New Procedure for Integration into the Cameroonian Civil Service: the KAIROS Software Package and the Collaborative Platform for Verifying the Authenticity of Diplomas

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Title: <u>CACAIS</u> 2024 Yaoundé

New Procedure for Integration into the Cameroonian Civil Service: the KAIROS Software Package and the Collaborative Platform for Verifying the Authenticity of Diplomas, Major tools.

Submission Type: Full Article

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Summary

The demands from teachers in 2022 led to institutional reforms in terms following the presidential directives dated March 9, 2022 and by correspondence No. 268/CF/SG/PR.

In a context of institutional crisis, the various actors involved in processing teacher files (MINFOPRA[1], MINESEC[2], MINEDUB[3], and MINESUP[4]) improved the existing procedure. MINFOPRA has established new working procedures, thanks to two emerging technologies. How have these technologies supported the new institutional dynamics?

MINFOPRA introduced new working procedures utilizing digital technology.The performance indicators for 2022-2023 showed significant contributions from emerging technologies in streamlining integration processes:

- KAIROS software digitized 3,812 files from thé eight ENS/ENSET, reducing access time from months to days.
- For the platform, we witnessed the reduction of two years in one click, for obtaining a return of authentication of a diploma.

Emerging technologies support changes in work practices, improving performance and reducing procedural burdens.

Keywords: integration folder, ENS / Press, Kairos, Collaborative Platform, Performance

Introduction

Cameroonian and international media news is at the heart of a concern during the month of February 2022. At the center of the debate, concerns expressed by primary and secondary teachers. Indeed, the latter are launching a series of demands made by the "On a Too Supporté (OTS)" movement, against the Government. Very quickly, the Cameroonian Government provided a response through its most authorized channel.

Indeed, by correspondence No. 268/CF/SG/PR of March 9, 2022, the Cameroonian president instructs direct officials to resolve the "dead chalk" crisis.

A study carried out in October 2023 by Christian Bios Nelem and Pauline Flore MBALLA ONANA on the new dynamics of mobilization in Cameroon in the digital age: the experience of the OTS and Mode Avion movements showed that the digital enterprise makes it possible to obtain promises made by political forces, even

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[1] Ministry of Public Service and Administrative Reform
[2] Ministry of Secondary Education
[3] Ministry of Basic Education
[4] Ministry of Higher Education

if they are not all respected. As for the teachers' movement, "certain demands have been met." This is thanks to "the seeds of a restructuring of relationships between citizens and their leaders[5]".

The Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reform, a major player in resolving this crisis, "has done, is doing and will always do its duty[6]". This through:

- An innovation in the procedure for processing integration files;
- Design and implementation of a new integration procedure for ENS/ENSET graduates
- Digitization and digitalization of part of the procedure using the KAIROS tool
- A pooling of efforts between the different stakeholders through the collaborative platform for verifying the authenticity of diplomas.

Based on the observation of two emerging technologies deployed by the Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reform in Cameroon, namely the KAIROS Archives software package and the Collaborative Platform for verifying the authenticity of diplomas, this contribution intends to question the dynamics of change in the nature of work through digital technology, which ends up shaking up traditional practices. How did the Cameroonian government turn a crisis into opportunities? What are the dynamics of change put in place by the Cameroonian Civil Service? What added value have emerging technologies brought to the dynamic of change? This surge of new working practices towards digital is not trivial, insofar as it is at the crossroads of the needs of public service users[7]. To report on the performance achieved by the emerging technologies deployed by MINFOPRA, it is important to start by describing the consultation process of the different stakeholders. Subsequently, it will be necessary to report on the institutional responses of MINFOPRA.

Materials and Methods

In an empirical-inductive approach[8] we will conduct a study of an inductive nature based on participant observation of an organization, in particular the Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reform. The interest in this structure is the establishment of a new working procedure with the support of emerging technologies. We therefore give ourselves the mission of verifying whether this has improved the performance of the structure.

During a period of 19 months from March 2022 to September 2023, we were interested in the statistics produced regarding the processing of teacher files. Being in service at the Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reform, we approached the Monitoring Unit in order to have access to the activity reports of the structures involved in the process of processing teacher files. In our reports, we target quantitative data relating to performance indicators such as the number of files processed overall, the number of files processed by body, the number of authenticated diplomas, etc.

Transform a Crisis in Opportunities: The Government in Tightened Rank

The implementation of the presidential directives dated March 9, 2022 and by correspondence No. 268/CF/SG/PR, induced a series of consultations between the different actors involved in the process of improving the condition of teachers.

In April and May 2022, consultations and the establishment of working groups at MINFOPRA with the Ministers of Secondary Education (MINESEC) and Basic Education (MINEDUB), allowed the repatriation and processing of pending files. In their respective administrations.

As a result of these consultations and the work carried out by the various groups, 51,000 career files from MINESEC were validated. The related signed acts have been transferred and taken care of financially. Furthermore, MINFOPRA also undertook consultations with the Minister of State, Minister of Higher Education. These consultations made it possible to distinguish between the training function, which falls under the responsibility of MINESUP, and that of recruitment into the Civil Service, which falls under the responsibility of MINFOPRA.

Dynamics of Change: MINFOPRA in Action

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[5] Christian Bios Nelem et Pauline Flore Mballa Onana, « Les nouvelles dynamiques de mobilisation au Cameroun à l'ère du numérique : l'expérience des mouvements OTS et Mode Avion », *Communication, technologies et développement*, nᵒ 13 (8 octobre 2023), https://doi.org/10.4000/ctd.9083.

[6] Editorial du magazine semestriel bilingue d'informations de d'analyses sur le service public au Cameroun, édition de Décembre 2023, P.11

[7] Extrait du discours du PM/CG Chief Dr Joseph NGUTE, à l'ouverture du colloque sur la modernisation de la Fonction Publique Camerounaise, Yaoundé, le 13 Janvier 2020

[8] Gaspard Claude, « Méthodes inductives et déductives : définition, méthodologie et exemples », Scribbr, 15 janvier 2020, https://www.scribbr.fr/methodologie/methodes-inductives-deductives/.

"Man measures himself against obstacles." MINFOPRA was able to take advantage of the problems posed by teachers by transforming obstacles into opportunities for action. A special system has been put in place for the rapid and careful processing of files. Dynamics of change[9] in the daily work of processing files for public officials in general and teachers in particular have given rise to new procedures including innovative technologies.

a) *New Integration Procedure*

On Wednesday October 12, 2022 in Douala, the Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reform officially presented the new method of handling the integration files of ENS/ENSET winners.

A procedures manual developed by MINFOPRA for those involved in the processing chain of personnel files (teachers), presents the process of processing the integration files of ENS and ENSET graduates. This manual offers a corpus of legislative and regulatory texts under the aegis of which the various acts are now developed, thus providing other ministerial departments with a basic reference.

The twelve steps of the new procedure are:

1) The submission of physical integration files to the Regional Delegation of MINFOPRA is the responsibility, as soon as the winners leave the training schools, by the Managers of said schools;
2) The examination of said files with a view to verifying their completeness and compliance;
3) Scanning the documents in the "good to process" file in the dedicated KAIROS application;
4) Extraction of lists in the KAIROS application by the MINFOPRA Information Systems Division;
5) Transmission to the Department of Human Resources Development of the State, with a view to the preparation of Collective Certificates of Taking up Service;
6) The transmission of Collective Certificates of Taking up Service to the National Coordination Division of SIGIPES, for generation of registration numbers;
7) The recovery of data generated by the online completion of the winner's form (file document) at the level of the State Human Resources Development Department, with a view to generating Collective Certificates of Taking up Service;
8) Digitization of said Certificate in KAIROS. At this stage, the (digital) integration file can be considered complete and the documents can be consulted online by all those involved in the processing chain;
9) The generation of registration numbers at MINFOPRA;

10) The extraction of electronic data from the files by the National Coordination Division of Sigipes, with a view to the initiation in batches, draft acts and letters of transmission to the Services of the Prime Ministry (SPM);

11) Editing draft acts and letters, after completion of the integration file (without file background) and compliance check at the Career Management Department;

12) Thus, after checking and affixing the visa by the SG/MINFOPRA, then signing the letter transmitting the simplified files, the integration acts can be signed by the SPM within a relatively short period (around two weeks) and the load at MINESEC.

Furthermore, a file is presumed complete if it presents the following documents:

1) A stamped request addressed to MINFOPRA;
2) A certified birth certificate;
3) A certified photocopy of the marriage certificate, if applicable;
4) Two fact sheets;
5) A criminal record bulletin;
6) A certified photocopy of the baccalaureate or license as applicable;
7) A certificate of presentation of the original of said diplomas;
8) A Certificate of Taking up Service produced and attached to each file by MINFOPRA;
9) A ten-year commitment;
10) A medical examination report;
11) A resume ;
12) A photocopy of the act of admission to the Normale School;
13) A photocopy of the document granting admission to DIPES I or II, DIPET I or II, as applicable

Although the new procedure is currently specific to the management of the files of ENS/ENSET winners, an extension will be made to other bodies.

b) *New Integration Procedure for ENS/ENSET Winners*

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[9] « Accompagner pour changer | Cairn.info », consulté le 12 mars 2024, https://www.cairn.info/revue-gestion-2019-4-page-54.htm.

As part of the rapid and efficient resolution of problems posed by teachers, MINFOPRA has undertaken steps to contribute to the normalization of the socio-professional situation of public officials in general and teachers in particular.

With regard to teachers, particularly the graduates of the Ecoles Normales Supérieures and Ecoles Normales Supérieures de l'Enseignement Technique, the challenge faced was to reduce the processing time for a file from 30 days to at most 90 days.

The process begins with the verification by the education services of the said Schools, under the watchful eye of the Regional Delegations, of the conformity, completeness and regularity of the winners' files, before their transmission to the Regional Delegations. Furthermore, a systematic tally of the constituent documents of each file received is carried out by the ENS/ENSET education services and the regional delegations. After these prerequisites, ENS/ENSET managers have at most one week, after publication of the end of training results, to send the complete files of their winners to the Regional Delegation of Civil Service and Administrative Reform of their administrative jurisdiction. Thus reducing procedural times (25 to 30 months) which previously provided for a transmission to MINESUP, MINESEC then to MINFOPRA, which today is a matter of minutes.

In addition to saving time, the double advantage of this routing of files in collaboration with regional delegations is the reduction of incomplete files and documents not authenticated by the Training Schools.

c) *Digitalization and Digitization of Part of the Integration Procedure for ENS/ENSET Winners Using the KAIROS Tool*

The new integration procedure is the immediate result of the presidential directive relating to the dematerialization and simplification of procedures for processing integration files in the Civil Service. As a priority program of MINFOPRA, the digitization and archiving of administrative acts have benefited from a particular increase in efforts for greater speed in the processing of public officials' files.

An electronic archiving system (SAE) through the KAIROS Archives software package was deployed in May 2020 at MINFOPRA. The success generated by this application with the digitization aspect of administrative acts (77,405 acts digitized as of December 31, 2024), motivated the recommendation of the addition of an additional module making it possible to partially dematerialize the processing of personnel integration files of teachers.

This dematerialization aims to move from paper documents to electronic documents, with a view to centralizing information, facilitating access, reducing the ecological footprint and saving money. The implementation of an information management system allowing the archiving and automation of the management of digital documents despite its complexity constitutes an asset for improving the quality of services.

The contribution of KAIROS Archives[10] made it possible to contribute to the speed in the processing of the files of the ENS/ENSET winners. Indeed, the transmission of the list of ENS/ENSET winners by the said schools and via slips results in the entry of the personal data of winners and the creation of accounts on the KAIROS Archives platform. The accounts thus made available to the winners allow verification of their personal data, in order to avoid entry errors. The winners then proceed to validate said data by validating the winner form proposed by KAIROS before attaching it to the physical integration file previously created. The files are transmitted by the Schools to the Regional Delegations, which scan the documents in the files and link them to the names of the interested parties in the system.

The digital copy of the file is accessible by the professional managers of the Career Management Department for the continuation of the procedure for processing said files. Subsequently, the files return to the Information Systems Division of MINFOPRA, which extracts the lists of winners by school, prints them and transmits them to the Directorate of State Human Resources Development for the production of the Collective Certificate of Taking Service. An operation that previously took around twenty months is now done in a few days.

d) *Pooling of Efforts Between Different Stakeholders Through The Collaborative Platform for Verifying the Authenticity of Diplomas*

Presented on Wednesday July 5, 2023 at the Ministry of Public Health, the diploma authenticity verification platform is a digital application, which allows the verification of diplomas and parchments issued by schools and institutions in one click and a few minutes. It aims to load data from the administrations issuing

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[10] « About », Kairos_Archives, consulté le 12 mars 2024, https://www.kairosarchives.com/about.

diplomas (MINEFOP MINEDUB, MINESUP, MINSANTE etc.). For the case of MINSANTE, 18,000 pieces of data (from 2017 to 2022) were loaded. An operation in progress at MINESUP.

This reliable and practical software package offers five pillars including the total dematerialization of the process and its simplification, the considerable time saving (in one click you know whether a parchment is authentic or not), the reliability of the data of the verification mechanisms (each institution uploads its data and MINFOPRA uses it), the security of the system at 3 levels: the database, the server and the platform interface.

This platform is an added value which will allow, in addition to quickly processing career files (reclassification integration, step enhancement), to proceed to the detection of false diplomas presented by users.

Previously, it took between three months to two years to obtain a return of diploma authentication. The collaborative platform makes it possible to reduce this delay in just a few minutes, and to detect false diplomas. Once the professional manager initiates a verification request on the platform, by entering the personal data of the person concerned as well as those relating to the diploma, a message confirming the authenticity or not of said diploma is displayed.

The special file on the return of authentication of diplomas devoted to pages 28 and 29 of the bilingual biannual Magazine of information and analysis on the public service in Cameroon from December 2023, allows us to note that the State Universities and the The Cameroon Baccalaureate Office still maintains a timid collaboration regarding the provision of MINFOPRA with information likely to enrich the platform's database.

Results

The change in the nature of work at MINFOPRA through the new integration procedure for ENS/ENSET winners, and with the contribution of two emerging technologies: the KAIROS Archives software package and the collaborative authenticity verification platform diplomas, was able to bear tangible fruit after just one year.

The reduction in steps brought about by the new procedure for integrating ENS/ENSET winners has enabled an exponential reduction in the duration of the sub-procedures, with the support of the two emerging technologies.

To recall the context, MINFOPRA has put in place a set of mechanisms whose main objective is greater speed in the processing of integration files, in accordance with the presidential directive of March 9, 2022.

The establishment of the new procedure with the corollary:

- ✓ The reconfiguration of the file to be created, of the processing circuit;
- ✓ The implementation of the collaborative platform for verifying the authenticity of diplomas and parchments presented by future and/or public officials;
- ✓ Accelerating the tracking of career files via a messaging platform and various other digital media.

After a year and a half of experimentation (covering the period from March 2022 to September 2023, the results observed are as follows:

- For the KAIROS software package, the addition of the additional module allowing the partial dematerialization of the processing of integration files enabled the digitization of the 3,812 files received by the Regional Delegations from the eight ENS/ENSET. Thus reducing the process of access to integration files by the DGC's professional managers from around twenty months to a few days, while allowing centralization of all the data necessary for the processing of said files;
- For the platform, we saw the reduction of two years in one click, for obtaining a return of authentication of a diploma. Allowing any obstacle to be removed in the processing of a file for which confirmation of the authenticity of the diploma is essential;
- Out of 3,838 integration files for ENS/ENSET winners, class of 2022, received by MINFOPRA, 3,789 were processed;
- As of October 16, 2023, 3,177 of this batch are already integrated, compared to 49 which remain pending due to incompleteness due to awaiting return of authentication, and computer problems;
- Registration, which is taking place today within 48 to 72 hours, is effective for 3,702 ENS/ENSET winners;
- Furthermore, a joint action between MINFOPRA and the SPM enabled the 3,177 integration files for ENS/ENSET winners to be signed within 17 days, one month, and 18 days and shortly before the 90 days deadline. Not to mention that this work was carried out in parallel with the processing of other files, namely: 640 reclassification files, 585 grade/executive advancement files, 41 tenures, 18 corrections, 02 reversals, as well as 11,515 transfer files. Integration of contract teachers and 3000 contracts relating to the Joint MINEDUB/MINFOPRA/Donor Support Program for Education Reform in Cameroon.

Future Challenges

Although the nature of the dynamic of change in digital work was superficial in this case (improvement of existing procedures, reduction of processing times, etc.), broader reflection is underway to deepen it. The very institutional character (the instructions came from the Presidency of the Republic) facilitated the implementation of the new dynamic. Furthermore, means of support have followed through programs such as the Rapid Results Initiatives, rejecting any oppositional bias.

However, the obligation to serve and to have to serve which is specific to public administration has been able to impose such a new dynamic without bias of opposition. A transposition into the sphere of private companies should follow specific supervision. Because if such change management[11], although superficial, has benefited from a social crisis, the means of support and high state instructions to impose itself, it could face technological bias, organizational culture, organizational motivation and environment outside.

The new integration procedure specific today to ENS/ENSET graduates will be extended to other civil service bodies in the near future. For this reason, consultations between the different players in the system are increasing with a view to refining said procedure and adapting it to the different variants (integration based on qualification, integration based on competition).

Furthermore, a redefinition of each actor in the processing chain relating to the procedure has been adapted and led to the evaluation of whether or not to continue with the KAIROS Archives software package, and an update of it in a validation case of continuity with the latter, and training of actors with a view to their appropriation of the new emerging technology or the old improved one.

As for the platform for verifying the authenticity of diplomas and parchments, it will have to continue its process of loading data from institutions issuing diplomas, under the control of the interministerial body responsible for monitoring the use of the diplomas and parchments application. However, an awareness of the administrations which are faced with their responsibilities as the necessity of introducing the reliable data that they introduce, of the choice of the administrators of the interface of each of them; already effective, must continue.

Conclusion

At the end of this study where we set ourselves the objective of questioning the dynamics of change in the nature of work through digital technology, with a view to reporting on the performance achieved by emerging technologies deployed by MINFOPRA, it emerges spectacular results. The language of figures being of another power, an examination of the statistics dated Thursday December 7, 2023, allows us to reveal the performances opposite: 3,561 files signed at the SPM out of the 3,836 received at MINFOPRA, i.e. 19 files in waiting for processing for completeness. A record result obtained in parallel with the processing of 11,535 integration files for contract teachers, 706 reclassifications, 632 grade advancements, 41 tenures, 18 corrections, 02 repayments and 3000 contracts relating to the joint MINEDUB/MINFOPRA/Donor PAREC Project . Bringing the number of files signed during this period to 19,770. A performance achieved within three months compared to 30 previously, for the complete satisfaction of users who today are considered customers because they demand accountability for the use of tax money of which they are the taxpayers. .

We want to clarify that the new procedure and emerging technologies were not the only elements that made it possible to achieve such a record. Several factors contributed to this, we can cite among others: the motivation and dedication of the staff under the aegis of the hierarchy, the availability of consistent work tools. The idea of this study was to show the added value of emerging technologies in the context of leading change in professional practice, when we add other existing components and this study was able to sufficiently demonstrate that emerging technologies are tools to support changes in work procedure practices, which make it possible to achieve extraordinary performance; by reducing working time and procedural burdens. However, a real will of the different actors involved in the change is essential not only when appropriating new procedures and related technologies, but also during their implementation. The question can be re-studied from other angles, for example how to support stakeholders during change management.

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[11] « Pour une théorie de l'appropriation des outils de gestion : vers un dépassement de l'opposition conception-usage | Cairn.info », consulté le 12 mars 2024, https://www.cairn.info/revue-management-et-avenir-2006-3-page-109.htm

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