Implementation of the Bologna Process Credit Value System: A Comparative Analysis of the Cameroonian and UK Universities

Abstract

The 'external dimension' of the Bologna Process (BP) has enhanced the scientific interest in the influence of the 'Bologna Message' outside Europe, with the 2006 Zgaga report focusing on the prospects of global adaptation among non-European 'partners'. Many African countries have aligned themselves with the BP by adapting their curricular structure and qualifications in line with the European Bologna architecture geared at maintaining relationships with their ex-colonial European imperialists; for instance, Cameroon, and its ex-imperialists Britain and France. Arguably, although the BP has sparked convergence at the higher global level, many divergences occur at the lower national/institutional levels. This article compares and contrasts the implementation of the BP reform in Cameroonian and UK universities with a focus on the credit value system. It employs Bennett's model of policy convergence as theoretical framework. Using a qualitatively approach, it thematically analyses secondary data (text documents). Findings indicate that although the Cameroonian and UK HE systems converge by adopting the BP credit system, both HE systems diverge upon implementation resulting from different outcomes, problems and/or criticisms encountered. Knowledge of the findings are relevant in providing insights on the BP realities which can be informative in drawing up stocktaking reports (regarding the achievements and failures of the reform), redirect focus, assessments and facilitate future monitoring and progress of the reform within the Bologna community.

Keywords: Bologna Process, Cameroon, Convergence, Comparison, Credit value system, Divergence, Licence-Master-Doctorat (LMD), United Kingdom, Higher Education

Introduction

Origin of the Bologna Process (BP) movement

National Higher Education (HE) arrangements are rapidly being affected by international pressures, and European HE is presently influenced significantly by two policy developments that are European-inclined – first, reforms in European HE ushered in by the Bologna Process (BP); and second, research features of 'the European Union's Lisbon Strategy for jobs and growth' (Keeling, 2006, p.203). The BP started in 1998 wherein HE ministers from the United Kingdom, Italy, Germany and France signed the Sorbonne Agreement aimed at harmonising HE qualification systems in Europe, because '… Europe is not only that of the Euro, of the banks and the economy: it must be a Europe of knowledge…' with its universities playing a pivotal

role for its development. (Sorbonne Joint Declaration, 1998, p.1). The following year the Bologna Process was launched and signed by representatives from 29 nations committing themselves to reforming their HE systems in order to attain convergence through the establishment of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) by 2010 (Bologna Declaration, 1999). Being a process, there have been biennial ministerial meetings focusing on different themes geared at monitoring, assessing and building on the progress of successive BP reforms[1]. Efforts were made during subsequent ministerial meetings to extend action lines, and signatories to the BP convention to include those with full EU membership and those working towards accession. The table below represents these:

[1] Summarily, these themes include:
- Emphasizing points (Prague Communiqué, 2001),
- Adopting additional action line (Berlin Communiqué, 2003),
- Discussing on further challenges and objectives (Bergen Communiqué, 2005),
- Appraising progress made towards the EHEA (London Communiqué, 2007),
- Discussing on HE priorities for the future to come (Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué, 2009),
- Monitoring previous communiqués (Budapest-Vienna Declaration, 2010),
- Stressing efforts needed to deliver meaningful changes and to further the comprehensive implementation of all Bologna action lines (Bucharest Communiqué, 2012),
- Stipulating collective ambition necessary to pursue goals, and adopt policy measures (Yerevan Communiqué, 2015),
- Adopting more policy measures (Paris Communiqué, 2018), and
- Developing criteria for building the future (Rome Communiqué, 2020).

Table 1: Summary of Bologna Communiqués (including themes and indicators, and signatory members)

Sorbonne Joint Declaration (1998)

- Summarily, setting the pace of the Bologna Process through the creation of EHEA

Signatories:
France, Italy, United Kingdom, Germany

Bologna Declaration (1999)

Objectives adopted:
- Readable and comparable degrees, use of Diploma Supplement to promote employability and international competitiveness.
- Two main cycles, undergraduate and graduate.
- Use of the credit system e.g. ECTS.
- Promotion of academic mobility e.g. students, teachers, researchers, administrative staff.
- Promotion of European co-operation in quality assurance.
- Promotion of European dimension in HE.

Additional signatories:
Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Greece, Ireland, Iceland, Latvia, Italy, Luxembourg, Lithuania, Netherlands, Malta, Poland, Norway, Romania, Portugal, Slovenia, Slovak Republic, Sweden, Spain, United Kingdom, Swiss Confederation

Prague Communiqué (2001)

Emphasized points:
- Lifelong learning.
- Universities, HEIs, and students as active partners within the EHEA.
- Promotion of the attractiveness of the EHEA

Additional signatories:
Croatia, Cyprus and Turkey

Berlin Communiqué (2003)

Additional Action:
- European Higher Education Area and European Research Area (inclusion of doctoral level as the third cycle in the BP).

Additional signatories:
Albania, Andorra, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Holy See, Russia, Serbia and Montenegro, "the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"

Bergen Communiqué (2005)

Further challenges and objectives:
- Higher education and research.
- The social dimension.
- Mobility.
- Attractiveness of the EHEA and cooperation with other parts of the world.

Additional signatories:
Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine

London Communiqué (2007)

Progress towards the EHEA:
- Mobility
- Recognition
- Qualifications Frameworks
- Lifelong Learning
- Quality Assurance and a European Register of Quality Assurance Agencies
- Doctoral candidates
- Social dimension
- European Higher Education Area in a global context

Additional Signatories:
Republic of Montenegro

Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué (2009)

Higher education priorities for the future to come:
- Social dimension: equitable access and completion
- Lifelong learning
- Employability
- Student-centred learning and the teaching mission of higher education
- Education, research and innovation
- International openness
- Mobility
- Data collection
- Multidisciplinary transparency tools
- Funding

Budapest-Vienna Declaration (2010)

Additional Signatories:
Kazakhstan

Bucharest Communiqué (2012)

Efforts to deliver meaningful changes and to further the comprehensive implementation of all Bologna action lines by:
- Providing quality HE for all: widening access, social dimension of HE, student-centred learning, quality assurance, open dialogue on funding and governance within HE.
- Enhancing employability to serve Europe's needs: research, meaningful learning outcomes, qualification frameworks, recognition of professional qualifications
- Strengthening mobility for better learning: portability of national grants and loans, academic and professional recognition (formal and non-formal learning), better balanced mobility, joint programmes and degrees, international openness.
- Improvement of data collection and transparency to underpin political goals.

Yerevan Communiqué (2015)

Collective ambition will be to pursue the following goals:
- Enhancing the quality and relevance of learning and teaching.
- Fostering the employability of graduates throughout their working lives.
- Making our systems more inclusive.
- Implementing agreed structural reforms.

Policy measures adopted:
- The revised Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).
- The European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes.
- The revised ECTS Users' Guide, as an official EHEA document.

Additional Signatories: Belarus

Paris Communiqué (2018)

Measures adopted:
- Structured peer support approach for the implementation of the three Bologna key commitments[2].
- Belarus strategy for 2018-2020.
- Short cycle qualifications as a stand-alone qualification level within the overarching Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA).
- Revised Diploma Supplement, with a recommendation for its adoption in identical form in the respective frameworks of the Lisbon Recognition Convention and Europass.

Rome Ministerial Communique (2020)

Building the Future via:
- An inclusive EHEA.
- An innovative EHEA.
- An interconnected EHEA.

Source: Generated from Bologna Communiqués

[2] The Paris Communique (2018, p.2) noted that in 2018-2020, thematic peer groups focused on three key commitments crucial to reinforcing and supporting quality and cooperation inside the EHEA:
- A three-cycle system compatible with the overarching framework of qualifications of the EHEA and first and second cycle degrees scaled by ECTS
- Compliance with the Lisbon Recognition Convention, and
- Quality assurance in compliance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area.

The BP and the resulting EHEA, being unprecedented examples of regional, cross-border cooperation in HE, have raised considerable interest in other parts of the world and made European HE more visible on the global map (Budapest Vienna, 2010, p.1). Although the process is perceived as a voluntary and non-binding policy among member states (Bologna Declaration, 1999), it nonetheless has had a spill-over effect in other parts of the world including Latin America, Asia and Africa (Crosier & Parveva, 2013).

Within the context of partnerships between Africa and Europe fostered by the African Union Council and European Commission, the BP as an 'example of a good practice' provides an impetus for universities in Africa to improve not only the provision of quality services or to satisfy the needs of local communities but to network within the international HE space (Zmas, 2015, p.737). Many conferences have been held in Africa to promote discussions on the adaptation of African universities to the Bologna Convention (Huisman, et al., 2012, p.95). Mohamedbhai (2014, p.75) noted that with the adoption of '*licence-master-doctorat'* (LMD) reform in French-speaking Africa, there has also been the adoption of course modularization and use of dual semesterisation within each academic year. The modularization of courses has aided students as they progress within their courses to successfully compile and complete modules leading to high success rates. Having two semesters have reduced the heavy load on staff in having to deal with 'all examinations at the end of the academic year'; and also provides flexibility among staff in making decisions on which modules to teach per semester.

Presently, the African Union (AU) viewed as 'an EU-style cooperation body' utilises the BP-model prototype to harmonise African universities using the 'Strategy for Harmonisation of Higher Education Programmes'. The project is intended to create a common 'African Higher Education and Research Space' (AU, 2007, p.5). CEMAC heads of states in 2005 signed the Libreville Declaration with the aim of establishing the 'CEMAC Space for Higher Education, Research and Professional Training' (Eta, 2015, p.161). According to the AU (2007, p.3), the benefits and rationales for instituting harmonisation include: to ensure extensive intraregional student and staff mobility, as well as to increase the sharing of research, intellectual resources and information.

As a signatory state to the CEMAC Convention, Cameroon has been compelled to implement the LMD in its HE system (Eta, 2015; Author, 2019). The LMD was introduced in Cameroonian HE to provide solutions to challenges surrounding credit values/transferability and degree recognition (Eta & Vubo, 2016), as well as graduate unemployment and student mobility (Eta, 2017; 2015). The LMD in Cameroonian HE has three broad objectives and nine specific objectives (Ministry of Higher Education, 2010, p.16). The broad objectives are to: promote socio-cultural and human development through citizenship training to enable individuals face challenges of the Millennium at the national and Central African sub-regional levels; enhance national economic development and employment of graduates; and encourage research geared at promoting outreach through partnership with the private sector. Summarily, the specific objectives address professionalisation and graduate employment, reinforcement of flexible and

comparable training, student mobility, certificate equivalences among others (Ministry of Higher Education, 2010, p.16)[3].

Some studies have been conducted in Europe indicating the comparative dimension of the BP (Witte, 2004; Teichler, 2012), with actual comparisons done across European HE systems (Michelsen, 2010; Zmas, 2015); European and Latin American HE systems (Verger & Hermo, 2010); and European and African HE systems (Woldegiorgis, *et al*, 2015)[4]. In other words, there is lack of comparative evidence-based BP research between European HE and non-European HE (specifically African HE). Although the works of Woldegiorgis, *et al.* (2015) for instance, provides comparison between European and African HE, this has been limited to analysing regional HE reform initiatives in Africa in comparison with the European BP using Knight's three analytical approaches of HE harmonisation processes, namely – political, functional and organisational approaches[5]. While the functional approach examines what the authors describe as 'issues' such as mobility; quality assurance and accreditation mechanisms; pan-regional post-graduate training and research networks; and the tuning program (p.246-249), adequate information from a comparative standpoint on BP action lines such as credit values/transferability, degree recognition, employability among others were uncovered in their research – thus a gap. In Cameroon, Eta and Vubo (2016) limited their comparison of the BP using the credit value systems and degree structures in both French-speaking and Anglo-Saxon universities in the pre-LMD and LMD era[6]. This means extensive in-depth studies on comparisons between HE systems across European and non-European nations; developed and developing nations; early adopters and late adopters; and ex-imperial nations and ex-colonies in the wake of the BP (specifically within the context of the implementation of BP objectives are quite lacking) – a gap which this paper seeks to fill[7].

This paper has as objective to:

- compare and contrast the implementation of the BP reform in Cameroonian and UK universities with a focus on the credit value system.

The analysis is timely as it builds upon existing discourses of Bologna literature and unveils areas of convergence and divergence necessary to provide insights on the BP realities across

[3] For more on specific objectives of the LMD, see Cameroon Ministry of Higher Education (2010, p.16).

[4] Furthermore, the European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice (2018) produced a stocktaking report of the Bologna Process (BP) which presents a comparative overview of the implementation of some BP action lines (e.g credits, degree structure/diploma supplement, quality assurance, access/participation, graduate employability and mobility) among other important themes within HE across the EHEA from a quantitative stance. However, this report lacks information on the implementation of the BP in non-EHEA contexts like Cameroon on which global comparisons can be made – a gap, calling for further investigations. According to the London Communique (2007 p.6,7), the filled gap has potentials of providing available data among participating countries of the BP (regardless of context) vital in measuring progress; and in assisting the stocktaking process, based on national reports.

[5] For more information on what these approaches mean, see Knight (2013) and Woldegiorgis, *et al.* (2015).

[6] LMD is an adapted version of the BP in most parts of Africa (Cameroon inclusive).

[7] Some of the reasons why HE in Cameroon and the UK have been selected for the study apart from the presence of existing secondary data include: the existence of colonial ties between Cameroon and the UK, with the dual nature of the Cameroonian HE system (Francophone and Anglo-Saxon) prior to the BP in this context modelled to reflect those of France and the UK; Cameroon is a developing nation while the UK is a developed nation; Cameroon is a late adopter of the BP and a non-signatory member state of the EHEA while the UK is an early adopter and signatory member state of the EHEA.

distinct contexts which can be informative for drawing up of stocktaking reports (regarding the achievements and failures of the BP reform), redirect focus, assessments and facilitate future monitoring and progress of the reform within the entire Bologna community. Knowledge of convergence and divergence is also vital in the theorisation, criticality and reflexivity of the BP being a global HE reform implemented across distinct national contexts. The analysis unveils the outcomes (including /shortcomings, problems and criticisms) of the credit value system across both contexts that can be bridged by learning primarily from BP communiqués and BP policy documents serving as templates.

An overview of the BP Credit System vis-à-vis the National Qualification Framework

Credits, especially European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) has been one of the main tools used in enhancing mobility across EHEA and in assessing learning equivalences (Bologna Declaration, 1999; HC, 2007, p.43). According to Piro (2016), policy innovations brought about by the BP has propelled inventive changes in the teaching and learning processes thus making European universities more effective and competitive by enhancing student and staff academic mobility, student-centered learning, establishing a three-cycle model of HE, establishing diploma supplements and aid degree transferability via the ECTS. Two instruments of exclusive European origin used for facilitating academic mobility, comparability and compatibility are the ECTS and the Diploma Supplement (Voegtle, *et al*., 2011, pp. 82-84). Credits are awarded after successful completion of module assessments (Sweeney, 2017).

Tuck (2007, p.2) defined 'qualification' as 'a package of standards or units judged to be worthy of formal recognition in a certificate'; and one of the distinctive features of a National Qualification Frameworks (NQF) is a national system of credit accumulation and transfer (p.4). EURYDICE (2010) provided relevant indicators for each national HE system in Europe including: checking the establishment of credit systems and national qualification frameworks; monitoring under-represented groups; checking whether independent quality assurance (QA) systems are operational; checking the regulation and legislation of 'Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL); and checking access to HE relative to RPL[8]. The table below summarises the importance of national qualifications and credit frameworks.

[8] For more on the recommendations raised in to boost National Qualification Credit Framework – NQCFs see ADEA, (2015, pp.4-5).

Table 2: What national qualifications and credit framework can do

1	Promote understanding and visibility concerning possibilities for individual progress through life chances and market opportunities
2	Promote understanding how to accede to higher and different levels of education and training over a lifetime as well as plan for children's educational progress
3	Contribute to capacity development
4	Promote the comparability and transferability of qualifications and skills
5	Enhance employer confidence in staff recruitment and training
6	Facilitate educational and labour market mobility
7	Facilitate curriculum design and development with the aid of credit descriptors as they exist within NQFs
8	Respond to the requirements for sustainable development by enabling the recognition of [formal, non-formal and informal] learning in lifelong and life wide settings and providing possibilities for "people of all ages and circumstances to access appropriate education and training over their lifetime to fulfil their personal, social and economic potential" (Scottish Qualifications Framework).
9	Inspire confidence among local, regional and international stakeholders

Source: ADEA (2015, p.4)

The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa – African Center for Statistics (2011, p.2) noted that there has been expressed concerns owing to the comparability of statistical curricula and qualifications across African sub-regions and language zones (CEMAC/Cameroon inclusive) including these anomalies: concerns of universal validity, integrity and credibility of statistical qualifications; concerns with regional curricular and qualification variations particularly in line with language obstacles and colonial experiences; disharmonious programme proliferation; existence of same degrees but dissimilar prospects; existence of same degrees but dissimilar levels of competencies and skills; existence of same curricula but dissimilar degrees; existence of same certificate but dissimilar curricula; differences between academic and professional degrees; and serious discrepancies that trigger doubts whether individuals within same academic disciplines practice same things across contexts; thus needing attention. The table below summarizes a proposed set of NQFs that would articulate with the African Credit and Transfer System per degree cycle.

Table 3: A proposed starting point for NQFs that will articulate with the African Credit and Transfer System

Level	Sustainability competencies/ learning outcomes: progressive level of difficulty	Correspon-ding Credits	Pre-Primary/ Primary/ Secondary Education	TVET/Workplace/ Professional/Agri-culture/Maritime Education...	Tertiary Education	Non-Formal/ Informal Education/ RPL& APL
10		Not typically rated			Professional Doctorate/PhD	**Recognition of learning in Lifelong & Lifewide settings**
9		180/120/60	**Continuing education**		Masters PG Cert/Dip	
8		360			B. A Honors	
7		300			B.A General	
6		240			Diploma	Use of Alternative Peda-gogies , e.g. Literacies: 1. Climate Literacy 2. Environmental Literacy 3. Health Literacy 4. Indigenous Knowledge...
5		120			Certificate	
4			HSC/A Level/IBAC/ French BAC	CERTIFICATE 4		
3			SC/GCE 'O' Level	CERTIFICATE 3		
2				CERTIFICATE 2		
1			Primary school level	CERTIFICATE 1		

Source: ADEA (2015, p.5)

ADEA postulated that arrangements must be made for to respect contextual/cultural specificities like the inclusion of Anglophone, European, Francophone and American aspects wherever they influence country-level provision.

To Eta and Vubo (2016), the justification for adapting the LMD's grading/credit system is rooted in the CEMAC's decision (CEMAC, 2006) which was respected by MINESUP (MINESUP, 2007) to maintain and issue the *Diplome d'Etudes Universitaires Generales* (DEUG) degree to students after successful completion of the fourth semester and having earned 120 credits; and also to maintain and issue Maîtrise to students with Bachelor's degree who have applied for postgraduate studies and who have passed and earned 60 credits in the first two semesters; explaining why Masters has been spilt into Masters I and II (Eta & Vubo, 2016, p.505, 506)[9]. Eta (2018, p.22-23) noted that an important feature of the credit system is the number of hours required to obtain a credit, which was, however, not included in the declarations and communiqués. Nonetheless, the ECTS user guide have provided details on the number of hours required to obtain a credit. The ECTS is based on workload (quantity of work) that a student is required to put in to 'achieve the objectives of a programme of study based on the principle that 60 credits measure the workload of a full-time student during one academic year', with the workload ranging between 1,500 and 1,800 hours per year, in which one credit requires roughly 25 to 30 working hours (Directorate General for Education and Culture, 2005, p.4). As noted in

[9] English translation for *Diplome d'Etudes Universitaires Generales* is *General Academic Studies Degree.*

the user guide, the workload consists of lectures, seminars, independent and private study, preparation of projects and examinations.

The ECTS functions as 'an academic transfer and accumulation system across the EHEA' (House of Commons Education and Skills Committee, HC, 2007, p.43). The credit system also helps in 'valuing, measuring and comparing learning achievements', expressing the 'volume of learning based on the achievement of the learning outcome and their associated workload' and supporting 'flexibility within education systems' to improve 'recognition and transparency' (Bologna Working Group, 2005, p.43). Within the EHEA and Cameroon, there has been need to justify the adoption of the credit value by reassessing what existed in the past (Bergen Communiqué, 2005; The BUN, 2017). Witte (2006) argued that although the Bologna Declarations and communiqués were not explicit on the duration of the different cycles, the suggestions in the Attali Report for the 3/5/8 model were mistaken as the norm in Europe; as research indicated diverse degree structures in many European countries, with the need for a common reference. According to Haug (1999), a hard-line model, such as the 3-5-8 model, was not achievable in Europe. Thus, in the 1999 report 'Trends in Learning Structures in Higher Education', Haug (1999) proposed a common but broad and flexible framework, considering national variations, with an emphasis on the number of academic credits needed to be successfully completed to reach the corresponding level, rather than focusing on length of studies. In this way, the degree structures relative to the ECTS were structured as follows:

- Sub-degree level (certificate, diploma): one to two years' worth of ECTS credits;
- First degree level (bachelor's, honours, other first degree): no less than three and no more than four years' worth of ECTS credits;
- Master's level: about five years' worth of ECTS credits, of which at least 12 months' worth are master's level credits;
- Doctoral level: varies (roughly seven or eight years in total).

In 2005, European Ministers adopted a qualifications framework in the EHEA consisting of three cycles and stressing the 'possibility of intermediate qualifications' within the cycles (Bergen Communiqué, 2005). The adopted framework emphasised 'learning outcomes and competences' and allowed for 'credit ranges in the first and second cycles', with workload in the third cycle corresponding to three to four years of full-time studies. According to the Bologna Working Group (2005), the qualification framework consisted of the following:

- First cycle (higher education) qualifications, typically including or represented by 180 to 240 ECTS credits;
- Within the first cycle, shorter-cycle higher education qualifications typically including or represented by approximately 120 ECTS credits;
- Second cycle (higher education) qualifications, typically including or represented by 90-120 ECTS credits beyond the first cycle, with a minimum of 60 credits at the level of the second cycle;

- Third cycle (higher education) qualifications. No proposal has been made for associating credits with third-cycle qualifications.

Research carried out by Eta (2015, p.173) in Cameroonian HE justifying the adoption of credit value system via an analyses of text documents revealed two reasons. First, while in the past there was need to create a specialized degree programme in order to determine an entry point into another programme, with the onset of the LMD, students can easily move from one level to another by deducing from their transcripts how many credits a given student for instance needs to be accepted into a new programme. Secondly, the apt operationalization of the credit system throughout Cameroon would increase the likelihood for students to transfer credits from a given university to another within the nation; and to enhance greater unification among higher education institutions (HEIs) within the CEMAC region (The BUN 2007; Eta, 2015, p.173).

Eta (2018) summarised the cycle of study, duration and required ECTS within the EHEA by drawing from the 1999 trend report, the 2005 Bologna Working Group on qualification framework report, and a review of literature (Witte, 2006; Croche & Charlier, 2012), as seen in the table below:

Table 4: Cycle of study, duration, and require ECTS

Cycle of study	Years needed for completion	ECTS required (60 ECTS per year)
Short cycle	1-2	120
First cycle	3-4	180-240
Second cycle	5 (1, 1½ , 2)	60-120
Third cycle	3-4	Not specified

Source: Eta (2018, p.22)

The World Bank (1994, p.74) recommended that to guide decisions on curriculum change and choice of course offered, HEIs need to observe the outcome of the labour market for their graduates including remuneration, placement, and demand/supply of various skills. This is also done by introducing a modular curriculum combined with the credit system of academic organization which permits not only specializations but flexibility in course designs. The Bologna Process recommends that credits earned while studying abroad should be accepted and recognized by home universities and should constitute part of students' final degree awards (Sweeney, 2017).

Credit values are considered important tools to enhance harmonization (ADEA, 2015; Woldegiorgis, *et al.*, 2015). Environments that are harmonized promote transparency in terms of curriculum development and synchronizes a common understanding of some HE terms such as recognition of experiential learning, credit accumulation, course duration, and 'the learning load' (ADEA, 2015, p.1). To Knight (2013, p.116), 'harmonization and convergence' comprises of stronger and strategic links and include systemic changes from national and institutional levels leading to the establishment of regional QA schemes qualification framework, academic credit system with a common currency for determination of credit based on workload, compatible

academic calendars, and regional citation index. Practices in Europe such as credit systems among others have indeed influenced educational systems in other regions (Croché & Charlier, 2012). Woldegiorgis, *et al.* (2015, p.249) added that experiences from the BP have been used by the AUC after the endorsement of the harmonization strategy paper document by COMEDAF III in 2007 to introduce Tuning in political discussions among African ministers of education, to support HE program harmonization via specific curricular integration methods, assorted mechanisms for credit accumulation and transfer systems. Shabani and Okebukola (2017, p.135) noted that mutual qualification recognition and sub-regional qualification frameworks are effective instruments for HE regionalization within Africa and other world regions. To Sweeney (2017), the 'Bologna has successfully promoted recognition and transparency which is seen as a positive development as universities everywhere are adopting credit-based systems and many use the three-cycle system as a basic qualification framework.

However, there exist problems associated to credit transferability. Within Africa, there is the lack of credit transfer arrangements from a local, regional and international dimension; and externally poor recognition of qualifications obtained in Africa (ADEA, 2015, p.2). Junor and Usher (2008, p.4) confirmed that the non-transferability of credits is indeed an issue. Post-secondary students may be reluctant to attempt a semester or year away from their home institution if they are not certain they will receive full credit value for their studies. Again, postsecondary students face demand for different academic qualifications required for entry into programs abroad – although this is likely less of an issue for those students interested in taking courses or credits only for a short period of time (p.4). To Mohamedbhai (2014, p.76), although ICT has been used effectively to assess students and process examination results in African HEIs, there are still problems relative to the use of ICT in enhancing credit transferability; and therefore, the use of ICT to enhance transferability has been encouraged.

Bennett's theoretical framework of policy convergence and the convergence/divergence debate

Bennett's model of policy convergence (1991) holds that the theoretical idea underpinning convergence stems from observations by comparativists, that developed nations face problems that are alike and therefore tend to address them in the same way[10]. In line with this, European universities have been experiencing escalating problems such as low output as well as low success rates for graduates, brain drain, inadequate global reputation of national universities, insufficient financial resources and increasing unemployment, which have triggered structural reforms in the European HE landscape (Voegtle, *et al.,* 2011, pp.77-78) using the Bologna Process as a policy reform. '…The crucial questions that arise are: 'Is the BP, as an intergovernmental policy agenda, a landmark in different regions and countries?' and 'Does it lead to a convergence of higher education policies around the world?' (Zmas, 2015, p.728). To answer these questions, the adoption of the BP reform among signatory nations have propelled national governments to create policies that align with the European agenda of converging HE

[10] Kerr (1983, p.3) defined convergence as 'the tendency of societies to grow more alike, to develop similarities in structures, processes and performances'; which has led to regional integration e.g. EU, CEMAC, OEDC (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development), etc.

systems (Huisman & van der Wende, 2004, p.355). The European Ministers of HE noted that 'together we are engaged in a process of voluntary convergence and coordinated reform of our higher education systems' based on public responsibility and a number of common tools (Yerevan Communiqué, 2015, p.1). Furthermore, the CEMAC Council of Ministers (CEMAC, 2005) stressed that, the LMD system is aimed at converging HE systems within CEMAC and those in Europe. To Keeling (2006, p.203), 'the Bologna Process is an intergovernmental commitment to restructuring higher education systems which extends far beyond the EU and the Lisbon Strategy…', and has a transnational effect, cross-border effect and/or global effect thereby leading to global convergence of HE systems (Zmas, 2015).

Despite the negative or positive comments regarding the 'global echoes' and 'triumphant arrival' of the BP across the globe, 'the discourse linked to the BP creates the impression that this model is, or will be, the dominant higher education paradigm in the 'Age of Convergence' (Zmas, 2015, p738). According to Verger, *et al.* (2012, p.26), once a particular policy programme is being adopted in a critical number of locations, then individuals can start experiencing some kind of policy convergence in education. To González, *et al.* (2009, p.113), whilst the BP is fostering changes within HE systems geared at attaining the objectives of mobility of student/staff, comparability and educational convergence, 'as a consequence, the structure of degrees, syllabuses, pedagogy and evaluation and assessment systems (for students, teaching staff and programmes) must be revised'.

Convergence according to Bennett (1991) is either of these five elements: political goals (for instance the quest to create a Higher Education Area in Europe (Sorbonne Declaration, 1998), Africa (Mohamedbhai, 2013), and CEMAC (Eta, 2015); policy instruments (such as Bologna communiqués, CEMAC ministerial communiqués (CEMAC, 2005 & 2006) and Cameroon's Ministry of HE legal document on the BP (MINESUP, 2007); policy styles (such as participatory governance or Open Method of Coordination (OMC) in implementing the BP in Europe (Cippitani & Gatt, 2009), policy content and policy outcomes (such as individual BP objectives and their respective outcomes.

Emulation is the first process that determines convergence (Bennet, 1991). According to Voegtle, *et al.* (2011, p.82), policy emulation is basically 'copying foreign policies and implementing them without adaptation to national conditions and context'. Pressure on time and limited resource availability are the reasons behind policy emulation (Holzinger & Knill, 2007). According to Eta, *et al.*, (2018), the adoption of the LMD in Cameroon is an example of a reform emulated from Europe's BP.

The second type of convergence is that of elite networking/policy convergence (Bennett, 1991). Elite networking is based on transnational networking which serves as a basis on which policy solutions are generalized. Such transnational network originates from actors who share same motivation, information and expertise regarding a common problem being faced. These elites are confident in using foreign instruments to solve domestic problems. The main actors introducing change in policies are International Organisations with specialised expertise in certain policy fields (Voegtle, *et al.*, 2011, p.82). Such actors (Holzinger & Knill, 2007), actively promote some policies as well as define standards and objectives across international contexts. The part

played by elite academic institutions is significant in policy generalisation. Globalisation agents such as UNESCO, the World Bank and OECD have played a major role in the international promotion of the BP and the extension of this reform to Africa (Croché 2006, p.210). Other bilateral powerful nations like France and Belgium (Eta, 2015) are also known to promote policy dialogue and sharing of best practices like the BP/LMD across global, regional and national HE institutions[11]. From the perspective of World Society Approach, International Organisations (IOs) contribute to policy convergence in education by spreading the western system of state authority and political organization across the globe (Meyer et al., 1992). Fearn (2008) also reported that Bologna has been used by some European governments to harass universities to operate according to what it had wanted them to do over the years. Such (elite) networking is important to enhance a common policy language (Steiner-Khamsi, 2004) among elite stakeholders involved.

The third process of convergence is that of harmonisation, which arises when more attention is given to international than national orientations (Bennett, 1991, p.225). Majone (2014, p.4) defines harmonisation as 'making regulatory requirements or governmental policies of different jurisdictions identical or at least more similar.' Supranational and intergovernmental institutions shape and provide common solutions to common problems thereby mitigating the unintended foreign consequences of local policies (Bennett, 1991). According to Huisman and van der Wende (2004, p.158) 'one can identify a strong convergence of interests between policies developed at national level and policies developed at European level. To Knight (2013, p.116), harmonization and convergence comprises of stronger and strategic links and includes systemic changes from national and institutional levels leading to the establishment of common credit systems, qualification frameworks and regional QA mechanisms – which are all advocated by the BP (Bologna Declaration, 1999).

Penetration is the last type of policy convergence (according to Bennett, 1991), and it is contradictory to harmonization. Penetration entails a foreign agent who defines the purposes, instruments, tools for evaluation – and to an extent makes provision for essential resources needed to put into practice policies, while forcing states to conform to their actions taken. Rosenau (1969, p.46) defined a 'penetrative process' as a condition in which 'members of one polity serve as participants in the political processes of another'. Penetration therefore expresses power (Bennett, 1991). What has triggered the adoption of the BP in Cameroonian HE include top down than bottom up decision-making processes and dominance resulting from unequal power relations between the west (Europe/multinationals) and the rest (Africa/Cameroon), as well as national governments and their university institutions. In other words, the power to make decisions governing the BP in Africa/Cameroon is top down and from the west to the rest.

However, critical studies are questioning the extent to which the adoption of Bologna reforms have led to such convergence (Heinze & Knill, 2008; Witte, 2006). Stromquist and Monkman (2000) criticized the convergence thesis for focusing on linear and top-down explanations while

[11] Also see the European Commission and African Union above as examples of elite networks that have participated in the dissemination, adoption and implementation of the BP/LMD.

ignoring the roles of regional and national levels as vital policy sectors. Vaira (2004) pointed out that, there exist two contrasting arguments which hold that in the age of globalisation, HE systems either experience convergence or divergence. It has been opined that:

> The divergence thesis is seeking to find lesser static or deterministic interpretational forms. Attention is focused on the micro-societal level and bottom-up processes, which prevent the implementation of any normative models of global education. Interest is focused on the heterogeneity of national and local educational policies, accompanied by unpredictable outcomes. However, the danger lurking behind the divergence thesis is to overlook the challenges of 'global norms' in the national systems of higher education (Zmas, 2015, p.740).

According to Huisman and van der Wende (2004), divergences exist between European countries regarding process approaches and outcomes, and such divergences can be more visible across different regional contexts. Bologna is not meant to standardize HE systems due to diversity but fosters comparability, compatibility, recognition, and mobility, as it is a voluntary and non-binding policy among member states (Sweeney, 2017).

It is easier to identify areas of divergence/differences than convergence/similarities in 'deep' than 'surface' harmonization'[12]. Ursin, *et al.* (2010) affirmed that with the BP, there could be convergence at the higher global level but with many divergences at the lower level. Divergence occurs when there exists extensive dissimilarity in socioeconomic, institutional and cultural attributes among nations which lessens the extent of convergence between these nations despite the influence of the BP (Heinze & Knill, 2008, p.499-500). While Powell and Finger (2013, p.273) argued that Bologna has as main impact standardisation, to Musselin (2009) the process has been used to stimulate local reforms, which Krücken (2003) noted has accelerated diversity among HE institutions. Furlong (2005, p.53) argued that the relevance of the BP does not only lie in the agreement and implementation of the reform but the justification it provides for diverse national adaptations also counts – hence promoting divergence. Caution therefore needs to be taken within the Bologna Process not to favour convergence or unifomization of HE and disfavour diversity (Froment, 2003).

Despite the above contrasting views, convergence-divergence remains an integral aspect of the BP as European Ministers have committed themselves to cooperate based on the 1999 Bologna Declaration objectives, building on the similarities and benefiting from the differences between cultures, languages and national systems (Prague Communiqué, 2003, p.3).

Methodology

This paper compares and contrasts the implementation of the BP reform in Cameroonian and UK universities with a focus on the credit value system, which is relevant in providing insights on

[12] 'Surface' harmonization deals with what superficially goes on across HE systems – such as the BP reform. This kind of harmonisation makes it easier to tell that HE systems are moving closer towards one another (or converge). 'Deep' harmonisation on its part examines details or the extent of what goes on across HE systems as prescribed by agreed upon objectives/action lines by member states and this is based on contextual realities surrounding adoption/implementation (Author, 2019).

the BP realities, and informative for drawing up stocktaking reports thereby facilitating future monitoring and progress of the reform within the Bologna community. The paper makes use of secondary sources of data (text documents) including reports, BP communiqués/LMD documents, newspapers/newsletters, journal articles, theses, textbooks and other online sources as seen in the table below.

Table 5: Text documents used for analysis

Types of texts documents	Organisations/Authors
Reports	House of Commons (HC) Education and Skills Committee (2007), Uvalic-Trumbic and Varoglu (2003)
Bologna Process communiqués/LMD reports	Bologna Communiqués (1999-2020), Cameroon Ministry of Higher Education (2007; 2010), CEMAC Council of Ministers (2006)
Newspapers/Newsletters	Cameroon Tribune (2016), University of Buea (2008)
Journal articles	Doh (2008), Eta (2015), Eta and Vubo (2016), Eta and Vuban (2017)
Theses	Doh (2007), Ngufor (2009)
Textbooks	Huisman and van der Wende (2004)
Other online sources	Fearn (2008), QAA-Universities UK (nd), Sweeney (2017), UK HE Europe Unit (2005)

The documents listed above are important as they capture the credit value system of the LMD reform in Cameroon and the BP in the UK. Furthermore, Bologna Communiqués that address this focus have been added to the analysis serving as recommendation templates from which lessons can be learnt to resolve the numerous associated problems across both contexts. Halliday 1978, cited in Eta (2015, p.168) defines 'text documents' as 'meaningful passages with meaningful-making potentials'. In other words, the article uses temporal comparison and thematic analytical approaches to analyse text documents.

Thematic analysis according to Braun and Clarke (2006, p.79) is used for 'identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data'. According to the authors, this method makes use of qualitative analysis as it identifies, analyses and reports patterns or themes within a given data set, organises and describes data in detail and also provides interpretation of the data. Thematic analysis is relevant as it calls for inductive and data-driven approaches (Braun & Clarke, 2006) suited for large data sets because of its capacity to reduce extensive data by extracting only those of relevance to specific questions (Guest *et al.*, 2012). The themes capture vital information relating to the research objective (Braun & Clarke 2006), The first step in the analysis reduced the data set (Guest *et al.*, 2012) to include only data of relevance to comparing and contrasting

the implementation of the BP reform in the Cameroonian and UK HE systems with focus on the credit value system. Some quotations from the documents have been used to support the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Anonymity is not an issue in the analysis as real names of individuals (who are either authors of existing publications or cited authors) and institutions have been used to indicate source of information used in the analysis.

A temporal comparison approach was applied in analysing the text documents, in which time was used as the unit of analysis to examine 'changes in education policy regimes that follow each other' (Kallo, 2012), with a large focus on changes in credit value system in the pre-BP/pre-LMD and post-BP/post-LMD eras in the UK and Cameroon respectively. It is worthy to note that 'comparative studies pivot on the discovery of what was common between and what was distinctive to different societies' (Crook & McCulloch, 2002, p.397). This has often been conceived in terms of comparing and contrasting systems of education as they have developed in different countries. Yet there are more profound structural and cultural issues that may also be subjected to this form of analysis (Crook & McCulloch, 2002, p.398). According to Zmas (2015, p.728) 'the transfer of the BP-model around the world proves to be a complex process with unclear consequences. …As it makes its way into regional, national and local contexts, it comes up against existing policy discourses and practices, whose priorities may in fact differ from the postulates of the BP-model' thus causing BP objectives to metamorphose as they get incorporated in national systems. This explains why there are similarities and differences in the implementation of the BP objectives (e.g credit system) across national contexts (such as Cameroon and the UK) calling for comparisons.

Findings

In Cameroon, adopting a common credit system and degree structure has been geared at fostering inter-programme, national and global mobility geared at enhancing mutual degree and credit recognition for shared understanding among higher education institutions (HEIs) and countries without bias (Authors**,** 2017, p.357). Cameroonian French universities (Yaounde I, Yaounde II, Douala, Dschang, Ngaoundere, Maroua) in the pre-LMD system made use of a system of averages and modules. Here, two or more courses were grouped as a single module. While a student might perform very well in some courses but fail in some (having not less than 7 on 20), marks for the well performed courses were used to 'make up' or 'round up' marks for the failed courses also known as 'system of compensation' (Doh, 2007; Eta & Vubo, 2016, p.502; Authors, 2017, p.356; Ngufor, 2009). Although the LMD system advocated a move from the module system to the credit system, it is worth noting that the aspect of 'making up' marks and the module system still operates in Cameroonian French universities when it comes to grading. Meaning in the LMD system, the main courses are grouped under what is known as 'unite d'enseignement' (UE) (also known as 'teaching unit' in English) but with credits allocated for the different courses (Eta & Vubo, 2016, p.502). In other words, just as 'making up' or 'rounding up' marks existed in the pre-LMD system relative to the grading system, this is also evident in the LMD system. However, such credits earned is relevant only at the university where the student is studying and cannot be transferred to other universities in the CEMAC zone as the

student would be expected to re-do the failed course. This practice is lodged in the French abbreviation *CANT* which means *crédits capitalisés mais non transférable* translated into English as *credits earned but not transferable*. This means the credit system is but an extension of the module system as it has not replaced the latter in French universities as it ought to be (Eta & Vubo, 2016). Thus, the word 'credule system' has been used to describe the use of the credit and module systems in Cameroonian French universities as 'the credit system has not replaced the module or the average system, then; rather, the credit system has simply been added to the module system' (Eta & Vubo, 2016, p.504). Individuals have raised psychological and confusing concerns regarding the new LMD system by questioning the use of compensation, credit system and modular system at same time since credits earned through compensation cannot be transferred to other universities within the CEMAC zone since their transcripts would bear *CANT*, thus limiting mobility and credit transferability (Authors, 2017, p.356).

The then lone Anglophone university – University of Buea during the pre-BMP era operated the three-credit American Course Credit System made up of '96, 126, 42, and 90 credits for the bachelor's degree, double degree, master's degree, and PhD, respectively, and not the modular system with no possibility for 'compensation' (Doh, 2008; Authors, 2017, p.356; Ngufor, 2009). 39 hours of lectures constituting three weekly hours over 13 weeks as well as 21 additional hours of study (divided between practicals and tutorials totaling 60 hours) made up a three-credit course. Therefore, 20 contact hours was equivalent to a credit. 39 hours of lectures only was contact time for some programmes that lacked practicals or tutorials. In addition to lectures, some courses offered just 6 tutorial hours. It has been reported that:

> To obtain the Bachelor's degree, a student had to earn 96 credits (composed of at least 66 [or 22] and at most 72 credits [or 24 courses] in the core area of study, between 18 credits [six courses] and 24 credits [8 courses] in a minor and three credits of university requirements [two each for the official languages and another two for Civics and Ethics], making a total of 30 courses in the major + minor and three courses in the university requirements). Double majors required 126 credits, while for Master's degrees, 30 credits of coursework and 12 thesis credits were needed. PhD students were required to earn 90 credits. Official documents do not record the credit value of the PhD thesis. Each course was also independent. A student has to pass all the courses with a GPA of at least 2.0 out of 4.0 (Eta & Vubo, 2016, p.504).

Courses are independent and students are expected to pass and obtain required credits for them. Meaning, credits were awarded only to passed courses and withdrawn for failed courses. That is to say students with failed course(s) were to redo it/them to pass and earn credits for it/them.

The LMD was later adopted to enhance a common credit system used for grading in all universities using '180, 240, 120, and 180 credits for the bachelor's degree, double degree, master's degree, and PhD, respectively' (Eta & Vubo, 2016; Authors, 2017, p.356). Thus:

> The adoption of the LMD system has led to changes in grading at the Anglo-Saxon university post-LMD (as illustrated in Table 6). The credit requirements for the award of the Bachelor's degree have moved from 96 and 126 credits to 180 and 240 credits, respectively, for the Bachelor's degree and the double major, whereas Master's degree requirements have

changed from 42 credits to 120 credits and PhD requirements are now 180 credits. This has been subsequent to the transformation of the value of courses from three to six credits (the value of each credit is now 10 hours of contact time, instead of 20). Consistent with the pre-BP situation, the courses have remained as independent units (Eta & Vubo, 2016, p.505).

Authors (2017, p.356), noted that the new credit/grading system has posed problems in the present LMD era. According to the Cameroon Tribune (2016), concerns regarding the new credit system include: 'the semestrialization of courses and grading systems'; codifying course units; deciding on credit values particularly credits per course; designing programmes; and deciding on the number of courses for each semester. The table below illustrates credit values in Cameroonian universities in the pre-LMD and LMD era.

Table 6: Redefinition of the credit value system under the LMD system

Degrees	Pre-LMD| credits	LMD credits
Bachelor's (three years programme)	96	180
Bachelor's (four-year programme)	126	240
Master's degree	42	120
PhD	90	180

Source: University of Buea (2008)

The credit system and transformation of the ECTS into an accumulation system for European HE is of utmost importance to the BP (HC, 2007, p.81; Huisman & van der Wende, 2004, p.272). Within EHEA, ECTS has been enhanced by the European Grade Conversion System (EGRACONS) which is a software that converts and transfers grades (HC, 2007, p.7). According to the UK Europe Unit (2005, p.19), UK has many qualifications including Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (EWNI) which is in line with the Berlin Communiqué; a comprehensive Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF), and Wales Lifelong Learning Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW). It should be noted that The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland does not incorporate all HE study or credit (HC, 2007). The national credit systems called the 'Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales' (CQFW) and the 'Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework' (SCQF) respectively are learning-outcome-oriented and are compatible with ECTS (HC, 2007, pp.81,112; UK HE Europe Unit, 2005, pp.20,30). England does not have any national framework for credits although regional arrangements exists (HC, 2007, p.112), but has recommended the creation of a common credit system for its universities which should be compatible with EHEA's ECTS through a steering committee known as 'Measuring and Recording Student Achievement' (HC, 2007, p.81). The table below illustrate eight credit levels used in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

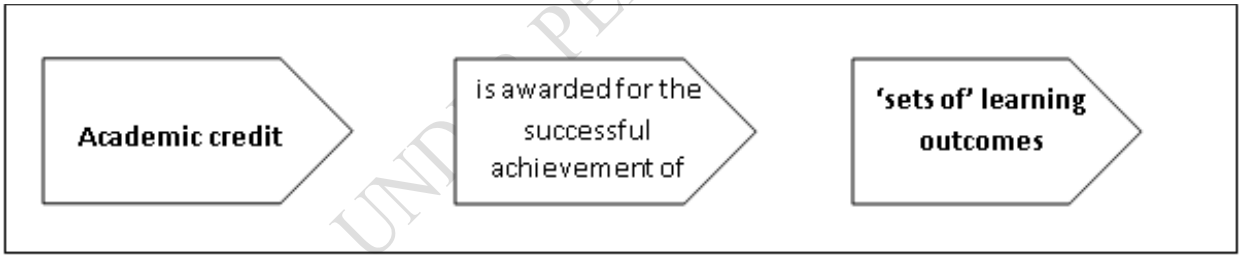
Table 7: Eight credit levels are used in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Of these, levels 4 to 8 represent the types of learning undertaken in higher education.

Credit Level	is typical of the learning expected of
8	a doctorate
7	a master's degree
6	the last part of a bachelor's degree (BA/BSc)
5	the last part of a Foundation Degree; the middle part of a bachelor's degree
4	the first part of higher education study
3	an entry qualification for higher education

Source: QAA-Universities UK, p.7

The credit system has for long been implemented in the UK although done differently across its four countries. Besides, not all its universities use it and a few universities that use it still need re-arrangements explaining why there is need to standardize credits; with more emphasis placed on the need to be outcome-based (learning outcomes) than focus on contact/study hours (HC, 2007, pp.45,81). The figure below illustrates how academic credits relates to learning outcomes.

Fig 1: Credit values are reflections of learning outcomes in the UK



Source: QAA-Universities UK, p.4.

However, the contact/study hours in the UK has been criticized. Fearn (2008) reports that a 2007 survey by Hepi found that contact time and study required at undergraduate level in the UK is far below the European average, as for instance, undergraduates at English universities receive a total of 14 hours of scheduled tuition each week, and put in 26 hours a week in total – about seven hours less than the European average, which negatively affects credits earned.

Sweeney (2017) criticized UK Master's credits for falling short of expectations in terms of the required credits within EHEA as its 180 ECTS Master's credits is only equivalent to EHEA's 90 ECTS. Fearn (2008) confirmed this by explaining that the credits are not equal because an Engineering student in the UK for instance puts in 4,800 effort hours to achieve a Master's by following a four-year undergraduate MEng degree course; and comparatively with qualification in Germany, a student must work for a minimum of 8,000 hours; thus divergence in credit and

hours of study. Furthermore, concerns about what lies ahead of UK's one year Master's as well as its four year integrated Master's degree (e.g MEng, MPharm in England, Wales and Ireland; while integrated Master's in Scotland is five years; Fearn, 2008) has been persistently raised since the ECTS is not compulsory as spelt out in the European Commission's User Guide (HC, 2007, p.12) which theoretically is no threat for UK's one-year Master's degree but in practice is problematic because the Commission has stated that 75 credits maximum is needed per year of study and 90 credits for a Master's degree. This is problematic for UK's one-year Master's degree '…because of the extent to which ECTS is used and accepted across the EHEA and because it seems to be, in the Minister's words, the "only show in town." (HC, 2007, p.12). Nonetheless, and with ECTS being a non-compulsory requirement of EHEA, UK has also raised concerns about the ECTS and the impacts it has for its home HEIs by questioning the basis on which ECTS calculated; the number of credits needed; the number of credits required to transit from second cycle Master's to third cycle or PhD; and the risks of the step-by-step approach on degree recognition (HC, 2007, p.51). UK therefore, has been encouraged to incorporate at least 60 Masters level ECTS credits in accordance with the EHEA qualification framework in its Master's programmes (HC, 2007, p.80). Huisman and van der Wende (2004, p.131) reported that UK degrees are an accumulation of required credits, with the transfer of credits from different HEIs normally possible with the awarding university always having more credits taught by its lecturers while some of its universities use the ECTS to enhance student mobility from an international perspective. The table below summarises UK credit values for Bachelors' degree, Foundation degree and Certificate of Higher Education.

Table 8: Examples of credit values for qualifications in the UK

Qualification	Credit Value
Bachelor's degree with honours BA/BSc (Hons)	**360 credits**, with a minimum of 90 at level 6 (many honours degrees include more than 360 credits)
Foundation Degree	**240 credits**, with a minimum of 90 at level 5
Certificate of Higher Education	**120 credits**, with a minimum of 90 at level 4
Actual numbers can vary between particular programmes and awards	

Source: QAA-Universities UK, p.10

From the analysis above, the application of credit value varies (divergence) across Cameroon and the UK HE systems. While Cameroon has 180 and 240 credits to cater for its three and four-years Bachelor's respectively; UK offers 360 credits for Bachelors' degree with honours. The four-years Bachelors' degree in Cameroon is equivalent to UK's Foundation degree as both issue 240 credits. Masters' degree in Cameroon is 120 credits which although may be equivalent to UK's 'Certificate of Higher Education', it is confusing to know whether the latter certificate covers all Master's, other postgraduate, and PhD degrees in the UK. The divergence of credit values in both contexts necessitates the need for credit equivalences to aid understanding, readability and transferability as spelt out by the 2005 Bologna Working Group.

To curtail problems associated with the credit system, according to the Berlin Communiqué (2003, p.4), while noting that ECTS is fast becoming a generalized basis for national credit systems, European Ministers encourage that ECTS should not only be used as a transfer system but an accumulation system. Ministers also call on institutions to link study credits with student workload and learning outcomes, and include the achievement of learning outcomes in assessment procedures using the ECTS Users' Guide (Bucharest Communiqué, 2012, p.3).

Conclusion

This paper compared and contrasted the implementation of the BP reform in the Cameroonian and UK HE systems with focus on the credit value system. Cameroon is a late adopter, non-EHEA member and the UK an early adopter and an EHEA member of the BP necessitating comparisons. Findings revealed that the convergence of both HE systems is evident by the implementation of the credit value system. However, there still exist divergence across both HE systems. Ursin, *et al.*, (2010) confirmed that within the BP, there is convergence at the higher global level but with many divergences at the lower level. Applying Bennett's theory of policy convergence was vital in explaining the convergent-divergence discourses of the BP (with focus on the credit system) in this paper.

The analysis provided in this paper has potentials of comparatively identifying gaps within the BP credit value system that can be bridged by learning primarily from the BP communiqués serving as templates. It is worth noting that European Ministers have committed themselves to cooperate based on the 1999 Bologna Declaration objectives, building on the similarities and benefiting from the differences between cultures and national systems (Prague Communiqué, 2003, p.3). It has been noted that some Bologna aims and reforms have not been properly implemented in some countries (Budapest Vienna, 2010, p.1); coupled with uneven implementation of structural reforms (Yerevan Communiqué, 2015) between policy areas and between countries (Paris Communiqué, 2018, p.1), such as the credit value system which this paper examines. Nonetheless, European Ministers have committed to curb implementation difficulties (relative to BP objectives) through: policy dialogue and exchange of good practice, aimed at supporting member countries experiencing difficulties in implementing the agreed goals (Yerevan Communiqué, 2015, p.3); building trust, cooperation and ensuring respect for the diversity of cultures and higher education systems (Budapest Vienna, 2010, p.1); and urging the Bologna Follow Up Group (BFUG) to enhance proper and full implementation of the agreed Bologna principles/action lines at the national and institutional levels through working methods such as peer learning, study visits and information sharing (p.2).

European Ministers have mandated the BFUG based on the upcoming Conference in 2024 to produce an implementation report assessing progress in agreed commitments aimed at achieving Bologna vision and goals by 2030 (Rome Communiqué, 2020, p.8). Ministers have also stressed on the need to engage together to enhance a process of voluntary convergence and coordinated reform of HE systems through public responsibility for HE and commitment to integrity (Yerevan Communiqué, 2015, p.1). Thus, knowledge of the findings in this paper are therefore relevant in providing insights on the BP realities which can be informative for drawing up

stocktaking reports (regarding the achievements and failures of the reform in relation to the credit system), redirect focus, assessments and facilitate future monitoring and progress of the reform within the Bologna community. To this effect, further research into comparisons between other BP/LMD objectives (for instance degree recognition and structure, mobility employability and more) across diverse contexts are needed. These will be important to provide a wider and holistic evidence-based information necessary for future stocktaking reports and monitoring of the reform.

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