

Moroccan Public Education And Training Institutions Face The Performance Challenge: Relevance And Feasibility Of Implementing An Assessment Tool

KHANNOUSS Loubna^{1*}, SADEQ Hanane², BENGHABRIT Asmaa³

¹Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Mines de Rabat, av. Haj Ahmed Cherkaoui - b.p.753 - 10100, Rabat, Maroc, l.khannouss@gmail.com

²Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Mines de Rabat, av. Haj Ahmed Cherkaoui - b.p.753 - 10100, Rabat, Maroc, hanane.sadeq@gmail.com

³Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Mines de Rabat, av. Haj Ahmed Cherkaoui - b.p.753 - 10100, Rabat, Maroc, benghabrit@anim.ac.ma

Abstract

The current environment of public education and training institutions in Morocco is converging towards performance-focused management. In this context, our article aims to identify the prerequisites for implementing performance management in this sector by exploring, on the one hand, the notion of performance in this context in the literature, and the main contributions of New Public Management theory to public sector performance and on the other hand, diagnosing the state of play of the performance of these institutions through a documentary review. These elements of analysis have made it possible to identify the main levers for setting up performance management in these entities, demonstrated by informed empowerment and contextualization and an upgrade in the quality of governance and management intervention. This exploratory work is a prerequisite for the design of an appropriate performance assessment tool in this context. A series of interviews confirmed the types of performance to be targeted by the assessment tool.

Keywords: Performance, Public Management, Public Sector, Overall Performance, Education

1. INTRODUCTION

The performance of the Moroccan public sector is a strategic priority, often guided by logics of rationalization and budgetary choice planning aimed primarily at better use of public funds far from a perception of multidimensional overall performance. This sector has undergone several reforms with a view to its modernization by instilling new management methods to make it more efficient and bring it up to the level of a supposedly competitive private sector, which should be "driven" by strategic and operational performance logic. In the present work, we are interested in the performance of public institutions providing an education, teaching, and training service¹ (EPEF). This sector is a significant pillar of public social action, counting 7,454,809 learners divided between primary, secondary, and qualifying secondary education for the 2020-2021 school year², and benefiting from 78% of the budgets of the departments of education and higher education (2021 finance law) and 43% of the total transfers made by the State to the public portfolio³. Regarding employment, 266,191 people work in institutions belonging to this sector, described as major employers, or 48.6% of civil servants (Ministry of Digital Transition and Public Sector Reform).

On a qualitative level, this sector is subject to performance imperatives that must provide quality training aligned with the requirements of productivity, innovation, and technological developments demanded by the job market to meet productive sectors' needs. On another level, the relationship between the cost and quality of education is expected by the citizens/taxpayers participating in financing this sector (Larré & Plassard, 2013).

¹ Public bodies in Morocco are defined and classified by Law no. 69-00 on State financial control of public enterprises and other bodies, and the draft law on governance and State financial control of public enterprises (EEP) and other bodies, including those in this sector.

² According to statistical data published in "L'enseignement supérieur en chiffre 2020-2021" and "Bilan d'activités du département de l'éducation nationale 2017-2020".

³ Public portfolio, within the meaning of the draft law on governance and financial control of the State over public enterprises and other bodies, is the totality of public establishments and companies wholly, majority or minority owned by the State, local authorities or public establishments, as defined by law 69-00.

In view of its importance, the EPEF sector is struggling to get off the ground and meet the challenges assigned to it, as evidenced by the statistics on the country's world ranking⁴ and the assessments drawn up by the central authorities⁵.

Indeed, this sector suffers from structural deficiencies related to its *organizational structure and governance*, *lack of managerial and financial autonomy* from supervisory departments, and the *weakness of its resources*. This is despite the multiple reforms introduced since independence (five-year plans, emergency plan, education charter 2000, and others).

Based on these contextual elements, we believe that integrating performance management is necessary in the public education sector. However, while there is agreement today on the need for a paradigm shift and reorientation towards performance⁶, a consensus on the definition of sought-after performance⁷ remains to be found.

This article is part of a process to design a tool to measure the performance of these establishments, requiring, among other things, the definition of this performance and its dimensions with a view to characterizing it for evaluation.

Thus, this article is based on a literature review to better understand the notion of performance before focusing on the main contributions of the new public management theory (New Public Management) to public sector performance. Then, an in-depth documentary review of the various official reports will allow us to assess the performance of public education and training institutions. This will allow us to provide initial answers to our central performance management issue in the EPEF sector.

In this logic, we propose exploring performance, a complex notion covering several dimensions. This performance will be questioned in the specific context of EPEF within the framework of the new managerial doctrine in the public sector (New Public Management) and finally explore the specific adaptations to be made and the conditions of applicability in the Moroccan EPEF sector in a quest for overall performance. Then, based on a diagnosis of the EPEF sector aimed at characterizing it and exploring its specificities and best practices, the article proposes to approach the performance to be tracked by these entities in the light of the national performance framework of the sector strategy and contextual constraints. The results of the literature review were confirmed through interviews with various stakeholders in these entities.

Thus, this article aims to better understand the notion of performance before focusing on the main contributions of the new public management theory to public sector performance

2. Which performance for the public sector and what contributions from the new public management theory?

2.1. Performance of a polysemic and multidimensional notion

Performance definitions are multiple in linguistic and technical terms, taking related or distinct meanings depending on the contexts and fields of use. Research work in management science and organization confirms these divergences (Lebas, 1995; Pesqueux, 2004; Bourguignon, 1997) and advocates for the convergence of the dimensions of performance towards an overall conception (Lebas, 1995; Pesqueux, 2004; Bourguignon, 1997).

Here, we retain the conception that performance is the **«accomplishment of a process, a task with the resulting outcomes and the success that can be attributed to it»** (Pesqueux, 2004, p. 6). Thus, performance is linked «to a numerical result in a ranking perspective" to improve this result (concerning oneself or others) (Pesqueux, 2004, p. 6). In other words, by interacting these three meanings, performance would designate **the result in reference to the action (process) that allowed it to be achieved while considering the objective of targeted success** (Bourguignon, 1995).

⁴ Morocco is ranked in the bottom 4 of TIMSS 2019 for science learning at primary level, and in the bottom 7 of PISA 2019. In addition, only one Moroccan university is ranked by the Center for World University Rankings, and only 4 universities in physics are ranked between 300 and 500 by the Shanghai ranking.

⁵ Several assessments have been produced, such as the report on "Governance of the education and training system in Morocco" (2016), "Higher education in Morocco: Effectiveness, efficiency and challenges of the open-access university system" (2018) and the "Performance framework for monitoring the strategic vision to 2030" (2019).

⁶ The regulatory framework governing these EPEFs, through framework law no. 50-21 on the reform of public establishments and enterprises and framework law no. 51-17 on the education, training and scientific research system, incorporates performance as a lever for reforming the sector.

⁷ Indeed, this notion, described as plethoric (Bouquin, 2004; Ehrenberg, 1991; Lebas, 1995; Bessire, 1999; Pesqueux, 2004), presupposes a prior demystification of its meaning in order to define it.

This agreement on the relationship between **action/result/success** in the perception of performance calls for another consensus on the **subjectivity of performance**. Indeed, if the latter is a relationship between achieving the goal and the achieved or achievable result, defining the goal and comparing the results assumes the intervention of the observer's interpretation. Performance thus appears as an association of the process designating the action to be maintained to achieve the expected result, synonymous with success according to the observer's perception and its user.

Moreover, given the lack of theories specific to performance and a shared theoretical definition in management science (Alain Ehrenberg, 1991), we are witnessing a multiple use of the notion according to the specific issues of management research (financial, economic, organizational, societal, social, environmental). Nevertheless, all the meanings converge in overall performance (Norton & Kaplan, 2001; Villarmois, 2001; Pesqueux, 2004).

In the context of this article, we adhere to this conception of the overall nature of performance, which presents itself as a hunt for balance between the interests imposed by the multidimensionality of the requirements related to each organization. As a result, the **social and societal** (value of human resources and stakeholders), **economic** (efficiency), **political** (legitimacy of the organization with external groups), and **organizational** dimensions must be weighted and taken into consideration in each strategy (Morin et al., 1994). Depending on the context and the observer's interest, these dimensions can evolve and include new ones (environmental, societal).

In this logic, we retain the idea that overall performance "is a difficult concept to grasp because of its multiple dimensions" (De La Villarmois, 2001, p.10) and the one stipulating that performance only makes sense in its context of use (Cohanier et al., 2010). The field of action and the expected interest in this performance determine the relevance of mentioning one dimension over another. Overall performance is an aggregation of different integrations of performance in management sciences. It is both "state" and "process" and is considered a contribution to the definition of the "common good" (Pesqueux, 2004). Its dimensions and meanings must be considered according to the context of its application and the intention and interest sought by its observer or interest groups.

Exploring the notion of performance leads back to its operationalization and, therefore, its management. Indeed, the latter refers to all the processes, actions, and means allowing the achievement of performance (Jacquet, 2011; Cohanier et al., 2010) in conjunction with the ability to manage the causal models that allow the achievement of objectives promptly, taking into account the constraints specific to the company (Lebas, 1995). From this perspective, performance management encompasses the processes of defining performance, expected outputs, and their standards (indicators and objectives), and the process of monitoring it while integrating the "linking of the budget to performance" and "ensuring that managers are accountable for results" (U.S. Navy² as cited by Cohanier et al., 2010, p3).

Furthermore, by linking performance to action (process), results, and success, performance management intervenes at both levels of strategy (representation of success and evaluation of strategic results) and activity (operational results and action processes) with a view to interaction and continuous improvement (Cohanier et al., 2010). Finally, performance management is the set of processes and activities that enable the organization to achieve its objectives horizontally, facilitating the integration of performance at different decision-making levels and uniting different interest groups around a specific performance.

2.2. Public sector performance, contributions from new public management theory

In the context at hand, namely that of public bodies (also called enterprises, establishments, or agencies), the new public management theory or New Public Management (NPM) has enriched managerial doctrine in terms of performance by implementing methods and tools tailored to this sector with organizational benefits bringing them closer to the private sector. Through their commitments and missions, these agencies can also submit to performance-oriented management, generally devolved to private management (Bartoli, 2005), with apparent vigilance regarding inherent specifics and contexts (Pollitt, 2003).

Incidentally, the public sector refers to « all organizations managed directly or indirectly by the State (central or local) », regardless of mission, purpose, values, or legal status (Bartoli, 2005). The different definitions divide public action into three categories:

1. Central or central authority public administration
2. Local administration or territorial civil service, and finally
3. Agencies, also called enterprises, establishments, and public bodies

Despite their heterogeneity, these agencies often share **institutional specificities** relating to the particular legal system, the relationship of submission to political power, the relationship of dependence on resources (allocated or levied), and the integration of obligations relating to the notion of "public service." They also share

organizational specificities relating to the activity of public domination/monopoly of the "public service," their different sizes depending on the nature and territoriality of the service and the complex and constrained environment.

However, while in this constantly changing context, the use of public bodies (establishments, enterprises, or agencies) has manifested itself as a response to the challenges imposed by changes in the economic and social environment in order to improve public service, **the majority of these entities have continued to operate as structures dependent on central authorities and are subject to the pressure of political stakes** (Hood, 2002). A dependence thus limits their organizational autonomy (Wong et al., 2004) and financial and human resources. Therefore, the management mode of public bodies should be reviewed. It would be wise to consider the benefits of new tools and working methods that consider the public service mission while developing relations with citizens towards a **«client-supplier relationship»**. Moreover, public-private complementarity will positively impact the sectors of activity concerned. Finally, significant social impacts are strongly expected beyond the economic and political rationality of the intervention. **Starting from the limitations previously raised, there is a shift worldwide towards reforms advocating budget planning and rationalization** (Dooren et al., 2015), thus **initiating the integration of the notion of performance-based management**.

This concept, which has developed widely thanks to the contributions of the New Public Management (NPM) theory, draws inspiration from practices exercised in the private sector. The latter defines *public management* as "all the processes of developing objectives, organizing, driving and monitoring public organizations aimed at developing their overall performance and steering their evolution while respecting their vocation," aiming at "the search for performance through customer orientation and cost control of public actions" (Bartoli, 2005, p. 98). This theory can be governed by ten principles (Bartoli, 2005; Amar et al., 2007; Chegri et al., 2019):

1. customer satisfaction,
2. specialization,
3. management autonomy,
4. deconcentration of decision-making and role clarification,
5. accountability,
6. management by objectives and results,
7. transparent budgeting focused on objectives,
8. contracting,
9. promotion based on results,
10. trust in the principal-agent relationship.

These principles change the paradigms of public sector intervention, which were initially bureaucratic (Weber, 1922), and further consecrate the separation between the State's strategic functions and the operational functions borne by public bodies. This new way offers public bodies a more flexible framework for action independent of the strategic sphere, allowing intervention tailored to field constraints and citizen-client demands. Accountability is achieved through performance evaluation and the level of achievement of objectives. Framework via contracting with central authorities is conceivable.

However, it is noteworthy that while the notions of objectives, results, and monitoring indicators prove to be common practice in the public sector, their framework in a new management system associated with the definition of strategy, target performance, and control tools in a clarification of relationships and responsibilities between the central authority and public bodies is lacking. These dimensions constitute the main contributions of this theory at the strategic and organizational levels. It follows that a change in method and process is inevitable at the operational level. Similarly, at the decision-making level, it is imperative to integrate the performance approach and its evaluation in the modes of action in order to materialize the separation and decentralization.

At this stage, let us recall that performance management in the public sector is a widely documented and supported concept, offering significant opportunities to improve the management of public bodies (Bartoli, 2005). However, integrating its principles and adoption requires adaptation to the constraints of each context and support in transferring related knowledge.

If public sector organizations prepare to transpose performance in the private sector sense, the multiplicity of definitions, dimensions, and specificities of the public sector requires adaptation. Transposing the three meanings of performance-action (process), result, and success in relation to a target objective - presents specific difficulties. Public organizations face a dual perception of performance: strategic (for the central authorities) and operational (for the organizations themselves). This means that the results produced by public bodies serve the strategic objectives of the central authority while organizations are still subject to their own operational decisions.

Public organizations must consider two performance levels to serve their purpose effectively, mainly to grasp the "delicate" nature of the interactions between the organization (responsible for implementation) and the central authority (responsible for strategic planning). Also, to avoid the dilution of responsibilities between the definition of objectives and the measurement of results.

It is evident that the relationship between these two structures is always present and can manifest itself in various forms, such as complementarity (providing information, proximity action), control, and orientation (strategy, planning).

In addition, this interaction requires us to focus on the relationship between action performance and result (the quality of the service provided). This result represents the level of operational achievement and is perceived through performance indicators. It presupposes an explicit contractual agreement between the organization and the central administration, representing the second condition for operationalizing performance in the public sector.

To simplify the process of defining the performance/results sought by a public organization, we use Emery's simplified diagram (2005), which is based on Schedler's presentation (1995) of the levels of results managed in the public sector. This scheme details the nature of public action, considering the two levels of planning (strategic) and realization (operational: action/results). The model identifies four levels of action: 1/identifying customer needs, 2/defining policy objectives and outcomes, 3/ creating service delivery plans, and 4/Developing resource deployment plans.

This approach is supported by evaluating the results at each action level and comparing planned and actual results to see how well the «expected outcomes have been achieved» (Emery, 2005).

These schemas represent a general concept that needs to be adapted to the particular case of each organization, taking into account any contractual and regulatory obligations, the representations of the State, and the level of autonomy granted by each public sector to its organizations.

Moreover, the level of autonomy each public sector grants to its organizations. Interaction throughout the chain of action requires the public sector organization to integrate objectives and result indicators. The latter represents both its field of intervention as an entity implementing public strategies (and fully aligned with them) and as an actor in its own right, autonomous and responsible for the planning and implementation of its action. In this context, the performance sought integrates micro and macro dimensions and the political dimension (Hood, 2007).

On another note, as the primary mission of these organizations is public service, the weight of social impact is reinforced (Chegri et al., 2019). Nonetheless, this social dimension poses the problem of its weighting in the overall performance of the organization in question, given that the imperative of economic performance takes precedence over the search for efficiency in the deployment of resources (Demeestère, 2005).

Finally, it is essential to remember the critical role played by information in performance design. This "precious" information must be used to design policies and strategies. It enables decisions to be made, resources, skills, and responsibilities to be allocated, implementation to be monitored and redirected, behavior and results to be self-assessed and evaluated, and reporting and accountability mechanisms to be justified (Dooren et al., 2015).

Thus, the specific nature of the public bodies' missions dictates that they must comply with performance rules in line with the public service or general interest missions entrusted to them and their relationship with the central authority. Clear performance objectives and guidelines require an understanding of relationships, missions, and responsibilities without undermining the autonomy of these entities, which should constitute their primary purpose. This clarification should be further emphasized within the framework of a contractual agreement with the central authorities setting out the missions, objectives, and resources to be implemented.

3. Performance management of education and training institutions in Morocco

3.1. Performance environment

There are 38 government-controlled institutions offering education and training, accounting for 14% of the public sector (report on public institutions accompanying the finance bill, 2021) and holding the legal status of a non-commercial public institution. EPEFs are divided into 12 regional academies of education and training, 13 universities, and eight higher schools and training institutes. These public institutions are essential in providing education and training opportunities in Morocco, with 6,467,666 primary, middle, and secondary school students and 987,143 higher education students for the 2020-2021 academic year. In 2020, they employed 315,354 people, including 267,099 teachers.

The budgets of these institutions account for 78% of the respective budgets of the departments of education and higher education (2021 finance law), excluding personnel expenditures mainly borne by the supervisory

departments. The State's transfers to these institutions in 2020 amounted to MAD 14.43 billion, or 43% of total transfers made by the State to the public portfolio, broken down as follows: MAD 12.15 billion for the academies, MAD 1.82 billion for the universities and MAD 0.46 billion for the other eight specialized public institutions. Their contribution to public portfolio investment amounts to around MAD 5 billion in 2020 and MAD 5.6 billion in 2021, or about 69% of investments by public institutions in the social sector and 7% of the total public portfolio. The importance of these institutions' missions and the available resources requires them to rationalize their actions to guarantee the expected quality of service given their context.

The use of the legal arsenal, reports from the Higher Council for Education, Training and Scientific Research (CSEFRS), the General Inspectorate of Finance, the Court of Auditors, and ministry press releases allows us to identify common elements of diagnosis by type of performance (**governance structure**, organization, **financing**, **human resources**, and **educational performance**) and type of institution (**regional academies of education and training**, **universities**, **higher schools**, and **institutes**).

In this regard, in terms of **governance**, there is an absence of a specific strategic framework for each institution and clear shared commitments with the central administration. This situation is induced by the multitude of governing bodies (exceeding 20 members according to the texts of creation compared to the 12 recommended by the Moroccan code of good governance practices), whose work remains mainly concentrated on operational aspects that need clear strategic orientations. This situation has been exacerbated by the weak managerial skills of the leaders of these institutions (experience exclusively in teaching for the majority), which does not offer them sufficient expertise and perspective to act with a performance mindset. This situation is also due to these managers' limited room for maneuver or insufficient clarity. In July 2021, technical supervisory contracts were established, and the organic finance law (LOLF) made three-year planning practices mandatory to overcome the limitation. However, in practice, we see a transcription of the directives of the department's strategy without major adaptation to each institution's particularities and the exclusion of other stakeholders from this contracting process (financial supervision and regional authorities). Note that this contracting process did not involve the eight specialized EPEFs mentioned previously, which are under the technical supervision of industry departments (mines, transport), while continuing the strategic and operational orientations regarding training offers and pedagogy from the department of higher education. Moreover, monitoring technical and budgetary achievements is in place, but mainly to serve the needs of strategic evaluation, school and training planning, and budget planning of supervisory bodies without being associated with a natural system for evaluating the institution's performance.

Then, in terms of **organizational performance**, there needs to be more functional management instruments that consider the particularities of each EPEF. This is partly due to massive intervention by supervisors (e.g., university organizational charts) or by massive unification of work tools not adapted to the constraints of these institutions (e.g., organizational charts and procedures manuals for academies...). The standardization of pedagogical intervention methods further consecrates a situation reflecting the organizational dependence of these institutions. In addition, an integrated information system still needs to be implemented despite numerous applications for centralizing information with supervisors, such as the GID systems for budget management and the MASSAR educational data management system at the academies. In addition, there is a weakness, if not an absence, of internal control mechanisms as evidenced by the lack of a dedicated internal audit entity in the existing organizational charts of these entities, noting the importance of this mechanism to support performance-based management.

Finally, in terms of **economic and financial performance**, EPEFs being subsidized, the intervention of technical and financial supervisors in budget planning is strongly confirmed, thus embodying a financial and planning dependence. In addition, these institutions do not have general accounting, relying solely on budget accounting and imposing a purely budgetary performance logic, except for some EPEFs (ISCAE, IAV, and ENAM), which have it but not in an elaborate form. Finally, it should be noted that EPEFs are presented as budget-consuming institutions. In this regard, forecasts of transfers from the State's general budget amount to MAD 19,562.20 million planned for 2021, or 55% of the envelope plan for non-commercial public institutions and enterprises and 45% of the entire public portfolio. Since adopting Vision 2015-2030, these transfers have been experiencing sustained growth. There has been a 35% increase between the 2021 forecasts and the achievements at the end of 2016, resulting in a total of MAD 6,775.89 million. The average annual growth rate has been 20%, excluding 2020, impacted by the COVID crisis.

Another critical point to note is the disputed financial and accounting project management capacity, which is reflected in the mixed performance on the realization rates of investments declared under the framework of the

finance laws (20% at the end of 2019 for universities and 72% for academies)—a finding confirmed by emergency program audits.

The lack of statistics is an additional challenge, especially those on public real estate assets made available to these entities, which remains an obstacle to assessing their investments.

In terms of **human resources**, staff (administrative and teaching staff) mainly comes under the civil service, limiting the academic institutions' room for guiding their human resources, with the exception. This excludes the institutions of teachers recruited since 2016 under contracting (joint decision No. 7975) and some staff from the eight entities, as mentioned earlier. In addition, staffing levels are well below standard levels (estimated educational supervision at 47%). Understaffing is also noted at the administrative staff level of universities, impacting their operational performance.

Moreover, in terms of **educational performance**, the level of achievements remains low and contested by international rankings and assessments made by supervisory authorities. The leading indicators reveal a deficit in the quality of education (51.3%), educational attainment (36.4%), and educational supervision (47%)⁸. While enrollment and school completion rates in primary and secondary sectors are satisfactory (91%, 61%), they still need to improve in high school and universities (39% and 58%), with almost half of university students dropping out.

Regarding the learning environment, there is a gap between the evolution of infrastructure and the number of students negatively impacting the school and university facilities conditions (e.g., for the 2019-2020 academic year, 921,944 students enrolled for a university reception capacity of 518,896 places). These low levels primarily question the relevance of training and teaching tools and point to the need to focus on modulating tools and processes and activating unified intervention methods. It also raises the issue of the attractiveness of the education and training offer, considering learners' social environment—finally, the importance of integrating a social dimension into the performance of EPEFs.

3.2. Performance characterization

With a view to designing tools for evaluating and measuring the performance of EPEFs, a semi-directive interview was conducted with 50 people from the stakeholders of these establishments, distributed as follows:

- 20% Shareholders or strategic stakeholders: technical supervisors, financial supervisors and members of the boards of directors of these establishments;
- 40% Personnel: Managers (directors, etc.), administrative and pedagogical managers, faculty and administrative staff;
- 20% Customers : Students and recruiters;
- 20% Partners: Partner institutions and universities, Laureate associations, Staff associations, Statutory auditors.

This population was questioned about:

- The definition of performance best suited to the sector;
- The types of performance to be sought for these establishments.

Qualitative analysis of the responses obtained confirmed the following results:

- **Defining performance :**
 - o All the people interviewed confirmed the need to link the definition of performance to action and to processes: action and process performance through the performance of the actions of internal players (educational, administrative and technical) and the educational performance of tools and the action environment;
 - o All those interviewed confirmed the need to link the definition of performance to results and their evaluation;
 - o Only 20% of the population considered performance to be a success. The 80% considered that the notion of success is highly variable and subjective, and that it is taken into account when defining measurable objectives. It is therefore not a necessary element in the definition of performance. 25% linked the concept of success to the impact of the action, which is an element assessed well after the result, making it inconsistent with the objectives of setting up a measurement and decision-support tool.
- **Types of performance :**
 - o The entire interview population confirmed the need to consider performance in its global dimension, including other types of performance;
 - o All those interviewed considered strategic performance to be an essential element of overall performance;

⁸ The 2018 national strategy 2015-2030 performance framework provides a detailed set of indicators.

- The entire interview population expressed the need to take organizational performance into account in the overall conception of performance. However, 30% of the population ranked it after strategic performance;
- All those interviewed considered social performance to be essential in assessing overall performance. However, 20% felt that, given the subjectivity of this aspect, its impact on the objectivity of overall performance could be felt;
- 85% of the population considered it to be an essential component of overall performance, putting it in fourth place and grouping it with societal performance. 10% considered that, in the case of EPEFs in Morocco, this dimension depended on strategic constraints and did not reflect the establishment's action to achieve performance. 5% suggested that it should not be taken into account;
- More than 85% considered that the other types of performance, namely Financial, Environmental and Systemic, were not appropriate for EPEFs.

4. Moroccan EPEFs: What path to performance management?

4. 1. Overall performance for EPEFs

By accepting the principle of the multiplicity of conceptualizations of performance and its dependence on its context for definition, we propose an identification of the central performances declared by the public authorities and then a relationship with the organizational performances to be sought by EPEFs as autonomous public entities, similar to private actors.

Indeed, these representations are supported by framework law 51-17 and the 2015-2030 vision having referred to: 1/performance action and process through the performance of internal actors (pedagogical, administrative and technical) and the pedagogical performance of frameworks and tools of action, 2/ performance result and success through the measurement mechanisms provided for by the framework law and the performance framework for monitoring the 2015-2030 strategic vision, 3/the organizational dimension through the performance of structural components (education and training institutions) and governing bodies of these EPEFs, 4/ the economic dimension through assessing the cost and volume of expenditure relating to each component of the education system, 5/ the strategic and political dimension that focuses on implementing strategies and, 6/the social dimension through the notion of quality of public service and promotion of working conditions of human resources stipulated in the framework law. These same results were confirmed by interviews conducted with stakeholders at these establishments.

Thus, we retain the perceptions of performance as **action**, **result**, and **success** in addition to the overall representation of performance that will integrate the dimensions: 1/ **organizational** (reflecting the maturity of the EPEF through all its components to be sought by managers and its sustainability), 3/**economic**(better allocation of intervention resources and their use), 4/ **strategic** (reflecting the performance of strategic implementation sought by public authorities, and includes, in this case, educational performance) and, 5/ **social** performance (reflecting the social value conveyed internally to internal actors and externally to student clients and society).

4. 2. Overall performance for EPEFs

4.3. Drivers of action towards performance

The contextual elements and diagnosis of the EPEF sector confirm a strong convergence toward implementing performance-based management. The legal and regulatory arsenal and the implementation of specific provisions, including performance-based budgeting and contracting of the relationship between the technical supervision, universities, and academies, primarily support this momentum.

However, to further strengthen the recommendations of the various reforms and based on the elements analyzed above, we suggest a horizontal approach to integrating performance and its management at EPEFs on three levels: strategic, managerial (management), and operational, as outlined below:

- At the **strategic level**, provisions are to be made by public authorities to clarify the perception of performance and the objectives of the strategy, as provided for in the 2015–2030 performance framework. A consensus of actors is to be found before breaking down the aggregated strategy and defining the level of achievement to be achieved by each EPEF. This approach constitutes an incentive framework for adopting this performance-oriented approach. It will be further facilitated by the implementation of prerequisites relating in particular to 1/effective autonomy, 2/contracting around performance, 3/orienting state controls towards performance (framework law No. 50-21), 4/dynamic planning (results and relevance of indicators audits, performance-based budgeting).

- At the **management level**, leaders will make provisions to embody the performance approach within their EPEF. At this level, the definition of performance objectives specific to each EPEF will be formalized, and the levels and objectives resulting from the particular activity of the institution. The levers to be mobilized in this direction concern: 1/formalization of a vision specific to the EPEF, 2/annual publication of technical and financial performance indicators (law No. 50-21) as a transparency process and customer and contributor loyalty, 3/internal transparency to establish a climate of trust (communication actions, management acts favoring equality, scoring for skills assessment and mobility), 4/formalization of planning, budgetary and technical processes, 5/implementation of general and then analytical accounting to reconcile allocated resources with objectives, 6/staff status and functional organizational chart for independence in performance-oriented resource management, 7/an internal control system to improve the performance of action processes and make them more reliable.

-At the **operational level**, an effort must be made to integrate and adopt a management approach focused on performance at different operational levels. The levers for action to achieve this would include in particular: 1/harmonization of action procedures with the definition of margins of maneuver, 2/an integrated information system guaranteeing the reliability and availability of data and business digitization, and 3/adaptation of pedagogical action to the environment of action with a definition of margins of maneuver.

Moreover, in the current situations, the pillars of performance-based management of EPEFs can be summarized as follows:

-**Management autonomy of EPEFs** by: 1/providing them with a **framework** (governance, contracts) and the necessary **management tools** (staff status, own organization, accounting, internal audit structures, adapted processes) to take ownership of the performance-based management approach 2/offering **clear margins of maneuver** (independence in steering, resource management, teaching methods, planning, framing the use of universities' resources and incentives, regional collaboration). This autonomy should also concern **education and training institutions** (Feyfant, 2017), a principle announced by the 2000 charter but weakly consecrated. Indeed, these institutions constitute the primary direct provider of education and training services, in contact with customer expectations and guaranteeing the image of the education system. Empowerment coupled with accountability and performance-based management would establish maturity at the various action levels that would positively impact the strategic performance levels.

- An **adapted governance framework** (Frajerman, 2018) through regulatory and legal reviews to apply the provisions of the code of good governance practices for public institutions and enterprises (established based on OECD guidelines) in terms of **professionalization of governing bodies**(composition, functioning, specialized committees, stakeholder representation) and standardization of **selection processes for leaders**, to establish the principle of commitment through development projects and institutions and accountability;

- A **horizontal contracting system** encompassing all EPEF stakeholders, which involves: 1/ **State -EPEF contracting** (technical and financial supervisors and other stakeholders) to formalize the content of the public service and the strategic performance objectives sought as well as the means implemented for this purpose (framed by article 54 of framework law 50-21), and gather the support of all stakeholders (technical and financial supervisors, local and regional authorities), 2/ **governing body-manager contracting** around the development project outlining a clear vision for the EPEF and rallying its actors around the same **performance objectives** stemming from the strategy and the EPEF's management needs taking the form of performance contract provided for by the same law, 3/ **internal contracting** EPEF-Head of education and training institutions based on institutional projects stemming from the EPEF's vision and falling within the national strategy. It outlines the performance broken down at the institutional level and adapted to the political and social context of the action for better adaptation to student needs, attractiveness of the public service, and allocation of resources (Frajerman, 2018).

Similarly, any contracting around performance must be based on an incentive system (Pesqueux, 2004) involving sanctions related to accountability and rewards, ideally, financial through variable remuneration by objective. However, sophisticated this widely experimented tool may be, it must not constitute a source of heaviness but rather a facilitating mechanism for action through guidance towards performance objectives and motivation through accountability. This contracting is also a path towards defining monitoring and evaluation methods and tools.

- **Change management** support through adequate training of managers and heads of institutions for a **reorientation of management style** and skills upgrading in management and management, particularly in an environment that increasingly requires agility in management.

Finally, these pillars must fall within and consider the particular context of the sector, which is undergoing multiple and rapid changes in international best practices and requirements, the training needs of the learner client, and the economic and political context. Their implementation requires equal agility in action and planning.

CONCLUSION

The current environment of EPEFs in Morocco, regulatory, social, economic, and political, is converging towards performance-based management, and hence the implementation of elaborate performance management systems in their global nature. This opportunity to reform this sector should benefit from the lessons learned from previous reforms by implementing all the necessary and adapted arrangements and measures for operationalization.

The contracting mechanisms and good governance practices instituted by regulation deserve to be adapted to the context and deployed to improve these public institutions' framework of action. However, the orientation towards performance management remains dependent on the level of autonomy granted to these public institutions, which is their main reason for being. This can be achieved by establishing independent and efficient governing bodies through regulatory review. This would offer a contractual framework defining the margins of maneuver and the mutual responsibilities of sector stakeholders, including schools and training institutions.

Given the potential risks associated with autonomy (Frajerma, 2018) in the workplace, the question arises as to how much flexibility allows each individual to achieve effective performance management without compromising the principles of equality within the industry. In addition, it should be noted that contracting, as a tool for implementing performance-based management, is essential for targeting the regional intervention of public education and training institutions within the framework of advanced regionalization. It also creates a framework for collaboration and adaptation of the service offered to local needs and the means of action, an essential component of successful contracting (Boisson-Cohen, 2016).

In conclusion, it is clear to us that the multiple mutations in the sector and its growing social dimension require proven management agility that must be accompanied by adapted governance tools in order to be able to act within a framework of continuous improvement by adapting the timing of action.

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