

De-Colonising Power Supply in Cameroon: A Community Entrepreneurship Approach

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Abstract

Energy is an indispensable resource for promoting economic activities and the enhancement of human welfare. This realisation underpins extensive research works in the field of energy and the environment in order to address socio economic issues such as poverty, income disparity, energy availability, accessibility and affordability within communities. But in sub-Saharan Africa, two in every three people significantly suffers from access to electricity. This is due to dysfunctional energy governance of the colonial hydro power systems and structures. Extensive studies advocate for decentralized energy systems and technologies in providing access to electricity; as well as associated investment requirements such as the grid energy paradigm. Nevertheless, previous studies on grid energy have predominantly focused on individual and groups ownership. Far too little attention has been paid to community investment and management of the energy systems. This research draws on the social capital and resilience theory, to critically examine the perceptions and reactions of community members towards investment and governance of energy supply in Cameroon. The qualitative case study approach was utilised. The in-depth interview technique was used to collect data from the South West Region of Cameroon. Findings reveal that communities were very anxious and willing to invest in the energy system. Evidence indicates that collective action of informal financial institutions can form the basis for community investment in energy thereby employing social cultural management systems. The study argues that there is a need for holistic resilience in the entire energy process from decision making, financing ownership, management and control using the bottom top approach. The study concludes that local community involvement is significantly needed to manage sustainable energy supply system in Cameroon. It also shows how community involvement model has been operationalized in other sectors.

Key Works: Energy; Electricity Supply; Sustainable Energy System; Community; Entrepreneurship; Cameroon

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