

CHALLENGES OF ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS AND PUBLIC SERVICE ACCOUNTABILITY IN AFRICA: THE CASE OF CAMEROON

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Abstract

The paper addresses issues of enhancing quality services in the public service sector by focusing on issues areas such as accountability, ethics, human resources development among others. The paper argues that the proper utilisation of information and communication technologies (ICTs) would greatly enhance and improve public administration and quality services delivery in transitional polities, Cameroon in particular. As the country experiences the throes of the structural adjustment Programme (SAP) it became necessary to set functional policy actions to meet output functions in respect of quality services delivery to its citizens. The paper therefore identifies factors that contribute to the lack of accountability and malpractices in the civil service; suggest policies and ICT strategies to promote accountability of public services; and provide a brief conceptual discussion on the benefit and link of ICT to Governance. Proactive strategic policy measures are recommended as the way forward for improved public service sector for the country.

Keywords: administrative, corruption, inertia, information, capacity building, public policy, public service, reform, information technology.

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1. Introduction

In Africa today, there is wide spread awareness that to enhance public service accountability will be a better way to good governance. In fact, maintaining appropriate standards, values, ethics and accountability has been what most institutions are attempting to build. The concern now for accountability to enhanced public service delivery in Africa is key to wipe out corruption. An essential pre-condition for any legitimate exercise of state authority is the efficient provision of a good public service. The degree to which public service institutions of developed countries embrace the values of responsiveness, accountability and integrity in responding to the needs of its people is an important aspect of good governance and should be an example to emulate by developing countries.

In Africa, the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) which was adopted emphasizes the realization of the development goals identified, notably the strengthening of governance, efficiency of public service and institutional framework. The issues of ethics and accountability should be linked with the concept of good governance. As observed, most Africans interact with public institutions on a regular basis whether it is to pay taxes, apply for a passport, driver's licenses and following up files in ministries. Many civil servants feel that dealing with public administration is not only cumbersome but also often frustrating and confusing because of "backdoor" dealings involved. Pushing of files, oiling of palms, soya, beer, are some of the expression used to describe these acts of corruptions due to no standard system in the public service. These situations apply to many African countries. The issue of ethics and accountability for enhanced public service should be considered within the context of the anti-poverty strategies put in place by African governments. Therefore, setting up an enhanced and efficient public service delivery system that is accountable and responsive to the needs and demands of the people is an important policy option to reduce corruption in the public service, and also the magnitude and level of poverty within the society. Meanwhile, the absence of clearly stated, defined and

enforced polices to promote professionalism in the public service allows the whole system to be vulnerable to malpractices and corruption.

2. Accountability and Ethics

2.1. Accountability

This implies that public managers must be ultimately answerable to elected public officials. The term used up the concept of overhead bureaucracy i.e. a method of controlling public servants by making them subordinate to the will of elected representatives. It also implies responsiveness to the wishes of those elected in parliament. Parliamentarians asked questions in parliament, this makes the executive to sit up and be accountable. Accountability and responsiveness of the public service to the people promote trust in Government.

Ethics and accountability complement one another because professional ethics is the basis of accountability. The Institute of public management in Cameroon has internal rules and regulations which enforces accountability within the institution. The introduction of management information system (MIS) Evaluation procedures, Management by objectives (MBO) is all internal accountability mechanism. Accountability and responsiveness of public services to the people promote trust in Government (Olowu, 1993, Meheret 1998). Any public service must have rules and regulations to ensure accountability.

2.2. Work Ethics

Accountability and ethics are the main values of employees in any well structured public administration. These are the norms of behaviour that public officials must strictly adhere to in the process of delivering public services to the public, which connotes a sense of integrity, responsiveness, acceptability, answerability, professional conscience, honest, neutrality, self-denial and a passion for excellence in the public services (Kamto, 1997).

Many Governments make use of many practical measures to enforce compliance with ethical codes and standards by public servants. The most common of these tools is ethics legislation that requires public servants, and those viewing for public jobs to fill out financial and private property disclosure forms. This an important measure to control illicit enrichment and unlawful amassing of wealth by public servants through abuse of official positions (Levine, et al.1990).

Ethics, conjures vital principles of consistencies, honesty, fairness, integrity and responsiveness in public service organization. In an egalitarian society, elected representatives of the people and an active civil society ensure that managers of the public service adhere to acceptable standards of professional conduct in carrying out their official responsibilities. These standards are the rights of the people and should have been the barometers for enhanced ethics and accountability in public service delivery.

3. Factors that Contribute to the Lack of Accountability and Professional Standards of Public Services in Africa

3. 1. Disregard for Rules

Today the public administration is considered as the main strong hold of corruption. Consequently it constitutes a priority area of action. There are norms, values rules in most public services in Africa, even if they do exist, there is wanton disregard for practices of accountability by public managers and civil servants. The problem is the text of application which is never respected. Lack of firm political commitments by African governments to institutionalise public services has led to the declining values of professionalism in most public services in Africa. Bellow are points for discussion:

3. 2. Ministries Administrative Bottlenecks: Epicentre of Inertia

Most public administration mostly in west Africa have resisted attempts to be proactive All those who have had the misfortune to go after a file in some of

these public services have a long story to tell. The stories rang from a missing file, incomplete file, and the interminable absence of a boss or the break down of a computer.

Most government efforts to speed up the treatment of files for civil servants have often met with ferocious resistance from people who think their survival depends on tips and outright corruption. Even the institution of a Public Service Day in the administration has been diverted from its main goals of creating awareness about the need for efficacy to mean a moment when officials award contracts for banners, organize conferences, and make empty speeches about hard work and results. Preaching virtue and practicing vice can be the best qualifier for most of the high officials in administration. How else can one describe an authority that goes out to tackle an issue of public importance and all he can tell a distress population is that he will take their complaint to the competent authority.

The introduction of a computer pool at most Ministries of public service and Administrative Reforms appears today as one of the most sorrowful innovations in administration. The number of desperate persons who hover around the windows of the said computer pool to get the same respond month after month is sad. No one knows the rights statistics about how long it takes to treat the file of any civil servant or any user of the civil service facilities in most public administration.

It is generally not strange (not to quote any country) to go on retirement and wait for three, four, five years without the required retirement benefits just because those handling the file have no interest in speeding up the file. "Call me by next week, come back in two weeks, etc." are the refrains that members of the public get when there are faced with the Public administration. One would have thought that the computer has come to facilitate matters for the public. Instead besides the long chain of officials that a simple file must go through before getting up to the Minister who may at time reject it, the malfunctioning of the machine is often

a justification for inefficiency and the inability of officials to take responsibility for the lack of a proactive spirit and sense of initiative in the services they are called up to render to the public. If the country has to lay claim to any meaningful development one day, it is indispensable for those appointed to duty posts to have the minimum possibility to take certain initiatives or even to be audacious enough to assume their responsibilities

3. 3. Government Inaction

According to his papers Jean Bosco Talla (Gredde Afrique 1999.), his survey concluded that, in Africa low salaries, the desire to acquire wealth at all cost, people not knowing their rights. He also pointed out that, the anti-corruption campaign in some countries are merely a wasted effort since Government had not taken any measures against the corrupted and the corrupters. It is felt that state machinery protects corrupters and the corrupted, and because of this impunity, corruption is a sea serpent neither the head nor the tail of which we can see. Respondents felt that had the first Gentleman of 30% been punished, corruption would not have been institutionalised in the public service. As concerns salaries, those interviews had a lot to say: They felt that given a minimum of well being, corruption in the public service would reduce on its own. To them people don't really need to be Rockefellers; rather they need to be able to asset themselves a little more in the society.

The quarterly journal (Banks d'Afrique issue of July 2006) noted that accountability revolves around corruption. This does not only kill the Nation economically, it also has a societal effect-because it prevents the building of a solid society founded on valorisation of the individual. Corruption in the civil service opens to anyone the door to any position with the first hope that the necessary skills will be acquired on the job, unfortunately the miraculous acquisition of these skills never occurs; schools loose their value. Those of young people who value work become discouraged. Children the most vulnerable members of the society, adopt as away of life and as the only way to succeed,

the practice of intrigues, cheating, corruption of teachers and civil servants etc. A person who is recruited in the civil service through cheating sees nothing abnormal to do the same thing in the public service. The civil service thus hatches a society of incompetence, ill prepared to face the international intellectual competition of the third millennium.

3.4. Lack of Professionalism, Declining Sense of Integrity, and Honesty, and Personal Agenda

Declining sense of integrity honesty, lack of professionalism and conflict of interests has destroyed African public service. The explanation we can give here is the way things are done in darkness, under the table. An example can be given on how promotions are done. No clear objectives criteria for staff evaluation. As such not the most competent are usually promoted but the well politically connected. As a result of injustices, people get discouraged by what happens around them and do not hesitate to resort to corrupt practices.

3.5. Corruption and Malpractices in the Civil Service

All over Africa, there is a general cry against corruption: It is shocking that act of corruption have been witnessed among top Civil and Government leaders in most African Societies. In Africa, the situation is now a general pandemonium. Thus most Africa Government has now embarked on a fight against corruption. Over the media, in conferences and seminars, in schools etc. there is the re-awakening of consciences towards this great societal malaise. Corruption is a state of life void of moral and ethical consciousness. Corruption is inevitable when individuals place their self-interest above social interest. Corrupt individuals are always in the habit of enriching themselves more than offer quality service, which may serve as a rich legacy of their impact.

3.6. Corruption in the award of Government contracts.

In most Government, in Africa, there are laws and decrees put in place to rigorously control purchases, services, suppliers and work bills to the state.

These actualities, which are generally carried out within the framework of what is called “Government contracts”, provide a very fertile ground for corruption in most public service in Africa. We would not delve into the various commissions that award contracts. However most concern areas cited (Fredrich-Ebert-Foundation Yaoundé 2004) was corruption is highlighted as the causes of unaccountability in most African public services are:

- The customs service.
- The justice department.
- Graft in the army and in the forces of law and order.
- Political corruption and public services.

3. 7. Customs Department

Everywhere in Africa, customs officials immediately go on defensive when asked questions about their services to the nation. The custom agency considers every declaration of goods as false. The customs officer like a police officer examining a car document carries out a long and pains taking search for abnormalities. This harassment will go on until the customer gives a tip to the official.

3. 8. Justice Department

Rather than uphold justice, the justice department has become one of the most corrupt institutions in Africa countries. In Cameroon, it is even alleged that magistrates walk the corridors of the legal department sometimes deliberately seeking out businesspersons to “say hello” to, more often to inform them of law suit against him or his relative. Bribery is also rife among members of the judiciary. Strangely, it has even noticed that a member of the judiciary is often obliged to bribe a colleague before a service can be rendered.

After winning a case, the magistrate is obliged to pass something under the table before the court decision is signed. This happened to a magistrate who after waiting for 5 months for the decision to be issued found himself obliged to pay about \$200 to the Court Registrar for him to draw up a decision. This testimony

from one of the participants of an international workshop on justice recently was confirmed by many. Magistrates of legal department who serves as prosecution trade their favours and weighs down heavily on judicial police, officers and bailiffs by abusively quashing their cases after being corrupted by litigants.

The magistrate and public prosecutor signed bailiffs emolument statements envelope exchange hands before and after these statements are signed. The Olusengun Obasanjo case as a young military officer in the 60s can also be sighted. According to Bate Bissong in his book “The Bastards” he narrated how Obasanjo was called to questioning as soon as was discovered that obasanjo who was a junior officer in the army has bought a car. Justifiable receipts were tendered during the investigation. As an officer Obasanjo kept part of his salary which enabled him to save and later bought a car. Today that bothered to question unjustifiable wealth?

3.9. Political Corruption

During the international workshop that brought together international political and opinion leaders, the problem of corruption in the electoral process was discussed exhaustively. Participants talk and frown about the sale of voting cards, rigging by administrative authorities etc. There are so many fraudulent activities during the political period that most civil servants are involved.

3.10. Public Administration

Corruption belongs to the category of phenomena which Durkleim (1990) describes as “pathological” which should not be confused with those considered as normal” the researcher seeks to understand a pathological phenomenon with a view to knowing it in order to correct it, to straighten it out, and make it to become what should be. One might be tempted to say that these researchers are going beyond their competence if they decide to make themselves the judge of things they observe. Durkleim notes that even through our aim is to study reality;

all our efforts would be completely worthless if we did not attempt to redress identified problems.

Ethics, integrity honesty trust, and accountability describe desirable characteristic and values of public service. These terms connote a sense of responsiveness, answerability and acceptability, norms of behaviour that public officials must strictly adhere to in the process of delivering public services to the citizenry. Modern government make use of many practical measures to inform compliance with ethical code and standards by public service agency. The most common of these tools is ethics. Legislation that requires public servants and candidates for public jobs to fill out financial and private property disclosure forms. This is important measure to control illicit enrichment and unlawful amassing of private wealth by public servant through abuse, of official position (Lewine et al 1990).

3. 11. Poor remuneration policies

Poor working conditions and low pay are some of the problems that contribute to the deplorable service record of African public services (Kamto 1998) Poor salaries do not motivate public employees to increase productivity or enhance commitment to public service. Public service salaries are not competitive with what the private sector offers for similar qualifications and competence level. This situation has encouraged brain drain, or to other sectors especially NGOs in search of better salaries and condition of work.

Poor pay has remained the major setback in most African public services. Poor pay has produced the following negative results.

- Medical doctors in public health institutions set up private practices in private clinics to have ends meet;
- Engineers stay in air condition offices instead of carrying out projects on site;
- Teachers are searching for nominations into administrative positions instead of teaching in schools or universities;

- Everyone would want to work in an office to control finances since the realities are there for those who work in these offices are extremely rich.

3. 12. Weak Institutions for Enforcing Accountability Standards

Government watchdog organisations have always been mandated to oversee the strict enforcement of professional standards of conduct in public service institutions. We can site example of: state control debts, anti corruption, ethics commissioned but these institutions have not been effective in enforcing professional standards. Anti-corruption civil service tribunals or disciplinary councils which look into irregularities, such as abuse of authority, embezzlement of public funds, unlawful enrichment etc have proven ineffective because of too much patronage. Very often, the higher ups in the organization intervene in the work of such bodies and ask for clemency/leniency to protect their protégés. The support structures for the administration of justice are:

- Inadequately trained staff;
- Poorly equipped and paid staff.
- Missing case files and poor management of information due to manual processes of documents.
- The public service has long been subjected to control and manipulations by politicians. It has compelled public managers to be answerable to politicians at the cost of a diminished sense of responsiveness and accountability to the people.
- The lower echelon s of the public services are overstaffed with semiskilled workers ,including clerks, secretaries, mail boys, reproduction staff etc all of whom have no marketable skills to venture into the labour market. This employee generally receives poor pay but stay on because of job security

4. Strategies to Promote Accountability in African Public Services

There are many strategies that could be mentioned in this paper but we would concentrate on the ICT strategy for obvious reasons. All the discussions and debate made in all seminars the world over point to the fact that there is a link

between information and communication technology in any modern management. The modern management means efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery especially in the public services. If African countries took the use of information and communication technology seriously and used them appropriately the public services would have been different from the mess we experience today.

4.1. Application of ICT

As in the context of globalisation, the importance of the appropriate application of Information and Communication Technologies (TIC) for efficient delivery of public service is obvious. Therefore, all over the world, rich countries and developing countries are engaged in harnessing the potential of e-administration. In the framework of the AFRICAN Governance programme, some pilot initiatives in some African countries for e-administration have been launched in the one hand, and some e-government projects are being implemented, notably the telemedicine project, on the other hand, with relative success.

It is evident that with the fast growth of ICT environment in some African countries, there is an enhanced use of ICT for public services delivery and in the medium or long term, the whole African continent would move to knowledge technology driven. To reach this ideal there is need for the government and its development partners, private sector and civil society to engage in co-ordinated and participatory concrete actions to get our public service moving.

4.2. Use of ICT at the Institutional level:

- Develop the capacities of an Agency to fully appropriate and lead the expansion of e-government in your country in terms of policy dialogue, policies and strategies elaboration, resources mobilisation...with specific Governmental institutions intervening as implementing agencies based on their specific expertise and missions.

- Set up an E-gov Unit at the Agency and provide necessary human, financial resources for their functioning.

4.3. Policies and Strategies

- Elaborate national ICT policies in individual country and a National E-Gov. Programme to be implemented, highlighting the VISION of the country on ICT for human development.
- An established legislative and regulatory framework for ICT issues like data security and protection, digital signature e-commerce, ICT education. Enacting laws and regulations for uninterrupted growth of ICT, in conformity with the world trade organisation (WTO) An act should be enacted to protect against computer fraud, hacking and damage to programs and data that may spread computer virus;
- Widespread introduction of ICT education in public and private educational institutions be encouraged. This is a prerequisite for producing skilled ICT manpower.
- Donor agencies, NGO's and other development partners of your country be encourage to help build the necessary capacity in area of.

4.4. Infrastructure Improvement

- To support the growing demand of the ICT sector, appropriate ICT infrastructure be established in public and private sector, as telecommunication infrastructure should be considered as infrastructure development industry like development of roads;
- In order to establish direct connectivity with international information and communication back-bone, African government should intensify the total connection of all sectors by the fibre optic submarine cable network;
- Basic telecommunication facilities are extended to the rural and underserved areas to bring the greater mass into the stream of ICT activities both by private public sector.

4.5. Efficiency in Service Delivery

- Government should establish immediately inter-banking payment system in electronic form.
- The use of ICT in health care is encouraged, especially in the area of electronic medical records, telemedicine, medical and health education.
- Telemedicine system network should be introduced throughout the individual country for cost effective delivery health care services.
- All hospitals and medical research centres should be linked by computer networks – with one medical centre of excellence as a central hub in order to make expert services available throughout the individual country.
- A computer based management information system with suitable wide area networks WAN and local area networks (LAN) should be established for Supreme Court and for the courts of first instance and appeal courts in individual countries.
- Local presentations and training should be used to make the population more familiarized with ICTs.
- Re-engineering of processes of the Key sectors of the economy will increase performance, and speed. Re-engineering will considerably reduce time and restructure administration for better performance.

4.6. Computer Information Network

Implementation of one common network for everyone. Entails building a super-high way linking all the regions on administrative unit of any African country and the creation of sectoral Intranets to coordinate the activities of various sectors. This will enhance free exchange of expertise and data and reduce the costly movements now made in search for reliable data in various sectors.

Each Ministry, Division, Government body should create an ICT cell, to be managed and run by well trained ICT professional. All Ministries, Divisions, agencies of government and autonomous organizations should set up web sites where all policy documents and information relevant to the public shall be posted

as early as possible and regularly updated. There should be a web portal of Government from which link will be provided to the web sites, like e-forms, e-procurement, e-recruitment, e-results etc. Government should introduce and promote ICT based services like G2G (Government to Government), G2E (Government to Employee), G2C (Government to Customers). Preference should be given to ICT literate candidates for the purpose of recruitment in public offices.

4.7. Human Resources Challenges

The numerous challenges posed into the Information Society have demonstrated the degree to which all economic and social development is determined by the quality of human resources. Not only does the lack of sufficient human resources in terms of quality and quantity remain a difficult problem, but national ICT related skills are sadly lacking. There are several reasons for this state of affairs:

1. Absence of a national ICT training policy; in most African countries.
2. Prohibitive access costs;
3. Unsuitable training structures and programmes;
4. Lack of information on the needs of the labour market;
5. Inadequate training/employment;
6. Lack of awareness of ICT challenges.

4.8. Shortage of Technical Skills

There is an acute shortage of technical staff in government services to design, install, operate, troubleshoot, support and maintain tools and internet nodes/hosts and networks which can provide technical support to and users. Numerous internet initiatives have been constrained resulting in delays or poorly implemented due to the low number of technical experts with the requisite computer networking and internet mode installation skills e g ISPs and tertiary institutions have to rely on a few local Experts. At the level of our councils, the participatory budget mechanism in councils can use ICT to improve public access to budget information. An example is the municipality of ESTONIA in Eastern Europe the council began using the Internet and citizens could voice

their opinion on budget priorities through Internet. Most council can be encouraged to redirect their resources to these projects.

4.9. Legal Regulatory Framework

The engagement of a Government to adopt and expand electronic government in its interaction with citizens, private sector and other public actors should go along way to helping any administration to be transparent with a regulatory framework. This will accelerate the setting up of a favourable legal Environment with sound rules and regulations tackling most issues related to electronic government issues (i) cyber Security (ii) cyber privacy, (iii) confidentiality, (v) access to, dissemination of, and preservation of government information; (v) accessibility of persons, (vi) digital signature E-commerce, (vii) e-administrative documents etc.

5. Benefits Information and Communication Technologies

Around the world, information and communication technologies (ICTs) are being touted as key instruments for enhancing economic development and promoting social, cultural and political progress. Cognizant of the tremendous potential offered by ICTs, most countries have embarked on significant policy and regulatory changes in order to create an enabling environment for harnessing and deploying ICTs for development purpose. In many parts of the world, governments and businesses are also working towards the creation of high-speed broadband information networks and infrastructure for better service of the citizens.

It is believed that the developing countries can derive the greatest benefits from the use of ICTs. New information and communications infrastructure and services are believed to provide developing countries with unprecedented opportunities to overcome their structural handicaps as well as their weaknesses arising from the lack of social and economic infrastructure, to leapfrog into the information age and society alongside their developed counterparts.

Recent studies and research however indicate that ICTs could also exacerbate existing disparities between nations and create what has been termed a 'digital divide'. Although few contest the potential of ICTs to enhance the development process, a number of critics contend that expecting ICTs to radically transform developing societies and address their structural weaknesses ranging from economic and social disparities, political fraction and indigenous cultural degeneration is far fetched. ICTs cannot be considered as the panacea for all social and economic problems. They are merely tools, and with all tools and instruments, ICTs can be effectively used only when they are harnessed and deployed with clearly identified objectives and through skilfully structured policy mechanisms and infrastructure deployment. It is here that appropriate policy and regulatory frameworks for the success of a nation's ICT initiatives and more importantly their effective use for purposes of public service and for socio-economic development.

6. Recommendations for Public Administration Reforms

To make the public administration more effective, Efficient and results-oriented, the following are suggested:

1. Accelerate the Public administrative reforms on harmonizing governmental structures and operations and re-engineering business processes.
2. Develop a national Enterprise Architecture Program which builds on a comprehensive business driven blueprint of the entire government which will (i) reduce redundancy, (ii) facilitate horizontal and vertical information sharing (iii) establish a direct relationship between IT and public administration, i.e. Citizen-customer-focused government,
3. Ensure web presence for all, the Ministries and governmental institutions.
4. Develop a Governmental intranet, preferably using harmonised broadband technologies, at Central level with interconnection with division at the provincial, Level.
5. Evaluate ongoing and develop and implement more thematic e-gov., G2G (Government to Government), G2E (Government to Employee), G2C

- (Government to Customers) such as programs as (e-health, e-commerce and trade, e-education, e-elections, e-taxation, e-Customs...
6. Deploy Computer based Management Systems, Information Management Systems in the public administration.
 7. Setting deadlines for the processing of files so as to avoid the abusive retentions which brings about secret dealings.
 8. Eliminating while raising salaries, all pernicious inequalities which characterize the structure of the incomes of employees given that such inequalities give rise to unhealthy frustration liable to greatly upset the harmony and balance necessary for a good public service.
 9. Instituting allowances, emoluments, and advancements likely to compensate or encourage output.
 10. Setting up of career profiles aimed at guaranteeing a minimum of rationality in the promotion of state employees and sustainability.

Reducing the length of time for holding key administrative positions. Those measures of general nature must be complemented and reinforced by measures specific to each sector e.g. finance, media, education, customs, army, police, public contracts etc.

7. Conclusion

Most Civil Servants in the African continent have never been well compensated. Because of the poor compensation and reward policies, this has generated administrative malpractices throughout the continent. This has compelled public servants to succumb to fraud. Introductory report by (Valantin Zinga) on corruption in Cameroon the media viewpoint attests to the cases of corruption in Africa. But there is another view, which state that malpractices exist in our public service because individuals whose purchasing power has dwindled have not acquired the habit to fight for their rights. To compensate the losses sustained, they fall on those whom they are called upon to serve.

Finally mobilization and collection of state revenue in Africa is very much affected by corruption. Not even poor pay. But the zeal to get rich quick has contributed to the civil service not producing the expected results. An enhanced sense of standards and accountability is required to curb rampant corruption in the revenue generation process in Africa. It is an illusion, as the international Financial institutions hypocritically claim to attack this “canker-worm” in our civil service without putting the nature of African Government to question because, it is worth emphasizing that if corruption is a central element in the functioning of the state, destroying it means shaking the whole political system founded outside any productive process. For leaders who need stability so as to remain in power. In any case international institutions “suffering from credibility plunged African into the economy)” quagmire” through standardized structural adjustment programs which do not take the specificity of each country into account.