

## Original Research Article

## The State and its Transformations: A Socio-Political Analysis of Cameroon Public Administration in the Midst of Reform

Ametissa Zabagai<sup>1\*</sup><sup>1</sup>PhD in Political Science, University of Bamenda, Cameroon**Article History****Received:** 14.01.2023**Accepted:** 25.02.2023**Published:** 28.02.2023**Journal homepage:**<https://www.easpublisher.com>**Quick Response Code**

**Abstract:** The option taken by the Cameroon public administration is that of managing the affairs of the state by putting the emphasis on results through Results-Based Management (RBM). The objective of this article is to evaluate the extent to which the reform of the Cameroon state and its administration has progressed, and to identify the obstacles that persist and block attempts at progress. To conduct this study, a semi-structured interview was used, which is itself based on the qualitative approach of constructivism. The results of this study showed some dysfunctions in terms of the coherence of stated policies and implemented practices. The logic involved is that of the consecration of the informal, which is organised around a limited range of actors who most often have no reforming personality, but draw their legitimacy from political, ethnic, tribal, friendly or family networks. The much advocated participation is more of a mirage than a reality. When used as a technique for designing and implementing administrative reform projects, it is more like a 'participation gift'. It is not yet set up as a rule, as a normal way of operating in public services. In addition, there is the syndrome of the presidentialization of the political regime, the politico-administrative sponsorship and the ethno-politicization of the administration, which run counter to the rules of good governance, transparency and administrative rationality.

**Keywords:** Quality, Performance, Administrative reform, Modernisation, Users, State, Good governance.

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### I. INTRODUCTION

As Michel Crozier (1997) stated, everything is bound to change. Change is unavoidable for any system that wants to be sustainable and that, if it does not change, it suffocates. We change to live, change is life. Organisations that do not change wither away. Systems that are not regenerated become so complex that they can no longer be controlled (De La Vignette, 1946). Indeed, 'Every time we analyse a company or an institution that does not work, we discover that the same good rules and principles that proved their worth twenty or thirty years ago are the cause of the disorder of today's failure' (Crozier, 1970). This is why human organisations are increasingly asked to be more active, more alive, more enriching for their members. All this is true for both public and private organisations because they all evolve in an environment that provides them not only with opportunities, but also with risks. In this perspective, the introduction of change within them has the ambition to seek competitiveness, efficiency, performance and competitive ranking. Thus, in order to

maintain the course of sustainability in a turbulent environment, an ever-increasing number of change projects are implemented, at the cost of colossal investments mobilising material, financial and human resources. However, although change is potentially a source of performance for organisations, it also carries the seeds of its own destruction. It generates resistance from those it affects and, in particular, from those responsible for its implementation. The actors involved in administrative reform are never inert. They develop adaptation strategies within public administrations. In such a context, how does the Cameroon public administration live with the reform dynamic impelled by the government?

### II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The analysis of Cameroonian public administration cannot be understood without highlighting contingency. Similarly, the relations between the administration and the social environment cannot be considered without reference to the

particularity of the administration's position in society. This is particularly linked to the culture of the State. Indeed, if it is 'commonly accepted that French-speaking African public administrations operate in unsatisfactory conditions and are no more efficient today than they were in the post-independence period (1960s)' (Rambourg, 1998), this is partly justified by the counter-productive behaviour of state employees inherited from this culture.

Developmentalist theory has been used to try to understand the dynamics at work within African public administrations. This theory defends the thesis that all societies converge towards a single model of modernity. Inspired by the Rostowian model of economic development, political development corresponds to a scale characterised by archaic despotism, modernised dictatorship, pluralist democracy and authoritarian power (Rambourg, 1998).

Two conceptions of the administrative apparatus emerge from this understanding: traditional societies and modern societies. The former are tribal and not very differentiated, the latter universal, rational and diversified. The existence of evils such as tribalism, clientelism and favouritism within African public administrations and the difficulty of reforming them is therefore essentially due to a delay in political development (Badie, 1994).

This apprehension of the dynamics of African public administration, marked by a real ethnocentrism, will give rise to numerous criticisms, all the more so as it not only emphasises the linearity of political development, but also its universality by abusively postulating that all political and administrative systems change in the same way with obligatory passages. Badie (1985) is one of those who fundamentally question this approach when he points out that: "political evolutionism sins by the naivety of its universalist claim by abusively postulating that all political systems change in the same way by going through the same stages. In reality, this vision ignores everything that constitutes the singularity of histories: the irreducibility of cultures and social structures to a single universal model".

Moreover, the separation between tradition and modernity is not always a zero-sum game. As Bayart points out, "contemporary social actors constantly straddle the arbitrarily circumscribed sectors of tradition and modernity. In the cocoa-growing south of Cameroon, [for example] retreats to the village suggest that the transition to the urban condition is not irreversible, contrary to what the dramatic concept of rural exodus suggests. Similar "itineraries" within the social field denote an integration and cultural placidity that contradicts the dichotomous categories cherished by developmentalists" (Bayart, 1989). This leads to the conclusion that African political and administrative

societies are not very conflictual and generally function in a vacuum. This will pave the way for the theory of dependence.

The theory of dependence defends the idea that the irruption of military regimes, violence, impoverishment and corruption are not the constituent elements of the stages in the process of political development of states, but the product of dependence on imperialism. This current has been defended by North African authors such as Samir Amin (1988). In contrast to developmentalists, dependency theorists do not analyse development as a process by separating underdevelopment and development on the one hand, but present the two entities as two functions of the same system. For these authors, the state and public administration have no autonomy of their own, especially since local governments are only objective allies of the imperialist forces, and more often than not their accomplices in the framework of their relations with the great powers and multi-nationals. The state and the public administration at this time have neither political nor cultural independence, because they are dominated by these external forces which only generate bureaucratic bourgeoisies, corruption and prebends.

In such a context, the administrative apparatus only vibrates to the rhythm of supranational and particularly Western entities. The bureaucratic bourgeoisie then becomes the relay bourgeoisie at the service of the metropolises. From then on, the dynamics of African public administrations can only be properly understood in the light of this dependence, which obliges state employees to function according to the dictates of the colonies. However, 'in the service of the state and money, the colony concentrates offices and shops in the cities, it does not penetrate the countryside. It does not frame the countries; it is superimposed on them (...) it agglutinates its men in patches' (De La Vignette, 1946). It takes no account of the social realities and development prospects of the societies concerned. Administrative reform is then nothing more than the expression of imperialist thinking which is constantly dying through the relations between this bureaucratic bourgeoisie and the international powers. To change and to want to reform finds in its way this imperialist truth determined to maintain the *statu quo*.

Summarising the thought of the dependency theory, one can see that it does not deviate much from developmentalist theory insofar as it emphasises the idea of globalisation and the role of external factors on the dynamics of political and administrative change. This analysis of the African state and public administration will also be challenged by the desire of the local bourgeoisie to improve its position and develop its own economic base, not necessarily that of the imperialist powers. It will also be criticised by the relativity of the omnipotence of the multinationals, the alibi of the international conspiracy against Africa and

the vitality of dependent societies that try to question the existence of African societies and the dynamics within them (Touraine, 1976).

The study of the political and administrative development of African societies based essentially on external phenomena will lead some authors, such as Bayart (1989), to analyse African societies on the basis of their own historicity, rejecting the notion of the post-colonial dependent state and its corollary, the yoke paradigm.

Jean François Bayart (1989), by rejecting the analyses of dependency and developmentalists who emphasise the foreignness of the state, subscribes to the idea that the dynamics of the outside are not really separable from the dynamics of the inside. Indeed, for this author, "the state established by the coloniser was from the outset the object of appropriation on the part of the peoples he had subjected. On the one hand, it was invested by the indigenous social actors in the best interests of what they thought were their interests. On the other hand, it was interpreted by them according to their own cultural representations. From this double point of view, the contemporary state in Africa has its own historicity" (Bayart, 1991). This state is therefore not so much the product of the social forces at work and/or a new demand, as a divine surprise imposed from outside. It was occupied by a local bureaucratic elite that took over the shell left by the coloniser (Borella, 1996).

By noting that there is no dichotomy between the internal and the international, Jean François Bayart (1989) rejects the idea that the Weberian state is suitable for the analysis of African societies. This ideal type of bureaucracy according to Weber is characterised by the centralisation of politics, the differentiation of politics and religion, the rationalisation of politics, bureaucracy and empowerment. However, this conception of the state according to Weber does not apply to the particular case of Africa (Le Roy, 1993). And for good reason, as Mwayila (1998) points out, firstly, this bureaucracy according to Weber is completely ignored by both the pre-colonial and the post-colonial state, namely the existence at the heart of the state of a power based on technical know-how for managing the workings of the state, which can be opposed to the political power held by the elected authorities. Secondly, 'the rural mode of production was based on a subsistence economy and not on an accumulation economy. Thirdly, the structuring factor of this economy, land, is in its very principle an inalienable public good, the political leader not being the leader of the land' (Balandier, 1967). Fourthly, "sultanism is the backdrop to this theory, because arbitrariness is both the basis of the legitimacy of the postcolonial state and the basis of the confiscation of its resources, whatever the multiple forms taken by this

confiscation. Fifth, it is by no means a resurgence of the traditional state" (Balandier, 1967).

According to Bayart, the politics of the belly is therefore a tendency to enrich or rather to accumulate in a primitive way by all means. It is rooted in society through multiple networks of resource exchange (Bayart, 1979). According to him, Marxist and liberal approaches place African political systems less in a perspective of their own historicity than in that of the historicity of the Western world, a kind of mimicry. This "administrative mimicry is derived from cultural and linguistic mimicry, or even legal-political mimicry, but above all it is psychosociological (...). It is a specific feature of the Third World" (Bayart, 1979). However, colonisation did not erase the previous political systems characterised by inequalities and dominations. Thus, "the unequal relationship between European and African societies has been grafted onto the historical dynamics of the latter, modifying to a greater or lesser extent, depending on the case under consideration, the structures of inequality and domination and the reciprocal relationships" (Bayart, 1979).

For Bayart (1979), the core of the hegemonic alliance is the administration, with the emergence of the civil service as an emerging force and social force on the power of the bureaucracy, despite its subordination to the president. The politics of the belly, according to this author, is also characterised by patrimonialism, which is a type of traditional domination whereby its holder exercises an absolute personal right over the goods and agents of an administration that he has appropriated, and therefore corruption, the most banal manifestation of the politics of the belly, is not only the responsibility of the dominant. Everyone, at his or her level, practices corruption by bribing or being bribed. This behaviour of the State employee who seeks by all means to enrich himself will therefore be an obstacle to any attempt at administrative reform, as it would defeat its purpose.

Furthermore, Bertrand Badie (1994) highlights the phenomenon of the dependence of southern states on those of the north and concludes that the grafting of the imported state has not worked because civil society bypasses the state, as the administrative shell has not secreted the elements of its internal implantation.

The administration having been transposed as it is has natural heirs as the result of a barely begun evolution of the local economic and social system. This organisation, which is out of step with both the model copied and society, leads to administrative reforms at the level of organisational change, which respond to a desire on the part of the centre to better control its local periphery. Thus, 'by dint of multiplying the texts and institutions of Jacobin inspiration, the leaders can end up believing that they effectively control the political space as a whole (...). It is a question of self-fascination

which itself leads to self-hypnosis; central power takes as true the false rational legal image reflected back to it by the distorting mirror of society' (Garas, 1936). In demonstrating this, Badie (1992) relies on the Weberian model of the state, which Bayart rejects. Indeed, as Bayart points out, the state in Africa should not be considered a mere product of the colonial episode, since political formations did exist in Africa before dependence on the West, a conceptual orientation identical to that of neo-patrimonialism.

The concept of neo-patrimonialism was developed by Eisenstadt in 1973 to remove the ambiguity between traditional and neo-traditional patrimonial regimes. The former results from the survival of the traditional patrimonial regime, the latter is associated with de-traditionalized forms of patrimonialism (Eisenstadt, 1973). The introduction of a neologism makes it possible to analyse forms of political organisation associated with bureaucratic apparatuses of parties and popular movements that are far more developed than those of traditional political systems and relatively undifferentiated. Neo-patrimonialism is thus a hybrid model to account for a particular variant of patrimonialism through the existence on the political scene of the new post-traditional system of society. Early references to the patrimonial state attempt to explain the rooting of an administrative construction process in a supra-traditional, neo-traditional or traditionalist. The study of post-colonial African states, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, departs from Weberian concepts of patrimonialism, where most of the new African states are characterised by forms of personal power based on clientele relationships and not on a politically relevant tradition (Jackson and Rosberg, 1982). Since independence, the administration has been seen as the only employment opportunity, the ideal springboard to political power, and the privileged access to natural resources.

For Crawford Young and Thomas Turner (1985), the African state is not patrimonial in the sense that although "the colonial state was originally a personal fiefdom, over the years its rule has been increasingly bureaucratized. The hegemony of the state was maintained through a socially distant, paternalistic, but impersonal European bureaucracy. . . But colonial power was highly institutionalised, operating through a dense matrix of laws and regulations" (Young and Turner, 1985). Several authors have attempted to apply the patrimonial model in Africa. Jean-Claude Willame, through the "notion of decentralised patrimonialism", emphasises the lack of central control and the development of relationships "Based on primordial and personal loyalties, the use of private armies, militias and mercenaries to govern" (Willame, 1972).

In the same vein, Callaghy sees the state in Africa as a "patrimonial administrative system, stato-

organically oriented and highly authoritarian" (Callaghy, 1984), which has as its goal the extension of the state's authority and power. The concept of neo-patrimonialism has been used by Jean-François Médard (1991) to analyse the state in Africa, where he notes the existence of a strong, authoritarian, absolute and powerless state, where political-administrative authority is converted into private property by a bureaucracy and a party closely controlled by a president. There is also the personalization of power, the confusion between the public and private domains, between the state's property and the owner's property, public resources and the sovereign's resources, between public and private management, between general and private interests, and the absence of distinction between the function and its holder; everything is given to one's friends and the law to one's enemies (Medard, 1979).

To quote Bratton and Van de Walle, "in neo-patrimonial regimes, the chief executive maintains his authority through client relationships, rather than through ideology and law. As in classical patrimonialism, the right to rule is vested in an individual rather than in an office. Relationships of loyalty and dependency permeate a formal administrative and political system, where those in charges of bureaucratic functions are there less to perform a public service than to acquire personal wealth and status [...]. The essence of neo-patrimonialism is the granting of personal favours by public office holders, both within the state [...] and within societies" (Bratton and Van De Walle, 1994).

A characteristic element of the neo-patrimonial state is the personalization of power concerning the entire state apparatus where "each holder of a parcel of authority appropriates it and manages it as his own" (Medard, 1991). It is a form of administration where arbitrariness and authoritarianism reign; a kind of privatisation of the state and bureaucracy where the individual considers the state and administrative apparatus as his private property. The accumulation of wealth is based on the relationship between the boss and the client. The former distributes public resources to the latter and in return the latter gives support and allegiance to the former (Badie, 2005). The clientelism that is the characteristic element of this relationship is therefore a kind of business where the two substitutable currencies of exchange are money and relationships (Medard, 1991). Public organisations are used in this context to reward friends and supporters through positions.

Clientelism, an eminently strong concept in neo-patrimonialism, is based on the existence of personal links of dependence founded on mutual services and forms of redistribution between bosses and clients, a mode of vertical articulation between the governors and the governed, far from being the prerogative of the countries of the South, it constitutes a

widespread practice there. It is “a relationship of personal dependence not linked to kinship, based on a reciprocal exchange of favours between two people, the boss and the client, who control unequal resources” (Medard, 1976). It is materialised by generalised recruitment practices in the public service based on favours, allegiances, nepotism and corrupt rents, which contrast with the legal and regulatory rules in force.

Neo-patrimonialism results in the personalisation of political relations and the transformation of political resources into economic resources. It is the common denominator of various practices such as nepotism, clanism, tribalism, regionalism, clientelism, cronyism, patronage, prebendalism, corruption, predation, factionalism, etc., generally observable within African public administrations (Medard, 1976). This hegemonic alliance, which presupposes recourse to a patrimonial mode of management of state resources, is generally in contradiction with the technocratic logic of development (Bayart, 1989).

In this regard, the state in Africa can be described simultaneously as a strong and a weak state. The state is strong because it is an authoritarian state based largely on arbitrariness and violence exercised outside any legal framework. This absolute nature of the state's power goes hand in hand with its inefficiency in the sense that it is in reality largely powerless despite its capacity to cause harm; since it remains incapable of translating the objectives it sets itself into effective and efficient public policy (soft state). The public administration in charge of implementing these different development policies is then unable to transform itself and respond to the ever-increasing demands of the population (Medard, 1976).

This situation may also be the materialisation of a state that is both overdeveloped and underdeveloped. The African public administration is overdeveloped in the sense that it is quantitatively overdeveloped in relation to society. This is because the state apparatus occupies a considerable amount of space and employs a plethora of staff. These administrations are highly differentiated and spread out over the whole territory. This makes its coercive capacity very strong. The underdeveloped nature of the state in Africa is due to the generally inoperative qualitative and functional nature of its state employees (Medard, 1976).

This state of affairs presents the type of relationship that can exist between the state and society. Although it can be described as parasitic or kleptocratic, the state in Africa (predator) is itself predated and the parasitic state is itself parasitized. The predatory nature of the state is justified by the fact that “the extraction carried out by the state in Africa at the expense of society has not led to any form of economic and political consolidation, due to the lack of investment in

local productive activities. Thus, the survival of the ruling group completely cut off from society can only be explained by the maintenance of a legitimised bureaucratic structure called the state, living as a predator for its environment” (Darbon, 1998). Thus, the state feeds off society while providing insufficient and poor quality services to citizens. State employees on the other hand are described as state predators who exploit their public positions as a prebend. These state employees usually captured by their families, villages, friends and clientele, hijack and colonise the state from within in the sense that each creates a personal power system that parasitises the state. This situation forces the elite to avoid structural reforms that could break the monopoly of the central administration and its agents on power and resources, by providing potential peripheral competitors with access to political decision-making. This results in a multiplication of stillborn structural reforms, without the solution ever being approached.

The entrepreneurial politician or big man (Medard, 1976) plays a crucial role in the state apparatus in that he not only builds up a personal system of power within it, but also, through the mechanism of personal accumulation, obstructs the development capacities of the administration and its reform. Since his primary concern is to accumulate resources in a perspective of consolidation of power and political survival, he will constantly fructify his economic resources with his political resources. This survival logic of the big man is in contradiction with the logic of the institutionalisation of the state. He is therefore “rationally” led to destroy the state and the administration as he helps to build them (Medard, 1976).

### III. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

The methodological framework used to carry out this research is constructivism. Given the existence of a multiplicity of variables and the complexity of the relationships between the different actors, this made it possible to opt for a qualitative methodological approach in the sense that it gives more perspective. It does not allow us to look for cause and effect relationships between different variables, but rather to better understand the multiple social constructions of reality and knowledge in the context of reform.

Following the constructivist research posture adopted, the semi-structured interview guide was developed to cover all the central elements of this research without falling into stereotypes or pre-established categories. During the administration of the semi-structured interviews, particular emphasis was placed on their flexibility and adaptability in order to maintain the authenticity and uniqueness of each interview and of each interviewee in the way they described the dynamics and logic of administrative reform in Cameroon.

Thus, the interview was conducted with 3 (three) categories of actors, namely, strategic actors, middle managers and receivers. This made it possible to understand the intricacies of administrative reform internally, especially since they are the main actors in terms of design, training and deployment of any reform. In addition, particular emphasis was placed on interviewing the receivers, as not only do they represent the largest group (of the three groups presented) who have to adopt and adapt to change, but they also appear in the literature on organisational change as the main sources of resistance (Moss Kanter Stein and Jick, 1992). The interview guide was also administered to external actors, notably users of the Cameroonian public administration.

#### IV. RESULTS OF THE STUDY

The success of any administrative reform depends largely on the people who are called upon to design and implement it. In this section, we analyse the behaviour of actors within the Cameroonian public administration in the context of change and to understand the logic in force within it, taking into account the environment in which the actor of change is deployed.

##### a. **The attitude of operational managers in the context of reform: indifference, frustration and disappointment**

The analysis of change in public administrations contrasts with the criticism of line managers on the one hand, and the absolute silence on how they experience change on the other. Generally, it is never discussed, it is not known and it is not wanted to be known (Crozier, 1979). However, just like strategic and middle managers, line managers experience the various changes in their organisation in their own way. These 'junior civil servants, whose attachment to the public service is fairly ritualistic and who favour job security and the defence of acquired rights' (Chevallier, 2007), have their own particular traits in the context of change.

If it is customary to say that 'the state is sick of its low-ranking civil servants' (Schmid, 2001), it is because they have behaviours that we must try to understand. In order to do so, it is necessary to situate them in the context of the African and Cameroonian public space. Thus, as Schmid (2001) noted, the African civil servant, 'by force of circumstance, often finds himself at the head of a colony of relatives who in fact become real parasites. To house them, he has to take a house whose rent exceeds his financial means. To feed them, he will take out loans from his wealthier colleagues. Then, once his salary is mortgaged, and if he does not have the character, he can commit malpractice to meet the crushing expenses". Following the same logic, one can rightly say that the Cameroon public service executive 'represents too much a power from which everything is expected not to be invested, in

fact, with a mission that greatly exceeds the limits of his or her speciality to the point of merging with that of the political leaders themselves: each of them is the State and the living link with the world of tomorrow' (Nicolas, 1968). This is so because each agent is called upon to satisfy needs that are generally beyond the scope of his or her instituted responsibilities. It is a construction of society which does not disregard the hierarchy within the public administration and which makes the state employee believe that he or she has not only the means, but also the necessary power to act and change the situations encountered by users who are family members, friends, comrades, those of his or her tribe, ethnic group, region.

This exacerbated expectation on the part of the "large family" is here a burden and a consequence of the social logic in force. For in Africa, "the important man is the one who gives and not the one who possesses, the one who spends and not the one who withholds. A full social existence requires a constant squandering of wealth, which attracts multiple clients to its author. Great prestige is always derived from great expenditure" (Nicolas, 1968). This mode of operation makes state employees actors who are sometimes completely cut off from reality. By "assuming their administrative responsibility with dignity and integrity, they find themselves in a social impasse" (Nicolas, 1968). In fact, they lose all notoriety in the eyes of family members. Only the rich, the one whose material success is real, has the power and the last word. For the poor, the incapable, because they cannot solve the many problems that their brothers and sisters raise on a daily basis, their fate is one of desolation and shame. The consecration of capitalism within Cameroonian society and the ambient impoverishment of the population make materiality a key instrument of evaluation, forcing all actors to make material success a major issue, to the detriment of dignity and integrity.

In order to set his or her authority and benefit from the praise of his or her "large family", the operating manager, even though of low rank, is forced to review his or her mode of functioning and attitude by creating room for deviant behaviour. In the context of reform, apart from the above-mentioned elements of non-participation, lack of consensus and consultation, the resistant behaviour of the lower-ranking state employee is a question of financial stakes. They think only in terms of enrichment, of satisfying their own needs and those of their families. This situation is exacerbated in a context where socio-cultural constraints are compounded by treatment that is incompatible with a high standard of living. As one respondent put it: *'Here we get by. Besides, you're from the ministry, I'm not telling you anything new. Given the situation, the difficult conditions here at the Ministry. Sometimes we don't even have taxi money to come to work and you know that. So what do we do? Look at this employee, she has less than CFA francs 50,000 a*

*month. What should she do? In any case, I know one thing; the goat grazes where it is tied. I'm not saying that I dupe users, but if they give me, I take.*

“Getting by” is therefore a kind of shield for the lower-ranking civil servant to hide all sorts of malpractices. For them, “getting by” is not stealing, especially when the victim is the state. In looking for justifications for unethical, moral and deontological behaviour, the lower-ranking state employee tries to point out that the closeness of relations between the various hierarchical groups within the Cameroon public administration and the climate of frustration and rejection on the part of society do not give him or her any room for manoeuvre in terms of exemplary behaviour.

While the top is greedy for power and middle managers play the game of the *status quo* and enrichment through the institutional channels they hold the strings, the operating managers follow a strategic path that highlights their pressing need to provide for themselves.

The administration then becomes a space where actors with totally divergent points of view rub shoulders. The grassroots, unable to initiate, propose and make its argument prevail, is content to make its basic needs its priority. The creative spirit, the spirit of initiative is replaced by the spirit of gain. Yet an organisation that wants to be effective needs the support of the grassroots. It is the grassroots that gives the structure its strength. More grassroots people have the strength and momentum for action. Participation in the strategic summit can only produce rhetoric, manipulation, frustration and status quo. It is the possibilities for initiative at the grassroots, operational levels that regenerate the organisation. This lack of realism and initiative is symptomatic of an organisation set adrift. As Michel Crozier states: “What we need if human organisations are to be more active, more alive, more rewarding for their members, is more enterprise, more initiative on the part of more people” (Crozier, 1979). The large number that constitutes the base, unfortunately, is either excluded or preoccupied with other issues.

#### **b. Behaviour of junior executive in relation to reform: between mistrust and trust**

Junior executives are responsible for ensuring the process of strategic reflection and action. They are a transmission belt between the strategic players and the operating managers. Any change project must theoretically receive their full support so that they are able to give impetus to the overall process. As Jean-Luc Metzger (2000) points out so well: “the relay actors play the role of innovators of a particular type, both reference models and agents of coercion, they are the first to speak the recommended vocabulary or to implement the instructions”. They are constantly

worshipping the state, the general interest and efficiency, even though this is an abstraction. By being entrusted with the task of preliminary discussions during consultation work or the implementation of reform projects, junior executives are actors whose role seems to be much closer to that of strategic actors. Indeed, “the fact of being in contact with the elite or its representatives, the proximity of decision-making centres, being invited to confidential information meetings, sometimes transcending hierarchical relations, the fact of being among the first to be informed of reform projects, of having “given one's opinion”, all these elements constitute as many reasons for thinking of oneself as being privileged” (Metzger, 2000). They are therefore more inclined to accept the recommended change, because it is the product of their own reflection. They do so, moreover, sometimes with such enthusiasm that this is reflected in the coordination or awareness-raising meetings held with employees. To this enthusiasm, which is justified by the fact that they feel privileged, that they are members of the inner circle and that their ideas are being implemented, are added the promises of promotion made by the strategic players. *Thus, gradually led to reduce the pressure margin of their critical sense, junior executives constitute the loyal allies that any power engaged in a major reform needs. As bearers of an identity as internal promoters, built by and for the organisation, these state employees have deeply integrated the new managerial discourse on mobilisation, investment, permanent change, quality and responsibility. Their mode of action can take several forms. Apart from the simple repetition of orders and the distribution of work, it is they who define the organisation by designing job descriptions; they guide individuals by the information they distribute and the follow-up they give to the achievement (or not) of objectives. They can also “accompany” change by setting an example (Metzger, 2000).*

This way of instrumentalising the commitment of middle managers to change can have unfortunate consequences. Indeed, the relay actors in the Cameroonian public administration can only be vectors of change as long as the prospects for change are favourable to them. If their freedom of action, if their interests are threatened or if they have not been involved in the design or validation of the project, they do not hesitate to develop behaviours that can block the process. This attitude is most often manifested by absence from coordination meetings, total lack of interest in the project in question or the development of harsh criticism of the project. In addition to the purely technical elements of participation in the design and implementation of reform projects, there is also the inability to enjoy the financial benefits of the project because they are not members of the project organising committee. One respondent gave his view: *‘Here at the Ministry of Public Service, you have to be a director to be somebody. They have taken everything. They are the*

*ones who are everywhere in all the projects. They are the ones on the steering committee. They are the ones on the validation committee. They are the ones who go on missions. They are the ones who go to seminars when there is remuneration. They have everything, we have nothing. One day, a director told me to wait my turn. I am waiting impatiently for it.*

Thus, the intermediate actors, far from being relays for the promotion of change, are obstacles to the implementation of reform projects and to the development of other collaborators. In addition to this “selfish” and “egocentric” character of the intermediary executives, there are, at national level, attitudes which block the implementation of reform projects when they do not satisfy their financial interests. Indeed, how can one justify the fact that despite the existence within each ministerial department of structures in charge of elaborating Public Investment Budget Projects (PIB), services that ensure the maturity of projects and the existence of a ministry in charge of public procurement, the rate of implementation of PIB in the Cameroon public administration has never reached 50% per cent? By analysing the behaviour of junior executives in this way, one can see that by playing an intermediary role, they try to develop their margin of manoeuvre within the apparatus. Thus, as Chevallier (2007) *points out, between an administrative elite eager for power, junior executives anxious to reduce their dependence, and a proletarianised demand base, there is apparently little common ground: the worlds tend to become closed, almost impermeable to each other. Dialogue becomes difficult between populations that ignore each other, while constantly rubbing shoulders, and whose values, aspirations and reactions are radically different.*

On a daily basis, there are latent tensions and open conflicts within the Cameroon public administration, which have a negative impact on the quality of public services and organisational performance. This situation sometimes becomes so difficult and untenable that it leads to casualness and disinterest. However, junior executives in this system, in this jungle, are in most cases able to cope through the room for manoeuvre they have. This environment is a place where the various groups of strategic executives, junior executives, users and external actors, with heterogeneous strategic interests, form networks and factions, and clash in order to ensure that their material or symbolic personal interests prevail (Olivier De Sardan, 1995). But how do operating managers experience change? What is their own strategy?

### **c. Senior management and administrative reform**

Like any organisation, the Cameroon public administration is made up of a set of actors recognised as senior (strategic) managers. They are responsible for designing change projects. In most cases, these managers occupy the position of director and are recruited from among former graduates of prestigious

schools such as the National School of Administration and Magistracy (ENAM), the Higher Teachers Training College (ENS), the Faculty of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences (FMSBM), the National Polytechnic School (ENP) etc. Admission to these prestigious schools confers on the person concerned membership of a prestigious body, a rank in society and an assured career because they are part of the elite. It is commonly said of this class of administrators that they “enter the administration from the top”. As Mintzberg points out, these “managers with formal authority at the strategic top are responsible for overseeing change projects” (Mintzberg, 1982) and are central to the steering of administrative reform.

While the constitution of this elite at the top of the state has enabled its members to rise to high responsibilities very quickly, it seems that this is not always accompanied by proven expertise on their part. The constitution of this elite corps maintains a kind of conformity, stability and pressure on anyone who is motivated by a desire for change.

Moreover, these elite, which is given the right to design the administration and possible changes, is more often than not prone to arrogance and is in fact not sufficiently cooperative with intermediate and operating managers. From time to time and on specific issues, these senior managers give injunctions on issues raised by operating managers. This top-down relationship remains fictitious in both form and substance.

An analysis of the Cameroon public administration shows that the top level, represented by senior managers, has virtual relations with the bottom level, which is made up of operating staff. Any practice of real participation of all actors is hampered by the strong stratification of the public administration. This makes the operationalisation of concepts such as Results-Based Management (RBM), performance and good governance null and void in a context where they appear to be the guiding threads of administrative action. From this point of view, operating managers are totally distanced from the facts and have practically no contact with the top. Yet it is from the problems encountered by the grassroots that reform projects are born. As there is no formal framework for consultation with the grassroots - except when there is an impact to give injunctions once again - strategic managers generally rely on data whose channels of communication are informal, generally through the grassroots. However, the relationship between the top and the bottom is a reverential one and does not allow the operating manager to develop an opinion contrary to that of his/her strategic manager. In addition to this reverence desired and obtained by the top, there is also the precarious environment in which operating managers live. This leads them to avoid any derogatory words for fear of seeing their situation worsen. Sometimes, everything is done to obtain favours from



the top, even at the risk of truncating information. The Cameroon administrative system based on dependence and passivity produces exclusion and favouritism.

Thus, not having all the information necessary to take the appropriate decision and being called to act to demonstrate movement and change, strategic managers take decisions not to fundamentally reform the administration, but more for announcement effects supposed to demonstrate their dynamism. This is what Claude Abe calls "*institutional cosmetics, itself working towards institutional gesticulation*" (Mutations, 2015). This situation observed within the Cameroon public administration is satisfactory for all stakeholders. Thus, while the strategic manager takes the path of least risk, the intermediate manager refuses to assume any responsibility and the operating manager avoids any unpleasantness with the top that could jeopardise his or her precarious situation. In this context, *the reactions of each partner conform to the expectations of a perfectly internalised scenario. The subordinate executive is indignant and proclaims loudly that he was not listened to; the senior manager withdraws into the silence of the rules, knowing that these events follow one another and cancel each other out, and that he would have even more difficulties if he tried to break through the impervious shield of the buffer of subordinate executives in order to make better decisions* (Crozier, 1970).

It is clear that at the top of the state there is some confusion about the relevance and quality of the decision taken. It does not produce the expected results and its negative effects on the quality of public services appear to be recurrent. The machine of organised collective action seems to be seized up and not under control. This is why it is useful to reflect on "new modes of regulation and government that can replace the traditional means. It is therefore more important to create a new capacity for action than to choose objectives which are good in themselves, but which our weak capacity for action will not let us achieve" (Crozier, 1979). Thus, in a process of organisational change, the administration must not limit itself to formulating relevant objectives, but must ensure their coherence and its own capacity to act, taking into account its intrinsic values and the environment in which it operates. By putting aside all illusions or blissful optimism, the Cameroon public administration must create favourable conditions for the evolution of the collective network, leaving aside institutional or social formulas and technocratic thinking that do not facilitate progress. Introducing a reform project is not enough in itself to create collective action. Whether it is taught or is the object of a strategy of change, the reform does not carry sufficient values to move an individual.

#### **d. Administrative reform in Cameroon: between personal issues and organisational efficiency challenges**

Based on the principle of legal-rational domination, the Cameroon public administration should have staff recruited according to legal and regulatory provisions based on the logic of competition and promoted on the sole logic of their competences as evidenced by their diplomas and experience. In this way, promotion should not be the result of nepotistic influence or mentoring. Staff recruited solely on the basis of objective criteria should work according to the workload assigned to the post and be evaluated according to predefined obligations and sanctions. Thus, the choice of staff at all levels should be made on the sole "criteria of competence and integrity. Services should not become exclusive fiefdoms of this or that party or money boxes to prepare for future elections" (Crozier, 1979). The public administration should therefore be a favourable space where the state employee can objectively build a career; the appointment of state employees to posts of responsibility should be done in accordance with Decree No. 88/772 of 16 May 1988 on the organisation of the government, which defines, among other things, the modalities of appointment within the Cameroon public administration and the promotion of the career.

Careerism in its bureaucratic understanding of the profession is used to designate and condemn any kind of "arrivisme" of the professional politician, the member of the political-administrative apparatus driven by the excessive ambition to "rise" at any cost, making all the necessary concessions, all the possible "bows", practising absolute followership towards a leader as long as he or she is "well placed". In doing so, the state employee is neither more nor less than destroying the interests of the organisation for the benefit of his or her own interests. By serving himself in this way, he enslaves the people who constitute the *raison d'être* of the administration (Lapassade, 2009).

Thus, "in Africa, appointment and promotion are not carried out according to the rules of the public service, but according to the wishes of the party in power", despite the legal and regulatory provisions on the subject. Indeed, General Instruction No. 002 of 1 October 2002 on the organisation of government work mentions that the Minister must manage the ministry under his or her jurisdiction in accordance with the fundamental principles governing the public service and, in particular: the equality of citizens before the law, the neutrality of the administration with regard to users of the public service, respect for republican legality and the continuity of the public service. The management of State personnel by the Minister must be carried out in a spirit of transparency and equity.

In any case, according to General Instruction No. 002 of 1 October 2002 on the organisation of

government work, “the Minister shall refrain from any clientelism and nepotism which distort the equality of opportunity of citizens in relation to public employment. The same applies to appointments and honours, which should reward the actual performance of civil servants and not reflect connections unrelated to the work of state employees”. For the administrative authority, managing therefore means respecting the laws and regulations in force as well as the values of society. The control of punctuality, attendance and professional conscience of all employees must be ensured by the authority in accordance with the required professional ethics. In addition to this provision which sets out the guidelines for the management of state personnel, three criteria govern appointments within the Cameroon public administration, namely technical, administrative and professional criteria; political criteria and reserve power.

An analysis of the requirements for a position in the Cameroon public administration shows that, apart from the level of qualification (e.g. Baccalaureate + 5 years) and the number of years of professional experience, which are sufficiently clear, the other elements of assessment are generic and difficult to define. By way of illustration, the qualities or skills refer in most cases to leadership ability, fluency, analytical and synthetic skills, initiative, discretion, command of official languages, good knowledge of ICT, and command of regulations and legislation. However, all these elements cannot be assessed on the basis of a curriculum vitae alone. By lacking clarity, precision and conciseness, and having no coercive power in itself, the organic framework has become the “slave” of reserve power. Moreover, even though the organic texts specify that appointments to posts of responsibility must be made in accordance with the appended organic frameworks, it is important to note that these are almost never appended.

When the Prime Minister, Head of Government, in circular letter No. 003 /cab/pm of 24 December 1992, on appointments to posts of responsibility, stated that he had “noted that the draft decrees appointing officials in the various State administrations and submitted to the formality of prior administrative approval by [his] services, are generally not accompanied by the elements of appreciation surrounding the proposals put forward”, he noted the difficulties he faces in instituting a minimum of transparency in appointments. This is why, in the same instruction, he asks that “from now on, all appropriate documents necessary for an informed assessment of the said proposals should be attached to the appointments proposed”. All these elements of assessment are contained in a form that the appointing authority must fill in and sign.

In practice, it is unfortunate that reserve power takes precedence over other appointment criteria. One

can even, eventually, talk of abuse of reserve power. Some would say that administrative authorities use and abuse reserve power in Cameroon. Constantly, one observes cases of appointment where there is no concordance between the rank of the civil servant and the post of responsibility. Sometimes, one also observes what is commonly known as “debauchery” which consists of appointing to a post of responsibility a state employee whose missions in the structure do not correspond to his or her training or real level of competence. Based on a formal legislative authorisation, the exercise of reserve power should be subject to the supervision of the ordinary courts. This is not the case within the Cameroon public administration and there is no case law on the matter. Appointment decisions have never been challenged in court. As a result, they are much more a product of subjectivity than objectivity. Moreover, as Breton points out, *neither access to public services nor the actual development of careers are really, de facto, subject to statutory provisions. These are often considered only as a reference framework whose binding scope remains relative in the face of the constraints of all kinds on which the daily operation of the administration and relations between individuals at all stages of the exercise of the administrative service and at all levels of the hierarchy depend* (Breton, 1990).

However, “the existence of the benefits associated with the post is the essential motivating factor for civil servants, as they appear as a sign of social development and success”. Unfortunately, appointment is not sufficiently regulated and gives unlimited power to the appointing authority. As Ousmane Diagana (1996) says, *the preoccupation of most public administrations is to hire more and more staff even when resources are limited, instead of ensuring more suitable salaries and more favourable working conditions for those already working... The appointment of managers to high administrative functions is more often based on their political affiliation than on their personal skills. This phenomenon, which affects the management of public services, considerably reduces their productivity and performance.*

This organised anarchy forces the actors who have benefited from this system to devote an absolute cult to the authority that gave them access to it. In this situation, any attempt at change is doomed to failure, as the same people will always seek to maintain the same system in order to continue to benefit from it. This justifies the lack of will to implement change projects effectively and the lack of commitment to achieving their objectives. It is fair to say that “public and private spaces are often confused and entangled. Many “civil servants” use the state more than they serve it as civil servants or politicians. Investing in the state often leads to taking from it in order to redistribute it to one's own group with the logic of short-term predation” (Hugon,

2012). By brandishing the weapon of reserve power every time an appointment is questioned, the Cameroon public administration enshrines the reign of secrecy.

However, “secrecy is an ally of corruption, and corruption is often practiced in secrecy” (Hugon, 2012). For the administrative revolution to take place, administrative power must be depersonalised. Society as a whole (public authorities, state employees, users, civil society and international organisations) must play the transparency card. Transparency and trust must regulate human relations, decisions and behaviour.

To quote Crozier (1970) when he analysed French society, we can rightly say that the Cameroon public administration 'has for many years been stuck in a system of compartmentalisation, secrecy and irresponsibility which manages to blur all difficult decisions and to guarantee everyone general protection against any sanction, even the simple sanction of publicising the results of his action' (Crozier, 1970). There is, therefore, a leakage of responsibility. No one dares to demand, everyone is afraid to lead by avoiding any conflict. For, 'when faced with a difficulty, the support staffs pass the responsibility on to the Bureau Head. The latter in turn passes the responsibility on to the Head of Department. The Head of Service passes the responsibility on to his Sub-Director, the Sub-Director to the Director, and the Director to the Secretary General, the Secretary General to the Minister. The Minister in turn declares to act in accordance with the high instructions of the Head of State. In the end, no one is responsible. The logic behind this is to step back from one's responsibilities in the face of every obstacle; laxity then sets in. Willing, courageous and determined administrators are nowhere to be found in the public administration, since, as one of them confided, “This is not my father's land. I do what I can do. The rest is not my responsibility. This is true for staff, colleagues and line managers alike. There is a clear lack of effective leaders and leaders of men (Riche, 1994). Beginning to address these barriers to change and to improving the quality of public services is the key to success. This requires the creation of freedom of action within the Cameroon public administration so that state employees can become poles of change and innovation. Indeed, “only power can fight power; multiplying [autonomous intervention entities] is the only way to bring down hierarchy and secrecy, along with monopolies. Finally, positive solidarities must begin to develop” (Crozier, 1970). In this way, the Cameroon administration will be able to possess the necessary ingredients for the production of organisational change.

#### **e. The strong political pressure on the Cameroon public administration**

It is useful to recall, at the outset, that it is difficult, as Paul Martin Zé points out, to materialise the politicisation of the administration, as it is more like an

“iceberg”, since most of it escapes observation and conceptualisation (Zé, 2005). Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that the politicisation of the administration reflects the willingness of government authorities to introduce various influences into the scope of administrative decisions with a view to orienting the behaviour of state employees in a direction deemed suitable (Stenmans, 2001). It highlights the influence of external power on the administration. Actors external to this organisation try to form a power coalition in order to influence the internal administrative hierarchy.

In this perspective, external actors, usually politicians, try to dictate their views on the daily decision making within the administration. The relationship between politics and administration is traditionally an ambiguous one. The political system, personalised to the extreme, constantly tries to impose its logic on the administration.

The public administration, on the other hand, tries as much as possible to wrest its autonomy. However, very often the interests of both systems meet. This could lead to the conclusion that they live in symbiosis. The politicisation of the administration therefore tends to create a link between the administrative hierarchy and the will of actors outside this administration (Mintzberg, 1986). This can be observed more in a system where a presidential-type political regime reigns.

In Cameroon, the separation of powers, as enshrined in the Constitution, is only a façade. The Head of the executive controls both the legislative and judicial powers. He holds cards in his hands that he deals out at will, based on tribal, ethnic, political and regional distribution. Anyone who does not pledge allegiance to him and who is not in his domain cannot benefit from his favours. In turn, the government, consisting of the Ministers and the Prime Minister who enjoy the favour of the Head of State, distributes “cards” to the civil servants responsible for implementing government policy. Each Minister, using the same method as the head of the executive, appoints civil servants to positions of responsibility in his ministry, most of whom come from his tribe or region. This operation of the political-administrative apparatus and the relationship between politics and administration undermine any attempt at change. Individuals are essentially interested, not in the search for performance, but in the ever-increasing allegiances they have to make to the head of the ministry, to the members of their political family, to their tribe or to any person who constitutes a godfather. This “subservience” of state employees to politics is a threat to public freedoms. They are forced by circumstance 'to apply the law in a discriminatory manner by favouring citizens who are good at pleasing the authorities and by bullying the others. A politicised administration is in itself a violation of the democratic principle of the equal

eligibility of citizens for public employment without any distinction other than that of their virtue and talents” (Gournay, 1978).

This “tribalisation” of the administration is also observed during cabinet reshuffles. The homes of the lucky ones are invaded by this “large family” which seeks to consolidate its position with the latter. Spontaneous parties are organised to celebrate either the retention or the entry into the government. In addition to this spontaneous reaction to joining the government, local, family and regional committees form a delegation to thank the President of the Republic for having chosen one of their own as a minister. This is why, today, more and more tribal and ethnic letters of thanks are addressed either to the elected official or to the appointing authority. These various behaviours have only one purpose: to ensure that the national cake is eaten in the family.

Moreover, the behaviour of state employees does not appear to be different from that of the political authorities, who try by all formal and informal means to create a climate of favour around them towards all those who are close to them. There is thus a confusion of roles, powers, functions and responsibilities. This confusion of roles created by all the actors, where each one tries at best to monopolise the powers conferred on him, the powers of the administration and the powers of the state, is a consequence of the social climate that prevails in African societies and in Cameroonian society. The behaviour of political and administrative actors is characteristic of the social climate and society's expectations of state and administrative actors. In this sense, the administration is a purely social product shaped according to the expectations of the population.

#### **f. Ethno-politicisation of the Cameroon public administration**

The ethno-politicisation of the public sector puts civil servants in a situation where they must constantly articulate between, on the one hand, taking into account the political power that constantly infers in the daily management of their activities, generally through verbal instructions. On the other hand, he must take into account the ever-growing influence of his ethnic group, his tribe, which voluntarily or involuntarily obliges him to orient his decisions by considering the idea that the members of this primary community have. In this perspective, the state employee is faced with the politicisation of the civil service, which is a blockage to respecting the rules of professional ethics and deontology. Evaluation, a characteristic element of the production and productivity of the state employee, is now threatened insofar as it does not accurately reflect the activities of each and every person. This ethno-politicisation of the public sphere is marked by the instrumentalisation of administrative and political promotion behind “ethnicism”, which is itself based on the policy of

regional balance with the aim, according to its followers, of building feelings of belonging and political and administrative solidarity and, in the long term, of social cohesion. This tendency to seek balance, although it may be a source of emulation, ultimately produces a segmentation of identity parts claiming to belong to a particular ethnic group or region. The social cohesion that was sought in the background is now threatened.

The reference to ethnicity in Cameroon developed firstly through a taboo gaze reserved for it by the public authorities. As such, it was perceived as an obstacle to the construction of national unity and development considered as supra-ethnic objectives. However, in practice, elements with an ethnic connotation were already present in the legal and regulatory provisions aimed at correcting some social injustices, reducing the social divide and creating social cohesion. One can rightly speak of the techniques of regional balance, regional quota, sociological realism, etc. Subsequently, these rules in the service of national solidarity have become instruments of clientelism and nepotism. In practice, this is used for all sorts of abuses, as there is no mechanism to check the implementation of all these provisions (Kamdem, 2002).

Furthermore, the “ethnisation” of the public sector gives rise, at the family level, to parental dynamics in which the thinking of the various actors is codified according to traditional rules. At the administrative level, this is reflected in the development of “parenting” relationships and strongly challenges the principle of administrative legality. This parental behaviour can be observed not only in practices generally characterised by laxity, clientelism and corruption, but also in expressions of kinship linked not only to respect, but also based on identity.

Thus, in the Cameroon public administration, we easily come across expressions such as my son, my daughter, daddy, mummy, my brother from ..., my sister from ..., my uncle, my auntie, my elder sister, my elder brother, cousin, cousin which, although referring to a sense of courtesy, carry in themselves potential elements of the personalisation of relations. This leads to the production of administrative services on behalf of the client, thus violating the principle of impersonal rules that should guide administrative action.

The problem of the relationship between administration and politics is a power relationship whose conception and implementation of a model of balance seems complex insofar as, in any power relationship, there is a link of subordination. However, the typical ideal of the running of politics and administration in the framework of the harmonious running of republican institutions is based on the separation of powers. The politician is responsible for defining policy and the administration as the secular

arm is responsible for implementing it. However, in practice, the politician who is supposed to give the main guidelines tends to abuse them, encroaching on the administration's scope. It is therefore important in this context to promote the principle of the empowerment of the administration while maintaining its role as an intermediary between politicians and citizens, from which political power derives its legitimacy on the basis of a social project.

Thus, just as the politician derives his legitimacy from the people, empowerment will be a guarantee of 'legitimation' of the administration. Thus, being part of an agency relationship, the agent in this case, in the position of representative in relation to the political principal, can capitalise on the asymmetry of information inherent in any agency relationship and can thus benefit from a limited autonomy. This empowerment of the administration in a state should by no means be understood as a kind of strict separation of power between it and the political. This is justified by the fact that the various actions of the administration, which are themselves a consequence of public policies, contain political ingredients. This makes the state employee both a political and an administrative actor.

It is therefore a case of reducing the link between politics and administration by creating a framework in which there is some neutrality on the part of the politician and proven technical expertise on the part of the administration in order to make any development project a technical construction with the aim of improving the living conditions of the population. The operationalisation of this effective junction between the administration and politics is based on the existence of formal and informal agreements between the various actors of the agency, namely the civil servant and the politician. Thus, while the former acquires loyalty from the latter, the latter obtains responsibility from the former. In this context, the state employee can be responsible, feel responsible and be held accountable for the management of public affairs (Ndong Souhmet, 2003). He or she is responsible through compliance with the obligations set out in the various legal and regulatory provisions. He must feel responsible by cultivating a true sense of responsibility by developing a self-evaluation without being under the yoke of various constraints, demands and controls. Likewise, he must be held accountable, by virtue of his responsibility before the people and before the judge, who carry out a posteriori external controls and evaluations.

## VI. CONCLUSION

From this analysis, it can be said that Cameroon's public administration is and remains open to criticism from outside and within. Although efforts are being made to improve the quality of public services, most of these initiatives are not producing the expected results. In fact, enormous weaknesses persist

within it, given that it is plagued by such evils as inertia, laxity, running away from responsibilities, the search for personal interests to the detriment of the general interest, cumbersome procedures, corruption, etc. In addition, the diktat of development partners endangers the coherence of projects for change and creates a crisis of confidence between the state and its citizens. Similarly, in its mode of operation, the Cameroon public administration is characterised by a great deal of hierarchical distance, which makes any attempt to participate in decision-making ineffective.

This hierarchical distance leads to decision-making that is much more subject to the law of parallel powers and lobbies than to rationality. Indeed, the logic at work is that of the consecration of the informal, which is organised around a limited range of actors who most often have no reforming personality, but draw their legitimacy from political, ethnic, tribal, friendly or family network. In the end, the much advocated participation is more of a mirage than a reality. When used as a technique for designing and implementing administrative reform projects, it is more similar to a 'participation- gift'. It is not yet set up as a rule, as a normal mode of operation of public services.

With regard to the actors of change, they are torn between the search for performance and the satisfaction of their own interests. Thus, while senior managers vacillate between exemplarity and submission to social logic, intermediate executives are between distrust and confidence and operating executives between indifference, frustration and disappointment. Added to this is the syndrome of the presidentialization of the political regime, the politico-administrative mentoring and the ethno-politicization of the administration, which contradict the rules of good governance, transparency and administrative rationality. This is undoubtedly the reason why reform projects pile up one on top of the other without any real impact on the quality of services rendered to users and administrative performance.

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