

# **A CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM UNDER CAMEROON'S 2005 CRIMINAL PROCEDURE CODE: EMERGING CHALLENGES**

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## **SUMMARY**

The objective of this article is to examine the changes introduced by the 2005 Cameroonian Criminal Procedure Code on matters of juvenile justice, considering that before this Code, juvenile justice in Cameroon was governed by extra-national laws. In undertaking this analysis, the article highlights the evolution of the administration of juvenile justice 50 years after independence of Cameroon. It also points out the various difficulties and shortcomings in the treatment of juvenile offenders in Cameroon since the enactment of the new Criminal Procedure Code. The article reveals that the 2005 Code is an amalgamation of all hitherto existing laws in the country that pertained to juvenile justice, and that despite the considerable amount of criticism it has received, the Code is clearly an improvement of the system of juvenile justice in Cameroon, since it represents a balance of the due process rights of young people, the protection of society and the special needs of young offenders. This is so because the drafters of the Code took a broad view of the old laws on juvenile justice. Also a wide range of groups were consulted, including criminal justice professionals, children's service organisations, victims, parents, young offenders, educators, advocacy groups and social-policy analysts. However, to address the challenges that beset the juvenile justice system of Cameroon, the strategy of the government should be focussed on three areas: the prevention of youth crime, the provision of meaningful consequences for the actions of young people, and the rehabilitation and reintegration of young offenders. Cameroonian law should seek educative solutions rather than to impose prison sentences or other repressive measures on young offenders. Special courts to deal with young offenders should be established outside the regular penal system and should be provided with

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resources that are adequate for and appropriate to fostering their understanding of juvenile crime.

**KEYWORDS:** Juvenile justice; Criminal Procedure Code; Cameroon