

Comparative Study of College Admission System Based on Baccalauréat in Cameroon and Gaokao in China

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to try answering to the question concerning the similarities and differences between Cameroonian and Chinese college admission system and the factors determining students' qualifications for higher education. Based on the documentary trends, interviews, observation and personal experiences, authors after an overview of admission systems in the world have presented the college admission systems in both countries, Cameroon and China. And then, they have analyzed the administrative structure, exam content, examination period and results release, assessment and the enrollment policies. Finally, based on some of the best practices showcased by both countries, some practical suggestions to both countries for a possible implementation have been given.

Keywords: Comparative study; College admission system; Higher education; Cameroon; China.

1. Introduction

Comparative study according to George Bereday is a research that allows to understand what is going around, to learn good practices from others and to avoid also mistakes by employing any system. It finds the roots of problems and prepares the ground for the economic and social development of a nation (Rahimi, 2015). This comparative study of college admission system between Cameroon and China will allow both countries to learn from each other; especially Cameroon to learn some good practices from China, the world's fastest growing economy. The recent growth projections published in July 2017 by IMF show that China maintains a speedy economic growth (IMF, 2017). Similar to China, Cameroon is a country which hopes on education as pillar of development. The expanding of access and a good quality of education are crucial factors for the attainment of emergence. According to the 2015 report of Lumina Foundation entitled *A stronger Nation through Higher Education*, "for the nation to attain, not just economic security, but social justice and cohesion, college success must expand dramatically" (Lumina Foundation, 2015). Helms noted also that "Tertiary education is more than the capstone of the traditional education pyramid; it is a key pillar of human development worldwide [...] It trains individuals who play a critical role in driving local economies, supporting civil society, teaching children, leading effective governments, and making important decisions that affect entire societies" (Helms, 2008). Additionally, Altbach noted that the impact of economic growth is in higher education (Altbach, 2009). Taking the example of China and India, he argued that the development of higher education is central to future economic growth of both countries, the world's fastest growing economies. The higher education becomes today the education sector of competitiveness. For him, the investment in higher education increases more and more due to the awareness that one has about its output and the effect that higher education produces on human and economic development. That is why the existence of admission assessment aiming to select competent students for higher education in order to bring a plus is essential and should respond to the need of each country. Admission systems aim at ensuring whether students have the necessary level, knowledge and skills to succeed in their chosen courses (McGrath et al., 2014). There are many admission systems in the world. The requirements of these students' admission to the higher education vary from one country to another (Helms, 2008); and it can also vary from an institution to another. According to the country or institution's objectives, students' admission system could take into account the situation of educational development and the realities of each country or institution. Considering the tied relationship that exists between education (especially higher education) and economic growth as many scholars have noted, the rapid economic growth of China pushes us to compare Chinese college admission system with that of Cameroon. The implementation of some measures which are adaptable to the realities of both countries could give a new trend to the development of their education or their entire society.

1.1. Definitions and clarifications of terms

College Admission: The seventh Edition of Oxford Advanced learner's Dictionary defines a college as a place

where someone can study for higher or more specialized qualifications after finishing higher school (A S Hornby, 2009). Admission refers to a “specific activity undertaken to admit students to universities” (Helms, 2008). Harman goes into details and defines it as the process that takes place when a potential student develops an interest in entry to higher education until enrollment in a particular institution (McGrath et. al, 2014). Thus, College admission or University admission can be defined as a process which students go through so as to have access to higher education.

Baccalauréat: The baccalauréat, often known colloquially as “Bacc”, is an academic qualification exam which Cameroonian students take at the end of their secondary school. It appears as an examination and a degree which has double peculiarity of sanctioning the end of secondary school studies in one side, and the opening access to higher education for successful candidates in the other side. The use of the term baccalauréat exists in many countries’ educational system but it doesn’t necessary refer to the same thing. For instance in Cameroon, France and many other countries, it refers to the secondary leaving examination and the degree sanctioning that exam. However, it should not be confused with baccalauréat in Canada which refers to the Bachelor degree. In Cameroon, there are baccalauréat général and baccalauréat technique. In this study, we focus on baccalauréat général.

Gaokao (高考 Gāokǎo): In Chinese, Gāo (高) means High and kǎo (考) means Exam. Gaokao is a unified examination for college enrollment; also known as college entrance examination (ordinary college entrance examination and adult college entrance examination). Gaokao is an examination needed for candidates to get into higher education in China. It is a selection test based on the established enrollment plan, moral, intellectual merits of candidates. Shortly, gaokao can be understood as the exam opening the doors to the higher education institutions in China.

1.2. Overview of admission system in the world

Globally taken, one can group admission systems into two main systems which are open admission system and selective admission system. Open admission system according to Sergeant et al., (2012) quoted from (McGrath et al., 2014) exists when holders of relevant secondary school certificates have an automatic right of access to higher education. And “a selective” occurs in the case when applicants have to meet other criteria in addition of holding a secondary school certificate to be admitted to higher education institutions. Based on various requirements, Helms breaks down these two systems into five typologies such as secondary leaving examinations, entrance examinations, standardized aptitude tests, multiple examinations and no examination (Helms, 2008).

Secondary Leaving Examination is a standard of admission system based on the score gotten from the examination at the end of secondary school. Most countries used secondary leaving examination as student assessment to get into university. In some countries, this examination offers a degree of completion of secondary education to the students and/or allows the access to the colleges and universities. It is often nationally or provincially-administered by the government. This system may be the only factor of admission as in the case of France, or with additional requirements (dossier) as in the United Kingdom. Due to different requirements, the secondary leaving examination as model of admission system can be divided into many other subsystems. These requirements could be: a national exam score, for instance in ordinary colleges and universities in France and Egypt; national exam score plus secondary school academic performance as in Tanzania; regional and/or national exam score plus secondary school academic performance as in Australia; national exam score plus application dossier as in the United Kingdom and Cameroon.

Entrance Examination is another type of admission system that evaluates the students’ knowledge in different subjects of secondary school. Here, no matter how good the students’ performances were in secondary school, all students must take part in the examination to get access to higher education. Depending upon the education system of each country, the examination can be organized nationally, regionally or institutionally. Like in secondary leaving examination, entrance examination can have additional requirements. In some countries after the national, regional or institutional entrance exam score, nothing else is required; but in others secondary schools, academic performance is required in addition to the entrance exam score. A typical example for the former is China, Georgia, Iran and Turkey; Spain for the latter.

Standardized Aptitude Tests refer to the evaluation of all candidates’ potential rather than achievement (Helms, 2008). It includes measurements of cognitive abilities and generic skills (McGrath and al, 2014). It is a comprehensive model because in addition to student potentiality, it could combine acquired knowledge, academic achievement, and/or application dossier. This admission system is used in the United States, Sweden...

Multiple Examinations: more than one exam is taken into consideration. In most cases, the national secondary leaving exams or national entrance examinations plus institutionally-administered entrance examinations scores are taken into account. The typical examples are Japan, Finland, Cameroon (the case of admission system to the “Grandes Ecoles”).

No Examinations admission system; here applicants are admitted on the basis of previous school

performance and/or application materials (dossier). Representative cases for this type of admission system are Canada, certain institutions in the U.S.A. and Norway.

One should note that each of the above admission systems presents some advantages and limits. The admission based on the examination scores for instance could be appreciated in term of equity (Helms, 2008). Even though, the term equity is an ambiguous concept, examination scores seem to be fair because they evaluate equally each student on the same test. However, it is a test oriented model that doesn't foster innovation and critical thinking. Concerning standard aptitude test (SAT) and applicant dossier and interview, they could respond positively to the issue of quality but they are more likely subjective.

1.3. Overview of admission system in Cameroon and China

In Cameroon as well as in China, the higher education is largely controlled by the government. The college admission practices are stipulated by the national policy. It defines the standard and the power of actors (government and/or the institution) implicated in that admission system. After what is said previously, this part is going to present a panoramic view of college admission system in Cameroon and China.

1.3.1. Admission system in Cameroon

Cameroon is a bilingual country which has two education sub-systems: French and British sub-system (Ngalim, 2014; Gonondo & Djiraro Mangue, 2016). Regardless of the two sub-systems, the higher education is also divided into faculties and the so-called "Grandes Ecoles" (elite training higher institutions). But this study focuses only on the admission to the faculties through baccalauréat. In this part, researchers focus on the global presentation of students' admission to the Cameroonian faculties where practices are different from those of "Grandes Ecoles". The students' admission to the colleges or universities in Cameroon is mainly through the secondary leaving examination which is organized nationally (the same day and at the same time everywhere across the country). The secondary leaving examination in Cameroon allows not only students to take part to the undergraduate programs but also confers them a diploma called "Baccalauréat" (in Francophone sub-system) which enables them to participate in many competitive examinations (concours) of public services. Cameroonian university admission system corresponds more likely to the first typology of college admission system according to the Matross Helms classification (Helms, 2008); that means secondary leaving examinations. As the basic and main criterion of students' admission to higher education, secondary leaving examination is under the control of the OBC (Office du Baccalauréat du Cameroun). This institution was created since 1993 by the decree N°93/255 of 28/09/93 and modified by the decree n° 97/044 of 05/03/97. It is in charge of organizing all the process of the exam, correcting copies and publishing results, establishing certificates, conducting researches about the examinations, evaluating and improving the education systems (OBC, 2014). A large number of students are registered each year for the baccalauréat examination. According to the 2017 statistics of secondary leaving examinations of general education published by OBC, there was 104,296 candidates registered among which 98,595 candidates (94.53%) took part to the exam and 45,356 candidates (46%) succeeded to their exam. Compared to the 2016 session during which 52% of the candidates have succeeded their baccalauréat, there is a significant increase of failure rate in 2017 (Nsana, 2017).

1.3.2. Admission system in China

The Chinese college admission system is the entrance examination; called "Gaokao" in Chinese. In order to be admitted to full-time ordinary institutions of higher education (what is called in Chinese 全日制普通高校), gaokao is considered as a bridge between secondary education and tertiary education for Chinese students. Gaokao is a standardized exam which aims at attracting to full-time higher education institutions high school graduate students. In these recent years (2016 and 2017), about 9,400,000 students took the exam each year (中商情报网, 2016; Gaokao, 2017a). In 2015, 9,420,000 students took the gaokao with an admission rate of 74.30% (中商情报网, 2016). Teachers, parents and students attach a great deal of importance to the gaokao because it is commonly believed that getting a college degree will easily lead to greater job options and consequently to a better life in the future.

Historically, the exam in China aimed to select civil officials. However, the students' college entrance exam (CEE) which was established in 1952 (Z. Ruoling, 2010), has undertaken multiple reforms which caused a drastic change in the examination system. During the period of Cultural Revolution (1966-1977), it was temporary abolished. At that time, people accessed to higher education thanks to their links to the political community or family relations (Zhu, 2014). After the gaokao restoration in 1977, CEE faced once more many reforms. These reforms concerned the structure of the exams, the recruitment policy, evaluation system etc. Some researchers think that, gaokao is based on competency and it is adopted to give to everyone an equal opportunity to have access to higher education (Z. Ruoling, 2010). To him, that system must be rationally appraised and understood. The college entrance examination or gaokao was for long the only admission requirement in China (J. Gu, & J. Magaziner, 2016). However, it constitutes a big worry for every student and their family because "good results considerably enhance chances of admission to a handful of top tier

universities (and have a profound impact on students' lifelong on social and economic status). Poor results put students on a far less promising track" (J. Gu, & J. Magaziner, 2016).

Through this literature review, we understand more the students' admission system to higher education around the world and especially those in Cameroon and China. Moreover, it has helped us not only to understand various systems of college admission used through the world, in Cameroon and in China, but also to tackle what is different from what others have done about the issue. For example, we find out that few researches are related to the Cameroonian students' admission system to higher education especially in the case of comparison. Till now we have not yet found researches comparing Cameroonian and Chinese university admission systems. Hence, there is a crucial need for conducting this research.

2. Research Method

This study is a qualitative research based on the description and the analysis of college admission system of two countries: Cameroon and China. It emphasizes the illustration cases of University of Yaoundé I in Cameroon and Zhejiang Normal University in China. Some research instruments namely document analysis, interviews and personal experiences are used to carry out this research. First of all, in document analysis, primary sources (such as national and institutional admission policies), and secondary sources (such as journal articles, reports, books, thesis dissertation, web pages) have been exploited by authors. And then, a semi-structured interview has been administered to some Cameroonian and Chinese students, teachers and even to some college admission officers. Finally, in addition to document analysis and interview this paper is also based on observation and personal experiences of researchers as former students of Cameroonian universities.

The choice of our case study universities is due to the fact that the University of Yaoundé I (UY1) is the biggest and the oldest university in Cameroon. It can be then a suitable case study. Another reason is that it is well-known by the researchers who have observed different practices of that system. Zhejiang Normal University (ZJNU) is the current university of researchers, thus easing accessibility to interview students and educational stakeholders. Besides the above reasons which could make the study easier, another very important reason pushing the researchers to choose these two institutions is the cooperation existing between both institutions since many decades. The University of Yaoundé I (one of the 20 African higher education institutions) and Zhejiang Normal University (one of the 20 Chinese higher education institutions), which cooperate since the establishment of a new type of one-to-one inter-institutional cooperation model between African and Chinese higher education institutions in November 2009 held in Sharm el-Sheikh in Egypt (Gonondo, 2017), have kept mutual and fruitful exchanges from then till present.

3. Presentation and Discussion of Findings

Apart from what was mentioned so far on admission system in Cameroon and China, we present and discuss in details some practices of these two systems in this part.

3.1. Administrative structure

In Cameroon, the students' admission system to the university is under the control of two ministries. The admission exam which is the secondary leaving examination, as mentioned earlier, is managed by OBC which is an institution controlled by the ministry of secondary education. This institution is in charge of all tasks concerning the exam; from the exams organization to the establishment of the certificates. To facilitate the transfer of dossiers and an effective communication with each school across the country, OBC works in relation with regional delegations of secondary education. For instance, after the establishment of the certificates, it sends them according to the location of each school to their respective regional delegations. Once the results are published and certificates are established, students' enrollment is managed by each university which is under the control of the ministry of higher education.

As in Cameroon, Chinese college admission system (gaokao) is under the administration of the ministry of education. The National Committee in charge of the students' enrollment to the college is represented in the provincial admission bureau, city/prefecture admission office and county admission office; all of them are managing the gaokao system in China. "All those different levels of bureaus and offices have the right to determine the time of the test, the subjects to be included, the method of the test, and the enrollment procedure after the test" (Zhu, 2014). Due to the unified college admission system and especially to its centralized regime, the Chinese government (the ministry of education) controls each level and step of enrollment in all admission offices.

From their centralized education systems, the college admission system in China and Cameroon are strongly influenced by the central government (ministries of education). They have almost the same way of administration system which is focused on centralization.

3.2. Exam Content

The content of exam in Cameroon varies from one stream or field to another. Regarding the admission to the faculties which is our focus in this study, almost all subjects studied in high school (especially during the last year) constitute the content of the secondary leaving examination (baccalauréat). Taking the example of general secondary school, there are many streams: stream A which emphasizes more on literature and arts; stream C which emphasizes more on Mathematics, Physics; and stream D which emphasizes more on Biology. For each of the above streams, there are about nine (9) subjects. The stream A' students are assessed in Literature or general knowledge, French, English, foreign language (German or Spanish or Arab or Italian or Chinese), Geography or History, Citizenship education, Philosophy, Mathematics, and Sports (physical activities). In the stream C and D, students are assessed in Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, French or Philosophy, English, Geography or History, Citizenship education, Sports. It appears that the subjects are almost the same for all streams; but the difference is that the content and the credits allowed to these subjects are not the same from one stream to another. For example the stream A has more credit in Languages than others subjects; the stream C has more credit in Mathematics and Physics than others and the stream D has the highest credit in Biology. The physical or sportive activities take place usually before the written exams. It is compulsory and the same for all students regardless of their stream or field; except disabled students.

Regarding the content of the exam in China, the "3+3" system has replaced the former "3+6" system. The first "3" in both systems stands for the three fundamental subjects which are Chinese language, Mathematics (Mathematics for Humanities and Mathematics for science and Technology), and foreign language (English for most candidates) (Gaokao, 2017a). The second "3" in "3+3" system refers to Physics, Chemistry and Biology for students who choose to learn Sciences; and Technology or Political Science, History and Geography for those who choose to learn Humanities whereas the "6" here represents a combination of the six subjects (Zhu, 2014). The "3+3" system initiated in few places like Zhejiang province and Shanghai city, is now being extended to all over the country. Nowadays 16 provinces and cities (in addition to the Zhejiang province and Shanghai city which are the pilot of the reform, there are Beijing, Hebei, Jiangsu, Jiangxi, Shandong, Guangdong, Hainan, Gansu, Qinghai, Guangxi, Ningxia, Hunan, Guizhou and Tibet.) have announced the reform of the college Entrance Examination plan and the "3+3" College Entrance Examination mode, together with the combination of arts and sciences specialties (Dai, 2017). In the "3+3" College Entrance Examination system, except the first "3" which represents the three core subjects listed above, students have chance to choose three others subjects among seven courses (Physics, Chemistry, History, Politics, Geography, Biology, Technology). Chinese language, Mathematics, foreign languages, the three core subjects, are taken in June 7th and 8th; while the 3 among 7 other selective subjects can be taken in April, October of each year. For instance, let us suppose that Mr. Xu started the second year high school in September 2017, and apart from the 3 fundamental subjects (Chinese language, Mathematics, and foreign language) which are compulsory for him, he chooses Politics, Biology and Technology as optional subjects. If he feels well prepared, he can take part into the exam of Politics, Biology and Technology in April of the same school year. If he is not satisfied by his results after the publication and thinks that he can do better, he can still take these same exams in October or April of the last year of high school. Foreign language can be taken in June or October. One could also notice that sometimes, some high schools choose one of the two periods in a year to organize and help students preparing their exams.

With such system, during the first year in high school, students learn all the subjects. And then choose their field of interest (Humanities or Science and Technology). The second and third year, every student will learn subjects according to their chosen specialty, either Humanities or Science and Technology. Even though with this new system students still have the pressure of preparing the exam, the pressure of revising lessons, one may say that it also presents many advantages. One of them is that it avoids the "lifetime exam" (一考定终身) and gives to the students the opportunity of taking the same exam twice. It is no longer like in the past where, maybe because of the traffic jam or any other reasons, students could lose the chance to get into the university. Another advantage is that it gives the right to the students to choose the subjects they want to take during the exam. Their choices could be directly related to their field of interest, competence or what they plan to do in the future. One of the limits of this system is the disability of learning more subjects as students could neglect the non-chosen subjects. For instance, students who perform well in Science and Technology have very limited knowledge in subjects such as Literature or Language; students who perform very well in Humanities, on the other hand, do not always excel in subjects like Biology or Physics.

The analysis of the content of exam shows that Cameroonian and Chinese exam contents of college or university admission systems are quite different. Contrary to Cameroonian system which has several compulsory subjects (about 9) in students assessment to be admitted into higher education, Chinese system includes few subjects and gives more opportunities to students to select subjects. Though the Chinese exam is very competitive, there is flexibility in terms of subjects. The existence of selective subjects and the new reform giving opportunity to students to take the exam twice in some subjects so as to enable them to choose the best score, are good methods to be appreciated; whereas in Cameroon, subjects are not only compulsory but some are

not known by the students till a couple of days before the exam or till the exam day. For example, students do not know in advance whether their exam will be in History or Geography. Another inappreciable practice is about French literature or Philosophy which stays hidden to the streams D and C students who discover it only on the exam day. That means students struggle to prepare the two subjects but only one will come out for examination. Another criticism concerning the content of examination in Cameroon is about the large amount of foreign languages. While nowadays scholars promote STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) education which is crucial for the economic growth, it seems not to be understood and implemented by everyone.

3.3. Exam period

Cameroonian students get to know the exact date of the exam (baccalauréat) some months only before the exam. For example, as far as the 2017 examination session was concerned, the exact date of exam was published by the Ministry of Secondary Education on December 2016 with the examination taking place at the end of May 2017, just about 6 months before examination (Minesec, 2017; Ngoumou, 2017). There isn't a fixed day for the examination. As mentioned, it takes place generally between end May and early June and lasts 4 to 5 days depending upon the stream.

In China, the time of gaokao is planned long before the examination period. Students know that every year in June from 7th to 9th they will take part in the exam and even know the exact time of each subject. As we mentioned above, Chinese language, Mathematics, foreign languages, these three compulsory subjects are taken on June 7th and 8th, while the 3 among 7 selective others subjects can be taken in April, October of each year. Moreover, students also have two opportunities to take the foreign language exam, in June or October. We have to mention that the exams which are taken in April and October are adjusted for January and June in Zhejiang province. This new reform will start to be effective from 2019 (南智考试人, 2017).

Thus, except Chinese language and Mathematics, there are two exam opportunities per subject for students. The 7th June in the morning, between 9:00 am to 11:30 am, they have Chinese language and the same day in the afternoon, from 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm, they have Mathematics. The following day in the morning, 9:00 am to 11:30 am, they have optional subjects (this is the case of the regions where the gaokao reforms are not yet implemented, but in the case of Zhejiang province, there isn't any exam at that time) and in the afternoon, from 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm, they will take foreign language exam (Sina, 2017).

The period of exam in China and Cameroon is almost the same. The Cameroonian secondary leaving examination (baccalauréat) can be held for approximately one week ahead of the Chinese gaokao (which takes place from June 7th to 9th). Another thing to notice here is that in Cameroon, there is a clear separation between the exam and the enrollment period. The examination period is organized by the OBC at the end of school year, whereas the enrollment period is managed by the universities themselves independently of the OBC, and it is undertaken some weeks before the opening of academic year. However, in China there is no separation between examination and students enrollment. The enrollment practice is the continuation of the examination process.

3.4. Assessment

The students' admission to higher education both in Cameroon and China is through a national exam. Students are mainly assessed on the basis of achievement. As we noted earlier, in the exam content part, Cameroonian students are comprehensively evaluated in about nine subjects, in which Physical Education is included. Each stream has a certain number of core subjects or first group subjects which are more credited than other subjects of second group. Apart from the credits system allowing the multiplication and calculation of scores, each subject noted on 20 points and the final score is also noted on 20. And as the admission exam system in Cameroon is not a competitive exam but a secondary leaving examination, every student who gains a final score of at least 10 out of 20 can be definitely declared admitted and could get to the academic public universities.

In addition to what has been mentioned in the part of the gaokao exam content, we note that the core subjects which are Chinese language, Mathematics and foreign language (mostly English) have 150 points each, and the three optional subjects selected among six (6) or seven (7) subjects which are Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Political Science, History, Geography and also Technology in some provinces are noted on 100 points each. We notice then that students are competing in gaokao on a final score of 750 points. Here we are dealing with a competitive examination where candidates must try their best to have access to their first-choice universities and programs otherwise they could be sent to their second choice, third choice or even couldn't be admitted.

Both Cameroonian and Chinese students' assessment standards focus only on the test scores gained from baccalauréat or gaokao exam. Apart of the score obtained in Physical Education which acts as another aspect of assessment in baccalauréat from Cameroon, there are no other criteria that are considered when it comes to students' assessment in the both countries. The assessment should take into account the student's achievement during all their high school period because making a summary of three years of high school achievement within

a few days of exam seems to be unfair. Baccalauréat or gaokao score aren't enough to assess the overall performance of the student. Comprehensive assessment considering other aspects such as candidate's potentialities should also be taken into account in admission assessment because today practical knowledge is much more valued than in the past.

3.5. Results release

In Cameroon, the results are generally released between mid-July and the end of that month through the National Radio and then posted later on the billboard of each establishment. There is no fixed date of results publication, it depends upon many criteria. In China, the gaokao results are first published online (Gaokao, 2017c) and thus every student can check his or her results. Once they have knowledge of their scores, candidates can fill the form and send it to the institutions and majors of their wishes. The process of admission to higher education institutions in China, particularly in Zhejiang province, is usually subdivided into three phases (or periods of time). They correspond respectively to 20%, 60% and 90% of the total number of candidates who took part to the exam (Gaokao, 2017b; ZJKS, 2017).

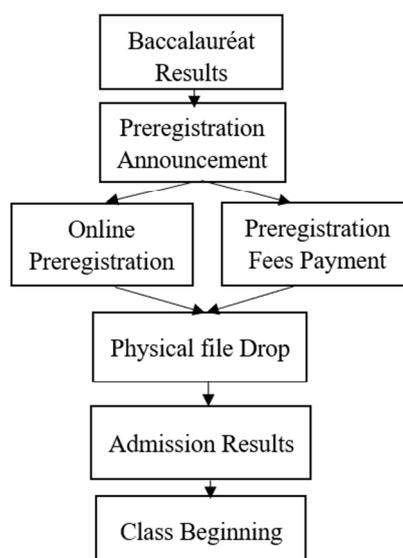
If a student meets the admission criteria and can be enrolled in several majors, he will be admitted to his or her first chosen major. For example, Mr. Xu filled as his chosen majors at ZJNU A, B, C and D. If he is not admitted into major A, but he has met the majors B/C/D admission requirements, then Mr. Xu will be admitted to major B, because major B has priority over the two others. One thing we should know clearly is that the total marks to be admitted into this or that major are not harmonized (the marks are not the same). For example during the 2017 second period of admission works in ZJNU, to be admitted into "Primary Education" major, the minimum required total score was 575/750 points, while in "Advertising" major the minimum required total score was 569/750 points (ZJNU, 2017a). In addition to the total score, there are other specific requirements to fulfill before being admitted into a particular major. For example in ZJNU, to be admitted into some majors there is a minimum required score in "Foreign language" exam as can be noticed in "Foreign language and literature" major where the candidate is required to have at least 115/150 points, or into "International Chinese Education" major where the minimum required score is 110/150 points. While in "Arts" and "Sports", the candidate just need at least 60/150 points (ZJNU, 2017b). After all the processes of admission, the higher education institutions send the admission letters to the schools or directly to the student's family address. Taking the case of Zhejiang Normal University, the 2017 entrance exam first batch results were released in July, the second phase in August. We can clearly note that in Cameroon the results are released once and then students wait for the beginning of school year to apply into higher education institutions. But in China, the results are released in different batches and phases. Some students have their results arriving many days in advance while others still have to wait. Also, a student can be sent to this or that major just because he or she hasn't fulfilled the requirements for the major of his choice.

3.6. Enrollment policy

The students' recruitment policy at any university in Cameroon is managed independently by each institution. Generally, institutions publish the period, required documents, procedures and cost of the recruitment in their own websites. The applicants for the first year of university or college should be the holders of baccalauréat certificate issued by the baccalauréat board of Cameroon or equivalent certificates duly approved by the same organism (UY1, 2016). Each candidate needs to provide and submit a file comprising of all required documents to the institution he or she wants to apply. Some years ago, applicants had to go to the higher education institution of their intent and follow all the procedures on spot. Nowadays, along with the development of ICT in the Cameroonian higher education institutions, especially in the University of Yaoundé I, one moves from traditional application model (where students needed to be on spot during their recruitment process by coming to the university) to online application. The required documents in University of Yaoundé I are as follows:

- ✓ A certified copy of baccalauréat/GCE A-Level or Result Slip;
- ✓ A certified copy of baccalauréat Transcripts;
- ✓ A certified copy of Probatoire/GCE O-Level or Result Slip;
- ✓ A certified copy of birth certificate;
- ✓ The online preregistration form (UY1, 2016).

After having all the required documents, applicants need to proceed according to the following procedure for his or her enrollment.



Students' enrollment process in Cameroon (University of Yaoundé I) established on the basis of preregistration process on the web site of UY1

After the publication of baccalauréat results, the university announces the period of preregistration, usually in August. During that time, all the new students must register online by filling in all the required information such as the applicant name, the faculty, the major etc. After filling the form online, student must print the form on which there is a specific date for the submission of the physical file or dossier in the faculty they are applying to. Meanwhile, the student chooses one of the institution's affiliated banks to pay the preregistration fee which is 10,000XAF (about 17.9 USD). After submitting the physical file including all documents indicated above, the student needs to wait for the admission results that will be posted at the university some days or weeks after the submission of dossier (generally, all applicants are admitted). Once the results are released, the students just wait for the beginning of classes. The registration fee which is 50,000XAF (about 89.5 USD) is to be paid after the preregistration - it could be payed once or in two periods.

The standard of college admission system in China is the test scores based on national college entrance examination. Since its establishment in 1952 and the restoration of the gaokao in 1977, the Chinese government has implemented preferential policies. "Preferential policies" refer to the policies which favor the minority groups or disadvantaged areas. Preferential policies authorize the increase or decrease of exam scores and enrollment cutoff points for Minorities (Weiwei, Lang, 2011). The introduction of preferential policies aims to reduce inequality in admission. However, it long sparked hot debates about its fairness. Some appreciate it because they think it is an expression of minorities' equality but others consider it unfair. Another practice of admission policies beside preferential policies which also constitutes a polemic, is the regional quotas in which institutions give more places to students from the province in which they are located.

The practice of choosing universities by the students is not reassuring. A student is likely to miss the opportunity to be admitted into a college if he or she does not list it in his or her preferential choices or does not rank it as his or her first choice (Zhang, 2009). That could be the reason why nowadays many colleges have started to implement the independent recruitment policy. The independent recruitment policy here refers to the action of allowing higher education institutions to recruit students whose learning styles match with their educational philosophy, criteria and goals (MoE, 2012; Zhu, 2014). Usually, this recruitment is organized under the form of interviews after the written exam. As Ruike noted, students who didn't perform very well during the independent recruitment system which is organized 5 to 6 months ahead of gaokao, still have the opportunity to get into college through gaokao. That is because "only a very small portion of students have such opportunities". The quota is very small when compared with the gaokao. The number of students sitting in these independent exams in 2010 for example was about 1% compared to that of the national exams Wang (2011) quoted from (Zhu, 2014). The advantage of this system is that students have opportunities to show and express themselves in different aspects and colleges have also the chance to select talent students they want.

Based on all what is said so far on Cameroonian and Chinese admission systems, the students' recruitment policies in Cameroon or in China present complex and various practices. Compared to the Chinese preferential policies, Cameroon has also an equivalence of such policies to admit student to the higher education. It is called regional equilibrium or regional quotas; and it is stipulated by the Decree N° 75/496 of 3 July 1975, and modified and completed by that of N° 82/407 of 7 September 1982 (Yodou, 2011). However, this policy is not applied in admission to the faculties (academic institutions). It is only taken into consideration in admission to

the Grandes Ecoles where, in most of these institutions, students are directly integrated in the public services after the training. Unlike Chinese preferential policies which authorize the enrollment cutoff points for Minorities (Weiwei, Lang, 2011) to have access to higher education, in Cameroon there is no increase or decrease of scores. What is rather taken into account is the population of each region. The bigger the population is, the more students are admitted. As regions (provinces) are likely to be divided according to ethnic groups, the aim of this policy is to represent all groups amidst the public services. In Cameroon, there isn't anything like an increase in number of places for students from the province which the institution is located. The regional equilibrium in Cameroon is almost the same to the regional quotas in students' admission to higher education in China, where under current rules institutions set a fixed admission quota for each province, but the difference is that in Cameroon the number is related to the population size of each region.

4. Suggestions

- **Give more opportunities:** In some Chinese provinces like Zhejiang province, except some fundamentals subjects like Chinese language and Mathematics, students have two opportunities to take the same exam. Thus, Cameroon government can also think about giving more opportunities to students for the exam.
- **Automatic correction of exam:** Set an automatic mechanism of exam correction (for the majority of the subjects). This will reduce the time of waiting for exam results, avoid subjectivity and temper of teachers during the correction and marking process, avoid also corruptions etc. during the manual corrections. This mechanism will also help the government to save a huge amount of money which is allocated for the correction of exams papers every year.
- **Issue regarding some subjects:** Set a mechanism which allows students to know in advance subjects in which they will be evaluated. For example, Cameroonian students don't know whether they will have an exam in geography or history, and in philosophy or literature. The former is revealed to the students two weeks before the examination while the latter is discovered the day of the examination. And even the date of the exam, Cameroonian government could think about implementing a fix date of the exam. In China, everyone knows that every year on June the 7th, 8th and 9th, students have to take their gaokao. This system could also be set in Cameroon because it can help exam officers, teachers and students to make their plans in advance thus, neither the subjects in which students are going to be evaluated nor the date of the exam shall be a surprise.
- **Insertion of STEM Education:** An analysis of the exam content in students' admission to higher education especially to the faculties in Cameroon shows that students have a lot of subjects but there is no focus on the subjects critically important for economic growth such as STEM. STEM education initiative was to provide all students with critical thinking skills that would make them creative, turning them into problem solvers and ultimately making them become more marketable in the workforce (White, 2014). To demonstrate this importance of STEM education on students, a scholar argues that "from a purely economic standpoint, students would benefit from better STEM education because the fields are expanding more quickly than any other besides the health care industry". By this, we would like to appeal to educational stakeholders' attention, especially in Cameroon where STEM education is not yet developed to think about how to introduce STEM in secondary curriculum in general and particularly in students' admission exam to higher education. For instance in stream A in Cameroon, there is only Mathematics which belongs to the STEM subjects in the baccalauréat exam content. All others like Science, Technology and Engineering are absent. In China on the contrary, even if most of the STEM subjects are optional, there are at least Mathematics, Sciences, and technology in some provinces like Zhejiang. Thus, we suggest the introduction of STEM in secondary curriculum and subsequently in students' assessment to higher education.

5. Conclusion

This comparative study of college admission system between Cameroon and China shows that there are differences and similarities. In both systems, there is a national admission exam which is different from other examination as in other countries. It assesses and selects student to the higher education. However, compared to the Cameroonian admission exam which is a secondary leaving examination and non-competitive, Chinese exam is an entrance and competitive examination. Moreover, in Cameroon, there is no direct relation between the exam scores and the quality of higher institution the student is admitted to. Whereas in China, the test scores are crucial to determine the kind (quality) of higher institution the student will enter into. Some scholars think that the gaokao score can even determine the future of the student because an admission to the top universities in China is likely to enable the student gain a good job in the future. Talking about admission exam, the content of exams in China is less numerous and more flexible than that of Cameroon. There are generally six (6) subjects in which 3 are compulsory and 3 others are selective whereas in Cameroon there are about nine (9) subjects in which only one subject is optional. Regarding the recruitment or enrollment, Cameroon presents a simple system of enrollment. Once holding the baccalauréat (secondary leaving examination), the student herself /himself

applies to any public university (faculty) he or she wants to get into. In China on the other hand, the admission to an institution depends upon many factors such as the student performance in gaokao, the choice made by the student and the student's province of origin. The college admission system between Cameroon and China presents a lot of differences. Therefore, these differences should constitute experiences which could help to learn or avoid some systems and methods already tried by others. It should constitute also an experience to share; especially between two countries like Cameroon and China which are in partnership since long time ago.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to Mrs. Djiraro Mangué Célestine Laure, Mrs. Wang Lingling, Mr. Liu Mengzhao, Mr. Ndomo Stanley and Mr. Ngabonzima François Xavier who closely assisted us in this research. We are most grateful about their remarks and suggestions.

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