

# The Competency-based Approach in Public Universities in Anglophone Cameroon: Implications for the Tuning Africa Project.

By

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## ***Abstract***

The study assessed the Competency-based Approach (CbA) in public universities in Anglophone Cameroon, notably the Universities of Bamenda and Buea (UBa and UB); within the framework of the Bachelor, Masters and Ph.D. (BMP/LMD) system and its implications for the Tuning Africa project. Inspired by Vygotsky's social constructivism, Dewey's progressivism and Fullan's change theories, the study; was guided by three objectives, answered three research questions and tested three hypotheses. The evaluative and descriptive survey designs were applied, and with a structured questionnaire known as the Competency-Based Education Questionnaire (CBEQ), data was collected from 200 persons (staff and students) sampled using the purposive sampling technique. Applying descriptive (frequencies, mean scores and standard deviation) and inferential (Independent T-test) statistics to analyzed data, the results revealed the following: Curriculum planning/design processes in public universities under study were not reflective of CbA (UBa  $\bar{X} = 2.9010$  & UB  $\bar{X} = 2.7595^*$ ), and the mean score responses of academic staff and students (3.148 & 2.703 respectively) relating to the adoption of CbA in the curriculum planning/design processes were significantly different ( $p < 0.05$ ) at the 0.05 significance level. Secondly, the two institutions relatively embraced CbA in their teaching-learning processes and the mean score responses from both institutions (UBa = 3.3681\* & UB = 3.2354) relating to the teaching-learning processes within the framework of CbA were not significantly different ( $p > 0.05$ ) at the 0.05 significance level. Thirdly, students' assessment in both institutions significantly reflected CbA (UBa = 3.9028\* & UB = 3.5979) and the process in UBa appeared better than that of UB. However, the mean score responses from both universities within the framework of CbA were not significantly different ( $p > 0.05$ ) at the 0.05 significance level. The implication of the results for the Tuning Africa project rested on the necessity to explore possibilities of partnership between the Tuning Africa project and any of these institutions, so as to share ideas and experiences on implementing the CbA in difficult areas of HE practices, and make improvements in areas where successes are already being registered.

**Keywords:** Competency-based approach; Public Higher Institutions; Anglophone Cameroon; Tuning Africa.

## **I. Introduction**

The quest for sustainable solutions to 21<sup>st</sup> century challenges and the pursuit for sustainable development put knowledge as the key driving force towards the attainment of these objectives. Through its capacity to improve productivity, knowledge increasingly constitutes the base for countries' competitive advantage. Consequently, investments in the knowledge base (education, research and

development etc.) of many countries around the world, especially OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries are exceeding investments in physical equipment.<sup>[1][2]</sup> Higher Education (HE) in particular, is critical to the building of a knowledge based economy and society as opined by global development players, policy makers and relevant international institutions/organizations such as; the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), World Bank, European Union (EU), U.K.s National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education, African Development Bank (AfDB), African Union (AU), Association of African Universities (AAU), Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) and specifically the Tuning Academy.<sup>[3]</sup> These organizations all believe that HE must be strategically positioned in the development plan of every nation for meaningful and sustainable economic development to happen.

This is because, the HE sector (if properly managed), is an engine of innovation involved in the training of skilled human resources (through teaching, research/innovation and outreach) who constitute the agents of sustainable development.<sup>[4]</sup> For instance, the Tuning Academy, as an International Higher Education and Research Centre, has been working in collaboration with EU, AU, and a network of communities of academic experts in Africa, in the design and implementation of HE innovations under the Tuning Africa project.<sup>[5]</sup> This is aimed at ensuring the development and enhancement of quality teaching, learning and assessment in HE, with emphases on the competency-based student-centered approach. That is, making sure that university students fully participates in the teaching-learning process and acquire competences (applicable knowledge, skills, attitudes, behaviors and values) for intellectual development, employability and responsible citizenship within the context of globalisation.<sup>[6]</sup>

With such understanding, Cameroon, like other African Countries has since independence engaged in different internal and external efforts aimed at reforming/innovating the HE sector towards functionality. That is, working with different stakeholders to put in place a vibrant HE system particularly in terms of curriculum innovations, teaching-learning practices, research and infrastructures, especially in public higher institutions. The underlying reason for these innovative efforts is to safeguard the training of students to acquire core competencies in all domains that will make them fit squarely in

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<sup>1</sup> OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development), *Knowledge Management in the learning Society: Education and Skills*. (Paris; OECD, 2000), pages 1 – 258. Retrieved on 1st August, 2017 from; <http://ocw.metu.edu.tr/file.php/118/Week11/oecd1.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> OECD, *Globalization and Higher Education: What the future might bring*. (OECD, 2009). Retrieved on 17th February, 2016 from; <https://www.oecd.org/edu/imhe/44302672.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Varghese, N. V., *Governance Reforms in Higher Education: A study of Selected Countries in Africa*. (Paris; UNESCO/IIEP- International Institute of Educational Planning, 2013) pages 1- 38

<sup>4</sup> New Africa Magazine, “Universities: Engines of Innovation”, *New Africa Magazine*, 2015 edition

<sup>5</sup> *What is Tuning Academy?* Retrieved on 12<sup>th</sup> September 2017, from: <http://tuningacademy.org/academy/?lang=en>

<sup>6</sup> Nwafor, Maureen, O., *Educational Innovation; Process and Products*, (Enugu: Magnet Computer Services, 2007), p.32

the global job market, and contribute significantly to sustainable development.<sup>[7]</sup> As a bi-cultural country (with the French and English subsystems of Education) the Bologna process has been a guiding tool for any recent innovation and partnership in Cameroon's HE, particularly in state universities within the French and English subsystems.<sup>[8]</sup> However, none of the two Anglo-Saxon public Universities of Bamenda and Buea are among the five public universities where the Tuning Africa project is being implemented - aimed at promoting the Competency-based Approach (CbA) in; designing academic programs, teaching-learning and assessment practices,<sup>[9]</sup> which are part of the recommendations of the BMP/LMD system under the Bologna process. This research therefore assessed CbA in public universities in Anglophone Cameroon, within the framework of BMP/LMD system and its implications for the Tuning Africa project.

## II. Brief History and Policy context of Higher Education in Cameroon

Cameroon is one of the nations in Western Africa created out of the colonial expeditions of Germany, Britain and France. The country has the shape of an elongated triangle, and acts as a bridge between West Africa and Central Africa. Cameroon lies between latitudes 1° and 13°N, and longitudes 8° and 17°E. The country is bounded to the north by Lake Chad; Chad and the Central African Republic to the east. To the south, it is bounded by the Republics of the Congo, Gabon, and Equatorial Guinea and to the west by the Bight of Biafra (an arm of the Atlantic Ocean) and the Federal Republic of Nigeria. It has been described as "Africa in miniature" because it exhibits all major climates and vegetation of the continent notably coast, desert, mountains, rainforest, and savanna.<sup>[10]</sup> Cameroon is a bilingual, bi-jural and bicultural country – with French and English as official languages and a Francophone and Anglo-Saxon educational, legal and administrative setups.

The 1996 Constitution of Cameroon (as amended) and the Draft Document on the Cameroon Sector-Wide Approach in Education state clearly that; education is a major mission of the State – the state is the guarantor of citizens' education at all levels.<sup>[11]</sup> <sup>[12]</sup> Consequently, the organization and control of education at every level is the responsibility of government, as she recognizes education as a national priority. This is based on explicit previews contained in Law No 98/004 Of 14th April, 1998 on the orientation of education in Cameroon and Law No. 2001/005 of 16th April/2001 on the orientation of

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<sup>7]</sup>Clay, Philip, "Model for the transformation of Higher Education in Africa" *University World News, Issue No. 441*, (2016). Accessible at: <http://www.universityworldnews.com>

<sup>8]</sup>Ngwa, Emmanuel and Fonkeng, George, "Indigenous Funding Strategies for Sustainable Higher Education in Cameroon" *African Journal of Social Sciences*, 8 no. 3 (2017), 25 – 44

<sup>9]</sup>*What is Tuning Academy?* Retrieved on 12<sup>th</sup> September, 2017 from: <http://tuningacademy.org/academy/?lang=en>

<sup>10]</sup>DeLancey, Mark W., and DeLancey, Mark Dike, *Historical Dictionary of the Republic of Cameroon* (3rd ed.), (Lanham, Maryland: The Scarecrow Press, 2000).

<sup>11]</sup> Republic Cameroon, *Draft Document of the Sector-Wide Approach in Cameroon*, (Yaoundé: Republic of Cameroon, 2005), P. 13.

<sup>12]</sup> Republic of Cameroon, *Constitution of the Republic of Cameroon*, (Yaoundé: Republic of Cameroon, 2008), Pages 2-3.

higher education. HE in Cameroon has been viewed over the years among other things as a vehicle for training high level manpower to consolidate the nation's autonomy and fast-track the nation's economic development. The expansion of this sector over time has been motivated by the conviction that it is a bench-mark for the training of manpower at lower levels of education and an important source of economic growth.<sup>[13]</sup>

Following the adopted policy to bring schools closer to the homes of the people and students under the fifth five-year development plan (1981-1986), decree no. 93/026 of 19th January, 1993 was signed creating six universities designed to give impetus to academic and professional development of Cameroonians citizens. These included the Universities of Yaoundé I (Bilingual), Yaoundé II (French speaking), Buea (Anglo-Saxon), Douala (French speaking), Ngoundere (French speaking) and Dschang (French speaking).<sup>[14] [15] [16]</sup> The continuous expansion of in student enrollment and congestion in state universities resulted in the creation of two additional state universities – Maroua (largely French speaking) and Bamenda (Largely English speaking) raising the number of state universities to 8 excluding other specialized institutions not attached to the universities.<sup>[17]</sup> The two Anglo-Saxon oriented universities of Bamenda and Buea (UBa and UB) are what constitute Anglophone Cameroon in this study.

In 2005, the government adopted an elaborate and consistent policy framework known as the New University Governance Policy (NUGP) (Nouvelle Gouvernance Universitaire). The NUGP presents evidence of changes in the perceptions about the role of HE in societal transformation. The policy earmarks a strategic path to transforming Cameroonian HE from its actual state of inefficiency to its materialization. It outlines a five multi-dimensional but mutually exclusive package to be consistently implemented and visualized to drive the long-term reorientation processes of HE, amongst which are:

- academic governance (the core missions of universities; teaching, research and outreach/service)

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<sup>13]</sup>Fonkeng George and Ntembe Augustine, "Higher education and economic development in Africa: The case of Cameroon." *Educational Research and Review*, 4 no. 5 (2009), 231-246. Available online at: <http://www.academicjournals.org/ERR>

<sup>14]</sup>Njeuma Dorothy, L., Endeley Hebert, N., Mbuntum Francis, F., Lyonga Nalova., Nkweteyim Denis, L., Musenja Samuel., Ekange Elizabeth, *Reforming a National System of Higher Education: The Case of Cameroon*, (Washington D.C: ADEA Working Group on Higher Education, World Bank, 1999), pages 1 – 19.

<sup>15]</sup>Ngwana Augustine, T., *The Implementation of the 1993 Higher Education Reforms in Cameroon: Issues and Promises*. Pages 1 – 8. Retrieved on 9<sup>th</sup> June, 2016 from: <http://www.chet.org.za/papers/implementation-1993-higher-education-reforms-cameroon-issues-and-promises>

<sup>16]</sup>Fonkeng George, E., *The History of Education in Cameroon: 1844-2010. (Revised edition)* (New York: The Edwin Meeler Press, 2008), p. 170.

<sup>17]</sup>Nwaimah Emmanuel, "CAMEROON: New university part of tertiary reforms." *University World News*, Issue, no. 15. Available at: <http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20081010091141564>

- Managerial governance (capacity building for modern governance and administrative practices) as well as resources
- Financial management
- Digital governance (ICT in higher education) and
- Social governance (living conditions, financial and communication support systems for students and staff).<sup>[18]</sup>

Generally, the goals of the 1993 reforms and subsequent policy thrust were all aimed to make university education sustainable through: the decongestion of over overcrowded universities and the professionalization of university studies to produce graduates who could contribute significantly in public and private sectors of the country thereby ensuring sustainable development. Some of the specific objectives of the reforms which are further echoed in Law No. 2001/005 as the objectives of higher education in Cameroon are to:

- Make programs more varied, professional, adapted and responsive to need of the job market by providing programs that will make graduates find employment in both public and private sectors in line with the nation's development agenda.
- Train citizens with sound democratic credentials, who are conscious of the need for an inclusive equitable society, promote ethical/moral values, bilingualism, national unity and integration
- Make universities more accessible to all category of qualified citizens and local, regional and international communities
- Grant universities more academic and management autonomy by providing infrastructure and finances
- Provide a more conducive environment for teaching and research and outreach.
- Revive and maximize inter-university and international cooperation
- motivation staff and improve living conditions of staff and students through better remuneration, condition for staff promotion and upgrading students' condition
- Broaden and increase the participation of different stakeholders in the financing and management of universities.<sup>[19][ 20]</sup>

The harmonization of the degree structure in Cameroon under the BMP/LMD system (which is a product of the Bologna Process) is the most recent innovation in the HE sector within the Central African Sub-Region. The Bologna Process is a HE innovation with a global impact marked by the adoption of the BMP (Bachelor, Masters and Ph.D.) for the Anglophone sub-system and the LMD (Licence, Mastere and Doctorat) for the Francophone subsystem. With the introduction of this

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<sup>18]</sup> Ministry of Higher Education (MINESUP), *Operational Strategy of the New University Governance Policy, a New Vision for the Cameroonian University-2020 Horizon*, (Yaoundé, Cameroon, 2009)

<sup>19]</sup> Tambo, Ivo, L., *Cameroon National Education Policy Since the 1995 Forum*, (Limbe: Design House, 2003a)

<sup>20]</sup> Fonkeng, George, E., *The History of Education in Cameroon: 1844-2010...*

innovation, all postgraduate diplomas have gradually phased out.<sup>[21]</sup> The major aim of this process is to ensure the comparability of degrees or certificates around the world, facilitate students and staff mobility and strengthen the quality and relevance of academic programs especially through the adaptation of curriculum and pedagogic practices. In other words, the BMP innovation promotes the professionalization of HE or the teaching of core competencies that address the needs of the global job market.<sup>[22]</sup>

Consequently, the professionalization of HE does not necessarily involve additional content over and above that defined by a discipline, but in many cases is concerned with just minor adaptations and adoption of competency-based or Student-centered Approaches by teachers and administrators in the handling of issues. It is expected that through this, students develop critical thinking abilities and take wide-ranging, systemic and self-reflective approaches and adapt to novel situations that can arise from complexity. Also, it is a likelihood that students may develop the ability to anticipate and prepare for predictable outcomes and be ready to adapt to unexpected ones. The overall essence of this is that it will enable students to be practically skillful, independent minded and individually grounded in the subject matter.<sup>[23]</sup>

### III. Problem Statement

In 2007, the BMP/LMD system was adopted within the Cameroon HE system, whereby the degree structure in universities since then has been based on the Bologna harmonized structure as implemented in the whole of the Central African Sub-region. Among these universities are UBa and UB which operate within the English sub-system of education. This innovation among other things emphasizes the professionalization of HE practices through the adoption of CbA especially in the domain of curriculum planning/design and pedagogy. It therefore presents a paradigm shift from “higher education in preparation for life” to “higher education for life”.

Anchored on Lev Vygotsky’s social constructivism, John Dewey’s progressivism and Theodore Brameld’s reconstructionism philosophies on democratic and functional education respectively, it is expected that this innovation having been implemented for about 14 years must have ensured relevant skillful trainings for university students and the democratization of the teaching-learning process particularly within public universities in Anglophone Cameroon. However, an observation of the status quo in UBa and UB revealed gross inadequacies in the practice of CbA in particular and the implementation of the BMP system as a whole. Some students and staff have complained of the fact that

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<sup>21</sup>] Peter, Nnane., Peter, Titanji and Therese, Tschombe, “The Bologna Process in Cameroon’s Higher Education System: Challenges and Prospects”, *European Educational Research Association*, 2009. Retrieved on 1<sup>st</sup> August, 2017 from: <http://www.eera-ecer.de/ecer-programmes/pdf/print/conference/2/contribution/3594/>

<sup>22</sup>] EHEA, *The Bologna Declaration of 19 June 1999: Joint declaration of the European Ministers of Education*, (Bologna, 1999), pages 1-2. Retrieved on 5th March, 2016 from: [http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/about/BOLOGNA\\_DECLARATION1.pdf](http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/about/BOLOGNA_DECLARATION1.pdf)

<sup>23</sup>] Longshurt, James, *Higher education for sustainable development. Guidance for UK education providers. The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education*, (London: Higher Education Academy, (2014), 1 – 28. Available at: <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/Education-sustainable-development-Guidance-June-14.pdf>

the curriculum contents do not adequately address the needs of this 21<sup>st</sup> century society, the teaching-learning processes remain largely theoretical, inadequate laboratories and laboratory infrastructure, increasing number of unskilled graduates and unemployment among graduates and very limited university-industry partnerships among other complaints.

Based on Micheal Fullan's argument that an educational change or innovation is likely to achieve its intended objectives only when the change process is closely monitored; considering the non-involvement of these two universities in the Tuning Africa project to reinforce the implementation of this innovation; and mindful of the inherent culture of monitoring and evaluation within HE systems, a performance-based evaluation of CbA under the framework of the BMP system became necessary. Such evaluation focused specifically on the curriculum planning/design, teaching-learning processes and students' assessment; with possible implications for the Tuning Africa project.

#### **IV. Research Objectives**

The study generally sought to evaluate CbA in public universities in Anglophone Cameroon within the framework of the Balogun process (BMP system). Specifically, the study set out to investigate;

1. How reflective of CbA is the curriculum planning/design process of state universities in Anglophone Cameroon,
2. The extent to which the teaching-learning processes embraced CbA and
3. How focused was students' assessment within the framework of CbA in state universities in Anglophone Cameroon?

#### **V. Research Questions**

The study answered the following research questions:

1. Is the curriculum planning/design process of public universities in Anglophone Cameroon reflective of the CbA?
2. To what extent does the teaching-learning processes in public universities in Anglophone Cameroon embrace CbA?
3. How focused is students' assessment within the framework of CbA in public universities in Anglophone Cameroon?

#### **VI. Research Hypotheses**

The study tested the following null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance;

1. There is no significant difference in the mean score responses of staffs and students with respect to the adoption of CbA in the curriculum planning/design process by public higher institutions in Anglophone Cameroon.
2. There is no significant difference between the teaching-learning processes in UBa and UB, within the framework of CbA.

3. There is no significant difference between students' assessment in UBa and UB, within the framework of CbA.

## VII. Review of Conceptual and theoretical Literature

### Vii.1. Competency Based Approach from the perspectives of curriculum, teaching-learning process and assessment

Scholars have defined competence to consist of three interrelated ingredients: a knowledge component (the understanding part), behavioral components (the overt behavioral repertoire) and a value component (including values, beliefs and attitudes). Therefore, a competent person performing a task may possess a combination of skills, knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors required for effective performance of the task or activity. A competence is defined as the holistic synthesis of these components.<sup>[24]</sup> From another perspective, a competence may be divided in three components - It is the ability of a person to show: a particular behavior in a particular context and with particular qualities. Consequently, having a competency goes beyond the possession of knowledge and skills. It takes into consideration the ability to respond to complex demands, by drawing upon and mobilizing psychosocial resources (including skills and attitudes) in a particular context. For instance, effective communication is a competence.<sup>[25]</sup>

The Competency-based Approach (CbA) therefore has to do with acquisition of concrete skills during the teaching and learning process. Unlike in a general course or a unit in a course, each learning outcome, known as a competency is one single unit. Students acquire one competence at a time by breaking down the larger lesson into small components/competencies and are evaluated on individual competencies only when they must have had a mastery of each unit of competencies.<sup>[26]</sup> CbA is student-centered. That is, it encourages independent studies, while the teacher or instructor plays the role of a facilitator. From the perspective of Lev Vygotsky's social constructivism theory, the teacher in CbA is a scaffold that supports the learner while he/she constructs knowledge. Learners are allowed to learn at their pace those individual skills they find challenging by practicing and improving on them as many times as possible. Also, through formative assessment, learners may skip units of skills already mastered before the learning exercise.<sup>[27]</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>] Nwafor, Maureen, O., *Educational Innovation...*, p.30

<sup>25</sup>] Sullivan, Noel and Alan, Bruce, "Teaching and Learning in Competency based education", *Check Journal*, 2014. Retrieved on 4<sup>th</sup> August, 2017 from <http://econference.metropolitan.ac.rs/files/pdf/2014/21-neilo-sullivan-dr-alan-burce-teaching-and-learning-in-competency-based-education.pdf>

<sup>26</sup>] Ilanya, Jane, Democratization of teaching and learning: a tool for the implementation of the Tuning Approach in Higher Education, *Turning Journal of Higher Education*, 4 no. 2, (2017), 257 – 276. doi: [http://dx.doi.org/10.18543/tjhe-4\(2\)-2017pp257-276](http://dx.doi.org/10.18543/tjhe-4(2)-2017pp257-276)

<sup>27</sup>] Aimzhan, Tulegenovna, M., GaukharMukhtashevna, A., ZhanarMustafaevna, B., ZaureAsetovna, U., Laura Tulegenovna, M. &KulzinatMeirambaeвна, K., "Theory and Practice of Competency-Based Approach in Education International Education Studies" *Canadian Center of Science and Education*, 8 no. 8 (2015), 181 – 192.



CbA is seen as an innovation because it is a paradigm shift from a learning process based on subject-area content and traditional academic formats, to that which is based on competencies or abilities, aimed at professionalizing education so that the graduate is capable of successfully performing the work which is expected of him/her as a professional. This means that the graduate having gone through the educational system should be able to have a permanent connection with the social, economic, and labor environment in which the professional competencies shall be demanded. It is therefore important, that the teaching-learning processes be competency-oriented in order to enable graduates possess the necessary characteristics and skills needed to effectively fit into the socio-economic and political environment. CbA demands a greater integrated interaction of the educational processes and institutions with society; and beyond classroom methodologies (practical fields) in order to enable adequate training environments and processes. This means that a competency-based curriculum should have taken care of this from the beginning of the training.<sup>[28]</sup>

According to the International Bureau of Education (IBE), a competency-based curriculum is one that emphasizes the complex outcomes of a learning process (i.e. knowledge, skills and attitudes to be applied by learners) instead of mainly focusing on what learners are expected to learn about in terms of traditionally-defined subject content. Such a curriculum, in principle is student-centered and adaptive to the changing needs of students, teachers and society. It implies that learning activities and environments are chosen so that learners can acquire and apply the knowledge, skills and attitudes to situations they encounter in everyday life. The proposed systematic methodology for competency-based curriculum development consists of six phases: conceptualization; planning; data collection; data analysis and create catalog of competences; develop competency-based curriculum and develop applications and pilot test. Competency-based curricula are usually designed around a set of key competences/competencies that can be cross-curricular and/or subject-bound.<sup>[29][30]</sup>

The goal and objectives of a competence-based curriculum is to guarantee that learners are able to exhibit their learned competences after they must have acquired a necessary combination of knowledge, skills, and abilities. Students obtain these competences through learning activities. Such learning activities must be in line with the contents of the studies undertaken. In a nutshell, the learning references are the competences and their behavioral descriptors that must be attained through learning activities carried out during the study period. Those activities deal with the knowledge resources, which is the raw material of learning. Therefore, the core of the competency-based framework is a clear and applied definition of competences and their useful connection to the learning activities.<sup>[31]</sup>

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<sup>28]</sup> Javier, Villar, O., "Ethical Competencies and the Organizational Competency 'Responsible University Social Innovation: looking at new ways of understanding universities and the competency-based education model in the context of significant social changes in Latin America" *Tuning Journal for Higher Education*, 4 no. 2 (2017), 311-332. doi: [http://dx.doi.org/10.18543/tjhe-4\(2\)-2017pp311-332](http://dx.doi.org/10.18543/tjhe-4(2)-2017pp311-332)

<sup>29]</sup>International Bureau of Education, *Competency based curriculum*. (UNESCO, 2017). Retrieved on the 5<sup>th</sup> August 2017 from; <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/en/glossary-curriculum-terminology/c/competency-based-curriculum>

<sup>30]</sup>Rouhmen, Nikolov;Shoikova, Elena;Kovatcheva, Eugenia, *Competency based framework for curriculum development*, (Za bukvite, O'pismeneh, 2014). Retrieved on 4<sup>th</sup> august 2017 from [http://pictettempus.sstu.ru/doc/1\\_CBE%20development%20manual\\_Tempus%20project%20PICTET%202013\\_FINAL.pdf](http://pictettempus.sstu.ru/doc/1_CBE%20development%20manual_Tempus%20project%20PICTET%202013_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>31]</sup>Rouhmen, Nikolov, et. Al, Eugenia, *Competency based framework for curriculum development...*

During the teaching-learning process, the competence behaviors are associated with the learning activities the learners are involved in. At the assessment level, the competence behaviors are used as the measurable indicators of learning progress and after the process, the learning outcome is the extent to which the competence is acquired. This means that students' assessment under the competency based approach is not a process of asking students to reproduce abstract concepts, but tasking them to show prove of different core competencies possessed or acquired either before, during and after the program.<sup>[32]</sup> In other words, assessment under CbA is seen as a mechanism to enhance the teaching-learning process, test level of students' autonomy/responsibility and their abilities to effectively apply competences acquired in their respective domains.

## Vii.2. The Bologna Process as a Competency-based innovation

The Bologna Process is a series of ministerial meetings and agreements between European countries designed to ensure comparability in the standards and quality of HE and qualifications among member countries. This process was launched at the University of Bologna- Italy, with the Bologna Declaration of 1999, as one of the main voluntary processes among European nations. Its membership was expanded beyond the European Union during the European Cultural convention of the Council of Europe. Further meetings have since held in Prague (2001), Berlin (2003), Bergen (2005), London (2007), Leuven (2009) and Yerevan (2015) among others. The process is today being implemented in close to 50 countries which constitute the European Higher Education Area (EHEA)<sup>[33][34]</sup> Added to the close to 50 state membership are consultative members among which are the European Commission, the Council of Europe, UNESCO, International Universities Association (IUA), Education International and BUSINESSEUROPE etc. Through the Bologna Accords, EHEA was created under the Lisbon Recognition Convention. The process is named after the University of Bologna, the host of the first meeting that saw the signing of the Bologna declaration by Education Ministers from 29 European countries in 1999, forming a part of European integration.<sup>[35]</sup>

Since the initiation of the Bologna process through the Bologna declaration, more than 4000 HE institutions and numerous stakeholder organizations in member states have continued to adapt their Higher Education Systems (HES), making them more compatible, modernizing degree structures and strengthening their quality assurance mechanisms and promoting national and international students and staff mobility. It is therefore a collective effort of public authorities, universities, teachers, and students,

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<sup>32]</sup>Larsen Katie, M. and Gaertner Mathew, N., *Measuring Mastery: Best Practices for assessment in competency Based Education: Center for Higher Education Reforms*, (American Enterprise Institute, 2015). Retrieved on 4<sup>th</sup> August, 2017 from: <https://www.luminafoundation.org/files/resources/measuring-mastery.pdf>

<sup>33]</sup> European Higher Education Area (EHEA), *Bologna Process- European Higher Education Area (EHEA)*, (EHEA, 2014). Retrieved on 6<sup>th</sup> March, 2016 from: <http://www.ehea.info/article-details.aspx?ArticleId=5>

<sup>34]</sup> European Commission, *The European Higher Education Area in 2015: Bologna Process Implementation Report*, (Luxembourg: European Union, 2015a).

<sup>35]</sup> European Commission, *The Bologna Process and the European Higher Education Area*, (European Commission, 2015b). Retrieved on 5<sup>th</sup> March, 2016 from: [http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/higher-education/bologna-process\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/higher-education/bologna-process_en.htm)

together with stakeholder associations, employers, quality assurance agencies, and international organizations, including the European Commission; with the main focus of promoting sustainable HE through: introduction of a unified three cycle system (bachelor/master/PhD); strengthening quality assurance and easier recognition of qualifications and periods of study.<sup>[36]</sup> <sup>[37]</sup>For instance, the 2005 Bergen Conference of European Ministers of Higher Education adopted an all-embracing framework for qualifications in the EHEA. The framework comprises three cycles (including, within national contexts, the possibility of intermediate qualifications), generic descriptors for each cycle based on learning outcomes and competences, and credit ranges in the first and second cycles. The ministers committed themselves to elaborating national frameworks for qualifications compatible with the overarching framework for qualifications in the EHEA by 2010.<sup>[38]</sup>

A critical analyses of the Bologna declaration and the framework for qualification in EHEA in terms of cycles, presents a unique synthesis of a HE innovation – a process aimed at the skillful transformation of potential university graduates through competency based education into professionals in their various endeavors who can comfortably fit into the labor market anywhere in the world. By competency-based education, it means that the acquisition of concrete skills by students is given priority over abstract learning. Teachers and university authorities must ensure that students own the education process from curriculum planning/design, teaching-learning to assessment.

### **Vii.3. Tuning Africa and the Competency-based Approach**

From the outcome of the Bologna process, it can be seen that 21<sup>st</sup> century HE is witnessing a paradigm shift in curriculum design and instruction from a teacher dominated approach to a student-centered approach. The teaching-learning process is increasingly being democratized with students given greater responsibilities.<sup>[39]</sup> Consequently, institutions like Tuning Africa, a product of the Tuning Academy, in association with EU and AU, are working on projects to promote and sustain these increasing changes, thereby assuring quality and functionality in HE practices. They are therefore a network of communities of academic experts who achieve their objectives by discussing, designing, elaborating learning instruments and sharing the results. They converge on around a single discipline or theme with the deliberate purpose of building mutual trust and confidence. They promote international, multi and intercultural interactions, while also respecting the institutional and national autonomy of co-participants. They share knowledge and experiences, while articulating and evaluating clear collective goals, objectives and outcomes at every step of their engagements.<sup>[40]</sup> <sup>[41]</sup>

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<sup>36]</sup> European Commission, *The Bologna Process and the European Higher Education Area...*

<sup>37]</sup> EHEA, *Bologna Process- European Higher Education Area ...*

<sup>38]</sup> European Commission, *The European Higher Education Area in 2015: Bologna Process Implementation Report...*

<sup>39]</sup> Illoanya Jane, *Democratization of teaching and learning...*

<sup>40]</sup> *What is Tuning Academy? ...*

The Tuning Africa Project advocates the adoption of competency-based education whereby teaching-learning processes in HE pay absolute attention to the interests and concerns of learners while the teacher performs the role of a facilitator of learning. It highlights the fact that students' voices should be adequately heard both in curriculum planning and design, lesson plans and their engagement in the teaching-learning processes. A teaching-learning culture that operates on the principle of equality and functions as integrated, interactive and evolving whole <sup>[42]</sup><sup>[43]</sup>

To conclude, the creation of the EHEA is among other things aimed at increasing the social credibility of HE systems and responding to the demand for qualified human resources. It promotes the adaptation of educational systems into two cycles (undergraduate and graduate cycles) and the use of a mode of work based on the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). This innovation, which is also being promoted by the Tuning Academy involves learning that is centered on competences and not on content, and places the role and the responsibility of learning largely at the door steps of students. It also involves designing competency-based curricula that take into consideration not only the perspective of academics but also the realities of the job market. On these bases, the CbA in HE thus has to do with the selection and combination of relevant knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and rules through the education process, that allow graduates respond to the complexities of different societies especially relating to socio-economic and political realities. This therefore imposes an adjustment in methodology, looking for contextualized and authentic learning (associated to simulations, case studies, problem-based, projects) and increased external practices and relationship/partnership with the workplace in particular and society as a whole. This approach requires that the teacher adjusts from being an instructor to that of a facilitator and supervisor of learning. This change in the teacher's role is evident both organizationally (teamwork, vertical and horizontal coordination) and at the curriculum level. That is, planning, designing and selecting contents based on the competences necessary to promote active development methodologies and adopting competences and learning evaluation systems that in turn require changes in ways of working and in coordinating times, spaces and structures <sup>[44]</sup>

### Vii.3. Theoretical Context

The research rested on the following theories bases; Lev Vygotsky's social constructivism theory; John Dewey's progressivism and Theodore Brameld's reconstructionism philosophies on democratic and functional education respectively.

Briefly, Lev Semyonovich Vygotsky (1896-1934) opined that the process of intellectual development takes place within a socio-cultural environment. He believed in language an important

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<sup>41</sup><sup>[</sup>What is Tuning Africa? Retrieved on 12<sup>th</sup> September, 2017 from: <http://tuningafrica.org/en/what-is-tuning-africa>

<sup>42</sup><sup>[</sup>Iloanya Jane, Democratization of teaching and learning...

<sup>43</sup><sup>[</sup>What is Tuning Africa?...

<sup>44</sup><sup>[</sup>Cano, Elena and Ion, Georgeta, "Curriculum Development through Competency-Based Approach in Higher Education" In Siran Mukerji and Purnendu Tripathi (ed) *Handbook of Research on Transnational Higher Education*, 2 (214), 79 -95. Retrieved on 4<sup>th</sup> August, 2017 from: <https://www.igi-global.com/viewtitlesample.aspx?id=78115&ptid=75837&t=curriculum+development+through+competency-based+approach+in+higher+education>

socio-cultural tool with which knowledge is constructed. Unlike Piaget's ideas, he maintained that development is a continuous process that has no stages and learning precedes development. By this model, the learner functions in levels – as s/he constructs meaning through practical activity at an intrapersonal level and as s/he interacts with others using language and cultural tools to link the meaning of the interpersonal world shared with others. The role of the teacher is of special importance in Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). ZPD refers to the difference between what the learner can achieve unaided in problem solving and what s/he can achieve with the aid of the teacher or peer monitors. The learner here is seen as a trainee who acquires skills and knowledge with the support of those who already have such knowledge. In other words, the role of the teacher is to provide scaffolding in the instructional process (supports to guide the learner to the desired level and reduces (fades) the help as the learner progresses, sets new ZPD and evaluates the learner) <sup>[45]</sup><sup>[46]</sup>

The university is a social and cultural environment concerned with the intellectual development of learners through the day to day interaction between the students and teachers. University education under CbA is directly in line with the theoretical thoughts of constructivist theorists, one of which is Vygotsky. As stated in preceding paragraphs, CbA is student-centered. Teachers must agree with the students on the content to be taught, taking into consideration their needs and that of society. The role of the teacher is that of a guide or supervisor who provides support to learners to the desired level and reduce such support as the learner becomes an expert in the subject under consideration. This means that the teaching-learning process in HE under CbA must prioritize practical/laboratory work, projects, discussions, field work and other student-centered related methods and techniques of teaching.

John Dewey (1859-1952) is the author of the progressivist and reconstructionist ideas in education. However, his reconstructionist ideas were extensively developed by Theodore Brameld (1904 – 1987) Their philosophies on education basically advocate for democratic (hands-on, non-discriminatory, unrestricted etc) and functionally-based educational systems in society – systems that promote learner-centered, problem-centered and meaningful citizenship participation, and should be receptive to change in an ever changing world. In his progressivism philosophy, Dewey argued that the purpose of education is to help individuals grow, understand and control their environment- education should be relevant to the needs of the learner/society. <sup>[47]</sup><sup>[48]</sup>

Dewey and Brameld in a bid to address criticisms of the progressivism philosophy came up with the idea of re-constructionism. The fundamental belief of re-constructionism is that; education systems should go beyond promoting traditional curricula like history, mathematics etc. to emphasize and provide learners with practical knowledge, attitudes, skills and motivations necessary for the reconstruction of the socio-economic and political life of society. In other words, controversial issues

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<sup>45]</sup> Nwafor, Maureen, O., *Educational Innovation; Process and Products...*, p.72

<sup>46]</sup> Tschombe, Shalo, M., "Theories of Learning" In Tschombe Shalo, M. and Nsamenang Bame (ed), *Handbook of African Educational theories and practices: A Generative Teacher Education Curriculum*, (Dakar: African University Press, 2011), p.175

<sup>47]</sup> Tozer, Steven, E., *School and Society: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives (4ed)*, (McGraw-Hill College, 2001), p.107

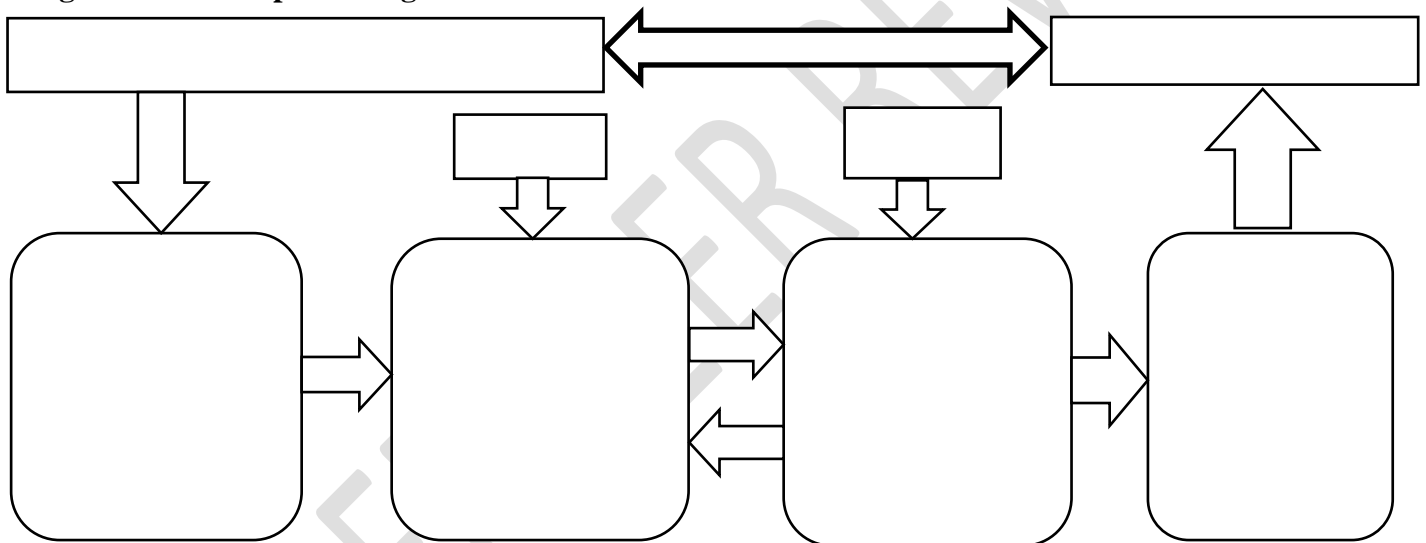
<sup>48]</sup> Tambo Ivo, L., *Principles and Methods of Teaching: Applications in Cameroon Schools* (Buea: Anucam Publishers, 2003b). p.174

and problems must play a huge role in education, and no issue should be considered off-limits for students to discuss and analyze.<sup>[49]</sup>

From Dewey and Brameld’s philosophies, it can be said that; the present state of underdevelopment, poor economic growth, negative demographic indices, poverty, diseases, social inequalities, exclusion, pollution and climate change experienced by most African nations including Cameroon is associated to the unsustainability or non-functional nature of the HE system which is supposed to be competency-based thereby serving the major source of skilled human resource for the nation. That is, HE in Cameroon and especially Anglophone Cameroon, considering the present and ever changing socio-economic and political realities (if we can judge on the bases of progressivism and reconstructionism philosophies) ought to be competency and functionally based. However, from observations, this seem not to be the case. This therefore calls for the need for an evaluation of the competency-based approach within the sector and seek the democratic contributions of every stakeholder in resolving this problem, towards a functionally based HE system.

Figure 1 below is a conceptual illustration of the variables under consideration.

**Figure 1.1: Conceptual Diagram**



### VIII. Research Method

The research applied the evaluative and descriptive survey research designs, making use of quantitative and qualitative approaches. By this, data was collected from 200 persons (135 BMP student delegates and 65 academic and administrative staff) from targeted institutions (UBa and UB) using a structured questionnaire tagged Competency-Based Education Questionnaire (CBEQ). The respondents were selected through the purposive sampling technique. Data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics – mean scores and independent t-test. Results were presented on tables using a comparative approach and followed by comparative and descriptive explanations/discussions. The analyses were concluded with possible implications of results for the Turning Africa project.

<sup>49]</sup> Tambo, Ivo, L., *Principles and Methods of Teaching...*

The CBEQ comprised of 19 items (18 closed ended and 1 open ended items). The response option for the 18 items was a 5 scale likert-type option (Strongly Agree – SA; Agree – A; No Idea – NI; Disagree – D; Strongly Disagree – SD). The first 18 items addressed research questions 1 to 3 (6 items per research question), while item 19 was on the general views of respondents on the challenges associated with the implementation of CbA in state universities.

After administering the instrument, returned copies were coded and the responses collated into a statistical software (SPSS version 23) to form the data for the study and then analyzed. In analyzing the data, the cut-off mean was 3.0. Mean scores for items greater than 3 but less than 4 were concluded as “Agree”, while mean scores of items equal to or greater than 4 were concluded as “Strongly Agree”. On the other hand, mean scores of items less than 3 but greater than 2 were concluded as “Disagree”, while mean scores of items equal to or less than 2 signified “Strongly Disagree.

## IX. Results and discussions

Out 200 copies of CBEQ administered to the sampled population, 193 (96 from UBa and 97 from UB) were returned making a return rate of 96.5 percent. The results from the analyses are presented below according to the various research questions and hypotheses.

**Research Question 1:** How reflective of the CbA is the curriculum **planning/design process** of public HEIs in Anglophone Cameroon? (See analysis on table 1.1 below)

**Table 1.1: Analysis for Research Question 1: the reflectiveness of CbA in the curriculum planning/design of public HEIs in Anglophone Cameroon.**

Item	Institution	N	$\bar{X}$	S. D	$\bar{X}$ . Diff.	Conclusion																																									
1. Relevant university stakeholders within the university (notably students, academic staff and administration) are fully represented in the academic/curriculum planning committee of the university.	UBa	96	2.72*	1.211	-.065	Though both institutions performed poorly, UB significantly underperforms. No institution however significantly performed better than the other.																																									
	UB	97	2.78	1.235			2. The university offer yearly training to staff on curriculum development processes and skills that capture the generic and specific competences expected of students in the different programs.	UBa	95	2.49*	1.211	.206	Both institutions significantly underperformed with non-significantly performing better than the other	UB	97	2.29*	1.235	3. Lecturers of different courses often sit with student/course delegates to develop course outlines for their different courses that are given out to students before lectures begin.	UBa	96	2.79	1.184	-.033	Both institutions performed poorly, though not significantly. None significantly performed better than the other.	UB	97	2.82	1.040	4. Course outlines of different university subjects contain general and specific competences expected from learners after the completion of the subject	UBa	95	3.43*	1.281	.153	Though both institutions performed well, UBa performed significantly well. No institution significantly does better than the other.	UB	97	3.28	1.323	5. The contents of the university curricula or programs very much reflect the demands of the job market anywhere in the world.	UBa	96	2.91	1.252	.267	Though both institutions perform poorly, UB significantly perform poorly. None significantly does better than the other.	UB
2. The university offer yearly training to staff on curriculum development processes and skills that capture the generic and specific competences expected of students in the different programs.	UBa	95	2.49*	1.211	.206	Both institutions significantly underperformed with non-significantly performing better than the other																																									
	UB	97	2.29*	1.235			3. Lecturers of different courses often sit with student/course delegates to develop course outlines for their different courses that are given out to students before lectures begin.	UBa	96	2.79	1.184	-.033	Both institutions performed poorly, though not significantly. None significantly performed better than the other.	UB	97	2.82	1.040	4. Course outlines of different university subjects contain general and specific competences expected from learners after the completion of the subject	UBa	95	3.43*	1.281	.153	Though both institutions performed well, UBa performed significantly well. No institution significantly does better than the other.	UB	97	3.28	1.323	5. The contents of the university curricula or programs very much reflect the demands of the job market anywhere in the world.	UBa	96	2.91	1.252	.267	Though both institutions perform poorly, UB significantly perform poorly. None significantly does better than the other.	UB	97	2.64*	1.264								
3. Lecturers of different courses often sit with student/course delegates to develop course outlines for their different courses that are given out to students before lectures begin.	UBa	96	2.79	1.184	-.033	Both institutions performed poorly, though not significantly. None significantly performed better than the other.																																									
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	UB	97	2.64*	1.264																																											

6. The university partner with industries and other business organizations in the development of the curricula for the different programs to fit needs of the job market	UBa	95	3.16	1.377	.354	UBa performs well while UB performs poorly. None significantly does better than the other.
	UB	97	2.80	1.226		

Source: *Field Work (2019)*.

**NB:**

- All mean ( $\bar{X}$ ) score values, starred (\*) indicate that at 0.05 level of significance, the mean score is significantly different (Greater than or less than) 3.0, which is the cut off value. Otherwise, any arithmetic difference that may exist could be explained by mere chance.
- All mean differences ( $\bar{X}$  - Diff.), starred (\*) indicate that at 0.05 level of significance, the difference in mean scores for the two institutions on the item concerned is significantly different from 0 (positive or negative). Otherwise any difference displayed is simply a random occurrence. Positive (+) differences indicate that UBa performs better than UB in the associated items and negative (-) differences indicate that the UB performs better.

From table 1.1, out of the 6 items that answered research question 1, it is observed that UBa outperformed UB in 4 of the items and underperform in 2. Also, both institutions performed poorly (as none exceeded the threshold mean of 3) in 4 items and well in one item (exceeding the threshold of 3). However, in the other item (item 6), UBa. performs well while UB performs poorly. Generally, we observe a pattern in which UBa. outperforms UB in almost every item, with UB attaining the accepted threshold in only one item. However, to draw a conclusion about the extent of both institutions' performance with respect to how reflective of the CbA they are in the curriculum, the overall mean scores for both institutions in all 6 items were analyzed as presented on table 1.2.

**Table 1.2: Comparison of overall mean score responses on the reflectiveness of CbA in the curriculum planning/design process of public universities in Anglophone Cameroon**

Institution	N	$\bar{X}$	S. D	$\bar{X}$ -Diff.	Conclusion
Uba	96	2.9010	.74165	.14159	Both institutions performed poorly, though UB performs significantly poor. No institution performed significantly better than the other.
UB	97	2.7595*	.54431		

Source: *Field Work (2019)*

From the overall mean score responses (see table 1.2), it is observed that both institutions performed poorly, though UB performed significantly poor and none of the two institutions perform significantly better than the other. The meaning of this is that the curriculum planning/design of public universities in Anglophone Cameroon is relatively not reflective of CbA, even though that of UBa. appeared a little better than that of UB.



**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant difference in the mean score responses of staffs and students with respect to the adoption of CbA in the curriculum planning/design process by public higher institutions in Anglophone Cameroon. (See analysis on table 1.3 below)

**Table 1.3: Independent Samples Test for Hypothesis 1.**

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	T	d.f.	Sig. (2-tailed)	$\bar{X}$ Diff.	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Competency-based approach in curriculum	Equal variances assumed	.225	.646	2.377	10	.039	.4450	.1872	.0278	.8622
	Equal variances not assumed			2.377	9.996	.039	.4450	.1872	.0278	.8622

Source: Field Work (2019)

An independent samples t. test was conducted to test for the null hypothesis 1. The mean score responses of academic staff and students with respect to the adoption of CbA in the curriculum planning/content by public higher institutions in Anglophone Cameroon were found to be significantly different ( $p < 0.05$ ) at the 0.05 significance level (see table 1.3). That is, the overall mean score response of staffs (3.148) was significantly higher than that of the student delegates (2.703) at the 0.05 level of significance (see table 1.4 below). Hence, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate. This means that, the staffs and student delegates significantly differ in responses with regards to the adoption of CbA in the curriculum planning/content of the universities.

**Table 1.4: Comparing the overall mean score responses of staff and students on CbA in Curriculum Planning/design**

Respondent's Status		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Competency-based approach in curriculum Planning/design	Staffs	61	3.148	.3274	.1337
	Students	132	2.703	.3212	.1311

Source: Fieldwork, 2019

The significance difference in the mean score responses of both staffs and student delegates above is explained by the fact that students didn't really feel fully represented in academic and curriculum planning committees and other related activities in both universities. In responding to the open-ended question on the challenges of implementing the CbA in both institutions, some student respondents noted that:

“...it's like implementing the CbA doesn't require students input at the curriculum planning stage because I cannot remember when

*I attended such a meeting as a student leader...we just see the programs at the start of the academic year and lecturers just come in to introduce their course and give us course outlines to follow in our readings...I have never participated in drawing a course outline for any of our courses with the lecturer...we only discuss and share ideas on the issues stated in the course outline during classes”*

Considering the student-centered nature of the CbA – meaning that students opinions on the issue appeared weightier, a combination of students and staff mean score responses on research objective one thus concluded that the curriculum/curriculum planning process wasn’t reflective of the CbA.

The non-reflectiveness of the CbA in the curriculum planning/design of both HEIs as revealed from the results is in alignment with previous studies on related issues. For instance, it has been revealed that the functionality of HE in Cameroon remains a serious challenge due to the fact that students are still largely exposed to theory than practice. Moreover, it has been established that the professionalization of HE in Africa may greatly influence the relationship between HE and economic development; but this is not yet the situation in the Cameroon HE sector as previous university reforms have not been able to adequately address this issue.<sup>[50] [51]</sup> This confirms the views of some respondents that the adoption of competency-based curricula require increased financial resources which is very much lacking. Added to this, government policy of centralization in the management of universities has greatly hampered university managements from taking independent decisions that may shape their curricula to suit professional needs. Though the curriculum planning/design of both institutions do not actually reflect competency-based practices, UBa appeared to be significantly above UB because of the fact that most of her schools are professionally incline. The problem, as identified by most respondents, however seem to be coming from the methods used in delivering curricula contents. Students under the Higher Institute of Management and Commerce for example, expect most of their lessons to be based on applications; but unfortunately, most are still based on concepts and theories which they only learn to apply during internships. Consequently, the significant different in the views of students and staffs relating to this issue was dependent on their different experiences as students and teachers. From a theoretical underpinning, it is an indication that the curriculum planning/design in public universities is still far from aligning with John Dewey and Theodore Brameld’s progressivism and reconstructionism philosophies in Education respectively.<sup>[52]</sup>

**Research Question 2:** To what extent does the teaching-learning process in public HEIs in Anglophone Cameroon embrace CbA? (See analysis on table 2.1 below)

**Table 2.1: Analysis for Research Question 2: Competency-based approach in the teaching and learning process**

Item	Institution	N	$\bar{X}$	S. D	$\bar{X}$ . Diff.	Conclusion
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<sup>50]</sup>Nwaimah, Emmanuel, “CAMEROON: New university part of tertiary reforms”...

<sup>51]</sup>Fonkeng, Epah and Ntembe Augustine, “Higher education and economic development in Africa: The case of Cameroon.”...

<sup>52]</sup>Tozer Steven, E., *School and Society: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives...*

7. Students control more than 70 percent the teaching-learning process within the university	UBa	95	3.66*	1.318	.059	Both universities performed significantly well. None performed significantly better than the other
	UB	96	3.60*	1.334		
8. The role of lecturers in the teaching-learning process is mostly that of a guide and supervisor of the learning process	UBa	94	3.72*	1.256	.170	Both universities performed significantly well. None performed significantly better than the other.
	UB	94	3.55*	1.224		
9. The teaching learning process in the university is largely practical than theoretical	UBa	92	2.64*	1.263	.250	Both universities performed poorly. None performed significantly better than the other.
	UB	97	2.39*	1.246		
10. Teaching methods that exposed students' creativity and independent thinking of students are adopted by lecturers during the teaching-learning process	UBa	94	3.53*	1.189	-.107	Both universities performed significantly well. None performed significantly better than the other.
	UB	97	3.64*	1.174		
11. Learning infrastructures (libraries, laboratories etc) have been adequately provided in the university to facilitate independent study initiatives by students	UBa	96	3.16	1.317	.219	UBa performed well while UB performed poorly and none significantly performed better than the other.
	UB	95	2.94	1.420		
12. The university offer students the opportunity to perfect the knowledge acquired through internship programs in industries related to their programs	UBa	95	3.83*	.996	.269	Both universities performed significantly well. None performed significantly better than the other.
	UB	96	3.56*	1.328		

Source: Field Work (2019)

As shown on table 2.1, out of the 6 items that tested how reflective of CbA is the teaching-learning process of public universities in Anglophone Cameroon, UBa outperformed UB in 5 of the items and underperformed in 1 (item 9). The results also showed that UBa perform significantly well in 5 items (exceeding the threshold of 3) and poorly in 1 item (below the threshold of 3). UB, on the other hand, significantly performed well in 4 items, significantly underperforms in 1 item (item 9) and underperformed in another 1 item (item 11). A pattern is therefore observed in which UBa outperformed UB in almost every item, with UB outperforming in only one item (item 10). However, in all 6 items, no institution performed significantly better than the other. To conclude on the extent of each institution's performance with respect to how reflective of the CbA the teaching-learning processes are, an overall mean score analyses of all 6 items was done and presented on table 2.2.

**Table 2.2: Comparison of overall mean score responses on the reflectiveness of CbA in the teaching-learning process in public universities in Anglophone Cameroon.**

Institution	N	$\bar{X}$	S. D	$\bar{X}$ -Diff.	Conclusion
Uba	96	3.3681*	.56812	.13266	Both institutions performed significantly well and none performed significantly better than the other.
UB	97	3.2354*	.61320		

Source: Field Work (2019)

From the results on table 2.1 it is observed that both institutions perform significantly well with no institution performing significantly better than the other. The implication of this is that public HEIs in Anglophone Cameroon relatively or to a great extent embrace CbA in their teaching-learning processes.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant difference between the teaching-learning processes in UBa and UB within the framework of CbA. (See analysis on table 2.3 below)

**Table 2.3: Independent Samples Test for Hypothesis 2**

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Competency-based approach in teaching- learning process	Equal variances assumed	.202	.663	.518	10	.616	.1433	.2766	-.4729	.7596
	Equal variances not assumed			.518	9.846	.616	.1433	.2766	-.4742	.7609

Source: Field Work (2019)

An independent samples t-test (see table 2.3) was conducted to verify the null hypothesis 2 stated above. The mean score responses of the respondents with regards to teaching-learning processes in UBa and UB within the framework of CbA were not significantly different ( $p > 0.05$ ) at the 0.05 significance level (see table 2.3). Consequently, the null hypothesis was upheld. **This means that the teaching-learning processes in both institutions were reflective of the CbA on an equal bases, as there was no significant difference in the overall positive mean score responses recorded by both institutions.**

As already seen from the result of research question 2, public universities in Anglophone Cameroon, notably UBa and UB, relatively or to a great extent embrace CbA in their teaching-learning processes, with no significant difference in the practices in both universities. This result is an indication that, these institutions are gradually keying into the adopted Bologna process which promotes competency education where the students are expected to own the teaching learning process and graduate as highly and interdisciplinary skilled, independent minded and professionally relevant wherever they find themselves.<sup>[53]</sup> Judging from the perspectives expressed by the academic staff and students of both institutions, it is clear that they all understand the role of the teacher at this level as a guide and facilitator of learning, following Lev Vygotsky's social constructivism theory.<sup>[54]</sup> That is why internships, projects and field works are totally the responsibility of the students while the teachers act as guides and supervisors. According to the stakeholders, the New Pedagogic approach in teaching-learning in the country is government's reform of transforming the teacher from an imparter of knowledge, to a facilitator in knowledge acquisition by students.

<sup>53</sup> EHEA, *Bologna Process- European Higher Education Area ...*

<sup>54</sup> Tschombe, Shalo, M., "Theories of Learning" ...

**Research Question 3:** How focused is students' assessment within the framework of the CbA in state universities in Anglophone Cameroon? (See analysis on table 3.1 below)

**Table 3.1: Analysis for Research Question 3: Competency-based approach in students' assessment in public HEIs in Anglophone Cameroon.**

Item	Institution	N	$\bar{X}$	S. D	$\bar{X}$ . Diff.	Conclusion
13. In my university, lecturers consider assessment as a mechanism to enhance the teaching-learning process and not a process to select best students or promote competition among students.	UBa	95	3.99*	.995	.639*	UBa performed significantly better than UB, though both Universities perform significantly well.
	UB	97	3.35*	1.234		
14. The student assessment process in the university test the level of autonomy and responsibility acquired by students during the teaching learning process.	UBa	96	3.78*	1.097	.542*	Though both Universities do well, UBa performed significantly well and significantly better than UB,
	UB	96	3.24	1.367		
15. Student assessment in the university is mostly through Continues written tests (CA's), individual or group presentations, project defenses and end of semester exams.	UBa	95	4.16*	.762	.021	Both universities performed significantly well. None performed significantly better than the other.
	UB	95	4.14*	1.058		
16. The university also assesses from assessment reports sent heads of industries and internship reports submitted by students after internship programs.	UBa	96	3.85*	1.026	.195	Both universities performed significantly well. None performed significantly better than the other.
	UB	94	3.66*	1.151		
17. Students assessments in the university ensures that the cognitive, affective and psychomotor abilities or skills expected from students are all tested.	UBa	96	3.77*	.900	.194	Both universities performed significantly well. None performed significantly better than the other.
	UB	97	3.58*	1.206		
18. Under the BMP system, the university has ensured that a student must earned at least a stipulated number of credit values in his/her course before being eligible for graduation.	UBa	92	4.12*	.900	.130	Both universities performed significantly well. None performed significantly better than the other.
	UB	95	3.99*	.905		

Source: Field Work (2019)

From table 3.1, we observed that 6 items determined how focused is students' assessment within the framework of CbA in public HEIs in Anglophone Cameroon. The analyses showed that both institutions performed significantly well in all the 6 items. However, UBa performed significantly better than UB in 2 items (items 13 and 14). Generally, we observed a pattern in which UBa outperformed UB in every item. However, to generally conclude about the extent of each institution's performance with respect to how reflective they are of CbA in the assessment of student, the 6 items were combined together in one analysis as presented on table 3.2. (See table 3.2 below)

**Table 3.2: Comparison of overall mean score responses on the reflectiveness of CbA in students' assessment.**

Institution	N	$\bar{X}$	S. D	$\bar{X}$ . Diff.	Conclusion
UBa	96	3.9028*	.60246	.30484*	Both institutions performed significantly well, however, UBa performed significantly better than UB.
UB	97	3.5979*	.57421		

Source: Field Work (2019)

The overall result as seen on table 3.2 shows that both institutions performed significantly well, with UBa performing significantly better than UB. The implication of this result is that the students' assessment process in public Universities in Anglophone Cameroon notably UBa and UB significantly reflected CbA and the process in UBa appeared to be better than that of the University of Buea. Even though institutions performed significantly well in this domain, some respondents in outlining the challenges in the implementation of the CbA in UB noted that:

“...there are a lot of classroom tests and exams which are mostly concern with evaluating our cognitive abilities...students assessment in some faculties mostly exclude the psychomotor domain in blooms taxonomy which is the most important so far as the CbA is concern...our internship periods are often very short with the longest being three months as compared to other countries where a whole year or semester is design only for industrial experience for students...”

**Hypothesis 3:** There is no significant difference between students' assessment in UBa and UB within the framework of CbA. (Insert table 3.3 below)

**Table 3.3: Independent Samples Test for Hypothesis 3.**

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Competency-based approach in the assessment of students	Equal variances assumed	2.339	.157	1.786	10	.104	.2850	.1596	-.0706	.6406
	Equal variances not assumed			1.786	7.234	.116	.2850	.1596	-.0899	.6599

Source: Field Work (2019)

From table 3.3, an independent samples t-test was conducted to test for the null hypothesis stated above. The mean score responses of the respondents with respect to students' assessment in UBa and UB within the framework of CbA were not significantly different ( $p > 0.05$ ) at the 0.05 significance level (see table 3.3). Thus, the null hypothesis was upheld.

The result for research question 3 revealed that the process of students' assessment in public Universities in Anglophone Cameroon notably UBa and UB significantly reflected the CbA and the process in UBa appeared to be better than that of UB. However, after an independent t-test to verify the null hypothesis, it was observed that there was no significant difference in the students' assessment processes in both institutions within the framework of CbA. The basic interpretation of this is that the students' assessment process in public universities in Anglophone Cameroon as assessed by academic staff and students, is significantly student-centered or competency-based. This is to say that the assessment process fully complies with the recommendations of the BMP system in which it is used as a

teaching-learning enhancer and not to promote competition among students.<sup>[55]</sup> Consequently, through the Continuous Assessment (CA), written examinations, thesis/project writing and defense, internships and practical/laboratory work, the assessment process is intended to test the level of autonomy and responsibility of students after the teaching-learning process. Of course, if the teaching-learning process was reflective of CbA, it is but normal that the same process flowed through to students' assessment. This therefore validates Lev Vygotsky's of constructivism and John Dewey's progressivism that all promote student-centered approaches to education <sup>[56][57]</sup>

Generally, the results of the study have underscored the importance of constant monitoring, evaluation and the introduction of innovations in any educational reform or change process as opined by Micheal Fullan in his change theory.<sup>[58]</sup> Though the results relating to teaching-learning process and students' assessment established the adoption of CbA by the institutions under study, the curriculum planning/design generally and relatively appeared to be lacking in CbA. The implication of this is that university graduates may still be unskilled and lack professionalism despite having been taught and assessed within the framework of CbA. This is because, competency-based curriculum processes may not have been provided to address the realities of the global job market. Findings have corroborated this when higher education stakeholders lamented that the increasing level of unemployment among graduates was a reflection of highly theoretical curriculum contents that do not reflect the competency and professional realities of the labor market.<sup>[59] [60]</sup> Consequently, it is necessary that reforms and innovations such as the CbA/BMP be carefully and systematically monitored and evaluated to ensure effective results.

## X. Conclusion

The study assessed the implementation of CbA in the two Anglosaxon public universities in Cameroon within the framework of the BMP/LMD system adopted by the country's higher education sector since 2007. It therefore focused on three indicators - the curriculum planning/design processes, the teaching-learning process and students' assessment. Apart from the curriculum planning/design process, both Universities of Buea and Bamenda, from the views expressed by staffs and students proved to be reflective of CbA in the teaching-learning process and students' assessment as observed from the analyses and interpretation of data collected using the Competency-Based Education Questionnaire (CBEQ). The Non-reflective nature of CbA in the curriculum planning and design process in both institutions was largely explained by the fact that student leaders and delegates were not often

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<sup>55]</sup>Nwafor, Maureen, O., *Educational Innovation; Process and Products...*

<sup>56]</sup>TschombeShalo, M., "Theories of Learning" ...

<sup>57]</sup>Tambo, Ivo, L., *Principles and Methods of Teaching...*

<sup>58]</sup>Fullan Michael, *Change theory: A force for school improvement*, Seminar Series Paper no. 157 (Jolimont, Center for Strategic Education, 2006), p. 1- 13.

<sup>59]</sup>Ngwa, Emmanuel and Fonkeng, George, "Indigenous Funding Strategies for Sustainable Higher Education in Cameroon" ...

<sup>60]</sup>Asie-Lumumba, N'dri, *Higher Education in Africa: Crisis, Reforms and Transformation*, (Dakar, Senegal: CODESRIA, 2006).

represented or carried along in university activities concern with curriculum planning and design; coupled with the fact that the curriculum content in both institutions remains largely theoretical despite continuous attempts at professionalization of university education in the country. This was corroborated by the student delegates as they expressed their views on the challenges of implementing the CbA in their various institutions. This therefore justified the significant difference in the views expressed by staffs and students on the issue, as both groups of stakeholders appeared to defend their different interests in their responses. But what are the implications of the above findings to the tuning Africa Project? The subsequent paragraphs have answered this question, and recommendations put forth to inform policy and practice particularly in the two institutions under consideration and generally in the Cameroon higher education sector

## **XI. Implications for the Tuning Africa Project**

Five out of the eight public universities in Cameroon are part of the Tuning Africa Consortium implementing the Tuning Africa projects especially the pilot projects in 8 subject areas. These universities which are all under the Francophone subsystem of education include the Universities of Douala in the Littoral Region, Yaoundé I and II in the Center Region, Dschang in the West Region and Maroua in the Far North Region<sup>[61] [62]</sup> Though the two Anglo-Saxon universities of Buea and Bamenda are not part of the Tuning Africa Consortium, they are both running the BMP system, an innovation of the Bologna process, which tries to promote CbA in HE.

From the results of this study, it is observed that CbA as promoted by the Tuning Africa project is relatively visible in the two universities in the areas of teaching-learning processes and students' assessment. However, the curriculum planning and design processes in these two institutions are still void of CbA, as there is a grossly limited student representation in the processes and so making the process teacher-dominated.

It is therefore necessary for these institutions to explore ways of partnering with the Tuning Africa project so as to share ideas, experiences and exchange notes with other members of the Tuning Academy on how to implement CbA in seemingly difficult areas of HE practice and make improvements for effective implementation in areas of the teaching-learning processes where it is already being implemented. This may go a long way in strengthening university programs, improving quality in teaching, research and generally, securing the sustainability of HE in the country.

## **XII. Policy Suggestions**

From the results of this study, it is important that the following policy suggestions be taken into consideration by the necessary stakeholders.

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<sup>61]</sup> *Tuning Africa: Cameroon?* Retrieved on 14<sup>th</sup> September 2017, from: <http://tuningafrica.org/en/country/cameroon>

<sup>62]</sup> *What is Tuning Africa?...*



Public universities especially in Anglophone Cameroon should increase the rate of students' participation in University administration. One of the challenges accounting for the poor implementation of CbA in the two institutions under study is the limited involvement of students in university governance. Most of the student respondents are ignorant of the fact that they are supposed to be represented by their delegates or leaders in the curriculum planning and design process, lesson planning and other administrative avenues, especially those directly linked to the concerns and interests of students; but this is not often the case. Consequently, the student-centered approach is not often felt in the decisions that emanate from such curriculum planning/design process and management or administrative forums.

It is also necessary that the two Anglo-Saxon universities increase their efforts in making the teaching-learning process and students' assessment more students-centered. This is because, despite the fact that these two processes are reflective of CbA, the respondents, particularly the students pointed out issues relating to too much dependence on the cognitive domain of students' assessment, to the neglect of the affective and psychomotor domains. They also decried the limited time involved in matching theory with practice through internship programs and skills development exercises. Consequently, there is need to increase the time periods for practical sessions during the teaching-learning process, and internship programs for all university programs. It is also important that the two universities create and improve on university-industries relations through Memoranda of Understanding where the different industries may be able to work with the universities in practicalizing and professionalizing university programs through different interventions.

As earlier mentioned above, it is absolutely vital for HEIs in Anglophone Cameroon to explore ways of partnering with the Tuning Africa project. This could be achieved through the signing of partnership agreements and organizing conferences and symposiums where experts from the Tuning Academy are invited to serve as facilitators. This will create a forum for the sharing of ideas, experiences and exchange of notes with other members of the Tuning Academy on how to effectively implement the CbA in seemingly difficult areas of HE practices and make improvements in areas where implementation is already gaining grounds.

Above all, there is need for the Cameroon government to grant institutional autonomy to public universities in the country. This is because, the centralization of HE and university management remains a serious hindrance to unilateral actions by individual institutions that may improve the quality and sustainability of teaching-learning processes and its academic and professional programs as a whole. It is a fact that universities are generally supposed to be autonomous academic communities engaged in quality and functional training of skilled human resources through teaching, research and outreach. However, stakeholders of public HEIs continue to lament that these functions of theirs are being heavily entangled due to meaningless bureaucracies resulting from the over centralization of university management under the Ministry of Higher Education.

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