

THE FUTURE OF PUBLIC ACTION

**CROSSING VIEWS AROUND
THE MEDITERRANEAN**

INTERVIEW WITH **VINCENT POTIER,**
LAMIA MOUBAYED, ADEL BEN YAKHLEF



WHEN TALENTS
GROW,
COMMUNITIES
MOVE FORWARD

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FOREWORD


This work recounts shared reflections in the form of a dialogue that took place in July 2016 in Marseille. The participants, directors of public administration-training institutions in their respective countries, are given the task of considering the state of public action in the Mediterranean area.

Convinced that public-service schools and training institutes are major agents of change, and considering that public action needs to confront the different political, institutional and cultural realities to create new approaches to their institutions' role and the place that training has, in these interviews they seek to identify the issues common to their countries.

Long committed to the development of networks for sharing best practice and experience, either at a their respective national level, or at an international level in networks such as "GIFT-MENA" and the "Forum Méditerranéen du Service Public", the participants first analysed the state of the public sector in the Mediterranean area – to which France belongs fully through its political and human ties – which is experiencing significant upheaval and which is undermining governments and public action. Although the crises suffered are of a different nature in France and the countries of the Southern and Eastern shores of the Mediterranean, each country has had to find answers to reform its public sector and adapt it to new, unexpectedly major demands. Emergency and fragility mark the context in which these countries are being led to adopt public action reforms.

However, although questions on the public sector are essential, are they a priority faced with the severe security, economic and financial crises to which our countries are exposed? Can these crises, as threatening as they may be, trigger a desire to tackle deep reforms in order to reaffirm public power and give impetus to a debate on a society wanting to implement a shared project for the future?

What are the keys and factors for recreating an idea shared by everyone of that which is within the general interest, the common good? What are the demands facing the civil service and what values must it engender



in order to be able to fully play its role as guarantor of consistency and fairness when it comes to public action? To redefine meaning of public action, the concept of quality public service occupies a central place, but it differs from one country to the next, despite France sharing many values, traditions and cultures with Mediterranean countries. Nevertheless, as soon as the concept of quality takes into account the purpose of public service, it becomes something that can be shared by everyone. It is up to schools and training institutes to deliver the tools necessary to develop comparative approaches in order to anchor the training in such way to anticipate the changes that are looming.

Finally, in order to move forward on this path, the policies for bi- and multilateral international cooperation must foster a model based on co-construction that respects present institutions, even weakened ones, and which excludes any substitution. They must recognise the key role of schools and training institutes in public administration, as well as networks such as those cited above which offer a forum for innovative co-production because they promote exchanges between peers from both sides of the Mediterranean, and carry the values of solidarity and the sharing of this common asset. the Mediterranean.

INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER

THREE SCHOOLS AT THE HEART OF THE MEDITERRANEAN

► Before entering the heart of the matter and discussing each of your visions for the future of public action around the Mediterranean, can you, in turn, briefly present your public-service training provider and specify what action it is taking internationally, particularly in the Mediterranean?

Vincent Potier, Director General of the Centre National de la Fonction Publique Territoriale (CNFPT):

The Centre National de la Fonction Publique Territoriale (CNFPT) is a tool that serves the French territorial communities and agents of territorial public services. This public institution carries out statutory functions and delivers life-long learning. Within the scope of its competences, the school seeks to open windows on the experience of foreign countries, considering that public action as it is conducted in France needs to face up to political, institutional and cultural realities. It is important to cooperate in order to fuel our own training activity. Within this framework, the CNFPT trains agents of French communities engaged in international action. Furthermore, the CNFPT participates in international cooperation actions, at the request of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs or other Ministries and government agencies, particularly around the Mediterranean and in West Africa.

► Do you have any concrete examples to give us?

Vincent Potier: In 2012, and within the framework of the Réseau des Écoles de Service Publique, the CNFPT actively contributed to creating the Mediterranean forum of public service schools. The Forum includes

a digital platform and organises meetings with its members. It brings together 131 public sector management training providers from the south and north shore of the Mediterranean. The last was held in June 2015 in Tunis, at the invitation of the Centre de Formation et d'Appui à la Décentralisation (CFAD).

Lamia Moubayed, Director of the Institut des finances Basil Fuleihan de Beyrouth (Lebanon) and Chair of the GIFT-MENA network:

The Institut des finances Basil Fuleihan is an independent training and documentation centre operating under the supervision of the Lebanese Minister of Finance.

Its role is to contribute to the proper management of public money through training, research and the dissemination of knowledge. The Institute is at the origin of a French-Lebanese cooperation project, created in 1996. My first task was to transform it into a public institution because it seems to have been able to create value.

Because the model for strengthening skills, particularly in the management of public finances, has worked in Lebanon, it has aroused the interest of its Arab neighbours, with very diverse experiences and contrasts in this area and who have sometimes sought to replicate and be inspired by it - an Arab region within which Lebanon has always been a hub when it comes to training and education.

Today, the Institute is regarded as the “school of public finance” for the Lebanese Government whose vocation it is to serve its main client, the Ministry of Finance, as well as central and local administration. And as it has acquired expertise, maturity and perspective, it has also found a regional vocation. It has not only turned towards Arab countries, but also countries bordering the Mediterranean, seeking to learn not only from the North but also from the South.

And as Vincent Potter was saying just now, we live in a free space where ideas and practices are compared in order to create value.

► **What examples of cooperation can you give us?**

Lamia Moubayed: In 2006 we created the network GIFT-MENA which tries to bring together public-service training providers in the Arab

«Historically, Lebanon has always been a hub when it comes to training and education.»

world and around the Mediterranean, with the support of French, Spanish and Italian partners. These schools practically didn't know each other at the beginning.

The Institute has established the first directory of schools, has identified their areas of expertise and has encouraged them to collaborate and share, with the aim of benefiting from each other's experience and trying to move forward together on matters that enhance human capital in public services, matters that appear technical, but which have significant political benefits.

The countries of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), including Lebanon, have cumbersome and complex public functions which weigh on the performance of public action and on the government's budget, without necessarily responding effectively to the expectations of citizens.

Virtually all public governance indices stress this. In Lebanon, for example, the index for political interference compared to competences when recruiting for public functions is one of the highest in the Arab world!

Adel Ben Yakhlef, Director of the Centre de Formation et d'Appui à la Décentralisation (CFAD, decentralisation training and support centre) in Tunis and President of the Réseau des Écoles de Service Public de Tunisie (RESP):

In Tunisia, the Centre de Formation et d'Appui à la Décentralisation (CFAD) is a public institution responsible for mentoring and training human resources among local communities, but also within regional administrations. The centre was created in 1995. Before the revolution of 2011, the CFAD evolved within a context of overly-excessive centralisation that prevented it from providing satisfactory results.

Since the revolution, there's been a desire to establish a decentralised model. The principles of decentralisation are now part of the new Constitution of January 2014. In this context, the CFAD has a central role to play, insofar as decentralisation can only succeed with sufficient means and skilled human resources.

The CFAD has, in fact, the strategic task to train local authority staff, promote the sharing of good practice between local authorities themselves and with their peers abroad. The centre is in the process of laying the foundations of these reforms.

We have drawn up agreements with several similar institutions, including the CNFPT, which has supported us since the creation of CFAD. We're cooperating together to create an efficient system of mentoring and training. This cooperation has continued and will grow stronger over the coming years.



CHAPTER I

PRIORITY REFORMS IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR IN A MEDITERRANEAN IN CRISIS

► The Mediterranean area is experiencing profound upheavals which are destabilising the public sector in many countries. Between the impacts of the economic crisis since 2008 and the social and political unrest that have shaken some of the countries in the region, what impacts have these events had on the role of the State, public services and public action in general? Are reforms under way in each of your countries?

Vincent Potier, Director General of the Centre National de la Fonction Publique Territoriale (CNFPT):

This question particularly concerns Lamia Moubayed and Adel Ben Yakhlef. However, I want to emphasise that France has long held strong and respectful relationships with the Arab countries, especially those of the Mediterranean. The geopolitical developments of recent years have contributed to tensions, particularly with the Iraq, Libya and Syria crises. We are in a critical context, with several armed conflicts, the migratory crisis, the rise of terrorism. In France, we are in a situation of economic and social crisis which, to put simply, raises two major questions. The first is that of the role of a public service. Is this a modern idea? An idea of the future? The second question: the population's distrust with regard to how politics is done. How do you restore confidence? These issues are common to all countries, even if we live in different institutional realities.

“Is public service a modern idea? an idea of the future?”

Lamia Moubayed, Director of the Institut des finances **Basil Fuleihan**: In line with what Vincent says, you know obviously that 2016 marks the centenary of the Sykes-Picot agreement

for the region (an agreement signed in May 1916 and which was shared by the Ottoman Empire and the Arab world between France and the United Kingdom, editor's note).

It is ironic to see that on the occasion of the centenary, these countries' borders, which at the time helped to establish strong States, are being challenged! It is paradoxical to see how this world is crumbling. As Gramsci said "The old world is dying, and the new world struggles to be born", in pain, with a lot of blood and fire. Because «now is the time of monsters.» continues Gramsci. For those of us who work for the State, these rising monsters are parastatal systems, militias, the rise in power of tribal, ethnic and transnational community groups, who incite fragmentation rather than openness. This situation makes the future highly unpredictable. Citizens are asking how such powerful States can collapse overnight. History suggests that for a long time, the conflicts were the result of States with too much power, the excesses of centralisation or military reign. Today, recent experience suggests instead that, on the contrary, the weakness or fragility of the States was the main cause of conflict in the Arab world. How do these major issues translate into public service? Wherever they are, Arab citizens are connected and notice that public services work elsewhere, but not at home!! They notice the difference in quality. They ask themselves questions and realise that they pay taxes without a return in performance, and lose confidence in the State.

➤ **This overly-powerful State which becomes a weak State must have consequences on public service and its credibility?**

Lamia Moubayed, The case of Lebanon is particularly interesting. The country has a tradition of public service which allowed it to overcome the civil war in 1975. During this period, decentralization allowed public services to operate, serve the people and preserve the unity of the country. It was after the war that the dismantling began! Numerous studies have highlighted that the political choice to integrate armed fractions within the State, police, army and public administration, without prior training, as if it were dividing the spoils, weakens public service by favouring an approach that strengthens the power of the fractions concerned at the expense of favouring effectiveness in pursuit of a common goal. At the same time, even the principle of representativeness, since we are a country of different faiths, and which was practically sacred and enshrined in the Lebanese law, has been

weakened. According to a number of experts, it is this representativeness that had preserved Lebanese public service, allowing for intrinsic management of the diversity of faiths. Nobody was excluded.

Furthermore, the competition system based on meritocracy ensured the continuity of the civil service. The State was able to manage the diversity of faiths instead of being managed by it. As I said, everything has unfortunately been dismantled since the 1990s. And since the 2000s, all attempts to reform recruitment methods and how training is structured within the civil service have failed. Although Lebanon is now a country that is extremely fragile and at high risk, it is mainly due to the impact of a denominational system of consensual governance that has led to the paralysis of decision-making at a central level. Institutes such as ours continue to operate, to play their role, but they do so without having to sign up to a global, long-term vision, without

“In Lebanon, institutes such as ours continue to play their roles, but without having to sign up to a global, long-term vision, without any modern regulatory framework or obligations of continuous training.”

any modern regulatory framework or obligations of continuous training. Since 2006, we’ve operated without any budget, and therefore without any idea of what resources we have. We train people in skills that we believe, as an institute, are the skills of the future. But they are not skills that

are defined within a national framework. The responsibility to move forward belongs more and more to individuals and institutions. It is a very particular situation, an approach very specific to Lebanon. But it is not sustainable at a time when the country doesn’t have highly qualified personnel to steer the State’s ship.

➤ **Is Tunisia facing the same situation as Lebanon is?**

Adel Ben Yakhlef, Director of the Centre de Formation et d’Appui à la Décentralisation (CFAD): Public service in Tunisia was provided by pre-revolution governments in an unbalanced way, benefiting certain layers of the population and certain regions. This imbalance was one of the elements that triggered the revolution of 2011. After the revolution, the State was weakened, along with the quality of public services, which are now facing major challenges in terms of security and excessive social demands. Governments have responded by buying social peace through mass recruitment in public services, far in excess

of the needs of the administration. The result? An unsatisfactory public service at an exorbitant cost. Salaries account for approximately 65% of public expenditure. And the country has 650,000 civil servants, while the real needs are estimated to be about half that. Tunisia has one of the highest proportion of public agents compared to the population. Furthermore, the distribution of civil servants between the State and those in local communities and populations is very uneven.

30,000 civil servants in local communities represent 5% of the total workforce. One of the solutions recommended is to put in place a decentralised system, to share roles and resources between the State and local communities according to the principle of subsidiarity and to redeploy civil servants by using this staff surplus to support local communities.

➤ **Is this redeployment taking place in Tunisia?**

Adel Ben Yakhlef: Obviously, legislative and regulatory reforms are needed. We need a system that motivates and encourages civil servants to work in local communities, including those in the country's interior.

➤ **In concrete terms, can you demonstrate that these reforms are progressing?**

Adel Ben Yakhlef: The reforms in general are progressing. The new constitution provides for the generalisation of the commune system, which has been achieved by creating 81 new communes, reaching a total of 350 for now, covering the whole territory. This reform will benefit 3.5 million inhabitants living in remote areas, where the public sector was virtually non-existent.

➤ **Has the creation of these 81 new communes been accompanied by a transfer of civil servants? And what are the challenges in the area of training?**

Adel Ben Yakhlef: We are right at the very beginning of this process. The communes have just been created. They need the State's support in terms of transferring resources. A tax reform will be undertaken to provide communities with their own resources. Tax resources must therefore be shared between the State and local communities who will assume an important role in managing public services. Concerning human resources, I was talking of the 650,000 civil servants, of which

95% serve the State. There will be a reform and staff will be redeployed to support local communities. It will be up to the CFAD to provide the knowledge and skills necessary for staff to respond to citizen's requests.

► **Have you assessed the number of civil servants that need training?**

Adel Ben Yakhlef: The number of staff that need training hasn't yet been assessed. Financial and human resources will be determined for each transferred task. For example, discussions are being held to ensure that basic education infrastructure (construction and maintenance of schools) is transferred to the communes. An evaluation will therefore be undertaken to assess the human and financial resources that need to be transferred from the national ministry of education to the commune. We will thereby ensure that this service is provided close-by for the best quality.

► **Are you faced with the same realities in Lebanon?**

Lamia Moubayed: In Lebanon, although we are an extremely centralised State in terms of decision-making, the refugee crisis has strengthened us in that it is only proximity that solves the problems. When you are

“The refugee crisis has confirmed to us that it is the proximity of public services that solves problems.”

in a Beqaa municipality and from one day to the next the number of refugees exceeds the number of inhabitants, as an elected representative you face an unprecedented problem. You have to be inventive, enterprising. You have to seek funding and to dialogue to ensure that there is no conflict, to respond to the needs of education, health, security, etc. it's entirely up to you, with minimal support from the State. So you roll up your sleeves.

I hope for Lebanon that this understanding will create a real awareness that materialises in new regulations in the field of administrative decentralisation.

► **Does Lebanon meet the conditions of this increased awareness?**

Lamia Moubayed: For Lebanon, and all the countries emerging from conflict, there must at least be peace and stability before you can start to think of reform. For Lebanon, it as in the 1990s, just after the war, that many of the economic, institutional and regulatory reforms

were undertaken over a dozen or so years. It was an exciting period in terms of proposals for legislation, public debate, new ideas, etc. For us, the Ministry of Finance, it is at this time that we have been able to implement major reforms to public services: customs, budget, VAT, etc. Some of them have been introduced with a lot of courage and determination. They have become examples. I'm thinking of the customs reform, with a uniform regulatory and legislative framework with global standards as well as the computing tools set up as good practice for the whole region. In 2004, we were receiving delegation after delegation, to study customs reform. But the systems didn't have time to consolidate and perpetuate themselves. New conflicts have weakened the State and managed to block today's system. Although the reforms haven't had enough time to establish themselves, they are still fragile and have become economically costly.

Adel Ben Yakhlef: We walk on a tightrope, the challenges are enormous and contradictory between economics and social needs. We are trying to advance steadily and with wisdom. We're counting on the Tunisian model, I hope it succeeds. International assistance is necessary.

➤ **In this context, are your public-service training providers also in crisis?**

Lamia Moubayed: It is an issue that affects the whole world, not just our country. The context is very specific to Mediterranean countries, above all those having experienced revolution. But it is also true that to move forward, especially for fragile States, we paradoxically need stronger States. But it's not a heavy, illegitimate, inefficient State that we need. We need a more competent and efficient State. The global state of affairs demonstrates that when a conflict seizes a country, the only way out is to reconstruct state institutions, to rebuild a developing State capable of driving development, defining good policies and implementing them. Lebanon therefore needs a State that reflects the quality of Lebanese citizens: flexible, adaptable, open, enterprising. The profile is there, but the legal framework is not. For example, the framework governing public services dates from 1959! The catalysts of change therefore come, firstly, through an in-depth review of the institutional and normative framework and of public service and, therefore, through a modernisation of the statutory framework and management methods in all areas: recruitment, career management, training, systems, motivation and retention of qualified officials, moral

“To move forward, especially for fragile States, we paradoxically need stronger States.”

improvement and modernisation of institutional practices, etc. We have always maintained that there needs to be an RGPP (Révision Générale des Politiques Publiques, general review of public policies, Editor's note) in Lebanon. We would be surprised at the result!

For schools, it means imparting new skills to develop the profile of civil servants. But we are not going to transform civil servants overnight. They are a product of their society, of their environment, their school and academic education. We are facing major difficulties on this level. It is no longer about training and transforming them, but offering them opportunities for contextual learning and supporting them in developing the skills of the future. If they want! Because there is no obligation to train in Lebanon. It is very difficult.

I would also like to add that the profile of young recruits is quite particular. It has evolved in recent years. They are impatient, relatively rebellious and want to get off the beaten track. They're competent with digital tools and access social media very easily. With YouTube, which records 6 billion hours of viewing per month (an average of one hour per person on earth) and 100 hours of videos put online per minute, young people are able to learn by video what the trainer doesn't manage to teach them.

How should our training providers adapt? How can they still create value? Because we find that the informal training is gaining ground, reaching nearly 70% of global learning, we need to change our ways of working to be in line with the image modernity that we're seeking to introduce in the public sector. Are we ready and adequately equipped? That's the question. It is for that reason we cooperate. That's why people are making comparisons and learning from other training institutes. It is a changing world and we're developing the most variable subject: learning.

► In terms of the CFAD, how is it reacting faced with these crises in Tunisia?

Adel Ben Yakhlef: The CFAD is part of the public landscape that has been weakened. We are trying to adapt and respond to a new need for training to ensure that civil servants in local, regional and even central administrations, are benefiting from new management tools to respond to the crises and to deal with a difficult, outraged public. We are also trying to improve our services by taking advantage of new technologies, to put in place tools for distance learning. We have

established a platform and are developing a Massive Open Online Course, the MOOC. Our action is focused on regions in the interior, favouring positive discrimination in respect of them.

Vincent Potier: A public services school is the melting pot for a future model. It prepares tomorrow, with the possibility of writing a new chapter when the day comes.

➤ Precisely how must the civil service develop over the next 5 to 10 years?

Vincent Potier: The vocation of States and local authorities is to respond to the great environmental, social and economic challenges. The authorities must therefore be strong, active and relevant in order to find adequate answers to the needs of security, the demands for social equality, the needs of climate change, etc.

Adel Ben Yakhlef: In Tunisia we are in a critical period of transition. There is a multitude of reforms to undertake. I don't think it's up to the State to do this alone. The solutions must be provided by others: civil society, trade unions, employment structures, the private sector, etc.

“The vocation of States and local authorities is to respond to the great environmental, social and economic challenges.”

With regards to the need to reform the public sector, there is an important debate in Tunisia among civil society which is an effective proposition for improving the situation. The problem is there is a lack of resources. The economic pillars, namely tourism and the mining sector, have been hard hit by the crisis.

➤ You mention multiple reforms to undertake or which have already been undertaken in terms of public action in the Mediterranean. Yet there is a ultra-sensitive subject of reform, specific to each country, that you have not addressed: the status of civil servants. Is it forever anchored and guaranteed or should it also be reformed to revitalise public action?

Vincent Potier: I would like to clarify that status and profession are two notions that are a little bit different. In territorial public service there is a profession. We identify 234 in France for the local public sector. The status contributes, taking into account the particular nature of the civil service and its sovereign role, for the general interest. It allows

us to differentiate between civil servants and employees in the private sector. The first have obligations, are subject to duties and have rights in exchanges for responsibilities and risks related to their role of civil servants, with the need for protection to enable them to exercise their prerogatives in complete independence. Is this justified? My answer, which is in line with French tradition, is yes. Status is not a brake. Public service roles require duties and it is easier to demand an ethical attitude when there is status, rather than within the framework of conventional employment. The fact that there are no negotiations, just pay grades, is a genuine factor that simplifies relationships within administrations. It is however important that the level of bonuses boosts the work and these is a bonus for those who play the game. Recognising the virtues of status in no way excludes a challenging vision of public action: effective, agile, democratic, economical etc.

► Do you share this same definition in Lebanon and Tunisia?

Lamia Moubayed: It is a fact that we operate at different speeds. Public service in Lebanon is very attached to status. This is fairly apparent in the former titles of nobility. The gateways between status and results are not optimal. If we want to create the civil engineering of the future, and knowing very well the state of public finances in a country devastated by debt, the current situation is not sustainable.

As a civil servant, you must justify yourself every day, compared to others, your brother, your neighbour, as they struggle daily in the private sector to create added value, jobs, and who take risks. This culture of risk is very far from that of the civil service, where you live from day to day, and where you know you'll be paid at the end of the month. The only risk you take is that there'll be a devaluation of the currency and inflation. Yet in Lebanon, and the whole of the MENA region, the civil servants are better paid than in the private sector. This is not the case in the rest of the world! Figures published by the World Bank highlight this: "The State remains the main employer with an employment rate amounting to 9.8% of GDP compared to a world average of 5.4%. The civil service

"Throughout the MENA region, the civil service is, on average, better paid than the private sector, which is not the case in the rest of the world!"

employs between 14% and 40% of total payroll and can sometimes reach 70% of the labour force. Wages are on average 30% higher than in the private sector, while on a global level the trend is the opposite with wages in the public sector

being 20% lower than those in the private sector.” The World Bank’s study also specifies that “recruitment systems are not particularly meritocratic, are based particularly on tribal links and relationships, and are limited to the skills of civil servants of the political elite in place.” It is a general average of the countries in the MENA region. Hence the obligation to discuss the development of status.

► **The idea is not to point responsibility, but how can Lebanon in exit ?**

Lamia Moubayed: We need more State. On the security aspect, for example, we need a military device able to do more with less. We need more government, but this does not amount to more status or more non-productive public spending. We need the political have the courage to take the step in performance and efficiency. Because it is not only technical, but they are deeply policies. And shortcomings in public governance have not a technical side. In Lebanon, governance has estimated annual cost 9% of GDP, and has many implications on performance Public Service. It is one of the major constraints recently identified by the Systematic Diagnosis established by the Country World Bank originally from Lebanon inability to generate growth inclusive and strong jobs.

“We need more state, but this does not amount to more status or more of public spending unproductive.”

► **In Lebanon, have there been avenues for reflection to help develop the situation?**

Lamia Moubayed: The crisis provides the courage to look at the figures and compare them to others: The wage bill costs the State nearly 32% of its income, although the civil service acknowledges a vacancy rate of 70% and 51.1% when it comes to the senior civil service (management positions) according to statistics published by the Office of the Minister of State for administrative reforms (2011). The average age of staff is relatively advanced (52-54), and therefore expected departures into retirement are massive.

Beyond the desire to maintain pride in serving and exercising a noble profession, we have to face this reality. The State is not self-supporting. It needs an economy, which needs a regulatory framework, transparency, competitiveness, jurisprudence. Civil servants cannot just wait for their cheque at the end of the month. It must comply with the demands of the time. It is a very hard turning point to initiate and it takes a

lot of dialogue, sharing, direction and honesty. We cannot provide an isolated response, this is part of the national dialogue. But if we don't do it, the risks are great. Lebanon has a public debt of around 142% of GDP, one of the highest levels in the world!

► **What is your reaction regarding the status of civil servants and the World Bank's figures?**

Adel Ben Yakhlef: The State is really the main employer. Recruitment in the civil service was used for a time to resolve the unemployment problem and not for responding to a need. Result: one of the highest numbers of civil service employees with a payroll representing 50% of budget expenditure to the detriment of investment expenditure, which has tended to be cut back. The other issue relates to the imbalance in the distribution of civil servants between the central departments and the regional and local departments, which are the community-based structures providing the best public services.

Lamia Moubayed: I tend to think that each country has a choice to make. They must find their own way on the question of status. In an opaque system, you need the courage to be transparent about salary scales and

“We must decompartmentalize status and allow other options to civil servants because the current status does not encourage performance, efficiency or restraint in public expenditure.”

bonuses. You have to decompartmentalize status and provide new options to civil servants because the current status does not encourage performance, efficiency, restraint in public expenditure or mobility but encourages moves into other sectors, for example going to work for a local authority or in the private sector. You need the courage to question these statuses as regards to the current situation. It is a no-win situation for the public sector as well as for the whole society to have closed statuses that are not directed towards creating public value or towards the collective well-being. Each situation needs its own

thought process. The dialogue and exchanges between the various countries that share these same concerns favour the emergence of new ideas and new courses of action. We can control the principles but not the keys to the solutions. By sharing and discussing with those who have the same concerns is how we can find our way. GIFT-MENA and the other public service networks such as the Mediterranean Forum of Public Service are useful tools that are extremely relevant and up to date for reflecting on and discussing sustainable solutions.

➤ **Apart from status, another subject caused surprise: training public sector employees is not compulsory in some Mediterranean countries. Is this a right that still has to be won in most countries surrounding the Mediterranean? Should it not be a priority reform in the countries that do not have compulsory training? Can we not bring this right to training in line in all Mediterranean countries?**


Vincent Potier: It is up to each country to set its principles. In France there has been a right to training since 1984, comprising a set of obligations from the start of a person's career and throughout their working life. The difference with regional public authorities, compared to the State public authorities, is in the principle of continuous training throughout a person's working life. Initial training courses, those taken straight after recruitment, are reduced to their strictest minimum, except for senior executives (regional administrators, registrars and senior engineers) in France, with training from 12 to 18 months.

Adel Ben Yakhlef: In Tunisia training is not compulsory but is highly desired for promotion in a person's professional career. But the politicians have understood that the public services can be modernised through training and that the amendments to the laws relating to the status of the civil service stipulate training for civil servants at all levels. This measure will have positive effects on the public service that is provided.

➤ **What is the situation in Lebanon?**

Lamia Moubayed: In Lebanon, initial training is compulsory for State civil servants at the start of their career. It isn't for all the other types of civil servants, including those in public companies and local authorities. So only nearly 20% of the civil service workforce benefit from compulsory initial training! We have to sweep away these ideas based on figures and data. In the past, we assumed that senior civil servants in Lebanon did not receive enough training. However, a study carried out in 2016 showed that in reality, they benefited from an average of 20.5 days per year. This greatly exceeds the standard in force in most countries, even Western ones!

“Perhaps we need to create a shared training system, because in the distant future we can imagine a cohesive public action around the Mediterranean.”



At the Institute of Finance we now want to put the accent on the obligation for training rather than on the right to training. Because you do not have the right to bear an arm if you do not know how to use it. You do not have the right to read a person's tax form if you have not been trained in taxation. In our country there is an obligation to rethink the whole national strategy regarding training. We have to redefine the direction of public action, as well as our responsibility towards the civil servant and the public. The obligation for training goes hand in hand with the obligation for a quality service provided to the public. We can no longer allow ourselves to have a civil servant who is not there to create quality for the public. The legitimacy of the State is at stake, at the risk of driving the wrong way to its destruction. The workforce has an obligation of performance and it is our responsibility to train them. Our ideas are based on three main principles: the obligation for quality, the choice of being trained throughout a person's working life, which must be maintained, but which must go hand in hand with the right and the obligation for continuous training. It is very interesting to see how our counterparts in the South and in the Northern countries work, and to rethink our way of doing things. There is a lot of experience in this field that can be exchanged around the Mediterranean. Perhaps we need to create a shared training system, because in the distant future we can imagine a cohesive public action around the Mediterranean. If the networks are well thought out, if we can find the right complementarities, we can build interesting tools. We still need to have the ambition and the will to do it.

➤ **What more did you learn from this study on senior civil servants in Lebanon who have more than 20 days' training?**

Lamia Moubayed: Apart from this very high figure that surprised us, we also discovered that the training courses are tailor-made and that they do not match the jobs that the senior civil servants carry out, nor the skills that are expected from these senior civil servants.

CHAPTER II

PUBLIC ACTION IN TRANSFORMATION

➤ **Although these questions on public services are essential, does this mean they are a priority? Especially in countries facing a serious refugee crisis?**

Lamia Moubayed: It is the question that everyone is asking now. The post-revolutionary situations are fairly unusual. We thought that numerous issues were going to be resolved after the popular uprisings. But even though Tunisia has taken huge steps, by adopting a modern constitution for example, a quarter of young people are still looking for a job. Half of the working age population are not in work and young people are not at school or at university. In our Arab world three out of four women do not have a proper job. Criminality and the risks of unemployment and poverty are increasing. Lebanon is in the middle of a huge refugee crisis. The social welfare systems do not guarantee real protection, the poor are now even poorer. Private insurance is expensive and favours the elite. The job markets in many of our countries, in both the public and private sectors, are neither transparent nor competitive. They favour the privileged few. As for ordinary people, they are taking less and less part in the decisions that directly affect them. They take refuge elsewhere, to escape the law and order disaster in their country, such as Syria, or to flee from a closed horizon. Mobility means that it is becoming more and more easier to get on a plane, boat, etc. and go to a safer country. It is a fact, the world is getting ever smaller, borders are illusory and human beings aspire to a same dignity. Do countries talk to each other about it enough? Because borders are illusory, people are capable of anything to give their children a better future.

➤ What impact has the flow of migrants had on the functioning of the public services in Lebanon?

Vincent Potier: If I may say something, it is a public services problem, but it is also a problem for the international community, which in particular concerns the action by the UNO. With the Syrian crisis and the way this weighs heavily on Lebanon, as well as on Tunisia, along with the security problems associated with the break-up in Libya, we are in the scenario of weakened States for which the solutions go beyond their sovereignty alone.

Lamia Moubayed: Although Lebanon has seen almost 1.8 million Syrian refugees¹ flow into its territory, who now represent almost 45% of the Lebanese population, which is the largest proportion of refugees per inhabitants in the world, the international community considered that the Syrian refugees were Lebanon's problem. We now have almost six million people in an area of 10,452 km². The basic public services are being used well over their capacity, whilst growth has been reduced to less than 1%.

Regarding managing water, waste, infrastructures, etc. everything has practically broken down. Public action has been overwhelmed. We can only educate 30% of Syrian children in our schools, which are working over two sets of timetables. State schools in Lebanon are open practically 24 hours a day so as not to leave children out on the street and to provide them with the minimum of education. It is not the Lebanese public services' responsibility to educate Syrian children. It is an international responsibility. Is it up to Lebanon alone to provide humanitarian solutions so that these refugees can have the minimum of dignity? It is a gruesome subject, but where do we bury Syrian refugees? How do we register Syrian births in Lebanon? Is this the responsibility of our State civil service? Global solutions must be provided by the international community. Because this small country that is Lebanon is providing a great service to the international community.

➤ In what state of mind are the Lebanese civil servants? Do they feel helpless?

Lamia Moubayed: They are helpless, out of their depth, practically demoralised. They are in a state of reaction, the immediate response, but they are neither looking ahead nor do they have a strategy. However,

¹ <http://www.unher.org/pages/49e486676.html>

from the military and security points of view, there has been a fantastic effort for efficiency. This situation is also a trigger for reforms for a better service and for asking questions. For example, the national police have thoroughly put their house in order. The first corruption cases have come to light and have been punished. It must be emphasized that this is also a critical time for Lebanon. Difficulties are sometimes triggers for reforms.

➤ **In Tunisia, faced with the break-up of Libya, do you recognise the situation described in Lebanon?**

Adel Ben Yakhlef: Political instability in Libya has consequences on the economic sector and on security in Tunisia. I should point out that the black market trade carried out with this country deprives the State of significant tax resources and feeds terrorism. It is a major challenge we have to confront.

Vincent Potier: However, the difference with Lebanon is that, all the same, there is a more structured idea of a State in Tunisia, only due to the effects of the Bourguiba period.

Adel Ben Yakhlef: It is true that in Tunisia we have a fairly strong administration, set up during the Bourguiba period. It is this factor that is ensuring a more or less peaceful control during this time of transition.

Lamia Moubayed: Tunisia and Lebanon are in fact two countries with their origins in a French tradition, but which have evolved differently.

➤ **Where must we mark the distinction between a strong State, but not too strong?**

Vincent Potier: When we talk about a strong State, we do not mean an authoritarian one. It is a State that is legitimate, organised, ...

Adel Ben Yakhlef: ... which guarantees the primacy of the law ...

Vincent Potier: ... and which is capable of resolving priority issues, therefore a State that has the ability to take the general interest into account and which successfully overturns the interests of the “Prince”.

Lamia Moubayed: I would like to say that for young people the vision of the State is often associated with politics and not with the administration or the public sector in general, including local authorities. It is not without questions for the future.

➤ **But with a disorganised State, can the public services carry out their tasks?**

Lamia Moubayed: Yes, as in Belgium, Haiti or Lebanon... And in Tunisia after the revolution.

Vincent Potier: Nations and States are essential, precious and fragile notions. We have all seen this by watching the way in which Libya or Iraq have been destroyed. Pandora's Box has been opened. And in fact the solidarity of our public services depends on the strength of our institutions. International solidarity must preserve States, comfort them, make them strong so that they can be democratic and develop positively. We cannot destroy States or nations with impunity. Diplomatic pressure is preferable, even if it takes years to make a dictator change. We have to respect States.

Lamia Moubayed: To preserve the State is to respect the traditions of a nation. For us, it is completely meaningless to destroy States so that a democracy can be set up. This takes us back to our job, which is to train State administrators and public leaders. But to do what? To serve which ideas? With what sense of efficiency? Democracy or not, could you say in the end that there must be an administration and a State? A completely new thing has struck us over these last ten years: we allow ourselves to destroy nations or States in order to set up a democratic system that does not work, as in Iraq or Libya. We really have to think sensibly before taking action. Because the dramas that arise after these interventions are even more difficult to manage.

➤ **How do we respond to all these emergency situations?**

Vincent Potier: In order to increase the quality of public services in a number of countries, first of all the State must be stabilised. The issues of good management, balanced governance, know-how and professional skills are essential. But in fact, unstable situations are obviously crying out for solutions that come from responses on a national and international level, for a number of countries, including both Lebanon and Tunisia. To be a civil servant depends on the strength of the State, on its ability to respond to all the challenges: unemployment, security,

etc. The type of issues is the same in all countries, but their intensity differs. Answers can only come from a stable State that is strong and filled with an idea of public interest that is developed as much as possible. In reality this is not at all perfect, but the key is there, with the awareness of a certain conception of the State and its issues, which are not only technical and to do with good management, but also in their international or geopolitical dimension.

“Answers can only come from a stable State that is strong and filled with an idea of public interest that is developed as much as possible.”

Lamia Moubayed: I think that the international community is not sufficiently aware of the changes that have occurred in the MENA region. Now the order has completely changed. There is an increased fragility in Lebanon, with serious repercussions for the whole aspect of the Middle and Near East. These problems are not only Lebanese or Syrian, they affect all the shores of the Mediterranean. And they are damaging the very idea of the public good and public service. We must start debates and discussions to find answers to this shared problem, and we will have to find shared solutions. The systems of governance and public action have been affected by the refugee issue in these countries. In Lebanon, we have almost 200,000 civil servants, half of whom are enlisted in the military forces because that is where the real need lies. But in ten years, how will this militarisation affect public service? And what influence will it have over society? There are not enough discussions around these issues. Unfortunately we know that the Syrian conflict will go on for several more years, but we have to start to think, plan and create new institutions or mechanisms. It would be interesting to take Tunisia’s experience into account, as well as those of the Lebanese local authorities who are providing answers in emergencies, and learn from them. It is still a matter of creating collective good.

➤ **Quite apart from the international and geopolitical dimension, locally do you feel there is more questioning from civil servants, with the values brought into question in societies? Are they now seeking to give, or find, meaning to their action?**

Adel Ben Yakhlef: We feel it in Tunisia, as a consequence of the transition phase our country has gone through. Both the political and the administration context have changed. Social and mass media networks exert pressure on civil servants. Each one is trying to understand their role. There is a healthy discussion that is feeding the strategies.

➤ **Taking all these events into account, are young people still choosing public service with the desire to build a future for their country. And in France?**

Vincent Potier: I would like to state first of all that in France young people are aware of their career paths. They sometimes lack the desire to commit themselves to contributing to the society of tomorrow. We

“They lack this will to commit themselves, to contribute to the society of tomorrow.”

have a generation of young people who are rarely political, who have less desire to contribute to reform than sit and do nothing. It is a small problem. We have to encourage the will to fight, to act and to take part in politics in the widest sense of the term.

Lamia Moubayed: It is normal when you are in a stable situation, in conditions with strong development, to see this ambition decline. With us in Lebanon, the Institute’s doors are open to young people and we have an “open door” programme especially for them. We welcome between 250 and 300 university students each year, who come to get to know how the Ministry of Finance works and how it manages public money. In the summer trainees come to the Ministry’s various departments. Public office immediately appeals to them. Right from the first day, when they find out about the Ministry’s scope of action and the trigger that it represents for transforming the future, they are won over immediately. However, we need recruitment and the gateways into public service to be more transparent and competitive. Because until then, unfortunately, recruitment is biased. You need the right keys to unlock the doors into public service. A large amount of work has to be carried out to create systems that can open doors to young talented people.

➤ **Exactly, but aren’t these young talented people leaving to go abroad instead?**

Lamia Moubayed: Of course. We have to attract them and retain them. This would be very interesting.

Adel Ben Yakhlef: In Tunisia, young people are very interested in public action. We can see this phenomenon through their commitment

“In Tunisia, young people are very interested in public action, however there are blockages in recruitment.”

to charitable organisations working in politics and socio-economics. They are the driving force behind proposals for public strategies.

➤ **Choosing an attractive salary for civil servants is essential for attracting young people, but you don't have any control over this. How do we do it?**

Lamia Moubayed: Schools do not have any control over salaries, but they do have control over starting a dialogue and ideas, over an awareness of these matters. For two years now the Institute has been experimenting with a regular form of publication called “Reports that Hurt”, including reports on recruitment, salaries, the comparison between the public and private sectors, the differences between the welfare systems for civil servants and the private sector, etc. It is at the limit of our training assignment, but it is still within the scope of our action: to make people aware. We have to stop looking at our schools as simple organisers of training courses in classrooms, we are instigators for change.

Adel Ben Yakhlef: I completely agree with Lamia's idea, training schools have a strategic role to play in promoting dialogue regarding the status of the civil service between the parties concerned. The problem is that the public resources necessary for reforms are limited.

Lamia Moubayed: Yes, because talented people become tired of a useless administration that costs them a lot of money. In that sense, yes, there are huge questions we must ask ourselves. Which leads to the importance of establishing a transparency of information. Why is the administration so expensive? What can we do to make the administration useful without having to destroy it?



CHAPTER III

FACTORS FOR REFORMING THE PUBLIC SERVICES

► The examples quoted for Tunisia and Lebanon show that there is great inventiveness, a determination to improve public services, to reform the practices in order to improve efficiency. Do these experiences prove that the public services have a strong ability to change themselves?

Vincent Potier: Public service must be synonymous with efficiency, with results that can be seen by the public, but without getting into a consumerist view of the public services. In France, the public can in fact be tempted into behaving towards public players (elected representative and civil servants) like they would when going to a supermarket to do their shopping. When you speak to an elected representative or a public service, you are not doing your shopping! There has to be efficiency and results, but not like the consumption of social products.

► Being slightly provocative, you continually refer to the ideas of general interest, of the common good, public services, dedication, etc. But are these still 21st century ideas, where individualism, consumerism and materialism are in fact growing strongly? Does acting for the good of all still find a response nowadays?

Lamia Moubayed: I am going to be provocative as well. Young people are often put into the individualist box, whilst in fact they are extremely aware of their role in the world and of their responsibilities. If you ask young people, they have a much more developed awareness than their parents' generation on the real concerns of the future, climate change,

water, energy issues, etc. They understand that they have to act in common for a better future. In Lebanon, the refugee crisis has led to many solidarity initiatives.

➤ **Is this solidarity not expressed more nowadays more through charitable organisations rather than in public action?**

Lamia Moubayed: When you work as a schoolteacher in Lebanon nowadays and you are teaching two groups of pupils in a day, the Lebanese then the Syrians, you are paid for it, but I can assure you, you would prefer to go and have a rest! I do not tend to think that there has been a general increase in individualism. This desire to act exists, but often the tools and structures are lacking to channel it and make it become tangible.

Adel Ben Yakhlef: The value of dedication to the general interest is starting to lose its meaning in a part of society. This is due to the lack of confidence, to the fact that sacrifice is not supported in an equitable way, leading to the feeling of frustration, rejection and selfishness. Training schools, the mass media and general society must re-establish the values of citizenship and mobilisation for the common good.

“Public service and the general interest are finding it difficult to find their direction in a society that is characterised by a certain materialism, a certain selfishness.”

➤ **How do you analyse this rise in consumerism? Do we now consume public service like we would buy products in a supermarket?**

Vincent Potier: It is a risk. So we need to look for what is essential, the thing on which society is based: living together. And that is the role of the authorities. To lead social actions that combat the inequalities and provide answers to employment needs: just a few aims for public action that goes beyond the consumerist approach.

➤ **Of course, but individualism, consumerism and materialism, are they not basic trends that have an effect on societies and alter the notion of living together?**

Vincent Potier: Amongst the basic trends there are some that are deadly: these are war, terrorism, the increasing wealth of minorities, intolerance, the massacre of bothersome populations, etc. These are the “monsters that are manufactured”. And we have to fight against them.

Lamia Moubayed: Absolutely. And it is one purpose of our work. And if we are aware of it, it is an extraordinary trigger. The systems, the regimes in place, the Nizam in Arabic, are creating isolated islands. You have the choice of staying at the bottom of an island, waiting for orders, with no communication with others. If you can escape from this system and you open up the islands, people work as a network. And this creates a multiplying effect and wealth. If you are a public service training school and your mission is to decompartmentalize yourself, you work on building a public service that is open and competent, that is able to create value through dialogue and which smashes the individualist aspect that is preventing it from growing. Decpartmentalization is a trigger for combating dirty practices: corruption, nepotism, predator effect, etc. But be careful, this also presents risks: The risk of creating organised crime. In some jobs, there is a tendency to group together for mutual protection.

➤ **But isn't this individualism also in the DNA of senior civil servants, who are now more motivated by their career than by the general interest?**

Vincent Potier: There are pathologies, and careerism is a pathology like vote-catching, corruption, social climbing, etc. It is a subject to be studied by itself. Our training schools would be better off by developing courses on the pathological risks of managing power. Schools could set up banks of projectors to spotlight these failings, but this will not get rid of the problems...

➤ **But in the end, aren't you just sharing a Francophone vision of public service, as opposed to a simplified Anglophone vision that is supposed to glorify efficiency?**

Lamia Moubayed: It is not a question of a Francophone or Anglophone vision. It is a human vision. What motivates it is the well-being of the public. Of course, efficiency rests on one of the pillars, like democracy, elections and representativeness. There is also certainly an administrative pillar, which cannot be built easily, in the sense that it requires skills to do it. It is a sort of protection for the public because arbitration is not allowed in the regions. The third pillar is methodology: we need know-how, the tools, programmes, etc. We need to be trained for that. And the final pillar is an intelligent control over public expenditure. This means giving an account of how the public's money has been spent.

Adel Ben Yakhlef: I completely agree with this point of view. To the pillars that form the base for the efficiency of public action, I would add that of civil society, alongside the single representative democracy. We need to take advantage of direct democracy. The public must become involved in the decision-making processes that define the projects that they need. This would provide more efficiency because elected representatives are sometimes somewhat disconnected from the reality of public action.

➤ **Are civil servants ready and trained to take the opinions of the general public into account?**

Adel Ben Yakhlef: Some attitudes have to be changed.

➤ **As a training school, how can you change attitudes?**

Adel Ben Yakhlef: People are alike. The grey matter is the same everywhere. The democratic countries have a tradition of listening to the public and of transparency. We have to establish these practices in our countries. It is a change of attitude and that will take time. It is a generational issue. Anyway, with social networks, you can no longer hide everything nowadays. Bad practices are very quickly relayed over the Internet. As a result, the administration must be prepared and be one step ahead of society. Training has an important role to play. We are preparing guides to train civil servants in participative approaches and we are providing distance learning. And this is starting to bear fruit. Local authorities in Tunisia publish their budget on their website and put documents relating to council debates on line. It is a winning process – winning for both the authorities and the public. And that is what we are looking for. That is efficiency.

“Local authorities in Tunisia publish their budget on their website and put documents relating to council debates on line. It is a winning process – winning for both the authorities and the public.”

➤ **Do you agree with Adel Ben Yakhlef’s analysis?**

Lamia Moubayed: I think we do not have any choice. Public service training schools must be exemplary. They must make sure that they are relevant, that they use the right tools and that they continually

update themselves. Except that, with the changes that are happening, we also have another role to play. We are becoming organisations that must put ideas and values forward during the training courses. Let me explain. We already have to teach civil servants how to listen, the ability to give an answer, to question and to confront. Training methods have to change. Training staff must also be trained on how to change their approach. For example, at the Institute we are trying to modernise our training courses by training on the basic skills to be acquired and not training for training's sake. In Lebanon, these ideas should ideally be thought about at a national level and not just at the Institute of Finance. Who do we train? To do what? What are the basic skills? Otherwise we train people and spend money but never get it back. So we have contacted other schools to create a national training network so that we can assess together this idea of a repository of skills and de facto bring it about that all schools become activists for a more modern service that is more open, much more efficient and effective. And that is not a given. This change needs courageous people, resources, tools and open minds. It is a major challenge for schools. Above all, once again, we have to be very enterprising because we have not been coached. And that is not the result of a strategy. Movement comes from the bottom and not from the top.

Adel Ben Yakhlef: We can see the same trend in Tunisia with the creation of a network of public service training schools with the purpose of exchanging good practices and experience between them so as to put into practice the instructions recommended by the regulations. For example, take the opening up of the administration. We have

“A public service training school must have a certain vision of public action, a certain idea of efficiency and the skills that it must train.”

resolved our problems in part by the adoption of a decree that forces it to be transparent, to make all important documents available to the public. This makes our task easy as a training centre because we have a legal base that allows us to deliver a training course that is completely within the law. This network is very useful. We try to meet regularly. We would like to meet up with your networks to benefit from your experiences.

Vincent Potier: I think that when you are a public service training school, you have to have a certain vision of public action, a certain idea of efficiency and the skills that you must train. You have to have a vision of what makes the State stand up and walk. The word “State”

comes from the Latin stare which means to stand up. So we should say the State that stands up. You can learn things from dialogue between peers. Creating a network is one way of making progress.

Lamia Moubayed: And that is collective intelligence.

➤ **The notion of efficiency is very often associated with that of performance. Have you established this link?**

Vincent Potier: This word “performance” has been the subject of lively criticism in France. This criticism relates to the ambiguities of the myth of profitability, with a strong economist connotation. Often, when we mention performance, we do not include old or disabled people, or those who have family responsibilities, having to look after young children. In the name of performance, we do not realise that public services are to be maintained, even though public services are useful to society, but they are expensive. But although they do not have an economic usefulness, they do have a social, security, preventive, etc. usefulness. We can take the example of a social worker who takes and “wastes” time to talk for a long time to a mother having problems of pre-delinquency with her teenager. With regard to performance, this has no economic profitability over the short term. It is expensive. But if this can prevent all the human dramas to come... I prefer to use the word effectiveness or efficiency, or even results.

➤ **But when we talk about the public sector, in the northern or southern Mediterranean, we also often mention overstaffing. Does this not pull the plug on the notion of performance or effectiveness?**

Vincent Potier: Public service must be synonymous with efficiency. Where there is a plethora, idleness or overstaffing, this causes a problem that has to be dealt with. And this is done in the name of a certain idea of efficiency, in the name of a certain idea of the economic use of public money.

➤ **As a trainer, how do you deal with this notion of performance?**

Vincent Potier: In France, performance is a liberal notion, in whose name we reduce public services, we privatise or we consider that a person must be “let go” when they reach the age of 50. To take the

demands of the public services into account, it would be better to use other words: efficiency, results, economic use of public money, flexibility and agility.

► **Do you share the same approach in this notion of performance?**

Adel Ben Yakhlef: When you study performance, you are dealing with factors of expenditure and the quality of the service provided. Costs should be rationalised, but without reducing the quality of the service. The cost is forgotten and quality remains.

► **And what does this notion of performance correspond to in Lebanon?**

Lamia Moubayed: We have to ask ourselves the right questions when talking about performance. What results are you aiming for? Is the well-being of the general public at the core of political decisions? How do you measure this well-being? By the percentage of the savings made? These are always very delicate questions. This also supposes that we are not forgetting to take into account that the nature of public decision-making has changed over time. Before, administrations used to make decisions alone and the most we could expect from them was that they acted like an efficient bureaucracy. The accent was put on conformity, the legality of public action. This notion has been completely turned upside down nowadays. The general public are no longer just a beneficiary, but they are stakeholders. The more the public are enlightened, the more they are called upon to co-produce and take part in public action. Furthermore, the administration is called upon to be legitimate, reliable, efficient, economic and careful. In my country, every time decisions were made without consultation, it ended up in problems. There are the means to make the public take part by transparency rules. Is public action that is remote from the public efficient? That is the question we must ask ourselves.

► **How do you prepare civil servants to answer these questions in your training centres?**

Lamia Moubayed: You can do it by making those that will be responsible for public action, the public leaders of tomorrow, aware of them. It is important to define the words, to give meaning and to ensure that our

training courses are as close as possible to reality and to the expected results. It is a never-ending concern that we always comply with international standards, to be good students of public management.

➤ **Is there still a risk that administrations put their own interests first, rather than the general interest?**

Vincent Potier: We have to make reforms, reform is essential. Making reforms is a necessity, but it is extremely complex. But you can make reforms without getting into a productivist system in order to respond to a command from the World Bank or the OECD, inspired by a neo-managerial and liberal vision, which aims at destroying the State or reducing it to its strictest minimum. It is an ideological aim with which one cannot agree. But we have to make reforms against the administrative corporatisms.

Lamia Moubayed: Collective work is difficult to measure performance-wise. This culture of performance does not necessarily measure cooperation, collective work or the values of the collective interest. Intellectual work must be carried out on this subject.

➤ **The effectiveness, efficiency and the results of public action, so we do not have to mention performance, are frequently faced with a phenomenon that is very sensitive to deal with: corruption. What role can training play in combating this scourge and in making attitudes change?**

Vincent Potier: There are pathologies in public action that hijack the public interest. This can be vote-catching, corruption or the autocratic or dictatorial management of power. When power is not subject to controls, you can understand, although not justify it, why civil servants make use of it. It can be a temptation due to the person himself or herself, their family, their friends or acquaintances, or even a political undertaking that requires funds.

What can be done in a system or a nation to make a person resistant to corruption? It goes back to morality, ethics, deontology and values. What can be done to make a civil servant dedicate himself or herself to public service and to serve others without serving himself or herself? How do we create a state of mind that encourages the desire to serve their nation, their country or a group of people? That is the important thing for training. How do we create an ideal so that people look for

things other than power or wealth? If we can answer these questions, this will orientate training because constraints and fear of punishment are not enough.

➤ **But in fact, in certain countries there are also civil servants who are poorly paid. This also contributes to corruption. How do we protect ourselves against it?**

Lamia Moubayed: These notions of corruption and ethics, the way in which they are advocated by the international authorities, appeal to notions of perception, never to clear tools. They have practically been raised to an ideological level and I have noticed two separate groups amongst my young students: those who consider it to be an absolute evil, and those who do not have firm ideas on the subject, who question it and consider that sometimes it is useful. We have to think about the basics and about definitions. The NGOs that work on anti-corruption are destroying the image of the civil servant and the public administration. In Lebanon, new recruits to the Ministry of Finance are often saddened by the poor image that their community has of their

“In Lebanon, new recruits to the Ministry of Finance are often saddened by the poor image that their community has of their job.”

job. It is very demoralising to always have this suspicious look from a member of the public about their work. I am not sure that endlessly going on about the trigger of corruption is really useful for improving public service and the image of the State.

➤ **Is this corruption problem as strong in countries neighbouring Lebanon? Do you speak to them?**

Lamia Moubayed: If you look at the World Bank’s corruption indexes, the MENA region is at the bottom of the ladder. But we do not speak to them much because it is a fairly strong cultural taboo. Things are often complex - personal, community, local authority and political interests are interwoven. There is work to be done so that civil servants do not feel as though they have hit the jackpot by joining the civil service and that they are going to become wealthy. And so this work also has to be done as early as possible, straight from school.

Adel Ben Yakhlef: Corruption heavily penalises economic development and according to experts costs the country three annual growth points. Before the revolution corruption was limited to one

clan. Five years after the revolution corruption continues to rage and is now widespread. War has been declared on this scourge through the anti-corruption authorities in particular, who are working on exposing dubious practices and misappropriation of funds. At the same time, laws are currently being prepared to strengthen control, sanctions, transparency, access to information and the protection of whistle-blowers.

“In Tunisia we have created a Ministry for the Civil Service and Anti-Corruption.”

Lamia Moubayed: I would like to go back to an illusion. Low salaries are certainly one of the factors that encourage corruption, but the latest statistics show that it is not the major cause. Corruption is just as prevalent amongst very well paid civil servants.

Vincent Potier: Pressure from the public is a trigger that may give us hope: the public do not want to be taxed, ripped off or fleeced.

Lamia Moubayed: We have had experience of this in Lebanon, with a whole wave of exposures helped by digital technology, photos and videos. In the beginning, it had a significant effect. But in a country where the rule of law is weakened, your life is at risk. Be careful, sometimes the tools cannot be adapted to the situation.

Adel Ben Yakhlef: Combating corruption requires the political will, a lot of perseverance and daring.

➤ But does this need more controls, repressive laws or appropriate training?

Vincent Potier: There needs to be rule of law. And control systems. There is a fear of punishment. And those that are in control must be well paid and themselves controlled. But this is only possible in a lawful State, not where the law of the jungle reigns.



CHAPTER IV

PUBLIC ACTION IN QUEST OF MEANING

➤ **Regimes toppled and borders abolished. States and administrations becoming weaker or very uncertain, etc. In a Mediterranean world where a number of reference points have been brought into question, is there still a common base of values of public action for the countries surrounding the Mediterranean? What would you put behind this word “value”? Do the words have a similar resonance in your countries?**

Vincent Potier: In France we are establishing a significant distinction between values and principles. Values go back to convictions, which justifies the choice of the public service. Principles now relate to the rules that are set and go back to ethics. Values and principles are often mixed together. Now convictions are distinguished from the rules of the game.

➤ **Can you illustrate your proposal with some examples?**

Vincent Potier: Words can describe values, give meaning to the civil service. First of all I am thinking about our republican motto: liberty, equality, fraternity. I am also thinking of the terms human dignity, secularism, justice and general interest. These are basic values. But there are other types of values. At the CNFPT we can discern the values of public service: continuity, mutability, legality, efficiency, effectiveness and reactivity. They characterise what public service must do.

We can distinguish them from the human values that also have to be taken into account: listening, respect for others, etc.

At the CNFPT, the notion of value therefore resembles gathers a set of convictions of three types: basic values, those of public service and those of human values. They have to be distinguished from principles that are duties and which are the foundation for ethics: neutrality, loyalty, integrity, etc. If these principles are not respected, they can be the subject of disciplinary warnings, and so penalties.

➤ **In France, how do you qualify the very symbolic words of neutrality and especially secularism?**

Vincent Potier: Secularism is a separate subject. I think that it is a fundamental value that is expressed by a principle of neutrality. The fact of being neutral, of keeping your opinions to yourself is a way of respecting religious opinions and religious convictions in particular. In France, neutrality is a requirement that can be penalised from a disciplinary point of view if it is not respected, in the name of a value, secularism.

➤ **What do feel about this word secularism in a multi-denominational country such as Lebanon?**

Lamia Moubayed: Can you remain secular in the way in which you provide a service? Who takes priority? If you are a Christian, are you going to treat Christians better?

I fully appreciate the distinction made by Vincent Potier. It is an idea that we could pursue around the Mediterranean. Because apart from words, this distinction allows us to strengthen each person's convictions and to make the vision of our role much clearer. It is fundamental. There is always a time in our career where we ask ourselves, "in a conflict situation, who is the most important?" Having these fundamentals in your mind is an advantage. Is secularism a fundamental value, a principle or public service value? The answer can be different depending on the country. But asking yourself the question is in itself a fantastic idea for then conveying it through training. Ditto for neutrality. However, I should add merit as a value

“Having these fundamentals in your mind is an advantage. Is secularism a fundamental value, a principle or public service value? The answer can be different depending on the country.”

for public service. You need merit to serve. This notion carries with it the way in which one carries out a public service job. If this notion does not exist in a country, this will have an effect on the way in which a civil servant carries out their action. It is not only words. Merit conflicts with a clannish conception of public action.

Adel Ben Yakhlef: Each country has its reality. Culture and tradition are largely inspired by religions. The State has to take this into account, but whilst protecting freedoms. Public service should be neutral towards everyone.

“In Arabic there is a saying that the ruler of a community is its main servant.”

Lamia Moubayed: These are also modern values. Vincent, you have mentioned the word “restraint” several times. For me it is the equivalent of this awareness that drives the servant of the State or local authorities to fully understand the financial impact of their decisions and to measure them. The civil servant must include this idea of restraint in their behaviour. You are a civil servant, even whilst eating your dinner. It is a modern idea, at least in our fragile countries.

➤ **There is another idea that is also a modern value: the duty of communication. We often speak of the obligation for reserve, but the obligation for communication with the public has not been internalised enough as a fundamental value of public service.**

Adel Ben Yakhlef: I think that there is another value that must inhabit the civil servant, and that is the dedication to serving others. The desire to serve others.

Vincent Potier: The English term “civil servant” is more accurate. That makes me think of the Latin etymology of the word “minister”, minus. The minus is the little boy who works for others. There is this attitude of the servant in the service of others which is taken up in the terminology of the public function, but in French “civil servant” does not work. Furthermore, in France people who work for the civil service do not often consider themselves to be public servants! Nevertheless, the civil servant must cultivate dedication, a benevolent attitude, to others. That is quite the opposite of individualist ideology!

Adel Ben Yakhlef: In Arabic there is a saying that the ruler of a community is its main servant.

Lamia Moubayed: Unfortunately, we are a long way from that! We have to bring back these ideas to the surface and reassert their value. It is a very strong cultural trigger.

➤ **If the values of public service are changing and are appearing to resist the upheavals that are shaking the planet and the Mediterranean region, what about the aims of public action? Are they changing? Are they still clear and precise enough for achieving the objectives assigned to civil servants?**

Vincent Potier: Regarding public action, aims are important. Public action is not just management techniques, it is also the search for aims. A training organisation needs to have clear ideas on public action in general and its aims in particular. In the project adopted by our board on 30 March last, there is research on the aims of public action: what are the changes? What are the challenges, what are the transitions? In other words, what must public action respond to in these fields of democracy, institutions, ecology, economics, society, etc. Once the challenges have been identified, changes must be undertaken. We speak of the democratic transition for a process to strengthen democracy. In France we refer to institutional transitions with the re-division of the regions for example. Ecological transition is the way to respond to climate change or how we can replace fossil fuels with renewable energies. In France, economic transition corresponds to the attempt to compensate for the losses of industrial jobs with new job creating sectors. And financial transition is expressed in our country by reducing the public deficit.

“A training organisation needs to have clear ideas on public action, and first of all on its aims.”

➤ **Is it not up to the politicians to define these changes or transitions?**

Vincent Potier: Absolutely. These are obviously political issues. They are based on democratic debate during presidential or general elections, where candidates or political parties propose their vision of what these challenges are for their country.

► **How can training schools adapt themselves and integrate these changes in their training mission?**

Vincent Potier: Training is based on a certain approach of political aims. Behind the titles of the training courses there are representations of what the politics, challenges, changes and transitions are. When we decide on the title of a training course we have a representation. This can be a solely management representation where one learns how to manage an accounting directive, which is important, which is fundamental. For that, perhaps also a representation of civil servants

“Behind the titles of the training courses there are representations of what the politics, challenges, changes and transitions are.”

as players of transformation. The methods for undertaking public action are shifting. Economic models for growth are evolving: for example, in France, we are learning to avoid the large projects that eat up public money or space, that upset the balance or do not take operating costs into account. And who makes a decision without asking the public’s opinion!

► **A year ago France adopted a law on energy transition. Local authorities will have a new role to play. Is this an example of these changes and these transitions?**

Vincent Potier: Of course. Both state officials and local authorities are involved here. A new approach needs to be found to topics to meet the environmental challenges. It involves the concept of selective growth. Growth is necessary but, in France, we realise that growth should be more balanced, more sober and frugal and consume less energy and space. This brings us to a reflection on the goals, in recognition of these challenges, and how to implement these changes in public action. It amounts to taking a positive role in this transition.

► **Are these changes also visible in Tunisia or Lebanon? These same questions?**

Adel Ben Yakhlef: In Tunisia, we are changing. We are moving from an authoritarian regime to a democratic regime, centralisation to decentralisation, a closed to an open administration. Our schools are obviously adapting to these changes in terms of their training objectives. A monitoring service has been set up. Our business is to collect information and to integrate changes and developments in training programs.

➤ **Each country, then, is experiencing its own transitions. What about Lebanon?**

Lamia Moubayed: Earlier we identified some keywords and I have been asking myself what keywords could apply for the Arab world. There is one that has survived for a long time, the word Nizam, the system, as I have already mentioned. It has almost established itself as a theology: ‘the Nizam’s objectives’, ‘does not contradict the Nizam’, ‘has to be consistent with the Nizam’ etc. Today the word transition is a keyword in the sense of democratic transition. Almost as if all countries were experiencing the same conditions, as part of the same homogeneous, well-defined whole! As if this change consisted in going from the same point A to the same point B. I even heard a Harvard professor explaining one day that, with the exception of Israel, democracy did not exist in the Middle East. That made me smile. I asked him what he meant by democracy? ‘It’s an electoral process,’ he replied. No comment. You cannot put all countries in the same basket.

“You cannot put all countries in the same basket. Context is very important.”

Context is very important. You cannot talk about transition and at the same time explain where it has to lead. As a public official, a servant of the concept of the state, one cannot adhere to such fixed concepts. There is a process of transition that our Arab countries will undergo. It’s called history. Societal systems and economic systems change. These models are reviewed. Nothing is inscribed in stone. A lot depends on the history of peoples and their inventiveness. Today, countries are laboratories. Not long ago Eastern Europe went through the transition to democracy. There are lessons to be learned.

➤ **In November, the COP 22 will be held in Marrakesh, on the African continent. For the countries of the southern Mediterranean, are ecology and climate change part of these transitions?**

Lamia Moubayed: In Lebanon, we’re not at that point. Today, the world moves at very different speeds. There’s a big difference between the north and south Mediterranean. This isn’t necessarily something that is recognised and this explains why there is no common consciousness and little dialogue around these issues. Southern Mediterranean countries currently have other priorities.

► We have discussed the values and goals of public action. What about a concept that is very much in vogue: governance? These days this word seems to cover everything. But what is good governance for each of you? And in your profession as trainer, what does conveying these concepts of good governance correspond to?

Adel Ben Yakhlef: Intuitively, I would say that good governance is how to manage public affairs in a transparent manner while listening to and involving those who are served and while being subjected to a rigorous monitoring system so that public funds are used in a rational manner. That, for me, is what good governance is.

► So it's not a static concept, but something that's scalable?

Vincent Potier: Good governance is a concept that emerged in the 1980s and was adopted by the OECD and the World Bank, then bolstered by the concept of new public management, with the idea that there would be one model, one optimal way of doing things. When looking at the rhetoric of the OECD or the World Bank, good governance is based on a management vision, focused on public finance, personnel management and the mode of organisation of the state, with very definite recommendations with very definite recommendations can be summarized by the lean management. These recommendations have of value in itself, but which are presented as an orthodoxy, however questionable because they are based on an a priori liberal: the weakening State, privatization at any cost, and the pseudo belief that decentralization to local authorities is more virtuous. Which is not necessarily true and can be a hazard. This vision grows as degreasing administrations, which is necessary, but not necessarily reducing the field of public action. In general, therapies for good governance lead to a lessening of the security forces. And it is not necessarily virtuous in itself.

Adel Ben Yakhlef: There must be a determination to do taking into account the realities of each country. And without excess. This is not because we want to up participatory approaches as legitimate structures must forget past by elections. Everyone must play their role. is collected the opinion of civil society, but the final decision still lies with bodies that the legitimacy of the polls because unlike civil society they were accountable at the end of a mandate.

Lamia Moubayed: On the theory of governance, I tend to be more moderate. It is true that the measure of governance is more successful than the concept itself, which is quite complex. political participation, inclusion in the decision, management of public funds, transparency of budgets, etc. the concepts are interesting and have helped identify weaknesses systems of governance or public administration. They set Obviously governance annuitants systems, opacity budgets, etc. but also the non-inclusiveness of economic growth and expansion disparities. It is worthwhile to put this concept of governance forward, especially in our country, in my country. Under one umbrella, several important policy elements related to the evolution of society, the way to govern, have been advanced. For me, it has a meaning.

➤ **What elements would you add to this notion of good governance reinforce this notion?**

Vincent Potier: That would be a sharing site with other schools public service than trying to define what a balanced public policy or quality to identify landmarks. Good governance is a set of common sense elements that one can not evict a backhand but are fragmented and behaviorists, a little fixed with liberal assumptions that we sometimes challenge some time. In a country like France, for the democratic game, the concept of purpose changes. The general good concept is scalable, it changes according to the considerations of the legislature. This is not a predetermined concept, but operating in a same country over time and between countries. That is the essence of democracy. Those are the legitimate representatives who choose to which is of general interest. It is the people of challenge if he did not agree.

“It would be a building site sharing with others public service schools trying to define what balanced public action or quality.”

➤ **Can you already illustrate what we are for you these benchmarks?**

Vincent Potier: In CNFPT we have some benchmarks. The first: In any public action must discern what is founder of sense for public action: the values, principles and political project set the goals. The second benchmark concerning governance. The third terms of skills. Form, for

us, is to reflect on the goals public action, provide benchmarks on the meaning of the action public on the balanced governance and develop skills.

Lamia Moubayed: It would be really interesting to publish a document with landmarks that can guide our thinking in this great mist of the action of our institutions. And that could be contextualize depending on the circumstances of each country.

Vincent Potier: We can also add all that makes up the good recommendations from the World Bank and the OECD, which in itself are good. That the state is not omnipotent, pot-bellied, it's good meaning. Provided they do not have the sole purpose of reducing the size of the State. Otherwise it will be wobbling. The state must be strong, not scrawny.

Lamia Moubayed: The state must be strong, but not heavy. When it costs you 40% of the budget, it becomes a little heavy! In Lebanon, it is 32%, it's huge!

➤ Do not we hear yet more talk about cost reduction as Capacity Building ?

Vincent Potier: If there are more ways for schools to educate young, certainly, we will save money, the debt will be reduced. It is a policy short term. The ratios might be excellent, but illiteracy will spread

CHAPTER V

THE QUALITY CRITERIA UNDERLYING PUBLIC ACTION

➤ Does, in the end, this quest for values and meaning in public action not simply amount to one single goal: the quality of public service? Are you all focused on the same goal?

Vincent Potier: As I explained above, we must rediscover the meaning of things. When we speak of values, principles, objectives, the aim is to produce quality public services. What does it take to obtain high quality public service? Cultivating a sense of public action, balanced governance and enhanced skills. These are the drivers of public action that should be borne in mind when designing training in a public service school. What gives meaning are values, ethical principles, societal responsibility (fighting against discrimination, gender equality, provision for the disabled, sustainable development, etc.) and political purpose.

➤ To advance the concept of quality requirements, standardisation and certification, would it be worthwhile pursuing shared projects between Mediterranean countries?

Vincent Potier: Certification is very dependent on having an organised system. It would seem complicated to develop certification on a geographical scale as diverse as the Mediterranean. However, a reflection on what provides a basis for and the emergence of quality would be interesting. What is quality? What underlies it? And what creates quality? This is more general and it would allow us to reflect institutional realities.

➤ Does the notion of quality go beyond mere user satisfaction?

Vincent Potier: Of course. Quality is more of an approach than a measurable object. Satisfaction indices provide measurement, but quality is a little broader than that.

➤ If each country has its own conception of quality, where is the value in discussion and exchange?

Adel Ben Yakhlef: For me networks are of great value in bringing us close together and enabling exchange. We share many values, traditions and culture and networking can only improve professionalism within training structures.

Lamia Moubayed: Certainly. Maybe we should think about coming up with a 'public service quality' certification. It's complicated, each institution has its particularities and there are specific quality measures for each area. Nevertheless, incorporating this thinking in management policy is very important. At the Institute of Finance, we perform an external audit every 5 years and recently we carried out a quality assessment with the help of a Lebanese quality auditor. This process has led us to carry out a thorough review of our procedures. The exercise is cumbersome, difficult to perform and requires considerable investment, particularly in terms of time. But it is a process of self-questioning that has to be incorporated in our work in order to move forward. Actually, no one requires this of us in Lebanon, not even the citizens. We are at the service of officials so that they may better serve citizens, but in the current system, no one calls us to account. For example I have never been questioned on the cost of training. Nevertheless, this culture of quality needs to be introduced at all levels. There should not be any choice in the matter. There needs to be a requirement of quality.

Vincent Potier: Beyond procedures for certification, we might raise the question of what gives quality to an initiative? I think it consists of relevant objectives. Efficiency requirements. Many concepts can thus

“The advantage of the word quality is that it takes final results into account and not processes, performance or budgetary data.”

be grouped under the banner of quality. ‘The advantage of the word quality is that it takes final results into account and not processes, performance or budgetary data.’

➤ Do you share this vision of quality?

Adel Ben Yakhlef: I would like to raise the question of the contribution of training to improving public service quality. This is a question which is always asked in training schools. To answer this, we would need tools to measure the impact of training on improvements in the quality of service.

➤ Do these tools not exist today?

Adel Ben Yakhlef: Hardly at all. There are perceptions, but not really any objective measures allowing us to act on the quality of a service rendered through training. I think we should go further, making use of discussion between training institutions, in terms of assessing the impact of training on the quality of services. The government gives you money to carry out training and then they ask you to account for it. How has the training impacted the structures you are providing training for? This is a complex area. I have visited several training institutes and I have never found an answer to this question. Yet I am convinced that it is easier to look into it objectively where training is not part of an overall strategy.

Lamia Moubayed: This reflects the dichotomy between training and management of jobs and skills. This is something we came across in customs when we had to train 30 customs officers on a highly technical issue: warehouse management. We spent a lot of money, made use of scarce resources and, three months later, none of the customs officers who had been trained had been appointed to this post! This is typically the case when there is no requirement for quality and a link between training and the business area.

➤ Is training a poultice that may be placed on an organisation that is malfunctioning?

Lamia Moubayed: Yes, that's right. This is a moot point between schools and administrations. We must not give in to pressure, otherwise the investment will be lost. Also, sometimes officials spend too much time in training and this is not at all synonymous with efficiency or profitability, or sobriety, or

“If officials spend too much time in training, this is not at all synonymous with efficiency or profitability, or sobriety, or quality requirements”

quality requirements, etc. We have to learn to say no. This is part of what schools must learn to do: say no. This is the true sense of public action, like it or not. But of course, this has a cost.

➤ **Do you have the power to say no?**

Lamia Moubayed: First of all, we must have the courage. Power is sized to the extent of one's courage! It's true that it's not easy and it is not freely given. For a profession like ours, you have to have a lot of belief and try with all available means.

➤ **To return to the idea of a satisfaction index of users of administrations. Could discussion between Mediterranean countries lead to the development of such a tool?**

Lamia Moubayed: This is no longer a luxury. Collecting and publishing statistics in the form of indices is a requirement because problems travel from one side of the Mediterranean to the other. An investment has to be made in this area in order to achieve the development of synchronised actions that respond to real challenges in the region. Since the mid-1990s, much has been invested in Euro-Mediterranean trade. I remember staff training programs on public service quality, the new culture of performance efficiency, the requirement to report to citizens, etc. We tried installing systems that resembled those on the northern shore of the Mediterranean, knowing that our systems could not keep up. Today, we know that no one can solve these problems alone. The issues are transnational ones, whether in terms of terrorism, migration or the legitimacy of public action and the rules of law. Unfortunately, there is a great deal less funding and resources available than 20 years ago!

➤ **But how can we still ensure quality public service in an environment dominated by cost-cutting?**

Vincent Potier: We must eliminate fictitious jobs, passive jobs and careers that do not serve anyone. Everyone has to contribute. This is commonsense. This can be implemented at the same time as considering that we need public employees for health care, security, teaching,

building roads, investment etc. It's just a question of finding a balance. We must not throw public service out with the bath water.

“By establishing a performance system based on quality of service, the state would be promoting wealth creation.”

Adel Ben Yakhlef: We are experiencing the situation evoked by Vincent. After the revolution, in order to buy people off in social terms, thousands, if not tens of thousands, of people were recruited without any real need. These are virtually fictitious jobs that are expensive and have no impact on public service quality. We must find a solution to mobilise these people elsewhere, particularly in local communities that are in need of human resources.

Vincent Potier: I agree with this approach, even though it does not really concern France. We must shift from an organic concept of public service to one of functional organisation. Public service must help organise economic development. It guarantees a certain number of rules and it has a contribution to make. But it is not itself obliged to act in the field. It can delegate tasks to the private sector. If you run a school, you don't also have to prepare meals for students. The same goes for transport. These services have to be organised for the public to ensure public interest, but there is no obligation for the state to manage everything directly itself. Public procurement can be developed, as well as public service delegations. We agree on this point.

Lamia Moubayed: This leads us to the question of having a highly competent public service and guaranteeing the effectiveness of the use of public funds. Contexts differ greatly. And when the context is fragile with states with a very broad range of activities that are diversified and very costly to citizens, the trend is very difficult to reverse. When you have established the habit of a welfare state and politicians have become the recruiters for public service, and this is the case of many countries, it is a very difficult process to reverse. When a large part of the public service is accustomed to working for just a fraction of the day, it is very difficult to train them to work all day. We have denounced this tendency in Lebanon. The only solution is to find ways to recreate a competent public service. This is to say we must recruit in another way, with people who are initially very well trained. This process may seem simple in theory, but in practice it is very complicated to implement.



CHAPTER VI

TRAINING SCHOOLS: AGENTS OF CHANGE

➤ You have repeatedly noted that public service training schools are heavily affected by the upheavals that impact on public policy in the Mediterranean. Training schools are also agents of change. How do they analyse and integrate these changes and how do they adapt their training activities?

Vincent Potier: I think that as trainers, we need bring about renewal in public service practices, in ways that are specific to each of our countries, but without losing the underlying sense of commonality. We share three common concerns. The first, is that the public sector is a fundamental pillar of society. When it is weak, society as a whole can fall apart, can be called into question. It also gives protection to the poor, isolated, frail, etc. And it is also a driver for development. Pillar, protection and driver. These three words are fundamental in order that we can live together in peace, security and the respect for human dignity. And if the idea of the public sector is as old as humanity itself and indeed deeply human and vital, it nevertheless has to be renewed. The second concern is that we know we need to distinguish between an organic and functional approach in the public sector. Public service can exist without public administration. Government has responsibilities, but it is not obliged to carry out the work itself. It may request the help of the private sector. This is what is meant by public procurement, public service delegation or privatisation. For us, renewal involves moving from an organic vision, whereby the administration carries out the work itself, to a functional one whereby the administration retains the function of monitoring and guiding of objectives and goals. It is the guarantor of general interest and relies on the private sector for

its service providers, which are more or less supervised depending on the public service issues involved. My third point is how do you make public service synonymous with efficiency, economy and public interest? These three points bring us back to the central question for any public service school: how to train new generations?

Lamia Moubayed: It's true that there is confusion between the public sector and public services. There is still a great deal of debate on who it should be who carries out a service. At the Basil Fuleihan Institute of Finance, we talk about people who have the responsibility of managing public money for the purposes of collective services. This is a broad definition that works and also concerns the elected officials of a municipality who manage public money and provide services to citizens. I think there's a pretty big change to be made in environments in which we work because public service, in the narrow sense of the public official, is no longer in step with modern perspectives. I share this organic vision. There is a real debate about the purpose of our work. Is it possible to build a public sector in countries where public employment is at the service of political expediency? I often ask myself this question.


Adel Ben Yakhlef: Societies are facing rapid changes due notably to technological developments. Public action must adapt to this. In this context training schools have a responsibility to analyse changes and expectations through a monitoring system and act on training programmes.

➤ **Do all schools have the ability to anticipate in this way? Is this an area for potential cooperation between training institutes in the Mediterranean?**

Vincent Potier: Public service schools need to be a couple of steps ahead of what is coming next in the world. We also have a responsibility to try to see that things could be different. And that if they were different, they would be better. Public service schools need to carry forward a paradigm shift, if I can be permitted to use the term.

Lamia Moubayed: If I can come back on that, I would say that public service schools also have a duty to consider other areas than just training. If they see their role as agents of change, they should promote exchange, discussion and an openness to civil society, academia, the private sector, etc. This is

“When one serves the public interest, one must possess a specific mentality.”



extremely important. Our work can have real impact, our action can be powerful if we are able to carry other stakeholders with us in the highly complex issue of public policy. In Lebanon we have chosen to support training through communication and dialogue with civil society and the private sector. We have anticipated by creating information tools for citizens, including the youth, to provide explanations for public money management mechanisms. We have been told that this has nothing to do with training. However we have persevered because we are convinced that the awareness with regard to public action must start very early, during schooling. Training schools are also a reservoir of knowledge, knowledge in the field of public action. They have a duty to share this knowledge.

Vincent Potier: Public service schools provide a certain representation of public action, the state, the place of citizens, civil society, democratic and ecological development, social justice and good economic management.

Lamia Moubayed: It's very easy to confine ourselves solely to training. It's fine to offer a training catalogue, but the awareness of young staff begins in our schools and we are also able to provide citizens with very scarce and inaccessible information.

Adel Ben Yakhlef: Administrative training schools provide a platform where one transmits knowledge and improves skills, but also where an opportunity for discussion and debate on public service can be provided in the presence of public officials who are directly involved and have in-depth knowledge of the public domain. Training schools have the task of synthesising these reflections and transmitting them to policymakers and reformers.

Lamia Moubayed: I would like to come back on this straight away. One of the goals in creating the GIFT-MENA network was to bring together training schools to work together to be a source of recommendation for governments, including on matters relating to the development of human capital. Up until now, these schools have been seen as factories producing standardised public officials, but this is not their purpose at all. They are important drivers of change in practices, cultures and values. It is important for the directors of these schools and their teams to be convinced of the importance of their role and purpose of their mission.

“Up until now, these schools have been seen as factories producing standardised public officials, but this is not their purpose at all.»

During one of our training courses, I listened to an instructor tell the story of Kennedy's visit to NASA. The American President turned to an accountant, and knowing full well what his function was asked him what he did. The accountant replied, 'I help humanity to conquer space, Mr. President.' The meaning of public action is fundamental and must be shared. However this meaning has been somewhat lost in recent years.

➤ What does this anecdote mean to you? Do you share this concept?

Vincent Potier: Public action is based on trained actors and working in a public service school is about giving public servants as much know-how, will and ability as possible. After training, trainees must leave with the will to act. They must be driven by an ideal that makes them want to work for others, to carry out public service. Public action is about organising and meeting the challenges of living together. It must therefore be motivated by a desire to work for the collective.

➤ Do all these changes change and influence your way of working and delivering training?

Adel Ben Yakhlef: Absolutely. The CFAD is a training structure focused on decentralisation and delegation, but we are based in Tunis... We have to rethink our system. Training centres need to be closer to the ground. To bring efficiency to the training we provide, we are thinking about creating regional offices, as close as possible to local and regional authorities. They will probably have a better vision of training needs and programming with administrations.

“Training centres need to be closer to the ground.”

➤ How is this regionalisation policy progressing?

Adel Ben Yakhlef: The new Constitution enshrined the principles of regionalisation and now we are at the stage of preparation of legal texts including the local authorities code. But the decentralised state structures will also be strengthened. There is a complementarity between the two modes of management. Our training facility is on standby and alert to changes that will be introduced. The training will follow suit.

➤ And you in Lebanon?

Lamia Moubayed: We are also reflecting very deeply on how we operate. We are examining our practices in depth. The fact that our courses are not mandatory is an opportunity for us to think differently. We subscribe to life-long learning and aim to understand how to respond to the real context of things and take this into account. We are still at the beginning of this rethink, but there is a real desire to be more relevant. The basis of this reflection is the fact that time and space are now secondary in training; we are constantly connected, so everyone needs to have opportunities to learn continuously. Skills needs change and these new skills need to be at the centre of our thinking, to ensure training facilities are closer to needs. We are also aiming to democratise training.

➤ Does this mean an individualisation of training? A la carte training for officials?

Lamia Moubayed: Yes, that's right. Public officials should be able to get training anywhere and at any time. This is a freedom that must be given as long as it is part of a perspective of skills, professionalism and development.

➤ But isn't it the case that when people have the freedom to do or not to do, in general people don't do?

Lamia Moubayed: On the contrary. People will train themselves because there is an expectation of results from their administrations. Also, when you develop the loyalty of your "clients/beneficiaries" by making knowledge easily accessible, you make training a "must have". Finally, the technical content of training must be updated constantly. For this it is necessary to invest in digital tools to encourage this type of training. Fortunately, there are inexpensive tools that meet these criteria. However, in this approach, we must not forget the sense of community. That's where we have got to in our reflections in Lebanon.

➤ **Does this willingness to put everything up for reconsideration in Lebanon result from an admission of failure or the feeling that it was possible to do better?**

Lamia Moubayed: First of all, training needs are broad and we cannot cover them entirely. There are tight budget constraints but strong demand for training. We cannot accommodate everyone on-site or always go to where people are. We have to create tools to go beyond our budget and training personnel limitations.

“We must create tools to go beyond our budget and training personnel limitations.”

➤ **Have you been able to measure this strong demand for training in Lebanon?**

Lamia Moubayed: Yes, especially through all the requests we receive. We have just launched, for example, training on a specialised topic, especially designed for those who work in the public sphere: “Preparing and delivering a speech in French.” Demand was well above our expectations. The same goes for the public purchasing course. We cannot accommodate all those who apply. And in opening ourselves to inter-ministerial training, there has been a great increase in demand. To cope with this growing demand, complementarity needs to be created with other institutions. Bridges need to be built. This is another central point in our thinking.

➤ **Is that not a great motivating force for collaboration between your training schools?**

Vincent Potier: Absolutely. We have already seen this ourselves. We are also finding there’s a great demand. We created a MOOC on VAT and local authorities and a second on governance and we found that many Moroccans, Tunisians, Algerians, Cameroonians and so on registered. Of the 5300 who enrolled, 1800 were from abroad. As you can see there is a great deal of demand! We are reaching an audience that we never dreamed of reaching and, forgive me for saying so, at great rates.

Lamia Moubayed: This is the new revolution! We must have the courage to question and not be afraid to move forward, towards the future. It’s like big data. You discover new dimensions, new demands that you had never thought of or even imagined could create value.

➤ Are you on the same wavelength in Tunisia?

Adel Ben Yakhlef: We have developed interactive modules that have helped to support classroom training. This has encouraged us to enter the era of the MOOC. And now we'll have a multiplicity of regulations to explain, instructions to give and so on. We are also trying to understand how to make these tools as educational as possible. This is the trend and we are adopting this perspective.

“We have developed interactive modules that have helped deliver knowledge without the costs of face-to-face.”

Lamia Moubayed: Hence the interest in learning from others. Something can be so interesting that you want to learn how to do it yourself.

➤ And what is the strategy in this area at the CNFPT?

Vincent Potier: Our strategy adopted on 30 March contains policies we have been working on for 4-5 years, aimed at renewing educational practices including using digital inputs. The goal is to enrich learning and make it active and interactive. Unlike the Americans and Canadians, we believe that distance learning (MOOCs, SPOCs, etc.) should not diminish face-to-face learning but rather enrich it. We are increasing the available downloadable e-resources. We are increasing webinars. We are also developing eCommunities. In the autumn we will be launching 40 e-communities on 40 professions (human resource managers, management control officers, etc.). We also draw on the forty or so face-to-face meetings per profession we organise once a year for two days. We will add a themed e-community to these meetings that will include the same audience and will be open to hundreds of others. A CNFPT paid trainer will manage this eCommunity so that it does not become a social network and so that exchanges remain focused on educational aims. We are also developing course eCommunities. This gives me an opportunity to mention the fact that we want to move all our courses towards the flipped classroom model. Thus, somebody who comes to a 1-, 2- or 3-day course, will find the knowledge they need on an e-resources platform. In this way we should be able, as far as possible to remove lectures and replace them for the 15 to 20 people on a course, by time dedicated to simulation and situational exercises, sharing of experiences, reflection, public design, etc. Face-to-face time must therefore be a personal experience, rather than making trainees sponges that absorb knowledge that is spouted forth. This knowledge,

as I said, can instead be provided through e-resources prior to courses, thus enriching the face-to-face sessions. Face-to-face time should involve what we call active and interactive teaching.

For us, the challenge is to train our training advisors and trainers. The process starts with pioneers: 10% of training advisors and 10% of trainers. In Lyon, during the last days of the summer, we gathered together 350 of our training advisors for three days, for them to experience these methods, with digital tools and the associated teaching methods. We conducted a summer school on new teaching practices and organised autumn training for trainers across the entire establishment.

Adel Ben Yakhlef: Distance education must be accompanied by professional certification that certifies the training received by officials. There is no legal framework for the moment.

Vincent Potier: At the CNFPT, we issue attendance certificates. But this is not sufficient. We need certificates of competence, but that's part of the revolution that we want to put into place in the coming years. The skills that have been acquired need to be certified, but we're not there yet.

Adel Ben Yakhlef: This is something that could be decided at Board level.

Vincent Potier: Decisions can be made, but first we must have clear ideas. What are the expected levels of skills? Then you have to build the assessment audit tools. It is a colossal task.

Lamia Moubayed: But it's the future.

Adel Ben Yakhlef: Indeed, it's the future. We have had some experience at the Post Office school, which is an international school. It has developed a distance course on what are known as unit values. Students follow modules with coaching from an expert and at the end of the year, students are evaluated face-to-face to verify that the material has been acquired. At the end of the exam, students receive a certificate which allows them to be promoted to a new grade. This is a very interesting experience that reduces costs, giving officials in remote areas equal opportunities to access training. This solution has many advantages.

“Certificates of competence should be awarded at the end of courses, but that's part of the revolution that we want to put into place in the coming years.”

➤ Does this necessarily require adaptation of human resources management in administrations?

Adel Ben Yakhlef: This concept of managing human resources is virtually non-existent, particularly in regional and local administrations. Organising staff, allocating people according to duties, setting human resource needs, training and building a workforce renewal strategy... all this is almost non-existent in Tunisia. We are giving priority to organisation and this must be accompanied by a management system because managing an administration is no longer just one or four people's business, but everyone's business. Fluid communication needs to be installed between top and bottom. A climate of trust between all the components of the structure needs to be established. It often turns out that the best ideas are found at the bottom, where execution is carried out. Those who are in direct contact with the field often have the solutions. Bosses must learn how to exploit this pool of knowledge. Through training we need to help them understand and manage the system in this way.

Lamia Moubayed: I prefer to use the term skills capital optimisation to HRM (human resource management, Ed). At the Institute, we consider that we manage skills. We optimise capital. This is not a linguistic change but rather a philosophical change. This does not mean looking at the individual in front of you as a resource to manage, but as a human being who has existing and hidden skills to develop. And our job is to optimise them so that officials can better serve citizens.

Adel Ben Yakhlef: I always make reference to Edwards Deming, the father of quality, who went to Japan after World War II. He set up a system where everyone contributes to the final goal. This is what the system of quality cycles is, whereby the boss sits next to his employees, the staff who execute tasks. This installs a climate of trust and contributes to improving quality. Because if everyone is responsible, it creates a good atmosphere. And everyone tries to give of their best to improve public service quality.

➤ In your remarks you all emphasise the central role of training institutions in enhancing skills and their contribution to improving the quality of public action, but in the background, your comments seem to betray a feeling that the work of schools, their place in the public sphere, is not sufficiently recognised and valued. Do you share that impression? How is this relationship between schools and administrations articulated? And how can it be improved?

Adel Ben Yakhlef: I think training institutes should be valued more and close cooperation must be conducted with administrative departments responsible for strategies. It is important to define the place of training.

➤ Where is the role that training should play decided and put into action?

Vincent Potier: It is fundamental that there be a link between employers and training organisations. We have a term for what a local authority should be: a learning community. This means that employers must take an interest in officials and their professional skills to enhance their skills capital. There is a strategy, known as a training plan, that helps officials to progress in their skills. On paper, it's widespread but in reality it is used very unevenly. But it's fundamental. In concrete terms, we have 700 training advisors at the CNFPT that are in contact with all the regional employers, of which there are several tens of thousands. So in fact, there is a dialogue between these employers via our territorial advisors.

Lamia Moubayed: In Lebanon, continuing education is a relatively new phenomenon, which arrived on the scene with the 1996 reforms. For years, we have struggled to explain what we have been doing. But with time and great efforts in communication, outreach, dialogue and creating networks of trainers, the practice has gradually gained ground and has been rolled out to the rest of the public sector. Dialogue is ongoing and means we have relevant ministerial contacts, the equivalent of the CNFPT training advisers, and through the national training network, which brings together all the public service schools, we are working to align our offer with demand. Moving ahead on one's own doesn't help anyone.



CHAPTER VII

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION A MAJOR CHALLENGE FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN

➤ A great many donor organisations are active in the sphere of training, as part of international technical assistance. Can such a multiplicity of actors, each with their own agenda and recommendations, be counterproductive? Does it not restrict the room for manoeuvre of beneficiary countries to deploy their own training policies?

Adel Ben Yakhlef: Tunisia is a unique setting, with multiple challenges. If there is international cooperation, it needs to be centralised, then channelled according to expertise, resources and demand, with coordination from State services.

➤ In view of these multiple demands, is there not a dispersal of priorities?

Adel Ben Yakhlef: One feature of the CFAD is that we work with autonomous local authorities which themselves have wide-ranging priorities. We have 350 municipalities and 24 regions. In future, there will be five or six districts. At every level there are differing priorities. A diversity of priorities is the only way to cater for a diversity of demand.

➤ What about in Lebanon? What is your view of multilateral cooperation?

“The model of cooperation applied to the Institut des Finances, based on coproduction, broke with the traditional top-down model used by donors.”

Lamia Moubayed: Lebanon has seen both the positive and negative effects of donor actions. For a long time, the country was a laboratory. And it is a real headache to manage development cooperation where

there is no single instrument providing coordination, consistent solutions and a 'country' agenda. A country must be allowed to have its own agenda and donors must allow it the time and room for manoeuvre necessary to develop its own solutions. For that reason, sometimes a bilateral relationship is more beneficial than a multilateral one. In these power relations, some countries are more sensitive to the specific characteristics of Lebanon than others. For our Institute, that was the case with France, with whom we had more room for manoeuvre and freedom to find our own solutions and come up with a balanced approach. A model of cooperation based on coproduction was applied to the Institut des Finances, breaking with the traditional top-down model used by donors. It was a mutual arrangement, whereby each drew on the other's expertise to seek innovative forms of triangular cooperation with other countries. Conversely, it is very difficult to speak the donors' language. One must learn cooperation. We spend a lot of time on understanding how the World Bank or OECD work, how they are changing and how we might benefit.

➤ **Is cooperation for a country all about striking a fragile balance between developing tailored solutions and benefiting from an external perspective?**

Lamia Moubayed: Certainly, but I would first of all like to point out that the GIFT-MENA network has tried to bring together some of the region's public service schools. It obtained no support because it is an informal network, which poses a problem for donor organisations in the north and south alike. It takes a lot of courage to explore innovative forms of cooperation with a network that operates by itself, funded in large part by its members, whose ambitions it supports by adopting a participatory decision-making process. Donors prefer clearly defined cooperation schemes. Perhaps a different approach ought to be taken today? Could more of an opportunity be given to informal initiatives in technical cooperation?

➤ **Is that one of the main lessons you have learnt in these ten years of the GIFT-MENA network's existence?**

Lamia Moubayed: Today, with the new regional order, I personally have more questions than answers. Where do we go from here? Yet these ten years of the GIFT-MENA network have been a very enriching

experience, which has enabled us to gain a better understanding of how the world around us works, to find out about successful experiences in the Arab world about which little is said, and to take advantage of the experiences of other countries in order to come up with our own solutions. As a result, Yemen has been able to benefit from the experience of Tunisia and Morocco. Countries that knew very little of one another at institutional level, like Morocco and Kuwait, have forged bonds of cooperation, and since 2013 Morocco has been a member of the Arab Planning Institute. Tunisia has formed a close relationship with the Jordanian institute of finance. Institutes that did not exist have been set up in Palestine, Jordan, etc. This is something real and tangible. It is genuine south-south and trilateral south-north-south cooperation.

➤ **Is it first and foremost about the opportunity for men and women to come together, driven by a desire to change current practices?**

Lamia Moubayed: Of course. That is the strength of informal relations. There is great resolve and less of a political agenda. There is above all a human desire to cooperate and seek solutions away from the well-marked paths of international or pan-Arab organisations. And that is met with distrust. When you connect people, you have only a vague idea of what the outcome might be. You take the risk. It is the same as with big data: when you put your details online, you don't know what will happen, or what sort of value it will create. You can't control the outcome!

➤ **What would you say have been the outcomes of ten years of the GIFT-MENA network?**

“We have set up a discussion platform which did not previously exist, for people in the same community working to develop public service skills.”

Lamia Moubayed: Ten years after it was founded, the network has more than 60 member institutions from 20 countries in the region, including schools and institutes of management, institutes of finance, institutes of administrative reform and ministerial departments, as well as the government bodies and/or ministerial departments responsible for the training of public servants in the region. Twenty regional and international organisations have joined. In ten years, more than 13

bilateral cooperation agreements have been signed; ENA France teamed up with the Bahrain Institute of Public Administration to create a master's programme in public administration, and with the Kuwaiti Ministry of Planning to found a leadership school; two national public service training networks have been set up in Lebanon and Tunisia, based on the French Réseau des Écoles du Service Public (RESP) and supported by French expertise. Over 810 leaders and future leaders have been trained, representing a pool of senior public servants capable of driving and overseeing major reforms in their countries.

In ten years, we have set up a discussion platform which did not previously exist, for people in the same professional community working to develop public service skills. In Lebanon, we have learned a lot from the Slovenian Centre of Excellence in Finance (CEF), the CNFPT, and associated schools in Bercy. In Tunisia, we also discovered the national school of finance. With Morocco, we have tried to maximise quality by creating a specialised course of pre-technical seminars in Arab and French focusing on the modernisation of public finance as a lever for reform, aimed at senior public finance managers.

All of this is value creation.

The icing on the cake is to have strengthened the position of these schools, which today have a much clearer vision of the role they have to play.

The GIFT-MENA network has enabled practitioners to have a collective discussion about the modernisation of public action in our countries. With the changing geopolitical situation, this platform has proved useful and necessary. The themes of governance, performance and development of public human capital are crucial to achieving sustainable development and a lasting peace in our part of the world.

Adel Ben Yakhlef: I would also like to mention a practice we learnt overseas at the meeting of the Mediterranean Forum of Public Service held in Tunis in 2015. We took our inspiration from the French network of public service schools, the RESP, and from GIFT-MENA, to set up our own Tunisian network in 2016. We find it very useful. We are at the early stages of the process, but it will enable the directors of Tunisia's public service schools to meet, get to know each other, and discuss shared problems.

► **Networking seems to be a given today. But what would you say are the prerequisites for rising to the challenges involved? (a need for spontaneity, an environment favourable to innovation that encourages adherence from donors, etc.)**

Lamia Moubayed: The north has evolved because of the amount of pooling, complementarity, discussion and dialogue. Large numbers of networks have made Europe evolve, because there was a need for regionalisation, for breaking down barriers, for seeking efficiency, etc. Why wouldn't the same apply to the other side of the Mediterranean? The southern Mediterranean is the least integrated part of the world, where there are the weakest trading, economic, institutional and cultural ties. Everything is directed towards the north, never horizontally south-south. Tackling this issue, even within informal relations where structures are extremely rigid and averse to change, is a worthwhile path to follow. I am convinced of it.

► **Is it not artificial to talk about networking among the Mediterranean countries?**

Lamia Moubayed: It is crucial! With the transnationalisation of issues, there is an urgent need for a different approach. There needs to be continuity of actions and responses.

► **To conclude, what would you change if you could?**

Lamia Moubayed: If there was one thing I would change, I would work to reduce the disparities that result in intolerable injustice. And in our countries, this would definitely be in large part through education. An intelligent education, where the focus is not on amassing certificates and diplomas, but on creating value and being useful to others. It is very idealistic, but when I was young I lived through war, as my daughters have done. We share this desire to give the Arab world back its pride. We are tired of hearing how weak our people and institutions are. We want to find meaning again, which I'm sure is bound up with a kind of morality you acquire early on.

➤ **When you grow up in a country at war, does it make you want to fight for stronger public action capable of preventing conflict?**

Lamia Moubayed: It is true that people risk their lives for their convictions. Proximity with death gives your strength. When you work for the State, you don't work only for yourself and your children, but also for other people's children, for the future. You project yourself straight into the future.

"We have set up a discussion platform which did not previously exist, for people in the same community working to develop public service skills."

➤ **What about Tunisia? What would your priorities be if you had the power to change the situation?**

Adel Ben Yakhlef: The priority for Tunisia is to establish security first of all, and to resolve the development of marginalised areas, creating jobs for young people. At the same time, we need to build and strengthen our democratic institutions, in order to emerge from this transitional stage of turbulence as smoothly as possible and move towards a period of stability and prosperity shared with our Mediterranean neighbours.

➤ **Although much criticised, can public action be described as a modern value? And could it be what brings the Mediterranean countries together?**

Vincent Potier: The Mediterranean is a region made up of peoples with traditional solidarities whose futures are bound together. It has seen obstacles, conflicts and all sorts of tensions, but it is a superb space. Here, public action is essential. And what is particularly exciting is that people are contributing to the development of policies for the common good, and bringing demands, values and principles to the exercise of power. As a training school, that is what we are interested in and committed to. In this respect, in this area of Mediterranean solidarity, we have much to learn from one another on the issue of the future of politics and the common good. It is very much a matter for sharing and deserves to be pursued.

Lamia Moubayed: I would like to end by saying that the Mediterranean is our common good. It is the primary common asset that we have: Mare Nostrum. Let's protect it!



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Before joining the Ministry of Finance, Ms Moubayed held the posts of economics researcher and development programme manager at private-sector institutions and international bodies including the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and UNDP, where she specialised in the issues of good governance and institutional development.

Ms Moubayed currently runs the institute, oversees the development of relations of bilateral and multilateral cooperation, and advises public decision-makers.

She is a founding member (2006) and chairs the steering committee of the GIFT-MENA network of public service training schools. She participates in the working group on the Governance of Public Finance component of the MENA-OECD Initiative for Good Governance. She is a founding member (2013) of the MENAPAR network, a research group on public administration for the MENA region, set up under the aegis of the International Association of Schools and Institutes of Administration (AIEIA-IISA), and of the scientific committee (2011) of the journal on public finance and State modernisation published by the Institut des Finances Basil Fuleihan. She is also a member of the World Bank regional committee for the modernisation of public procurement.

THE INSTITUT DES FINANCES BASIL FULEIHAN

The Institut des Finances Basil Fuleihan is an autonomous public institution under the auspices of the Lebanese Ministry of Finance. It is a training and documentation centre whose objective is to contribute to the good management of public money through training, research and the dissemination of knowledge. Combining know-how with expertise of the context, the institute is at the forefront of regional and international cooperation. It provides the secretariat for the GIFT-MENA network of public service schools and is a regional training centre for the World Customs Organization (WCO).

THE GIFT-MENA NETWORK

GIFT-MENA is an informal grouping of schools and institutes specialising in training public servants. Set up in Beirut in March 2006, today the network comprises 60 schools and institutes from 20 countries across the MENA region, together with some 20 regional and international partner organisations. It is a platform for discussion and networking between public decision-makers, development actors, training providers and donor organisations. It is an instrument of triangular and multilateral development cooperation, in particular south-south, in the spheres of public governance, institutional development and State modernisation.



VINCENT POTIER is director-general of the Centre National de la Fonction Publique Territoriale (CNFPT) since 2010.

Previously, over a period of 20 years, he held the posts of director-general of various local authorities and public institutions in France. In addition, he was adviser to the Senegalese Minister of the Interior (1997-98) and chief of staff of the speaker of the French National Assembly (2001-2002). In 2012, he served as chairman of the French network of public service schools (RESP). Since 2013, he has chaired a working group of the International Association of Schools and Institutes of Administration (AIEIA).

Vincent Potier is the author of a number of books on public action.

THE CENTRE NATIONAL DE LA FONCTION PUBLIQUE TERRITORIALE (CNFPT)

The CNFPT is a public institution of national scope, whose governing body is formed by the territorial authorities and territorial public service representatives. It has statutory and vocational training functions which involve supporting the 1.8 million territorial public servants and 55,000 local public employers in their public service mission. It has a strategic plan for the period 2016-21.

With 2 300 staff and 14 000 instructors, the CNFPT plans and organises 220 000 training days per year, with over a million participants in 2015. It increasingly offers training based on active, interactive and enriched learning, using public design methods and digital tools.

In addition, the CNFPT organises the competitive examinations to appoint the territorial public service management positions of territorial administrator, heritage curator, head of libraries and chief engineer. It also offers support for the accreditation of prior experiential learning and organises the recognition of academic qualifications. The CNFPT also advertises all management jobs and supports newly recruited staff.

THE MEDITERRANEAN FORUM OF PUBLIC SERVICE

Set up at the end of 2012, the Mediterranean Forum of Public Service is a community of discussion and resources, comprising 131 public service training schools and institutes in the countries around the Mediterranean. It was born in the spirit of the Deauville Partnership, signed by the G8 countries in 2008. The modus operandi of this sharing community makes it a tool for renewed cooperation:

- A digital platform run by its members, in three languages: Arabic, English and French.
- An online documentary resource centre giving access to methods, guides and research shared by members, a directory of public service training providers, and news of events related to their activities.
- A discussion forum offering individual members in the public service training sphere the opportunity to share their thoughts, questions and views.
- Meetings of network members to discuss themes linked to the meaning of public action, public service training expertise, and the principles of public administration and governance.



ADEL BEN YAKHLEF is director-general of the Centre de Formation et d'Appui à la Décentralisation (CFAD), an executive agency of the Tunisian Ministry of Local Affairs. A graduate of the Tunisian École Nationale d'Administration (ENA), he is a senior civil servant with the status of public services adviser. Mr Yakhlef previously held positions of responsibility at the directorate-general for local public authorities. He

lectures at the ENA and CFAD. He is currently chairman of the Tunisian network of public service schools.

He is also a member of the board of the Centre d'Information, de Formation, d'Études et de Documentation sur les Associations, and a former member of the board of the Centre International des Technologies de l'Environnement, in Tunis.

THE CENTRE DE FORMATION ET D'APPUI À LA DÉCENTRALISATION (CFAD)

The CFAD is a public administrative establishment providing training and support for decentralisation. Founded by Law No 94-76 of 27 June 1994, it was originally called the 'Centre National de Perfectionnement et de Recyclage des Cadres Régionaux et Municipaux' and was under the auspices of the Ministry of the Interior. The law establishing the CFAD was amended by Decree No 2004-1181 of 25 May 2004, to change its name, expand the list of organisations benefiting from its services and set out a more detailed list of its objectives. In addition to the senior officials and staff of the governorates and communes, the list of beneficiaries includes central government staff and senior officials concerned with regional and municipal action. Since 15 March 2016, in accordance with Article 7 of Government Decree No 2016-365, the CFAD has been under the auspices of the Ministry of Local Affairs.

The CFAD has a strategic role to play in the success of the decentralisation process by strengthening management capacities and the coordination of local staff.

