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**EMPLOYEE CAREER PLATEAU IN CAMEROON'S ENTERPRISES:  
PATTERN GUIDES TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS**

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**RESUME:** *La recherche des solutions qui peuvent permettre de résoudre le problème de plafonnement de carrière est devenu une décision indispensable pour les grandes entreprises camerounaises. Pour atteindre nos objectifs, nous avons administré 291 questionnaires aux personnel cadres et non cadres des grandes entreprises camerounaises représenté dans le territoire national. Notre principal variable d'étude est le plafonnement de carrière, tandis que les trois autres variables secondaires sont : l'enrichissement des postes, la participation aux décisions et le soutien des collègues. Pour aboutir à nos résultats nous avons utilisé le modèle de régression multivarié avec le logiciel STATA 13.0. Nos résultats montrent que la participation aux décisions a un effet significatif et positif sur le plafonnement de carrière. Nous recommandons à toutes les entreprises camerounaises d'impliquer les employés dans les prises de décisions et de continuer à enrichir leur poste au fur et à mesure que le temps passe.*

**Mots-clés :** plafonnement de carrière, pratiques de gestion, enrichissement de poste, participation aux décisions, soutien des collègues

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**ABSTRACT:** *Suggesting possible solutions that can help solve the problem of career plateauing has become an indispensable issue in Cameroon's large enterprises. To achieve this objective, we administered 291 questionnaires to managers and personnel of large Cameroon's companies spread across the national territory. Our principal variable in this study is career plateaued while the three secondary variables are post enrichment, participation to decision and assistance or support from colleagues. To achieve our result, a logistic and multivariate regression model with STATA 13.0 software were used. Our results show that participation to decision making has a significant positive effect on employee career plateaued. We recommend all Cameroon's enterprises to involve employees in decision making and continuously enrich the job as time elapses.*

**KEYWORDS:** Career-Plateau, management practices, post enrichment, participation in decision making, support given to colleagues

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Irrespective of the fact that employee's possessed required qualification to access high level of responsibility, the more an individual is found in a situation of the plateau of his career the more he becomes demotivated (Carson and Bedeian, 1995). In the same manner, employers are faced with a situation of compression and a decrease in possibilities for promotion due to the effect of a large number of individuals whose career is plateauing, limiting their possibility for advancement. For illustration, certain analysts estimate that 70% of staff are actually found in situation of plateau (Caudron, 1994), others previewed that the rate can attain 90% in the course of subsequent years (Driver, 1985). The possibilities to obtain promotion or an increase in salary are highly limited. Thus the initial career which we dreamt of becomes less realisable. The perception of failure relative to career development will lead to negative consequences which require proper mastery in an organisation.

However, career ceiling has become a managerial challenge, just as efficient management of human resource which can impede the success of public and private organisation. Nevertheless, Lemire and Rouillard (2003) indicated that this feeling represents a threat that likely impedes the success of an organisation. As a matter of fact, career ceiling necessitate proper handling through the implementation of appropriate management strategies of human resource in general, and the management of career in particular.

In cameroon, a good number of factors justify the study of career ceiling in enterprises. At the first plan economic crisis which prevailed in the 1990 compelled many enterprises to shut down, causing reduction in the number of personnel in the public and private sector, liquidation of enterprises, fusion and restructuring, and at times streamlining hierarchical layers which put in recourse the concept of << Career >>. Notwithstanding, demographic evolution has been at the origin of one of the main distortions such as major arrival of new entrant on the labour market, fall in salaries and consequently income, an increase in the duration of same post, and the uncertainty of employment with development of the informal sector (Essombe, 1995).

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

The relation between diverse career management practices and the perception of career ceiling has been a point of focus and interest by numerous researchers. In this review, a unravels sets of managerial action which envisage to reduce the perception of career plateau (planification of career, movement of career, development of career, career support, auto training, information about career, new roles, etc.). in accordance with works from authors such as Guerin and Wils (1993), Appelbaum and Santiago (1997), Garavan and Coolahan (1996). This range of contribution cannot be exhaustive without examining the idea of exchange to the traditional evolution of career which permit an individual to develop a portfolio of competence, reinforce their employability, vary their apprenticeship and to progress in a continuous manner in an organisation.

In Cameroon, the work of Etoundi (2008) shows that several practices of HRM are valorised in Cameroonian enterprises but, in a set of practices (The purpose of this study is to envisage the integration of HRM practices and their effects on performance management in Cameroon's enterprises. lessons from this work reveal the existence of remuneration practices, responsibility, training, communication and identifications such as remuneration, responsibility, training and communication ) which was retained by the authors, in the absence of career management. Moreover, the work of Douanla (2008) has shown that the seven groups of strategies as proposed by Russell (1991), to help individuals better manage their career and to avoid premature ceiling, are practically absent in their quasi-totality in Small and Medium Size enterprises, which implies according to the author a major challenge in organisational components to fight against staff career ceiling in Small and Medium Size enterprise in Cameroon.

Contrary to works in the Cameroonian context, Lemire and Rouillard (2005) demonstrate that the dimensions of practices in career management are significantly linked to the perception of ceiling. Finally, as suggested by many authors such as Feldman and Weitz (1988), it is when an individual does not benefit from adequate career management practices that he has the perception of career ceiling.

A good number of organisational variables or potential solutions have been suggested and taken into account by various authors. For example, Chao (1990) found that longevity in same employment can moderate the relation between perception of ceiling and intrinsic or extrinsic satisfaction of employment and identification of the enterprise. Milliman (1992) on his part studied the moderating effects of career aspiration as concerns individuals and the interest their superior orientate towards their evolution. These results indicate that if career ceiling constantly persists, the interest elaborated by the superior can influence the implication of subordinate in an organisation, satisfaction with respect to his salary and his chances of advancement.

However, studies on solutions to career ceiling have not been a point of focus by a good number of studies in literature. Works orientated on this topic search to identify the moderating effects of longevity in an employment (Chao, 1990), career aspirations of individuals (Milliman, 1992), support from an immediate hierarchy and characteristics of employment (Gerpott and Domch, 1987), the tracks or pattern of career (Hall, 1985) and finally the ambiguity of role, the potentiality of post enrichment and participation to decision making (Tremblay, Roger 1995) on career ceiling.

On one hand, the results of Gerpott and Domsh (1987) show that the support from an immediate superior hierarchy and the characteristics of employment can play a mediating role between objective ceiling, attitudes and behaviour at work. According to Karasek (1979) the situation exposing you more to stress is that which combines at the same time a high psychological demand and a weak decisional latitude. According to same author, social support at work (socio-emotional and technical) from colleagues and superior hierarchy modulate the disequilibrium (psychological demand/ decisional latitude). In this wise, a situation combining elevated psychological demand and weak

decisional latitude (overloaded with work) is better supported if the person in question is assisted (or can count on someone) in his professional entourage.

Finally, the studies of Hall (1985) suggested that the pattern of career in an organisation can modify the attitude of managers following their statute of career. Our research intends to extend these works by specifically examining the influence of the three variables linked to characteristics of employment occupied, either potential enrichment of post, participation in decision making and the perception of support from colleagues. Following the works of Tremblay and Roger (1995) and following disparity of results observed in works, we intend to extend analysis of these authors by replacing ambiguity of role by support from colleagues in the frame or context of large Cameroon's enterprises. From above we are motivated to investigate: **what is the relationship between diverse managerial variables (enrichment of post, participation to decision and support given to colleagues) and career ceiling of employees in Cameroon's large enterprises** ? Theaforementioned enables us to formulate the following three hypotheses:

*H<sub>1</sub>: Enrichment of post reduces career plateau in enterprises*

*H<sub>2</sub>: Participation in decision making reduces career ceiling in enterprises*

*H<sub>3</sub>: Assistance from colleagues reduces career ceiling in enterprises*

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research is based on personnel and managers of Cameroon's large enterprises spread across the national territory. About 600 questionnaires were distributed to employees in organisations from February to August 2016. The questionnaires were administered directly and a total of 291 questionnaires were returned. We proceeded with analysis and treatment of the data collected. Moreover, this study is constituted of a dependent variable (career ceiling) and three independent variables (post enrichment, participation to decision and assistance or support from colleagues).

In effect, in the literature on career plateauing, we distinguish two types of ceiling that is, objective plateauing and subjective plateauing. On one hand, the objective plateauing is measured by the number of years within which an individual handles or occupies a post. In this study, to avoid classifying as mobile and non-ceiling individuals or staff who are at the start of their career, we decided to exclude from our sample all respondents who have less than five years' experience at work within the organisation. To differentiate the topic relatively to objective plateauing, we as well decided that individuals who had five years of work experience in the same post, during the interval of time the research was carried out, will be classified as non-ceiling and others will be classified as plateaued. On the other hand, objective plateauing which is the perception to be in a situation of attaining career ceiling is obtained through the compilation of six indicators drawn from Veiga (Idem). The findings will indicate on what measure the above variables are in accord or not in accord with each of the above (1=totally disagree; 7= total Agree).

Moreover, as indicator of principal variable, we have potential of post enrichment captured by an index composed of four principal components which constitute work variation, its consequences on the organisation, work margin, adequation of competence, and exigencies at work. The internal coefficient of coherence of this measure is 0.70. The degree of participation to decision is measured by the sum of eight variables concerning participation to decision influencing work, policies affecting hierarchical personnel within the organisation, the organisation in its assembly, career planning, training and perfection, evaluation of return and the establishment of remuneration policies.

For the decision variable mentioned, the respondent needs to carry out an evaluation on a five-point scale ranging from (1) (<< Others decide for me>>) to (5) (<<I decide completely>>), up to the point he had the possibility to participate to decisions. The internal coefficient of coherence of this measure is 0.77. Finally, the perception of assistance or support from colleague, given certain organisational constraints linked to the length (size) of our questionnaire, we use a much more reduced version of supportmeasure offered in literature. The perception of support or assistance from colleagues is measured following four items drawn from the scale of Eisenberger et al. (1986). << My organisation is really preoccupied with my wellbeing>> is an example of an item used for this study. Once we must have replaced the term organisation with colleagues, for each of the eight decisions variables, the respondent needs to evaluate on a five-point scale ranging from (1) (<< Never>>) to (4) (<< Regularly>>), at what level he could feel the support of colleagues. The reliability coefficient of this measure is 0.93 and the variance is 0.76.

For the verification of our hypothesis as mentioned above, the linear regression and hierarchical models were used. They were realised through the use of "STATA 13.0". We, as well, established a multiple linear regression model to verify if there exist a linear relation between career ceiling and the independent variables announced above. Finally, we made use of Fisher test to verify if there exist a linear relation between types of plateau and blocs of variables mobilised in this study.

## RESULTS

From the first view, we verified if there is an interaction between our different binary variables following our model. All the variables were slut in simultaneously in a multivariate analysis, but they were sluted in bloc following a hierarchical analysis. However, we have as well,transformed all the variables into binary at the end to obtain a logitmodel of estimation (The choice of a model logit versus probit result from the statistical nature of results obtain by the logit in terms of Pseudo R of Estrella, or of Mc Fadden, the quality of information from the criteria of Akaike and Schwarz and finally the percentages correctly classify in the model). In general, the multivariate analysis (logistic regression) reveals that the model is globally significant at **10 %**. Even though pseudo R (The codification of this variable is given as 0 = The practice does not exist within the enterprise ; 1 = the Practice exist within the enterprise.) is weak, and does not pose any problem since we are in logistic regression.

After carrying out multivariate analysis and according to our hypothesis, table 1 below shows existing relations between career plateauing and potential solution retained.

**Table 1:** Logistic Regression of Career Ceiling

<b>Logistic regression</b>	<b>Number of obs</b>	=	291,00
	<b>LR X<sup>2</sup>(30)</b>	=	53,00
	<b>Prob &gt;X<sup>2</sup></b>	=	0,01
<b>Log likelihood = -138,49785</b>	<b>Pseudo R<sup>2</sup></b>	=	0,16

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Coef.</b>	<b>Std. Err.</b>	<b>z</b>	<b>P&gt;z</b>	<b>[95% Conf. Interval]</b>
<b>Post Enrichissement</b>	-0,10	0,37	-0,26	0,80	-0,82 0,63
<b>Participation to decisions</b>	1,11	0,63	1,76	0,08	-0,13 2,35
<b>Perception support to colleagues</b>	0,30	0,35	0,87	0,38	-0,38 0,98
<b>Cons</b>	-2,75	1,13	-2,43	0,02	-4,98 -0,53

### Interpretation of Results

From observation of our estimated results, we see that there exist no relation between our independent variables and plateauing objective. However, plateauing objective is positively link to participation to decision ( $r = 1.1$ ,  $P \leq 10\%$ ) and significant at the threshold of 10 %. In conclusion from our three hypotheses, just one is verified. In effect, only the relationship participation to decision and objective plateauing is verified.

### DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

These results do not tie with the works of Tremblay and Roger (1995) as certain environmental aspect of work such as the degree of ambiguity in role, potential post enrichment and the participation in decision making or taking decision can contribute to limit the consequences of career plateauing.

Nevertheless, these results confirm those of Wolf (1983) which shows that once we increase the quality of employment for those who have to persist in their actual post they will be implicated in their decision individually, and even decision which concerns or involves organisational aspects. The results correlate the works of Driver (1985) according to which << once a large number of middle managers or staff at the operational level share major political and strategic functions, certain frustration linked to career ceiling can be eliminated >>. He as well suggested that the sharing of managerial responsibilities can present an interesting solution to career ceiling. Finally, these results are in accordance to Feldman and Weitz (1988) analyses according to which increase in responsibilities can limit negative effects of career blockage. Definitely, significant power of decision can increase substantially the feeling of hierarchical success even without promotion (Gattiker and Larwood, 1986).

## **IMPLICATION OF RESULTS**

The results we obtained are explained by the fact that enterprises have the tendency to neglect effective application of career management. Moreover, the more an enterprise implements these practices, activities of follow up and evaluation are not effective and regular so as to monitor the effectiveness of the practices to the targeted population relative to career ceiling. It is for this reason, that employees who have observed or witness prolonged stability in their post and those who estimate to have had blockage in their career and who do not feel this impact are frustrated.

At the end of this study, we can say that the solution identified in this research to resolve the problem resulting from dis-functioning which is a consequence of not taking into consideration staff's concern for attaining plateau effect and participation in decision is strongly explicitly established. This results pushes us to evoke the theory of management by participation which appears to be the most efficient. From this theory, the responsibility of decision by consensus and the establishment of objective by group need to be implemented for staff to attain ceiling of their career. Also, with regards to the same author favouring interaction between personnel at the ceiling and other members of the organisation will facilitate problem resolution within this group and make the organisation to function on the basis of mutual influence instead of informal network of relations. Finally, individuals approaching the threshold of career ceiling need to participate in decision making as concerns employment and organisation.

## **CONCLUSION**

The objective of this study was to give our opinion on potential solutions which could reduce the effects of career ceiling in Cameroon large companies. More specifically, it was a question to show how practices of human resource management can reduce the effects of career ceiling in Cameroon's large companies. From all evidence, this work enabled us to meet up with the domain of traditional expectation of research on career ceiling. Irrespective of the fact that certain results obtained in current studies do not inscribe in their integrity in works previously carried out on professional plateauing, some specificities linked to this context have been revealed.

Results obtained show that participation to decision is an indispensable tool to reduce the sentiment of career ceiling experience by employees. Irrespective of works from theory which elaborate clearly on the existence of a cause effect relation between career ceiling and its solution, results obtained in this study necessitates two rubrics.

In the first place, statistical analysis effectuated does not permit to confirm with certainty the existence of a causality link between the different variables studied and far from being a tool to prediction. However, it is possible to conclude in the first place that the feeling of being steady at same level for a considerable period of time might generate an

attitude of retiring and discouragement. To resolve this problem, it does not only suffice to associate the employee to decision but also to observe their implication at work.

## **FUTURE RESEARCH**

Notwithstanding, future works need for example to be orientated not only on organisational variables but equally on personal variables.

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