Management Control: Tool of Responsibility In The Moroccan University

Khalid Rouggani, Mohammed LAMCHAOUAT and Nabil BOUAYAD AMINE
Research Laboratory LEG, Hassan I University, Settat, Morocco
m.lamchaouat@uhp.ac.ma

Abstract:

This paper has two main objectives. Firstly, it aims to remove some ambiguities surrounding the subject of responsibility in the Moroccan universities, we demonstrate that this concept seems imperiously linked to some other related concepts, namely, deconcentration and decentralization, contractualization, motivation and incentives, delegation of authority, good governance and accountability. Secondly, we try to demonstrate that the responsibility is present at the heart of the function of management control. Thus, its tools serve to further empower different actors of the academic field, in particular through responsibility centers, dashboards, reporting and budgeting system. In this regard, our article is based on a qualitative approach and a theoretical methodology articulated especially around a documentary review.

Keywords: Responsibility, management control, Moroccan university, related principles.

Introduction

At the beginning of the third millennium, Morocco undertook numerous projects aimed at the modernization of the public sector. Indeed, the finance Act 2002 introduced the principle of contractualization in public management. Some public institutions therefore benefitted from a high degree of autonomy and so more responsibility. The new constitutional order of the Kingdom is based on the principles of good governance and the correlation between accountability and responsibility. So, public services “report the management of public funds in accordance with the legislation in force and are submitted, in this respect, to the obligations of control and evaluation” (Moroccan Constitution of 2011, article 156, p. 65). Hence, responsibility and accountability at the level of public administrations are in the heart of the new Moroccan Constitution. This is enacted through the adoption of some reforms at the level of that Constitution in a gradual way.

Recently, Morocco has created some public institutions, whose task is to present annual reports on their activities, at least once a year, to the Parliament for debate. These establishments are formalized within the new constitution of 2011, namely, the mediator, the Council of the Moroccan community abroad, the competition Council, the national authority of probity, of the prevention and fight against corruption, the superior council of education, training and scientific research, etc. In the same direction, the Moroccan university has undergone these reforms. Indeed, the Law 01-00, which is proclaimed in the light of the National Education and training Charter in 1999, has come to implant the idea of Contractualization in State-Universities. Therefore, this public structure enjoysan
effective financial autonomy and is able to create new fields of work and research as well as organize itself at the level of multidisciplinary research projects.

In this paper, we try to achieve two main objectives, namely:
- To remove ambiguities surrounding the issue of responsibility within the Moroccan university.
- To put forward the role of management control and responsibility in the academic field.
To achieve these two main objectives, we adopt a theoretical methodology articulated especially around a documentary review. Therefore, our approach is considered qualitative.

I. The responsibility in the academic environment:

Beforehand, it is useful to define the notion of the responsibility. According to Larousse, a person in charge of something or responsible for something is someone who has to report to an authority about it and is accountable for his acts (or the acts of those under his responsibility). He has a formal delegation of authority (Bescos and al., 1997). To develop the concept of responsibility, two elements are usually put forward by Vancil (1979):

- The authority: we are responsible for something (a department, a division, a product, a process, a geographic area...).
- The obligation to report its acts (accountability): we are responsible in front of somebody, which implies the existence of performances evaluation system of this responsible.

There are many legal articles which give the aspect of authority to managers in the Moroccan university. For example, the president represents the university legally, and seals agreements and conventions after agreement of the University Council and does all conservatory acts, etc.

In the university context, the concept of responsibility seems imperiously linked to some related concepts, namely, deconcentration and decentralization, contractualization, motivation and incentives, delegation of authority, good governance and accountability. The following is a schematic representation of these key elements:

![Figure 1: Related concepts about responsibility.](image-url)
For example, according to the World Bank (1994) and the Development Programme of the United Nations (2005, p. 19), the responsibility and the accountability constitute two pillars among others of the good governance.

It follows that, via a thorough literature review, we highlight the aforementioned concepts, and link them with the topic of the responsibility within the Moroccan university:

**a. Deconcentration and decentralization as a decisive choice**

In fact, the Moroccan government conducted a decentralization and administrative deconcentration policy to release essentially “constructive initiatives, while clearly placing the persons in charge, anywhere across the country, to solve practical problems of the sector on the spot” (National Charter of Education and Training 2000, Article 152, P.68).

Because of the high number of students, infrastructure and staff constraints, the process of deconcentration and decentralization is becoming imperative today. Indeed, this process facilitates partnership and collaboration, empowers and helps to liberate initiatives and obviously to answer the need for fast adaptation with the regional evolutions.

The university is thus enjoying an effective administrative and financial autonomy (Law 01-00, Article 5) and a distinctive scientific and educational attribute and responsibility. In this regard, the Moroccan university enjoys a considerable autonomy; it organizes itself in the most suitable manner, and so generates additional resources, uses and allots them optimally. It benefits from a specific criteria -determined State subsidy, and manages its own human resources in the best way.

A national coordinating body for higher education has seen the light in consultation with all universities and related academic establishments, based on the principles of flexibility, efficiency and conciliation between university autonomy and overall coherence of the Higher Education policies.

Therefore, through deconcentration and decentralization, the university has become much more responsible than before. These two processes are real vectors for accountability.

**b. Accountability Topic**

According to the Moroccan constitution (Article 156, p.65), "Public services report the management of public funds according to the legislation in force and are submitted, in this respect, to the obligations of control and evaluation".

Also, this principle is strongly highlighted through the Law 01-00. According to Article 77, the education and training system in Morocco is submitted in its entirety to a regular assessment, on its internal and external profitability, and covering all educational, financial and administrative aspects, on self-assessment of each establishment and periodic opinions’ survey of educational stakeholders and their partners. In fact, during the review of the annual budget law, the government presents -in front of the Houses of Parliament- a report on the state of balance sheets and of perspectives that emerge from the above mentioned assessments.

Thus, each year in September, university presidents and directors of higher education institutions, present a similar report for discussion by the regional council.

A synthesis of the generated reports will be published by the governmental authorities in charge of higher education to make them available to public opinion.

The constitutional system of the Kingdom is based on "[...] Principles [...] of the correlation between responsibility and accountability" (New Constitution of the Kingdom, Article I, P.11). These two principles are so closely linked.
c. Good Governance:

Governance allows for better relations between all stakeholders in the entire university system, which leads to its smooth functioning. In fact, it is a philosophy that would give democracy its true dimension because it would be turned towards the citizen (Delperee F., 2002, P.56).

Following the example of Stakeholders theory of Freeman (1984), the university governance is ensured by multiple actors. In fact, the university council consists "of the President of the University, deans and directors, faculty and student delegates, prominent figures from the world of business and culture" (National Charter of Education and Training 2000, Article 152, P70).

This report clearly highlights the will of Morocco to instill the culture of citizen participation in public management. Also, the involvement of the directors of private education in university governance is an obvious intention to consolidate the public - private partnership (PPP). Similarly, the development of the Emergency Plan stems from all hands participatory rationale that aims to involve all major actors in the education and training system.

d. Contractualization:

Contractualization is a mutual consensus between two signatory parties who agree on principles to be respected or achievements to be done, and requires follow-up as well as the arbitral bodies in case of issues of no respect of terms (penalties ...) (Demeestère 2001).

In the light of the agency theory, there is the principal (the State) the financer, and the agent (the university). This is a mutual commitment of both partners.

The university enjoys a pedagogical, scientific and cultural autonomy. Some activities of training and research can be the subject of multiannual contracts signed between universities and the State. This is the principle of contractualization, which is the result of the principle of decentralization and the deconcentration (solution of centralism).

Contractualization is implemented to promote the development of a culture of results or outcome and an effective piloting. It is about reinforcing autonomy while emphasizing accountability and spirit of initiative.

For example, a four-year contract (2009-2012) was concluded on a specific emergency program for each university, the National Center for Scientific and Technical Research and Technique and the National Office of Social and Cultural University Work. In the light of this contract, the university is to respect the clauses of the contract in order to reach an objective, and the State (represented by the minister of higher education and that of the Economy and Finance) is to grant to the necessary fu and human resources. During this period, the university is supposed to present progress reports and annual reports at the end of each financial year.

e. Motivation and incentive:

Responsibility implies necessarily motivation and incentives. For the purpose of implementing this principle, universities are authorized to serve, from their own revenues from research and service work, complementary compensations to their staff (Article 17 of Law 01-00).

f. Authority delegation:
We cannot separate accountability and delegation of authority. Those are two sides of the same coin. We cannot grant responsibility to someone without delegating to him a part of authority.

According to the Article 12 of Law 01-00, the University Council can delegate some of its responsibilities to the university president or to a commission from the council. And according to the Article 16, the President also delegates all or part of its responsibilities to the deans and directors of academic establishments for fields under their jurisdiction, especially regarding the functioning and equipment budget.

II. Management Control As A Responsibility Tool:

It is defined by Anthony (1965) as "the process by which managers ensure that resources are obtained and used effectively and efficiently in the accomplishment of the organizations’ objectives" (Anthony, 1965 P.17). In 1998, Anthony and Govindarajan (1998, p.6) redefined it as "the process by which managers influence other members of the organization to implement the organization’s strategies." As for Bouquin (1998), management control is the intersection of three fundamental missions. It is the hinge between the strategy and the daily?, of which it must ensure interaction, by guaranteeing that the current actions are in coherence with the strategy, but also by allowing managers to inflect their strategic approach according to the facts found in the current functioning of the organization. It is a vector, as all control processes, of behavior orientation of actors, perceived and, in a way, established as autonomous decision-makers, through the delegated management of couple Resources / Results. Its object, finally, is being the economic functioning of organizations; it is based on a modeling of the relationship between the pursued results and resources to mobilize and to use to achieve them (Bouquin 1998, p.68).

Karine Cerrada and Yves De Rongé (2012, p.10) recounted three phases for the control process, the diagram below highlights them:

![Diagram of the three phases of the control management process]

We deduce that the contracts sealed by the government and universities follow the same logic of this process, that is to say, they are articulated in the same way as the three phases of management control highlighted above.

The objectives are mentioned in the contract; the resources are granted by the State and must be used effectively and efficiently. The reports that the university must submit annually or at the end of each stage are the equivalent of the reporting process in terms of management control, which amounts to the accountability.

For this purpose, management control represents an unprecedented opportunity in the context of contractualization. In fact, it is a key to give a sense of responsibility to the various stakeholders in order to achieve the objectives as assigned in the contract.
We emphasize the empowering and accountability process on two levels, at first the macro level, that is between the State and the university. Secondly, within the university, this is what we call the internal one. The first level is formalized, but the second has not reached a satisfactory level of formalization, due to several factors, among which the fact that Moroccan universities have not yet formalized organizational charts approved by the authorities. Therefore, departments within universities are not established in a systematic manner, that is to say there is no appointment of department heads, etc. The subject of responsibility is at the heart of the function of management control. Thus, its tools serve to further empower managers within the public organizations, in particular through responsibility centers, dashboards, reporting and budgeting system.

According to Bouquin (1994), the responsibility center is defined as an entity whose leader is committed to achieve some results in the agreed deadline with predefined means. Which specifies that the responsibility center is the idea of a pair goals/means. So, through this tool, Massenet (1975) recommended a "responsible administration" and proposed to create "autonomous centers of responsibility and management" provided with funds attributed in a comprehensive manner, of an individualized mission, with a right to choose their collaborators, whose results are evaluated and whose manager may be chosen unautomatically and may see his duties withdrawn from him (Demeestère 2001, P.90). The logic of responsibility centers deserves serious cultural modifications to move from a highly hierarchical bureaucratic culture, characterized by an accentuated centralization, to a more decentralized culture, encouraging initiative, compartmentalization and the development of local strategies. The head of each responsibility center within the university, with the financial, human and material resources that are placed at its disposal, should lead to the realization of the objectives specified on the contract. And regularly, he has to submit progress reports of these contributions (accountability or reporting).

Regarding the Dashboard, this is a set of piloting indicators, built periodically, for a person in charge, to guide his decisions and his actions in order to reach the performance goals (Doriath 2008, P.143).

The dashboard highlights performance and its dysfunctions, it is considered as a communication support between managers, while promoting decision making, after analyzing the values, and implementing corrective actions. Thus, through this instrument, the performance of the department, which is under the responsibility of a person, is highlighted. This will allow us to lead a comparison between the different results from different managers within the university. This technique will generate an internal competition between academic actors.

As to reporting or accountability, it is a set of result indicators, built a posteriori, periodically, to inform the hierarchy about the performance of a unit. In the context of decentralized management, the reporting allows to verify that responsibility centers respect their contractual obligations. The reporting is an essential component for the follow-up of achievements of the responsibility centers, and for the behavior piloting of their managers (Doriath 2008, P.143).

Abdelghani Bendriouch (2005, p.10) defined the budget system or budgeting by how budgets are prepared and analyzed. And this is done, according to several approaches: by nature, by product, by process, by department, etc. For example, we can analyze budgets by budgetary center in three ways, namely, a participatory one based on the objectives, an incremental one by reference to previous realizations and a authoritarian one imposing the budget to managers. Thus, it is the first approach which can be in favor of the responsibility process for the university case. Consequently, the manager has more responsibility, because he participates in the definition of objectives and of the adequate budget.

Furthermore, two major issues emerge in this case. More we go down towards the base of the university structures more we are far from being satisfied regarding the budgetary system thus conceived of. Also, we must not deny the financial constraints which may arise during the implementation of budgets at university level; therefore, the expected objectives cannot be reached as a whole.
Conclusion

As a conclusion, the issue of responsibility in the field of academia is highlighted through two foundations, namely, authority and accountability (Vancil 1979). Moreover, we also noticed that it is dependent on other principles: deconcentration and decentralization, contractualization, motivation and incentives, the delegation of authority and good governance.

We were able to make a link between these principles and responsibility through the use of illustrative examples encountered in Moroccan legislation.

Regarding management control as a tool of responsibility, understanding the State-University contractualization process and Management Control led us to conclude that these two processes are closely similar. Therefore, management control tools represent an unprecedented opportunity to raise the responsibility level of the different actors within the university organization, while going from the top to the operational base.

It has become necessary to formally recognize management control tools on both Macro and Microlevels. That is to say between the State and universities and between the university presidency and its various establishments respectively. So, a management control system must cover the entire perimeter of the university. Obviously, that will allow feedback (organizational learning) in a regular way, which will have a positive impact on the definition of objectives, and even on the global strategy for higher education.

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