHS	TRUSTECH	HIAMS	AUIBM
1992/93	768	/	/		/	/	/
2008/09	12,269	29	/	123	191	/	/
2009/10	13,887	133	40	121	120	/	/
2010/11	14,954	264	150	102	153	/	/
2011/12	16,611	441	400	131	126	/	11
2012/13	17,061	617	550	130	153	110	16
2013/14	16,818	837	600	187	127	120	16
2014/15	19,240	1,316	900	177	136	170	24

Source: Students and records services (School Archives/Registers)

Table AII.
Evolution of student enrolment in some major higher institutions of learning in Buea

Appendix 8

Category	facilities/housing type	Government amount (FCFA)	Average actual amount (FCFA)
A	Wardrobe, internal toilets and kitchens	15,000 (£30)	20,000-35,000 (£40-70)
B	Only internal toilets	12,000 (£24)	16,000-20,000 (£32-40)
C	External bathrooms and kitchens	8,000 (£16)	10,000-15,000 (£20-30)
D	Semi-permanent materials	5,000 (£10)	8,000-10,000 (£16-30)

Source: Endong and Mbeh (2007); Field survey (2015)

Table AIII.
Non-respect of 2007 government harmonisation of rents in Buea

Appendix 9

Net Change (FCFA)	%
≤10,000 (£20)	21.7
10,001-20,000 (£20.002-40)	26.1
20,001-40,000 (£40.002-80)	21.7
≥40,001(£80.002)	30.4
Total	100

Source: Field survey (2015)

Table AIV.
Annual net change in rents (FCFA) of sampled hostel tenants in the Buea Municipality (%)
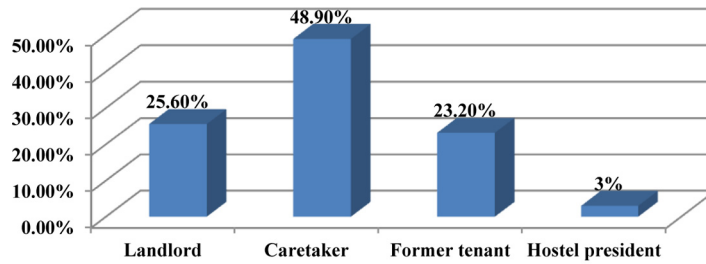
Appendix 10

Source: Field survey (2015)

Appendix 11

Opinions	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Caretaker exploits students regarding utility (bills)	26.5	16.3	17.3	13.3	26.5
Extra rents charged for more than one person per room	25.3	11.1	5.2	22.2	36.4
Former tenants always sell their rooms to new tenants	36.2	20.3	16.9	8.5	18.1
There is no transparency in the way bills are calculated	29.5	17.9	5.3	16.8	30.5
Extra bills are levied	22.7	13.4	8.3	24.7	30.9

Source: Field survey (2015)

Appendix 12

Noise (loud music) — 27.40%, 26.40%, 23.60%, 22.60%
Clashes (tenants & Landlord) — 8%, 8%, 20%, 64%
Clashes (tenants & caretaker) — 13.50%, 15.30%, 19.80%, 51.40%
Hygiene and sanitation — 18.60%, 16.70%, 24.50%, 40.20%
Theft/Insecurity — 13%, 14%, 28%, 45%
Electricity supply — 12.70%, 12.70%, 23.70%, 50.90%
Water supply — 28.90%, 16.80%, 23.50%, 30.80%

Serious problem
Moderate problem
Minor problem
Not a problem

0.00% 10.00% 20.00% 30.00% 40.00% 50.00% 60.00% 70.00%
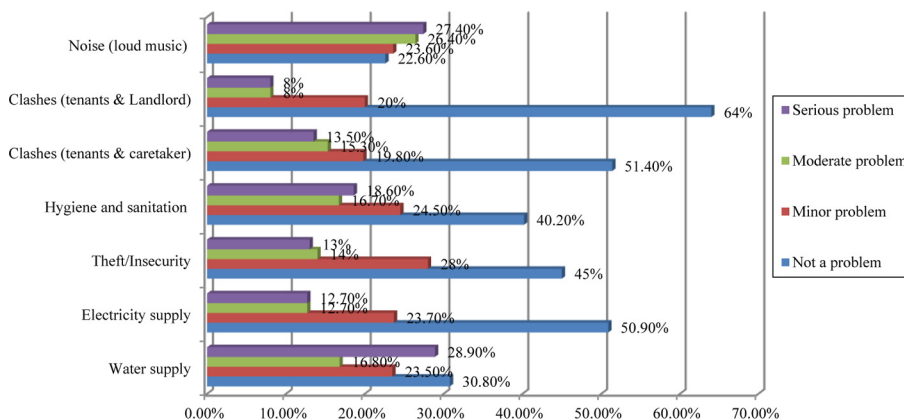
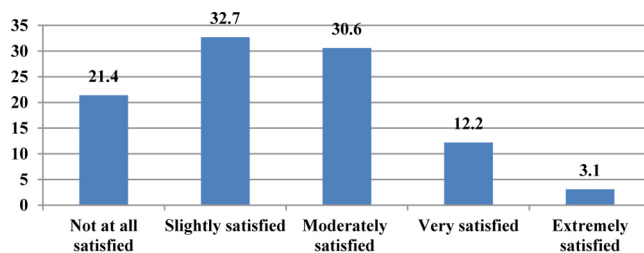**Source:** Field survey (2015)

Figure A2.
Assessment of Hostel
management problems
in Buea by sampled
hostel tenants

Appendix 13

35
30
25
20
15
10
5
0

21.4 — Not at all satisfied
32.7 — Slightly satisfied
30.6 — Moderately satisfied
12.2 — Very satisfied
3.1 — Extremely satisfied

Source: Field survey (2015)

Figure A3.
Degree of satisfaction
of sampled hostel
tenants on the
complaint handling
system in their hostels
(%)

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