

Universities: The difficult implementation of Management Control - Case of a Moroccan University -

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ABSTRACT: The modernization of the public sector and the reform of public education are in the heart of debates in Moroccan universities. Indeed, the situation in this sector has become very alarming because of the problems of massification, professional integration, and governance. Under the impulse of the LOLF and the New Public Management, Moroccan universities are obliged to develop a management control system to attend performance and results. However, the specificity of the university's activities raises the question of the compatibility of such systems with such context and highlights the role actually played by management control within these institutions. This article discusses the role of management control prescribed in the literature, particularly the regulatory aspect and contribute through a case study, to identify the place occupied by management control within this organization as well as the role it fulfills in the Moroccan universities.

KEYWORDS: University, management control, steering.

INTRODUCTION

The last decades have been marked by intense changes that bring a managerial dimension to the public service. In this trend, public universities (are excluded from this category public universities with private management) are similarly to change their management practices by focusing on results. These evolutions are reflected in two elements. The first is about the impact of the LOLF (The Organic Law of the Law of the Finances n ° 130-13 promulgated by the Dahir n ° 1-15-62 of 14 chaabane 1436 (June 2, 2015) on the obligation to adopt a management based on the results and to renew the management practices for a better performance of the public sector, and the second element is about the wiliness of receiving tools of piloting and designing systems management control in order to cope with the constraints of the current context of Moroccan universities which suffers from intense massification, national and international competition and the need to satisfy the various stakeholders.

The theory suggests that management control systems focus mainly on implementing strategies and achieving organizational goals. It tries to ensure that the organization designs effective programs and implements them in an efficient manner. However, the characteristics of public sector organizations, including universities, may hinder this role of management control and lead to deleterious and even ruinous effects, Rasolofo-Distler et al (2008). These characteristics include a rigid bureaucracy, a lack of innovation, and the tunnel vision. Concerning universities, new features are added, including the specificity and diversity of their missions (initial and continuing training, orientation and professional integration, scientific and technological research, transmission and exploitation of its results, international cooperation ...).

In this context, the question about the compatibility of management control systems with the characteristics of such a context is primordial. What role does management control really play in universities? This question raises the issue of the emergence of management control from the private sector and the probabilities of its failure, Bollecker (2013) in organized anarchy, including universities, Cohen et al (1972).

To answer this question, we recall in a first part, the expected role of management control extracted from the literature, particularly the regulatory aspect, and the second part focus on analyzing the role of management control actually played in Moroccan universities through a case study.

THEORETICAL SPECIFICITIES OF THE ROLE OF MANAGEMENT CONTROL IN UNIVERSITIES:

The conditions for successful management control in a predictable cybernetic context suggest the compatibility of management control with academia.

BETWEEN THE PRIVATE AND THE PUBLIC: SIMILAR ROLES OF MANAGEMENT CONTROL IN THEORY

Known as New Public Management (NPM), the term has been introduced by academics in the UK and Australia to describe the approaches that were developed in the 1980s as the effort to make the public service more "commercial" and to improve its efficiency by using private sector management models. Thus, private sector management practices have been transposed to the public sector in order to propel it towards efficiency and effectiveness. Management control is included as a tool for decision support and performance management, Bouquin and Gervais (1997). Based on this new management, the transposition of the logic of private management to the public, Osborne (1993) was considered as a reference to define the role of management control in the public sector. According to Demestère (2008), management control in a public context aims to: "focus on the results (and not the means) of public action, enhance efficiency and effectiveness through managing by objectives, and to develop measurement systems and management reviews to supervise and develop action plans".

The objective of management control in public sector organizations is to overcome the various problems on which the public sector suffers, Demestère (2005). Indeed, it seeks to dispel the constraints that overwhelm public resources, to fill the need for coordination and adaptation of the organization to its environment, and to reinforce the organizational learning. Also, management control in the public sector has the essential role of responding to the need to provide quality services to citizens, and users.

The direction of management control in the public sector is close to the main definitions of its role in private organizations. Indeed, Anthony, in his first definition of management control (1965), addresses the issue of the efficient and effective use of resources and presents it as "a process by which managers are assured that resources are obtained and used to achieve objectives in an effective and efficient way" (Anthony RN, *Planning and Control Systems, A Framework for Analysis*, Division of Research, Boston, Harvard University, 1965, 17).

In his second version of analysis (1988), Anthony discuss the behavioral aspect and advance that "it is the process through which, the managers influence other members of the organization to implement the strategy of the organization" (Anthony RN, *op cit*, p.10) and the need to coordinate with and between the different actors. Management control systems influence the behaviors and attitudes of stakeholders and make them aware of the achievement of objectives, Solle (2011). It promotes management dialogue, advice and analysis. It legitimizes the animation and the coordination within the establishment. An adaptive role is therefore demanded by management control systems, so Simmons (1995) defines management control as "the information-based processes and procedures that managers use to maintain or modify certain configurations." Organization's activities "Simons (1995), Boston, Mass., Harvard Business School Press, 1995, p. 5) Organizational learning and user service roles have been amply emphasized in the Kaplan and Norton BSC (1998).

This proximity in the design of management control roles makes the transfer of the function to the public sector simple and achievable, Bollecker (2013). This transfer is particularly supported, on the one hand, by the reforms of the public sector, Bartoli et al, (2015) and on the other hand, by the increased need of the supervisory bodies for information on the results of the public organizations Chatelain Ponroy and al (2006).

Also, the role of management control is strengthened in the public sector by legislative measures, in this case: the LOLF. It is the founding element of management control in the public organization where it clearly establishes logic based on results and not on means. It places the management control at the heart of its processes and devices, Gibert (2002) by obliging the ministries to periodically present the project performance and the results obtained (Note of presentation of the Organic Law of the Finance Act, http://www.sgg.gov.ma/Portals/0/lois/Projet_loi_130.13_En.pdf) synthesized in a performance report. These remarks concerning the expected role of management control in the public sector lead us to imagine an automatic application of these texts. Admittedly, it is difficult to do this given the contextual contingency inherent in any management control approach, Naro (1998). In this sense, and with respect to the university, is it possible to set up a GCS for planning and evaluating performance, Bollecker (2013).

A LIMITED ROLE IN THE PRACTICE OF MANAGEMENT CONTROL:

Within the universities, the information produced by the management control would mainly allow the presidential teams to prepare budgets to meet the objectives of the LOLF and / or to negotiate the operating and investment grant from the state, Chatelain- Ponroy et al (2006). This limited role can be justified by the nature of the activities of Higher Education and Research sector.

Also, the management control proposed to universities is part of a cybernetic framework, unlike the reality where universities operate in a non-cybernetic model context. Indeed, the objectives of the universities are ambiguous, the outputs are difficult to measure, Guilhot (2000) and the activities of are very diversified. The immaterial, qualitative, and rarely hierarchical objectives of research activities do not simplify control and evaluation, Fabre (2013). Similarly, with regard to teaching activities, the content of the training offered to the student, is not easy to control because of the principle of autonomy (Article 4 and 5 of Law 00-01 on the organization of Higher Education),

This limited role of management control in universities can be explained by the political dimension embodied in the status and the behavior of school leaders, since they are elected officials and representatives. In the ambition to renew their mandate, they seek to reap a lot of satisfaction, Fabre (2009). For example, they seek to increase the size of the university, the administrative and the teaching staff to get a reasonable educational and administrative support rate, create new courses and offer training requested by the current market and by students.

In addition, harmful disparities between units can appear in case of a detailed publication of the consumption of the resources or at the level of operation of the teaching units. Also, these disparities can be at the origin of a reluctance to transmit the formal information. For that, is the development of management control conceivable and feasible in the university context considering the difficulties of its implementation?

ANALYSIS OF THE ROLE OF MANAGEMENT CONTROL IN A MOROCCAN UNIVERSITY: CASE OF MOHAMED V UNIVERSITY OF RABAT

Ideally, university management control systems should make it possible to meet both internal management needs (operational management of the business lines - teaching, research, professional integration, asset management, etc.) and the State requirements. This package allows to articulate the various existing control systems, including management control and to contribute to the management of performance.

The purpose of this article is to analyze the role of management control exercised in a Moroccan university. The choice of the case study is justified by the need to study deeply the Moroccan university and to understand how it works. Through a four-month observation, we tried to answer our research question that attempts to appreciate the role of management control as well as the positioning of the university in relation to formal management control systems. We mention that in this case study we can't generalize because of the high contingency incarnated in this university.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND GENERAL CONTEXT OF THE UNIVERSITY:

The case study is an effective method in the qualitative approach. It is for this reason that Stake (2005) considers it as one of the most used methods. It allows studying deeply a research object, which leads to a detailed and precise knowledge of the latter. Indeed, being a subject of research little studied in the Moroccan context, the basic idea of the case study is to emphasize the management practice in university, by detecting the whole of its activities which are supposed to be multiple.

The case study as a research method is an empirical investigation to study a phenomenon in the real world, Yin (1994). In this context, the case study method would allow us to know all the general aspects that may constitute contingency factors and may be related to the role played by management control within universities. Potentially, the case study is a reference that would serve as benchmarking, opening the way for other organizations or other avenues of research, David (2005). In the case study, several sources of data collection are exploited. The methodology chosen from the outset refers to the triangular method that advocates cross-referencing, Scapens (1990) to boost the quality of the results. Thus, three methods were selected for data collection, mainly observation and documentation with some semi-directive interviews:

- The observation: it is a participative observation in the various meetings at the local and central level;
- The interviews: these are interviews conducted essentially within the central administration. In the university, the main interview was with the focal point of the management control in the Presidency of the university;
- The documentary study: it consists in examining the various documents, in particular the projected budgets of the university, the states and treasury situations of the university, the development project of the president of the university

In Morocco, twelve universities make up the Higher Education system. They operate in a very complex environment characterized by massification and increased diversification. In statistical terms, the number of students reached is around 770,000 students in 2016/2017. In 2015/2016, the university recorded 750,130 (according to the official statistics of the ministry of supervision) students against 677,391 in 2014/2015. This massification is burdensome for the university because it must acquire the means and resources to meet this demand that unfolds in a social sector where the basic principles are equality of opportunity. In terms of governance, Moroccan universities are governed by Law 00-01 on the organization of Higher Education (Dahir No. 1-00-199 of 15 Safar 1421 (19 May 2000) promulgating Law No. 01- 00). To propel this sector and to fulfill its missions, considerable efforts are made by the State in trying to overcome the constraints. The most important one is about the emergency program.

The university being studied is Mohamed V University of Rabat (UM5R is the construction of the first modern university in Morocco, and in 1957, at the dawn of independence of the country, was born the University Mohammed V by grouping three institutes, namely: the Cherifian Scientific Institute, the Institute of High Moroccan Studies and the Center of Higher Scientific Studies), the result of a process of fusion which took place in September 2014. The objective of this merger was to achieve performance with an integration of international developments. The Mohammed V University of Rabat has nearly 85,107 registered for the year 2016/2017. It includes 2048 teacher-researchers providing an average supervision rate of 40%. The administrative and technical staff (agents, technicians, preparers, engineers, and administrative staff) is composed of 1,357 people. The university has 70 research laboratories with numerous teams and includes 13 components including 8 faculties, two engineering schools, three graduate schools (IUT). With an annual budget of 935 MDHs (in 2017), the university have other revenue sources.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF LOCAL MANAGEMENT CONTROL PRACTICES:

At the national level, the emergency program, which was a major challenge for the reform of the education sector, was an opportunity to set up mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the performance of universities, in particular by implementing in place of a state-university contract: "These contracts are part of the national movement to improve the performance of the management of public action and aim to strengthen the effectiveness and efficiency of the educational system, and scientific research "(Internal document of the Ministry's Strategies and Information Systems Directorate).

The implementation of these contractual commitments is accompanied by a monitoring and evaluation system based on the following axes: monitoring and evaluation committees: on the one hand, an internal committee at the local levels (the university) and a central committee. it has also planned a periodic reporting including: a status report on the progress; an annual report on the achievements report; a set of monitoring indicators (half-yearly frequency); an annual action plan. According to the Strategies and Information Systems Department, in consultation with the universities an emergency plan was developed. This program showed the desire to learn about management control systems and to receive management tools in order to redress financial situation, to strengthen autonomy and to surpass the constraints of the LOLF.

The interviews conducted revealed the absence of an overall management control system at both central and local levels. This deficiency poses various problems, mainly and frequently that of the distribution of the State subsidy as underlined by an official in the Department of Budget and General Affairs of the Ministry: "In our level, we have no idea about the distribution criteria of the General Budget on Universities ".

Another accounting officer in the Ministry insists on the need to introduce new management practices, especially management tools, because the traditional method still persists: 'unlike the various political discourses of innovation and modernization of management, we always work with the classical method". Hence the insufficient support of the central administration. However, there is a follow-up in the execution of university budgets. In fact, the regulations in force require certain accounting and account indicators to be communicated periodically to all financial control bodies, in particular treasury and account situations and the semi-annual transfer.

From These observations, we notice that the governance of the university is the most consistent project to lead. In this context, management control practices were deployed to clarify the reality of the situation and to obtain new resources. They provide the necessary information "it is my argument to carry evidence of our weak means when it comes to an organization of an event or The development of a budgetary control tool makes it possible to follow the budget implementation rate. In addition, special attention is given to rationalizing expenditure and finding new revenue ". This budget monitoring would make it possible to have visibility on the risks of scarcity of resources.

Among these locally developed practices, Mohamed V University of Rabat has adopted distribution keys to allow the presidential team to give objective and impartial decision-making regarding the distribution of resources. These keys were selected by the University Council as good practice. Seven of them constitute the resolutions of the University Council

02/04/2015: Recurrent charges of the institutions; Pedagogical supervision of students; International mobility Teachers Researchers and administrators; Internal mobility of civil servants; Support for scientific and cultural events; Support for Pedagogical and Scientific Publishing, Patent Publication and Filing, and Budget Performance.

These keys are accompanied by objectives to be achieved in each component. Thus, "these keys, commonly accepted by all players in institutions under the university, allow us to distribute the endowment of the State in a healthy and easy as before," according to the Budget and Control Manager of the University. In other words, these keys represent the university's performance criteria for supporting successful institutions, particularly in terms of budget execution.

Despite the lack of support from the trusteeship for the establishment of a global control system, the university under study is obliged to "get by" and develop practices management to improve its performance, to defend itself and show the commitment of the presidential team which, in a political approach, strives to overcome the difficulties it faces. Firstly, it is alarming to don't develop a good governance in such official organization (After the merger, an organization chart has been developed but it is not yet validated by the line ministries) which has a negative impact on administrative organization and generates a strong demotivation of staff who are deprived of legal bonuses of responsibility and suffer also from the absence of an integrated information system and the archaism of certain tools of governance and management. Secondly, there is a structuring problem where the capacity in available physical places does not align with the expected increase in the number of students. his insufficient capacity is accompanied by a blatant heterogeneity between the number of students and the number of teachers: student numbers ranging from 0 to 15,000 and the number of teachers ranging from 5 to 700 per school. This generates a rate of supervision of some institutions far removed from the average university: 1 teacher for 130 law students - economy and management. Not to mention the massive departures from 2016 due to the seniority of the university; hence a risk of collapse of the supervision rate. Finally, the question of financial autonomy is imperative especially that it is an article of law 00-01. However, in practical terms, the university suffers from cumbersome management procedures because of the slow transfer of the state endowment, which painfully affects the smooth running of the university and what drives it to diversify its recipes, especially through training.

These observations make it possible to say that the governance of the university is the most consistent project to lead. In this context, management control practices were deployed to clarify the reality of the situation and to obtain new resources. They provide the necessary information "it is my argument to carry evidence of our weak means when it comes to an organization of an event or The development of a budgetary control tool makes it possible to follow the budget implementation rate. In addition, special attention is given to rationalizing expenditure and finding new revenue ". This budget monitoring would make it possible to have visibility on the risks of scarcity of resources.

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The introduction of other criteria in relation to the missions of the university is among the axes of reflection of the university. The Contracts-Objectives-Medium culture begins to imbue the university by showing the university's willingness to adopt piloting tools whose management control obeys the spirit of the LOLF.

These local practices constitute an issue of protection, monopolization and optimization of resources. The role of management control within the university is like a munition machine, Burchell and hopwood (1980) in contrast to the roles of effectiveness, efficiency, and coordination, learning identified in the literature. From there, can we wonder about the feasibility of management control in universities and ask the question: is management control as commonly recognized would be feasible within universities?

CONCLUSION

The specificity of the universities makes lead us to say that the implementation of the management control is difficult to envisage by making analogy with the roles of management control identified in the literature. This proves the interests on contingent approaches in management control.

The rigid financial situation, the heavy massification with the limited reception, the very high rate of supervision, and all those factors led to the development of local practices of management control. The role of these management control practices is to defend, to protect, and to hook up resources and to optimize them. The results of this study cannot lead to any generalization whatsoever. First, in relation to the methodology, it is a single case with a very limited number of actors. Secondly, the character of the university and its properties can be highly contingent factors of management control. Finally, the study was done during a specific period, coinciding with the establishment of the provisional budget, which limits the exploration of other local practices of management control.

Notwithstanding these limitations, this study contributes to understand the difficulty of implementing a management control system and therefore anchoring a culture of objectives and results. One of the avenues of this research would be to explore other Moroccan universities in different levels, and different contingency factors in the management control practices with a lack or nonexistence, a central steering of guardianship.

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