



المجلس الأعلى للتربية والتكوين والبحث العلمي
Conseil Supérieur de l'Éducation, de la Formation et de la Recherche Scientifique
الهيئة الوطنية لتقييم منظومة التربية والتكوين والبحث العلمي
Instance Nationale d'Évaluation du Système d'Éducation, de Formation et de Recherche Scientifique

INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM

RESEARCH EVALUATION ISSUES, METHODS AND TOOLS

INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS



6-7 DECEMBER 2017 - RABAT



The organization of its symposium on « **Evaluation of Scientific Research: Issues, Methods and Tools** » by the National Authority of Evaluation at the Higher Council for Education, Training and Scientific Research has been influenced by the importance and growing internationalization of evaluation and its methodological imperatives, in addition to the many questionings that arise amongst the researchers community. This has also been instigated by the new paradigms that come through evaluation methods and practices of relevant institutions.

The development of research is indeed a major challenge for all countries, and probably even more so for developing countries where universities are at a maturing stage, research infrastructure unfolding and the scientific community in the process of forming. It is known that quality research has a positive impact on the university in the first place, values university researchers and contributes to their promotion, and upgrades the very international standing of the university. Research has also a fundamental part to play in the advancement and progress of countries and their smooth integration into the knowledge society. Coupled with a quality education and performant training, research enhances human capital advancement and leads to job creation. The experience of developed countries is particularly telling. They have indeed managed to promote research and reinforce innovation in a way that provides them with competitive advantages knowledge-wise.

The digital and technological revolution fostered the expansion of information and knowledge and allowed for a wider access to them. The gap is however getting wider between northern countries, which have based their economy and growth on knowledge, and developing countries of the South, which are yet striving to lay the foundations of research infrastructure and increase the critical mass of high level researchers within universities and laboratories. Southern countries' effort is directed toward enhancing scientific research and positioning it at the very heart of developmental issues. In a global world that is characterized by the circulation of knowledge and ideas and where scientific production plays a fundamental role in achieving nations' prosperity, these countries struggle, to promote the scientific research system with little financial resources. The transition from the classical research production paradigm to that of a knowledge based economy is indeed subject to constraints that seriously hinder the booming of scientific research and hold up its impact as an engine of development in a great number of countries. That is why the progress to be achieved with regard to



scientific research represents a key milestone for human development and progress.

In light of this, the challenge of research evaluation rises as a mean to assess its situation, identify its constraints and promote its quality. Evaluation in fact purports to be a development catalyst in our country.

We know that evaluation throughout the world is now considered to be vital to public authorities that finance academic research systems, to evaluation agencies and to States and societies that aspire to get anchored in the knowledge-based economy. Moreover, scarce financial resources and the need for efficiency prompt the pursuit of performance and call for an evaluation that would provide an assessment of the scientific research situation in the country.

Research evaluation is currently experiencing a real surge with the new public management as a corollary of the principle of good governance, which lays at the basis of liberal societies and guides the functioning of their institutions. Optimization of public investment requires availability of accurate information on the research situation by means of evaluation. In some developed countries, evaluation is made available to the education sector so as to allow the public to gauge and choose the most performing university product. It is used to shed light on scientific production development and upgrade policies and strategies. Despite private investments accounting for most scientific research funding in rich countries of the North, fundamental research, which generates knowledge, is less attractive for private investments. The latter continues to be handled by public authorities on the basis of competitive funds' allocation.

We can see that evaluation is at the center of the new trend of public management, based on results and on the imperative of performance, which advocates accountability and transparency. For it to be operational, it has to provide data based on measurable and reliable standardized indicators. It is in this sense that the scientific activities of researchers are evaluated through performance indicators.

If evaluation has emerged in an environment of global higher education and research, and in a context of new public management, a question presents itself: how to evaluate and by through which methods and instruments?

The answer is that evaluation, based on the principle of "quantify in order to objectify", uses technicity, instruments, tools, and measurable indicators to



quantify quality. We measure, compare, classify and publish palmaris. In this context, the reputation of both research and the university is measured using the quantitative logic. Even though their methodologies may be criticized, university rankings obey to the logic of the number of research publications. Indicators of scientific research serve the ranking of universities, which in turn, take into consideration the improvement of their performance in their strategy.

The development of the TIC has led to the extension of databases of indexed scientific journals and to the setting up of bibliometrics and scientometrics, encouraging, thus, international benchmarks of countries and national comparisons between researchers. We quantify quality through the evaluation of the impact of scientific productions that are achieved through indicators, index-quotations, H-index and H-factor, the number of conference given by the researcher abroad, and the number of projects held through international collaboration. This way, evaluation becomes a strategy of encouragement for publishing in indexed and famous journals. By referring to the conformity to the norms and requirements of standardized indicators, evaluation promotes competition in the production of research and motivates researchers by creating an emulation climate that encourages researchers to produce.

The objective of our symposium is to study and analyze methods of evaluation, techniques of measurement, tools and instruments used in the assessment of research, and to associate to this analysis an epistemological thinking about the art of evaluating science in its diversity, dimensions, and variety of disciplines. It is evident that the methods of evaluation are not the same when we evaluate strategies of research, researchers, structures of research and production. The differentiation between hard and soft sciences, i.e. humanities and social sciences raises the issue of applying the measure in the same way, on different types of scientific production, and identifying the most efficient methods and indicators. The most appropriate methods to evaluate this diversity arouse enquiries and call for a thought that will certainly serve as a basis for our symposium.

In order to measure quality, it is necessary to question indicators in the context of research production. A researcher publishing in indexed, and adding his name to several collective publications might not be a researcher who develops a creative contribution comparing to another research with less individual publications but with a social impact. It would be therefore



interesting to question other countries' context, which limits some indicators' scope. The entire 'Arab world' region, which publishes mainly in Arabic, has little access to international indexed journals, and is, hence, less exposed to measuring. This raises the issue of importance and singularity of certain bodies of work whose effect and cultural impact transcends the value of measuring, thus, influencing an entire era and going down in the history of human thought.

By adopting a reflective evaluation approach, while considering the importance of research indicators and without being subject to the dictate and the "tyranny" of evaluation, this conference questions evaluation in relation to the stake it holds. It also addresses the use of instruments of measure along with indicators in light of the issues relating to scientific research on the international level, on developing countries level and with regards to the nature of research fields: hard sciences, humanities and social sciences. If evaluation through the use of indicators is a form of judgement, in order for it to be a well thought out judgement, it needs to be the subject of questioning². This encourages the fact of making of evaluation and its methodological mechanisms a subject of scientific research to be dealt with a critical mind to allow evaluation to become an important development lever for science and knowledge with a positive impact on societies.

The event organized by our institution "National Authority of Evaluation at the Higher Council for Education, Training and Scientific Research" exposes these outstanding questions and aims to shed some light on them. This is an opportunity for INE to exchange with you as participants as well as with members of assessment institutions and researchers from different university backgrounds, who have been involved in this arena and the reflexion process. This event brings us all together today to share our respective experiences and brainstorm around the different methods and assessment instruments that are available to us along with their potential for success and areas of development.

Presentations are organized in six sessions, each of them reflecting major concerns which will be discussed during this conference:

1- From Angelique del Rey's book's title : « the tyranny of evaluation » – La Découverte Edition, Paris, 2013.

2- Bruno Leclercq. « Recent evolutions of research evaluation : some relevant concepts », p.121: in Edwin Zaccari, benoît Timmermans, Marek Hudon, Barbara Clerboux, Bruno Leclercq and Hugue Bersini. Think the Science. Research evaluation in question(s). Royal Academy of Belgium, 2016.



- The first session is dedicated to highlighting the relevance, issues and challenges of evaluation in the field of research in a context of measurement appreciation;
- The second session deals with comparability and measure as tools of evaluation in liberal societies nowadays;
- The third session re-focuses the debate from measure to research evaluation through social impact;
- The fourth addresses the evaluation methods used in the national and international experiences
- The fifth one is dedicated to international collaboration in the field of research and its evaluation;
- The sixth session features doctoral programs as breeding ground for researchers and for methods used in evaluation.

A summary of these presentations will be presented in the General conclusions at the end of this symposium.