

## **The performance of the Moroccan education system: between effectiveness, efficiency and governance issues**

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**Abstract.** From a perspective inspired by the theory of capital, education systems are essential levers of economic development and competitiveness. Despite the reforms undertaken and the importance of the resources mobilized, the Moroccan education system continues to record limited performance in national and international evaluations. This research aims to analyze the contribution of managerial approaches in improving the performance of the education system through the dimensions of effectiveness, efficiency and governance. The study adopts a theoretical and exploratory approach based on a literature review in the economics of education while mobilizing certain elements relating to the Moroccan context. The results show an integration of the principles of New Public Management into Moroccan educational reforms, as well as the growing influence of international standards in the management of the education system. However, organizational and cultural limitations continue to affect the overall performance of the system. The originality of this research lies in the articulation between the economics of education, public management and educational governance to analyze the transformations of the Moroccan system.

**Keywords:** *Education System; Educational Management; Performance Governance.*

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### **1. Introduction**

Proponents of the theory of human capital place education systems at the center of their thinking, as a major element in creating wealth and overcoming the fallout from global competition.

Despite the reform efforts undertaken, the various evaluations carried out by the specialized national and international bodies continue to place the Moroccan Education System among the least efficient. Thus, the 2023 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) positions Morocco at the bottom of the ranking in terms of mastery of science and mathematics (« International Results » 2023). Similarly, the results of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) of 2022 places Morocco at the **71st place in mathematics, 79th reading and 76th in science** out of more than 80 countries assessed. Only a small minority of Moroccan students reach the **Skill Level 2** (only **19% read**, compared to 74% on average in the OECD), indicating that the vast majority remain confined to **Levels 1 or lower**, translating Very limited achievements in all the areas tested (OECD 2023). These findings highlight persistent challenges in the quality of education. The weak performance of the Moroccan education system is explained in several national and international studies by factors related to governance(EL HAYANI 2017).

During the last two decades, several debates have been opened about the governance of the Education System. The influence of the New Public Management imposes on educational organizations so-called results-oriented management methods, by putting at the center of the actors' action, the concerns of effectiveness and efficiency. This tendency, which could be linked to the neo-liberal philosophy that considers school as an economic system par excellence, an approach that places education in a logic of measurable performance.

In 2024, the Ministry of National Education, Preschool and Sports mobilize a budget of 76.46 billion dirhams, representing 17.6% of the general state budget and nearly 5% of the GDP estimated at 1,580 billion dirhams. This significant envelope questions the effectiveness and efficiency of the allocation of public resources in the education sector. Beyond the simple financial volume, the central issue lies in the ability of the education system to convert these resources into tangible results, measured by the performance of learners, their academic success and the overall performance of the Moroccan education system.

This article uses a theoretical approach mobilizing the contributions of the economics of education, management sciences and the new public management to question the performance of the Moroccan education system. Its originality lies in the articulation of the concepts of effectiveness, efficiency and governance with the organizational and cultural specificities of the Moroccan education sector. Finally, this study traces the limits of the transposition of managerial logics to the educational field, while highlighting their potential contribution to the improvement of the overall performance of the education system.

In this perspective, this study seeks to analyze the relationship between the introduction of managerial approaches and the improvement of the performance of the Moroccan education system, mobilizing the dimensions of effectiveness, efficiency and governance. It also questions the organizational and cultural constraints likely to limit the scope of these reforms in the Moroccan context. The central question of this research is therefore the following: to what extent can managerial approaches contribute to improving the performance of the Moroccan education system?

This article adopts an exploratory approach aimed at analyzing the application of managerial logics to education systems and their effects on educational performance. It is based on a literature review in the economics of education, management sciences and public governance. Without claiming to reach definitive conclusions, this research rather proposes avenues for reflection on the conditions and limits of the transposition of managerial approaches to the education sector.

To answer the problem, this article is structured around two main axes. The first focuses on the theoretical foundations of the performance of education systems, through the notions of effectiveness, efficiency and educational management. The second analyzes the managerial transformations of the Moroccan education system, focusing on the issues of governance, organizational culture and change management.

## **2. The question of the performance of education systems**

### **a. The Performance of Education Systems: Generalities**

Before beginning the subject of this article, we first question the function of the school. Émile Durkheim considered school as a tool for transmitting values and norms to ensure social cohesion. John Dewey, a figure of pragmatism, sees school as an institution that brings the learner closer to real life. Educational economists equate school with an industry that ensures the creation of wealth.

The performance of the Education System consists in the development and implementation of effectiveness and efficiency criteria that can measure the impact of actions on learners' learning. The implementation of the managerial culture implies considering schools as organizations that seek to achieve objectives by implementing human and financial resources in a complex environment.

The issue of performance raises critical issues regarding the manner in which human, material and financial resources are used. Educational performance can be defined as the ability of the Education System to produce significant results in terms of academic success, skills acquired by students, and professional integration, while making optimal use of available resources. A high return implies that the investment of time, effort and resources (teachers, infrastructure, programmes) generates a substantial impact on student learning and outcomes.

The expert in the economics of education Le Thanh Khôi used the criterion of the nature of the return: quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative when we try to measure the outputs of the SE via the number of graduates, abundant students... and qualitative when we focus on the learning and skills acquired. The qualitative dimension is also reflected in the adequacy of the achievements with the real needs of the labour market(Lê Thanh 1967).

Educational economists consider education to be one of the branches of the economy, in the same way as other social services under the responsibility of the State. From this perspective, education as an economic sector is very expensive for the Community. From the moment this diagram is carried out, we begin to question the education sector on the criteria of performance. Leading the management of education towards a logic of performance implies the establishment of a set of criteria of effectiveness and efficiency (Éthier 1989). In the book "The Management of Excellence in Education", by Éthier G., who is a teacher of management in the public sector in Canada, lists a set of criteria likely to ensure effectiveness and efficiency in the education sector, these elements can be summarized in Table 1.

**Table 1 criteria of effectiveness and efficiency in the education sector.**

Efficiency	Efficiency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Knowledge of needs</li> <li>- Goal Accuracy</li> <li>- Consensus on objectives</li> <li>- Choice of priorities</li> <li>- Use of the environment</li> <li>- Focus on quality</li> <li>- Completion of the action plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Adequate internal and external communication system</li> <li>- Conflict Resolution System</li> <li>- Monitoring and evaluation mechanism</li> <li>- Job satisfaction</li> <li>- Motivation</li> <li>- Organizational climate</li> <li>- Harmony of roles</li> <li>- Managerial competence</li> <li>- Decision-making process</li> <li>- Appropriate technology</li> </ul>

*Source: Developed by us from the book: The Management of Excellence in Education (Éthier 1989).*

Efficiency is a term widely used in the context of educational sciences. Legendre defines school effectiveness in the Dictionary of Education as: "the degree of achievement of the objectives of a program, translated by the ratio between the results obtained on the objectives targeted" (Legendre 2005). This efficiency-oriented approach in the education sector emphasizes the achievement of the objectives set by the school curriculum. From this perspective, the analysis of total factor productivity makes it possible to assess the level of efficiency not only of the economy, but also of each of its sectors, including education.

The first two thinkers (Thanh and Éthier) completed their models with the concept of equity. International institutions that operate in the education sector opt for programmes to consider dimensions related to territories, gender and ethnic groups. The issue of equity within the education system requires a global approach, considering a variety of parameters.

### b. The Effectiveness of Education Systems

The large economic scale of education systems has prompted the World Bank to design evaluation programs. The Education Research Manager programme uses the concept of performance in their work.

According to the expert Psacharopoulos G., efficiency depends on the relationships between the inputs and outputs of the Education Systems (Psacharopoulos et Maureen 1988). According to World Bank expert Psacharopoulos G., efficiency depends on the relationship between inputs and outputs of education systems. For the World Bank, internal efficiency concerns all the factors related to the visible results of learners while they are within the Education System (standard of graduates, number of repeaters, number of abundant students, etc.).(Psacharopoulos et Maureen 1988) External efficiency studies the fate of learners when they leave school and enter socio-professional life (MINGAT et al. 2001). as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2 The Difference Between Internal and External Efficiency**

Internal efficiency	External efficiency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quantitative, when inputs and outputs are quantitative. Examples:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Proportion of graduates to total enrolments.</li> <li>-Proportion of repeaters in relation to the number of students in a cohort.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Qualitative, when initial achievements and final skills are taken into account. Examples:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-All the research on educational gain.</li> <li>-Comparative analysis of output and entry skill levels.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quantitative when inputs and outputs are measured. Examples:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Proportion of jobs held in relation to graduates, or even those enrolled in a field.</li> <li>-Relationship between the number of self-employed people and graduates, or even those enrolled in a field.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Qualitative in nature when the inputs and outputs are qualitative. Examples:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Comparison between skills used in real life and those acquired through the SE.</li> <li>-Relationship between the skills targeted by the SE and those actually developed.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Effectiveness:</b> Ratio of exits (observed effects) to inflows (actual or stated objectives)</p>	

*Source: Prepared by us on the basis of the World Bank's report on the status of a National Education System, Methodological Guide for its preparation, Africa Region, (2001)*

Analyzing education policies in terms of external performance includes methodological difficulties, for which the World Bank focuses on two questions: the first is how to analyze the impact of policies in relation to the levels and types of training, this question studies how to optimize the results in human capital generated by the different actions. The second question is the rationalization of investment externalities, i.e. how to direct individuals towards the objectives for which these investments are committed.

To measure the effectiveness of education systems, the World Bank adopts indicators as a measurement tool. To do this, it has designed several indicators that trace the trend of repetition

and dropout in the different levels of schooling. These indicators calculate the number of pupil-years that enter the different cycles with reference to the number theoretically necessary without repeating a year or dropping out (MINGAT et al. 2001).

Data collection and reliability is a major challenge for international institutions. The World Bank uses several sources of information to improve its studies. The World Bank uses the results of international and national learning assessments using the so-called "value-added" approach, which compares the results of the end-of-year tests with those at the beginning. It uses the results of the PISA, TIMMS, PIRLS surveys and UNESCO (Measurement of Learning Achievement) surveys. The World Bank also uses national exams, even though these can generate biases because they are not standardized.

The World Bank's approaches are appropriate because of their theoretical basis and scientific legitimacy, since they coherently articulate the internal and external effectiveness of education systems.

### c. The Efficiency of Education Systems

Efficiency, which represents the other side of performance, is also reflected in the field of education. Economists who integrate education among economic sectors consider that overall efficiency is measured by total factor productivity, i.e. all the resources mobilized in the economy and its various fields.

In its narrow sense, training efficiency is defined as "the results achieved by participants in courses or training programmes that demonstrate a favorable cost-benefit ratio and a good adaptation of the level of teaching and methods". Like effectiveness, efficiency is divided into internal and external dimensions, each with a quantitative and qualitative aspect. The evaluation of efficiency, whether it relates to an education system as a whole or to one of its components, can use standardized evaluation methods similar to those used to measure effectiveness (Sall et De Ketele 1997). The distinction between internal and external efficiency in the education sector is presented in Table 3.

**Table 3 The difference between internal and external efficiency in the education sector**

Internal efficiency	External efficiency
- Qualitative: Example: relationship between the number of graduates and personnel costs. - Qualitative when outputs and inputs are qualitative. Example: Comparison of the skills acquired at the end of the training with those of the trainers at the start.	- Quantitative when the input and output data are encrypted. Example: Relationship between the number of jobs created and the expenditure allocated to the SE. - Qualitative when the inputs and outputs are of an unencrypted nature. Example: Analysis of the link between skills developed and resources dedicated to internships.
<b>Efficiency:</b> The relationship between the results obtained and the resources committed as inputs.	

*Source: Developed by us from the article "The evaluation of the performance of education systems: contributions of the concepts of effectiveness, efficiency and equity" (Sall et De Ketele 1997).*

Thus, efficiency is an essential dimension of the analysis of educational performance, because it makes it possible to directly link the results obtained to the resources invested. Its interest lies in the possibility of assessing not only the rationality of the budget allocation, but also the

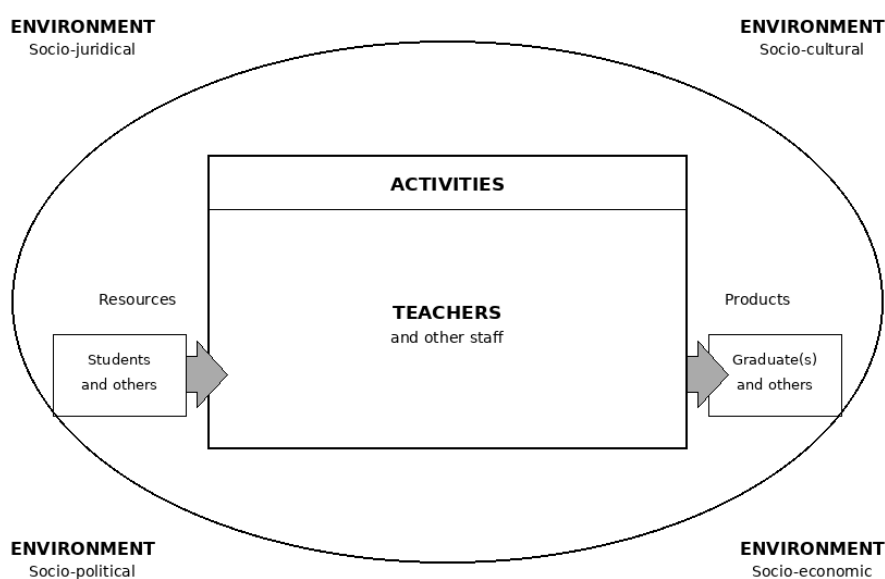
relevance of the pedagogical and organizational choices. It therefore offers a complementary evaluation framework for effectiveness, by explicitly integrating the notion of opportunity cost.

### 3. The management of the Moroccan Education System

#### a. The management of educational organizations

Despite the efforts made to modernize the national education sector in developing countries, its managerial style still suffers from its rigid and routine bureaucratic aspect. The objective that the former Director of the UNESCO Regional Office, Kacem Bensalah, outlined in 1996 is still valid today: "It is a question of gradually replacing an administration of the status quo with an administration of development, of moving from a routine management of administrative and pedagogical acts to an interactive management of performance" (BENSALAH 1996).

**Figure 1 Systemic view of educational organization**



*Source: book by Jean Joseph m. and Jean plante pierre t, La gestion des ressources humaines pour la réussite scolaire, Presse de l'Université du Québec, (2018)*

Figure 1 from the book "Human Resources Management for Academic Success" (Moisset et al. 2018) shows that the Education System is all like other production systems that can be modeled and subjected to management standards. The figure above treats the school as a company whose final products are graduates. Just like a company, the school consumes material resources and the work of teachers and other staff to generate graduates with skills and achievements. This operation is carried out in a complex environment that combines legal, cultural, political and economic factors.

In the education sector, the integration of managerial techniques ensures effective coordination of activities and processes between the different actors. Seen as a construct for sustainable integration, education must be based on individual capacities and needs, while mobilizing simultaneous processes to achieve specific goals (A. de Arrascaeta Farrando 2007). The notion of construction accounts for a set of elements that act simultaneously through processes to achieve objectives.

As a result, there is no reason not to apply, at least in the managerial aspect, the same standards as those adopted by private companies. Of course, education has a social dimension, and any

initiative can meet with resistance, which is sometimes difficult to control. However, the extent of the shortcomings observed in the system's results requires the authorities to adopt proven managerial practices capable of structuring activities, optimizing resources and ensuring the achievement of the objectives set.

The application of private company management standards to the education sector, at least in the administrative aspect, can generate several advantages, including: benefiting from the contribution of quality assurance through the implementation of recognized standards such as ISO 9001 or ISO 21001 (Idrees et al. 2023).

#### **b. The performance of the Moroccan Education System**

The National Charter for Education and Training emphasize the importance of performance as a structuring principle of the education system, and this orientation is manifested in a concrete way in the field of human resources, which is a significant example of this logic. Indeed, it stipulates that "the promotion and reward of education and training personnel will be based on the principle of pedagogical performance", thus stressing that the valuation of educational actors must be directly linked to the efficiency and quality of their work (Commission Spéciale d'Éducation et de Formation 1999). The department opts for this system to replace the traditional approaches to measuring the performance of operators, based essentially on exams, with the results obtained by the learners. This new vision opts to link the actions of all the actors to the learner who constitutes the center of all the actions of the Education System.

The various reports and policies undertaken by the supervisory department insisted on improving the internal performance of the Education System. The emergency program that was implemented between 2009 and 2012 worked to improve, through the various projects, the internal performance indicators of the Moroccan Education System, particularly those relating to repetition and school dropout. The report of the evaluation of the implementation of the National Charter of Education and Training 2000-2013 drawn up by the National Authority for the Evaluation of the Education, Training and Scientific Research System (INE) highlights that the success of the Education System is only reflected in relation to the achievement of objectives related to internal performance, i.e. the degree to which students remain until they obtain the necessary prerequisites to enter the labour market (Instance nationale de l'évaluation du système de l'éducation de la formation et de la recherche scientifique 2013). To measure the performance of the Education System in relation to the quality of achievements, the INE administers a learning assessment programme called the National Programme for the Assessment of Achievements (PNEA).

Like international institutions, the 2015-2030 strategic vision developed by the CSEFRS emphasizes the issue of performance. To outline the prospects for improvement, the CSPEFRS lists the limits and weaknesses of the Moroccan Education System according to the contribution of researchers and international institutions, as shown in Table 4 (Higher Council for Education, Training and Scientific Research, 2015).

**Table 4 the dysfunctions of the Education System - the strategic vision 2015-2030**

Limitations of internal performance	Weak external performance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Insufficient mastery of languages, knowledge, skills and values;</li> <li>-The low efficiency of the performance of education actors;</li> <li>- Deficiencies in initial and continuing training;                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-The persistent losses affecting the school, university and vocational training systems;</li> <li>-Restricted access to learning via educational technologies;</li> <li>- The low impact of scientific research;</li> </ul> </li> <li>-The difficulties in addressing cross-cutting issues, in particular language learning and those used as languages of instruction.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The obstacles encountered by graduates to integrate economically, socially and culturally;</li> <li>-The weak connection between the school and its local, national and international environment, accentuated by its inability to quickly and adequately monitor changes in this environment.</li> <li>-The inability of the school to effectively support the overall development of the country and to actively participate in the knowledge society.</li> </ul>

*Source: Developed by us from the preamble of the 2015-2030 Strategic Vision*

### **c. The crisis and the culture of the Moroccan educational organization**

In Morocco, the evolution of the education system has been structured around three main stages: the pre-protectorate period, the protectorate period and the reforms undertaken after independence, in particular the National Charter for Education and Training. These different stages have helped to shape an organizational culture specific to the education system, by establishing rules, practices and values that guide all actors towards the coherence and effectiveness of educational actions. However, this historical construction has not prevented the emergence of a crisis situation, marked by persistent tensions and dysfunctions, which reveal the limits of this organizational culture and call for reflection on the managerial paradigms to be adopted.

In a crisis situation, drawing up a specific scheme for the governance of educational organizations requires keeping an eye on the "culture of organizations" component. According to Louart and Sire: "Corporate culture corresponds to all the activities, operating rules and values that are common to the social group that constitutes the organization as a whole" (El Alaoui 2016). Projecting this definition onto educational organizations will make it stand out from other organizations. Indeed, the Department of National Education is crossed by conflicts of organizational cultures, between a managerial logic focused on efficiency and a pedagogical logic focused on transmission, and between a social orientation favoring equity and an economic orientation oriented towards competitiveness. Generally, the culture that reigns in this super-organization is accused of being among the main causes of this situation. While there is a consensus on the causes of this crisis and the failures of the organization and even the measures to be taken, questions persist about the process of change to follow.

In his opening speech of the autumn session of the third legislative year in 2012, His Majesty King Mohammed VI made an alarming diagnosis by stating that the national education system suffers from a chronic crisis, a fact regularly underlined by successive ministries of national education. This speech, beyond its critical dimension, paved the way for a broader and more open debate on the future of Moroccan schools, thus creating the conditions to consider more effective reforms that are better adapted to the challenges of the education system. The speech

of His Majesty the King allowed the various stakeholders to make diagnoses and formulate proposals for reform embodied in the Strategic Vision 2015-2030.

Among the measures of the Strategic Vision 2015-2030, the moral contract occupies a central place, aimed at renewing the trust and support of stakeholders, and building a new organizational culture within the education system, an essential condition to ensure the success of mobilization around the School (Higher Council for Education, Training and Scientific Research, 2015). This measure is particularly necessary in the face of the cultural crisis in the education system, where the coexistence of divergent professional and managerial cultures weakens the coherence of actions and complicates governance.

The institutional reforms that the MENPS have encountered strong resistance, manifesting themselves both in trade union action and in protests from other stakeholders. Thus, in 2023, the implementation of the new status has met with significant opposition from the various operators, while human resources management is the responsibility of the government. Faced with these challenges, the Strategic Vision 2015-2030 proposes specific measures to support change, facilitate stakeholder buy-in and strengthen the effectiveness of reforms in the education system.

The Strategic Vision of the MENFPES, in its Chapter IV entitled "An approach to lead change via two levers: For Effective Leadership and New Change Management" (Higher Council for Education, Training and Scientific Research, 2015), proposes two central measures to support the transformation of the education system. The first lever, sustainable social commitment, aims to strengthen the mobilisation and confidence of stakeholders, by consolidating their support for reforms and placing the learner at the centre of actions. The second lever, dynamic governance and effective management skills at all levels of the school, improves coordination, accountability and consistency of decisions.

The strategy seeks with all means to establish modern management methods in the education system while gradually leading change; thus in the same chapter IV of the vision, it is stipulated that: "*Combining responsibility and accountability and imbued with the spirit of change and the will to renew the modes and methodology of action and management, not only at central level, but also at regional and local levels and at the level of education and training institutions*"

However, change management must take into consideration the history and identity of the organization and drive change slowly to allow it to adapt while respecting the phenomenon of homeostasis, i.e. the elements that guarantee its overall balance. In general, as a system, the culture of the educational organization, as stated by DEVILLARD O. and Rey D. in the book *Corporate Culture a Strategic Asset* (Devillard et Rey 2008), responds to the phenomenon of homeostasis, i.e. while moving on certain points, it is necessary to imbue it with a strong desire for change and sometimes to constrain it.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Faced with the requirements of the New Public Management, educational organizations are called upon to draw inspiration from the private sector management method, which demonstrates effectiveness and efficiency and adaptability to disruptions and crises. However, many reservations have been expressed about the approach to be taken in sectors where the definition of profit and utility is impossible.

The Department of National Education as an organization is a subtle system, its culture adheres to the past when it occupied the center of society's interest and the source of all reflection; talking about economic concepts such as efficiency, RBM, yield and more about contractualization puts him in a traumatic situation.

Since the dawn of the third millennium, the Moroccan Ministry of National Education has initiated important institutional reforms that have profoundly transformed the management of the education sector. Studies in the economics of education, as well as the standards defined by international organizations, strongly emphasize the importance of performance in the evaluation of the quality of education systems, insisting on the need to focus efforts on the student, a true "product" resulting from the entire pedagogical process.

In addition to the classic research carried out on topics related to the sciences of education, which focused on pedagogy and didactics, the present research highlights the opportunities offered by the managerial sciences to improve the quality of school education. This journey from the commercial and industrial lexicon to a social sector par excellence, presents a theoretical challenge and a long process of culture change.

Since the National Charter of Education and Training, Morocco has opted to put the school system in line with modernity and the benefits of the theory of human capital. The various reforms undertaken by Morocco seek to link the management of education to the performance of learners. The contribution of this paper is to build the theoretical foundations that justify the strategic choices of the various reforms in the field of educational management.

The results of this research can be summarized around three observations. First, the emergence of approaches inspired by the New Public Management in the governance of the education system. Secondly, the gradual integration of the logics of effectiveness and efficiency into Moroccan educational reforms. Third, the persistence of organizational and cultural limitations affecting the performance of the Moroccan education system.

The crisis from which the Moroccan Education System suffers, materialized by the poor performance of students in the various international evaluations, highlights the urgency of integrating a managerial logic into the organizational component and at all levels. This new paradigm arises in the context of the New Public Management. The following general recommendation is made from this research: The improvement of the performance of education systems, as defined by researchers and institutions, depends on the implementation of modern management techniques.

The perspectives of this research lie in the construction of a theoretical framework that can be used for the development of hypotheses and the conduct of empirical research mobilizing modeling and econometric tools, particularly in the field of educational economics.

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