

French Universities Reforms and Management Changes

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Abstract

Fundamental changes that universities face deeply alter their pilotage conditions. Indeed, French higher education landscape is undergoing a very net acceleration in its adaptation to the set of these changes and, addition to application of the LOLF at University administration, the LRU act grants to institutions, responsibility to create own tools to assist governing institutions to complete their assigned missions.

Keywords: LOLF; universities reforms; management

1. Introduction

Fundamental changes that universities face deeply alter their pilotage conditions. Indeed, French higher education landscape is undergoing a very net acceleration in its adaptation to the set of these changes and, addition to application of the LOLF[1] at University administration, the LRU[2] act grants to institutions, responsibility to create own tools to assist governing institutions to complete their assigned missions.

Role and rules of operation of French universities highly evolved by the structuring of texts and decisions effect over the past ten years. The signing of the Bologna agreements[3] on June 19, 1999 is an act which is part of the logic of European construction which is corollary the will to emerge a "Europe of knowledge". It assumes a harmonization of the basic tasks in the respect for fundamental principles defined in 1988 by the Magna Charta Universitatum[4] with the University, academic course "independent of any political, economic and ideological power" and as an "autonomous institution which way critical product and transmits culture through research

and education." Emphasis is placed on professionalization and the unavoidable link between the professional skills to acquire training and the application of the economic sector in the matter. Even more, the Bologna agreements will establish a clear framework of competition between institutions: between the US and Europe in a context of attractiveness of foreign, Asian students in particular, but also between universities European to receive in the second cycle "Master" the best students who can enrich the laboratories and centres research.

In fact all of these phenomena is part of what L. Bronner (2005) calls a "global competition fierce on higher education". the establishment of a international market of higher education including the standardization of the products (where the comparisons would be easier) makes now more clear this competition.

The purpose of this article is to describe, first, the academic reforms observed in France since the end of the 1990s and a second time, to briefly observe major changes managerial these reforms generate and draw the outlines of a new managerial model of French Universities.

2. Academic reform in France

2.1. LOLF

In the first place, "thinking engaged to the Parliament in the years 1998-2000, on the effectiveness of public expenditure and the role of assemblies in budgetary matters, has witnessed the birth of a political consensus to modernize budgetary and accounting, rules laid down by the organic order of 1959" "The implementation of the new financial constitution, promulgated in 2001, extends just four years until the entry into full force of this text in 2005 and 2006 Finance Act".[5].

In reality application of the LOLF higher education takes effect in fiscal year 2006. The State budget appropriations are presented by objectives, each accompanied by indicators, in "annual performance projects." The confrontation of objectives and results and an analysis of gaps must be an "annual reports" of performance. Finance bill project 2009 (PLF) establishes a battery over 30 performance indicators on twelve objectives applicable to institutions for higher education. The objective of greater democracy in the use of public finances is subject to the rules of efficiency and responsibility of the public "managers". Thus the University facing these rules then seeks to develop tools for efficient steering of means under the master word of "performance".

Lolf relies on the notion of efficiency which the measure is a performance measured by indicators. As noted by Calmette (2006), "spirit" of LOLF is directly translated into the "letter" of the act which advocates obligation to "performance". Article 51 paragraph 5 of the Organic act of 1 August 2001, including indicates that explanatory appendices by Department accompany Finance Bill must be supplemented by an annual performance project stating "presentation of associated costs, objectives, results obtained and expected for coming years measured by specific indicators including justified choice". This system of management of "performance" is directly inspired by culture of management. It is from the outset that culture of result and fiscal policy - at level of State as to that of institutions - are nested.

2.2. LRU

In addition to it broadens the spectrum of fundamental missions of University [6] "LRU law, it has for vocation to give academic institutions the ability to be good operators of LOLF by bringing the model of entrepreneurial University.". (Go, 2008). The Act establishes a strengthening of power of President and teaching staff at the expense of that of administrative personnel and students in advice on general principles reflecting accountability of University they concern: (1) funding: freedom of research of extrabudgetary resources; (2) structures : autonomy for determination of internal structures; (3) the means implemented: including masters of payroll.

Modalities of implementation of the Act gradually install explicit or not assumptions underlying: universities budget is agreed by

appropriations allocated on the basis of the model SYMPA ("System of distribution of means to Performance and activity") built on basic indicators in the field of education and research at the service of a reductive conception of performance.

2.3. RGPP

While we may be considered that French University remains relatively in the margins, because of autonomy of institutions, of approach of RGPP[7] began end of 2007 by administration for "rationalization" of public policy, all shows that in reality she does escape not design central to this approach is that of productivity services. As noted by E. Woerth (2007): "this approach also allows for better valuing work of public servants, by adapting nature of their tasks to changing needs of citizens and paying better fewer officials." If researchers teachers are not the first affected by this approach, personal "Biatoss[8]" of all University is subject to this new requirement through what Y. Cannac (2008) calls "development of skills management... clearly at the heart of modernization of public Human Resources Management."

Until 1968, faculties remained "relevant unit of French University System structuring" (Solle, 2001) and the essential national academic knowledge producer. To weaken faculties, the Faure Act was established to reduce hegemony of universities and their leaders in the management of higher education by opening University to the outside by boards of Directors and their elected and appointed members. Another greatly weakening factor was the introduction of five-year contracts between the Department and each University from projects they prepare and use as basis for negotiation. Although it concerned only 5% of operating budget - rest continuing to be awarded on criteria - this new procedure initiated a progressive but radical change (Musselin 2001). It reduced the role of academic profession, including the Department where logic of disciplines is found by logic of institutions competition. As have observed Mignot-Gérard (2006) and Musselin (2001), voluntarism and practices more managerial presidential teams face frequently lack of relay internally, including on the part of Department Directors who have trouble to feel solidarity with Presidency policies, both by disagreement with their content for some of them, and because teachers and

Administration expect their directors that they safeguard them these policies rather than they relay. Thus, University management teams are often faced with realization of arbitrations managerial between, on the one hand, their resoluteness and performance objectives set by their guardianship and, on the other hand, daily concerns of the University staff.

In this article, we will study the major managerial changes that appear in the organizational areas (governance, relations with the guardianship, budget management and human resources management) to describe succinctly the new model of French universities managerial that seems under direct and indirect influence recent academic reforms.

3. Main changes managerial

Several elements of change, in a few years, are imposed not only the management of universities but all of the design that can be must have higher education. We previously tried, like others, to the part of the national elements (reform and modernization of the State) and international (standardization of models and international competition), which changed at least the managerial University speech. These changes are "the consequences of the evolution of the status of the science in society" and "the emergence of normative discourse at the international level" (Mailhot and Schaeffer, 2007). At these substantive explanations must be added the peculiarity of the French politico-economic context: the search for public economies coupled with a reflection on the rationalization of resources in administrations represents a strong weight in the evolution of the managerial methods. Thus, it is now the responsibility of the universities to ensure "the orientation and the employability of students" or contribute to the "exploitation of research".

From the point of view of the academic analysis, understanding of the factors of change may dispense with this approach: how standardization training models can be confronted with a French academic culture? At the core of this reflection is the question of values. One of the main brakes to the changes underway is felt by the actors (or for a large part of them) to a questioning of some value in the representation of knowledge and its transmission. Finally the notion of performance suffers fundamental changes. Performance indicators defined by the French Ministry of higher edu-

cation and research are attached to objectives quantifiable and almost all in connection with the socio-economic environment of the institutions[9]. This formulation of universities duties are completed by the LRU law (cf. supra) in the definition of the missions of the University, accompanied by new methods and therefore, new managerial rules.

As noted by Matheson (2004), the first generation in public management reforms are seeking solutions by: reduction of the deficit, the liberalisation of the labour market and the introduction of market mechanisms. The goal being to restore economic efficiency through a "managerialisation" of the Government. The France came relatively late in this approach to other nations. But the model as described is perfectly compatible with the spirit of the reforms and the revision of the management rules imposed on universities (as, more often, in most jurisdictions) for a few years. Thus we can identify the different areas concerned by these amendments (Politt and Bouckaert, 2000).

3.1. in General Organization: redefinition of the perimeter of the organizations and modification of administrative structures.

This concerns universities both their sizing and the redefinition of what the law defines as "components" of the University. LRU law does not alter the provisions of the "code of education" and, in this field, we can identify two convergent sources of changes. The global competition, the desire to attract foreign students (and particularly those of emerging countries) in academic centres recognized for "excellence", translates into a requirement always reaffirmed grouping of universities but rarely justified in large sets of training and, especially, of research. The model of the PRES (Research and Higher Education Centres) forerunner of fusion between universities, confirm this approach. At the same time the concern for internal efficiency leads to the number of components decrease on the basis of the survival of "Faculty" policies from an archaic design - or even medieval - of University operating. It appears that, all things equal, the increase in the size of universities and components of these is the direction chosen for greater training and research efficiency.

3.2. In the mode of relationship to the environment: strengthening of contractual and privatization.

Contract becomes for universities called to assert more autonomy, the required mode of relationship to institutions of guardianship. Relationship to a State where the Act confers on the five-year contract a new weight: funding for dependent establishment projects negotiated into the wishes of administrative reconfiguration. But relations with the authorities local (Region, Department, Cities) are also a multi-annual contractual character based on projects and justifications post-clearance verification of the use of appropriations. University is responsible. Privatization remains a particular element for higher education in the French context. Both the principle of free and democratization of higher education cohabits with, in some areas (including science management and to a lesser extent of engineering science), a paid private sector under the principle of schools. But privatization concern not only the offer of training; It has become one of routes recommended to ensure by outsourcing, some internal services: maintenance, maintenance, cleaning. This allows to operate the "repyramidage" of posts with fewer employees at lower level of qualification (category C) for the benefit of better qualified employees (categories B and A) better to complete administrative functions more increasingly complex.

3.3. In the management of human resources

Practices have been heavily modified and are implemented in the academic world with more slow than in other jurisdictions. But the distinction between the two categories of staff academics: teachers and researchers[10], on the one hand, and Biatoss[11], on the other hand, does not facilitate harmonization of human resources management practices. If for the second category of personal, introduction of managerial approaches based on principle of merit (if not performance), control and evaluation seems to be acquired, for the first, things are still far from being made even if the idea of a development of the service obligations of the researchers teachers based on their scientific productivity is mentioned in the recent texts.

3.4. In the field of accounting, budget control and management control

The national accounts classifications and procedures framing by LOLF harmonization of accounting software, but also the need to progressively lead to a knowledge of actual costs for better control them, tends to the "technification" of administrative tasks and bureaucratization of academic services in the service of greater control over costs and internal process to the detriment, sometimes, of development fundamental missions of University.

In reality these changes, to resume our initial definition of organizational performance, assume membership of actors to objectives of organization once they can show themselves "loyal" to values brought by these same objectives. Or the academic world, overall, hostile or reluctant about "Manager adrift" of public management is not spontaneously resistant to the concept of performance if the concept is not read as reduced to financial efficiency. It is easier in a University to address common reflection from the concept of a common performance from quantitative targets declined from the LOLF. In other words, and, to resume distinction of the levels control (Baumgartner and Solle, 2010), on the one hand, between State and place of authoritarian control and, on the other hand, the establishment and its components instead of joint regulation where actors express themselves, performance is located in the heart of process of regulation without being carrying the same meaning or same values rooted in the representation of knowledge and its transmission.

3.5. toward a model of entrepreneurial University

If there is a modernization of State, it is based, for universities, on a reading where University should strengthen its function as a player in economic development: enhancement of its research and "employability" of its graduates. Following a historical and comparative analysis Etzkowitz et al. (2000) conclude that these transformations, in several countries, seem to converge towards a model of entrepreneurial University, despite the resistance, criticism, the institutional problems and governance questions posed by this evolution. These changes does not remove academic missions of University but encourage them to lead them in a different way. There are new forms of technology transfer and the traditional role of education is also reinterpreted. Therefore, performance indicators defined by Ministry of high-

er education and French research are attached to objectives quantifiable and almost all in connection with socio-economic environment institutions.[12] :

- Reply to higher qualification needs
- Enhance success at all levels of training
- Master training
- Make higher education a powerful training tool
- Increase the international attractiveness of French offer of training and its integration in the European and global system
- Optimize access to documentary resources for training and research
- Produce scientific knowledge at highest international level
- Develop dynamism and reactivity of University research
- Contribute to the improvement of the competitiveness of the economy by transfer and enhancement of results of research
- Contribute to development of international attractiveness of French research
- Participate in the construction of European research area
- Optimize management and evolution of real estate heritage
- Develop realisation of services by universities

Each of these goals gives rise to development of specific national indicators contained in the annual performance Plan (PAP) and between, its scale, in the five-year negotiation conducted between Department and institution. This measure "imposed" performance can add indicators specific to University.

All these indicators are therefore explicitly references to measure-"to evaluate" - relevance and effectiveness of its University "management". These indicators are objectives which

refer to questions about meanings of mission of the University, on consequences that could have non-compliance with objectives, on the use by the Department, institutions or teachers of such a program, without really these issues are ex ante a response to build a real policy.

4. Conclusion

That becomes research and management of performance in this new managerial context ? It seems that one can distinguish two ideas about reality behind displayed principles and national and local budgetary development models.

First, mentioned for the sake of good use of public funds, research of performance put forward in the LOLF, is before any "tool" of structuring: its put the establishment, rich of new skills and new responsibilities, in the heart of the system of higher education. One can wonders if, in a period of difficult mutation, the priority is not given to financial efficiency (making the institution able to safely undertake its new missions) rather than organizational effectiveness (a better way to fill its traditional missions). Powers allocation, or, rather, powers distribution changes.

In this context performance becomes the key to the internal debate in academic institutions shared entry on a new sharing of power and responsibilities: actual performance (reality of results compared with objectives) is more an alibi than a real issue. It allows each regain its place in a turbulent environment where University itself is redefining its place.

Also, the new model of management of universities by results and performance was primarily used as a tool of domination to define a new Division of powers between State, universities, component, staff and users. He will return to University managers to implement necessary conditions for the use of this type of management as a true management tool legitimate and bearer of meaning for members and users of University.

References

- [1] The organic law on the laws of August 1, 2001 - LOLF - finance reform in depth State management. It came into force in stages and applies to any administration since January 1, 2006.

- [2] "Freedom and responsibility of universities" Act of August 10, 2007
- [3] 29 signatory countries: the Germany, the Austria, the Belgium, the Bulgaria, the Denmark, the Estonia, 1' Spain, the Finland, the France, the Greece, the Hungary, the Ireland, the Iceland, the Italy, the Latvia, the Lithuania, the Luxembourg, Malta, the Norway, the Netherlands, the Poland, the Portugal, the United Kingdom, the Czech Republic, the Romania, the Slovakia, the Slovenia, the Sweden, the Switzerland.
- [4] Signed in Bologna on 18 September 1988 by rectors of European universities
- [5] "A new budgetary framework to reform the State" site of Ministry of economy and finance. (2006)
- [6] Article L123 - 3 Code of Education: higher education public service missions are: (1) initial and continuing training; (2) The scientific and technological, research dissemination and valorisation of results; 3 ° Orientation and professional insertion; 4 ° dissemination of culture and information science and technology; 5 ° The participation in construction of the European area of higher education and research; 6 ° international cooperation.
- [7] Review general public policy
- [8] Librarians, engineers, technicians, administrative, labour, health and service
- [9] LOLF. Program "Superior and university research Formations" MEN 2006
- [10] Teachers-researchers: Professors, lecturers. Teachers: Aggregated and certified in second degree
- [11] Of library, engineers, administrative personnel, health and Service technicians
- [12] LOLF. Program "Superior and university research Formations" MEN 2006.