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Reforms in French Public Universities. How does commitment to performance match with commitment to public values?

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The increasing use of performance measures in the public sector has been a major issue for public management research over the past years (Rabovsky, 2012). Proponents argue that performance measures improve decision-making in public institutions and make it easier for political leaders and the general public to evaluate public institutions. Wholey (1999, p. 288), for instance, states that public managers "use performance information systems for managing their agencies and programs, in accountability to key stakeholders and the public, to demonstrate effective or improved performance and to support resource allocation and other policy decision making". Conversely, critics claim that performance measures are "often short termism, blind to the practical realities that many public managers deal with, and are implemented in ways that distort agency missions and result in unintended consequences that negatively impact service delivery" (Rabovsky, 2012).

NPM reforms that have been led recently in the public sector in many countries strongly emphasize the notion of performance (Lapsley, 2009). If the effects of these reforms on the core micro-processes of organizations retained a great deal of attention (Townley, Cooper, & Oakes, 2003), few studies examined how these changes transformed the identities of civil servants (Vigour, 2009). By contrast a growing body of "Public Service Motivation" (PSM) research demonstrates that individuals may have predispositions to work in public institutions or organizations (Perry and Wise 1990; Perry, Hondeghem & Wise, 2010). These predispositions induce them "to perform better in—and feel more satisfied with—their public sector jobs because

they find this type of work intrinsically rewarding” (Wright & Grant, 2010, p. 692). This PSM is related to “motives and action in the public domain that are intended to do good for others and shape the well-being of society” (Perry and Hondeghem, 2008, p. 3). Previous studies suggested that PSM has a positive effect on job satisfaction, organizational commitment and organizational performance (Kim, 2011, 2012; Perry, Hondeghem & Wise, 2010) and ample evidence has been brought that PSM for public sector employees is much higher than for staff in private sector (Wright & Grant, 2010; Perry, Hondeghem & Wise, 2010; Hondeghem & Vandenabeele, 2005). In other words, civil servants share specific « public values ».

As a consequence the incorporation of a culture of performance raises questions about its effects on the identities of public servants within public organizations. Some authors speak of the hybridization of these identities (Miller et al., 2008; Kurunmäki & O’Leary, 2008). But scholars who are more critical about performance-based management suggest that what Kim (2012) consider as a component of PSM, i.e. commitment to public values, is difficult to reconcile with a positive attitude towards performance-based management (Bezes & al., 2011). It is therefore relevant to ask whether the dissemination of a culture of performance results in less commitment to public values or if they are compatible with one another. In the remainder of the paper, we will address this theoretical issue by exploring the following question: how far can civil servants committed to public values be simultaneously be committed to performance impact in public institutions?

We will explore this question in the context of French universities, whose administrative and academic staff is first of all composed of civil servants, and that recently experienced reforms that aimed at increasing the measure and the impact of performance. This is an innovative perspective as most former studies focused on the impact of the reforms upon academic staff only. In this contribution academic and administrative staff will be considered altogether and their commitment to public values (rather than to academic ones) will be studied.

Performance and Public Values in French Universities: Institutional Context

For a long time performance and the measurement of performance were not central issues in the French higher education system. Budgets were calculated according to inputs (number of students,

number of square meters, etc.) and evaluation was first of all a priori. For instance, the agreement to offer a bachelor program in sociology for the next four years at university X was based on the project prepared by the sociologists of this university and not on the results achieved by this department over the last four years. The words reputation, reward, recognition were frequent and used, but the word “performance” was foreign to the academic sphere.

This situation dramatically changed over the last decades under the influence of three major evolutions. First, a-posteriori evaluation has progressively been given more attention than to a-priori evaluation and this trend was accompanied by an important development of indicators. As in many other countries that experienced this trend (Townley, 1997), French academics tried to preserve this academic enclosure but they eventually failed. This started by the end of the 1990s with the evaluation of university research teams: the department of the Ministry that was in charge of this mission collected quantitative information, produced data basis and compared data, without making these information public nevertheless. At about the same period, the four-year contracts that the ministry has signed up with each university since the beginning of the 1990s became more and more informed with data and indicators. Finally in 2002 a new national budgetary act (the LOLF) introduced new budget procedures: public services (including universities) are supposed to clarify for which objectives they need a budget and develop indicators to measure the attainment of their objectives the following year (Bezes, 2008). The production of data thus expanded and they were transformed into indicators that more and more allowed for benchmark (between institutions, research labs etc.), bibliometrics or accountability.

In 2006, the French government reformed the evaluation system of higher education and research and created the French Agency for the evaluation of higher education and research, (AERES – Agence d’Evaluation de la Recherche et de l’Enseignement Supérieur). The AERES regularly assesses all labs, higher education institutions and teaching programs. Between 2006 and 2011, research labs were graded from ‘A+’ to ‘C’. The number of scholars of the research unit considered as ‘research active’, i.e. publishing enough in quantity and quality, played an important role in the determination of this grade. But more than the grades, the fact that all ratings and qualitative reviews led by the AERES were publicized on its website was a major change: the evaluation bodies that preexisted to the AERES were also asked to give grades but they were not made public.

With the development of indicators and the delivery of grades, a second major evolution became possible and happened in the mid-2000s: the funding and budgeting system of French higher education has progressively been based on performance. In 2008 the calculation of the budget allocated to each university was modified in order to better take performance into account. This was a major change as the share of public funding is very high in French universities. For the operating budget dedicated to teaching, 10 per cent are now based on outputs, such as the graduation rates or the placement of graduate students on the job market. For research, it is suggested that 20 per cent of the funds should be based on ‘performance’. Furthermore, the ministry is not the only one using performance to calculate the amount of budget allocated to universities: university leaders also use the grades delivered by the AERES to calculate the budget they will allocate to the research labs within their institution. As a result, the peer-based reviews produced by the AERES are used as management tools by universities (Musselin 2013).

In addition to the introduction of performance indicators in the calculation of the budget allocated to and within universities, a third evolution consists in an increased share of project-based funding, i.e. on another form of performance reward. In 2005-2006 the government created a new agency, the ANR (l’Agence Nationale pour la Recherche, e.g. French national research council). Its role is to organize calls for proposals of research projects presented by academics, to select and fund them on a competitive basis and after peer-review evaluations. The budget dedicated to the ANR strongly increased. The role of the ANR became even more crucial when, in 2010, a state program, called the ‘Investissements d’avenir’ was launched and the ANR became responsible for the management of the many competitive calls that were organized to allocate the money. Research labs were invited to apply for a call for LABEX (excellent labs) and universities to acalls for IDEX (excellent universities) (Mignot-Gérard, 2012). Juries composed of international scholars were appointed to designate a short list of institutions or labs that would be recognized as excellent and receive important amounts of financial resources dedicated to the program. A hundred of research labs were laureates of the LABEX and eight universities received the IDEX label.

Commitment to performance and commitment to public values in French Universities

Figure 1 shows the theoretical framework of this study. Commitment to performance and

preference for equality are assumed to influence commitment to public values. This direction of causation is certainly debatable. While we postulate that the commitment to performance impacts the commitment to public values, it is possible that the commitment to public values of public employees in universities influence their commitment to performance. The present study focuses on a simpler model, leaving more complicated theoretical and methodological issues such as mutual causation for future work. We also postulate that seniority, centrality and status have an impact on both commitment to public values and commitment to performance measures.

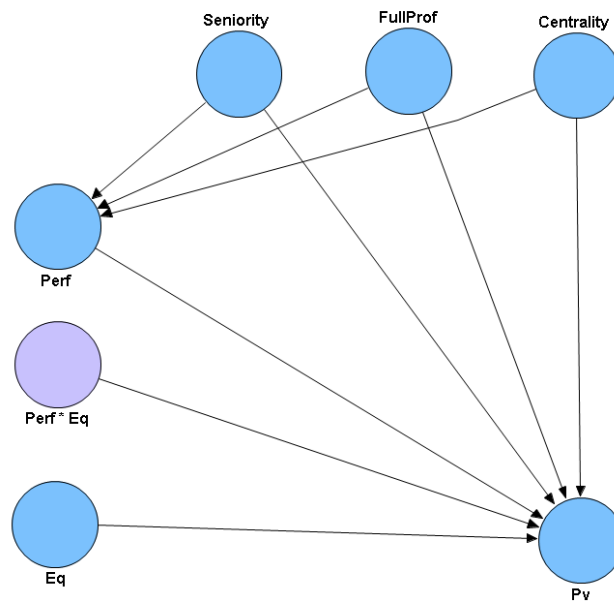


Figure 1 – Theoretical model

Commitment to public values

Public values are identified as those that give governmental organizations their distinctive public purposes. They provide “normative consensus about (a) the rights, benefits, and prerogatives to which citizens should (and should not) be entitled; (b) the obligations of citizens to society, the state, and one another; and (c) the principles on which governments and policies should be based” (Bozeman, 2007, p. 13). Based on a review of publications in English language concerning "public values", Jorgensen & Bozeeman (2007) identify 72 values considered as public. They group these values in seven constellations. The contribution to society is the first constellation exposed by Jorgensen & Bozeman (2007). They show that public values are also

associated with behaviors such as choosing decision-making styles, weighing ethical considerations, achieving outcomes, and motivating the workforce. The latter has recently attracted considerable interest among the scholars that conduct research in the field of public service motivation (PSM). Public values can indeed be seen as ideal to be followed when producing a public service: they provide direction to the behaviour of public servants (Andersen et al. 2013).

An important stream of research suggests that there is a positive impact (direct or indirect) of public service motivation on public employees' job satisfaction, organizational commitment and individual performance (Kim, 2012; Perry & al., 2010). This can be explained by the fact that work situation in the public sector can satisfy the individual need of wanting to help others. PSM and commitment to public values – a specific component of PSM – play an important role in the success of public organizations. This has been shown for many public services, but not for universities, although the latter are interesting cases in terms of their ‘publicness’, i.e. “the degree to which they are and should be affected by political authority” (Bozeman, 2007). According to Bozeman (2007, p. 10), the degree of publicness “is of interest because of the belief that achieving public values, and ultimately achieving public interest, depends to such a large degree on bringing to bear the optimal mix of political and economic authority in pursuit of values (both individual and public)”. The history of universities is characterized by their continuous attempt to escape “political authority” without becoming too much dependent on “economic authority”, but many authors stress that over the last years higher education has turned into a market and became more dependent on economic authority (Chait, 2002; Gumpert, 2002; Kirp, 2004; Williams, 2004). In this study, we thus suggest defining the commitment to public values of the university staff by the level of adhesion or resistance to measures that either aimed at transforming the public nature of universities and/or their public mission. This first of all concerns the trend towards “marketisation” or “commodification” and the transformation of teaching and research into private goods that can be bought by paying fees or intellectual property rights and provide individual rather than collective benefits (McMahon, 2009; Just et Huffman, 2009). As a result, while teaching can be sold to consumers -the students-, the objectives of higher education might also be affected: it does not so much aim at transmitting knowledge but rather at training a qualified manpower for the job market. The knowledge produced by research no longer is a common good available to all (Merton, 1973) but access to

knowledge is limited by intellectual property rights (licenses or patents) and becomes a source of revenues (Just et Huffman, 2009). The finality of research is also affected: it serves the search for truth as much as economic growth. Last but not least, it also deals with the trend towards forms of privatization of universities through the increase in resources coming from the private sectors (firms or families) (Mohrman et al., 2008) or the rise of student fees, but also the introduction of managerial practices coming from firms.

Commitment to performance values

We know less on why individuals are concerned by PSM (Wright & Grant, 2010), or public values at large, than on the effects of PSM. Seminal studies about PSM postulate that the greater an individual's public service motivation, the more likely this individual will seek membership in a public organization (Perry & Wise, 1990). The numerous studies that tested this proposition are generally supportive (Perry and al., 2010).

But can the PSM of one individual vary? And if yes, what can affect the degree of PSM? Some studies suggest that adaptation and socialization occur. Some studies show that a higher PSM is the result of an organizational environment that cultivates or deteriorates those values among their employees (Wright & Grant, 2010). Following this perspective, one can question the impact of the recent introduction of performance in the French higher education system. We already described these transformations that all aimed at evaluating and taking performance into account, and also partly transformed qualities into metrics, thus introducing more commensuration (Espeland & Stevens, 1998) in the higher education sector. One major consequence of this trend is the increase in competition between individuals and between institutions: the definition of performance measures has established the bases for commensuration and the publicity of the results has accentuated the pressure. Another major consequence consists in the higher selectivity of resource allocation and, consequently, the increase in differentiation that results from the tighter relation between funding and performance.

These reforms aimed at improving the competitiveness and results of French universities but also at transforming the individual behaviors (Le Galès & Scott, 2008). It is thus legitimate to ask how the civil servants working in universities perceived this diffusion of “performance-based management”. In the field of higher education, many studies questioned whether this led – or not

– to a change in academic values among the faculty staff: they largely observed change in practices, but some argue that such reforms also deeply affected academic values (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004; Osterloh, 2010), while others concluded to their endurance (Henkel, 2000; Barrier, 2010, 2011).

By contrast with such studies we will first not focus on the academic values of French faculty members but on their commitment to public values and their commitment to performance in order to see whether they are compatible one with another or not. Furthermore, instead of looking only at faculty members, we will consider all employees of French universities, faculty and administrative staff and see whether they are or not affected the same way or differently, although they are all civil servants.

French universities developed as public services and most of their staff – either administrative or academic – are civil servants. One main characteristic of the French system as it developed over time was equality, or more precisely equivalence. The French ministry every four (now five) years accredits each training program so that a bachelor in Law all over France is considered as equivalent to any other bachelor in Law, whatever the university that delivers it. This theoretical equivalence between higher education institutions also works for academics: professors or administrators with the same seniority and same echelon receive the same salary. The recent reforms introduced more differentiation between institutions (IDEX versus the others), research units (LABEX versus the others), and among academics, since bonuses can now be allocated according to performance in research. This increase in competition and concentration of funding challenges public values. It is emphasized by the introduction of private forms of management and the closer relation between performance and rewards that modifies the principle for equality. We can therefore expect that individuals who are committed to performance values are not committed to public values.

H1: Commitment to performance values has a negative effect on commitment to public values. The higher the level of an individual's commitment to performance values, the lower the level of commitment to public values.

Preference for equality

As stressed by Rubin (Rubin 2009; Rubin and al., 2012) most studies on organizational justice do not concern the public sector, or when they do so, they look at the impact of fairness on the acceptance of public policies or public decisions (Herian and al., 2012; Baird, 2000, Rottman, 1998). Following the perspective opened by Rubin, we want to further investigate organizational justice in the public sector by focusing on public professional bureaucracies, i.e. universities. As stressed in the introduction, such organizations are highly interesting because they employ traditional administrative staff whose activity is mostly governed by rules and legal rationality and professionals (academics in our case) whose activity is regulated by professional norms and who consider themselves as (equal?) peers.

While following Rubin's interest for the public sector, we nevertheless studied fairness in a way that is different from her and from most publications on distributive and procedural justice. The latter are mostly interested in investigating the impact of the perception of justice on behaviors and attitudes – i.e. performance (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001), loyalty and commitment (Lind and Tyler 1988), cooperation (Tyler and Lind 1992, Tyler and Blader 2003), turnover (Rubin 2009), satisfaction (McFarlin and Sweeney, 1992) –. They therefore develop scales measuring whether individuals feel that they are treated fairly, whether they think the rules are fair –and applied fairly– or not, and test the relationship between these answers and a specific behavior or attitude. However, such studies do not question what is understood by “fair”: what is important is whether individuals feel it is fair or not, but not what is meant by fair. In most cases, it is also implicitly and tacitly understood that “fairness” is equity, i.e. allocating rewards according to the contribution of each individual.

In this paper we will on the contrary pay attention to the principles of justice preferred by individuals. Because we are interested in their adhesion to public values, it is important to measure whether they have specific preferences in terms of justice. In other words, we are less interested in the impact of the perception of justice than on what is considered as fair (or not) and how this is related the adhesion (or not) to public values and to attitudes towards performance.

In the literature on theories of justice, different principles of justice are distinguished. According to Leventhal (1976 and 1980), Lerner (1982) or Deutsch (1975 and 1985), allocation of rewards

can be based on the outcomes of performance (equity), but also on equality (same amount to all) or on needs (the more needy will get more). Justice motive theory (Deutsch, 1975) stipulates that variations in fairness depend on the situations in which relationships develop. If economic productivity is the first goal, equity prevails, while equality is dominant when the maintenance of social relations comes first and needs is preferred when personal welfare is the common goal. Some psychologists (Rasinski, 1987; Davey and al., 1999) by contrast consider that individuals each have personal preferences either for equity, for equality or for needs and that it may explain and predict their attitudes toward social policies. Choosing among these different principles in order to define how rewards will be allocated (or a good distributed) is qualified as proactive content theory of justice by Greenberg (1987) because it defines what those who design a distributive process consider as fair.

As stressed by Morand and Merriman (2012), organizational justice is generally associated with equity: the outputs produced by different individuals are supposed to be different and thus merit differences in rewards. Nevertheless they observe that when individual contribution is hard to measure, or when one wants to promote solidarity within a group, egalitarian distribution may prevail. But they furthermore argue that if reward is not reduced to salaries, other forms of recognition (Fraser, 2001; Fraser and Honneth, 2003) might rely on equality. Human resources policies for instance recently increasingly developed egalitarian measures or “symbolic egalitarianism” (Pfeffer, 1994) such as having the same cafeteria for blue and white collars or adopting the same dressing codes for all. Organizational justice can therefore rely on equality as well as on equity and, even in the workplace, individuals may prefer equality to equity as a principle of justice when resources have to be allocated, recognition attributed or prestige shared.

We will therefore consider that academic and administrative staff may either prefer equality or equity. Because equality was the main principle organizing the French higher education system (Musselin 2001 [2004]), we expect equality to be closely associated to public values stressing collegiality and social relationships among peers while equity praises the recognition of individual performance. The preference for equality will therefore increase the opposition between performance values and public values.

H2a: The preference for equality has a positive effect on commitment to public values: the higher the level of an individual's preference for equality, the higher the level of

commitment to public values.

H2b: The relationship between public values and performance is moderated by the preference for equality; the lowest the preference for equality the stronger the negative link between commitment to performance and commitment to public values will be.

Status, centrality and seniority

For each of the two types of commitment addressed by this paper we will look at the characteristics of the individuals dedicated to them. We expect a rather strong disconnection between those committed to public values and those committed to performance. But we also expect finer results.

According to the literature on higher education that points at the more managerial conceptions of the administrative staff and their greater familiarity with management, indicators, procedures, etc., we can on the one hand expect the administrative staff to be more committed to performance than the academic one. But former studies led in France (Mignot-Gérard, 2006) showed a quite strong divide in French universities between academic and administrative staff belonging to departments (facultés) and those belonging to the central administrative offices or the presidential teams, the latter being more opened to reforms and management than the former. We therefore expect that individuals (either academics or administrative staff) working at the “central” organizational level of universities to be more favourable to performance than staff of schools; simultaneously, we expect the latter to be closer to public values than the former.

H3a: Academic and administrative staff belonging to the central administrative offices or the presidential teams are more committed to performance - AND less committed to public values - than those in university sub-units (faculties, departments, research centers)

Many studies on the implementation of NPM in universities have stressed the importance of age or seniority in attitudes towards these reforms. They draw on neo-institutionalist theories scholarships that have emphasized the impact of socialization on actors behaviors and values (DiMaggio et Powell, 1983). They generally suggest that new staff members trained and socialized in the new context are less opposed to them than older or more senior staff. We therefore expect the latter to be more committed to public values.

H3b: The senior members of the administrative and academic staff are more committed to public values – AND less committed to performance – than the younger ones.

Finally, building on studies stressing the (increasing) diversity of the academic profession (Becher, 1989; Owen-Smith and Powell, 2001) we expect to find variations among the answers of the French academics. In particular, one can expect an influence of careers on commitment. Drawing on conclusions built by the Mertonian sociology of science that points the endurance of meritocracy in scientists' values, we expect that those who benefited the more from reward and equity principles (full professors) will be more committed to performance than academics in lower ranks. With regards to public values, earlier research upon the professoriate in the U.S. pointed to the relative higher proportion of "liberals" in the professoriate than in other occupations with similar socio-economic status (Finkelstein, 1984). However, more recent scholarships that investigate the American professoriate's political opinions from the inside, have found differentiated views within the academic profession. Gross and Simmons (2007) demonstrated that there were as many professors who hold center-center/leftist views as those who hold more liberal positions. In another type of scholarship –focused on the making of 'hard decisions' within universities-, Gumpert (1993) brings evidence that full professors recognized as 'faculty stars' would support managerial decisions that aim at implementing retrenchments of schools that do not perform well to adapt their curricula to the market needs. These studies thus come to the converging idea that professors may be less close to public values than their colleagues.

H3c: Full professors are more committed to performance - AND less committed to public values - than other administrative and academic staff

We will hence try to identify which of these three variables (organizational level, seniority and career) is the most important to understand both the commitment to performance and the endorsement of public values.

Method

Sample and procedure

The data upon which this study is based were collected in a survey sent to actors (both academic and administrative staff) involved in the governance of all French universities.

Universities had been informed in advance of the survey through two channels: the mailing list of the Conférence des Présidents d'Université (Conference of University Presidents) and the French Association of Registers. Online questionnaires were sent by email to 4 793 administrative managers (registers, heads of administrative offices (human resources department, finance department, etc.) as well as the administrative counterparts of deans, department heads and directors of labs) and 7 497 academics (members of presidential teams, elected members of the decision-making bodies, deans, department chairs and directors labs) of all French universities. The emails outlined the objectives of the study and guaranteed anonymity to the respondents. Data were collected online in order to increase the response rate and to ensure that the collected data were only accessible to the four authors of this paper. This method assured participants that no personal information would be shared within and across universities. Our contacts with respondents were independent and were backed by the full anonymity assured to all who agreed to take part in the study. All data were collected by the researchers and kept with them throughout the study.

Emails were sent between April and September 2011. Administrative managers returned 710 responses, yielding a response rate of 14% and 1817 responses were returned by academics (response rate: 24 %). The majority of the respondents were men (65%). The average age was 51 (standard deviation = 8.9). 63% of respondents have worked in higher education for more than 10 years and 50% of respondents have worked in the same university for more than 10 years.

The response rate was significantly lower for administrative employees than for the academics. This can be explained by the importance of hierarchical relations in the administrative services of French universities: some people did not want to answer without explicit consent of their superiors.

Measures

All of the measures used were collected on a seven-point Likert-type scale (1 = strong disagreement, 7 = strong agreement). To establish content validity, we thoroughly reviewed the prior literature. We used established scales when they existed; otherwise, we relied on the underlying literature to provide a basis for formulating survey questions (see Appendix 1).

Commitment to public values in universities (PV) were measured with five items reflecting the opposition to the trend towards the “commodification” of teaching and research and their transformation from public goods to private goods that can be bought by paying fees, intellectual property rights and the increase in resources coming from the private sector (McMahon, 2009; Just & Huffman, 2009; Mohrman & al., 2008).

We defined the commitment to performance (PERF) through two main set of questions and 5 items. The first one concerns attitudes towards the instruments, devices, agencies in charge of evaluating or measuring performance, while the second focus on the level of acceptance of the introduction of performance in the allocation of funding, instead of budgeting processes that reproduce former budget (Wildavsky, 1964).

Organizational justice was regarded as preference for equity (Morand and Merriman, 2012). It was measured by asking the respondent their agreement to use resources to reduce inequalities and their reject of the rise of differentiation in the management of staff through the introduction of bonuses (EQ).

Several other variables were included in the model: the number of years of university experience (Seniority) (0 < 10 years or 1 > 10 years); the centrality of the respondent which divides the population in two groups, the academic and administrative staff working in schools (facultés) Vs those of the central administrative offices or the presidential teams (Centrality); the status which opposes the full professors to others (FullProf).

Descriptive statistics of the measures were computed for individual items using SPSS 20, as shown in the appendix. Reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity were assessed with SmartPLs.

Table 1 shows the characteristics of the three constructs we used. The Cronbach's alphas, except for commitment to public values, are greater than .7, and all estimates of the composite reliability exceed .7. This suggests an acceptable level of reliability. The loadings of all items on their factors are in a range between .575 and .815. Average variance extracted (AVE) is slightly below 0.5, however for the three constructs composite reliability is always superior to AVE.

	Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of Items	Cronbach alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Commitment to public values	19,12133	23,075	4,803597	4	0.554	0.746	0.427
Commitment to performance values	21,55379	41,493	6,441516	5	0.749	0.823	0.482
Preference for equity	29,02424	89,359	9,452990	7	0.813	0.863	0.476

Table 1 - Reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity of the constructs

The correlation estimates between the variables used are from 0.0004 to 0.7185 (Table 2).

	Centrality	Eq	FullProf	Perf	Perf * Eq	Pv	Seniority
Centrality	1						
Eq	-0.1301	1					
FullProf	-0.1662	-0.101	1				
Perf	0.1072	-0.5945	0.076	1			
Perf * Eq	-0.0517	0.7185	-0.0464	-0.2977	1		
Pv	-0.1194	0.5545	-0.0579	-0.4648	0.4025	1	
Seniority	-0.1053	-0.0004	0.296	-0.0625	0.0114	-0.0091	1

Table 2 – Variable correlations

(*) Moderation effect

For the three constructs we used the square root of the AVE of each construct is larger than the construct's correlation with any other construct in the model. This suggests an acceptable discriminant validity.

	Eq	Perf	Pv
Eq	(0.690)		
Perf	-0.5945	(0.694)	
Pv	0.5545	-0.4648	(0.654)

Table 3 – Inter-construct correlations*

* Values in parentheses on the diagonal in the correlation matrix show the square root of AVE.

The statistical analysis suggests an acceptable level of reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity for the measures we used.

Data analysis and measurement model evaluation

In order to estimate our theoretical model we performed a partial least squares (PLS) structural equation modeling (SEM). SEM integrates path analysis and factor analysis. It allows to test simultaneously all the relationships in the model. The next section discusses the estimation results of the theoretical model.

Results

The structural model in PLS is assessed by examining the path coefficients, t-statistics and R2 values. A nonparametric bootstrapping procedure (200 replications) were performed to test the significance of PLS path modeling. The model accounts for 34% percent of the variance of commitment to public values (See figure 2). Table 4 presents the test of the hypotheses.

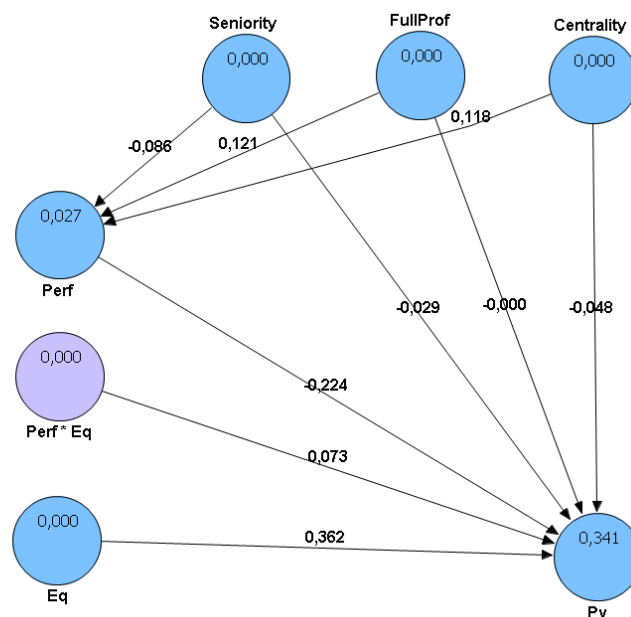


Figure 2 – Inter-construct correlations*

	Path coefficient	t-value
Centrality -> Perf	0.1183***	4.9383
Centrality -> Pv	-0.0476**	2.5138
Eq -> Pv	0.3623***	9.8584
FullProf -> Perf	0.1211***	4.8393

FullProf -> Pv	-0.0003	0.0122
Perf -> Pv	-0.2243***	9.5734
Perf * Eq -> Pv (1)	0.0733*	2.6849
Seniority -> Perf	-0.0859***	3.4093
Seniority -> Pv	-0.0288	1.4955

Table 4 – Results of PLS model estimations

* $p < 0.05$,

** $p < 0.01$

*** $p < 0.001$

(1) Perf * Eq = interaction effect, i.e. the moderating effect played by the preference for equality on the impact of performance on the commitment to public values.

Hypothesis 1 postulates that commitment to performance values has a negative effect on commitment to public values. The relationship between commitment to performance values and commitment to public values is negative ($\beta = -.2243$) and statistically significant at $p < .001$, even after controlling the effects of preference for equality, centrality, status and seniority. Thus, the test result provides support for hypothesis 1; the higher the level of an individual's commitment to performance value, the lower the level of commitment to public values. In other words, individuals strongly committed to public values appeared to be poorly committed to performance and vice-versa. This is not very surprising as performance-based management challenges many of the principles upon which civil service relies (collective management, impersonal rules, weak differentiation, etc.) but is nevertheless striking because there is no reason to think that individuals committed to public values are less efficient or care less to the quality of their work.

Hypothesis 2a postulates that the preference for equality has a positive effect on commitment to public values. The relationship between preference for equity and commitment to public values is positive ($\beta = .3623$) and statistically significant at $p < .001$. This suggests that the higher the level of an individual's preference for equity, the higher the level of commitment to performance values.

Hypothesis 2b postulates that the relationship between public values and performance is moderated by the preference for equality. Data confirm that the lowest the preference for equality the stronger the negative link between commitment to performance and commitment to public values is ($\beta = .0733$). This interaction effect is statistically significant at $p < .05$. According to this interaction effect it seems that what is at stake is less about being performing than about using performance (i.e. merit or equity) as a principle for distributive justice. In public services –

such as universities – hybridation of values after the reforms seems less usual than opposition.

Hypothesis 3a postulates that staff in departments is more committed to public values than those belonging to the central administrative offices or the presidential teams. The relationship between centrality is negative ($\beta = -.0476$) and statistically significant at $p < .01$). In addition, we observe that academic leaders at the top of the university and the administrative staff working in the central administrative departments of the university are more committed to performance than all types of staff working in academic departments (facultés) ($\beta = 0.1183$; $p < .001$). Commitment to performance values is thus higher among those involved in the governance of universities at the central level. This suggests that the recent reforms did not reduce the distance between top academic and administrative leaders and intermediary leaderships (deans, heads of department of lab and their administrative staff) and, as a consequence, that performance values did not diffuse within French universities.

Hypothesis 3b postulates that the senior members of the administrative and academic staff are less favorable to performance than juniors. We see that the relationship between seniority and commitment to performance is negative ($\beta = -0.0859$) and significant ($p < .001$). This confirms authors stressing that adhesion to performance values is more frequent among academic and administrative members who recently entered universities and were socialized after performance-based funding, a posteriori evaluation and indicators developed and that one can expect commitment to performance values to become more frequent overtime. However, our assumption that seniority would go hand in hand with the endorsement of public values is not confirmed, since the link between seniority and commitment to public values is negative ($\beta = -0,0288$) but not statistically significant.

Hypothesis 3c postulates that full professors are more committed to performance values than other administrative and academic staff. The link between the status and commitment to performance is positive ($\beta = 0,1211$) and statistically significant ($p < .001$). Our results confirm that there is an opposition between full professors to all other academics: they are closer to performance than all other categories of staff. Our second assumption that full professors were less akin to public values is also confirmed ($\beta = -0,0003$) although the link is not significant between status and public values.

Discussion and conclusions

The PSM research stream has convincingly argued that individuals working in the public sector were committed to a similar set of values that have a strong impact on their involvement, motivation, performance at work and retention (Perry and al., 2010). In parallel, scholarships have demonstrated that NPM reforms might be a source of perturbation of this public service ethos. As put by Rayner and al., 2010, p. 28), “the literature indicates that, on the whole, these reforms have altered roles (Bach, Kessler, and Heron, 2007), influenced norms (Marsden, 2004), and significantly, and negatively, affected public service professionals and the public service ethos (Rhodes, 1994)”.

Three important conclusions can be drawn from these first results at that stage.

First of all, our study indicates that the civil servants operating in French universities do not form a homogenous category: obviously, some are more committed to the “publicness” of universities than others. However, the cleavages among civil servants are less between seniors or juniors, or between different status of the academic profession (professors versus associate/assistant professors) than between the location of the people’s position within the organization: the ones working in the central administration of the university are less committed to public values than the ones working in the university subunits. This finding is not surprising per se; other studies on universities have found that university administrators were more sensitive to corporate values than were the lay academics (Gumport, 1993; Hardy, 1990). However, in the literature that studies the implementation of NPM reforms within universities, the authors usually stress other dichotomies, especially the one between the administrative staff on one hand and the academic staff on the other. They argue that the administrative staff is more sympathetic to private values either because they come from the private sector (Rhoades and Sporn, 2002), or because their day-to-day job consists in implementing management tools imported from the private sector (Krücken and Meier, 2004). In the case of French universities, this cleavage is not a new one: Mignot-Gerard (2006) had already noticed this conflict of values between the university presidents and the deans by the end of the nineties: the former were more in favor of the diversification of universities funding and the development of partnerships with the socio-economic environment than were the deans. One can thus hardly conclude that this dichotomy in

‘publicness’ between the “center” and the “periphery” in French universities is resulting from the reforms led since 2006 that stress the importance of economic performance of research (as do for instance the ‘excellence initiatives’) or put forth the placement of graduate students on the job market as the first and foremost criteria to judge the performance of university degrees (Lebaron, 2010). The tension between the center and the periphery actually extend beyond the issue of publicness. As highlighted by the present study, it also concerns the commitment to performance. One can then conclude that the distance between top academic and administrative leaders and intermediary leaderships (deans, heads of department of lab and their administrative staff) is probably more the result of fifty years of reforms of French universities that, unlike what happened in other European countries, have continuously been dedicated to strengthen the leadership at the top of the university instead of building a strong hierarchical line (Musselin, 2009).

Secondly, in line with the findings of other scholarships, our study clearly confirms that adhesion to performance in universities is hardly compatible with public values. But it moreover shows that individuals opposed to performance are all the more in favor of the university publicness that they value equality instead of equity. Until the nineties, the reforms led to strengthen the universities autonomy, aimed primarily at reducing the inequalities between the universities (Musselin, 2004). The most radical change entailed by the recent reforms led in the French higher education since 2006 is that they encourage differentiation both between individuals and academic units (either universities, schools or research labs); these reforms also enhance meritocratic principles for the allocation of public funds towards individuals and organizations. Our study thus indicates that those specific measures, which are suspected to create vertical differentiation and increase inequalities are –more than the addition and generalization of tools of performance evaluation– viewed as highly incompatible with the universities publicness. Such result is interesting because it encourages to elaborating further distinctions among the several dimensions that compose New Public Management. Furthermore, it invites to question whether the strong relation between equality and publicness is a specific trait of public service in France or whether it can be generalized to other national contexts.

A third striking result of this study is the fact that the status in the academic career explains more the opinion towards performance than any other variable. As career success is highly linked to performance, it is not surprising that being full professor better explains the commitment to performance than seniority or belonging or not to an academic sub-unit. We indeed suppose that they prefer equity to equality because they understand achievement in career as a reward for their individual performance. This adhesion to equity by those who benefited from decisions based on merit should be further explored. In complement to this interpretation, we could assume that professors are indifferent to new performance measures that will not apply to them but only to junior professors. But the most important to notice here is that being a professor is more positively related to commitment to performance than being a university administrator (either academic or administrative staff). This finding is interesting because the scholarships usually stress the tension entailed by NPM reforms between the organization and the profession (Bezes and al., 2011). By contrast, our study highlights possible greater disagreements within the academic profession itself than between the professional and the managers, as it was originally conceptualized in the model of the ‘professional bureaucracy’.

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Appendix A

(N = 1785-2413)	Mean	Std. dev.	Factor loading
<i>Commitment to public values</i>			
<i>Vp_Fees.</i> Regarding the available resources of your university, are you in favor of an increase of tuition fees? (RC)	5,286	1,874	,651
<i>Vp_Resources.</i> Regarding the available resources of your university, are you in favor of an increase of the proportion of funding generated by private companies? (RC)	3,675	2,007	,760
<i>Vp_PublicService.</i> How the development of teaching programs offered by your university should be oriented? Teaching programs should primarily be driven by the public mission of universities	5,635	1,420	,617
<i>Vp_Autonomy.</i> About research activities... Do you believe that research contracts restrict faculty scientific autonomy?	4,456	1,928	,618
<i>Commitment to performance</i>			
<i>Perf_Aeres.</i> About recent or future reforms, what do you think of the evaluations led by the AERES?	4,202	1,912	,680
<i>Perf_CnuTeaching.</i> About recent or future reforms, what do you think of a regular assessment by the CNU ¹ of the performance of faculty in teaching?	4,997	1,760	,809
<i>Perf_CnuResearch.</i> About recent or future reforms, what do you think of a regular assessment by the CNU of the performance of faculty in research?	5,184	1,670	,815
<i>Perf_Alloc.</i> Regarding the financial resources of your university, should performance be taken more into account in the allocation of resources provided by the Ministry to universities?	4,135	1,908	,575
<i>Perf_LRU.</i> The individual assessment of faculty prescribed by the LRU law is beneficial because it enhances competition among faculty staff	3,121	1,856	,658
<i>Preference for equality</i>			
<i>Eq_Projet.</i> Research on projects creates too much growing inequalities among the faculty staff	4,544	1,836	,715
<i>Eq_Coll.</i> Salary incentives should only be collective bonuses	3,195	2,127	,609
<i>Eq_Disp.</i> The better conditions offered to newly recruited staff increase too much disparities among the faculty staff	4,291	1,959	,608
<i>Eq_Modul.</i> With regards to the balance between teaching, service, and research activities, it is better that all faculty have the same duties rather than introducing individual variations	3,639	2,089	,702
<i>Eq_Ineq.</i> Taking into account performance creates too much	4,199	1,890	,585

¹ The CNU (Comité National des Universités) is a national committee in charge of faculty recruitment and career promotion. Every candidate to permanent academic positions (either as associate or full professor) has to apply to the CNU before applying to positions offered by institutions. On the basis of the examination of the scholars' publications and academic involvement, the CNU makes decisions whether or not the candidates are 'qualified' to apply for academic jobs. In 2007, a project of reform planned that the CNU should in the future be in charge of the individual assessment of faculty performance both in teaching and research. This project has not been implemented so far but it is still warmly debated among the academic community.

inequalities among the faculty staff			
<i>Eq_IneqTeach.</i> Taking into account performance creates too much inequalities among the faculty staff	4,673	1,894	,830
<i>Eq_Comp.</i> You value positively the fact to distribute research budgets on the basis of a competition between research teams? (RC)	4,542	1,834	,793