

The performance of public organizations between the instrumental management approach and the influence of the social representations of civil servants

- **AUTHOR 1** : SIJILMASSI IDRISSE SOUKAINA,
- **AUTHOR 2** : EJBARI ZOUHAIR,

(1): Doctoral student - ABDELMALEK ESSADI University
Tangier Faculty of Legal, Economic and Social Sciences

(2): Professor of Higher Education - ABDELMALEK ESSADI University
Tangier Faculty of Legal, Economic and Social Sciences



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ABSTRACT:

This scientific contribution addresses the question of the social representations of the performance of public organizations among senior civil servants in the light of the legal measures mobilized by the organic law of finance laws (LOLF) towards public management through performance.

By adopting interviews conducted with these actors and referring to the theory of social representations, we highlight the influence of the cognitive aspect of actors on their behaviours and commitments in performance management practices. This contribution is based on a comparison between the theoretical foundations of public sector performance and the social representations of civil servants in this respect, to verify whether there is a cognitive convergence on this subject between the meaning intended by the directives of political and administrative decision-makers and the perception and behaviours of civil servants as operating actors.

KEYWORDS:

Public organization, LOLF, performance, social representations, civil servant.

Introduction:

For more than three decades, and as a result of the heavy budgetary costs incurred by public organizations in implementing their public policies, and in the face of the permanent scarcity of State resources and the increased social demands of citizens, public management has undergone a major evolution, both conceptually and practically; marked essentially by the rise of the *New Public Management* paradigm (Hood, 1991 and 1995) as a new management approach advocated by the quest for public performance.

In this sense, the new national legislation marked by the implementation of the organic law of finance laws (LOLF) in 2015, calls on public entities to rethink the way they operate and to better manage their actions, which will have to be evaluated in relation to their performance, understood as the degree of achievement of the objectives initially defined in their performance projects, while preserving their alignment with the State's strategic directives. Several changes are therefore beginning to take place, particularly in the management functions appropriate to public finance and accounting, strategy, and management control.

In accordance with the provisions of the LOLF, for each public policy, managers are required to define the strategies to be pursued, the objectives to be achieved, and the most appropriate performance indicators for evaluating their actions. As a result, the issue of performance evaluation and the tools needed to report on it are becoming central concerns for public managers. Of course, it is perfectly legitimate to think about the divergence of perceptions regarding the purpose of public performance. This suggests the risk of constructing different representations for the same reality. This can only lead to problems of interpretation and subsequently to divergent action, especially as the concept in question is polysemous from the outset, and sometimes even vague enough to be easily defined.

Indeed, numerous scientific studies have shown the plurality of linguistic and conceptual meanings of the notion of performance (Bessire, 1999; Bourguignon, 1995), that's why the present contribution aims to address the perception of civil servants about the performance of public organizations. This postulate is reinforced by reference to the theory of social representations (Moscovici, 1961; Jodelet, 1984 and 1989) which assumes that there is no objective reality, but rather different realities socially reconstructed by individuals and social groups.

To this end, this article is exploratory in nature, based on an interpretivist approach that relies on abductive reasoning to verify the following hypothesis: "the outcome of public management through performance depends not only on the tools introduced by public decision-makers but also on

the social representations of civil servants and implementing actors alike ". So, the central question is: *"What is a high-performance public organization? How is it perceived by Moroccan civil servants?"*

In the second stage, we will move towards an empirical test of the actors' representations through an exploratory study involving a diverse sample of profiles to illustrate the degree of convergence or divergence of perception in relation to the notion of performance. Finally, in the third stage, we plan to present and analyze the results obtained using a content analysis.

From a theoretical point of view, our ambition is to enrich knowledge about the concept of performance in the context of public organizations, while at the same time taking care to capture all the representations of each player in the chosen sample. In addition, our study will be supported by the main research works relating to the issue of public performance, the theory of social representations and socio-cognition, those of (Moscovici, 1961; Jodelet, 1989; Hood, 1991; Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2000; Gruening, 2001).

I. Literature review

The aim of our literature review is to address two main concepts that form the core issue of this research: firstly, performance in the public sector and, secondly, stakeholders' representations of this subject.

I.1. Public performance: in search of stakeholders' representations

Given the central role played by public organizations in the implementation of public policies, the issue of their performance is open to debate, especially as the objectives of these organizations are overlapping and polymorphous. For this reason, understanding and grasping their performance, and being able to say whether an administration is performing well or not, is of particular interest to practitioners and researchers alike. Addressing the issue of public performance also means gaining a better understanding of the content of its model in new managerial approaches (O. Aktouf, 1994; T. Peters, 1992; and H. Serieyx, 1993).

As mentioned above, apart from any public resonance, the concept of performance is open to numerous explanations and interpretations. (J. Saulquin et G. Schier 2007) describe the concept as a "suitcase" word because it conveys a whole basket of different meanings. For the two authors, "performance has as many facets as there are observers inside and outside the organisation"¹⁰. We have thus moved from a notion of a logical and neutral nature to one that is more dependent on the perception that the players in the organization have of it. This means that, in any given situation, different interpretations can arise within the organization regarding its performance, which implies that the value of performance is closely linked to what stakeholders expect of it.

In management literature, the concept of performance is highly polysemous, but according to (Hood, 1995) it can be associated with one of the following three meanings:

- ✓ **Performance is success:** it is a function of the actor's representations of success.
- ✓ **Performance is the result of action:** this second meaning refers to the activity of measurement and does not involve a value judgement.
- ✓ **Performance is an action:** in this sense, performance is therefore the realization of a skill in the hands of the actor performing the action.

The polysemous nature of the word performance confirms that there is no real common ground between the various meanings mentioned above, but rather "family resemblances" such that they can be combined mentally. It should therefore be noted that, despite the predominant place occupied by public performance in the language of reform, its definition still poses a problem, and

it is therefore essential to define its contours, which are intrinsic to the context in which the concept is used.

Historically, the quest for public sector performance is a phenomenon that came into its own during the era of New Public Management. The fundamental idea of this school of thought is that the public sector should be governed by the same management methods and rules as the private sector, and that the management tools developed and introduced in private companies can be fluidly applied to all public organizations, the main objective of which is to introduce results-based management.

According to (Hood,1995), "this latter dimension of the quest for results"¹, is fully "at the center of the policies inspired by New Public Management" and is "both the objective and the means of public reforms"² (Chappoz et Pupion, 2013a, 2013b). There are two nuances to the concept of public performance: on the one hand, the issue of performance is not at all new to these organizations, since the rationalization of budgetary choices (RCB) has been envisaged in France since 1960 in order to introduce a culture of results within public organizations; on the other hand, the prominence of the notion of performance in the public context takes on a different interpretation, since for public organizations, the introduction of new management methods is a means of imposing new practices that were previously little taken into account by these organizations.

However, in the national context, it seems that the body of recent public reforms. envisaged promotes more the instrumental vision of performance through the implementation of planning, control, and evaluation tools. The proof of this is that the Organic Law on Finance Laws (LOLF) is organized around six areas of work, including accountability through a culture of results, which requires public organizations to develop an instrumental approach to managing, monitoring, and evaluating their annual performance.

Thus, the deployment of a performance culture within public entities is fundamentally reflected in the quantification of activities and the measurement of results using measurement indicators to assess performance. This is an explicitly conventional way of defining performance (Bouckaert and Halligan, 2008). Quantifying performance therefore appears to be the most tangible expression of the performance targeted by steering and assessment tools.

Talking about public performance means knowing which path to take that of simple

¹ Hood, C. (1995). The "New Public Management" in the 1980s: Variation on a Theme. *Accounting, Organizations and Society*, 20(2/3), pp. 93-109.

² Chappoz, Y., Pupion, P.-C. (2013a). The quest for performance. *Gestion et management public*, 1(3), pp. 1-2.

management instrumentation inspired by new public management, which simply aims to encourage the transposition of private sector management models to the public sector. Or it could be to study the way in which tools are interpreted and used, to explain the socio- cognitive factors influencing the outcome of the new management approach and, consequently, the results obtained.

Furthermore, the literature review shows that most of the research work on this issue focuses more on the measurement of performance than on its social representation among the players. For many authors, performance measurement tends more towards the financial aspect of the organization in question. Given this critical point, the question that needs to be raised is: "Can we really reduce an organization's performance to its financial indicators alone?"

Aware of this criticism, some authors consider that measuring performance by financial results alone is metaphorically compared to a driver who steers his vehicle by his rear-view mirrors alone (O'Brien, 2000). It is important for the State to know how its players 'decode' the notion of performance, which is currently at the pinnacle of public policy, and with what system of interpretation of reality civil servants perceive this notion.

With the aim of broadening the field of understanding of the factors that explain the performance of public organizations, we are therefore posing the question of how civil servants represent the concept of performance. Our aim in this contribution is to highlight the cognitive levers and obstacles likely to mark out the managerial changes linked to the introduction of the performance approach in public entities.

1.2. Understanding social representations, a prerequisite for measurement

For (Jodelet,1989), a social representation is "a form of knowledge, socially elaborated and shared, having a practical aim and contributing to the construction of a reality common to a social group"³. With this definition, the author insists on the perception of the world to demonstrate that individuals exercise control and power over their environment and consequently act on it. (Abric,1994) considers that social representations help to create theories that explain our environment.

The founding reasoning of the theory of social representations is that there is no such thing as objective reality, but rather a reality perceived by the individual or by the group. It is a subjective reconstruction of reality that is formed in the individual's cognitive reservoir and incorporates his or her value system through the social and ideological history that surrounds him or her (Abric,

³ Jodelet D., (1989) *Les représentations sociales : un domaine en expansion*, in *Lesreprésentations sociales*, sociologie d'aujourd'hui, P.U.F., p. 41.

1994). In this respect, an individual being (the subject) expresses his point of view about a situation (the object), both of which have meaning only through representation (Seca, 2010).

The theoretical framework used in this essay is therefore based primarily on the analysis of social representations. Applied to the concept of public performance, this will make it possible to focus on the central as well as marginal characteristics which construct the representations of civil servants on public performance. Following this logic, (Abric, 1994) considers that a social representation involves the interaction of two sub-systems, namely a central core and a peripheral core.

A central core, made up of one or more elements which give it its meaning, is also the most constant part and the most resistant to change, and its transformation will therefore result in a total modification, or even destruction, of the representation. Every element of the representation therefore depends on its central core, which embodies the group's identity and social cohesion. The function of the central core is therefore that of consensus, because it establishes what the group must adopt and share in the representation.

The peripheral elements, on the other hand, correspond to all the opinions and beliefs concerning the object of the representation. It is also the boundary between the representation and the daily reality. It receives its strength from the heterogeneous elements that come from individual and contextual variations (Souchet and Tafani, 2004). Its variations are prescriptive in terms of the behaviors to adopt and the positions to take in different situations. As for the peripheral core of the representation, it acts as a "buffer" for the central core (Abric, 1994) providing a degree of protection for the representation's non-negotiable knowledge.

Considering the interpretative risk inherent in the notion of performance, each individual "reconstructs" the object in such a way that it becomes part of his or her socio-cognitive system, we can therefore accept that a director of public finance has a representation of performance that is a priori different from that of a manager of a social public service, given their training background, the nature of the work department, and the ideological and socio-cultural stereotypes conveyed in the administration in which they operate.

It is therefore highly likely that distinct representations can be found within the same group. For example, in a research study carried out among craftsmen, the results revealed two categories of representations by craftsmen of the object of competition, the difference between which lies in their system of values and/or in their perception of themselves (Abric, 1994).

Within this framework, (Jodelet,2008) suggests the existence of three spheres making up social representations, namely: the sphere of subjectivity, intersubjectivity and trans- subjectivity. Firstly, the subjective sphere refers to the various cognitive and emotional processes that enable individuals to appropriate and construct their social representations. These processes depend mainly on the individual's own life experience, which will then create a meaning for the performance object by linking it to his or her own interests.

At the same time, as (Jodelet,1989) points out, social representations play a part in the construction of a shared meaning and reality within a social group. The intersubjective sphere thus makes it possible to show how social representations evolve because of interactions between individuals, since one of the major functions of social representations is to facilitate the exchange of ideas and beliefs between groups. Focusing on the representations of stakeholders, which in our case are public service employees, also enables us to study and understand the outcome of their encounters and dialogues because of the social relations they develop in their socio-professional environment, and to understand whether and how these ~~ats~~ will reach a consensus about the performance object.

Clearly, it is important to bear in mind that civil servants in public administrations do not have the same room for maneuver as managers in a private company to defend their point of view in relation to the object of performance. It must be borne in mind that these players, because of the links and management rules which govern them in their work units, are in a very narrow position of action in relation to their hierarchical dependence which controls them as much as the political dependence which directs them.

All this can only make it more difficult for them to defend their vision of things and, subsequently, for their actions to be consistent with the sense of performance targeted by public policies. Thus, the framework of interpersonal exchange that brings public servants together at the level of the different hierarchical lines makes the intersubjective sphere a key element in the construction of social representations in relation to the object of performance.

Finally, the trans-subjective sphere concerns everything that is common to the same social community, and which enables a given belief about a situation to be endorsed and shared collectively as it acquires meaning among these actors. We are talking about the norms and values imposed by mass communication systems, within institutional operating frameworks. This last element seems

to us to be particularly important in this work, insofar as the world of public administration conveys a special ideological content attached above all to the notions of professional security and stability, and of passivity, to the detriment of the logic of promotion through performance.

For our field study, our objective is no longer to individualize the share of each of these three spheres in the social representation of the actors concerned; rather, it is important for us to cumulate the presence of these three dimensions to better grasp the evolution of social representations in the public sector in this respect. In addition, this contribution's interest in this subject goes far beyond the purely descriptive aspect, because for us, tackling the subject of representations has a very interesting contribution to make to the administration, insofar as it allows for a better understanding of the behavior and practices of actors faced with the notion of performance in accordance with what (Abric, 1994) calls the behavioral orientation function engendered by social representations.

If we accept that there is an overlap between the purpose of the action and the anticipation and expectation systems of the players, the social representation becomes a prescriptive guide which directs the behavior of the players. And if we manage to conceptualize measurement and evaluation indicators that include the element of performance representation, we will have every right to begin by asking the question of the consistency of these measurement systems with existing representations.

The aim is no longer to create another instrument for measuring performance, but rather to understand whether the players, through their representations, are moving towards the same perception of the concept and the same performance objectives that the public administration aims to achieve through its measurement indicators.

II. Research Methodology

In practice, the field of study of social representations is established in a qualitative way, and the collection of points of view is done either with the help of a directive or semi-directive interview by means of a questionnaire with open questions (Abric, 1994). We can therefore allude to the phenomenological approach, which aims to understand the meaning that the subject projects on to the world (Blais and Martineau, 2006). We take the view that representation is a form of discourse in which it is possible to find its own characteristics thanks to the discursive practice of socially situated subjects (Jodelet, 2003).

Given that the perceptions of the public servants who form the subject of our study seem to be heterogeneous and multiple from the outset, case studies remain a privileged learning tool because everyone has his or her own interpretations and reactions, what is known in psychology as idiosyncrasy (Cossette,2004). Admittedly, exploration by means of a single case study runs the risk of producing a very narrow view of the phenomenon. Moreover, with a study subject of a sensitive nature such as the perception of public performance, the refusal rate is likely to be higher, and so the random sample no longer makes sense. **For this reason, the diversified sampling method, based on a reasoned choice, is the most appropriate solution for the specific nature of the study.**

According to (Charlier and Van, 2014), using the principle of diversifying the cases studied enables researchers to obtain significant and relevant results from the point of view of sociological understanding. To this end, our study was based on a sample of civil servants with different profiles and belonging to diversified work administrations. Moreover, the number of cases studied is defined by the saturation limit of the data collected.

On the other hand, the use of a purposive sample gives the researcher the right to deliberately choose his interviewees according to his research objectives, as it also allows, in the case of small samples, to provide good results compared to a probabilistic method which risks producing similar results for all the subjects in the sample. *"As in the case of samples intended for quantitative processing, the confidence in the results increases with the size of the sample, the disadvantage often being a parallel increase in the time and cost of data collection."*⁴

To overcome all these constraints, our sample was selected according to the criteria of a reasoned choice of administrations and profiles interviewed. In the same vein, the data is collected and analyzed using an online interview guide, administered to over forty civil servants from different administrations. The questionnaire consists of a series of open-ended questions and a few multiple-choice questions drawn up on a three- point Likert scale, with the aim of bringing out the most significant variables and items in the individual representations of the players in relation to our research framework.

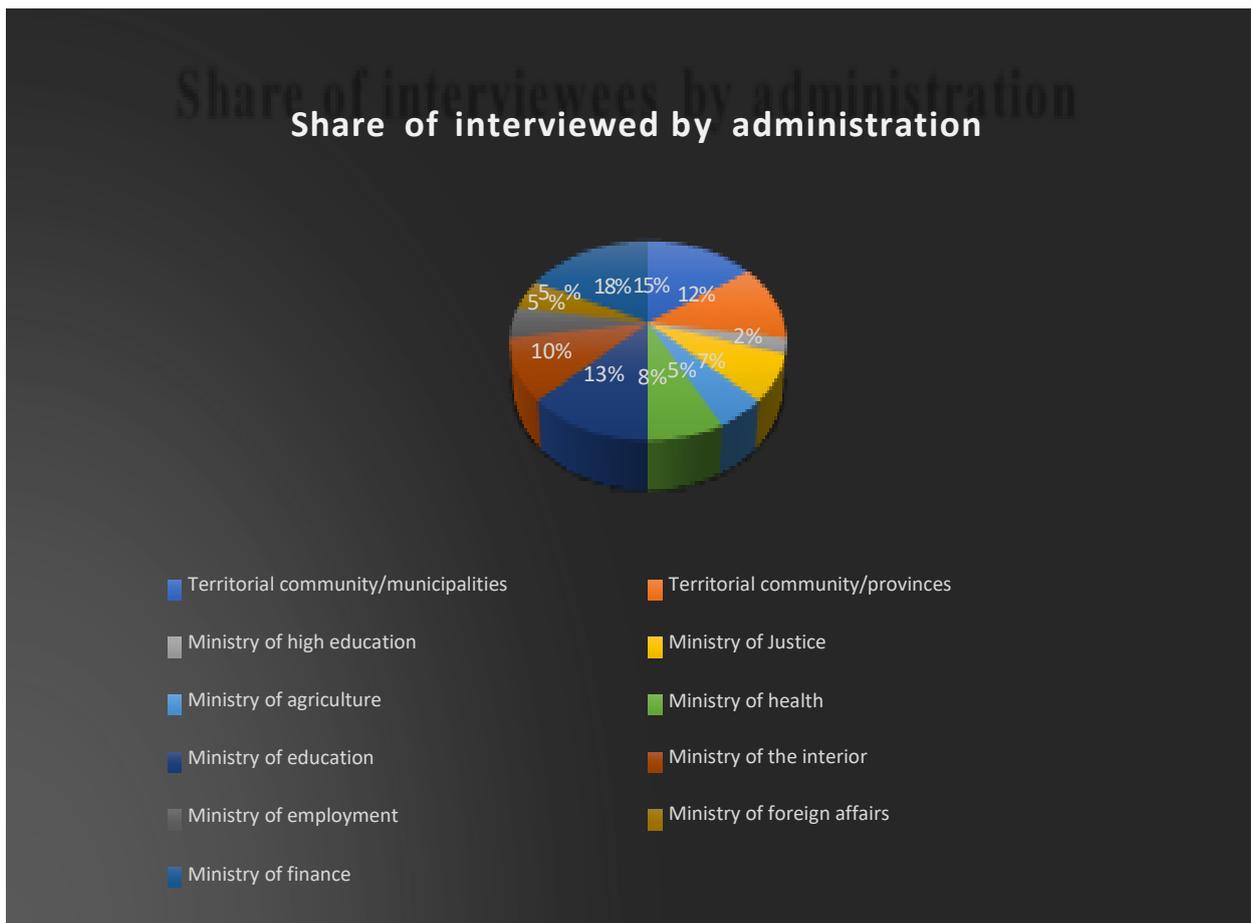
We would point out that the choice of this method of data collection is justified by the fact that our research objective is to analyze the meaning that the actors assign to their practices and to the events that they encounter in their working environment. We adopt the view that social

⁴ ROYER I., ZARLOWSKI P., 2003, Le design de la recherche, dans THIETART R.-A. (dir.), *Méthode de recherche en management*, Éditions Dunod, Collection Gestion Sup., Paris, pp.139-168

representation is a discourse that provides access to the characteristics of the thought of the subject studied (Jodelet,2003).

Our aim is therefore to analyze social representations of performance at a given point in time, without thinking about how they will evolve in the future, while retaining the hypothesis that these social representations will inevitably clash in the public administration environment because of exchanges between players and may even lead to changes in the way they are constructed. forty participants came forward to fill in the questionnaire and give us their views and beliefs about public service performance. We therefore collected responses from forty civil servants spread across the public administrations as follows:

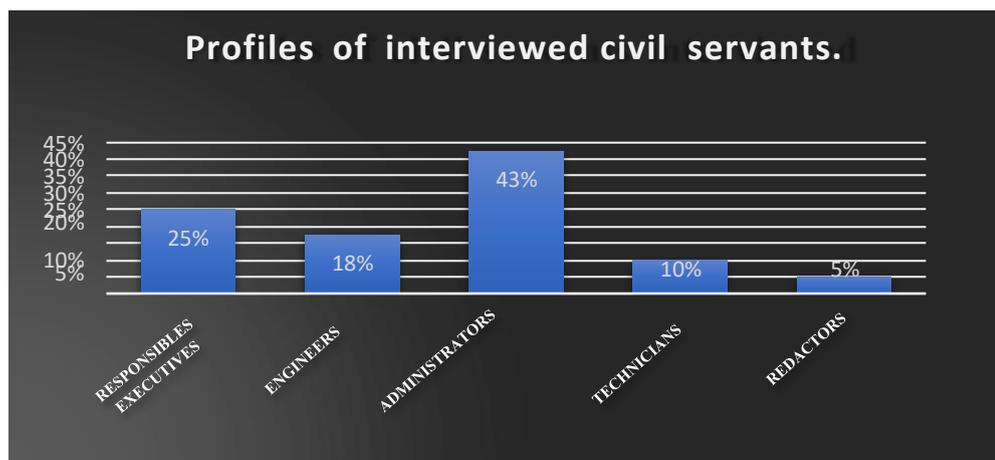
Figure 1 Share of interviewees by administration



source: our own empirical study

In addition, the questionnaire was sent to a wide range of profiles, including managers, administrators, engineers, technicians, and reporters, to cover all professional categories in the civil service.

Figure 2 Profiles of interviewed civil servants



source: our own empirical study

Regarding our study framework, our objective through this questionnaire is to raise the main characteristics associated with a high-performance public service in the discourse of the actors interviewed according to their own perceptions, while deducing the meaning behind and the comments made by the latter. It is also a question of addressing how the respondents apprehend the theoretical conception of the notion of performance in the context of Moroccan public administration.

In this context, the research questions that form the basis of our analysis are as follows: What are the most prevalent representations of performance among civil servants? Are they coherent and consistent with the theoretical underpinnings of this concept? Are there discrepancies between the practices mandated by the LOLF and the personal vision of those involved? Which elements are considered as core or peripheral in the object of performance analysis? To answer all these questions, we have taken as our starting point the theoretical definition of performance by (Buschor, 2002) which identifies the notion of public performance by equity, economy, efficiency, effectiveness, and impact.

However, instead of contenting ourselves with the classic definition of performance from (Buschor, 2002), we preferred to broaden our perspective of analysis to better understand the representations of civil servants in relation to this term, and to do this we opted to integrate some conceptual frameworks from political and organizational sociology. To this end, a promising

approach by (Boltanski and Thévenot,1990) was published in the early 1990 in France, the aim of which is to understand the way in which individuals justify their actions in group settings through sociological studies based essentially on case studies.

The results of these studies have enabled them to classify individual conceptions according to a typology of "ideotypical" reference worlds in which each world is based on a common philosophical and political frame of reference against which actions are judged (Giauque,2004). As a result, these reference worlds reveal community representations to which the members of a group or organization refer to justify their decisions and behavior.

The following table illustrates the main reference worlds in relation to public performance, inspired mainly by the works of these two authors and considered in our study:

Table 1 Boltanski and Thévenot's five reference worlds⁵

	Industrial world	Civic world	Commercial world	The domestic world	World of opinion Principle
Common reference systems	Efficiency and "functional" performance	Representative groups and collectives	Competition and market value	Personal relationships, hierarchy and traditions	Opinions and Public perceptions
Overview of each world	A world based on functional performance that borrows its logic from the operation of machines obeying the principles of professional efficiency and optimization of resources.	A world that draws its principles from democratic action, and civic legislation in favor of the figure Emblematic of the citizen.	A world absorbed by logic. Market linked to the mechanisms of competition and the value of the service Which are its central theme.	Qualified by the family aspect, the domestic world places the benevolent relationships that animate groups at the heart of its legitimacy.	A world where the value of a person or an action as a gauge for opinion-forming.

⁵ BOLTANSKI L. and THEVENOT L.(1991), *De la justification. Les économies de la grandeur*, Paris, Gallimard.

This categorization of worlds seems to us to be appropriate for analyzing the representations of Moroccan civil servants and will enable us to collect the central characteristics (the core) and marginal characteristics (the periphery) that these civil servants accumulate, share, and apply in relation to the object of public performance. To do this, we followed the instructions given by the researchers (Miles and Huberman, 2003, Paillé and Mucchielli, 2003) about data analysis, which was established in three phases: data reduction, condensation, and presentation of the data, the aim being to extract central meanings from the raw data in relation to the research objectives.

III. Consensus on the interpretation of the term and the role of civil servants in the use of performance measurement tools:

After analyzing the responses of each interviewee, we deduce that the dimensions forming the meaning of the term performance among public servants acquire meanings spread over at least four worlds of reference. From the definition of the term to the tools used to measure it, there is a wide variety of interpretations, which we have tried to summarize according to the themes presented in the After analyzing the responses of each interviewee, we deduce that the dimensions forming the meaning of the term performance among public servants acquire meanings spread over at least four worlds of reference. From the definition of the term to the tools used to measure it, there is a wide variety of interpretations, which we have tried to summarize according to the themes presented in the following matrix:

Table 2 Interpretations associated with public performance grouped by world of reference.

	Themes raised	Respondents' interpretations	Frequency
➤ Theme 1 Meaning of the term and its dimensions.			
Industrial world (Operation, resources, and quality of the organization)	Defining Performance	<input type="checkbox"/> Achieving objectives <input type="checkbox"/> Achieving objectives by optimizing resources	++++ +++

	<p>Sources of performance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A public authority's human resources are its strength, a source of performance • Ongoing staff training. • Good governance, use of information and communication technologies, better HR management. 	<p>++++ +++ ++</p>
	<p>Managerial shortcomings limiting performance in the public service</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor training of human resources. • Bureaucracy and civil service regulations in force (unfavorable working conditions, lack of control, lack of staff incentives, choice of unqualified people for positions of responsibility). • Lack or weakness of communication (internal and external). 	<p>++++ +++ ++</p>
	<p>The impact of performance on the public service</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality service, satisfied citizens, and easier access to public services. • Greater efficiency saves time and resources are better 	<p>++++ +++</p>

		allocated, reducing costs.	
➤ Theme 2 Stakeholders in public performance			
The domestic world (Personnel management)	Players responsible for performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human resources (civil servants, executives, and managers). • The administration and its internal and external collaborators (citizens, parliament, administrative bodies). 	<p>++++</p> <p>+++</p>
	Role of the civilservant	• Cornerstone (Management performance is the sum of individual performance)	++++
	Consistency between civil service regulations and the performance approach set out in the LOLF.	• Two incoherent systems (objectives without motivation, lack of incentives and lack of supervision by the bureaucracy);	++++

➤ Theme 3 Performance measurement systems and tools			
Commercial world (Profitable and operation of the sector) logical private	Defining the Performance project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All the actions that an administration aims to carry out to achieve its objectives. • It's a project aimed at improving the quality of public service. • I've no idea. 	<p>++++</p> <p>+++</p> <p>+++</p>
	Knowledge of management control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Checks to ensure that the objectives set have been achieved. <input type="checkbox"/> Detecting anomalies and proposing appropriate solutions. <input type="checkbox"/> Internal control and audit 	<p>++++</p> <p>+++</p> <p>++</p>
	Tools and indicators of control of management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dashboards, reporting and statistical indicators. • Procedures manuals and legal texts. • Inspection and audit missions 	<p>++++</p> <p>+++</p> <p>++</p>
	Performance assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compare what has been achieved with what should be achieved. • Refer to the service 	<p>++++</p> <p>+++</p>

		quality standards.	
Theme 4 Corrective action required.			
World of opinions	How to improve public service performance	• Staff motivation and training.	++++
		• Governance and accountability.	+++
		□ Change the bureaucratic management style.	+++

Estimated frequency of sub-themes mentioned:

++++: sub-theme mentioned very often (by at least three quarters of respondents)

+++ : sub-theme often mentioned (by more than half of respondents)

++ : sub-theme mentioned by a few respondents (by around a quarter of respondents)

Interpretation:

The synthesis of the matrix presented above allows us to observe that the most dominant worlds among civil servants about performance are indisputably as follows: the industrial world, the commercial world followed by the domestic world and finally the world of opinions. This reflects major perceptual compromises in civil servants' representations of the meaning, tools and actors involved in the concept of public performance. It is therefore clear that there has been a paradigm shift in the circle of representations, which are becoming more oriented towards the industrial and commercial worlds of reference. The responses of the interviewees show an evolution in the perception of the civil servant as an endogenous player in the new performance approach.

In addition, the interviewees' responses concerning the definition of performance confirm the dominance of the industrial reference world in their cognitive system. Statements such as: "performance means achieving the expected results with the allocated resources", "achieving objectives and cost savings are the main sources of performance" are good examples to support our deductions. The conditions and elements of good organization in relation to the industrial world also appear in the perceptions of the impact of performance on the public service when they frequently mention the elements of "functional" efficiency and quality of public service.

At the same time, the interviewees prior knowledge of performance measurement tools such as management control and the performance project..... are salient elements which reveal the influence of the commercial world on the representations of civil servants. In our study, therefore, this consensus of interpretations of the meaning and approach to performance is a central core of the representation of civil servants, given the consistency of the responses of most of the interviewees and the almost identical predominance of the interpretation of the content and dimensions of the subject studied.

Admittedly, this compromise of interpretations is clearly accompanied by a remarkable presence of the world of domestic references in the responses collected, which pulls the needle of perceptions in the direction of a regression towards the periphery which focuses more on the role of the civil servant in achieving the performance of public policies. In this sense, almost all the respondents emphasized the role of the public servant as the main actor in performance. For them, it is the accumulation of individual performance that determines the overall performance of these organizations, and to achieve this, the bureaucratic way in which they operate, as well as the civil service regulations in force, need to undergo an ancestral revolution if they are to be able to keep pace with the changes that public management is currently undergoing.

From the responses collected, we can deduce that most civil servants interviewed perceive an antagonistic relationship between the pragmatic approach to performance mandated by the LOLF and the traditional bureaucratic system that still drives the wheels of public administration today. From their point of view, the achievement of the administration's objectives depends on the incentive system and the continuous supervision of human resources, whereas with the persistence of the bureaucratic operating mode and in the absence of a serious reform of the civil service statute dating back more than half a century, public performance can remain blocked. All these observations reflect the importance of the domestic world of reference for civil servants as the driving force behind the desired performance, and thus form the peripheral core of our study.

On the other hand, the results of our study show that the composition of the social representation of public performance obeys the three spheres which contribute to its formation. Regarding the intersubjective sphere, we hypothesized that the individual's representations are constructed through interaction with others and through the discovery of reality in action. For this reason, we assumed that the civil servant's interaction with the object of performance is already guided by the meaning collectively constructed in their work environment.

In this sense, (Clenet,1998) considers that “representations are constructed through

interaction with others, through contact with reality in action”⁶. He adds that: "Social representations are at once inter-individual, inter-group and ideological products and processes, which resonate with each other to form dynamics specific to an institution [...] and these dynamics are not indifferent to the construction of individual representations”⁷. As for (Jodelet,1989): “social representation is a form of knowledge, socially elaborated and shared, with a practical aim and contributing to the construction of a reality common to a social group”⁸.

Thus, apart from the intersubjective sphere, a first level of analysis of the results in relation to the subjective sphere of representations reveals the weak presence of the other dimensions of public performance in the discourse of the interviewees, namely: efficiency, equity, and impact, which highlights a contrast between the theoretical approach exposing public performance and the cognitive approach of public administration actors.

Management literature describes this as the cognitive distance between public players. According to (Van Hée,2008) this is the difference in knowledge, perception, and interpretation of phenomena by individuals. According to (Nooteboom,2000), the capacity for mutual innovation between two collaborators is based simultaneously on the capacity for absorption between the two individuals, which is a decreasing function of the cognitive distance between them, and on the innovative value contributed by each collaborator, which is an increasing function of the cognitive distance. In other words, the more disparate the mental schemas, the greater the cognitive distance between them.

Still in relation to the component spheres of representations, a second level of analysis uses this verbatim to identify the knowledge and cognitive images shared by most civil servants regarding the management rationale and the legal and functional obstacles to the development of the desired performance. Two aspects stand out: the consensus of perception regarding the transition from a logic of means to a logic of management by results, and the neglect of the role of the civil servant in the face of the statutory limits imposed by the legal rules of the civil service.

Analysis of the responses shows that the trans-subjective sphere is very prominent among Moroccan civil servants, who see public sector performance as a management approach based on achieving results, marking a collective transition in perception from the old logic of means-based management to the new paradigm of results-based management.

Furthermore, regarding the organization of work, the civil servants interviewed share a common perception of the introverted way in which the administration operates and the work

⁶ Clenet, J. (1998), *Représentations, formation et alternance*, Alternances Développement, Harmattan, Paris, p. 70. Giaouque, D. (2004). *La bureaucratie libérale*,

⁷ Clenet, J. (1998)

⁸ Jodelet D., (1989)

regulations in force, which they see as the main obstacles limiting the role and willingness of civil servants to contribute to the achievement of performance. More precisely, the cumbersome bureaucratic operation, the prism of the rules, those of the civil service statute, the lack of training, to which can be added the failure of the channels of communication, and consequently an internal disengagement which is born to deviate the results from the direction wanted by the public decision-makers.

Conclusion

The present research is novel in that it draws on a body of work related to management and psychoanalysis, to provide an explanation of the way in which public officials perceive the issue of public performance, and consequently the impact that this representation has on their behavior within the public administration.

The results of this study are certainly of an exploratory nature, given the size and the profiles selected for our sample, but their added value lies in the originality of the work, in that they highlight a question rarely addressed by research into the issue of public performance. Up to now, most of the studies carried out on this subject have focused more on the measurable and pragmatic nature of performance as a result and not as an approach, while the psychoanalysis of the actor as a key element has often been neglected throughout the process of constructing and implementing public policies.

The question of how civil servants perceive public performance is a crucial one for both managers and political decision-makers. The results of this study confirm in their diagnostic aspect that the root obstacles to the development of a performance culture within public administrations lie mainly in a lack of clarity of the term, and a divergent interpretation of working approaches by the various stakeholders in public performance.

This lack of communication and dialogue between the politician at first level, the administrative top management at second level and the executing agent, who in this case is the ordinary civil servant, creates a very significant cognitive distance in interpretations and consequently has repercussions on the behavior of the players and the outcome of public action in general.

The fundamental and underlying idea is that the tools used to measure results cannot be deployed without or against civil servants or, of course, political decision-makers; on the contrary, they need to be reproduced in a context of participative and integrated management. Thus, the measurement and evaluation of public performance requires management based on mutuality and the positive interaction of stakeholders, to ensure the cognitive coherence of management processes right from the design phase.

Subsequently, this research will of course have to be integrated into the results of the second phase of empirical study planned for the end of 2023. In particular, the cognitive map of the different hierarchical lines of the public administration to validate the gap in the perception of sustainable public performance. In addition to this analytical work, which is based on the existing literature on the subject, other field studies will have to be carried out in the future in order to

strengthen the rigor of the knowledge proposed, and to develop it further in favor of responsible management of public affairs, where the dialectic of horizontality in the co-construction of management processes and tools and the verticality of staff involvement in the production of public action seems particularly rich in issues.

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