



The Omnipresence of Conspicuous Abnormalities in Cameroon

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ABSTRACT

This work is an attempt to show that Cameroon is experiencing a good number of conspicuous abnormalities in the daily management of private and public affairs. These abnormalities are omnipresent in virtually all domains of life. They have wreaked havoc for so many years. Nobody cares about addressing and redressing this deplorable situation. Consequently, there is need for all Cameroonians (government workers and officials; ordinary citizens; intellectuals; non-governmental institutions; etc) to devise ways and means of handling this unfortunate situation.

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Just like in many African countries, there is a lot of laxity in the management of public affairs in Cameroon. This situation is perceivable in almost all sectors of life. Government officials and their collaborators do not take public management or governance seriously, thereby paving the way for a plethora of abnormalities in various domains of public life. Some of these domains are, namely, transportation; education; public service; health; legal and judicial system; democracy; housing and town planning; public contracts; sports and bilingualism.

The domain of transportation in Cameroon is experiencing a good number of conspicuous abnormalities. I shall highlight just two. The first one

concerns the disreputable attitude of some drivers (especially cab drivers) and some commercial motorbike riders. They are not polite to other road users and their passengers. They are always impatient on the road. Another conspicuous abnormality deals with the laxity in the issuing of road-worthiness documents for vehicles. Some of these documents are worthless since they are issued on the basis of unconventional road-worthiness tests.

As concerns education, the educational system in Cameroon is displaying some conspicuous abnormalities. I shall spotlight just three. The first deals with the very low salaries or incomes of Cameroonian teachers at all levels (primary, secondary and tertiary)

of education. Their efforts and professional statuses are not given the esteem they deserve. Secondly, the educational syllabuses in Cameroon do not adequately adapt to the professional, social and moral needs of the Cameroonian society. Their outcome, in terms of personal responsibility, is a far cry from Forbi Stephen Kizito's Perception of Personal Responsibility.¹ Lastly, the Cameroonian educational system is one of the most corrupt in Africa and the world. Corruption (bribery) is omnipresent and omnipotent at all levels (examinations; the admission of students; the recruitment of teachers; etc).

The public service in Cameroon is replete with cases of conspicuous abnormalities. One of them is the lack of a streamlined career profile for the various professional corps. Members of these corps work without depending on any reliable career profile, thereby paving the way for a situation of total disorder in terms of promotion, etc. Another glaring abnormality is the high rate of corruption or graft. Many officials in Cameroon's public institutions are very corrupt. They rely on bribes to make ends meet. Other abnormalities involve nepotism, tribalism, favoritism, etc in terms of recruitment, appointment, etc.

Cameroon's health system is replete with cases of glaring abnormalities. This is a system in which patients who are unable to pay their hospital bills are taken hostage by hospital authorities. This pathetic phenomenon is rampant in a good number of health institutions in Cameroon. Furthermore, many public service doctors devote a considerable part of their time to private practice, thereby depriving, to some extent, patients in public hospitals of their services. This situation is due to the meagre salaries earned by these doctors. These two cases of glaring abnormalities constitute just the tip of the iceberg.

The legal and judicial system in Cameroon is very unreliable. A good number of its verdicts are violated or not implemented. This despicable situation obtains even when the verdicts of the highest court in Cameroon (the Supreme Court) are concerned. Some

judgements passed by this court have been trampled upon by some top officials of Cameroon; senior ruling party members; etc. Moreover, the Constitutional Council showed beyond reason doubt that some members of Cameroon's legal and judicial system could be very insensitive to the daily plight of Cameroonians. This point was exemplified by Barrister Ikome Ngongi's utterances in this council in 2018.² In terms of compliance with the constitution, this legal instrument has a very strange or weird provision, a provision which states that the new institutions provided for by the Cameroonian Constitution shall be set up progressively or gradually.³

The practice of democracy in Cameroon is a far cry from orthodox democratic practice. It encompasses all sorts of shabby phenomena inherent in obsolete democracies. I shall mention just two of them. In Cameroon, there has never been any genuine dialogue between the ruling party and opposition parties. The former believes in Machiavellian politics. It adores outsmarting its rivals at the expense of its people. It is not willing to heed and implement rational proposals such as the one presented by Linda Ankiambom and Gilead Nkwain.⁴ Furthermore, Cameroon has more than 300 political parties. Most of these parties are involved in at least one of the following condemnable phenomena: obstructionism in parliament, etc; political treachery against the Cameroonian people; stomach politics; etc.⁵

In Cameroon, there is no proper implementation of conventional or acceptable housing and town-

¹ Forbi Stephen Kizito, "Pillar Role of a Man of Honour in the Family", *CMA Echoes (A Publication of Catholic Men Association – CMA of the Archdiocese of Yaounde)*, No. 4, Yaounde, CMA, 2019, p.32

Forbi Stephen Kizito brings to the fore the meaning of the term *responsibility* in the society. He states:

Becoming a responsible person means doing the things you are expected to do, being able to consciously make decisions, behaving in a manner that seek to improve family life. Most importantly, a responsible person accepts the consequences of his or her own actions and decisions.

Elements of responsible behaviour: Responsible behaviour is made up of five essential elements – honesty, compassion/respect, fairness, accountability and courage.

² Ikome Ngongi (In his submission in Cameroon's Constitutional Council in 2018)

His utterances were as a result of the insensitivity portrayed by this council to the urgent need to annul the 2018 Presidential Election, a need which stemmed from the fact that there was- and still is - an ongoing atrocious war in the Anglophone part of the country. He rightly stated that the said council was insensitive to the plight of war –torn Anglophone Cameroon since it was out to validate the said elections regardless of this war. Furthermore, it considered, in a very insensitive manner, President Paul Biya's victory in this election and his stay in power as being more important than the existence of Cameroon and the collective interest of Cameroonians! Quite preposterous!

³ Article 67(1) of Cameroon's 1996 Constitution.

⁴ Linda Ankiambom Lawyer and Gilead Nkwain Ngam, *Literary Forces and Democratic Evolution in Cameroon (A Historical Perspective)*, Riga, SIA OmniScriptum Publishing, 2018, p.55

Linda Ankiambom and Gilead Nkwain assert that Cameroonian democracy is in need of constant adjustments to the voices of Cameroonians expressed in literary creativity and criticisms.

⁵ Stomach politics is politics which gives priority to individual materialism at the expense of the common wealth.

planning policies and programmes. Most Cameroonian towns depict the fact that Cameroon does not care about the said policies and programmes. A glaring example of this situation is the lack of enough access roads in all towns and cities. Many neighbourhoods have paths in portions which are meant for access roads! The lack of access roads renders it difficult or impossible for some activities such as rescue operations to take place smoothly.

The world of public contracts in Cameroon is very controversial. It is full of conspicuous cases of abnormalities. In some of these cases, the procedure for the award of the said contracts is hardly respected. A good number of them go to friends, relatives, etc. In other words, the mechanisms for the award of public contracts in Cameroon are flouted by those who award them. Furthermore, many public contracts in Cameroon experience overbilling while others are not executed by those called upon to execute them.

In the domain of sports, Cameroon displays quite a good number of glaring abnormalities. One of them deals with the remuneration of sportsmen and sportswomen. Some of them spend several months to get paid. Moreover, most of their salaries are derisory or ridiculous. Another glaring abnormality is the lack of respect for games schedules. A good example, here, is the lack of respect for the opening schedules of Cameroon's First Division and Second Division Championships. They are always postponed!

The practice of bilingualism in Cameroon is still far below expectations despite the fact that Cameroon is a bilingual country. Notwithstanding the existence of some positive steps taken to improve upon the despicable state of this practice, a state Denis Atabong refers to as "a mighty fraud against the people of Southern Cameroons", there still exist some glaring abnormalities in the said practice.⁶ These abnormalities include the use of only the French Language by

⁶ Denis Atabong, "Cameroon Bilingualism: A mighty Fraud against the People of Southern Cameroons!", *The Post Magazine*, Edition No. 0001, Buea, The Post Magazine, 2019, pp. 14-15

Denis Atabong depicts a very gloomy picture of Cameroon's bilingualism. He states:

Francophones learn English today, not so that it can be used in the Cameroon administration, but for the enormous advantages that English gives them in the world. Do not be deceived. Even Francophone ministers who study in English countries use only the French Language when serving in the Cameroon administration. The Anglophone Prime Minister uses only French and so do all other Anglophones in the administration. They must do this to prove to their Francophone bosses that they have been thoroughly assimilated, to pretend to belong, to gain favours and so on. No one dares point out the programmed end of bilingualism in Cameroon.

Cameroon's President (Paul Biya) when addressing Cameroonians. He scarcely speaks in English! Another glaring abnormality is the publication of some official documents solely in French (no English version!).

Finally, the conspicuous abnormalities discussed in this work constitute just the tip of the iceberg. Cameroon displays these abnormalities in practically all domains of daily life. There is need for all Cameroonians (government workers and officials; ordinary citizens; intellectuals; non-governmental institutions; etc) to devise ways and means of convincingly addressing and redressing this deplorable situation.

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