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**JOURNAL of  
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# Voluntary IFRS Adoption by Cameroonian World-Class Entities

Georges Kriyoss Mfouapon\*  
William Junior Nhiomog†  
Félix Zogning‡

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## Abstract

The study of voluntary IFRS adoption is central to many theoretical and empirical works on the harmonization of international accounting practices. Unfortunately, despite the rise of world-class entities in developing economies, this crucial issue remains relatively unexplored in these regions. To address this gap, an exploratory qualitative study was conducted on three private entities in Cameroon to understand and analyze the factors driving some large Cameroonian entities to voluntarily adopt IFRS standards. The study aims to shed light on why these entities align with IFRS in producing and sharing financial and accounting information with stakeholders. A temporal analysis of the results suggests that the main motivations behind voluntary adoption are grounded in economic calculations based on anticipated benefits and strategic efforts to establish legitimacy and international presence. This pursuit of legitimacy and strategic alignment with international norms appears crucial for these entities as they seek to integrate more fully into the global market. By examining these motivations, the study highlights the importance of both economic foresight and international acceptance for firms in developing economies, offering insights into why certain firms proactively choose to align with IFRS, thus contributing to a broader understanding of accounting standard adoption in emerging markets.

**Keywords:** OHADA, IFRS, accounting standards, internationalisation, diffuse shareholding, financing.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

In the field of financial accounting, the last two decades have been marked by the harmonisation of international accounting practices. This harmonisation has grown into a matter of debate under trade globalisation, the evolving needs of capital markets and financial investors, the need for financial analysis of firms competing for the control of new financial resources, and the comparison of entities that may or may not be in direct competition. This, given the use of accounting to secure the investments of shareholders and investors while reducing the financial risks.

In 2002, the European union began forcing groups listed in any of its financial markets to use international accounting standards (IAS) and the IFRS when producing consolidated accounts throughout the euro zone. This decisive measure has been under enforcement since January 1, 2005 (Demaria, 2008) and demonstrates the level of interest placed in harmonised accounting practices at the international level for both national economies and accounting professionals alike, given the evolution of the business climate

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\* Associate professor. University of Ngaoundéré, Cameroon. E-mail: [gekriyossmfouapon@yahoo.fr](mailto:gekriyossmfouapon@yahoo.fr).

† University of Ngaoundéré, Cameroon. E-mail: [Nhiomogwilliam@yahoo.com](mailto:Nhiomogwilliam@yahoo.com).

‡ University of Sherbrooke, 2500 Bd de l'Université, Sherbrooke, QC J1K 2R1, Canada. E-mail: [felix.zogning@usherbrooke.ca](mailto:felix.zogning@usherbrooke.ca).

(Feudjo, 2010). Moreover, the need to restore confidence in individual investors and other lenders has led to the adoption of texts that seek to improve financial security following the financial scandals of the past three decades (Enron, Vivendi Universal, Parmalat, Worldcom, etc.), as well as the international subprime mortgage crisis of 2008. The widespread adoption of these texts by the French-speaking and Anglo-Saxon world acted as a precursor to the current urgency with which accounting standards are converging at the global level (Pigé, 2015). In an African context, delays in homogenising accounting language and practices have led the organization for the harmonization of business law in Africa (OHADA) to legislate a new accounting framework in February of 2017 with the stated goal of gradually converging regional accounting practices toward international IAS/IFRS standards (Souleymanou, 2017).

This revision comes at a time when stock-listed companies in OHADA member countries have reached a point where they must produce financial statements in accordance with IFRS standards, which primarily target financial markets. The merger between the Douala stock exchange and the Bourse de Valeurs Mobilières d'Afrique Centrale in Libreville, Gabon, along with the vitality of other sub-regional financial markets, suggests that the interest in reporting standards will only increase in the short term, thus increasing the need for harmonised accounting practices. While Affès and Callimaci (2007) and Zéghal and Sellami (2010) have both addressed the problems involved in voluntary IFRS compliance in a European context, and despite the apparent fact that accounting harmonisation is nothing new in French-speaking Africa (Bampoky, 2019), the motives behind voluntary IFRS adoption by certain Cameroonian companies should nonetheless be clarified when such entities are also required to comply with the OHADA system. In other words, this study will attempt to identify and understand the factors that push certain large entities in Cameroon to voluntarily adopt the IFRS in a Cameroonian socio-economic context that imposes few constraints. Beyond this, the research also intends to create a profile of Cameroonian entities that have adopted these standards.

To achieve these objectives, the first section will present theoretical and empirical arguments that may explain early and voluntary IFRS adoption. The second section will present the empirical research protocol that was used to construct our sample and to collect and process the data. The third section will provide a presentation and discussion framework for the results obtained. Finally, a conclusion will discuss the limitations and possible avenues for future research.

## **II. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. Early IFRS Adoption: Theory and Practice**

At a fundamental level, the adoption of international accounting and financial reporting standards involves the harmonisation of accounting practices. According to Degos (1999), this harmonisation involves the convergence of applicable accounting standards and practices in several different countries and economic contexts. It also unifies various accounting practices from different countries and economic contexts to establish an accounting language common to all states (Mathérat, 2003). Here, harmonisation refers to changes in accounting practices that involve, in particular, a transition from so-called national or sub-regional accounting standards to international standards (Avelé & Degos, 2014). Thus, the early or voluntary adoption of these standards can be understood from the perspective of positive accounting and signalling theory, but it can also be understood through the empirical results obtained from socio-economic contexts beyond those found in Africa.

### **2.1.1. Early IFRS adoption: a theoretical interpretation**

The voluntary adoption of international accounting norms is currently the subject of a lively but unresolved theoretical debate between proponents of aggressive accounting strategies and those who promote signalling strategies. In line with Russo (2011), however, this phenomenon seems to emerge from changes in accounting standards and a desire to send important signals to international investors through the production of quality accounting and financial information.

From a theoretical standpoint, positive accounting theory helps clarify the preferences and choices made by business managers when producing summary financial statements. Here, Watts and Zimmerman (1986) argue that the theory aims to predict and explain why managers and accountants opt for one particular accounting method over so many others. Following this theoretical approach, Pigé (2015) believes that the manager's choice or adoption of international standards has more to do with a desire to comply with the applicable regulations. This theory does not appear to be well founded in an economic context like that of the OHADA, where the IAS/IFRS only applies to stock-listed companies while so few are listed in the local, regional or international financial markets. In addition to IFRS-compliant financial statements, which are only required for the financial markets, OHADA member companies must still produce financial statements in line with the regional reference frameworks that are recognised by their own tax authorities. Early and voluntary adoption of IAS/IFRS practices can be included in strategies to improve their label, strengthen their audience and minimise costs when raising capital in the financial markets or from financial institutions.

To expand on this idea, and in accordance with the predictions of signalling theory (Spence, 1973), early and voluntary IAS/IFRS adoption may be based on the willingness of company managers to reduce information asymmetry between stakeholders in the contractual node (Meek et al., 1995) while generating trust by reporting directly comparable accounting and financial information codified in a common and comprehensible language. From the standpoint of those who use the standardised information, and in line with theories regarding the diversification of financial assets (Markowitz, 1952) and business portfolios (Porter, 1987), the early and voluntary adoption of these standards can help users analyse the risks and returns involved in each financial asset while conducting the three main diversification tests required by potential corporate investors when guiding and allocating investment resources.

While all three theoretical approaches provide information on what motivates early and voluntary IFRS adoption, knowledge obtained from our various avenues of investigation can strengthen this understanding.

### **2.1.2. Voluntary IFRS adoption: an empirical analysis**

The urgency with which sub-Saharan African countries have adopted the IAS/IFRS has already been addressed by Feudjo (2010). But according to Ngantchou (2011), the need for sociocultural reform over the short and medium term, along with commitments by local companies to absorb the costs of change (Degos & Souleymanou, 2018; Bampoky, 2019) provide the necessary conditions. Despite such conditions existing in Africa over the past ten years, and despite recent attempts to understand such changes in local accounting practices, our survey of the literature reveals that no study currently exists regarding the issue of early and voluntary IAS/IFRS adoption in Africa.

Studies by Dumontier and Raffounier (1998) on the voluntary adoption of international standards by Swiss companies revealed that foreign sales, along with a desire for a foreign market listing, strongly explain the propensity of companies to voluntarily adopt international accounting standards. A similar study by Leuz and Verrecchia (2000)

in a German context expanded the motives behind early and voluntary IAS/IFRS adoption to include company size among factors like foreign sales and listings on international financial markets. Bertrand et al. (2021) find that in Europe, the adoption of IFRS leads to more private debt issuance for non-listed companies.

Using a sample of Austrian and German firms, Affès and Callimaci (2007) found that companies with a high propensity toward early adoption tend to be large, have a diffuse financial structure, conduct foreign operations and undergo auditing by international firms. These results are similar to those obtained by Zéghal and Sellami (2010) using data collected from a sample of French groups. Indeed, after studying the determinants of their early IAS/IFRS adoption before the implementation of European Regulation 1606/2002/EC on January 1, 2005, which required stock-listed companies to present their consolidated accounts according to the IAS/IFRS, researchers uncovered that the international nature of auditing firms, along with the size of the groups involved, significantly explained the changes that had taken place.

This dual theoretical/empirical interpretation of the factors behind adoption shows that, overall, companies with international standing listed on foreign financial markets with significant international revenues are more likely to adopt these standards early and voluntarily. All of this appears to support the foundations of positive accounting theory and signalling theory. Thus, the absence of studies conducted from the perspective of financial markets, savings institutions and other investors does not support the theory of financial assets and business portfolio diversification at this level of inquiry. In light of a Cameroonian economic context where the financial market is still under construction, where the financial behaviour of managers is often difficult to understand and where OHADA compliance remains mandatory in the production and reporting of accounting information, one wonders what could lead to voluntarily IFRS adoption when presenting summary financial statements.

### **III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1. Data Collection**

The collection of data from the managers of these companies that have adopted IFRS was done through a semi-directed interview. We used three successive stages to collect the data necessary for the empirical treatment of the issues considered in this research. The first stage used data from Cameroon's national institute of statistics and the groupement inter-patronal du Cameroun (GICAM)<sup>1</sup> to draw up a sample of companies with minimum annual revenues of one billion CFA francs (approximately two million US dollars), at least 25% of which stem from international sales. Eighty-nine (89) companies were selected at this stage. For the second stage, we contacted the selected companies by email between March 9 and March 21, 2020. The goal was to identify whether or not these entities voluntarily used the IFRS when presenting their annual or semi-annual financial statements to business partners. At the end of the second stage, 23 companies were eliminated from our initial sample; these were subsidiaries of foreign multinationals who consolidate their accounts according to international standards at their head offices. Of the remaining 66 firms, only 10 Cameroonian entities declared having used IFRS standards voluntarily over the past three years when transcribing their financial statements, which are still produced according to OHADA standards. In the third and final stage, we conducted a field visit to collect data between August 19 and September 30, 2020. Here, an interview guide structured around four themes (company

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<sup>1</sup> GICAM is the main organization of business leaders in Cameroon.

and respondent profile, knowledge of international accounting standards, opportunities and reasons behind voluntary IFRS adoption) provided the information we needed to address the research problem.

### 3.2. Company Profiles

The COVID-19 health crisis made data collection difficult in the field due to public health guidelines, despite our efforts to obtain interviews by telephone, Zoom or Microsoft Teams. Nonetheless, we successfully conducted in-person interviews with executives from three companies in strict compliance with health restrictions. While Eisenhardt (1989) demonstrated that two or three cases often make generalisations difficult, Yin (1994) showed this number to be sufficient for exploratory studies conducted with a discovery-based approach. Given this recommendation, the sample's structure (Table 1) appears satisfactory, allowing us to use the data when addressing the issue.

**Table 1**  
**Cases Profiles**

Historical Activity Sector	Cases Targeted	Cases Studied	% of Cases Studied	Head Office	Year of Creation	Staff	Year of Voluntary IAS/IFRS Adoption	Interview Dates	Interview Duration
Commercial	03	01	10%	Douala	1999	1147	2015	04/09 /2020	54 min.
Industrial	03	01	10%	Yaoundé	2016	562	2016	15/09 /2020	68 min.
Service	04	01	10%	Yaoundé	1987	689	2013	24/08 /2020	47 min.
<b>Total</b>	10	03	30%						

The first case involves a Cameroonian company active in the commercial sector through the distribution, importing and exporting of petroleum products. It was created in 1999 by national and international investors. Its main markets are Chad, the central African republic, equatorial Guinea and Cameroon. The group's chief accountant and tax officer acted as respondent. The second case, active since 2016, involves a company that has built its core business in the industrial sector, and more specifically in the construction, operation and monitoring of hydroelectric dams and solar power plants. It has a mixed and international shareholding structure. According to the administrative and financial director we interviewed, the company focuses its market entirely on the Cameroonian territory and has been voluntarily adhering to the IFRS since its creation. The third and final case is a banking company created by a Cameroonian national in 1987; its shareholding structure is currently controlled by the promoter while a good portion of its capital belongs to foreign investors. The firm owns subsidiaries in Chad, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Côte d'Ivoire, Zambia, China, France and Belgium, among others. According to the head of accounting services, the company adopted the IFRS when it expanded operations beyond the OHADA zone in 2013. None of the firms studied is listed on the African financial markets, or any other market, nor are they particularly diversified in their business models. Diversification appears to be focused primarily on territory and ownership.

### 3.3. Data Analysis

Qualitative exploratory studies currently offer a wide range of analysis techniques regarding the opinions and statements obtained from group interviews, along with structured, unstructured and semi-structured interviews. While Bonnet et al. (2017) agree

that summarisation, thematic analysis and content analysis are the primary approaches, Yin (2003) argues that content analysis by itself represents the most comprehensive, rich and widely used technique in social science research. The approach offers rigour and creativity when conducting analyses built on research objectives. Here, the technique is used to analyse the data collected via Sphinx Q software.

#### IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The first objective of our research was to characterise Cameroonian companies that have adopted the IFRS. Table 2 shows that the companies that finally participated in the study consisted of one large company with no foreign subsidiaries and two companies that we described as multinationals in the sense that they are represented in several countries on the African continent and in European countries. With the exception of the first company, whose shares are held entirely by national investors, the shareholding structure of the other two companies includes a variety of foreign investors alongside nationals. The territorial diversification of the markets of these economic entities' accounts for at least a quarter of the annual turnover as can be seen in the table below.

**Table 2**

**Characteristics of Companies that Have Adopted the IFRS**

	<b>Business Market</b>	<b>Proportion of Turnover from International Business</b>	<b>Origin of Investors</b>	<b>Shareholding</b>	<b>Audit Firm</b>	<b>Company Size</b>
<b>Case 1</b>	CEMAC sub-region	At least 25% carried out outside Cameroonian territory	- Cameroonian - Switzerland	- Cameroonian State non-banking private companies - Banks and insurance companies	International	Very large company with offices abroad
<b>Case 2</b>	- Cameroonian - Foreigner	At least 25% carried out outside Cameroonian territory	- Cameroonian - Chinese	- Institutional investors - State and other legal persons - Individuals	- International holder - National substitute	Very large company without subsidiaries
<b>Case 3</b>	- Black Africa - France - Belgium - China	At least 25% carried out outside Cameroonian territory	- Cameroonian - Central African Republic - French	- Controlled by the promoter of Cameroonian nationality - Foreign	International	Very large company with offices abroad

Finally, the analyses of the interviews, the codifications carried out and the inter-case comparisons made show that endogenous, exogenous and strategic factors (Figure 1) help to understand why the cases studied have adopted the IFRS for the presentation and publication of their summary financial statements even though they are not yet listed on a stock exchange.

Insert Figure 1 here.

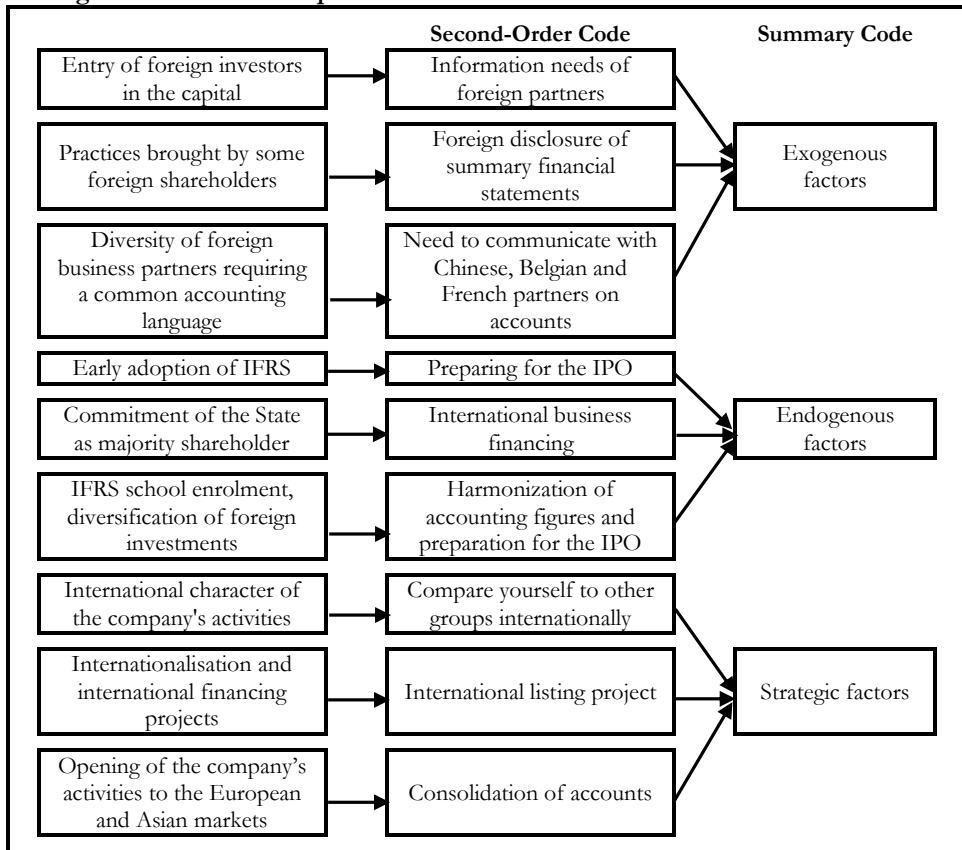
##### 4.1. Exogenous Factors in the Adoption of IFRS

Exogenous factors are those that are external to the companies studied and which constitute a sort of constraint imposed by international business partners. They consist of the need for information and communication of accounting figures to international partners. These different needs have become urgent with the opening of the capital to foreign investors. In addition, the international accounting practices brought by some foreign shareholders and the diversity of their accounting culture are factors that would

have pushed companies to adopt IFRS to meet their needs. From the different discourses of the informants, it appears that:

“...there is the entry of the international investor “W” in the capital of our company in 2015 that triggered the adoption of IFRS at our company. Indeed, when it entered the capital, it issued in its business charter four conditions that the company should meet. The first and most urgent expectation was that the financial statements would be transcribed to IFRS after three semesters. The objective of this investor was to inform its shareholders and to standardise the accounting figures in the Swiss group accounts”. Also, “... It was a real vision brought by some foreign shareholders which did not exempt us from the obligation to respect the OHADA standards in terms of production and communication of our accounting and financial information. From then on, our financial statements are produced in OHADA format for domestic users and in IFRS format for foreign shareholders”. Finally, “...I noticed that the accounting and financial information produced by the company was immediately transcribed by an international accounting firm for the purposes of communication with our Chinese, French and Belgian partners...from my point of view, relations with our foreign partners were very decisive in the voluntary adoption of IFRS”.

**Figure 1**  
**Coding Trees for IFRS Adoption Factors**





In addition to the role played by foreign shareholders in these entities in the adoption of IFRS, the Cameroonian State, through the National Investment Company which manages its portfolio of financial assets, is also said to have promoted the adoption of these standards in two of these companies. In this regard, it appears from the informant's speech that:

“In the strategy to promote some state-controlled companies at the former Douala Securities Exchange - DSX, the board of directors, chaired by the supervising minister, had decided at one of its sessions that the management team should take the necessary actions to present the financial statements approved by the board of directors in accordance with the International financial reporting standards”. In the same vein as this informant, another adds that “... the decision to adopt IFRS by our company is a requirement of the international shareholders and the State of Cameroon which is one of our reference shareholders”.

#### **4.2. Endogenous Factors in the Adoption of the IFRS**

In addition to the adoption suggested and encouraged by foreign business partners in most cases, the results show that internal motives of the companies studied are also behind the voluntary adoption of IFRS. These can be placed in the context of forward-looking and anticipatory learning. This is reflected in their willingness to learn the standards for producing summary financial statements in the IFRS format. Still internally, in its capacity as majority shareholder, the State encourages the companies in its portfolio, which are certainly currently among the national champions, but exposed to problems of financing their growth and supporting international competition, to anticipate the transition from OHADA to IFRS. The stated objective seems to be to prepare for the raising of significant financing for growth investments on the international market. This financing policy would eventually result in a stock market listing and the harmonization of accounting figures in order to facilitate the consolidation of accounts produced from the various territories where the company is established. On this subject, we note from the informants that:

“For several years our bank has been preparing for a stock market listing. Currently, the file is well advanced and is at the stage of finalisation and validation. As you know, one of the requirements of the stock markets is the presentation of financial statements according to IFRS standards. It was therefore necessary to enroll in the IFRS school to develop this accounting culture in order to satisfy institutional constraints and the expectations of international investors”. In another entity, the respondent believes that “in addition to the IPO project, which is mainly supported by the State shareholder, there is the will of the management team to raise important means of financing our strategy on the international scene”. These comments are in line with those made by another research associate who maintains that “... if one of the innovations of the revised OHADA Uniform Act on commercial company law is the presentation and publication of summary financial statements in OHADA and IFRS versions, it was time for our company to adopt IFRS standards for our financial communications in anticipation of our forthcoming listing on the stock exchange”.

In terms of visibility, transparency and good governance, these entrenched practices are fundamentally part of a process of signaling the financial health of

companies, to financial investors and to the players in the financial market on which the company is considering applying for a listing.

### **4.3. Strategic Drivers of IFRS Adoption**

The strategic drivers of IFRS adoption are both the result of voluntary economic calculations embedded in a process of organizational change, and of adaptive responses to the constraints of the local and international environment. One would have liked to create a knot linking these factors to the endogenous dimension, but the intercession of strategic factors between the internal and external boundaries of companies argued in favor of their disconnection. As the results show, it is basically the establishment of companies in other African, European and/or Asian countries (e.g., China) that is said to have amplified the process of change in accounting practices, via the adoption of IFRS. From a strategic positioning perspective, the transcription of OHADA financial statements into IFRS would enable these companies to compare themselves with competitors present in various international markets and to facilitate the preparation of their application for international listing. It is with this in mind that we can understand the respondents' opinions that:

“I cannot deny that the international nature of our business has also played a major role in the adoption of the IFRS. But this factor would have little impact insofar as the markets in which we operate are subject to OHADA regulations on the production and communication of accounting and financial information. However, 'It should be noted that this ambition to internationalise on the African continent includes the ambition to raise funds on the international financial markets in the future, hence the need for us to adopt the international IFRS standards’’. Reacting to one of our follow-ups during the interviews, another employee of the study argues “...that the international character of our group and its openness to the European and Asian market are the first factors that could inform the adoption of the international standards you are talking about. Given the heterogeneity of accounting standards in the OHADA area and other areas, it was urgent, in the context of the consolidation of accounts, to adopt IFRS’’. ”

### **4.4. Discussions**

Finally, the results found reveal that the voluntary adoption of the IFRS by Cameroonian entities of international standing obeys strategic, change, progress and anticipation logics. Moreover, the early adoption of these standards is also revealed as one of the consequences of the territorial diversification of the activities of these companies and as a constraint subtly imposed by international financial investors. Beyond this lesson, and from an instrumental point of view, the voluntary adoption of IFRS would become more of a technique or relatively a tool of prospective and financial management that would help managers to build in the short term the foundations of their future strategic actions.

#### **4.4.1. Theoretical contributions of the research**

This research contributes to the theoretical debate on the voluntary and early adoption of international accounting standards that was initiated in the European context in the aftermath of the adoption of IAS/IFRS by most countries and extended a few years after the entry into force of this reform. Contrary to the trendy tradition that has long consisted in analysing the factors of adoption of these standards in listed companies, the accounting practices rooted in world-class companies not listed in Cameroon invite

a paradigm shift. From a theoretical point of view, the results and lessons learned from this study show that international or even national listing is still not a prerequisite for companies to adopt IFRS. While it is true that stock exchange listing now requires companies listed on the Central African Securities Exchange (BVMAC) to present their summary financial statements in accordance with OHADA principles and IFRS at the same time, this accounting practice does not constitute any legal or regulatory constraint that would oblige, in the sense of Pigé (2015), world-class companies not listed in Cameroon to comply with any law. The latter are certainly free of legal constraints, but other informal constraints born of social pacts between national and international investors push them to present their financial statements according to international accounting requirements. In addition to these informal constraints, another not explicitly codified in the thinking that has a high psychological salience for managers relates to the presence of companies in international markets where they generate more than a quarter of their turnover. The fact that the IFRS are more popular for the presentation of annual accounts in the various international markets of companies, and the weight of the moral and professional obligations of the managers force them to produce annual accounts in the IFRS format. These factors, described as exogenous, support the idea of informal pressure from institutions, which is well documented in the work of DiMaggio and Powell (1983). In addition, the strategic and endogenous factors of voluntary adoption of international standards by world-class companies in Cameroon account for the hidden, unconfessed but mentally elaborated dimension of the investment financing policy, the intention to go public and the development of the learning framework.

If such results are the originality of this study in its context and in its field, they have points of resemblance with those resulting from other studies carried out on the listed companies. (Leuz & Verrecchia, 2000; Affès & Callimaci, 2007; Raffounier, 2007; and Zéghal & Sellami, 2010). Indeed, comparisons of the results between the cases studied have made it possible to draw regularities that show that the volume of international sales, the entry of foreign investors in the capital of these companies and their opening up to the European and Asian markets and to other African economies have encouraged the adoption of IFRS. In relation to the often-held view that the size and reputation of the audit firm is a factor in the early adoption of IFRS by companies, none of the respondents were able to substantiate this view, even though many of these companies have recruited reputable audit firms.

More deeply, drawing on Freeman's (1984) stakeholder model based on contribution-retribution, the voluntary adoption of these standards by these entities can also be interpreted as a strategy for legitimising the leader, attaching to the values and expectations of the various residual creditors, and maintaining the holders of the resources (Barney, 1991) necessary for pursuing the strategy and building a competitive advantage internationally. In line with Huault's (2009) analyses, the voluntary and anticipated adoption of the IFRS by Cameroonian entities of international standing would ultimately be the result of institutional processes that go beyond them, without any reference to the rationality of managers, and with the sole purpose of establishing the legitimacy and prolonging the survival of the company internationally.

With regard to the factors related to managerial intent discussed earlier in this section, it seems that this voluntary and early adoption of the IFRS is a purposeful signaling strategy. The first purpose is to send signals to the financial markets to reduce information asymmetry (Spence, 1973) and facilitate their listing. The second, which is directly related to the first, is to increase the attractiveness of entities that have adopted these standards to potential international financial investors. In the sense of Russo (2011),

these signals would be read through the production of accounting and financial information understandable by potential investors and usable when analysing the risks and returns from which they make trade-offs when choosing their financial investments. It is also clear that management's motivations for voluntary adoption of the IFRS in this environment go well beyond the increased relevance of financial reporting under these standards, as highlighted by Zogning (2013).

#### **4.4.2. Practical contributions of the research**

This research presents practical and managerial contributions to organizational change and the adoption of managerial innovations. First, the results show that residual creditors, because of their financial weight, can propel organizational change faster than those emanating from mainstream institutions. In this sense, they have the power to progressively erase backward accounting practices and to get managers, without prior adjustment, to perceive the benefit of change, to mentally construct this change and to translate this change into concrete actions. Another practical contribution lies in the ability of the state as a shareholder to encourage change in companies through exhortations from management and resolutions of board meetings. In a context where companies that meet the conditions for listing are still reluctant and where the financialization of the economy is weak, the shareholder state is likely to use its financial power to get managers to build their listing on the national or international stock exchange and to sell the brand of the accounts on the international market. To the extent that this market has a language, this perspective would ultimately require world-class companies to communicate with that language and thus with the language of the IFRS.

## **V. CONCLUSION**

The aim of this research was to understand, in a socio-economic context where entities are supposed to present their financial statements in accordance with the requirements of the OHADA Uniform Act, the motives for the voluntary adoption of the IFRS. The empirical study adopted a constructivist approach based on a qualitative multiple case study. The results of this exploratory study reveal that entities that are not listed on a financial market and that operate in the OHADA context voluntarily adopt the IFRS for reasons of economic utility, strategy and foresight. While this practice is well established in the entities studied, the study does not provide information on the strategies for adopting these international standards and the reasoning behind the trade-off between the cost of adoption and the benefits of adoption.

However, the scientific added value of this study is twofold. It provides new knowledge that could falsify certain preconceived ideas that would lead one to believe that early and voluntary adoption of the IFRS is a practice reserved for listed companies. It also shows that, in addition to the positive accounting theory and the signal theory usually used by researchers who have posed and dealt with this issue, the actor theory, the strategic and resource approach and the neo-institutional current can be used to feed and build this line of research. From a theoretical point of view, this research suggests that the voluntary adoption of the IFRS reveals the strategy of actors. From a practical point of view, the lessons learned from this study show that organizational actors are sources of change and that the move from OHADA to IFRS can be achieved quickly without any legal institutional constraints by the latter.

While such results provide new knowledge on the subject, the number of cases on which this knowledge is built remains small and the confinement of the research to a single country may give rise to criticism. Aware of these facts and with a view to further research, a collaborative study on the same issue is envisaged based on a sample of

companies of the same nature that have voluntarily adopted the IFRS, even though they are not listed or delisted on any stock market.

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