

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE AMID INSTITUTIONAL DISORIENTATION: ETHICAL CAPACITY BUILDING FOR LEGAL PROFESSIONALS IN THE CAMEROON JUDICIAL SYSTEM

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Achancho Pauline (Ph.D.)

Associate Lecturer, Catholic University of Central Africa

Courtroom Practitioner, High Court Fako., Cameroon

Background & Problem

Why This Study Matters

- Judicial systems rely deeply on ethical frontliners. Yet in Cameroon, court registrars face an undervalued status and systemic institutional disorientation.
- This dysfunction creates severe ethical uncertainty where formal rules fail. How can registrars sustain professional integrity when structures actively generate ambiguity?
- This research leverages dual analytical pathways to study the intersection of regulations and real-world administrative dynamics:
 - 1) A comprehensive examination of Cameroon's judicial organizational laws, constitutional provisions, and formal civil service regulations.
 - 2) An exploration of the everyday realities, administrative interactions, and real ethical dilemmas faced by working registrars.



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REPUBLIC OF CAMEROON
Peace – Work – Fatherland

CAMEROON JUDICIAL STRUCTURE

INCLUDING SPECIAL / EXCEPTIONAL COURTS

AND THE ROLE OF COURT REGISTRARS



SUPREME COURT
(Highest Court of Appeal)

Registry Division
(Registrars at the Supreme Court)



MINISTRY OF JUSTICE
Custodian of the Judiciary

COMMON LAW COURTS
(North West & South West Regions)



Court of Appeal
Registrar



High Court
Registrar



Magistrates' Court
Registrar

SPECIAL / EXCEPTIONAL COURTS



Constitutional Council



Military Courts



Administrative Tribunals



Court of Accounts



Disciplinary Councils &
Professional Order Courts

CIVIL LAW COURTS
(Other 8 Regions)



Court of Appeal
Greffier en Chef



Tribunal de Première Instance
Greffier



Tribunal d'Instance
Greffier



COURT REGISTRARS (GREFFIERS) – ADMINISTRATIVE & PROCEDURAL BACKBONE

Custody of Records | Case Management | Procedural Integrity | Access to Justice



Court Registrars operate under the authority of the Registrar in Chief and the supervision of the Heads of Jurisdictions in accordance with judicial organization laws.



Store & Custody
of Court Records



Case Management
& Scheduling



Procedural Support
to Judges



Communication with
Parties & Lawyers



Safeguarding Integrity
& Confidentiality

The Role of Court Registrars



Key Functions

Acts as the operational core of judicial operations:

- Custodian of court records
- Authentication of documents
- Procedural guidance to litigants



Strategic Bridge

Acts as the intermediary contact point between:

- Judges & Court Leadership
- Private Lawyers & Litigants
- General Court Administration



Ethical Exposure

Highly vulnerable to critical workplace pressures:

- Informal systemic influences
- Procedural conflicts of interest
- Compromised accountability

Applicable Legal Framework

Legal Instrument	Core Governance Scope	Impact on Registrars
Cameroon Constitution	Guarantees rule of law, public accountability, and general judicial independence.	Constitutional mandate for professional service.
Decree No. 2011/020 & 2021/442	Establishes the Special Status of Court Registry Civil Servants in the civil service.	Defines technical duties and official career pathways.
Law N°. 2006/015 & 2011/027	Regulates Judicial Organization and court administrative structural systems.	Defines lines of authority within the registry.
Cameroon Criminal Code	Provisions penalizing professional corruption, abuse of power, and document forgery.	Sets clear statutory penalties for integrity breaches.

Institutional Disorientation



Systemic Manifestations

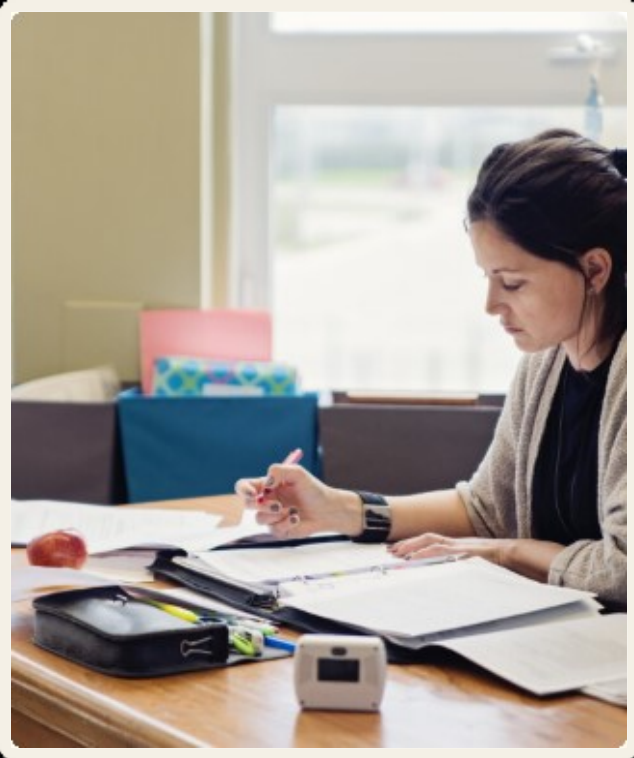
- Institutional disorientation surfaces when formal rules are clear on paper, but enforcement is inconsistent, lines of authority are blurred, and role ambiguity prevails.
- Informal power networks bypass formal administrative channels, leaving registrars with diminished recognition and limited authority.



The Operational Consequence

- When institutions default on guidance, everyday rules lose practical force. Consequently, ethical judgment is shifted entirely onto the discretion of individual civil servants.
- Without structural reinforcement, the burden of maintaining procedural and administrative integrity becomes intensely personalized.

Theoretical Foundation



PRACTICE THEORY

The Reflective Practitioners

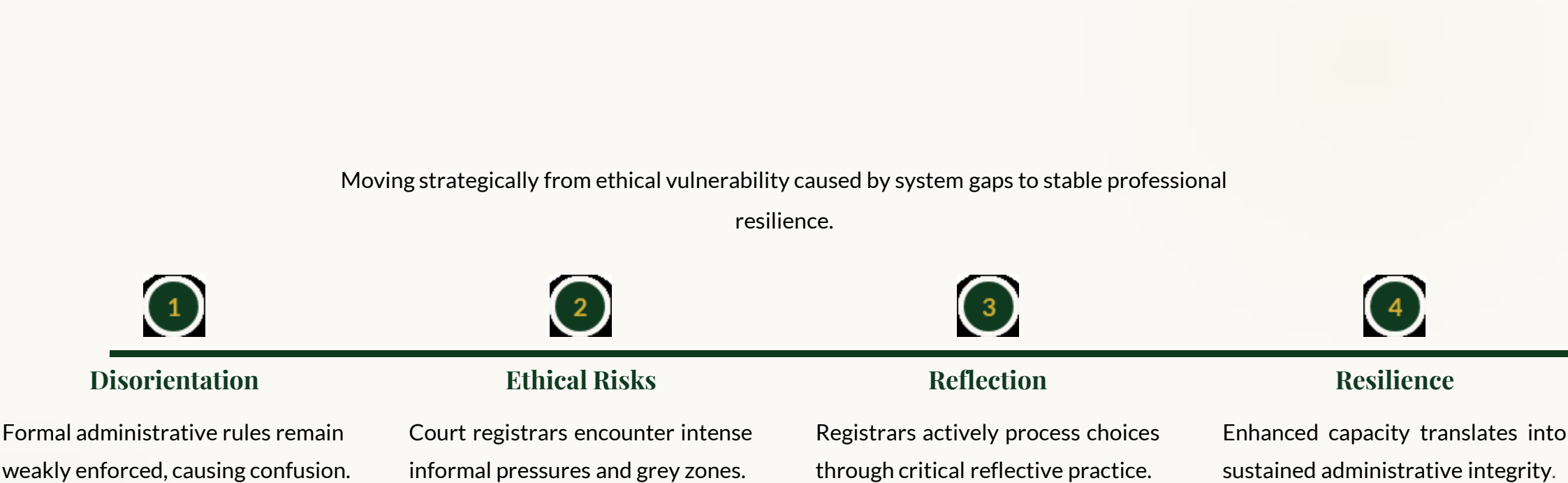
- **Donald Schön** asserts that professionals develop superior decision-making capacities by intentionally reflecting on their lived experiences.

Reflection-in-Action: Evaluating options and thinking cognitively while executing a complex professional action.

Reflection-on-Action: Reviewing and critically assessing decisions after action is completed to build long-term ethical resilience.

- **David Boud, Rosemary Keogh and David Walker** – learning through critical engagement with experience.
- **Michele Leering** – reflective practice as professional growth and ethical competence.

The Conceptual Framework



Key Findings & Reforms



Confidence Erosion

Institutional disorientation directly weakens the daily ethical confidence of court registry personnel.



Rule Insufficiency

Formal statutes on their own are insufficient to guide registrars through complex, real-world ethical gray zones.



Reflective Resilience

Practitioners who cultivate intentional reflection demonstrate vastly superior resistance against improper systemic pressures.



Proposed Reform

Integrate structured reflection modules directly into official judicial training in ENAM, programs and regular initiated performance evaluations. Of all Registrar at all levels

Thank You

Reflective practice is the ultimate bridge between institutional weakness and professional integrity.

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