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## Dynamics of the civil service and homeostasis of public organizations.

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**Abstract:**

This article analyses the dynamics of the civil service based on the notions of professional reference frameworks and organizational homeostasis. Based on a systemic approach and mobilizing Christophe Dejours' contributions relating to the centrality of work, he conceives of public organizations as systems sensitive to institutional transformations, the effects of which are reflected on public servants in Morocco. He points out that statutory reforms, carried out without in-depth impact assessments, could influence employee engagement as well as the effectiveness of organizations. After having highlighted several paradoxes in the civil service in Morocco, we formulate hypotheses on the influence of the disorganization of professional references, linked to statutory reforms, on professional identities and the homeostasis of organizations.

To this end, this article adopts a theoretical and qualitative methodology based on a systematic review of the literature in organizational theory, occupational psychology and human resources management, reinforced by an analysis of Moroccan statutory and regulatory texts governing the civil service. The analytical scope focuses on two emblematic cases: the body of administrators, some of whose strategic functions have been weakened by differentiated mechanisms for the allocation of benefits, and the civil servants of the Ministry of National Education, faced with a profound redefinition of their professional reference frameworks following the legislative reform of 2024. This study leads to the conclusion that the absence of rigorous impact assessments and coherent professional frameworks can generate a cumulative process of organizational destabilization. By weakening recognition mechanisms, disrupting the implicit contractual balance between the State and its agents and reducing the dynamics of cooperation, these reforms promote the emergence of psychosocial risks and alter organizational homeostasis. These results, which are the result of a theoretical approach, open the door to future empirical research aimed at deepening and testing the hypotheses formulated.

**Keys words:** Public sector, Professional farmwork, Organizational homeostasis.

## Introduction:

The interest in understanding the dynamics of the civil service stems from its constitutive role in the action of the welfare state, through which the missions of socio-economic regulation materialize. The civil service is part of an institutional framework based on legal, organizational and procedural principles aimed at ensuring the continuity, equality and quality of services provided to citizens. Beyond this formal architecture, its functioning depends closely on the internal balances that structure public professions, statuses and professional dynamics.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 affirms the principle of equality in work: "equal pay for equal work", as such work has a normative scope relating to fundamental rights. As a form of work, the civil service is also governed by the principle of equality. In Morocco, this principle is recognized by the 2011 Constitution, which implicitly enshrines it in equal access to public functions and equality before the law. However, the state of play highlights an excessive corporatism that compromises this principle and generates tensions that impact the performance of the public service. This phenomenon, which can be described as dysfunction, is the result of the instrumentalization of the civil service for political and trade union purposes, while research and practices in human resources management tend towards professionalization and rationalization. The orientations expressed at the highest level of the State, particularly in the 2016 Speech from the Throne, where His Majesty King Mohamed VI called for an improvement in the performance and efficiency of the public administration, enshrining performance as a central determinant of the dynamics of the public service.

The recent transformations of the Moroccan civil service, marked in particular by the diversification of statuses and the recomposition of career paths, are likely to generate perceptions of injustice when these developments are not based on clearly established job references. These situations go beyond the sole statutory dimension and contribute to the production of psychosocial risks, by affecting the mechanisms of professional recognition, the dynamics of cooperation and, more broadly, the balance of public organisations. Indeed, this article mobilizes the contributions of the systemic approach as well as the work of Christophe Dejours, whose approach highlights the central role of recognition, professions and cooperation in the balance of organizations.

These transformations raise a central question: to what extent do statutory reforms in the Moroccan civil service affect the centrality of work and compromise the homeostasis of public organizations? The present study proposes to analyse this problem through a theoretical approach backed by a literature review oriented towards the formulation of a set of hypotheses.

## **1. Administering Mankind: The Paradox of Public Organizations.**

### **1.1. The complexity of public work and the logic of actors**

Administering the action of the public service involves governing individuals with professional identities, expectations, social trajectories and belonging to professional groups, and cannot be reduced to the sole application of rules and procedures (Veziat, 2016). The civil service, as a system framed by highly standardised bureaucratic mechanisms, is confronted with logics that escape its capacity for control. The above-mentioned professional groups, to which are added the interplay of actors as analysed by Michel Crozier (Crozier & Friedberg, 1977), develop strategies that escape the determinants of the public service system.

Moreover, real work, according to the expression of the psychodynamics of work, remains linked to the dynamics of recognition and the subjective relationship of civil servants to their activity (Dejours, 2009). Therefore, administering public organizations amounts to managing the work of operators as a complex human phenomenon. Within this perspective, the contradictions affecting the civil service will be highlighted through certain factors that are hindering its functioning.

The Understanding of public service cannot be reduced to a simple matter of remuneration, as it is part of a broader set of more complex factors. However, the question of valuing the work of agents has been a central issue, particularly in economic analyses. One of the major questions concerns the determination of the material consideration and the methods of assessing its value. In this regard, these questions have extended to public organizations, where the contribution of agents remains more difficult to quantify. While economic analyses associate the value of market labour and the remuneration attributed to it according to the value added produced, the civil service is reduced to the sole dimension of income. One of the reasons for this difficulty is the estimation of public sector value added in the national accounts based on production costs rather than on the real value of services rendered (Stiglitz et al., 2009).

### **1.2. Statutory transformations and organizational imbalances**

The legal framework governing the Moroccan civil service goes back, for the most part, to the general statute of the civil service of 1958. Despite several revisions, this text remains marked by the obsolescence of its provisions, which limits the ability to support the transformations of society and the needs of new generations of civil servants. The changes that the labour market in Morocco has undergone since independence, in connection with the economic transformations influenced by

neoliberal policies and the international opening to the rest of the world, have generated new perceptions of agents with regard to work(López-Acevedo et al., 2021).

The special statutes resulting from the general statute, the purpose of which is to adapt the latter to the specificities of each profession, have produced significant disparities within the civil service. Under the requirements of effectiveness and efficiency linked to the reforms inspired by the New Public Management, the civil service has been divided into two categories(Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2017): on the one hand, certain market sectors offer particularly advantageous statuses to operators; on the other hand, so-called non-market sectors bring together agents with comparable training, but with much less favorable statuses. These statutory gaps contribute to weakening the principle of equality between public servants and can lead to professional and organizational tensions.

The valuation of work refers to another dimension of public service management, that of promotion. Before the wave of administrative and university reforms in the early 2000s, the provisions of the general statute provided, for example, for four years of seniority in scale 9 to sit for the promotion exam, in line with new graduates entering the civil service with a bachelor's degree that requires four years of university studies. However, subsequent revisions increased this period to six years(Decree No. 2-04-403 of 29 Chaoual 1426 (2 December 2005) setting the conditions for the advancement of State personnel in grade or cadre, 2005), while the university reform has reduced the duration of obtaining the bachelor's degree to three years. The gap is still remarkable for the recruitment of master's degree holders. That said, this gap is accentuated by the absence of a system for validating prior learning that is supposed to recognize career paths. The inadequacy reveals a lack of coordination between the different departments in the development of management policies for public officials, in this case the civil service, the university system and vocational training and employment.

Finally, the trade unions are important players in the dynamics of the civil service. However, the interweaving of political logics in trade union action can lead to an alteration of their counterweight function. This situation refers more broadly to the question of the social role of the civil service. In some contexts, it can be mobilized as an instrument of social regulation and maintenance of social peace, in particular through recruitment or job creation policies(Sahnoun et al., 2015). At a time when contemporary approaches to human resources management, in particular through tools such as the forward-looking management of jobs and skills (GPEC), are now being implemented(Peretti, 2016), make it possible to identify exactly the real needs in terms of numbers and skills. The gap between these rational management approaches and certain practices of social regulation contributes to weakening the organizational balance of the public service.

The observations mentioned above, without being exhaustive, reveal several explanatory dimensions of the paradoxes of the civil service, in particular the contradictions between a reality that bases the existence of public administration solely on its institutional legitimacy and the imperatives of utility as well as the incentive mechanisms of organizations.

## **2. Repository of professions, centrality of work and destruction of professions.**

### **2.1. Repository of professions, centrality of work and destruction of professions**

The current psychodynamics of work developed by the psychiatrist and psychoanalyst Christophe Dejours insists on the centrality of work in the lives of individuals through the deep penetration of professional experiences in the different spheres of daily life. Research in occupational psychology also highlights that it is difficult to establish a clear boundary between professional and private life, since experiences in the workplace influence emotions, social relationships and the construction of identity (Dejours, 2009).

As such, professions are not reduced to a simple set of technical tasks, they are also based on professional references that bring together the missions, skills, training methods and forms of recognition associated with a given activity. These frames of reference constitute a structuring framework for individuals, insofar as they participate in the construction of their professional identity and their subjective relationship to work (Dubar, 2015).

As Christophe Dejours points out, the work is not limited to the execution of formal prospecting; It always implies a subjective commitment of individuals who mobilize their intelligence and creativity to face the constraints of real activity (Christophe, 2015). When institutional reforms change statutory rules, missions or remuneration systems without taking this balance into account, they can have destabilizing effects for individuals as well as for organizations. By ignoring the historical and professional foundations, these reforms lead to a destruction of professional standards that generates psychosocial risks. Any transformation of these standards must therefore be considered with caution.

### **2.2. Statutory reforms and the destruction of the trades.**

The recent major statutory reforms carried out in the civil service in Morocco, implemented without impact studies on the functioning of organizations or on the mental health of agents, and without in-depth analysis of the reference frameworks of professions, are leading to a destabilization of professional benchmarks (Dejours, 2024). This alteration is a determining factor in psychological suffering and contributes to the increase in psychosocial risks.

The example of the "administrator" executive in Morocco clearly illustrates the destruction of professional standards. These executives perform strategic functions - evaluation of public policies, management of administrative and financial affairs and management of human resources - based on precise benchmarks in terms of training, fields of competence and the type of tasks that structure the symbolic value of their profession. However, the allocation of substantial benefits to other categories of comparable executives, undermines professional pride, to use Christophe Dejours' expression, and gradually destroys the meaning and identity of these professions. This erosion of reference points is not limited to a question of status or compensation: it mobilizes the defensive resources of directors and increases stress, anxiety and burnout. According to Christophe Dejours, this dynamic reflects both the destruction of vital professions and the increase in psychosocial risks, showing how the weakening of professional standards has a direct impact on the mental health of agents and the performance of public organizations.

The professions of public finance management, human resources management and legal affairs are particularly vulnerable to the destruction of their professional references. Poorly calibrated reforms can erode the professional identity of these functions. This weakening compromises the continuity of know-how developed over the course of history, devalues the skills acquired through specialized university training and disrupts career paths. The destruction of these essential landmarks thus opens the way to the destruction of occupations for which a complete and costly system has been built, encompassing training, career organization, promotion methods, as well as the implementation of economic development programs.

The second example is the reform of the status of civil servants at the Ministry of National Education, which illustrates a managerial shift marked by differentiated and sometimes arbitrary allocation of benefits and missions (Decree No. 2-24-140 of 13 Shaaban 1445 (February 23, 2024) on the special status of civil servants of the Ministry of National Education., n.d.). This situation is the result of the absence of impact studies or prior preparation of reforms, such as reference frameworks for professions and appropriate skills. The teaching profession, devalued by the attribution of advantages and prestige to other educational functions (pedagogical inspectors, guidance agents, educational administrators, etc.), is exposed to a loss of meaning and reference, likely to lead to a gradual destruction of some of its functions.

The analysis of the current situation of civil service invites us to question the ability of public organizations to preserve their balance in the face of the paradoxes of the public service and the weakening of certain professions.

### 2.3. Dual-Speed Remuneration in the Moroccan Public Sector: The Case of Engineers and Administrators

In the Moroccan civil service, the basic salary, determined by the general index scale, is globally harmonized for civil servants on the same scale, regardless of their body to which they belong. The pay gaps thus come mainly from the indemnity scheme, which is made up of statutory allowances specific to each corps. This mechanism contributes to significant differentiation in overall remuneration between staff of the same grade but from different bodies.

The disparities between engineers and administrators within the Moroccan public sector are a particularly revealing illustration of the statutory inequalities that can affect organizational homeostasis. This rivalry, rooted in a differentiated treatment institutionalized by statutory frameworks, is long-term and refers directly to the imbalance of "public service bargains" theorized by Hood and Lodge (2006). When the implicit contract between the State and its public servants is perceived as unfair, the dynamics of loyalty and performance inevitably tend to deteriorate.

**Table N° 1: Comparative Salary Structure of Engineers and Administrators in the Moroccan Public Service (as of July 1, 2024)**

Components	Administrators	Engineers
Basic Treatment	Comparable	Comparable
Hardship allowance	1 450 DH	1 600 DH
Maximum management allowance	7 850 DH	14 357 DH
Maximum specific premium	7 096 DH	11 188 DH
Compensation dynamics	Moderate	More favourable

Source: synthesis from Maroc Ingénierie (2025).

## Figure 1 Comparison of the maximum gross salaries of engineers and administrators in the Moroccan public administration as of 01/07/2024

Source: General Secretariat of the Government

The analysis of the statuses of the two bodies highlights a significant organizational paradox. While Administrators have, in principle, a broader and more transversal field of intervention – covering the



design, coordination and evaluation of public policies – engineers benefit from a more advantageous remuneration structure, particularly since the introduction in 2011 of the grades of chief engineer (main grade), which raised the salary ceiling of this corps. The remuneration of the two categories is based on five main components (basic salary, residence allowance, supervisory allowance, administrative or technical allowance, and on-call allowance). However, the ceilings for supervision and technical allowances granted to engineers remain significantly higher, with no equivalent counterpart for other civil service bodies, which reinforces perceptions of injustice (Maroc Ingénierie, 2025).

In the light of the psychodynamics of Christophe Dejours' work, this statutory rivalry directly affects the processes of recognition and the construction of professional identity. The administrators, whose missions formally cover strategic functions of steering, public policy design and intersectoral coordination, may perceive this discrepancy as a form of denial of symbolic recognition. This situation leads to manifestations of suffering at work and can result in defensive behavior, such as minimal work (reverse zeal), as well as a deterioration in inter-body cooperation. Moreover, the mechanism of social comparison described by Bandura (1978) accentuates this phenomenon: the

perception of a long-term unjustified wage gap weakens the sense of self-efficacy of administrators and reduces their commitment to collective action.

## **1. Homeostasis of public organizations in the face of the weakening of professions.**

### **1.1. The homeostasis of organizations and the mechanisms of regulation**

By adopting the systemic approach as a framework for analysing public organizations, it emerges that abrupt changes can reach their equilibrium. Of course, cybernetic theory generally considers organizations as systems of state transformation, mainly subject to hazards related to the behavior of processes rather than to structural issues. Nevertheless, this does not exclude the possibility that these organizations/systems internalize an ability to maintain an internal balance, in other words a form of organizational homeostasis (Ashby, 1956).

Reforms, as external changes, can make organizations less homeostatic, as they disrupt their internal regulatory mechanisms. More concretely, a reform that draws on a collective profession, as in the case of administrators and professionals in the national education system in Morocco, contaminates the entire system, threatening organizational homeostasis (Bakker et al., 2023). Operators thus witness the degradation of their resources in the face of increasing demands, which triggers, according to the JD-R (Job demands-Resources theory), negative spirals incompatible with any form of organizational homeostasis. In this context, System 1, which at Stafford Beer corresponds to the operational units ensuring the actual production where the activities are carried out, is seeing its regulatory capacity weaken (Beer, 1985).

According to Hood and Lodge (Hood & Lodge, 2006) the civil service system is built on the basis of an implicit compromise (public service bargains) between the State and public servants. This deal defines the remuneration that the agent receives, in particular salary, security and prestige in return for the duties of loyalty, competence and neutrality. Strong inequalities in terms of pay weaken compromise (public service bargains) and reduce the profitability and loyalty of agents. This idea is in line with the reasoning of Christophe Dejourné who explains that a remuneration system perceived as injustice leads to the deterioration of cooperation and the emergence of forms of withdrawal such as zeal. Zeal is a factor that necessarily impacts the quality of work and the ability of organizations to achieve their objectives, especially when operators adopt excessive enforcement of the rules (Lhuillier, 2009).

## **1.2. Organisational imbalance and weakening of professions.**

Applied to the civil service, this reading grid highlights that statutory reforms carried out without in-depth impact studies can disrupt the institutional balances on which homeostasis is built (Ashby, 1956). The breakdown of job references, combined with inequalities in treatment and the reconfiguration of missions, weakens the implicit compromise structuring the relationship between employer and employee. The weakening of the managerial framework, for example, risks leading to the disappearance of professions on which the public administration depends to carry out its functions. It also promotes turnover phenomena, contributing to the loss of collective know-how accumulated over decades, affecting the quality of work and the performance of organizations, insofar as agents develop individual strategies (Crozier & Friedberg, 1977) in the absence of a collective regulation mechanism.

Differences in pay, missions and salaries directly influence the commitment of agents through the social comparison mechanism. According to Albert Bandura, these comparisons affect the feeling of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1978). A decrease in this feeling reduces the ability of agents to project themselves into action, weakens their initiative and perseverance, and results in a decrease in commitment to work. The defensive behaviors described by Christophe Dejours push agents to protect themselves in the face of the environment perceived as unfair, condemning the coherence of the organizations' actions.

Consistency between statutes, job references and recognition mechanisms is an essential condition for maintaining the homeostasis of public organizations. Calling them into question weakens internal regulations, affects the commitment of agents and kills professions. These pathways promote the emergence of psychosocial risks and contribute to the deterioration of the performance of public organizations.

**Conclusion:**

Dysfunctions in the management of the civil service cannot be analysed independently of their macroeconomic implications. International financial institutions, including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, are closely monitoring trends in indicators related to public expenditure, particularly those associated with the civil service wage bill. This expenditure is a central element of the State's operating budgets and has a direct influence on the balance of public finances and on the main macroeconomic balances. Excessive use of the civil service as an instrument of social regulation can thus lead to imbalances comparable to those observed during the structural adjustment policies implemented in Morocco in the 1980s.

In addition, the increasing complexity of the State's missions and the pressure of economic and social issues tend to lead to the development of policies that are sometimes marked by certain haste or by a lack of scientific anchoring. The insufficient mobilization of academic research from the social sciences, human resources management and occupational psychology in the design of the statutes condemns the general balance of public administration.

The preservation of the homeostasis of public organisations therefore appears to be an essential condition for the sustainability of public finances, social stability and the performance of public action. Any reform of the civil service should therefore be part of a systemic approach, articulating economic, institutional and psychological dimensions, in order to avoid long-term sources of imbalance.

This article has certain limitations, related in particular to the lack of empirical investigation that validates its assertions. The theoretical analysis led to the formulation of hypotheses that could be validated through more in-depth empirical research.

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