

Performance and Ethics: Levers of Scientific Research Reform in Morocco

Performance et Éthique: Leviers de la réforme de la Recherche Scientifique au Maroc

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Abstract

This contribution deals with Performance-Based Management related to the reform of Morocco's Education, Training, and Scientific Research system, focusing on the Scientific Research component. In fact, Public finance has become a major instrument of public policy, and a vital means for public authorities to direct and develop economic and social life, so for good public financial governance, the management of public finances must obey ethical rules based on principles of integrity, transparency, accountability and equity.

Furthermore, the administrative reform undertaken around the modernization of public management and the search for links between performance and ethics has become a central concern of managers and theorists. The objective is therefore to present a theoretical overview of the concepts of performance and ethics and the relationship between them in the context of public management, then focus on the monitoring of the performance of scientific research and present the main strategic visions of the sector and the integration of ethics by the new model of development.

Keywords: Performance; Ethics; Reform; Public management; Scientific research

Résumé

La présente contribution porte sur la gestion axée sur la performance dans le contexte de la réforme du système de l'Éducation, Formation et Recherche Scientifique au Maroc en se focalisant sur le volet de la Recherche Scientifique. En effet, Les finances publiques sont devenues un instrument majeur des politiques publiques, et un moyen vital aux mains des pouvoirs publics pour orienter et développer la vie économique et sociale, ainsi pour une bonne gouvernance financière publique, la gestion des finances publiques, obéisse à des règles éthiques basées sur des principes d'intégrité, de transparence, d'obligation de rendre compte, et d'équité.

En outre, la réforme administrative engagée autour de démarches de modernisation de la gestion publique et la recherche des liens entre la performance et l'éthique est devenue une préoccupation centrale des gestionnaires et des théoriciens. L'objectif est donc de présenter un aperçu théorique sur les notions de la performance et de l'éthique ainsi que la relation entre eux dans le contexte de la gestion publique, puis mettre le point sur le suivi de la performance de la recherche scientifique et présenter les principales visions stratégiques du secteur et l'intégration de l'éthique par le nouveau modèle de développement.

Mots clés : Performance ; Ethique ; Réforme ; Gestion publique ; Recherche Scientifique

Introduction

For several years now, Morocco has been implementing a vast public management reform program, with a clear acceleration in the pace of its implementation since 2002, in order to strengthen the coordination and integration of the various public policies put in place with a view to creating the conditions for strong and sustainable growth that will create jobs and wealth. Thus, the concept of performance was introduced by the organic law relating to finance law 130–13, which is also based on transparency and accountability.

The concepts of performance and ethics have been discussed by several authors, and the relationship between these two notions is closely linked, particularly in the context of public management.

In addition, higher education is not only a simple stage in training young people, but above all an essential lever for accelerating the country's development and equipping it with the necessary skills to ensure its competitiveness. The importance of this sector has placed its reform on the priority list of the new development model. The special commission for the new development model (CSMD) diagnosed in its final report that: "Higher education suffers from a weak development of scientific research and a still limited opening on its socio-professional environment".

Indeed, the quality of higher and professional education and the enhancement of scientific research are key determinants of the development model; they are part of the prerequisites necessary to accelerate the trajectory of development of Morocco and to set it among the ranks of sustainably competitive nations

As the reform of the Higher Education and Scientific Research sectors is integrated into the priority building sites of the Kingdom, we are going to focus particularly on the scientific research component, the follow-up of its performance, and the integration of ethics as a principle of performance-based management and as a moral value of the actors in scientific research.

In this respect, the working problem is structured as follows: **"What is the place of performance-based management and ethics in the reform of the scientific research sector?"**

First, we will present some theoretical studies concerning the concept of performance given its multidisciplinary nature and the principles of ethics as an individual and collective responsibility. Second, we will explain the problematic nature of the work by utilizing a documentary study methodology, which consists first and foremost in identifying the strategy

and objectives of scientific research and innovation in Morocco, the indicators set up for the monitoring of the performance of these latter ones, as well as the foundations of the new reform of scientific research, which is based primarily on the principles of strategic vision.

1. Performance and ethics: a conceptual framework

1.1. Conceptual framework of performance

1.1.1 Multidisciplinarity of performance

Performance is a concept that we use daily in all sectors of human activity. Children must perform at school, adults must perform at work, and exceptional performances are expected from athletes and artists.

Etymologically, "performance" comes from the Old French "parformer," which meant "to accomplish, to perform" in the 13th century (Petit Robert). The English verb to "perform" appeared in the 15th century with a broader meaning.

In the context of globalization, non-performing organizations are doomed to disappear. As for the performance of public organizations, it is not uncommon to say that they are inefficient, ineffective, bureaucratic, slow to adapt or adjust to their environment, and wasteful. However, over the past two decades, the need to improve public sector performance has become more compelling in OECD member countries. (OECD, 2005, p. 64).

The word performance is synonymous with accomplishment, achievement and success; it also means the ability to achieve a set of objectives in an optimal way. In other words, performance means the achievement of assigned objectives in the shortest possible time, with the best possible quality and the minimum of resources, it is about achieving the maximum with the minimum. Performance can also be synonymous with evaluation and control, in order to judge the performance of a private company or a public institution it is imperative to go through an evaluation and control procedure (Kabba & Ejbari 2021)

1.1.2 Organizational performance

In the field of management, performance has always been an ambiguous notion, rarely defined explicitly. Since the 1980s, many researchers have attempted to define it (Bouquin, 1986; Bescos et al., 1993; Bourguignon, 1995; Lebas, 1995; Bessire, 1999...), and more recently this notion has been mobilized in the managerial literature to evaluate the implementation by companies of announced sustainable development strategies (Capron and Quairel, 2005).

According to Steers (1977), organizational performance is the ability to use scarce resources quickly to achieve the organization's true objectives and thus increase sales. Thus for Campbell (1977), the judgment of organizational performance is made through indicators related to the achievement of objectives, efficiency, industrial relations, and other different approaches.

Lebas and Euske (2007, p. 125) note that the word "performance" is widely used in all areas of management. In the field of management control, we find terms such as performance management, performance measurement, performance evaluation, and performance assessment.

According to Renaud &Berland (2010), performance has been reduced to its financial dimension; it consisted in achieving the profitability desired by shareholders with the sales and market share that preserved the company's sustainability. But in recent years, we have moved from a financial representation of performance to more global approaches that include social and environmental dimensions.

In the field of business, the slogan is very clear today: one must perform in order to guarantee the survival and sustainability of one's organization and also to increase one's competitive advantage. This era is particularly characterized by the intensification of competition, globalization, and the internationalization of markets. Thus, the concept of performance can be defined for a company as the level of achievement of results in relation to the efforts made and the resources consumed.

1.1.3 Performance is based on results

For a long time, performance was measured solely by profit and was thus considered a one-dimensional concept. The only objective was financial and consisted essentially of maximizing shareholder profitability through increased sales and market share, which were the only elements for measuring the company's performance (CHBAATTOU & LANKAOUIL2020).

Performance, according to the OECD, is "the output or results of activities carried out within the framework of objectives pursued. "Its purpose is to increase the number of cases in which governments achieve their objectives" (OECD 2005, p. 65).

The expression "organizational performance criteria" refers to the type of results that an organization seeks to achieve through its activities. Thus, the choice of an indicator stems

from the concern to measure what has been produced (result) and compare it to the product desired at the outset (objective).

In traditional public administration, "performance was determined by the assurance of compliance with existing laws and regulations, control of resources, and the ethics of public service" (OECD, 2005, p. 65). This approach has often been criticized for being more, if not solely, focused on processes or means rather than results.

In relation to these two criteria, Bourguignon (1995) grouped together three primary meanings: first, performance-success, which represents success from the observer's point of view; second, performance-result, which refers to the outcome of an action; and finally, performance-action, which refers to an action or process. The word is, therefore, "catch-all" (Pesqueux, 2010) because it includes both the idea of action and result.

1.2. Conceptual framework of ethics

1.2.1. Ethics and morality: two interdependent notions

According to Bédard (2000), ethics is part of axiology, which is considered to be one of the four fundamental components of all concrete human activity, and concerns in particular "the domain of the good" (Bédard, 2000). Axiology groups together three notions often used interchangeably: ethics, morality, and deontology. However, according to Pauchant (2002), these "cover very different realities."

Indeed, morality, from a philosophical point of view, refers to the specific norms of any society to ensure a collective life and social cohesion. According to Hadot (2001), ethics must include a moral dimension because it is an appreciation of good or evil in actions, for individuals, and in things.

However, ethics is a meta-point of view that involves reflection on the foundations and principles of morality (Morin, 2004). Thus, according to Mercier (2004), ethics is situated upstream of norms and downstream of action; it serves to guide individual and collective human conduct. The two terms are therefore interdependent because morality depends implicitly or explicitly on ethics, and ethics feeds on morality (Morin, 2004).

1.2.2. Ethics, individual and collective behavior

Ethics is an individual effort that considers an individual alone in front of his fellow human beings without dictating the conduct to follow (Noël, 2006). It is a set of practices that allow the individual to build himself in the presence and guidance of others (Gros, 2002). The first condition of ethics, therefore, lies in the adherence to and sharing of values that are oriented

towards a common good. Ethics is therefore embodied in a community and in shared values (Daudé and Noël, 2006). In the sense of Morin (2004), ethics implies a strong link between the individual and collective levels.

The second condition of ethics is the existence of formal and informal institutions that allow for the sharing of responsibilities and the awareness of the consequences of actions on oneself and on others. According to Gros (2002), this condition is based on socialized techniques that provide criteria for defining appropriate forms and limits for action. The objective is therefore to support individuals in their choices and actions through the criteria of common responsibility.

For this purpose, ethics is not universal, although it is nourished by individual and collective morals, it is also oriented towards practice and it aims at acting reasonably given the constraints that are imposed on individual and collective action. (Yatim 2015)

1.2.3. Ethics of management

Management serves to replace surveillance with rationality whose principles are supposed to be neutral, virtuous, and just (Boussard 2008). Thus, management ethics is the application to the professional sphere of a certain conception of good and evil. The ethics of a private organization are considered an internal constraint; they are more related to the means than to the ends to be achieved. Boyer (2002) emphasizes that management must include ethics as a decision criterion in the same way as other strategic variables.

According to Khaltar& Moon (2019), informal ethics management and transformational leadership improve organizational performance by reducing unethical behavior within an organization and increasing organizational commitment, while performance management directly improves organizational performance.

However, the mission of a public organization is to organize and guarantee the common good, whose ultimate custodian is the people (Rochet, 2010). The ethics of a public organization are therefore based on social goals. The management of public entities aims to achieve strategic objectives in an effective and efficient manner. However, the sustainability of the public organization does not depend on the achievement of these objectives but rather on the existence of a public problem that guides its mission.

1.3. Relationship between Ethics and Performance in the public sector

1.3.1. Ethics and performance interaction

The place of ethics in the implementation of the performance approach in the public sector has been raised by several authors. In fact, countries that have launched a process of modernization of their public administration consider the link between performance and ethics as a public management priority.

According to Bartoli (2011), a set of drifts pushes to clarify the relationship between performance and ethics, in particular conflicts of interest, the non-respect of the principle of neutrality, the abuse of power, the respect of the moral, physical, and psychic integrity of the agents and beneficiaries of the public service in connection with the objective of performance, etc. (BARTOLI & al., 2011). Performance cannot therefore be achieved at the expense of the purpose of public action. Thus, the problem of the relationship between ethics and performance in management must be approached, according to Bartoli, from the angle of the type of balance identified as follows:

- A case of performance bias: emphasizing primarily the management aspect and prioritizing the achievement of purely quantitative goals without regard for impact.
- A case of imbalance in favor of ethics: the public nature of management being privileged; the absolute respect of ethical considerations can hinder the collective performance of an organization.
- Case of balance between performance and ethics: the existence of tensions in this relationship can take different forms depending on their degree of intensity, and the consequences that result from this possible combination vary significantly.

1.3.2. Ethics as a tool for performance in the public sector

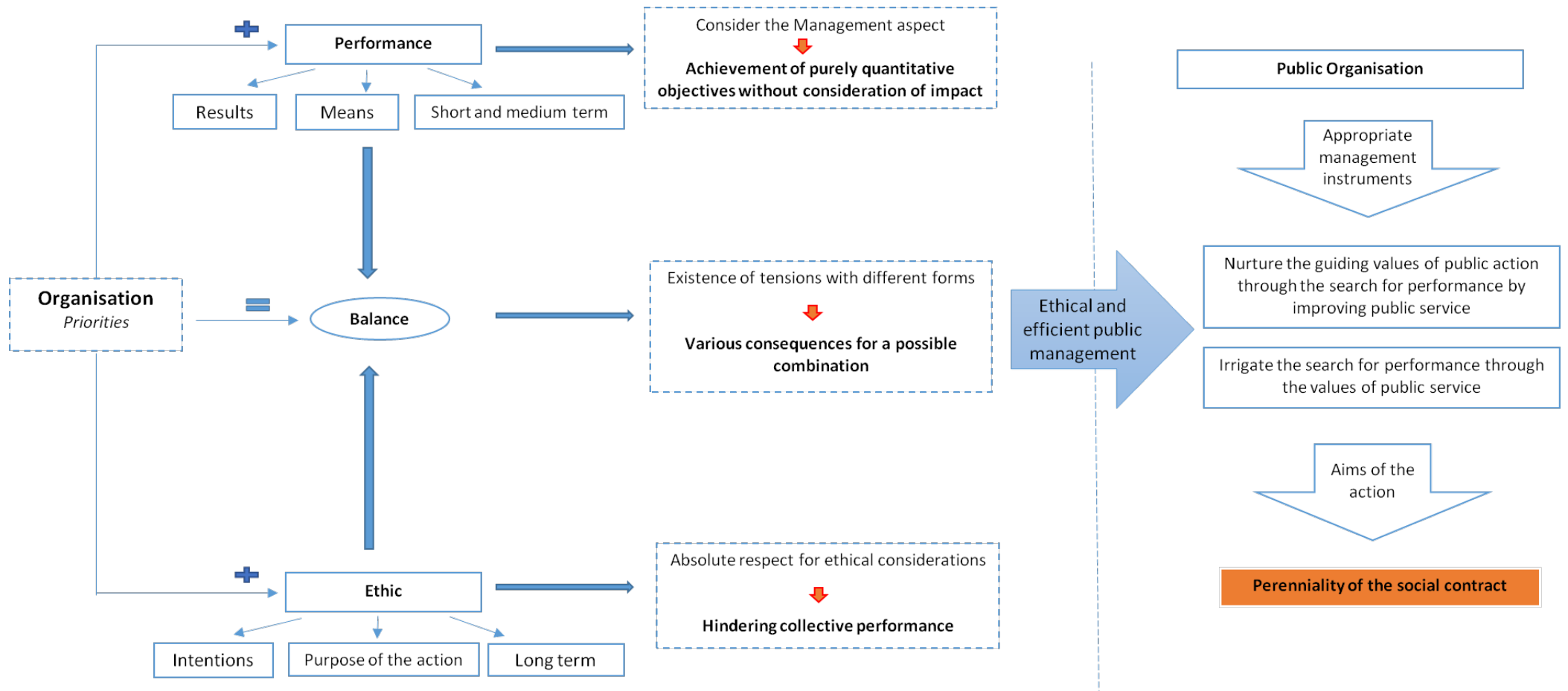
In the private sector, ethics is an internal and external issue in relation to the company, closely linked to the organization of the company and the management of behaviors. It is the most appropriate way to build the foundations for development capable of reconciling individual motivation and organizational performance. It is a process that culminates in the integration of ethical principles into the management of the company's activities. (Nafzaoui. M.A. & al., 2020)

This issue also applies to the public sector, according to the OECD, Ethics should no longer be considered separately and distinctly, but as an integral part of all management systems. The issues of ethics, social justice, and collective interest make the difference between the

managerial tools of the public and private spheres; they are linked to the objectives of effectiveness and efficiency, in the sense that they represent this primary objective of the public sector.

The ethical climate is defined as the set of shared perceptions of how ethical issues should be handled in an organization (Victor and Cullen, 1988). The modernization of public management has introduced this concept to increase the transparency and legibility of public action based on accountability and responsibility.

Figure N°1: relationship between ethics and performance in management/ in public management



Source: Authors' conception adapted from Bartoli & al (2011)

1.3.3. Ethical orientation of the national administration reform plan

In Morocco, over the past decade, several efforts have been made to strengthen the integrity of public officials and encourage ethical behavior within public institutions. This has been done in particular through the transposition of private sector tools to the public sector and the adoption of new strategies to fight administrative corruption (Akhlafou & al., 2016).

The main vision of the National Administration Reform Plan 2018-2020 is to achieve "an administration at the service of the citizen and the enterprise, responsible for the continuity of public services, subject to quality standards while serving the general interest" (National Administration Reform Plan 2018-2020, Kingdom of Morocco).

The concept of ethics was at the heart of the principles of this plan. It aims to regain the confidence of citizens around the public administration by acting on organizational and managerial changes aimed at improving the quality of public services, strengthening the skills of human resources, and preserving the general interest in public services.

In addition, the national plan for the reform of the administration aims to diversify the offer of public services to fight against social exclusion, restructure the administration for efficient institutions capable of ensuring political, economic, and human development throughout the country, and to ensure the legal, organizational, and managerial means necessary for the development of public services.

2. Performance and ethics of managing scientific research in Morocco

The new organic law relating to the Finance Law (LOF), which institutes new rules for the preparation and execution of the State budget, is based on three pillars: performance, transparency, and accountability.

The first pillar, "Strengthening the Performance of Public Management," is embodied on the one hand by the introduction of three-year budget programming, which provides a framework for monitoring performance by making it possible to place budget management in a three-year perspective, and on the other hand by the development of budget programs aimed at improving the governance of public policies and strengthening the accountability of managers.

The search for performance in the public sector implies the implementation of a whole approach based on a system for steering administrations to achieve the expected results. It aims to strengthen transparency to better inform Parliament and the public about the expected objectives and the results obtained, to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of public

spending, thus guaranteeing a quality public service at the lowest cost, and to increase the accountability of managers with respect to their obligations to report on their performance and results.

2.1. Objectives and Indicators of the Scientific and Technological Research Program

In the sense of the LOF (2013), an objective expresses the priorities that will enable the program's goals to be achieved. The LOF thus defines public performance as the achievement of previously defined objectives in terms of socio-economic effectiveness, efficiency, and quality of service.

Moreover, an indicator is a numerical representation that measures the achievement of an objective and makes it possible to assess its attainment as objectively as possible; it must have a strong logical link with the objective set and relate to a substantial aspect of the expected result of the program.

The table below presents a compilation of the objectives and indicators of the program:

Table N°1: Objectives and indicators of the program Scientific and Technological Research

Program	Objectives	Indicators
SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL RESEARCH <i>Program Leader: Director of Scientific Research and Innovation.</i>	Supporting scientific research to improve its production and influence at the international level	Number of doctoral theses defended
		Number of publications in indexed international journals Sub-indicators: Number of co-publications with foreign partners
	Promote the results of scientific and technological research	Number of research and innovation projects carried out in partnership with companies
		Number of patents filed by universities

	Promote the mutualization of the use of research infrastructures	Number of analyses and measurements carried out by the Technical Support Units for Scientific and Technical Research (UATRS)
		Number of articles downloaded from the databases available at the Moroccan Institute of Scientific and Technical Information (IMIST)

Source: MENFPESRS, 2021 Performance Project

The monitoring of the performance of the scientific research sector in Morocco is based on the evaluation of the rates of achievement of these predefined objectives with reference to the indicators mentioned above. These indicators are calculated on the basis of data collected from scientific research actors in Morocco, yet the problem that arises is the adaptation of these indicators to the reality of scientific research and the challenges encountered in order to assess the performance of the sector and the quality of research in Morocco.

2.2. Strategic vision of scientific research reform

The strategy is the overall reflection that governs the choice of objectives presented in the annual performance projects. It also describes how the means will be implemented to achieve the objectives.

Scientific and technological research is considered a lever for socio-economic development and is one of the priorities of the strategic vision of the 2015–2030 reform initiated by the Higher Council for Education, Training, and Scientific Research.

In addition to the promotion of scientific and technical research and innovation, the CSEFRS makes proposals on several levels:

- Institutional: Through the Promotion of the Scientific Research System and the Restructuring and Reorganization of the Department of Scientific Research
- Financing: Increase the share of GDP allocated to the financing of scientific research; set up tax incentives for companies that initiate and pilot research with economic or social benefits for the nation; and finally, support the National Fund of Support to Research
- Coordination of the research policy
- Training and Qualification: Enhancing Human Capital

- Valorization, research structure: protection of intellectual property, creation of new poles for economic and social development
- Monitoring and evaluation: the establishment of a rational system of governance and management with accurate indicators to monitor and evaluate scientific and technical research and innovation.

The strategic plan of the higher education and scientific research sector defines the objectives of scientific and technological research aimed at

- Improving the Governance of the National System of Scientific Research and Innovation
- The continuation of the reform of training through research in the centers of doctoral studies and the promotion of excellence;
- The reinforcement of the infrastructures of scientific research and the mechanisms of valorization of the results and promotion of the innovation;
- Establishment of an integrated system related to scientific research;
- The reinforcement of partnership and cooperation at the national and international level and the mobilization of Moroccan competences residing abroad.

2.3. Governance of Scientific Research according to the New Development Model

The scientific research and innovation sector constitutes 0.8% of the GDP, and this low level of funding hinders the development of the sector. However, the financial governance of research projects is an important issue to promote scientific research in a reactive and competitive context. The administrative and financial management of research projects remains complicated and not compatible with the specificities and activities of scientific research and innovation.

Indeed, the Special Commission on the Development Model recommended improving the governance of the sector. In terms of financing, the CSMD recommends the establishment of a fund for financing research and innovation managed directly by an independent scientific council and oriented directly towards inventors and researchers.

As for universities, which are considered the major actors in scientific research, the new governance will be based on a steering system that is "transparent, credible, and focused on performance" through the establishment of multi-year contracts between these institutions and the State, setting the objectives to be achieved.

Conclusion

The Higher Education and Scientific Research sector is considered a strategic sector and a major reform project. The search for performance in this sector implies the implementation of a whole approach based on a steering system to achieve the expected results. However, finding a balance in the relationship between performance and ethics in public management is a major challenge for managers, as the orientation towards performance requires the achievement of strategic objectives by focusing much more on results than on means, whereas ethics governs individual and collective behavior. The integration of ethics in decision-making stems from the principle of transparency, which is a major issue in democracy. Therefore, performance and good governance in public management are at the heart of all public sector modernization reforms.

This article aims to shed light on ethics as a main component that is integrated in the evaluation of public management performance. Thus, in the scientific research sector, ethics is not only about the financial management system, but is a pillar of the scientific process. Ethics and scientific integrity are considered a principle, a value, and a moral responsibility of the researcher; each one must adhere to the recognized ethical practices as well as to the ethical standards supported by the various national, sectoral, and institutional codes of ethics, hence the regulatory role of the establishment of a national research ethics committee, which is necessary for the monitoring and governance of scientific research.

In light of these findings, this research has limitations. First of all, there is the absence of an information system on the evaluation of the budgetary performance of the scientific research and innovation sector, the complexity of defining the relevant model of ethics management within the universities, given the competition and the existing competitiveness between the different establishments of the system, and the absence of a national reference system for the ethics of scientific research and innovation.

Taking these limitations into account, we propose new research perspectives:

- Work on a critical evaluation of the budgetary performance of the scientific research sector based on the evolution of key indicators.
- Study the mechanisms of financing scientific research in Morocco by focusing on the role of cooperation and national and international partnership as an important source.
- Work on the management of ethics of scientific research and innovation by Moroccan universities.

- Study the role of sectoral policies as levers for reforming scientific research in accordance with national priorities.
- Work on a benchmark on the performance indicators of scientific research in the Maghreb countries.

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