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SERVICE PUBLIC IMPROVEMENT IN GABON

MASTER'S THESIS

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THESIS DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis entitled “**Public service improvement in Gabon**” a research study by scientific ethical principles, which was conducted by me under the guidance of Asst. Prof. Dr. Hafijur Rahman. I also declare that there is no manipulation of the data used in this thesis and no part of the thesis is presented as work from another thesis in this university or other universities.



Claude Lucia NFOULA ENGUIE

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

"At certain times in our lives, our own light is extinguished and rekindled by the spark of another person. Each of us has reason to be deeply grateful to those who have rekindled the flame within us. " (Albert Schweitzer)

These words of Albert Schweitzer resonate deeply with my Master's journey, and it is with immense gratitude that I wish to thank all those who have contributed to rekindling my flame throughout this academic adventure. Therefore, as a preamble to this work, I would like to express my gratitude to GOD, source of wisdom and inspiration, who has guided and supported me throughout this academic journey. His light has illuminated my path in moments of doubt and instilled in me the perseverance necessary to complete this thesis. I would then like to extend my heartfelt thanks to my thesis supervisor, Asst.Prof.Dr Hafijur RAHMAN, whose expertise, patience and unwavering support were crucial sparks in my intellectual journey. My gratitude also extends to the members of the jury who agreed to evaluate this work and thus shed their own light on this research. A special thank you to my family, including my brothers and sisters, and especially my father and mother, who have always been accomplices par excellence to my ambitions, and whose love, patience and encouragement have been an inexhaustible source of comfort and motivation, rekindling my flame in the most difficult moments. I would also like to thank very special friends who have been very present for me: Aïcha , Ralph, Kevin and Jeremie. A person I would also like to thank is Mr Turan Güldür, who has always helped me tremendously in my daily life. Finally, I would like to thank TOKAT GAZİOSMANPAŞA UNIVERSITY for providing a conducive environment for this research to flourish.

TEŞEKKÜRLER

"Hayatımızın belli dönemlerinde kendi ışığımız söner ve başka bir kişinin kıvılcımıyla yeniden alevlenir. Her birimizin, içimizdeki alevi yeniden alevlendirenlere derin bir minnet duymak için nedenleri vardır. "Albert Schweitzer. Albert Schweitzer'in bu sözleri benim yüksek lisans yolculuğumda derin bir yankı uyandırıyor ve bu akademik macera boyunca ateşimi yeniden alevlendirmeye katkıda bulunan herkese büyük bir minnettarlıkla teşekkür etmek istiyorum. Bu nedenle, bu çalışmaya bir giriş olarak, bu akademik yolculuk boyunca bana rehberlik eden ve destek olan, bilgelik ve ilham kaynağı TANRI'ya şükranlarımı sunmak istiyorum. O'nun ışığı, şüpheyi düşüğüm anlarda yolumu aydınlattı ve bana bu tezi tamamlamak için gerekli azmi aşıladı.Uzmanlığı, sabrı ve sarsılmaz desteğiyle entelektüel yolculuğumda önemli bir kıvılcım olan tez danışmanım Prof Dr Hafijur RAHMAN'a en içten teşekkürlerimi sunarım.Bu çalışmayı değerlendirmeyi kabul eden ve böylece bu araştırmaya kendi ışıklarını tutan jüri üyelerine de şükranlarımı sunarım.Erkek ve kız kardeşlerim de dahil olmak üzere aileme, özellikle de hırslarımın her zaman en mükemmel suç ortakları olan ve sevgileri, sabırları ve cesaretlendirmeleri tükenmez bir teselli ve motivasyon kaynağı olan, en zor anlarda ateşimi yeniden alevlendiren babam ve anneme özel olarak teşekkür ederim.Ayrıca bana her zaman destek olan çok özel dostlarıma da teşekkür etmek isterim: Aicha, Ralph, Kevin ve Jeremie.Ayrıca teşekkür etmek istediğim bir kişi de günlük hayatımda bana her zaman çok yardımcı olan Sayın Turan Güldür'dür.Son olarak, bu araştırmanın gelişmesi için elverişli bir ortam sağladığı için TOKAT GAZİOSMANPAŞA ÜNİVERSİTESİ'ne teşekkür ederim.

ABSTRACT

PUBLIC SERVICE IMPROVEMENT IN GABON

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In a global context where the modernisation of public administrations has become a priority, the improvement of public services is a crucial issue for States, and in particular for developing countries such as Gabon. This study examines the changes and challenges associated with the evolution of the Gabonese public service since independence, focusing on the mechanisms of development and renovation of the public administration. The main objective is to analyse historical changes, recent innovations and persistent obstacles to the effectiveness of the public service in Gabon. The methodology used combines a multidisciplinary approach, combining historical documentary analysis, comparative study of administrative reforms and quantitative analysis of the performance of public services. The chapters that structure this research deal with the theoretical foundations of public service improvement, the historical evolution of public management in Gabon since independence, contemporary initiatives for administrative modernisation with a focus on the digital transition, more specifically the digitalisation of public services in Gabon as a means of improving services, and the identification of structural and cyclical factors. The findings underline Gabon's considerable efforts to modernise its administration, but also highlight persistent problems such as corruption, budgetary constraints and the need to strengthen the training of civil servants. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of the dynamics of the transformation of the Gabonese public service, and offers strategic perspectives for its continuous improvement.

Keywords: Public Service, Public Administration, Gabon, Administrative Reform, Modernisation, Digitalisation

ÖZET

GABON'DA KAMU HİZMETLERİNİN İYİLESTİRİLMESİ

Yüksek Lisans Tezi Kamu Yönetimi Anabilim Dalı

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Kamu yönetiminin modernizasyonunun bir öncelik haline geldiği küresel bağlamda, kamu hizmetlerinin iyileştirilmesi Devletler ve özellikle Gabon gibi gelişmekte olan ülkeler için çok önemli bir konudur. Bu çalışma, kamu yönetiminin geliştirilmesi ve yenilenmesi mekanizmalarına odaklanarak Gabon kamu hizmetinin bağımsızlıktan bu yana geçirdiği evrime ilişkin değişiklikleri ve zorlukları incelemektedir. Temel amaç, Gabon'da kamu hizmetinin etkinliğinin önündeki tarihsel değişimleri, son yenilikleri ve kalıcı engelleri analiz etmektir. Kullanılan yöntem, tarihsel belgeler analizi, idari reformların karşılaştırmalı incelenmesi ve kamu hizmetlerinin performansının nicel analizini birleştiren çok disiplinli bir yaklaşımı bir araya getirmektedir. Bu araştırmayı yapılandıran bölümler, kamu hizmetlerinin iyileştirilmesinin teorik temellerini, bağımsızlıktan bu yana Gabon'da kamu yönetiminin tarihsel gelişimini, dijital geçişe odaklanan idari modernizasyon için çağdaş girişimleri, daha spesifik olarak Gabon'daki kamu hizmetlerinin bir hizmet iyileştirme aracı olarak dijitalleşmesini ve yapısal ve konjonktürel faktörlerin tanımlanmasını ele almaktadır. Bulgular, Gabon'un idaresini modernize etme yönündeki kayda değer çabalarının altını çizmekle birlikte yolsuzluk, bütçe kısıtlamaları ve kamu görevlilerinin eğitiminin güçlendirilmesi ihtiyacı gibi süregelen sorunların da altını çizmektedir. Bu çalışma, Gabon kamu hizmetinin dönüşüm dinamiklerinin daha iyi anlaşılmasına katkıda bulunmakta ve sürekli iyileştirilmesi için stratejik perspektifler sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kamu Hizmeti, Kamu Yönetimi, Gabon, İdari Reform, Modernizasyon, Dijitalleşme

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ABBREVIATION

AFDB: African Development Bank Group

ANINF: Agence Nationale des Infrastructures Numériques et des Fréquences

ARCEP: Regulatory Agency for Electronic, Communication and Posts

ARTEL: Telecommunication Regulatory Agency

CDO: Chief Digital Officer

CIAG: Creation of Gabonese Administration Information

CNAMGS: Gabon's national health insurance program

CPF: Country Partnership Framework

DOM: Overseas Departements

ENA: Emergency Nurses Association

GDP: Gross domestic product

GNP: Gross National Product

ICT: Information and communication technology

IMF: International Monetary Fund

IT: Information Technology

ITU: International Telecommunication Union

NGO: Non Governmental Organisation

NGP: New Public Management

NICT: National Institute of Information and Communications Technology

NPM: New Public Management

NPS: New Public Service

NSR: New Remuneration System

OECD: The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

PAT: Transformation Acceleration Plan

PDCA: Plan-Do-Check-Act

PDG: Gabonese Democratic Party

PNTHD: National Very High Speed Project

POs: Privatised public organisations

PPS: Personalised Public Service

PRE: Economic Recovery Plan

PSGE: Strategic Plan for an Emerging Gabon

PSM: Public Service Motivation

RCB: Rationalisation Of Budgetary Choices

SDGs: Sustainable Development Goals

SMEs: Subject matter experts

SNIS: New National Health Information System

UK: United Kingdom

UN: United Nation

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNFPA: United Nations Population Fund

UNICEF: United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

WHO: World Health Organization



INTRODUCTION

Public service improvement evokes a very complex debate between operational efficiency and social equity. Previous research highlight the need to modernize processes, that is to say the adoption of new reforms to increase efficiency, while emphasizing the importance of maintaining accessibility for all. The different authors explore themes such as citizen participation, transparency and rational management of resources to achieve the improvement of public service (Noveck, 2015; Kettl, 2015). That is why the improvement of public service is a subject which has long aroused the interest of researchers in public administration, particularly with the objective model which is the oldest and at least apparently the simplest efficiency model (Maynard-Moody and McLintock, 1987). This is based on the idea that formal organizations are created for a specific purpose: to achieve objectives that individuals, families or communities cannot achieve on their own. However, over time these objectives can change or improve, so the extent to which these objectives are achieved can be used to evaluate the degree of success or failure (Mohr 1973; Simon 1964). Public service improvement is one of those elusive concepts in administration. It is simpler to define it and measure it according to the total satisfaction of each person than to measure it as a herd (Floz, 2004). Which makes it a fairly controversial notion of approach that some have defined it and evaluated it as simply as possible, as Floz basically says. According to an approach centered on results or (mode of expectation of objectives) which is based on the hypothesis according to which we can masonically expect that public services achieve their objective political mission in one way or another (Amukhan, Yanaan and Lambright, 2008). This approach suggests that the evaluation of performance and the possibilities for improvement should be judged in terms of achieving changes supervised by political actors, for example if the objective of a public health service is to improve the physical well-being of populations. They suggest that the analysis will be an assessment of a country's existing morbidity and mortality indicators.

However, other people do not fully agree with this approach, finding it too limiting. And determines the improvement of public service as a closer correspondence between perceptions of actual and desired standards of public services (Boyne, 2003). Indeed, Boyne suggests that the evaluation of improvement is based on the process and practices used to provide the services, the importance of performance and efficiency in the public

sector. Boyne maintains that the use of clear and objective performance measures, as well as the accountability of stakeholders, can contribute to a significant improvement in public services. It also highlights the importance of involving citizens in the improvement process, thus promoting more open and inclusive governance.

Compared to the thesis supported by Boyne (2003), some researchers(Barber,2007; Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2004) are more or less in the same direction, adding other approaches such as that focused on results, we speak of the approach in relation to the new public management. In particular Hood who supports that the tools of new public management have been widely described as challenging the assumptions and practices of traditional public administration (Hood, 1991). For him, improving public service can be achieved by introducing private sector principles into public management such as decentralization, competence and performance measurement and accountability. It also highlights the importance of results-based governance and management. It proposes that public organizations adopt more flexible and results-oriented approaches emphasizing citizen satisfaction and operational efficiency. In summary, Hood (1991) advocates a profound transformation of public management to guarantee continued improvement in public service. Beyond debates about which dimensions of performance are most appropriate for measuring public service improvement, we must recognize ensuring that services are judged by various internal and external groups (Connolly, Conlon and Deutsch, 1980). According to these researchers, perceptions of performance vary depending on who is asked to respond, how they are asked to respond and under what conditions. The multiple districts served by utilities use different criteria to evaluate performance. Indeed, improving public service can involve initiatives such as the digitalization of administrative processes, increased citizen participation, and the development of policies focused on sustainability and social inclusion. Approaches focused on efficiency, transparency and collaboration between different branches of government are also crucial.

In Gabon, Improving public service is a complex subject addressed by few Gabonese authors, researchers and practitioners. Government publications, academic work and local research highlight challenges and initiatives to strengthen public governance. Themes such as transparency, citizen participation and operational efficiency are at the heart of the discussions. In fact, the improvement public service in Gabon has been achieved through several initiatives and reforms. New Public Management (NPM) theory was introduced to

improve public performance, with emphasis on effective resource management and stakeholder accountability, as argued by Pollitt (2003) in his work "The Essential Public Manager". The new public management seeks to improve the efficiency of the public sector and the control that government has over it. NPM reformers argue that these changes will allow governments to provide better quality services and create public management organizations. public sector that responds to citizens' needs more effectively." Because Gabon has in fact modified its legal framework to facilitate the conclusion of contracts and improve the management of public services but has also created supervision institutions to create and ensure the quality of these (Huet, Pompignan and Batt, 2013) . Reforms aimed at modernizing and transforming the civil service have also been undertaken, reflecting an urgent desire for improvement. In other words, Gabon has undertaken a reform of the public service to improve the quality and universality of public service, by reforming institutions and modernizing public action tools (Mouele, 2023). For example, work to improve basic services was undertaken in Libreville (Mboumba, 2007) . Other reforms have been taken, notably that of improving public effectiveness and efficiency (Mamboundou, 2021). In addition, concrete measures, such as legal aid, have been put in place to guarantee access to the public service of justice, in particular for the most deprived, (Moukouangui, 2023). But also the emerging Gabon strategic plan (PSGE) which also aims to modernize public action tools (Obame, 2020); So these initiatives demonstrate Gabon's commitment to strengthening its public service to meet the needs of its citizens.

Over the past decade the Gabonese government has taken several initiatives to improve public services, particularly in the areas of digital service delivery and broadband connectivity in other words the digitalization of administrative procedures. Indeed, Gabon has launched projects to digitize administrative processes, such as the creation of online platforms to facilitate access to government services. This may include online services for obtaining official documents, paying taxes and other administrative transactions. (Ministry of the Economy, Finance and Industrial and Digital Sovereignty) Thus allowing greater accessibility to public services and reducing administrative delays. These changes have helped make government services faster and more efficient (World Bank Group, 2019). Then Gabon established an initiative with Europe called the Team Europe Gabon initiative, which is a cooperation program between the European Union and Gabon aimed at

promoting sustainable development and environmental protection. It includes actions in the areas of environmental education and social and environmental responsibility. In this way, Gabon is committed to protecting 30% of its terrestrial, freshwater and marine habitats, making it a leader in terms of conservation (Sarah Wakefield Adhya, 2022). The country has also established strong institutions for environmental protection, such as the National Climate Council and a National Agency managing its 15 natural parks (Ighobor, 2022). Finally concerning the education and health sectors; Gabon received support for the development of its two sectors with projects aimed at facilitating school enrollment and renovating health centers. Indeed, joint United Nations programs aim to target the most vulnerable populations, particularly women and young people, for example by providing birth certificates to access education, health care and social protection. In addition, the Gabonese government has provided very significant funds for the construction and modernization of hospitals across the country. These improvements aimed to provide quality medical facilities, thereby reducing regional disparities in access to health care. They also implemented reforms in the education sector to strengthen the Gabonese education system. this may include revising school curricula, training teachers and improving infrastructure to create an environment conducive to learning. Within this initiatives, this thesis analyzes public service improvement in Gabon. This thesis aims to analyse the transformation and modernisation of public services in Gabon, a complex process taking place in the context of administrative reforms and institutional development.

The main objective is to understand the dynamics of change and the strategies implemented to improve the efficiency, accessibility and quality of public services in this Central African country. In order to achieve this objective, this research will seek to answer the following questions: How have administrative and technological reforms changed the delivery of public services in Gabon since independence? What are the key factors that have contributed to improving the efficiency and accessibility of public services in Gabon, particularly in the education and health sectors? And What are the main national initiatives taken by Gabon to modernise and improve the efficiency of its public services? These research questions will allow an in-depth analysis of the processes of change, the challenges faced and the successes achieved in the transformation of the Gabonese public administration. By analysing these different dimensions, this thesis aims to provide a nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the efforts to modernise public services in

Gabon. This research is part of an interpretive qualitative approach that favours in-depth analysis of processes and meanings.

The methodology is based on a combination of data collection and analysis techniques, including an extensive documentary analysis of government reports, official documents, international publications and academic literature on administrative reform will also be conducted to gather qualitative perspectives and insights. Thematic analysis will be used to identify, analyse and report on emerging patterns and themes in the data, providing a nuanced understanding of the dynamics of public service transformation in Gabon.

This thesis consists of three chapters. The first chapter deals with the improvement of the public service in general: in this chapter we will see the different theories surrounding this subject, basing our interest on some of these theories that have stood out, such as NPM or the New Public Service, and finally see how these public services have become digital with the arrival of new technologies. Then the second chapter, which deals with the management of this public service in Gabon, a Central African country: this chapter explains how the Gabonese authorities have managed the public service after independence until our era. Finally, the third chapter presents the main initiatives taken by Gabon to improve its public services: this chapter discusses not only the initiatives, but also the different problems and the solutions that can be offered.

CHAPTER 1

PUBLIC SERVICE IMPROVEMENT

Public service improvement, a central concept of modern public administration, has evolved significantly over time. Initially focused on professionalisation and the fight against corruption in the 1880s and 1920s, it adapted to the expansion of the welfare state after the Second World War. The 1970s and 1980s marked a turning point with the emergence of New Public Management, which questioned the effectiveness of the public sector in the face of economic crises. This approach was followed in the 1990s by the concepts of 'reinventing government' and 'entrepreneurial government', which aimed to make public services more efficient and responsive (Osborne and Gaebler, 1992). Since the 2000s, the focus has been on digitising services and e-government, while the last decade has seen the emergence of concepts such as 'open government' and 'co-creation', which emphasise the importance of citizen participation and innovation. Today, public service improvement is defined as a continuous process aimed at increasing the efficiency, accessibility and quality of government services, while adapting to the changing needs of citizens and respecting fundamental democratic values. In other words, public service improvement refers to initiatives aimed at optimising the quality and efficiency of services provided to citizens, as the OECD (2005) states: "Improving public service consists of making services more efficient, accessible and responsive to user needs".

This involves approaches such as listening to users, analysing the results and implementing action plans adapted to local needs. In this sense, Pollitt and Bouckaert (2011) define it as: "a deliberate set of changes in the structures and processes of public sector organisations with the aim of improving their functioning". The Public Services Programme, for example, favours a decentralised approach where operational teams are empowered to identify and prioritise improvement actions in collaboration with users and other stakeholders. This approach aims to increase citizen satisfaction and trust in public institutions, as strongly supported by Denhardt and Denhardt (2000), who propose a citizen-centred definition: "a continuous process aimed at meeting citizens' needs and expectations for public services while respecting democratic values" (Marc, Etienne and Younhee; 2009).

1.1 Theories of Improving Public Service

Improving the delivery of public services is one of the central tasks of public administration reforms, and this improvement is crucial to ensure user satisfaction and the efficiency of public administration. As Bovaird and Löffle (2009) argue in their book *Public Management and Governance*: "Improving public services is at the heart of public administration reforms. It aims to increase citizen satisfaction and organisational effectiveness, while meeting public expectations of service quality and responsiveness". In a context of increasing citizen expectations, it is essential to take measures to improve the quality of public services. This involves finding solutions to the challenges facing public services, adopting effective strategies and measuring the results achieved. Indeed, the current context for improving public services is characterised by a growing demand from users for quality services that are accessible and adapted to their needs. At the same time, expectations of public administration have evolved, with a desire for transparency, efficiency and citizen participation. In addition, technological advances have had an impact on public services, offering new opportunities but also requiring the adaptation of practices and skills. Hence the importance of the capital it dreams of in several respects. First of all, it makes it possible to meet the needs and expectations of users, thus guaranteeing their satisfaction and their trust in public institutions. Secondly, it helps to strengthen the legitimacy of public administration by demonstrating its capacity to provide quality services and to adapt to changes in society. In addition, improving public service makes it possible to optimise the use of financial resources by reducing inefficiencies and increasing administrative efficiency. Improving public service is therefore a key objective for governments and administrations around the world. It can be considered through various theories and approaches that aim to optimise the effectiveness, efficiency and quality of services provided to citizens. Among these theories, we can identify certain leading theories developed and supported by different authors. These include public management theory, public governance theory, service quality theory, public innovation theory, etc. Each of these theories offers approaches and tools for improving public service delivery. Therefore, this concept is a very controversial issue due to the different approaches. The literature highlights the need to modernise processes by adopting new reforms to increase efficiency, while emphasising the importance of maintaining accessibility for all.

We would like to discuss from four crucial approaches: Citizen-centered Approach, Quality Approach, Governance Approach and The Innovation Approach.

1.1.1 Citizen-centered Approach

Some authors have relied on the citizen to improve public services, we speak of the citizen-centred approach. It allows us to focus on the needs and expectations of citizens in order to design and deliver more efficient and responsive public services. As defended by Donella Meadows, a pioneer in the field of systems thinking, she emphasised "the importance of taking into account the needs and perspectives of citizens in the design and delivery of public services. Known for his concept of servant leadership, Greenleaf "put forward the idea that public officials should focus on the welfare and interests of citizens in order to improve the quality of public services". But other writers have also contributed to the conceptualisation of this approach, notably the American philosopher and educator Dewey (2005), who argued for a democratic approach to public administration, emphasising citizen participation and taking into account the needs of the community in the delivery of public services (Audoire, 2016). Carolyn J. Heinrich, a professor specialising in social policy and public management, who has conducted research on the importance of citizen participation in the evaluation and improvement of public services. Finally, Mary Parker Follett, the pioneer of organisational theory, emphasised in her writings the importance of collaboration and co-creation between citizens and public organisations to improve the efficiency and relevance of public services. Since then, all these authors have contributed to the promotion of a citizen-centred approach to public management, emphasising the importance of participation, transparency and accountability to improve the quality and efficiency of public services. Their work has influenced policies and practices aimed at strengthening citizen participation in governance and public service delivery.

1.1.2 Quality Approach

Several authors then defended a quality approach to improving public services. It applies the principles of quality management to continuously improve the processes and outcomes of public services, involving the adoption of high standards, citizen participation, staff training and the implementation of effective processes to ensure more efficient and satisfactory service delivery. W. Edwards Deming (1986), known as the father of the quality movement, developed principles and methods to improve the quality of processes and services, particularly in the public sector. In fact, having observed that American companies were underperforming compared to their Japanese competitors, he expanded

this approach in his writings with a view to improving the American public service. In *Out of the Crisis*, he proclaims: "The purpose of this book is to transform the American management style. It is no longer acceptable to throw employees onto the unemployment line. Market losses and the unemployment they create are not preordained. They are not inevitable. They are man-made. The fundamental reason for the ailment of American industry and the resulting unemployment is the inability of managers to lead. He who does not sell cannot buy. The reasons commonly cited for business failure are start-up costs, cost overruns, inventory write-offs, competition - anything but the real reason, plain and simple bad management (Petersen, 1999). The approach developed in this way is a widely recognised model for continuous improvement, known as the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle. It is also known as the Deming cycle or the Shewhart cycle because it was developed by Walter Shewhart and popularised by W. Edwards Deming (1991). The quality management expert confirms the reasoning of Deming, Juran (1951) by emphasising the importance of planning, control and continuous improvement to ensure the quality of public services. Thus, the question of quality of service has become an increasingly important and delicate concept for the public service, due to the management news adopted and the existence of significant problems of information asymmetries between service providers and consumers of services. This is why many other authors have supported this approach, because the debate on quality as a crucial aspect only began when the charters failed to achieve their intended objectives. It is in this spirit that these researchers have all contributed to the promotion of a quality approach to public management, emphasising the importance of user satisfaction, process efficiency and continuous improvement to ensure high quality public services. They have marked their reflections on management practices and policies aimed at improving the quality of public services through quality management methods and tools.

On the other hand, other researchers have argued that "the concept of service quality emerged from the development and adoption of a new approach to performance-based management systems in the field of governance" (Martinez, 2001). Hence the existence of the governance approach to improving public services, which consists of establishing effective management and coordination mechanisms to guarantee the provision of quality, transparent, accountable public services adapted to the needs of citizens. Some key elements of this approach are: firstly, transparency, which is essential to ensure citizens'

trust in public institutions. Transparent governance involves the disclosure of relevant information on the decisions taken, the policies implemented and the results achieved. This key element is supported by Professor Hood (1991) of Oxford University, who "highlights the mechanisms of control and accountability in the public sector and emphasises the importance of transparency and accountability in improving governance". Accountability is also a fundamental principle of public governance, which means that public actors have to justify their actions and decisions to citizens and control bodies.

Citizen participation then involves citizens in the decision-making process and in the design of public policies, and is essential to ensure that public services meet the real needs of the population. Citizen participation can take different forms, such as public consultations, advisory committees or feedback mechanisms. As a professor at the University of Chicago, Lynn (2006), who has worked on governance and public management, emphasises the importance of performance, accountability and citizen participation in improving services (Usanase, 2021).

In addition, collaboration between public, private and civil society actors is often necessary to address the complex challenges facing public services. Collaborative governance means working together to find innovative and effective solutions. Finally, efficiency and performance: Good governance in improving public services aims to ensure the efficiency and performance of public institutions by putting in place monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to measure results and adjust policies accordingly.

1.1.3 Governance Approach

Thus, by implementing a governance approach to public service improvement, governments and public institutions can strengthen the legitimacy, quality and effectiveness of their services, while building citizen trust and responding to the needs of society in a more efficient and transparent manner.

It turns out that there are experts who have advocated both approaches, such as the well-known public management expert who has written extensively on public service reform and improvement. He emphasises "the importance of governance, management and performance in the delivery of public services. But also the importance of innovation and adaptation to change to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of public services" (Pollitt, 2000). This professor emeritus of the Catholic University of Louvain has studied

innovation processes in the public sector and the challenges of implementing new practices and policies. In addition to Pollitt, there are several authors who have defended the innovation approach to improving public services. Here are some of the most influential authors in this field: First, in their book "Reinventing Government: How the Entrepreneurial Spirit is Transforming the Public Sector";—Osborne and Gaebler (1992) first highlighted the importance of innovation and entrepreneurship in public sector reform (Wooldridge and Smith, 2017).

1.1.4 The Innovation Approach

We will therefore also talk about the innovation approach to public service improvement, which involves encouraging and implementing new ideas, innovative practices and new technologies to transform and improve public service delivery. Furthermore, by adopting this approach to public service improvement, governments and public bodies can increase the creativity, efficiency and adaptability of their services, respond more flexibly and proactively to the changing needs of citizens, and improve the overall user experience. Because calling an improvement "innovation" does not make it so. "Innovation is more than an improvement, improvements are important, but innovation is like a quantum improvement that creates value in new ways" (Edward de Bono,1992). Indeed, public services have long remained the poor cousins of 'innovation studies', with the prevailing idea being that innovation is specific to market sectors and that the phrase 'public innovation' is an oxymoron (Sørensen and Torfing, 2013). However, this observation does not apply to all public services. For example, as we have already pointed out, no one disputes that public health services are among the most innovative activities in today's economies, or that innovation is intrinsically linked to public research services and universities. Other exceptions can be cited, such as public broadcasting services and security and defence services (Nicolay, Adamtey and Kadzere, 2021). The fact remains that the vast majority of other public services, and in particular public administration services, have long been considered to be impervious to innovation. Thus, the issue of innovation in services has continued to gain prominence in the economic literature and policy agendas.

And finally, the results-oriented approach, which emphasises setting clear objectives, measuring performance and adjusting policies and practices according to the results achieved. This approach starts with clearly defining the objectives and expected results of

public services and identifying relevant performance indicators to measure the success and impact of policies and programmes. Presumably, it suggests that the assessment of performance and opportunities for improvement should be judged in terms of achieving changes overseen by political actors, for example, if the objective is public health, the service is to improve the physical well-being of the population. They suggest that the analysis consists of an assessment of existing morbidity and mortality indicators in a country. Others, however, do not fully agree with this approach and find it too restrictive. Others, however, see it as too restrictive and define public service improvement as a closer match between the two perceptions of actual and desired standards of public service (Boyne, 2003). Indeed, this suggests that the assessment of improvement is based on the processes and practices used to deliver services. His approach emphasises the importance of performance and efficiency in the public sector. Boyne argues that the use of clear and objective performance measures, as well as stakeholder accountability, can contribute to significant improvements in public services.

We can conclude this section by saying that each of these approaches can be combined and adapted to the specific context in order to significantly improve public service. In fact, there is no single approach to improving public service. The best approach is one that is adapted to the specific context of each administration. It is important to combine different approaches to improve public service. By combining the quality approach, the user satisfaction approach, the innovation approach and the collaboration approach, administrations can improve the effectiveness and efficiency of public services and provide a better quality of service to users.

1.2 The Notion of New Public Management

1.2.1 Definition of New Public Management (NPM)

New Public Management (NPM) is an approach to managing public service organisations used in government agencies and public services at both local and national levels. It is a public management model that aims to apply private sector methods to the public sector. It emphasises the performance, efficiency and accountability of government agencies by introducing concepts such as decentralisation, internal competition, the use of financial incentives and a greater focus on results, as opposed to the principles of the public sector, as some authors claim. "The new public management is thus opposed to the principles of bureaucracy, which are centralisation, continuity of the relationship between the

administration and the political authorities, prudence and close monitoring of processes" (Charih and Rouillard, 1997).

In his thesis entitled *Trajectories of equity: strategies for managing the actions of public organisations*, Olivier Keramidas (2008) explains that "the State now considers efficiency to be an imperative, the ultimate objective being to restore budgetary balance and ensure the quality of public services. NPM is therefore a new system of governance based on a neoclassical approach to the state. In other words, the economy must be regulated by market rules rather than by the state. This results in the application of private management methods to the public sector, which makes companies "efficient in the market". Thus, NPM is simply the application of private sector management techniques to the public sector (Rochet, Keramidas and Bout, 2008) However, Philippe Bezes (2016), in his article "The renewal of the control of bureaucracies", points out that the status of NPM is ambiguous. For him, it is a heterogeneous set of axioms from economic theories, prescriptions from management knowledge and descriptions of practices experienced in reforms (particularly in Anglo-Saxon countries) and doctrinal rationalisations carried out by transnational organisations (OECD; 1995, World Bank;1997). He adds that NPM is a kind of doctrinal puzzle with a generic vocation, applicable to all administrative services, whatever they may be. GIBERT completes this vision by qualifying" NPM as business-oriented public management ". From then on, "New Public Management is a model of public administration management that is set up in opposition to the bureaucratic management model", as underlined by Gow and Dufour (2000), because it would be based on the performance triangle linking economy, effectiveness and efficiency, which is the basis of private management and which poses the problem of measuring performance. As a result, public administration has adopted the same performance measurement criteria as private companies. These criteria, mainly financial, can only exist through the establishment of appropriate management control in public organisations. The concrete application of NPM therefore involves a series of actions, including the establishment of a management control system.

1.2.2 Context of Emergence

It is important to clarify that in English the word "management" has been used as a synonym for administration, or more precisely, as an essential part of it. Even management was seen as something that was only concerned with the organisation of this

administration, and as a minor and subordinate activity. (Paramez, 1974). Since the 1980s, however, management has been used as an antonym to administration, preceding and inspiring the Anglo-Saxon trend of new public management. It should not, therefore, be confused with the new public administration that developed in the United States in the late 1960s over the course of a little more than a decade. As stated by Frederickson (1971), one of the main authors who conceptualised its foundations, the new public administration aimed to strengthen social justice by encouraging civil servants to exercise their freedom of action where they observed social injustices, in order to eliminate the discrimination that they were able to perceive due to their proximity to the citizens. For the defenders of the new public administration, the transfer of power to civil servants was necessary because of the inability of administrative procedures to eliminate the discrimination suffered by the most disadvantaged. "Contrary to the individualism that the new public management would advocate, the new public administration" defended values that Frederickson (1996) would later describe as humanist and democratic.

New Public Management was thus born in the early 1980s in the United Kingdom and New Zealand, and was then used in most OECD countries, including the United States, Canada, Germany, France, the Netherlands, Belgium. It was Christopher Hood who proposed the name New Public Management in an article published in 1991. He wanted to use this name to describe the trends he and others had observed in the recent administrative reforms in many OECD countries. For several authors, the event that marked the emergence of new public management was the reform of the British administration that took place in the wake of neoliberalism, when Margaret Thatcher came to power in 1979. In the years that followed, several countries, mainly Anglo-Saxon, followed in Britain's footsteps. Drawing mainly on the British experience, Hood (1991) described "the new public management as a search for austerity".

Another key publication in the construction of the concept of New Public Management is the work of David Osborne and Ted Gaebler (1992), in which the authors prescribe "developing the entrepreneurial spirit of managers in the American public administration and introducing consumer-client management as a remedy to bureaucracy". However, it should be emphasised that NPM is part of the adaptation of public management to the economic context. It was not the first attempt to modernise public administration. Indeed, in the 1960s, a reform called Rationalisation of Budgetary Choices (RCB) was introduced

in France in order to make better use of public funds. However, this reform seems to have failed because it was too complex to implement and misunderstood by those involved. In the 1980s, as a result of a number of urgent events, a new reform of public management was launched in various countries around the world. However, the events at the origin of such modernisation remain diverse and specific to each country. For this reason, the definition of NPM cannot be the same for each country where it has been applied. Moreover, the urgency and diversity of these events have influenced the speed of implementation of NPM in each of these countries. For example, implementation in the UK was very rapid, while in France it took more than 20 years. The trigger in Europe was the financial crisis of the early 1980s. This crisis led the state to take on more debt and affected the economy. This leads citizens to question how their contributions are being used. The hitherto hidden problems of public administration came to light: lack of efficiency in the public sector, bureaucracy, lack of transparency, lack of coordination between administrative services, incoherent management and lack of flexibility in the administration. Anne Amar and Ludovic Berthier, in their article 'The new public management - advantages and limits', point out that "none of these reasons alone explains the introduction of NPM, even if financial crises have often appeared as the main triggering factors. In fact, NPM is the result of both internal and external pressures on the public sector, which are more or less complementary and reinforcing depending on the configuration. It then becomes impossible to make the state more efficient without changing the way it is managed. "

1.2.3 Principles

New Public Management (NPM) is based on principles and theories of different origins - economics, management and public choice. The main principles of NPM are as follows :

Performance and results orientation: NPM emphasises measuring the performance of public organisations by focusing on the results achieved rather than on internal processes.

The use of financial incentives: NPM encourages the use of financial incentives such as bonuses or penalties to motivate staff to achieve specific goals.

Decentralisation and autonomy of public bodies: NPM advocates greater decentralisation of decision-making and more autonomy for public agencies to manage their resources effectively.

Internal competition and outsourcing of services: NPM sometimes promotes competition between different public or private entities to provide certain services, as well as the outsourcing of certain government functions to external providers.

1.2.4 Theories

Implemented for 30 years in countries with different institutional contexts and adapted to the historically constructed realities of local administrative systems, NPM appears as a "hybrid, processual and evolving construct" (Eymery-Douzans, 2008, p. 80) or as a "slippery label" (Manning, 2001), to the point that any innovation in public sector management could be based on it. For this reason, several theories and concepts have led to the idea of public administration management as a private sector enterprise that needs to be identified. On the one hand, it is important to note the economic theories underlying NPM. Moe (1984, p. 742-758) states that there are essentially four theories underlying NPM: transaction cost theory, principal-agent theory, property rights theory and public choice theory. And on the other hand the management theory called (managerialism): This understanding consists of a general convergence of the lessons of administrative reform based on professional management (Özer and Phillips, 2012).

The theory of transaction costs refers to the costs associated with a given transaction. The question is: who is best placed to carry out the transaction: A public or a private agency? At the heart of NPM is the belief that the private sector is better than public administration and the question of why public administration is necessary. Following the theory of property rights, it points out that private property is important for having effective and efficient organisations; hence the need to privatise public organisations (POs), as private ownership is essential for economic growth (Bavon, 1998, p. 66) Once privatised, public services can be produced and delivered more effectively and efficiently. There is also the principal-agent theory, which also underlies NPM. Indeed, in democracies, citizens are leaders and they elect representatives as agents on their behalf. However, elected officials cannot carry out all the public works and produce all the services and goods that citizens demand. Therefore, they hire civil servants as agents to respond to citizens' demands and needs. Principal-agent theory argues that in a democratic political system, public administrators are agents of the principals, in this case the citizens. In addition, the legislative and executive branches of government can be seen as principals of public administrators because they are elected by the citizens to represent them. Close and

constant monitoring may be necessary if agents are not performing well, according to principal-agent theory. Public choice theory also underpins NPM. It states that policy must reflect the wishes and serve the interests of the majority, with citizens as interested customers. By following market signals, public sector managers can determine what the majority wants; an accumulation of the personal interests of individual customers allows the government to assess the public interest. If the centralisation of AP leads to the problems of the majority of clients and local issues being more important, then it is necessary to decentralise management.

The other theoretical basis for understanding NPM is the theory of management ideology (business administration) or even managerialism, which can essentially be understood as the pursuit of a set of management ideas. This idea is confirmed by Clarke, Gerwitz and McLaughlin (2000), who describe the process of putting management ideas into practice as managerialisation (Shepherd, 2018). It is an approach that sees the private sector management approach as superior to public administration and examines private-sector style management techniques. This theory, which is integrated into the understanding of NPM, highlights principles such as commodification, commercialisation, competition, privatisation, preference, quality standards, strategic management, contracting, measurement and performance evaluation in public administration (Sobaci, 2009, p. 56).

1.2.5 Advantages

The benefits of New Public Management (NPM), also known as New Public Governance, are mainly aimed at introducing management methods from the private sector into the public sector in order to make it more efficient and effective. Here are some of the benefits of this approach (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2017).

Firstly, NPM allows for increased effectiveness and efficiency by drawing on private management techniques; public administration can aim for better use of resources and better value for money for services. But also transparency, modern public management methods promote transparency of processes and control of results, thus offering better accountability. It is therefore important to emphasise that transparency is an essential aspect of good governance and that NPM can contribute to strengthening transparency in public administration. By introducing practices such as performance measurement, benchmarking and public reporting, NPM helps to create a culture of openness and

accountability. This transparency not only promotes trust between government and citizens, but also allows for greater scrutiny and public participation in decision-making processes. The rationalisation of processes and the search for efficiency can lead to a reduction in costs for the state and taxpayers. Indeed, the introduction of NPM has made it possible to eliminate much waste and achieve substantial savings. This is the case in Australia, without affecting the quality of services provided.

In New Zealand, according to former Minister of Industry Mac Tigue (2005), the number of civil servants was reduced by 66%, the government's share of GNP fell from 44% to 27%, and productivity increased. Budget surpluses made it possible to reduce public debt from 63% to 17% of GNP and to lower income tax rates. This reduction led to a 20% increase in revenue. According to Bumham (2000), in the United Kingdom NPM has led to a reduction in costs, an increase in the quality of services, better productivity and a sharp reduction in the number of civil servants (less than 34% since 1979), etc. It has also improved the quality of services. NPM also improves the quality of services by focusing on the needs of users (citizens become "customers"). In other words, it adopts the customer-first approach. This aspect of putting the customer first will lead to an efficient delivery process. This means that an employee must listen to customers and also invent on their behalf. For example, in a situation at the information desk, the customer service manager must provide the customer with the necessary information in a clear and understandable way, especially for young and old people who are still learning about new technologies and new products. procedures on how to handle certain personal documents or anything related to them.

With the presence of new public management, an administrator will be more responsible in the timely execution of his task and in an efficient delivery process. In fact, in the new public management there are many management methods and work procedures used by an administrator to make an organisation more organised in the implementation of certain actions and processes.

However, it is important to note that New Public Management has also been the subject of criticism, particularly with regard to the quality of public service, the reduction of the social function of the state or the potential marketisation of public services (Dunleavy and Hood, 1994).

1.2.6 Limits

The limitations and criticisms of New Public Management are numerous and vary according to the context. Here are some of the limitations often associated with this approach:

Reduced quality of services: The focus on cost reduction and efficiency could reduce the quality of public services, especially when market logic takes precedence over the public interest (Pollitt, 2008).

Deregulation and inequalities: The deregulation promoted by NPM can lead to inequalities in access to public services, particularly by creating disparities between regions or social groups (Hood, 1991).

Pressure on staff: The emphasis on performance and results can increase the pressure on public sector employees, potentially leading to stress and a deterioration in working conditions (Boyne, 2002).

Administrative complexity: Despite the desire for simplification, the adoption of NPM can sometimes lead to an increase in administrative complexity, with a proliferation of agencies, contracts and performance indicators (Christensen and Lægreid, 2008).

Accountability problems: Increased accountability and fragmentation of public services can make it difficult to determine responsibilities, especially in the event of failure or problems (Dunleavy, Margetts, Bastow and Tinkler, 2006).

The loss of long-term vision: The focus on immediate and measurable results can undermine the long-term planning and investment that is essential in certain public sectors such as education and health (Terry, 1995).

The commercialisation of public services: NPM can lead to citizens being treated as consumers rather than as citizens with rights, which can change the very nature of public service (Clarke and Newman, 1997).

Contested effectiveness: Some studies have questioned the real effectiveness of NPM, pointing out that the savings achieved are not always as significant as expected or that they are accompanied by hidden costs (Ferlie and Pettigrew, 1996).

It should be noted, however, that these critiques do not systematically reject the principles of NPM, but highlight the need for a balanced approach that takes into account both the imperatives of effective management and the values specific to the public service.

1.3 New Public Service (NPS)

The New Public Service (NPS) represents an emerging paradigm in the field of public administration, offering an alternative to traditional models of government management (Denhardt and Denhardt, 2015). Developed primarily in the 1990s and 2000s, this approach emphasises service to citizens and the promotion of the public interest. The NPS is based on several key principles that distinguish it from other theories of public administration. New Public Service (NPS) theories focus on the evolution of public services in response to modern societal expectations. It integrates paradigms such as New Public Management and New Public Governance, and emphasises the importance of innovation, citizen participation and service quality. Indeed, The New Public Service is a critical response to New Public Management (NPM), which has dominated public management thinking since the 1980s. Influenced by neoliberal ideas, NPM emphasised efficiency, privatisation and the application of private sector management techniques to the public sector. These theories seek to reconcile efficiency with democratic values, while addressing the challenges posed by the digitalisation and standardisation of services. I will present to you the different theories that have contributed to the development and evolution of the New Public Service (NPS). The NPS draws on several theoretical trends in public administration, political science and democratic theory.

1.3.1 The Theory of Deliberative Democracy

The theory of deliberative democracy, developed in particular by Jürgen Habermas (1996), is at the heart of the New Public Service (NPS). It emphasises the importance of public dialogue and collective deliberation in arriving at legitimate decisions. This approach emphasises the active participation of citizens in public decision-making processes and contrasts with traditional approaches to public administration that emphasise efficiency, management and bureaucratic control. NPS, conceptualised by Denhardt and Denhardt (2000), is positioned as an alternative to New Public Management by applying private sector management principles to public administration. Deliberative democracy has its roots in the work of political theorists such as Jürgen Habermas and John Rawls. The foundations of this approach are based on three key elements: active citizenship, public

interest and public deliberation. NPS and deliberative democracy see citizens not just as customers or consumers of public services, but as key actors in the decision-making process. The public interest, at the heart of this approach, is the product of dialogue and deliberation between different stakeholders rather than the aggregation of individual interests (Bozeman, 2007). Deliberation, on the other hand, is seen as a process of reasoned exchange of arguments in which participants are open to changing their opinions in the light of new information and perspectives (Fishkin, 2009). The implementation of this approach is based on deliberative forums, where citizens can discuss societal issues, and on the co-design of public policies, where they are involved not only in the discussion, but also in the design and implementation. implementation of policies, through initiatives such as participatory budgeting or collaborative planning (Fung, 2015). In this context, public administrators play the role of facilitators and mediators, navigating between divergent interests and fostering consensus. Despite its promise, this approach faces several challenges, such as unequal participation, the cost and time required to organise deliberative processes, and the complexity of technical issues. In addition, the relationship between deliberative processes and traditional representative institutions can create tensions. However, the integration of digital technologies offers new opportunities for deliberation at scale, facilitating the participation of more citizens, while posing challenges in terms of digital inclusion and the quality of debate (Noveck, 2015). In conclusion, the theory of the New Public Service, anchored in deliberative democracy, offers an ambitious vision of public governance, centred on citizen engagement and the collective search for the general interest. Despite the practical difficulties, this approach opens up promising avenues for revitalising democracy and improving the quality of public policy.

1.3.2 The Theory of Democratic Citizenship

The theory advocated by Benjamin Barber (2003) and others emphasises the importance of citizens' active participation in public life, and the New Public Service (NPS) adheres to this vision by encouraging public administrators to facilitate and encourage civic engagement. This approach sees citizens as essential actors in democracy, not just consumers of public services, and values their active participation. The public interest is no longer seen as the simple sum of individual interests, but as the result of collective dialogue and deliberation in which citizens and public officials share responsibility for solving public problems and contributing to the common good. Public administration must

create opportunities for citizens to participate in civic and political life and ensure that public decisions are the result of an inclusive and informed deliberative process. The NPS encourages collaboration between citizens, non-profit organisations, businesses and government agencies to solve public problems, emphasising democratic values such as fairness, justice, transparency and accountability. Civil servants must now act as facilitators of dialogue and citizen engagement, rather than simply as managers or experts, by designing administrative structures and processes that facilitate citizen participation, and by prioritising civic education and capacity building. Despite inherent challenges such as ensuring equitable and inclusive participation of all social groups, balancing administrative efficiency with time-consuming participatory processes, and managing divergent citizen expectations while building consensus, the NPS theory of democratic citizenship aims to revitalise democracy by placing citizens at the centre of the governance process, thereby transforming the role of public administration and the nature of the relationship between the state and citizens.

1.3.3 Social Justice Theory

John Rawls' theory of social justice influences the NPS by emphasising fairness and equity in the distribution of public goods. This perspective is reflected in the NPS's commitment to serving all citizens equitably. Social justice in the new public service (NPS) is a fundamental pillar of contemporary public administration (Denhardt and Denhardt, 2015). This approach considers the promotion of equity and inclusion as a central responsibility of public administrators (Frederickson, 2010). NPS expands the notion of equity beyond formal equality to include fairness in access to resources and citizen participation (Svara & Brunet, 2005). Public officials are seen as agents of social change who are responsible for actively integrating principles of justice into their practices (Blessett, 2019).

This approach emphasises the inclusion of marginalised groups in decision-making processes (Quick and Feldman, 2011). It recognises the intersectionality of inequalities and advocates a holistic approach to responding to them (Hankivsky and Cormier, 2011). The evaluation of public policies integrates criteria of social justice beyond simple effectiveness (Gooden and Portillo, 2011). Social justice is conceptualised as a dynamic process that is constantly redefined through public dialogue and democratic deliberation. This vision of social justice in the NPS aims to create a more responsive and

equitable public administration, integrating principles of equity and inclusion at all levels of governance (Denhardt and Denhardt, 2015).

1.3.4 The Theory of Social Capital

Social capital theory, developed by sociologists such as Bourdieu (1986), Coleman (1988) and Putnam (1995), conceptualises the resources inherent in social networks and norms of reciprocity. Putnam (2000) defines social capital as the connections between individuals and the norms of reciprocity and trust that result from them. Social capital manifests itself in three main forms: bonding, bridging and linking (Woolcock and Narayan, 2000). These forms reflect links within homogeneous groups, between heterogeneous groups and with formal institutions. Key components of social capital include social networks, norms of reciprocity, social trust and civic engagement. These elements facilitate collective action, reduce transaction costs and improve the diffusion of information. The measurement of social capital is often based on indicators such as associational participation and interpersonal trust. The theory has been applied in fields ranging from economics to public health (Kawachi et al., 2008). Despite its influence, the theory has been subject to criticism, particularly in relation to the risk of reinforcing inequalities and the difficulty of measurement. In summary, social capital theory provides a framework for understanding how social relationships generate beneficial resources for individuals and communities, while recognising its limitations and complexities.

1.3.5 The theory of democratic public administration

The theory of democratic public administration, which underpins the New Public Service (NPS), offers an alternative to traditional models and to New Public Management (Denhardt and Denhardt, 2000). This approach places democratic values and citizenship at the heart of public administration.

The NPS is based on several key principles:

- Serving citizens rather than customers (Denhardt and Denhardt, 2015).
- Seek the public interest as a result of collective dialogue (Bozeman, 2007).
- Value citizenship and public service beyond entrepreneurship (King and Stivers, 1998).
- Think strategically, act democratically (Bryson, 2011).

- Recognise the complexity of managerial accountability (Romzek and Dubnick, 1987).
- Serve rather than lead (Crosby and Bryson, 2005).

This approach involves the creation of deliberative forums, the development of facilitation skills for administrators, and the redesign of administrative processes to promote citizen participation (Nabatchi, 2010). Challenges include balancing efficiency and participation, ensuring equitable representation, and managing tensions between technical expertise and citizen knowledge. NPS thus aims to reinvent public administration as a space for democratic dialogue and co-creation, redefining the relationship between the state and citizens.

1.3.6 The Theory of Public Service Motivation

Public Service Motivation (PSM) theory, originally developed by Perry and Wise (1990), proposes that some individuals are motivated by a desire to serve the public interest and contribute to the well-being of society. This theory has become an important framework for understanding the motivations of public sector employees.

Perry (1996) has identified four main dimensions of PSM:

- The attraction to public policy development
- Commitment to the public interest
- Compassion
- The importance of sacrifice

PSM is seen as a multidimensional construct that influences attitudes and behaviours at work (Vandenabeele, 2007). Research has shown that individuals with high levels of PSM are more likely to choose and perform effectively in public sector careers (Brewer and Selden, 1998). Studies have also linked PSM to various positive organisational outcomes, such as increased job satisfaction, stronger organisational commitment and reduced turnover. However, the theory has faced challenges, particularly in terms of measurement and cross-cultural generalisation (Bozeman and Su, 2015). Researchers have called for a more nuanced conceptualisation of PSM that takes into account cultural and institutional contexts (Vandenabeele et al., 2014). Despite these challenges, PSM remains a central concept for understanding motivations and behaviours in the public sector and has

important implications for the recruitment, management and retention of staff in public organisations (Ritz et al., 2016).

1.3.7 The Theory of Networked Governance

The theory of networked governance, which is central to the New Public Service (NPS), offers a collaborative approach to public administration (Denhardt and Denhardt, 2015). This perspective recognises the increasing complexity of public problems and the need for inter-organisational coordination to respond effectively. According to Agranoff and McGuire (2003), networked governance involves the coordination of multiple actors - governmental, private and non-governmental in solving public problems. This approach emphasises horizontal relationships rather than traditional hierarchies.

Governance networks are characterised by

- Flexible and adaptable structures (Klijn and Koppenjan, 2016).
- Sharing of resources and information (Provan and Kenis, 2008)
- Trust and reciprocity between stakeholders
- Co-creation of public value (Stoker, 2006)

In this context, the role of public administrators is evolving towards that of network managers and facilitators (O'Toole, 2015). They need to develop skills in negotiation, mediation and conflict management (Agranoff, 2012). Networked governance has potential benefits, including greater innovation and better responses to complex problems (Sørensen and Torfing, 2011). However, it also poses challenges in terms of accountability and democratic legitimacy (Klijn and Skelcher, 2007). In conclusion, NPS network governance theory offers a framework for rethinking public administration in the context of increasing complexity, emphasising collaboration and multi-stakeholder engagement in the creation of public value.

1.3.8 The Theory of Co-production

The theory of co-production, which is central to the New Public Service (NPS), proposes a collaborative approach to public service delivery in which citizens are active partners rather than passive beneficiaries (Osborne et al., 2016). This theory, originally developed by Ostrom (1996), has gained prominence in the context of NPS. Co-production is defined

as the process by which citizens and public officials work together to plan, design, implement and evaluate public services (Bovaird, 2007). It is based on a number of key principles:

- Recognition of citizen expertise (Nabatchi et al., 2017)
- Power and responsibility sharing (Voorberg et al., 2015)
- Creating public value through collaboration (Alford, 2009)
- Strengthening participatory democracy (Pestoff, 2006)

Co-production can take different forms, ranging from co-planning to co-evaluation of public services (Brandsen and Honingh, 2016). It is particularly relevant in areas such as health, education and community development (Needham, 2008). Potential benefits of co-production include better matching of services to citizens' needs, more efficient use of resources and increased social capital (Verschuere et al., 2012). However, it also poses challenges in terms of fairness, accountability and managing expectations (Steen et al., 2018). For public administrators, co-production requires new skills and attitudes, such as facilitation, active listening and the ability to share power (Torfing et al., 2019). In conclusion, the theory of co-production in the NPS provides a framework for rethinking the relationship between the state and citizens, promoting a more collaborative and participatory approach to public governance.

1.3.9 Public Value Theory

Public Value Theory, originally developed by Moore (1995) and integrated into the New Public Service (NPS) framework, offers a new way of conceptualising and evaluating public sector performance. This approach emphasises the creation of value for society, rather than simple organisational efficiency. According to Benington and Moore (2011), public value comprises three key elements:

- What the public values
- What the public adds value to
- What is generated through publicly legitimate means

Creating public value involves a dynamic and collaborative process between public administrators and citizens (Bryson et al., 2014). It requires a deep understanding of societal preferences and needs, as well as the ability to mobilise resources and navigate the political environment (Alford and O'Flynn, 2009). In the NPS framework, public value is seen as the result of collective deliberation and active citizen engagement (Denhardt and Denhardt, 2015). Public administrators are encouraged to act as 'public value managers', facilitating dialogue and co-creation with citizens (Stoker, 2006). Assessing public value goes beyond traditional measures of efficiency and effectiveness to include criteria such as fairness, democratic legitimacy and public trust (Faulkner and Kaufman, 2018). However, the theory faces challenges, particularly in terms of measurement and operationalisation (Williams and Shearer, 2011). It also raises questions about balancing different conceptions of public value and managing divergent stakeholder expectations (Hartley et al., 2017). In summary, public value theory in NPS provides a framework for rethinking public sector performance and legitimacy, with an emphasis on the collaborative creation of value for society.

1.4 The Digitalization of Public Service Management

1.4.1 Definition

We've been talking about digitalisation since the advent of the Internet, but what does it really mean? Digitalisation is the integration of digital technologies into business processes with the aim of improving them. Some authors define it as "the changes associated with the application of digital technology to all aspects of human society" (Stolterman and Fors, 2004). In reality, digitalisation affects all core businesses to a greater or lesser extent. It is a process aimed at transforming a process, a profession, an object or even a tool into computer code in order to improve the performance of an organisation. Today, almost everything can be done online, this is the principle of digitalisation. Indeed, (Brennen and Kreiss 2014) describe "digitalisation as the adoption or increased use of digital or computer technology by an organisation, industry or country". It is said to be transformative, as it completely changes the way companies interact with their customers. Digitalisation has therefore become essential for a company or any type of organisation. In fact, it touches all areas, optimising time and money by automating increasingly complex tasks. It can even become a competitive advantage in areas where companies have not yet fully embraced the digital shift. The OECD defines "digitalisation as the use of technology and digital data

and their interconnections to create new activities or improve old ones". It also distinguishes digitalisation from digitisation; it is true that, by definition, digitalisation is the act of digitising. It is a well-known Anglicism, but today its definition has evolved.

Digitising means converting analogue information into digital form. The latter is the simple act of converting analogue data and processes into a machine-readable format. Digitising, like any other synonym, comes close to this term. But over the years it has taken on a broader meaning. Thus, the term digital transformation is a combination of the two terms (OECD 2019). In other words, we should not confuse digitalisation and digitisation. It is important not to confuse digitalisation and digitisation, which are two different terms that are often mixed up. Digitisation refers to the process of 'translating' physical data into a mechanical format. Digitalisation comes after digitisation and consists of improving the process, for example by making a digital document available on a website. The two terms are complementary.

1.4.2 Growing Importance of Digital Transformation of Public Service

Following the massive development of digital applications in our daily lives, digital transformation has become a priority for many sectors of activity. Public services are no exception and have also started to modernise their services in this direction, even if they are still lagging significantly behind in terms of the digitisation offered to users. Thus, with the diversification of access channels to the administration made possible by digital technology, the user behaves like a consumer of public services, able to choose the exchange channel through which he can use the service he needs. Digital technology allows them to access public services easily and quickly by connecting online from home or work, even when administrations are closed. The aim of this digitisation of public services is to make them easily accessible to users wherever they are and whatever their constraints. The public sector has also had to adapt to technological change. As some authors argue, organisational change is not new in the public sector, and the wave of innovation has continued to grow since the advent of the internet in the mid-1990s. (Lopes, 2017) (Nielsen, 2016) (Weerakkody; Janssen and Dwivedi 2011).

The digitalisation of public services is the result of a gradual evolution of administrative systems and the way governments interact with their citizens. The digitalisation of public services began in the 1960s and 1970s. These were not the first steps in the modernisation

of public services that were taken with the introduction of computer systems in government organisations. Computers began to replace manual, paper-based processes for data management and calculations.

Then, in the 1980s and 1990s, the Internet era began, allowing governments to share information and collaborate with other national and international institutions. The first government websites appeared, giving citizens access to basic information about public services and policies.

What enabled the growth of information and communication technologies (ICT) in the 2000s, which led to the emergence of more advanced online services, such as government portals, online services for permits, taxes and social assistance applications. Governments have begun to recognise the importance of innovation and the use of technology to improve services to citizens.

In 2010, the digitisation of public services became increasingly important, with a particular focus on creating a more accessible, efficient and transparent digital public service. Governments have started to implement national digital strategies and invest in projects to improve online services and reduce the digital divide. For example, it was only in 2015 that we saw the emergence of the position of Chief Digital Officer (CDO). The growth of technology has made digitalisation increasingly accessible in many areas of activity, which has enabled its emergence.

According to the Digital Report 2023, the number of internet users worldwide is increasing every day. In fact, the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 accelerated the digitisation of public services, as governments had to adapt quickly to provide online services and ensure continuity of services to citizens in times of crisis. Security and privacy challenges are greater than ever, requiring efforts to build citizens' trust in online services.

1.4.3 The Challenges of Digitalization

The digitalization of public services is a major challenge for administrations, because it makes it possible to meet the needs of citizens in a more efficient and accessible manner. Data management is a crucial issue for public administrations. The data collected by public entities is often dispersed, heterogeneous, erroneous or dated, which makes it difficult to collect and process it to be usable. To meet this challenge, it is important to start on a small scale with a clear vision of the result, to map the most relevant registers, to create

standardized components to facilitate data sharing and to conduct the project in agile mode. In the digital age, public services across the world are transforming to integrate information and communication technologies (ICT) to improve administrative efficiency, facilitate access to services for citizens and improve the quality of interactions between administrations and users.

A solid IT infrastructure is essential to meet the needs of public administrations. It must be secure, efficient and accessible, and allow all information and procedures to be grouped together in one place. Migration to the Cloud is an important issue for public administrations. It allows you to have efficient, scalable and interconnected infrastructures, but it is important to choose a Cloud approved by the government and to take into account security and regulatory constraints. (Syvertsen, 2020)

Managing cybersecurity risks is a major issue. It is important to have a data security strategy that protects citizen data. User trust is a key issue for the digitalization of public services. It is important to have a digital transformation strategy transversal to administrations, to allow ministries to strengthen their specialization around digital skills, to instill the "phygital" culture in the way of delivering public services and to of data security a pillar of the interministerial program. (Ministry of Transformation and the Civil Service, 2021)

The dematerialisation of public services aims to replace paper processes with digital solutions. This includes, in particular, the digitisation of documents, the creation of online services for administrative procedures or the use of digital platforms to facilitate access to information and government services. The digitisation of processes is essential for public organisations. It makes it possible to increase accessibility and user satisfaction, respond to rapid changes in the context and needs of citizens, and ensure the efficient distribution of their resources to maintain the quality of services offered to citizens.

Creating digital journeys that improve the user experience is a major challenge for public administrations. It is important to provide users with the information they need, understand their behaviour, emotions and intentions, and optimise their online experience. (Goldfarb, Accenture and Kotler, 2019) In summary, the digitisation of public services raises many issues that require a global approach and a clear strategy to meet the needs of citizens in an

efficient and accessible way. It uses different tools to make this service more efficient in the years to come.

1.4.4 Technological Tools at the Service of Digital Management

Technological tools for digital public administration are essential to improve the efficiency and transparency of public administrations. E-administration, also known as electronic administration, is a form of administration that uses information and communication technologies (ICT) to manage administrative processes (Roux, 2010, p. 20-29). E-administration aims to transform traditional administrative management processes into electronic processes, thereby improving the quality and speed of public services, as well as the transparency and accountability of administrations. It also helps to reduce costs and delays by enabling citizens to communicate directly with public administrations. Emerging technologies, such as blockchain, artificial intelligence and machine learning, can improve tax administration processing and tax enforcement. They can also improve the efficiency of tax administrations' internal operations, reduce costs and improve their ability to collect revenue through smarter use of data. (Catelin and Mtanios, 2021, p. 44-47)

The development of e-government regularly raises questions about the most relevant socio-organisational and technological paths to follow in order to improve the quality and scope of online public services. The emergence of Web 2.0 opens up new perspectives and offers considerable potential for development. It is an opportunity for the state to involve the user in the development by combining data from different sources (open data), the evaluation and the evolution of public services. (Schaie and Hertzog, 1983, p. 105-113) Public administrations are also using new information and communication technologies (NICTs) to improve the quality of services to the public and to simplify relations with users. The use of NICT is widespread in many countries, and governments can implement innovative practices to meet citizens' expectations. (Idrac, 2015, p. 55-61)

In conclusion, technological tools are essential to improve digital public administration by providing quality public services, reducing costs and delays, and improving transparency and accountability of administrations. Emerging technologies such as blockchain, artificial intelligence and machine learning can improve tax administration processing and enforcement, as well as the efficiency of tax administrations' internal operations. So its advantages are very numerous.

1.4.5 Advantages

The digitisation of public services offers many benefits to improve the efficiency and quality of services provided to citizens. Firstly, digitalisation makes it possible to process requests more quickly, reduce errors and lower operating costs (Ministry of Digital Transformation, 2020). Indeed, digitalisation promotes the rationalisation of administrative processes. The use of digital technologies makes it possible to automate data processing, which leads to a reduction in file processing times and a reduction in human errors associated with manual processing. As a result, operating costs are optimised, leading to a significant gain in terms of financial and human resources for administrations. Secondly, it aims to make public services more accessible and inclusive, especially for people in situations of division digital. It turns out that digital inclusion is at the heart of digitisation concerns. The aim is to make public services accessible to the entire population, including those who experience a digital divide. It is therefore an approach that goes beyond the mere provision of online services and includes a component of support and training for citizens in the use of digital tools. (OECD, 2020). Thirdly, digitalisation contributes to the transparency and accountability of public administrations. As processes are more open and documented thanks to digital systems, citizens have a better insight into the functioning and decisions of the administration. This transparency has become an essential pillar of user trust in public institutions (Ministry of Digital Transformation, 2020). In addition, the implementation of digital services allows for better internal management thanks to the interoperability of information systems, thus facilitating the exchange of data between the different services and with users. This dematerialisation of exchanges is a vector of efficiency that makes it possible to meet the requirements of responsiveness and adaptability of public services to the demands of citizens. Finally, the implementation of digitised public services is in line with the expectations and contemporary lifestyles of citizens, who increasingly prefer online interactions because of the simplicity and time savings they offer. Consequently, this modernisation contributes to improving the perceived quality of services and user satisfaction.

In conclusion, the digitisation of public services is part of an approach based on efficiency, inclusiveness and transparency, fundamental elements for improving the relationship between the administration and citizens. However, this transformation must be

accompanied by support and training strategies, as well as reflection on the ethical and security issues related to the use of personal data. However, the benefits are limited.

1.4.6 Limits

The digitisation of public services is a complex process that requires particular attention to avoid inequalities in access to public services. Although the dematerialisation of public services facilitates access to administrative procedures for the majority of users, it can also increase the digital divide and distance citizens from their public services. It can present challenges in terms of accessibility, particularly for the oldest people, those with the fewest qualifications, those on low incomes, those living alone or as a couple without children, or those living in the overseas departments or in disadvantaged areas (DOM), who are most affected by the lack of equipment and skills. Public services must be accessible to all, including people who do not have access to the Internet or who do not have the necessary skills to use this tool. All these comments are supported by Mr Bruno Rojouan, who draws the attention of the French Minister for Transformation and the Civil Service to the risks associated with the dematerialisation of public services. As a senior civil servant in the office of the General Commissioner for Sustainable Development pointed out, "the dematerialisation of public services facilitates access to administrative procedures for the majority of users, but can also increase the digital divide and distance citizens from their public services".

It is crucial that public authorities take steps to resolve these problems, ensuring that public services remain accessible to all, regardless of their level of digital literacy or Internet access. The lack of an internet connection and/or equipment for some people, the absence of a bank account (500,000 people in France) and therefore the impossibility of receiving a bank transfer via the internet, problems of confusion between public and private sites for online applications for vehicle registration documents, difficulties in accessing information due to unsuitable sites, problems when changing an email address during a paperless administrative procedure (Macrez, 2020). It is also important to put in place effective means of resolving the difficulties that may be caused by the dematerialisation of public services, such as careful observation of how users feel, policies on accessibility, mediation and digital coverage of the territory. Public services must be accessible to everyone, including people who do not have access to the Internet or who do not have the necessary skills to use this tool.

In short, the digitalisation of public services is a complex process that requires particular attention to avoid inequalities in access to public services. Public authorities must take steps to resolve the difficulties that the digitisation of public services may cause and ensure equal access to public service procedures.



CHAPTER 2:

PUBLIC SERVICE MANAGEMENT IN GABON

Table2.1: General Information From GABON

General Information	Details
Full Name	Gabon, Gabonese Republic
Capital	Libreville
Population	Around 2.3 million inhabitants
Official Language	French
Currency	CFA franc (XAF)
Political Regime	Semi-presidential republic
Independence	August 17, 1960, from France
Natural Resources	Oil, manganese, wood, and uranium
Main Cities	Libreville, Port-Gentil, Franceville
Economy	Economy dominated by the oil sector; heavy dependence on exports of natural resources
Recent Events	Coup d'état in August 2023, Brice Oligui Nguema takes power

Gabon is a country in Central Africa on both sides of the equator, with an area of 267,667 km² and a population of 2,389,000 inhabitants. It borders the Republic of Congo to the east, south-east and south, the Atlantic Ocean to the west, Equatorial Guinea to the north and Cameroon to the north-west. Its economy is largely based on its abundant natural resources, including oil, manganese and timber. Oil production is dominant, although the country is seeking to diversify its economy. Gabon has a rich history, marked by colonisation and the march towards independence, with a period of domination by the Gabonese Democratic Party (PDG) under the presidency of Omar Bongo from 1967 to 2009. And although the 1990s saw a transition to a multi-party political system, the Bongo family continues to dominate the Gabonese political scene. President Ali Bongo Ondimba

succeeded his father in 2009 and was re-elected in 2016, but was deposed in 2023 following a military intervention led by Brigadier General Brice Clotaire Oligui Nguema, who was appointed President of the Gabonese Transition, on the grounds that poor governance had led to the deterioration of public services, making life unbearable for the population. The management of public services in Gabon is therefore a key issue, as it has a direct impact on the quality of services provided to the population and the efficiency of the country's public administration. This management reflects public policies designed to meet the needs of citizens and to structure the administrative organisation of the territory, and it is therefore appropriate to analyse this management of the public service in detail over time. In fact, public service management in Gabon dates back to the country's independence in 1960. At the time, Gabon was facing major challenges in terms of socio-economic development and building strong institutions. Public service management was essential to meet the needs of the population and ensure good governance in the country. This historical context allows us to understand the foundations and evolution of the Gabonese public service over the decades in the light of the analyses carried out. The objective of this study is to evaluate in depth the management of the public service in Gabon from independence to the present day. It aims to provide a rigorous analysis of the policies and reforms implemented and their socio-economic impact.

This analysis will also identify the challenges and obstacles encountered in building and modernising the public service in Gabon. Finally, it will formulate concrete recommendations for better management of the public service in the future, taking into account the current challenges facing the country. Since its independence in 1960, Gabon has faced major challenges in the management of its public services. Changes in the management of public services have taken place at different times, notably during Gabon's post-independence period and more recently in the current period.

Table2.2: Politics of Gabon

Key Events	Details
Independence	Gabon gained independence from France in 1960, with Léon Mba as its first president
Political Regime	Semi-presidential republic; the president holds executive power and the prime minister heads the government
Dominant Party	The Gabonese Democratic Party (PDG) remains the majority

	party since 1968
Coup d'état 2023	Ali Bongo is deposed by a military coup after being re-elected, Brice Oligui Nguema takes power
Political Transition	Oligui Nguema announces a transition to free the country from a dynasty of more than 50 years

2.1 Post-Independence Period

The management of the public service in Gabon after independence on 17 August 1960 was marked by a series of reforms aimed at creating an autonomous and efficient administration capable of meeting the needs of the population. Indeed, with the establishment of new public management systems, Gabon has sought to establish a New Public Management (NGP) focused on performance, accountability and efficiency. The NGP aims to modernise Gabon's public administration by introducing management practices inspired by the private sector. The reforms also affected financial and budgetary management, with the introduction of practices such as results-based management, improved financial transparency and good governance. These changes were aimed at making the public service more responsive and responsive to the needs of citizens (Escalante and Mamboundou, 2024, p. 97-118). Gabon's national archives also bear witness to the administrative transition after independence. They contain essential documents for understanding the evolution of public administration. These archives are particularly important because they reflect the country's efforts to establish administrative and political sovereignty (Messi Me Nang, 2005, p. 157-164). In conclusion, the post-independence period in Gabon has been a period of transformation in the management of the public service, characterised by the search for autonomy, the establishment of appropriate administrative structures and the implementation of reforms aimed at a more efficient and modern management of the public service.

2.1.1 The Establishment of the First Gabonese Institutions

The first thing to remember is that Gabon was a colony. During French colonisation, the first institutions created in Gabon were designed to serve the interests of the colonial power. The foundation of Libreville by the French in 1849 marked the beginning of their permanent presence. In 1886, Gabon became a full French colony with a governor appointed by Paris to represent it. In 1910, its integration into French Equatorial Africa reinforced its status as a territory under French domination. At the time, the sole aim of

these French institutions was to serve French interests, without any real plan for the emancipation of Gabon. As the Gabonese historian Nicolas Metegue N'Nah (2006) writes in his work "History of Gabon: From the origins to the beginning of the 21st century": "The French colonial administration, from the moment it was established, put in place structures designed to establish its domination and exploit the country's resources for the benefit of the metropolis. These institutions were in no way designed to prepare the Gabonese for autonomy or independence. After the Second World War, France was forced to move towards gradual decolonisation. In 1946, Gabon became an "overseas territory" with limited institutional development. It was not until 1960 that the country was able to start building its own institutions. On the eve of independence, the first Gabonese constitution was adopted, establishing a parliamentary regime. However, this text was closely monitored by France. When Gabon became independent on 17 August 1960, its institutions were largely inspired by the French model. The presidential system was adopted, with a president elected by direct universal suffrage, a prime minister appointed by the president and a bicameral parliament.

It also established the National Assembly, composed of 114 deputies elected for 5 years, and the Senate, composed of 102 senators elected for 6 years. The Gabonese government then set about creating national institutions to replace the French colonial administration. This included the creation of executive, legislative and judicial institutions specific to Gabon. For example, the National Assembly of Gabon was created to serve as a legislative body and to represent the Gabonese people. The first constitution, adopted in 1960, established a parliamentary regime. In other words, once it had gained its sovereignty, Gabon had to structure the state organisation necessary to govern an independent country. The Constitutional Act of 14 November 1960 was fundamental in this process, as it laid the foundations of the country's institutional structure. But it was quickly replaced by a new constitution in 1961 that gave Gabon a presidential system, with Léon Mba becoming the first president in 1967. He played a key role in the establishment of these institutions and was a central figure in Gabonese politics in the post-independence period. During his term, several institutions and public services were created or restructured to better meet the needs of a sovereign state (Clist, 2005).

President Léon Mba created the Gabonese Democratic Party (PDG) as a single party. It was not until 1990 that there was a return to multipartyism. Post-independence structural

reforms also focused on public administration to make it more efficient and responsive to the needs of citizens. This included the establishment of local and regional institutions aimed at decentralising power and bringing administration closer to the people. The first years of independence were therefore a period of intense institutional building for Gabon, marked by the adoption of new laws and the creation of government structures independent of the former colonial power. These institutions laid the foundations of the modern Gabonese state and were essential for the political and administrative development of the country. However, despite these developments, the transparency of elections and the functioning of institutions have remained major challenges in Gabon since independence and are constantly evolving.

2.1.2 The Evolution of Public Service Management

The evolution of public administration in Gabon since independence in 1960 can be described as a complex process influenced by various political, economic and social factors.

In the post-independence period, Gabon, like many other African countries, faced the challenge of transforming the administrative structures inherited from colonisation into an indigenous system of governance that would meet the needs of its people. This transition has not been easy, and several reforms have been introduced to improve public governance. We are witnessing a weakness in investment and inequalities. Despite its oil wealth, Gabon suffered from a lack of investment in urban public services after 1960. This has led to inequalities in access to basic services such as water, electricity and sanitation, particularly in Libreville (Mboumba, 2007, p. 131-140). The Gabonese state, weakened by the economic crisis, has failed to promote social and territorial justice in the distribution of public services. In the 1980s and 1990s, decentralisation and privatisation took place as part of structural adjustment. So argues Douglas A. Yates, an American political scientist who has written extensively on Gabon. In his book, *The Rentier State in Africa: Oil Rent Dependency and Neocolonialism in the Republic of Gabon* (1996), he discusses Gabon's economic and political challenges during this period.

Under pressure from international donors in the 1980s and 1990s, Gabon had to undertake decentralisation reforms and privatise certain urban public services. The decentralisation law of 1996 transferred powers from the state to the municipalities, but without sufficient

financial resources. At the same time, the management of water, electricity and waste was handed over to the private sector (Mouele, Nkoulembene and Kokolo, 2022). However, despite these reforms, inequalities in access to basic public services remain significant in Gabon, particularly between Libreville and the rest of the country. Municipalities still lack the means to effectively regulate the management of public services. The Gabonese state is struggling to fully play its regulatory role and ensure that the population's needs for basic services are met equitably. (Keese, 2004, p. 141-170)

In summury, Gabon has made progress in the management of public services since independence, particularly through decentralisation and privatisation reforms. However, territorial and social inequalities remain significant, demonstrating the limits of the reforms undertaken so far. The issue of equitable access to basic public services remains a major challenge for the Gabonese authorities. Hence the influence of politics on this management.

2.1.3 The Impacts of Political Changes on Management

Post-independence policy changes have had a profound impact on the management of the civil service, shaping its structure, objectives and practices. The impact has been varied and complex. Independence, achieved in 1960, ushered in a new era of governance and required a restructuring of the public service to adapt to a changing political context. One of the main consequences was the need to nationalise public services that had previously been under French control. This involved the creation of Gabonese administrative structures and the transfer of skills. However, this transition was not without its challenges. Challenges included a lack of qualified staff and issues related to the autonomous management of resources. Reforms inspired by "New Public Management" have profoundly changed the structure and organisation of public services, including (Fortier-Labonte, 2014, p. 71-86):

- The separation of public service tasks and their organisation into public monopolies, with a redefinition of the role of the state.
- The decentralisation and regionalisation of certain services, sometimes without coordination or overall vision, and the development of project funding, which increases the fragmentation of public action.

- The difficulty of preventing legislative and regulatory inflation and the "zapping" of reforms. The political changes have also led to urban policies aimed at modernising Gabonese cities and reducing socio-spatial inequalities. However, these initiatives have sometimes been hampered by problems of corruption and embezzlement, limiting their effectiveness.

After independence, Gabon continued to receive public aid from France, and the relationship between the two countries influenced the management of public services. Although this aid contributed to the development of the country, it also created a dependency that could affect the sovereignty of political decisions and, by extension, the management of public services.

In addition, after independence, France continued to exert a considerable influence on the Gabonese political scene, which may have had an impact on the management and reform of public services in Gabon.

Finally, it is important to note that the development of the concept of the 'indigenous leader' had an impact on the perception of authority and the way in which public services were managed and administered. Political careers in post-independence Gabon have often been shaped by interactions with the previous colonial administration and the expectations of Gabonese citizens.

2.2 Contemporary Period

The contemporary period of public service management in Gabon is characterised by several important developments (Ministry of Public Service and Administrative Reform, 2022). First, the country has embarked on a process of decentralisation and public administration reform aimed at transferring skills and resources to local communities and modernising management practices (Bongo, 2018).

Furthermore, Gabon has implemented a programme to privatise certain public services and has developed public-private partnerships for the management and investment of infrastructure (Ntsame, 2020). It has also implemented e-government and dematerialisation of public services to improve their accessibility and efficiency (Ministry of Public Service and Administrative Reform, 2021). At the same time, efforts have been made to strengthen citizen participation in the management of public affairs and to fight corruption, in particular through measures to increase transparency (Mba, 2019).

2.2.1 Recent reforms in public service management

Recent reforms in the management of public services in Gabon have been marked by initiatives aimed at modernising the administration and improving the quality of services provided. Firstly, with regard to the modernisation of the administration, initiatives have been taken, in particular the ongoing reform of the public audiovisual service in Gabon is based on founding texts aimed at improving the efficiency of the administration, in particular by reducing its multiplicity and high costs. In addition, efforts are being made to bring the institutional framework into line with the strategic plan for an emerging Gabon (PSGE), which was endorsed by former President Ali Bongo Ondimba in one of his speeches in July 2012:

“The emerging Gabon that I propose to you will be a good country. It will be governed with respect for the rights of all, a country fully integrated into global networks for the exchange of ideas, goods and capital, and finally a country in which every Gabonese will have an income that allows them to provide for themselves with dignity, decent housing and good health and social care. Gabon, with its resources and skills, can change the standard of living of all its citizens within a generation. This is not an idea, but a firm and irrevocable commitment....” (Ali Bongo Ondimba, 2012)

This project was therefore set up to optimise the performance of the administration and improve the quality of services provided to citizens and businesses. Secondly, the various administrative reforms that affected the Gabonese public administration in 2009, which emphasised the modernisation of administrative tools and processes. They have sought to modernise public management tools and consolidate the foundations of the emergence by emphasising the efficiency, transparency and performance of the administration. Indeed, these recent reforms in the management of public services in Gabon can be contextualised within a framework of modernisation and increased efficiency in the management of services offered to the population. Since 2009, Gabon has undertaken a series of administrative reforms aimed at improving the quality and management of public services. In 2009, Gabon launched a fervent wave of reforms, manifested in particular in the modernisation of public management tools (Obame, 2020, p. 288). They were also motivated by the desire to adapt to international standards and to optimise available resources. One of the most important reforms was that of the budgetary system, marked by the adoption of Organic Law No. 31/2010, which introduced a new management of public

finances. This budgetary reform is considered to be a turning point in the management of the country's finances, aiming at greater transparency and better allocation of resources. The adoption of this reform, which concerns the first budget in the LOLFEB mode in 2015, also introduced a new system of programme budgeting based on results and strengthened the role of Parliament in budgetary matters. This reform aims to modernise public management and enhance transparency. The main objectives include improving visibility over the use of public funds, strengthening parliamentary control over finances and optimising spending through a results-based budgeting system. The latter makes it possible to link the resources allocated to the expected results, thus promoting a more efficient allocation of funds. It also aims to transfer more financial responsibility to local authorities, enabling management that is better adapted to the specific needs of the regions.

However, a number of challenges remain, including corruption, which is hampering the effectiveness of the reforms, and the lack of training and technical skills within public administrations. Political will is also crucial to ensure the sustainable implementation of reforms. In the context of the current political transition, Gabon is at a crucial crossroads in terms of strengthening its budgetary system. Priorities include strengthening financial structures to ensure rigorous management of public resources, considering tax reforms to diversify revenue sources and reduce dependence on hydrocarbons, and putting in place a solid framework for monitoring and evaluating budget policies. In short, although challenges remain, a strong political will, coupled with a strong political will to act, is essential (Nkoghe, 2020). In addition to this reform, in recent years, Gabon has embarked on a wide-ranging programme of reforms aimed at modernising and improving its public service. These initiatives are part of a wider drive for development and good governance, responding to the country's social and economic challenges. The reforms undertaken affect various aspects of public administration and the services provided to citizens, with the aim of increasing the efficiency, transparency and quality of these services.

-One of the pillars of these reforms is administrative decentralisation. The Gabonese government has implemented a policy of transferring powers and responsibilities to local authorities, with the aim of bringing the administration closer to citizens and improving local governance. This decentralisation covers key areas such as local infrastructure management, town planning, sanitation, local economic development, as well as culture and sport at local level. To support this transfer of powers, funding mechanisms have been

put in place, notably an increase in State allocations to local authorities and a strengthening of local taxation (Ndong Ngoua, 2011). The success of decentralisation depends to a large extent on the ability of local elected representatives to assume their new responsibilities. With this in mind, intensive training programmes have been set up, covering areas such as financial and budgetary management, project development and management, administrative law and public procurement procedures. Ongoing technical assistance is also provided to local authorities, with the provision of experts and the creation of regional resource centres for sharing best practice.

-Citizen participation is another important aspect of these reforms. Consultation mechanisms have been put in place, such as the creation of neighbourhood councils in major cities and the regular organisation of public meetings on local projects. The development of digital tools supports this participatory approach, with the introduction of online platforms for consultation and voting on local projects, as well as mobile applications for reporting problems in public spaces (Nzigou, 2022).

-Reform of the energy sector is another crucial aspect of the modernisation of public services in Gabon. A vast energy infrastructure modernisation programme has been launched, including the renovation and extension of the electricity distribution network, and the construction of new, more efficient power stations. Gabon has also embarked on a policy of diversifying its energy sources, with the development of hydroelectricity and investment in solar energy, particularly for rural electrification. An incentive framework has been put in place to promote renewable energies, including the adoption of a specific law and the introduction of attractive feed-in tariffs for electricity from renewable sources (Nze, 2020).

-Digital transformation is at the heart of the modernisation of public services in Gabon. Several online platforms have been developed to facilitate access to public services, including a single portal for online administrative procedures and a platform for online payment of taxes. A major effort has been made to dematerialise administrative procedures, with the introduction of electronic signatures for official documents and the creation of a unique digital identifier for each citizen. To ensure the success of this digital transformation, digital training programmes have been set up for civil servants, and digital public spaces have been created to provide access to online services for all citizens.

"The fight against corruption is an essential pillar of the reforms aimed at improving the quality and efficiency of public services. In this context, a national anti-corruption agency has been set up to investigate suspicious cases, propose preventive reforms and raise awareness among the population and public officials. The legal framework has been strengthened by the adoption of stricter anti-corruption laws, in particular Law No. 002/2003 of 7 May 2003 and Law No. 041/2020 of 22 March 2021, and more severe sanctions. Transparency measures have also been introduced, such as the publication of the State budget and expenditure and the introduction of a reporting system. declaration of assets for senior civil servants" (Official Journal of Gabon, 2021).

It is also important to note that it is learning from the failure of reforms treated in the academic literature, emphasizing that certain reform initiatives in Gabon may have served as lessons for new measures (Mamboundou, 2021, p. 97-118). This may imply a more pragmatic approach adapted to local realities in the conduct of administrative reforms. Although reform efforts have been undertaken, it is obvious that administrative reform cannot be dissociated from State reform, the two going hand in hand for an effective and lasting transformation of public services and the civil service in Gabon. .

In short, recent reforms in public service management in Gabon reflect a desire for modernization, efficiency and transparency, while being part of a dynamic of alignment with the country's development objectives. They demonstrate the The government's commitment to providing efficient, transparent public services that meet the needs of the population. However, despite these reforms, Gabon still faces numerous challenges full of issues.

2.2.2 Current Challenges and Issues

The management of public services in Gabon today is characterised by a series of challenges whose causes are multiple and complex, and which require a strategic and innovative approach to ensure sustainable and inclusive development for the entire population. Among these challenges, digitisation and e-government occupy a prominent place. Indeed, a study shows that 40% of civil servants in Gabon do not own a computer, which underlines the importance of investing in IT infrastructure and digital training to modernise public administration (Gabon Media Time). According to the World Bank

(World Bank, 2022), the Digital Gabon project aims to accelerate the adoption of digitised public services and facilitate inclusive access to public services by providing a single identity for all citizens. The digitalisation strategy is therefore embodied in the Digital Gabon project. It is a major lever for the modernisation of governance. It aims to increase administrative efficiency and improve access to public services, while reducing opportunities for corruption. The allocation of a unique digital identity to each Gabonese citizen is a step towards more inclusive governance, facilitating administrative procedures and reducing inequalities in access to services.

The efficiency of public investment is another major challenge in Gabon, where public investment does not always succeed in playing a driving role in economic growth, highlighting the need to increase the efficiency of this expenditure in a constrained budgetary context. Improving the management of public investment is essential to reduce the efficiency losses observed and to guarantee the optimal impact of investment expenditure in terms of the quality of infrastructure and the satisfaction of the population's needs.

Inclusive development and economic diversification are also major challenges for Gabon. Despite its natural resources and high GDP, Gabon faces the challenge of ensuring an inclusive future for its population by improving infrastructure, social services and professional integration, while diversifying its economy to ensure sustainable and equitable growth. In other words, economic diversification has been identified as a priority for Gabon, particularly because of its historical dependence on the oil sector. Diversifying the economy by developing other sectors is crucial to reduce vulnerability to external shocks and create diversified employment opportunities (IMF, 2021). This includes promoting entrepreneurship, supporting manufacturing and investing in human capital.

In addition, the quality of public spending is a key issue in promoting inclusive growth in Gabon; it is essential to maximise the impact of the country's limited resources. It is therefore important to focus investments on sectors with a significant multiplier effect on society, such as education, public health and infrastructure (World Bank, 2020). These investments are likely to contribute to more equitable growth and improve the overall well-being of the population. In a tense macroeconomic context that exacerbates the challenges of unemployment, poverty and inequality, the country must make budgetary choices to adapt to the reduction in its public resources while ensuring that it maintains the quality of

essential goods and services such as education, health and housing. In summary, the challenges of public service management include the lack of financial resources, inadequate infrastructure, the training and professionalism of administrative staff, and the need to involve citizens in the management of public services. Equitable and universal access to public services, sustainable development and environmental protection are also important challenges to be addressed. Deep reforms and effective management are needed to address these challenges and ensure transparent, efficient and inclusive governance to promote harmonious and sustainable development for all Gabonese people. However, there are promising prospects for the future.

2.2.3 Prospects for Improving Management

Gabon has undertaken significant reforms to modernise the management of public services, focusing on digitisation, administrative reform and the reduction of socio-spatial inequalities. These initiatives are essential to meet the needs of a population demanding more efficient and accessible public services. However, the road to optimal public administration is fraught with pitfalls and requires constant vigilance and adaptation to technological and social developments. Sustained efforts in digital training of public servants and investment in IT infrastructure are therefore essential. In addition, transparent governance and greater citizen participation could encourage the emergence of innovative solutions and a better adaptation of public services to the needs of the population. Openness to future improvements could also include developing strategic partnerships with international actors to benefit from their expertise in public management. It could also involve encouraging local innovation through e-governance incubators to design more adapted and personalised public services. Gabon can also seek to strengthen financial orthodoxy and the effectiveness of public management, as Dupont (2022) underlines "the need to implement the economic recovery plan (PRE) to address the deterioration of macroeconomic balances". It also recommends aligning Gabon's emerging strategic plan (PSGE) with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Agenda 2030 and the African Union's Agenda 2063. In addition, the creation of a Ministry of Evaluation and Policies and State Control would make it possible to anchor the culture of results and evaluation of public policies (Dupont, 2022). Or even improving the governance of public enterprises, as proposed by Ondagui Antchouo (2020), modernising the management of public enterprises would improve their performance. In addition, the practice of governance would promote a

strategic vision that reconciles the social and environmental framework of the corporate citizen. But also think about investing even more in the digital sector; indeed, although the digital sector has experienced some slowdowns, the outlook remains positive.

Slowdown, the outlook remains positive (National Assembly, 2007). It is therefore essential to invest in digital infrastructure to promote innovation and economic development. Thus, by continuing its reform efforts and remaining open to cooperation and innovation, Gabon can make further progress towards a public service that effectively responds to the expectations of its citizens and is part of a dynamic of sustainable and inclusive development.



CHAPTER 3:

MAJOR INITIATIVES, CHALLENGES AND RECOMANDATION TO IMPROVE PUBLIC SERVICE IN GABON

3.1 Major Initiatives

Gabon is in the process of continuously improving its public services. This approach is part of its long-term development strategy, the Gabon Strategic Plan 2025 (PSGE), which aims to diversify Gabon's economy and modernise its public services. The country has also made significant progress in the area of digital transformation, with the development of digital infrastructure. These initiatives include the "e-Visa" project to simplify entry procedures into Gabon, the creation of the Gabonese Administration Information (CIAG) to facilitate access to administrative information, as well as ministerial reforms that have attracted foreign investment and economic measures to improve the management of social affairs and health.

In addition, Gabon is a pioneer in the field of ecology, actively seeking to protect its tropical forest, making it a net carbon absorber. In this context, we will examine the main initiatives taken to improve public services in Gabon. These various initiatives to improve Gabon's public services are characterised by several problems. The country faces significant financial constraints, which limit the resources available to invest in public services. In addition, corruption and mismanagement are recurring problems that undermine the efficiency and transparency of administrations. Finally, many citizens have limited access to public services, leading to inequalities and widespread dissatisfaction. The aim of this work is to analyse the various initiatives taken by the Gabonese authorities to improve public services, focusing on the measures taken to address the challenges identified. This will include examining the various strategies put in place, such as strengthening the capacity of civil servants, modernising public infrastructure, simplifying administrative procedures and promoting transparency and accountability. Through this analysis, we will be able to assess the results and impact of these initiatives on the quality of public services, citizen confidence and the reduction of corruption and red tape.

3.1.1 The Emerging Gabon Strategic Plan

To present the main initiatives to improve public services in Gabon, several key actions have been described in different strategic documents. These initiatives aim to improve the

governance, efficiency and effectiveness of Gabon's public sector. The country has sought to strengthen its diplomatic efforts, particularly with regard to the protection and assistance of Gabonese citizens abroad, as highlighted in the Gabon Emergent Strategic Plan, which is a variant of the Programs and Actions of the Gabonese Society. Society Project of former President Ali BONGO ONDIMBA (2015), who supported this project by declaring: "the future with confidence". This includes the establishment of a robust consular service, the strengthening of the operational capacity of the Assistance and Protection Fund and the engagement of the Gabonese diaspora to support the country's development. The PSGE aims to diversify Gabon's economy and modernise its public services. It is based on three pillars :

-Industrial Gabon: This pillar aims to develop Gabon's industrial capacity, particularly in the hydrocarbons, mining and metallurgy sectors.

-Green Gabon: This pillar aims to strengthen the timber, agriculture, livestock and fisheries sectors, in line with Gabon's commitment to environmental protection and sustainable development.

.-The Gabon of services: This pillar aims to promote the development of tourism and financial services.

The PSGE also aims to give every Gabonese access to a decent standard of living. To achieve this goal, the plan includes a series of ambitious economic reforms and a precise action plan. Gabon's emerging strategic plan will be financed and supported by various sources. Firstly, through internal financing, the Gabonese state finances part of the plan through its own resources. These include tax revenues and income from its shareholdings in various companies. When government expenditure exceeds revenue, a budget deficit arises. This deficit is financed by borrowing in the form of securities sold on the financial markets.

Gabon also receives external financing from various international institutions and development partners. These funds can take the form of loans, donations or direct investments. Finally, institutional support is provided by various national and international institutions. These institutions provide technical support, advice and expertise to help implement the plan. In addition, the PSGE aims to make culture a strong and job-creating sector of activity and growth through the diversification, structuring and development of its

various sectors in Gabon. In short, the Emerging Gabon Strategic Plan is a global initiative aimed at transforming Gabon into an emerging economy while ensuring the well-being of its people and protecting its environment.

3.1.2 Development of Digital Public Services

Gabon is committed to the digitalisation of public services in order to improve the efficiency and quality of the services offered to the population. To support this digital transformation, initiatives are being launched in Gabon, such as the Digital Project, which is part of the Transformation Acceleration Plan (PAT) and aims to develop the digital sector in Gabon in line with the Digital Development Vision defined by former President Ali Bongo Ondimba (Edou, 2024). The same applies to the e-Gabon project, which aims to use ICT to improve the delivery of public health services, in particular by strengthening epidemiological surveillance. The e-Gabon project is an ambitious initiative by the Gabonese government to modernise public administration through digitalisation. Launched as part of Gabon's Emerging Strategic Plan (PSGE), the project's main objective is to improve the efficiency and transparency of the administration, while facilitating access to public services for citizens and businesses. It has several key components, including the creation of a robust digital infrastructure, the development of online services, the establishment of a digital identity system, and training programmes for civil servants and citizens. Despite the potential benefits, the project faces significant challenges such as the digital divide, resistance to change within the administration and data security issues. The success of the e-Gabon project will depend on the government's ability to overcome these obstacles and maintain a strong commitment over time, while ensuring continuous evaluation and adjustment based on feedback. The main elements of this project are to strengthen the health system through the use of information and communication technologies (ICT), but also to improve epidemiological surveillance through the collection of health data and the rapid dissemination of information. Provide the population with more efficient, transparent and higher quality public services. (World Bank, 2016) It consists of the establishment of a new National Health Information System (SNIS) based on ICT. Develop the digital innovation ecosystem, especially for entrepreneurs and SMEs. Digitisation of essential public services through the Gabon Numérique project. The project is led by the Ministries of Communications, Digital Economy and Health. It is funded by a \$56 million loan from the World Bank since 2016, and implemented in partnership with

the National Agency for Infrastructure and Digital Frequencies (ANINF) and the National Health Insurance Fund (CNAMGS). The National Agency for Digital Infrastructures and Frequencies (ANINF) is a key player in Gabon's digital transformation. Created by the Gabonese government, the agency is responsible for developing and managing the country's essential digital infrastructure, as well as managing the radio frequency spectrum. Its main tasks include the deployment of the national fibre-optic network, the creation of the Central African Backbone, the development of government data centres and the management of frequencies for telecommunications services. The ANINF has made a significant contribution to improving Gabon's digital infrastructure, but faces challenges such as sustainable funding, attracting technical talent, coordinating with other stakeholders and adapting to rapid technological developments. The agency plays a critical role in Gabon's vision to become a regional digital hub, with future priorities including expanding the fibre network, developing 5G infrastructure, strengthening cybersecurity, and promoting digital inclusion in rural areas. ANINF's continued success will be instrumental in achieving the country's digital ambitions and transforming it into a vibrant digital economy. Other initiatives have been taken, such as Gabon's National Very High Speed Plan (PNTHD), a strategic initiative to modernise the country's digital infrastructure as part of the Emerging Gabon Strategic Plan (Gabon Republic, 2012). This ambitious plan aims to extend broadband coverage to the entire national territory, significantly increase internet speeds, reduce the digital divide and position Gabon as a regional digital hub in Central Africa (National Agency for Digital Infrastructures and Frequencies [ANINF], 2018). The PNTHD is structured around several strategic axes, including the deployment of optical fibre, the development of 4G/5G networks, the use of satellite technologies for remote areas, the creation of Internet exchange points and the construction of modern data centres (Ministry of the Digital Economy, Communication and Post, 2020). The implementation of the plan faces significant challenges, particularly in terms of financing, coordination between public and private actors, regulatory adaptation and the development of local skills (World Bank, 2019). Despite these obstacles, the PNTHD is expected to have a significant impact on Gabon's digital economy, education, health and public administration (International Telecommunications Union [ITU], 2021). Its success could position the country as a regional leader in digital connectivity, paving the way for major economic and social transformation. But also the Regulatory Agency for Electronic Communications and Posts (ARCEP), which is the regulatory authority for the electronic

communications and postal sectors in Gabon. Created in 2001 as the Telecommunications Regulatory Agency (ARTEL), it was renamed ARCEP in 2012 to reflect the extension of its powers. Its main mission is to regulate the electronic communications and postal market in Gabon, with the objectives of ensuring healthy and fair competition between operators, promoting the development of the sector, protecting the interests of consumers and guaranteeing universal access to basic services. ARCEP operates within the framework of Law No. 005/2001 regulating the telecommunications sector in Gabon, as amended by Law No. 006/2012. This legislation defines its powers and responsibilities. The agency is governed by a seven-member Regulatory Council appointed by presidential decree and has financial and administrative autonomy to carry out its missions. The main activities of ARCEP include the allocation and control of operating licences, the management of the radio frequency spectrum, the regulation of tariffs and quality of service, the settlement of disputes between operators and the protection of consumers. Since its creation, ARCEP has made a significant contribution to the liberalisation and modernisation of the telecommunications sector in Gabon. Its actions have encouraged the entry of new players and the improvement of national network coverage. ARCEP is currently facing several challenges, including adapting regulation to new technologies, promoting innovation in the sector, improving coverage in rural areas and combating the digital divide. These issues reflect the rapid evolution of the telecommunications sector and the growing importance of digital technologies for Gabon's economic and social development.

3.1.3 The Creation of the Gabonese Administration Information Center

The creation of the Gabonese Administration Information Center was launched on 26 March 2015 as part of the modernisation of the administration in Gabon. This centre, known as CIAG (Gabonese Administration Information Centre), was created to improve access to administrative information for Gabonese civil servants. It operates with a dual approach, comprising an online service, called the Front Office, which acts as a database used in libraries, and a central service, called the Back Office, which is responsible for the physical management of the administrative information sought. The CIAG plays a crucial role in improving the quality of public services by facilitating access to essential administrative data for civil servants in Gabon (Edzang and Darby, 2024). The creation of this centre was supported by the Gabonese government, in particular by the former President of the Republic of Gabon, Ali Bongo Ondimba, as part of his policy of

modernising the administration and improving governance. This initiative also benefited from the technical and financial support of international partners, such as the World Bank and the African Union, which provided assistance for capacity building and the establishment of the infrastructure necessary for the operation of the Centre.

3.1.4 Institutional Reforms

In 2023, as part of the ongoing political transition, a Ministry of Institutional Reform has been created. Headed by Murielle Minkoue th. Mintsu, its mission is to coordinate the process of institutional reform, relations with parliament and independent administrative authorities (Obame, 2023). In fact, in February of the same year, the government presented a draft decree establishing the Directorate-General for the Modernisation of Public Administration, attached to the Ministry of the Civil Service.

This new entity will have the task of designing and implementing policies for the reform and modernisation of the public administration (Nzuey, 1983). It should also be recalled that in 2012, former President Ali Bongo Ondimba announced ambitious reforms of the National School of Administration (ENA), career management and the remuneration of civil servants in order to meet the challenges of Gabon's emergence.

The aim is to make the ENA the training framework for senior civil servants and to optimise the management of human resources in the administration (Ministry of Economy and Participation, 2012). In short, since 2009, Gabon has undertaken a major project of administrative reform, with the creation of modern tools, new dedicated structures and the announcement of ambitious projects by the highest authorities. The challenge is to make the administration more efficient and adapted to the country's development ambitions.

More recently, in 2024, Gabon launched a series of reforms through a national dialogue, which officially began on 8 April 2024 and ended on 30 April, and which was a crucial platform for discussing the country's future in the context of the military coup that had taken place seven months earlier. The main objective of this dialogue was to propose far-reaching institutional, political, economic and social reforms (Lionel, Messia and Esozimina, 2024), such as one of the most important institutional reforms proposed during the national dialogue was the introduction of the presidential system into the Gabonese constitution. This measure aims to establish a system of government in which the President

of the Republic holds the main executive powers, with safeguards to prevent abuse of power and ensure a strict separation of powers.

-The suspension and restructuring of political parties

The dialogue also recommended a major overhaul of Gabon's political landscape, including the suspension of all political parties until new, stricter rules for their creation are established. In particular, this proposal aims to reduce the influence of the former ruling party, the Gabonese Democratic Party (PDG), by disqualifying its leaders for a period of three years. -Review of sovereignty and immigration

Strong recommendations were made on sovereignty and immigration, calling for a more rigorous policy that prioritises the protection of the interests of the Gabonese people. In particular, it is proposed to reserve high administrative posts for nationals and to review the conditions for acquiring Gabonese nationality.

-Review of cooperation agreements

One of the proposals calls for a comprehensive review of all existing cooperation agreements to ensure that they truly serve the interests of Gabon and its people. This measure is intended to strengthen the country's autonomy and ensure more sovereign management of resources and international commitments. In conclusion, these institutional reforms, proposed as part of the national dialogue, represent an important step towards overhauling Gabon's governmental and political framework. They aim to create a more democratic, transparent and resilient environment capable of responding to the aspirations of Gabonese citizens. The President of the Transition, Brice Oligui Nguema, is responsible for translating these proposals into legal texts, paving the way for their effective implementation.

3.1.5 Environmental Protection and Development in Gabon

Gabon is positioning itself as a leader in environmental protection and sustainable development in Africa through a series of strategic initiatives and partnerships. It is one of the few countries in the world that absorbs more carbon than it emits, demonstrating its commitment to environmental protection and the fight against climate change (United Nations Sustainable Development Group, 2022). In 2021, Gabon became the first African country to receive results-based payments for reducing emissions from deforestation and

forest degradation. The country co-hosted the One Forest Summit with France in March 2023, seeking a fair agreement between forest countries and the international community to reconcile environmental ambition with economic development. It has therefore embarked on sustainable development and taken economic initiatives. Indeed, Gabon is working to transform its oil-based economy into a green economy by accelerating economic diversification and promoting the sustainable use of natural resources. The World Bank's new Country Partnership Framework (CPF) for Gabon (2023-2027) supports the country's transition to sustainable and inclusive economic growth, focusing on improving household resilience and increasing employment in the non-oil private sector. Projects such as the Programme for Access to Basic Services in Rural Areas (PASBMIR) improve access to water and energy services, supporting local development and resilience. As a result, it is committed to international and regional causes and will host Africa Climate Week in 2022, bringing together environmental and climate experts, as well as international and national leaders, to discuss climate action on a global scale continent. Through its targeted engagement in Gabon, the World Bank is working to promote blue and green jobs in key sectors such as fisheries, forestry and ecotourism to diversify the economy and improve the investment climate. Ultimately, these local initiatives, such as raising awareness of conservation and good fishing practices, help protect the environment and promote sustainable lifestyles. In addition, « projects supported by international organisations, such as the UN, aim to strengthen sustainable development by promoting local agriculture and supporting small and medium-sized enterprises, » says WWF-Gabon.

Gabon is thus positioning itself as a model in the fight against climate change, combining economic growth, environmental protection and mitigation of the effects of climate change.

3.2 The Problems and Challenges of Improving Public Service in Gabon

Improving public services in Gabon faces many complex problems that hamper the country's development efforts. Despite the progress made in recent years, Gabon still faces major challenges in providing quality public services that are accessible to all citizens. Among the main problems identified are personalised public service practices that place a heavy burden on the state budget; economic challenges related to legislation, standards and security of commercial transactions; and the need to improve the effectiveness of public spending to promote inclusive growth. These multidimensional problems underline the

complexity of the task facing the Gabonese authorities in modernising public administration and meeting citizens' legitimate expectations for quality public services. Far-reaching reforms are needed, combining changes in mentality, targeted investments and better allocation of resources. The stakes are high because improving public services is an essential lever for stimulating Gabon's economic and social development by creating a favourable environment for businesses, reducing inequalities and improving the living conditions of the population. It is a transformation challenge that requires the commitment of all actors, public and private, to build a modern, efficient and citizen-centred public service. Indeed, improving public services in Gabon is a key issue for the country's socio-economic development and for meeting the needs of its citizens. In the face of multiple and complex challenges, the modernisation of public administration, the effective management of investments, the fair remuneration of state actors and the optimisation of public spending are essential aspects to be taken into account. As Nzengue (2018) points out, "the quality of public services has a direct impact on the lives of citizens, and it is therefore imperative to rethink existing policies and practices". In a context where the quality of public services has a direct impact on the lives of citizens, it is imperative to rethink existing policies and practices to ensure efficient, transparent and equitable delivery. Improving public services in Gabon requires an integrated approach combining the modernisation of administrative structures, the continuous training of agents, the promotion of good governance and the involvement of citizens. According to Mouloungui (2020), "the modernisation of the public administration is essential to promote inclusive growth and meet the socio-economic needs of the country". By emphasising the rigorous management of public resources, promoting efficiency and quality of services, Gabon can not only strengthen citizens' trust in public institutions, but also stimulate economic growth and promote sustainable and inclusive development. This introduction highlights the crucial importance of addressing the specific challenges and issues that hamper the efficiency and accessibility of the country's public services, linked to their improvement in Gabon, in order to build a prosperous and harmonious future for the entire population. In other words, it aims to explore these obstacles and highlight the courses of action necessary to overcome these challenges and improve the quality of public services in Gabon.

3.2.1. The Problems

The problems associated with improving public services in Gabon are many and complex. Despite the efforts made in recent years, the country still faces many obstacles to the modernisation of the administration and the provision of quality public services accessible to all citizens. One of the main problems identified is the personalisation of public services, which places a heavy burden on the state budget. Gabon also faces major economic challenges related to legislation, standards and the security of commercial transactions. Another major challenge is to improve the efficiency of public spending to promote inclusive growth. In addition, the system for monitoring and evaluating public policies suffers from organisational and operational problems, which reduce the authorities' ability to measure the impact of their actions. In other words, the absence of good public governance in Gabon is also cited as an obstacle to learning from the failure of administrative reforms.

3.2.2 Personalized Public Services

The personalised public services (PPS) represent a major challenge for the improvement of public services in Gabon. According to sources, these public entities, which have a public service mission and a legal personality distinct from the State, will consume no less than 167.7 billion CFA francs in State subsidies in 2021 (Mapiya, 2024). It is characterised by the private appropriation of public goods and services by certain individuals or groups, to the detriment of the general interest. Several factors explain this problem:

- The absence of good public governance, characterised by a lack of rigour in the management of public funds and a culture of impunity (Mamboudou, 2021, p. 97-118). This encourages the embezzlement and misuse of state resources.
- An inadequate legal and regulatory framework, with laws that are not always applied or circumvented (Obame, 2023). The public domain of the state and local authorities is thus subject to sometimes anarchic occupations.
- There is a lack of control and effective sanctions in the face of abuse. Authorisations to occupy public property are often granted in a precarious and revocable manner, and abuses are not systematically punished.

To remedy this situation, far-reaching reforms are needed that combine a change of mentality, a strengthening of the legal and institutional framework, and the mobilisation of all stakeholders. The challenge is to rebuild a public service that serves the general interest and guarantees fairness and transparency in access to public goods and services.

3.2.3 Support for Salary Increases

The need to accompany the increase in salaries with an improvement in the quality of public services remains a major challenge, even though the introduction of the New Remuneration System (NSR) for public servants in 2015 was a success recognised by a pan-African award for excellence. Indeed, the increase in salaries must be accompanied by an improvement in the quality of public services provided to citizens.

As highlighted in an article published by the Ministry of Public Service and Capacity Building of the Republic of Gabon in 2017: « Improving the remuneration of state agents must be accompanied by an improvement in the quality of public services, hence the need to (...) implement ambitious reforms to meet this challenge. » Indeed, the establishment of this New Remuneration System (NSR) for public agents has enabled a significant increase in public sector salaries. This ambitious reform was internationally recognised by the award of a prize for excellence. However, this increase in remuneration has not been accompanied by a tangible improvement in the quality of public services provided to citizens. . This is the main challenge for the government. With the increase in salaries, Gabonese citizens now rightly expect better public services in return. In particular, they hope to see improvements in access to and quality of health services, education, administration, etc. If these expectations are not met, there is a risk of disappointment and loss of confidence in public institutions. It is therefore crucial for the government to tackle this project quickly. In order to improve the quality of public services, Gabon must make targeted investments in priority sectors. . This means allocating more budget resources to education, health, infrastructure, etc. But investment alone is not enough. They must be accompanied by far-reaching reforms of the public administration: modernisation of procedures, capacity building of agents, fight against corruption, etc. This is a long-term project that requires vision and strong political will.

3.2.4 Corruption and Embezzlement

Indeed, the problem of improving public services in Gabon is a complex one that poses many challenges. One of the main problems the country faces in this area is corruption and the misappropriation of public funds. According to Transparency International (2022), Gabon ranks 126th out of 180 countries in terms of perception of corruption, with a mediocre score of 31/100. "Corruption remains particularly widespread in Gabon's public sector" (Transparency International, 2022). . Here are the key findings on corruption and embezzlement in Gabon:

- More than three-quarters (76%) of Gabonese citizens believe that corruption in the country has increased over the past year, with a majority saying it has increased significantly.
- Key institutions such as the president, officials in the presidency, the police/gendarmerie and members of the National Assembly are perceived as corrupt by a significant proportion of the population.
- A very large majority (90%) of Gabonese citizens disapprove of the government's efforts to fight corruption within the public administration. Unfortunately, many observers agree that corruption is a widespread scourge within the Gabonese public administration at all hierarchical levels (RFI, 2021). Huge sums of money are allegedly siphoned off every year from budgets that are supposed to finance essential public services such as health, education or infrastructure. Various mechanisms are used, ranging from over-invoicing of public contracts to bribery and direct embezzlement, as denounced in the report "Billions at Play" by the NGO The Parade (2021).
- There is a widespread fear among Gabonese citizens of reprisals or negative consequences if they report acts of corruption.
- The country's annual losses due to corruption are estimated at between 400 and 500 billion CFA francs, hindering economic growth and the emergence of a middle class. In other words, beyond financial waste, corruption deprives the population of the services to which they are entitled (Journal du Cameroun, 2019). Infrastructure remains dilapidated or unfinished, hospitals lack equipment, schools lack textbooks, because there has been insufficient investment. And despite a few high-profile trials, most embezzlements remain

unpunished, with a less than independent judiciary facilitating this widespread impunity (RFI, 2021).

- Despite efforts such as the creation of an anti-corruption ministry, the National Commission to Combat Illicit Enrichment and the National Financial Investigation Agency, corruption remains endemic in Gabon, as evidenced by the country's low ranking on the Corruption Perceptions Index. The involvement of senior officials, including members of the Bongo family, in corruption scandals and embezzlement of public funds has been a long-standing problem in Gabon, leading to legal proceedings and international scrutiny. The accumulation of considerable wealth by the family through illicit means has been the subject of national and international investigations and legal proceedings. Corruption thus creates a vicious circle in which public services are rendered ineffective by lack of funding, forcing citizens to resort to them out of necessity, while the elites line their pockets (The Parade, 2021). To combat this scourge, reforms...

3.2.5 The Aging of Infrastructure

Another major challenge for improving public services in Gabon is the advanced age of the existing infrastructure. It is therefore important to emphasise that ageing infrastructure has a significant economic impact, leading to increased travel times, vehicle damage and reduced productivity. It can also have a negative impact on the environment and on access to essential services such as water, electricity and transport. Despite the significant investments made between 2009 and 2013, the efficiency of public investment in terms of infrastructure quality remains low, with a loss of efficiency estimated by the International Monetary Fund at 50% by June 2020. Indeed, many administrative buildings, schools, hospitals, roads and water/electricity networks are in a worrying state of disrepair due to decades of underinvestment in their maintenance and renovation.

According to a World Bank report (2018), more than half of Gabon's paved roads are in urgent need of rehabilitation, with a third of them in a "very poor" condition. The road infrastructure maintenance deficit would represent an economic shortfall of \$115 million per year for the country (World Bank, 2018). The situation in the health sector is not much better. "According to a report by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) (2022, p.25), "the obsolescence of hospital infrastructure is one of the major challenges. Some health centres date back to colonial times and lack modern equipment. Similarly, in the

education system, many schools suffer from a lack of building maintenance, dilapidated desks, unhygienic toilets, etc. (UNESCO, 2021). These deplorable conditions seriously affect children's learning and schooling. Faced with this alarming observation, the Gabonese government is struggling to mobilise the necessary funds to upgrade this ageing infrastructure, which is nevertheless essential for the proper functioning of essential public services (Blimpo and Cosgrove, 2020). A major long-term investment plan seems essential to stem this widespread deterioration.

3.2.6 The Shortage of Qualified Personnel

The glaring lack of competent and qualified personnel is a major obstacle to improving public services in Gabon. According to a study by the African Development Bank (2019), "the lack of qualified human resources constitutes a significant bottleneck" (p.17) for the Gabonese civil service. This problem is partly due to the brain drain that the country has been experiencing for years. Many Gabonese graduates prefer to work abroad, attracted by better salaries and working conditions (Gaulme, 2018). Gabon is struggling to retain its locally trained elite. But beyond this phenomenon, it is the very attractiveness of the civil service that raises questions. Young graduates are often deterred from this path by uncompetitive salaries and difficult working conditions in an outdated administrative system (Malaud, 2017). This lack of competent human resources affects many strategic sectors, such as education or health. "Gabon's education system is experiencing a worrying shortage of qualified teachers," notes a UNESCO report (2021, p.39). In hospitals, too, the lack of doctors and nurses trained to international standards is affecting the quality of care (World Health Organization, 2020). To remedy this situation, sustained efforts in terms of training, career progression and salaries in the public service seem essential (World Bank, 2017). Otherwise, Gabon could see its public services continue to deteriorate due to a lack of sufficiently qualified personnel.

3.2.7 Inequalities in Access to Public Services

A major challenge in improving public services is the wide disparity in access between urban and rural areas of Gabon. While urban centres such as Libreville concentrate most of the infrastructure and services, rural populations struggle to benefit from adequate access to even basic services. Access to health care is no more equitable. While 46% of the country's hospital infrastructure is concentrated in Libreville, seven provinces together account for only 15% (WHO, 2020). In rural Nyanga, there are only 3 doctors per 100,000

inhabitants, compared to 31 in the capital (Ndombo et al., 2020). This is a major barrier for remote populations.

In education, for example, "rural students pay a high price with lower access and retention rates", according to a UNICEF report (2021, p.12). Many villages have a severe lack of nearby schools, forcing children to travel long distances to study. More specifically, Gabon's rural population suffers from a glaring lack of access to basic public services compared to urban dwellers, a glaring inequality that jeopardises their development. In the education sector, for example, the net primary school enrolment rate drops to only 74% in rural provinces such as Ngounié or Ogooué-Lolo, compared to 94% in Libreville (UNICEF, 2021, p.14). Many villages remain completely without nearby educational facilities. The territorial divide is also striking in the health sector. "65% of health facilities are concentrated in the cities of Libreville and Port-Gentil", while large rural areas remain without accessible health infrastructure (World Health Organization [WHO], 2020, p.9). Access to drinking water and electricity also remains highly unequal. According to the World Bank (2022), only 38% of rural households have access to running water, compared to 87% in urban areas. The statistics are similar for electrification. Even access to essential services such as drinking water and electricity remains highly unequal. In the rural province of Haute-Ogooué, only 14% of rural households have access to running water and barely 6% are connected to the electricity grid (World Bank, 2022). This lack of access has serious implications for the education, health and living conditions of these populations. Beyond the quantitative infrastructure deficit, the quality of public services available in rural areas is often a problem. Schools suffer from a severe lack of equipment, teaching materials and qualified teachers (UNESCO, 2021). Similarly, the technical capacity of rural health centres remains very limited, not to mention regular shortages of essential medicines (WHO, 2020). These territorial inequalities are fuelling a massive rural exodus to escape the lack of basic services, increasing the pressure on urban infrastructure. Addressing these inequalities through massive and targeted investment in remote rural areas is therefore a key challenge that the authorities are still struggling to address (United Nations Population Fund, 2022).

3.3 Solutions and Recommendations Related to These Problems

It is clear that Gabon's public services suffer from many serious problems that hinder their efficient functioning and their ability to meet the needs of the population. Outdated

infrastructure, a lack of qualified staff, unequal access depending on the area and, above all, the plague of widespread corruption, which diverts a significant proportion of resources, are all major obstacles that need to be overcome. As the economist Dani Rodrik has written, "strong public institutions are the key to sustainable economic and social development". Given the scale of the challenges, deep reforms are urgently needed. To be sure, the task at hand is immense and the projects to be undertaken are many and complex. But as Boutros Boutros-Ghali, former Secretary-General of the United Nations, said, "Good governance is perhaps the most important aspect of sustainable development". The challenges of a genuine recovery of public services are, quite simply, vital for Gabon's economic and social development, as well as for national cohesion. That is why I am going to put forward a series of ambitious but realistic recommendations that can make a lasting difference. They will be based on several complementary priorities: the rehabilitation of public administration, the training of human resources, major investment in the renewal of infrastructure and a major move towards the territorial decentralisation of services. As Nelson Mandela wrote, "Education is the most powerful weapon for changing the world". If there is a real political will to undertake these fundamental reforms, there is no doubt that Gabon will eventually have the means to provide itself with efficient public services that are equally accessible to all and meet the highest standards. This is an essential objective in order, in the words of Nobel laureate Amartya Sen, to "expand the real freedoms enjoyed by individuals".

3.3.1 The Solutions

The following are some of the main solutions that have been proposed to address the various problems that hinder the improvement of public services in Gabon. In the face of corruption and misappropriation of public funds, solutions have been considered to combat the corruption and misappropriation of public funds that are damaging public services in Gabon: The first absolute priority must be to restore transparency and accountability in the management of public finances. This requires the establishment of rigorous and independent control and audit mechanisms throughout the expenditure chain (tenders, procurement, project implementation, etc.) (Transparency International, 2022). The systematic publication of detailed accounts and the possibility of public and challenging scrutiny are also essential to ensure good governance (Kiwanda et al., 2021). At the same time, it is imperative to tackle head-on the impunity that fuels this phenomenon of

widespread corruption. A thorough reform of the judiciary to ensure its complete independence from political and economic powers is essential (RFI, 2021). Judicial proceedings must be able to be initiated and completed impartially, with heavy sanctions for proven misconduct (Mouélé, 2019). The creation of a specialised financial jurisdiction could be an effective lever. The involvement of civil society and citizens in this fight also seems crucial. Strengthening press freedom and transparency of public finances would allow them to exercise a useful countervailing power (Transparency International, 2022). The creation of government platforms for safe reporting could also encourage whistleblowers to break the law of silence. Finally, a global strategy to moralise public affairs seems necessary (Mills, 2020). This would involve awareness-raising campaigns among civil servants, but also within the education system, to gradually restore a culture of probity and the public interest after decades of abuse. So many complex but essential measures to ensure that Gabonese taxpayers' money is finally invested in public services instead of fueling opaque circuits and enriching a few.

The lack of qualified personnel in the Gabonese civil service is a major problem for the improvement of public services: The first priority must be to make careers in the public sector more attractive. This will inevitably involve a significant increase in the remuneration of civil servants, which remains very low in many professions such as teaching or health (Leyono Ndong, 2019). Approximating the pay scales used in the private sector would make it possible to attract and retain skills. At the same time, it is essential to invest in improving the working conditions of civil servants, who still often suffer from outdated and inadequate infrastructure and equipment (African Development Bank [AFDB], 2019). Modernising administrative buildings, schools and hospitals with state-of-the-art equipment would go a long way towards promoting these professions. Another key area is the development of a high-quality vocational and higher education system in promising sectors (AFDB, 2019). Strengthening the capacity of existing institutions, creating new ones where necessary, and ensuring a close link with the needs of administrations would make it possible to train the sought-after skills locally (UNESCO, 2021). Promoting careers in the public sector also requires a reform of the governance of the sector (Mills, 2020). Providing real prospects for career development based on merit and greater transparency in human resources management would be important motivational levers. Finally, we must not neglect the need to reverse the brain drain by attracting skilled

diasporas abroad to return and invest in Gabon. Targeted recruitment campaigns, securing career paths and improving the living environment could contribute to this dynamic. If all these conditions were to be met, Gabon would be able to provide itself with the quality human resources needed to run its public services effectively in the long term.

To address the worrying ageing of Gabon's public infrastructure, which is a real obstacle to improving public services: The first need will be to mobilise massive, long-term financing to undertake large-scale renovation and construction programmes. According to the World Bank (2018), Gabon's infrastructure investment needs for the period 2020-2024 are estimated at around \$3.5 billion, or more than 15% of annual GDP. Given the scale of these needs and the country's budgetary constraints, the government will inevitably have to turn to international donors (financial institutions, donor countries, etc.) to complement national resources. An advocacy strategy and the preparation of bankable dossiers will be essential to convince these partners (Banerjee et al., 2020). However, mobilising these funds will not be enough. At the same time, it will be necessary to strengthen the management capacity of infrastructure projects, which is currently hampered by a lack of technical skills and rigorous procedures (African Development Bank [AFDB], 2019). The training of dedicated managers, the use of foreign expertise, the establishment of audits and strict control mechanisms will guarantee the optimal use of investments. The authorities could also consider increasing the involvement of the domestic and foreign private sector through public-private partnerships or concession contracts (Gutman et al., 2015). This path would allow them to benefit from financing, know-how and modern management practices to accelerate renovation. Finally, greater decentralisation of infrastructure investment to the local level seems necessary in order to take better account of the specific needs of each territory (World Health Organisation [WHO], 2020). Supporting this process by strengthening the administrative and technical capacities of local authorities will be a key to success.

Solutions have also been implemented to reduce the deep territorial inequalities in access to basic public services between urban and rural areas in Gabon: A massive rebalancing of public investment in favour of hitherto neglected rural areas appears to be an absolute necessity. According to the African Development Bank (2019), at least 30% of investment budgets should be allocated to these areas for at least a decade to make up for accumulated delays in school infrastructure, health, access to water and electricity. Targeted funding

must be provided, with rigorous monitoring of the actual allocation of resources. This proactive policy must be accompanied by a thorough process of decentralisation of public services as close as possible to the rural population. This requires the transfer of skills, financial and human resources from the central level to local authorities (Hugon, 2005). This must be preceded by a substantial strengthening of the institutional, technical and management capacities of these municipal and provincial administrations (United Nations Population Fund [UNFPA], 2022). In order to accelerate the reduction of inequalities, the increased use of "mobile" or itinerant public services in remote areas can be an effective additional lever, pending the long-term implementation of infrastructure (UNFPA, 2022). Medical teams, administrative offices and even "mobile" schools could be set up on a temporary or regular basis. At the same time, facilitating access to new information and communication technologies (NICT) in rural areas offers enormous potential for reducing territorial disparities (Hugon, 2005). The development of telemedicine, distance learning and online administrative services would make many services accessible without the need to travel, and the mobilisation of rural populations themselves as actors in these policies will be essential for their ownership and sustainability (UNFPA, 2022). The involvement of local communities and traditional chiefs in the definition of priority needs and the management of decentralised services must become the norm. So many complex but essential projects to ensure equal access to basic services throughout Gabonese territory, a guarantee of national cohesion and development.

3.3.2 My Recommendations

The observation is clear, public services in Gabon suffer from many serious problems which hinder their efficient functioning and their ability to meet the needs of the populations. Outdated infrastructure, shortage of qualified personnel, inequitable access depending on the territory, and above all the plague of widespread corruption which diverts a considerable part of resources, all major obstacles to be removed. As economist Dani Rodrik wrote, "strong public institutions are the key to sustainable economic and social development."

Faced with the scale of the challenges, in-depth reforms are urgently needed. Certainly, the task to be accomplished is immense and the projects to be opened are multiple and complex. But as Boutros Boutros-Ghali, former Secretary General of the UN, said, "good governance is perhaps the most important aspect for sustainable development." The

challenges of a real recovery of public services are quite simply vital for the economic and social development of Gabon, as well as for national cohesion. This is why I will formulate here a series of ambitious but realistic recommendations, capable of lastingly transforming the situation. They will revolve around several complementary priority areas: the sanitation of public governance, the training of human resources, heavy investments in the renovation of infrastructures, and a vast movement of territorialized decentralization of services. As Nelson Mandela wrote, "education is the most powerful weapon to change the world." These recommendations which will be formulated constitute a set of fundamental, complementary and interdependent reforms, aimed at profoundly transforming the current landscape. As philosopher John Dewey wrote, "any genuine reform must begin with a rigorous effort to rethink the problems themselves." These will not be half-measures or superficial solutions, but rather a major overhaul of the legal framework, governance practices, financing arrangements and the territorial organization of public services. A real structural overhaul to "overcome the ruts of the past" as recommended by the Kenyan writer Ngugi wa Thiong'o. These large-scale transformations inevitably involve taking up complex challenges, shaking up established interests and calling into question certain inertias. But it is at this price that Gabon will finally be able to provide itself with public services worthy of the name, efficient and equitable throughout the national territory. If there is a real political will to undertake these fundamental reforms, there is no doubt that Gabon will ultimately have the means to provide itself with efficient public services, equally accessible to all and meeting the highest standards. An essential objective to allow, in the words of Nobel Prize winner Amartya Sen, "to expand the real freedoms enjoyed by individuals". As in the words of Lee Kuan Yew, a figure of modern governance in Asia, "between deadly immobility and painful but vital adjustment, the wise choice is beyond doubt." The path of reforms, however difficult it may be, is the only way to bring about real change for the future.

1.The Adoption of New Public Management (NPM)

Adopting New Public Management (NPM) in Gabon can be an effective way of improving public services. By focusing on results-based management practices, NPM promotes efficiency in service delivery, enabling better allocation of human and financial resources. In addition, transparency is enhanced through the digitalisation of administrative processes, which facilitates access to information and reduces opportunities for corruption. At the

same time, the accountability of public servants is being encouraged through ongoing training and performance-based reward systems. However, for these reforms to succeed, a strong commitment from the government and the active involvement of citizens are essential, while taking into account the challenges associated with their implementation.

2. Fight Corruption

As mentioned previously, eradicating the endemic corruption which plagues administrations must be the very first priority. This requires a reinforced legislative and legal arsenal, but also through profound reforms to restore transparency and traceability in the management of public finances. Mechanisms for spending control, auditing and citizen involvement must be put in place. Only healthy governance will make it possible to truly invest public money where it is needed.

3. Train Human Resources

Faced with the cruel lack of qualified personnel, ambitious training programs in strategic sectors (health, education, administration, etc.) are essential. It will be necessary to develop academic and professional capacities, while reviewing salary scales and career prospects to attract and retain trained skills.

4. Invest Massively in Infrastructure

Several billion dollars will have to be mobilized, including from foreign donors, to finalize multi-year programs for the renovation/construction of public infrastructure (hospitals, roads, schools, networks, etc.). At the same time, technical capacities for managing complex infrastructure projects will need to be strengthened.

5. Strongly Decentralize Public Services

To reduce glaring territorial inequalities, it will be necessary to transfer many more skills and budgets from the central level to local authorities, accompanying them with a strengthening of their administrative/technical capacities. The deployment of “mobile/itinerant” public services in remote areas can also be a good complement.

6. Involve Populations

Truly involving civil society, local communities and the media at all stages, from defining needs to implementing and monitoring reforms, will be essential to ensure their appropriation and lasting effectiveness on the ground.



CONCLUSION

Ultimately, the improvement of public services in Gabon is part of a historical trajectory marked by successive changes and represents a multidimensional challenge at the crossroads of the demands of modernisation, the growing expectations of citizens and the imperatives of sustainable development. Since independence in 1960 until today. From its earliest days as a sovereign state, Gabon inherited a public administration based on the French colonial model, centralised and designed primarily to meet the needs of a limited elite. This model, although effective in a context of low demand for public services, has proved unsuited to the aspirations of a modern state seeking inclusive development. In the post-independence period, Gabon has experienced different phases of administrative development, moving from a structure inherited from the colonial model to a system that today seeks to integrate modern technologies and the principles of participatory governance. It has thus been marked by successive efforts to adapt the administration to a rapidly changing socio-economic context, often hampered by structural problems such as excessive centralisation. Indeed, its challenges are numerous: the persistence of corruption, bureaucratic red tape, territorial inequalities in access to public services and the need for technological modernisation. While these problems are deep-rooted, they are not insurmountable. They require in-depth reflection and concrete action to transform public services in a sustainable way and to bring them into line with modern standards of efficiency, ethics and proximity to citizens. A first line of reflection is based on the need to put public services at the service of citizens. Inspired by the principles of the "New Public Service", this model involves considering citizens as active partners in the construction of public policies. In Gabon, this could lead to the development of citizen participation mechanisms such as regular public consultations, feedback platforms or even local project monitoring committees. These initiatives would not only make it possible to adapt public services to the real needs of the population, but also to restore the trust between the state and its citizens, a trust that has often been eroded by years of dysfunction. At the same time, the digitisation of public services must become a strategic priority. Digital technologies offer unprecedented opportunities to simplify administrative procedures, reduce processing times and increase transparency. For Gabon, this means investing in a robust digital infrastructure that is accessible even in the most remote areas, and supporting this investment with training programmes for public officials and citizens. Building on the work of Heeks, who highlights the importance of well-designed e-governance, Gabon

could implement integrated systems for managing administrative records, electronic payments and monitoring public projects. These reforms would not only improve administrative efficiency, but also help to combat corrupt practices by making processes more transparent. Another avenue of action is effective decentralisation. Although Gabon has enacted laws aimed at transferring certain powers to local authorities, these efforts are still in their infancy. successful decentralisation requires not only the delegation of responsibilities, but also the provision of adequate financial and human resources to ensure the effectiveness of local administrations. In this context, Gabon could draw inspiration from the successful examples of other African countries that have set up local development funds to support community projects. By making local authorities more autonomous and able to respond to the specific needs of their populations, the State would strengthen the proximity and efficiency of its public services. The fight against corruption is also a key transversal axis. Corrupt practices, deeply rooted in the Gabonese administration, are one of the main obstacles to the modernisation of public services. For Gabon, this means strengthening existing institutions, such as the National Commission to Combat Illicit Enrichment, by giving them more resources and independence. In addition, raising awareness of administrative ethics among civil servants, coupled with strong sanctions for deviant behaviour, would be essential to change attitudes in the long term. Finally, strengthening human capacity in public administration is a key lever for transformation. An efficient administration relies on well-trained, motivated and service-minded staff. Gabon could invest in training programmes for its civil servants, in partnership with academic institutions and international organisations. This training should include modules on results-based management, public ethics and the use of digital technologies. Reforms to recruitment procedures could also help ensure that civil servants are selected on the basis of merit rather than patronage. Improving public services in Gabon requires a global and integrated transformation that combines technological modernisation, human capacity building, the fight against corruption and effective decentralisation. To be successful, this reform cannot be carried out by the state alone: it must mobilise all stakeholders in society, including civil society, the private sector and international partners. More broadly, it must be part of a long-term vision, aligned with sustainable development goals, to build an inclusive, transparent public administration that truly serves citizens. This transformation is therefore not merely technical or administrative; indeed, the improvement of public services in Gabon, while essential for national development, is part of a broader issue that

goes beyond the country's borders. It raises the question of the modernisation of public administrations in Africa and elsewhere in the world, in a context where citizens are demanding more transparent, participatory and results-oriented governance. The emergence of digital technologies, combined with the need to adopt sustainable management approaches, opens up new perspectives for rethinking the relationship between the state and its citizens. But this transformation project is not only technical or administrative: it raises fundamental political, social and cultural questions. For example, to what extent can institutional reforms actually transform societies where patronage and corruption remain deeply entrenched? At a more global level, how can we integrate the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), such as equitable access to basic services or the reduction of inequalities, into national public service reform strategies? These questions open the way to a broader reflection on the future of states as guarantors of collective well-being in a rapidly changing world. They call for an exploration of other international experiences of public administration modernisation, such as those observed in certain Asian or Latin American countries, where innovative strategies have made it possible to profoundly transform public management. Finally, the improvement of public services in Gabon is not limited to a national issue: it is part of a global dynamic of redefining administrative models to meet the growing expectations of populations and the challenges of the 21st century.

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ÖZGEÇMİŞ

Adı Soyadı

Kişisel Bilgiler

Eğitim Bilgileri

