

Administrative Management in Higher Education Institutions: A Theoretical Framework of Process Management

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ABSTRACT

Higher education institutions face unprecedented challenges from dynamic internal and external factors, including demographic shifts, technological advancements, economic fluctuations, and evolving stakeholder expectations, while traditional fixed institutional structures prove inadequate in addressing these contemporary challenges. This study develops a comprehensive theoretical framework for process management implementation in Cameroon's higher education institutions, proposing a contingency-based theoretical model that balances standardisation with contextual flexibility. The research introduces the Contingency Process Management Theory, grounded in four key assumptions: process management must adapt to institutional context and environmental changes; effective implementation requires accurate data collection and analysis; collaborative stakeholder engagement is essential for successful execution; and institutional processes are interdependent across multiple organisational levels. The study employs a conceptual framework analysis, examining process management types including management processes (document-centric, human-centric, and integration-centric), operational processes, outsourcing designers' processes, supporting processes, and reengineering processes, incorporating systematic strategic execution principles and multi-level process integration approaches. Process management serves as a "strategy execution engine" that transforms strategic goals into operational realities through structured workflows, standardized procedures, and continuous improvement mechanisms, with the framework identifying critical areas for implementation including performance evaluation, resource allocation, traffic management, and core academic functions through four essential steps: conscious process management, process centrality focusing on stakeholders, strategic planning alignment, and comprehensive process architecture design. The proposed framework enables higher education institutions to enhance collaboration, improve communication channels, maintain goal orientation, and achieve sustainable competitive advantage while addressing complexities related to task distribution, control processes, evaluation systems, and quality outcomes, ensuring effectiveness and efficiency in academic operations. The contingency process management framework provides higher education institutions with a dynamic, context-sensitive approach that balances standardisation with flexibility, enabling institutions to effectively navigate contemporary challenges, optimise resource utilisation, and sustain operational excellence while maintaining responsiveness to evolving educational demands and stakeholder expectations.

Keywords: Administrative Management, Process Management, Contingency Theory, Higher Education, Performance Evaluation, Strategic Execution, Operational Efficiency

INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions are administered at strategic, operational, and tactical levels, influenced by a multitude of internal and external factors such as communal expectations, legal frameworks, demographic shifts, economic fluctuations, technological advancements, and client demands (Kirchmer & Franz, 2016). Given the dynamic nature of these influences, traditional fixed institutional structures often fail to adequately respond to contemporary challenges. Consequently, higher education managers are encouraged to develop what Sinur, Odell, and Finga (as cited in Kirchmer & Franz, 2016) describe as a "systematic strategic execution" capable of

addressing institutional opportunities, weaknesses, and threats posed by limited resources, competition, and evolving technologies. This approach underscores the necessity for higher institutions to design or redesign methodological frameworks that ensure sustained success in a rapidly changing environment.

Methodological approaches in institutional management establish structured processes that guide actors within the system. These processes are often subdivided into sub-processes based on functional homogeneity while remaining globally interconnected (Kirchmer & Franz, 2016). Garvin (as cited in Zelt, Recker, Schmiedel, & Brocke, 2016) conceptualises processes as a series of institutional functions, practices, and activities that transform inputs into outputs, emphasising their role in enhancing efficiency and outcomes. Administrative managers increasingly regard processes as “strategic assets” capable of guiding institutional performance (Smart, Maddern, & Maull, n.d.). Process management has been applied in various managerial domains, including organisational resource planning, client relationship management, and business process optimisation, and has recently gained prominence in educational administration (Smart, Maddern, & Maull, n.d.). Moreover, processes have been identified in key functional areas of professional institutions, such as performance evaluation, resource allocation, traffic management, and core academic disciplines, including programming and mathematics (Zukerman, 2022). The centrality of processes in institutional management has, therefore, elevated the importance of process management as a critical management tool.

Process management has emerged as a “strategy execution engine” within higher education, enabling institutions to systematically translate strategic goals into operational realities (Kirchmer & Franz, 2016). Its significance continues to grow as universities and colleges seek to sustain competitive advantage in an increasingly globalised environment (Bruin, 2009). Defined broadly, process management involves the scientific formulation of strategic plans and their systematic implementation to achieve institutional objectives (Brandall & Henshall, n.d.). It provides a structured framework for analysis, design, and operational execution, ensuring clarity and consistency in institutional processes. In practice, process management requires managers and academic practitioners to: establish a strategic direction; define end-to-end institutional processes; design functional standards and streamlined workflows; adopt a client- and value-centred approach; promote effective collaboration; link internal processes with community needs; and dismantle cross-functional barriers to ensure comprehensive process integration (Bruin, 2009). Two conceptual frameworks are particularly relevant to process management: process management progression and process maturity. Process management progression refers to dynamic activities undertaken within a defined period, without necessarily measuring sequential dependencies or exerting strong influence over the process (Bruin, 2009). In contrast, process maturity provides a more static measure of sequential activities, consolidating key elements such as relationships and structural integration to reinforce process effectiveness and sustainability periodically (Bruin, 2009; Hammer & Champy, 1993). Collectively, these frameworks emphasise that higher education institutions must adopt both flexible and structured approaches to process management, balancing adaptability with stability to navigate contemporary challenges while ensuring operational excellence and strategic alignment (Davenport, 2013; Harmon, 2019).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this paper, we hold that contextual dynamics influence how processes should be structured, coordinated, and monitored. By acknowledging the situational nature of process effectiveness, this framework provides a flexible lens for analysing and optimising workflows, decision-making, and performance outcomes in diverse institutional settings, including higher education and public agencies.

Contingency Process Management Theory

Process management is a systematic and scientific approach applied to the functional processes, activities, and practices within higher education institutions. It provides a structured framework that guides the institutional workforce to ensure consistency, operational efficiency, and the ability to capitalise on improvement opportunities (Dumas, La Rosa, Mendling, & Reijers, 2018; van der Aalst, 2013, as cited in Kerpedzhiev, König, Röglinger, & Rosemann, 2020). By embedding standardised procedures into daily operations, process management facilitates the effective coordination of academic and administrative tasks, allowing institutions to respond proactively to dynamic environmental and organisational challenges (Harmon, 2019; Bruin, 2009). Zelt, Recker, Schmiedel, and Brocke (2019) highlight four critical considerations in the design and implementation

of process management in higher education. First, they emphasise that “there is no one best way to manage processes,” noting that process management approaches must be adapted to the type of institution, the specific process, and contextual conditions. This aligns with contingency theory principles, which assert that organisational effectiveness depends on fitting managerial practices to situational variables (Donaldson, 2001; Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967). Second, processes should be defined by measurable objectives, including qualitative and quantitative parameters, enabling continuous monitoring and evaluation for improvement (Davenport, 2013; Harmon, 2019).

Third, processes operate within social systems where personnel collectively create, search, collect, process, manipulate, store, and distribute data. All stakeholders are actively involved in process implementation, which typically consists of logically linked and interdependent tasks, often supported by academic tools and equipment (Zelt et al., 2019; Kerpedzhiev et al., 2020). This systemic integration ensures that tasks are performed cohesively and efficiently, reducing redundancies and optimising resource utilisation. Fourth, processes function at multiple organisational levels: individual, group, team, and departmental, where activities are interconnected and contribute to overall institutional objectives. Managing these multi-level processes necessitates comprehensive data collection, analysis, and coordination (Bruin, 2009; Davenport, 2013). From these considerations, contingency process management theory is underpinned by four key assumptions. First, process management must remain flexible, adapting to institutional context, environmental changes, and process-specific requirements. Second, effective management relies on accurate and timely data for monitoring and continuous improvement. Third, collaborative engagement of all stakeholders is essential to ensure process execution aligns with institutional goals. Fourth, institutional processes are interdependent, such that modifications in one process can influence outcomes across multiple levels and functions (Kerpedzhiev et al., 2020; Zelt et al., 2019; Harmon, 2019). Overall, contingency process management theory emphasises that process management in higher education is neither prescriptive nor static. Instead, it is a dynamic, context-sensitive approach that balances standardisation with flexibility, enabling institutions to achieve strategic goals while maintaining operational efficiency and responsiveness to internal and external challenges (Bruin, 2009; Dumas et al., 2018; Davenport, 2013). By adopting this approach, higher education institutions can systematically manage complexity, enhance performance, and sustain continuous improvement in an increasingly competitive and evolving environment.

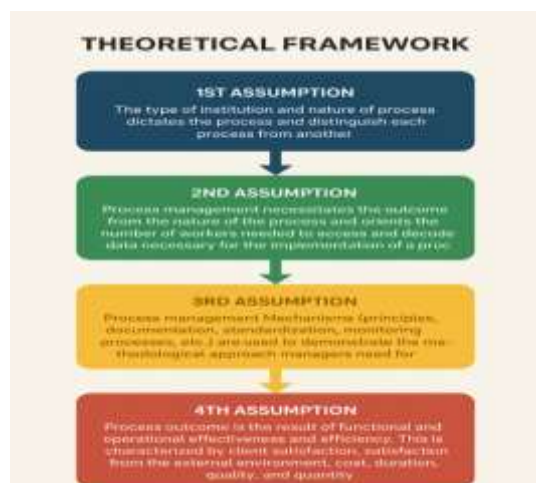
1st Assumption: The type of institution and nature of the process dictates the process and distinguish each process from another.

2nd Assumption: Process management necessitates the outcome from the nature of the process and orients the number of workers needed to access and decode data necessary for the implementation of a process.

3rd Assumption: Process management Mechanisms (principles, documentation, standardisation, monitoring processes, etc.) are used to demonstrate the methodological approach managers need for coordination and control.

4th Assumption: Process outcome is the result of functional and operational effectiveness and efficiency. This is characterised by client satisfaction, satisfaction from the external environment, cost, duration, quality, and quantity.

The contingency of the process management framework (Musa, 2025)



Types of process management

Management processes

It has to do with a series of activities, practices, or functions that are linked to the systematic way of strategic planning, organising, coordinating, leading, making policies, making vital decisions, controlling, evaluating processes, etc. According to Brandall & Henshall (n.d), management process concerns the act of strategic planning on ways to accurately organise activities and tasks, in consideration of time, abilities, and capabilities needed for the task accomplishment. During these activities, resources are allocated and a timeframe is designed, and investigative approach methods are put in place to ensure that operations are in practice at the maximum level. Management processes are not management activities that begin from the start to the end. Their activities are centred around strategic planning and forecasting the future of operations. These management processes are necessitated by the need to meet several goals charged by the different stakeholders within the academic domain (Boyne, 2002). We do believe that these processes are set as a means to ascertain a common attitude and behaviour for all the workers within the system. It integrates and engages each and every one towards a common purpose. Management processes may have three broad activities, which may include designing document-centric processes, human-centric processes and integration-centric processes.

Document-centric processes.

These are management processes that are focused on designing, and or providing a database with documented norms, principles, procedures, rules, and regulations that are used to regulate human behaviour within the system. According to Smart, Maddern & Maull (n.d), it is through this process that process owners make use of documents to ensure consistency, discipline, procedures, etc. An academic system is a haven for principles and documents, and most have a process that is based on that light. For this process to be effectuated, they must be individuals mobilised by the management system to handle it. The institutional management has to carry on human-centric process practices to acquire such an objective.

Human-centric process

Humans are seen or believed to be the heart of all social activities and more. It is doubtless to state that any social activity is designed in consideration of different groupings of human beings. Within the academic settings, individual processes, team processes, group processes and institutional processes are designed to set the pace for the attainment of institutional goals and objectives. There are some processes which individuals carry out, some necessitate teamwork, some are done by a constituted group, and others are done by the entire system. All these processes are guided by norms, rules and regulations, and principles of the system such as the human-centric principle, the principle of learning, privacy protection principle, security insurance principle, fair competition principle, the principle of fairness, accountability and transparency, and the innovations principle (Council for Social Principles of Human-centric AI, 2019). There is vitality in policy co-creation as it is a booster for effective process implementation. Actors feel part of the system when they have a say in the design process and development of policies related to their functions. It is an act that ensures the respect of individuals' rights (Malan & Newberry, n.d). For this to be achieved, there is a need for human-centred design. Human-centred design is a substructure that seeks to build methodological approaches necessary for problem solving, work approaches, functions, operations, etc., through the inclusion of all the manpower resources in all the different levels of processes. The structure engages contextually with observations, brainstorming, conceptualisation, development and implementation processes. The design takes into consideration issues related to the demand for health, learner-centred programming, empowerment programs for administrators, teaching staff and learners, considering the current issues in the design, strengthening administrative systems, and creating a digitalisation system. It is a tool that reduces the limitation gap. It is vital as manpower is considered as "problem-solvers in unanticipated situations" (Boy, 2011). The core of it is aligned with the desire to set the integration of manpower resources with other resources based on the understanding of their wants, needs, lives and wishes within the system (Burns, 2018).

Integration-centric process

This process has to do with processes involved in the systematic designing, amalgamation and integration of all

the sources (human, financial, material, technology and time) needed for a smooth running of an educational system. It is a process that has to do with the functional and operational processes within a system. It includes all the levels of management and the different units of the operating core. According to Taxen (2006), it is a bi-fundamental method that takes into account the systematic integration-centric engineering, which deals with the management of social and technical dependencies. Furthermore, the method sets the skills, tactics and strategies that are relevant to the construction of the coordinated engineering process. Again, he believed that the strategic aim is to furnish universal information that is accepted by the coordinated core, which articulates the understanding of what should be coordinated during the integration process and how the coordination should be done. The integration-centric process explains the operational processes of the different sectors.

Operational Process

It is a systematic design that is clearly put in a written form, articulating a routine task and or activities of workers within their various areas of specialisation in a system. It furnishes employees with information necessary for work performance, maintains consistency and assures quality outcomes. It is used for setting standards and assures a “successful quality system” (United States Environmental Protection Agency, 2007). As opined by Silberschatz, Galvin, & Gagne (2013), an operational process has a base where other process units are generated. It is from the base that the development of the process system is established and implemented in a systematic form. The base is described as a “parent process, and the new processes are called the children of that process” (Alrashid, n.d). This process generates units of processes in a way that the sub-processes are standardised. The goal of the operational process is to ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of functions.

Outsourcing Designers’ Processes

This explains the methodological approach that is undertaken to gain the services of an external expert. Not all needs are open for outsourcing within a system. This process guides actors to identify the need for, and an area within the system that necessitates outsourcing practice. Some of the strategic design processes are done by the top-level management. It is therefore vital to be conscious of different processes, to set the processes relevant for outsourcing designers. According to Mol (2007), outsourcing designers’ processes and activities which are understood based on the institution’s state of affairs that needs external contribution and as a process in itself. Institutional management outsources only functional activities and services that are not accessed within the system, which can only be obtained from experts in the external environment. Outsourcing is understood on a contextual basis. It varies by institution, and it is done based on the needs of the institution. The management team investigates the gains of outsourcing on a particular function, context, and or activity before outsourcing is carried out. Outsourcing designers begin by designing an outsourcing strategic plan. Managers link the outsourcing strategy to the institutional strategy during the outsourcing designers’ processes. It is being used as a solution to some institutional issues, and insourcing is preferable for some. Current outsourcing practices warrant that the management systems should understand the historical evolution of the institution, the economic state, social demands, and workers’ perceptions. Managers use a dynamic outsourcing approach as it allows them to carry out multifaceted outsourcing. Outsourcing designers can be done at the level of e-book designing, website redesigns, and video creation (Brandall & Henshall, n.d), supplier relationship management, contracts, training, ICT, and maintenance such as repairs of computers, printers, desks, boards, projectors, building renovations (Mol, 2007), others may include accounting process, data entry process, recruitment, data management process, quality assurance, and payroll management. All these mechanisms are taken into account before a satisfactory decision is taken about the designer(s) to outsource. Outsourcing decision is a periodic activity, as what was outsourced yesterday may be insourced today (Mol, 2007).

Supporting process

“Supporting processes support the management and the operational processes” (Brandall & Henshall, n.d, p.9). It is a tool used by managers to provide resources needed for the effectiveness and efficiency of management and operational processes. Resources vary from the provision of finances, human resource services, provision of quality services to learners, and information and communication technology, which guides the management to determine and design an institutional process management system that favours the institution’s process variation. The system undergoes an experiment and intensive analytical process before being implemented in

management and operational processes as a support process (Shaw, Holland, Kawalek, and Snowdon, 2007). Support process outlines related methods needed for the acquisition of different resources.

Reengineering process

The reengineering process “Has been receiving attention from industries as well as the academic community, and working processes in the organisations in the future, because it is likely to change management practices” (Chen, 2001, p. 68). It is a mechanism used by managers to assist academic institutions in boosting services to learners, quality assurance, functional cost reduction, leadership skills, transformation, and processes. It is a change to process management (Tucek, 2009), which may have to do with changes in the structural process, changes in the timetable, and time duration, such as short-term, midterm, and long-term changes. A radical change in the academic system may be stimulated by unforeseen circumstances and or behaviours. The case of COVID-19 brought about a series of changes within the educational setup. We saw changes at the level of the timetable, restructuring of the entire system, and engagement in the use of technology within the school systems. Learners’ behaviours, such as attacks on classmates and lecturers, may stimulate the reengineering process. Corrupt practices, bullying, insulting, assaulting, and intimidating learners by the administrative system and teaching staff may call for a reengineering process. Also known as “core process redesign”, the reengineering process refers to “the fundamental rethinking and radical design of... processes to achieve dramatic improvement in critical, contemporary measures of performance, such as cost, quality, service, and speed Hammer and Champy, cited in Bhaskar and Singh, 2014, p. 25).

According to Bhaskar (2017), process reengineering is a mechanism that is vital for transformational processes and redesigning institutional processes. It has to do with rethinking and redesigning processes, and the related elements of an institution and the institutional organisation and structure, to acquire a radical boost to a higher institution of learning’s results, Saleem, 2012; Goksoy et al., 2012 (as cited in Bhaskar, 2017). The process of reengineering major areas may best be understood from an institutional standpoint. An institution can be regarded as an amalgamation of interrelated processes. When effectuating process reengineering within an institution, there are three key areas of focus. They include: inter-institutional processes, inter-functional processes, and interpersonal processes (Grant, 2002). Within the different major areas of process reengineering, there are other important segment that calls for attention and may be revisited when there is a need. According to Bhaska (2017), some of these segments have to do with the strategic plan, the original process plan, culture (which defines the way people do things in their institution), and supporting tools. Supporting tools are linked to technological gadgets (computers, apps, projectors, loudspeakers, savers, etc.), which play an undeniable role within the academic setup. It has processes ranging from the determination of the types and nature of technology to purchase, the award of a contract, the reception of goods, the payment of the goods, installation, and manipulation of the tools for effective usage. There is a need for radical reengineering in some cases, where there is a new and effective technology in the market. Technological evolution is a push factor for the existence of process reengineering.



(Source Musa, 2025)

Importance of process management

Process management plays a pivotal role in enhancing the overall efficiency, effectiveness, and competitiveness of higher education institutions. One of its primary benefits is the promotion of collaboration across organisational units. By clearly defining workflows, responsibilities, and interdependencies, process management fosters coordination among individuals, teams, departments, and external stakeholders (Davenport, 2013; Harmon, 2019). This collaborative environment ensures that tasks are executed seamlessly, knowledge is shared effectively, and institutional resources are utilised optimally, thereby reducing redundancies and operational inefficiencies. In addition to collaboration, process management boosts communication within institutions. Structured processes create standardised channels for information flow, facilitating timely reporting, feedback, and decision-making (Kerpedzhiev, Konig, Röglinger, & Rosemann, 2020; Zelt, Recker, Schmiedel, & Brocke, 2019). Clear communication of objectives, expectations, and progress enhances transparency and accountability, allowing all stakeholders to remain aligned with institutional goals. Furthermore, well-managed communication reduces misunderstandings, accelerates problem-solving, and strengthens trust across the organisation.

Another significant benefit is that process management ensures institutions remain goal-oriented. By integrating strategic objectives into daily operational activities, process management provides a framework for aligning institutional processes with long-term goals (Dumas, La Rosa, Mendling, & Reijers, 2018; Bruin, 2009). This alignment allows managers and practitioners to monitor performance systematically, evaluate outcomes against predefined benchmarks, and implement corrective actions where necessary. Consequently, institutions can maintain focus on achieving their mission while adapting to dynamic educational and environmental demands. Finally, process management enables institutions to gain or maintain a sustainable competitive advantage. In a rapidly evolving higher education landscape, the ability to optimise processes, enhance quality, and innovate operational practices distinguishes high-performing institutions from their peers (Harmon, 2019; Davenport, 2013). By continuously analysing, refining, and aligning processes with institutional strategy, higher education organisations can improve responsiveness, reduce operational costs, enhance student and stakeholder satisfaction, and sustain long-term competitiveness. Process management thus serves not only as a tool for operational excellence but also as a strategic mechanism for institutional growth.

Steps in Process Management

This section presents the different steps of the process and their implications in higher education management. The steps are:

Conscious Process Management

Conscious process management emphasises deliberate attention to planning, execution, and evaluation in organisational processes. Baumeister, Schmeichel, Dwall, and Vohs (2007) argue that conscious processes contribute significantly to innovation and productivity, enabling the identification of essential constructs, themes, and activities required for effective process management. Conversely, a lack of consciousness may hinder creativity and innovation in institutional processes. Mechanisms such as structured brainstorming sessions, reflective practices, and process audits help establish and maintain process consciousness (Vohs et al., 2008; Latham & Locke, 2006). Conscious process management is reflected in practices such as structured curriculum reviews and accreditation exercises, where universities like the University of Yaoundé II and the University of Dschang deliberately plan, execute, and evaluate programs to align with national and international standards. For example, during the transition to the LMD system, faculties organised brainstorming workshops and reflective seminars to identify key themes such as competency-based learning and student mobility, while periodic audits by the Ministry of Higher Education ensured accountability and continuous improvement. These deliberate, reflective mechanisms foster innovation, enhance productivity, and prevent institutional stagnation.

Centrality of the Process

Effective process management prioritises stakeholders as the central element of any process, with learners being the core focus (Smart, Maddern, & Maull, n.d.). Process managers analyse stakeholder needs and the potential

impact of processes on them, considering both internal and external participants. The centrality principle ensures that institutional goals are achieved efficiently through strategic use of available resources, guided by a comprehensive process strategic plan (Hammer & Champy, 2003; Davenport, 2013). Centrality of the process is evident in universities implementing student-centred learning initiatives. For example, during curriculum reform at the University of Yaoundé I, process managers actively consult students, faculty, and employers to align course content with labour market needs. Similarly, in participative management of university research projects, administrators consider both internal stakeholders (researchers, lecturers) and external partners (NGOs, government agencies) to ensure resources are allocated efficiently and project objectives are met. This approach ensures that institutional goals such as improving graduate employability and research impact are achieved while keeping learners at the core of all planning and decision-making.

Process Strategic Plan

A process strategic plan provides a structured framework for guiding institutional operations, aligning tasks with learner demands, and addressing administrative requirements. It defines roles, responsibilities, timelines, and expected outcomes, supporting short-, medium-, and long-term goals (Heyl, 2011). Collaborative planning involving process managers, teaching staff, and administrative personnel ensures alignment with institutional priorities. Common strategic approaches include process orientation, routine orientation, service orientation, and mass customisation (Heyl, 2011; Rummler & Brache, 2012). In the Cameroonian academic context, a process strategic plan is exemplified by the implementation of the Bachelor-Master-Doctorate (BMD) reform across universities such as the University of Douala. University administrators, faculty, and support staff collaboratively develop detailed plans outlining course schedules, assessment methods, and resource allocation to meet student learning needs while complying with national education standards. For instance, process orientation ensures courses are designed around learning outcomes, routine orientation standardises administrative procedures for student registration, service orientation addresses student support services, and mass customisation allows elective modules tailored to individual student interests, all contributing to efficient achievement of institutional goals.

Process Architecture

Process architecture represents the design and mapping of institutional processes, clarifying roles, responsibilities, workflows, and interrelationships. It reduces administrative complexity, facilitates communication, and enhances performance (Barros, 2007). Sub-processes within an academic system may include inter-departmental coordination, administrative staff workflows, teaching and learning processes, and interactions with external stakeholders (Dumas, La Rosa, Mendling, & Reijers, 2018). Process architecture is illustrated by the structured workflow at the University of Buea, where clear mapping of processes ensures smooth operation. For example, inter-departmental coordination is formalised through regular faculty meetings and cross-department committees, administrative workflows are standardised for tasks like student registration and transcript issuance, teaching and learning processes are organised through scheduled lectures, practical sessions, and continuous assessment, while interactions with external stakeholders such as accreditation bodies, government agencies, and community partners are managed through designated liaison offices. This structured architecture reduces bottlenecks, clarifies responsibilities, and enhances overall institutional efficiency.

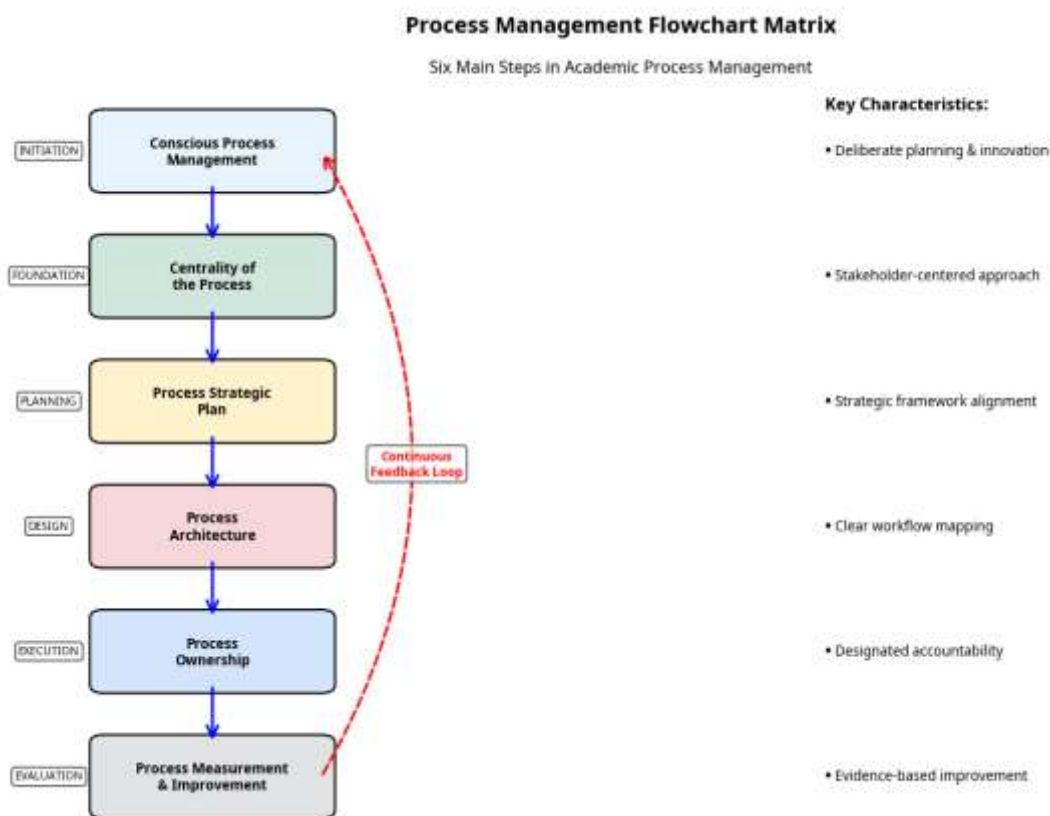
Process Ownership

Process ownership assigns accountability for the design, execution, and improvement of specific processes to designated individuals or teams. Process owners play a critical role in process reengineering, performance measurement, standard-setting, resource mobilisation, and stakeholder engagement (Hrabal & Tucek, 2018; Hammer, 1996). They are typically senior administrators responsible for ensuring that processes are executed effectively and in alignment with institutional goals (Handbook for Basic Process Improvement, 1996; Harrington, 2016). In the Cameroonian academic context, process ownership is exemplified at institutions like the University of Yaoundé II, where deans or heads of departments act as process owners for academic programs. They are accountable for designing curricula, overseeing teaching and assessment procedures, monitoring student performance, and ensuring compliance with national higher education standards. Similarly, administrative units designate officers responsible for enrollment, financial management, or research grant

administration, who coordinate resources, set performance benchmarks, and engage relevant stakeholders to ensure processes run efficiently and contribute to the university's strategic objectives.

Process Measurement and Improvement

Process measurement involves systematically evaluating workflows, performance indicators, and outcomes. It addresses what to measure, when, and how, distinguishing itself from process monitoring or control (Aiello, Nota, & Faggini, 2006). Effective measurement informs continuous improvement, supports accountability, and enables evidence-based decision-making (Neely, Gregory, & Platts, 2005; Kaplan & Norton, 1996). Process improvement focuses on enhancing efficiency, effectiveness, and overall quality. It involves establishing performance standards, fostering a culture of accountability, and implementing corrective actions when targets are unmet (Handbook for Basic Process Improvement, 1996; Hammer & Stanton, 1999). Continuous improvement is critical for maintaining competitiveness and responsiveness in academic institutions. In the Cameroonian academic context, process measurement and improvement can be seen in universities such as the University of Dschang, where academic and administrative processes are regularly evaluated using performance indicators like student pass rates, graduation timelines, research output, and service delivery efficiency. For instance, periodic audits of teaching quality, student feedback surveys, and departmental performance reviews help identify gaps, leading to targeted interventions such as revising course content, improving laboratory facilities, or streamlining administrative procedures. These continuous improvement efforts ensure that institutional objectives are met, resources are optimally used, and the quality of education and services remains responsive to stakeholder needs.



(Source: Musa, 2025)

Guiding Principles of Process Management

Principle of Context Consciousness

Processes should be designed with awareness of contextual factors, including institutional size, strategy, objectives, client demand, and available resources (Brocke, Schmiedel, Recker, & Trkman, 2014; Johansson,

McHugh, Pendlebury, & Wheeler, 2002). The principle of context consciousness can be illustrated in how universities design and implement quality assurance and curriculum reform processes. For example, a large public university such as the University of Yaoundé I, with its high student population and limited resources, may adopt mass lecture methods and modular curricula to accommodate numbers, while focusing on broad, employability-driven objectives aligned with national higher education strategies. In contrast, a smaller private university like the Catholic University of Central Africa might design more personalised teaching and research processes, integrating Catholic values, targeted professional programs, and closer lecturer-student interaction to meet client (student and parent) demands. Similarly, professional schools such as ENAM or ENS consciously align their training processes with state objectives of producing civil servants and teachers, ensuring curricula and evaluation processes respond directly to institutional missions and available funding. These variations reflect the contextual awareness of institutional size, strategy, objectives, client expectations, and resources in shaping processes in Cameroonian higher education.

Principle of Continuity and Enablement

Processes must be implemented consistently to ensure institutional effectiveness. This principle emphasises ongoing training and capacity building for human resources to sustain process efficiency (Davenport, 2013; Hammer, 2010). In the Cameroonian academic context, the principle of continuity and enablement is evident in initiatives such as ongoing training for university lecturers in competency-based approaches (CBA) and digital pedagogy under the Ministry of Higher Education's modernisation agenda. For instance, after the adoption of the Licence-Master-Doctorat (LMD) system, continuous workshops and refresher seminars were organised across state universities like the University of Buea and the University of Douala to build faculty capacity in designing syllabi, managing credit systems, and integrating ICT tools such as Moodle for e-learning. Similarly, administrative staff in institutions like ENS and ENSET undergo periodic training in new evaluation, accreditation, and quality assurance standards to ensure consistency in institutional processes. By sustaining these professional development efforts, universities not only maintain process efficiency but also adapt to evolving educational demands, thereby reinforcing institutional effectiveness in a resource-constrained environment.

Principle of Holism

A holistic approach ensures that processes are managed across the entire organisational value chain rather than in isolated units. It integrates strategic plans, resources, and social dimensions into the process framework (Hammer & Stanton, 1999; Rummler & Brache, 2012). The principle of holism can be seen in how universities integrate teaching, research, and community service within a unified institutional framework rather than treating them as isolated units. For example, the University of Dschang links its agricultural sciences programs to community outreach by combining classroom teaching, applied research, and field extension services that directly support local farmers, thereby aligning academic objectives with socio-economic development. Similarly, the University of Bamenda's teacher training programs holistically connect curriculum design, pedagogical innovation, and internship placements in secondary schools, ensuring that academic knowledge, practical skills, and societal needs are addressed together. At a strategic level, the Ministry of Higher Education's LMD reform embodies holism by synchronising program structures, credit systems, and mobility policies across all universities to integrate institutional planning, resource allocation, and broader national development goals within the academic process chain.

Principle of Institutionalism

Process management should integrate formal roles, regulations, and organisational culture, balancing vertical and horizontal structures to promote coordination and learner-focused outcomes (Mintzberg, 1979; Scott, 2014). The principle of institutionalism is reflected in how universities balance formal regulations, roles, and organisational culture to ensure coordinated, learner-focused outcomes. For instance, the Ministry of Higher Education sets national policies such as the LMD framework, which establishes vertical structures of compliance across public universities, while individual faculties and departments exercise horizontal collaboration through curriculum committees, student associations, and joint research projects. At the University of Yaoundé II (Soa), clear role distinctions between the Rector, Deans, Heads of Department, and student representatives are

institutionalized, but decision-making often involves consultative councils that blend hierarchical authority with participatory input. Similarly, institutions like the University of Buea emphasise organisational culture through practices such as regular Senate meetings and student-staff forums, which not only enforce formal regulations but also foster an environment of shared responsibility. This integration of rules, roles, and culture ensures coordinated processes that remain aligned with academic standards while addressing student-centred learning outcomes.

Principle of Involvement

Engaging all stakeholders minimises resistance to change, enhances commitment, and supports process success (Kotter, 1996; Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999). The principle of involvement is evident in the way universities engage multiple stakeholders when implementing reforms such as the LMD system or competency-based training. For example, before rolling out the CBA in teacher training institutions like ENS Yaoundé and the Higher Technical Teachers' Training College (HTTTC) Bambili, workshops brought together lecturers, student representatives, ministry officials, and employers to discuss curriculum relevance and expected competencies. Similarly, at the University of Buea, participatory consultations with faculty, administrative staff, and students during Senate meetings or departmental boards help shape policies on grading, research supervision, and digital learning platforms, reducing resistance to change and fostering ownership. This inclusive approach not only ensures smoother adoption of reforms but also strengthens commitment to learner-centred outcomes and institutional effectiveness.

Principle of Joint Understanding and Purpose

Establishing a common language and shared understanding aligns process activities with institutional missions, vision, and strategic objectives (Brocke et al., 2014; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). The principle of joint understanding and purpose is reflected in how universities and stakeholders align their activities with the national vision for higher education and institutional missions. For example, the implementation of the LMD reform across all state universities required creating a shared language around credits, semesters, and competency-based learning, ensuring that lecturers, students, and administrators understood and worked toward the same goals. At the University of Douala, strategic planning sessions bring together faculty heads, administrative staff, and student leaders to harmonise departmental objectives with the university's broader mission of fostering entrepreneurship and professional training. Likewise, the University of Bamenda integrates joint understanding through induction seminars where new lecturers and students are oriented on institutional culture, values, and academic expectations, thereby aligning individual actions with the university's vision. This shared framework ensures that diverse academic processes collectively advance institutional objectives and national.

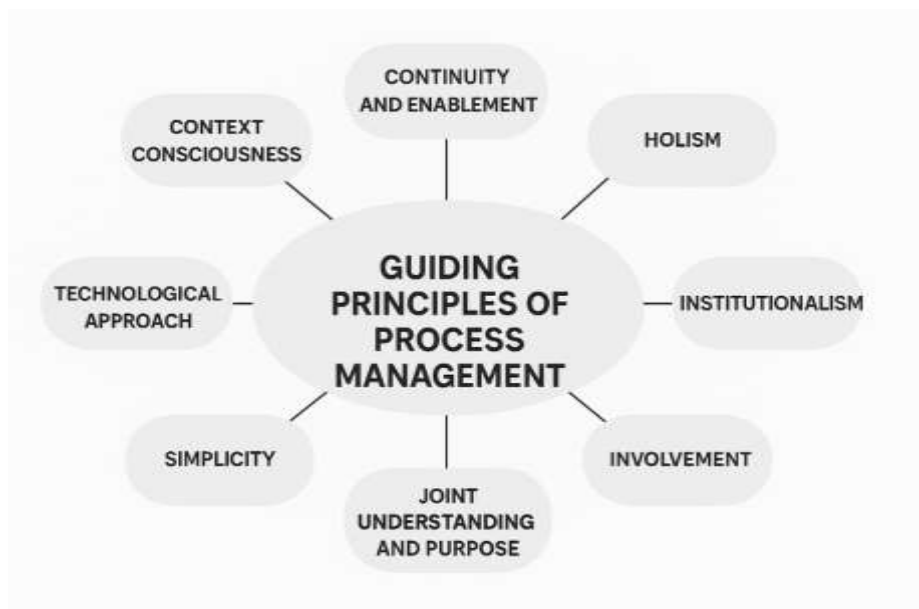
Principle of Simplicity

Process design should optimise resource use while maintaining effectiveness and efficiency, minimising unnecessary complexity (Rummler & Brache, 2012; Davenport, 2013). The principle of simplicity is illustrated in how universities streamline administrative and teaching processes to optimise scarce resources while ensuring effectiveness. For example, at the University of Maroua, where resource constraints are acute, course delivery often relies on simplified modular teaching and standardised evaluation formats that reduce administrative overhead while maintaining academic quality. Similarly, the University of Buea has introduced digital platforms such as online registration and electronic transcript requests, which cut down bureaucratic delays and costs for both students and administrators. Teacher training colleges like ENS and ENSET also apply simplicity by using standardised lesson planning templates and clear competency-based assessment rubrics, minimising ambiguity and complexity for both trainers and trainees. These practices allow institutions to function efficiently despite limited funding, infrastructure, and staff, while ensuring that learning outcomes remain the central focus.

Principle of Technological Approach

Information and communication technologies (ICT) facilitate process management, enhancing communication, monitoring, and performance (Harmon, 2019; Dumas et al., 2018). The principle of a technological approach is evident in how universities leverage ICT to improve process management, communication, and performance.

For instance, the University of Buea and the University of Yaoundé I have adopted online registration systems and digital platforms like Moodle and Google Classroom to facilitate course delivery, assignments, and feedback, thereby reducing administrative bottlenecks and enhancing student engagement. During the COVID-19 pandemic, institutions such as the University of Bamenda relied on Zoom and WhatsApp groups to sustain teaching and supervision, ensuring continuity of academic processes despite mobility restrictions. Additionally, the Ministry of Higher Education's e-National Higher Education Network Project provided laptops and internet connectivity to students and lecturers, promoting digital inclusion and smoother monitoring of academic activities. These ICT-driven processes enhance transparency, streamline communication, and improve institutional performance in a context where traditional paper-based systems often slow down efficiency.



(Source: Musa, 2025)

The differences and relationships of management, operational and document-centric processes

The paper presents managerial, operational, and document-centric processes as distinct in their purpose. Management processes are strategic and proactive, focused on overarching activities like planning, leading, and policy-making to forecast the future of operations and achieve stakeholder goals. Operational processes, in contrast, are the routine, systematic day-to-day tasks that provide employees with the information needed for work performance and ensure quality outcomes. The document also positions document-centric processes as a subset of management processes, specifically focused on using documented principles and procedures to regulate behaviour and ensure consistency within the system. This creates a clear hierarchy where strategic management processes provide the framework, and operational processes are the practical execution of that framework. The relationship between these processes is one of interdependence and integration, as highlighted by the paper's "Contingency Process Management Theory". The framework proposes that institutional processes are interdependent across multiple organisational levels. This means that modifications in one process, such as a management process, will influence outcomes across other functions, including operational processes. The paper further clarifies that management processes include the design of document-centric, human-centric, and integration-centric processes, indicating a direct, subordinate relationship where document-centric processes serve as a tool for management. The document also describes process management as a "strategy execution engine" that transforms management-level strategic goals into operational realities through structured workflows, showing how these different process types are linked to achieve a common purpose.

Research Design

The study adopted a qualitative approach with an exploratory redesign aimed at analysing administrative management in Cameroon's higher education. document analysis was used as a data collection method. Secondary Data Collection was drawn from Policy Documents & Institutional. That is, we reviewed national

education policies and university frameworks and an Academic Literature Review relating to administrative management practices. These studies analysed prior studies on process management and administrative efficiency. We adopted a Purposive Sampling in document selection for qualitative insights. also, the Thematic Analysis and Content Analysis were used to examine policy documents, institutional reports and academic literature on the phenomenon under study.

CONCLUSION

The document discusses a conceptual framework of the process management approach, proposing a "Contingency Process Management Theory" for higher education institutions in Cameroon. The study highlights that traditional, fixed institutional structures are inadequate for addressing contemporary challenges posed by dynamic factors like demographic shifts, technological advancements, and economic fluctuations. The paper conceptualises process management as a "strategy execution engine" that translates strategic goals into operational realities through structured workflows and continuous improvement. The theoretical framework is grounded in four key assumptions: first, process management must be flexible and adaptable to an institution's context and environmental changes; second, effective implementation requires accurate data collection and analysis; third, collaborative stakeholder engagement is essential for successful execution; and fourth, institutional processes are interdependent across multiple organisational levels. The article examines various types of processes, including management processes (document-centric, human-centric, and integration-centric), operational processes, outsourcing designers' processes, supporting processes, and reengineering processes. The conclusion of the paper reinforces the importance of process management in orienting institutional stakeholders toward goal achievement and client satisfaction. It is a critical management tool for enhancing collaboration, improving communication, maintaining goal-orientation, and achieving a sustainable competitive advantage. The document emphasises that the proposed framework provides a dynamic, context-sensitive approach that balances standardisation with flexibility, enabling institutions to navigate challenges, optimise resource utilisation, and sustain operational excellence. The principles and steps outlined in the article provide a comprehensive guide for managers to systematically manage complexity and ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of academic operations.

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