



Research Article

Impact of Governance on the Organizational Performance of Professional Associations: A Study of the Poultry Sector in Morocco

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Abstract

As groups of professionals that defend their own interests, professional associations must improve their organizational performance on both individual and collective levels. However, members' diversity, lack of interaction and difficulties in creating and diffusing information have prevented these organizations from achieving their goals. These aims may include: lobbying, scheduling and pricing production, improving product and process quality as well as promoting consumption and exports by seeking out new markets. The governance of professional associations is frequently responsible for the success or failure of a sector. As such, this paper considers how some countries develop a strategic sector by building a solid foundation for professional associations' development. The existing bibliography as well as a specific benchmark of two emergent countries were used in this research to determine the key success factors of organizational performance in the poultry sector. The benchmark indicated that integrated production systems and strategies focused on the search for added value. Diversification (halal markets in the Middle East); aggregation (performance-based service contracts) and partnerships with production-technique leaders (especially in Japan); and territorial organization and compartmentalization (one industrial aggregator per region buying from multiple breeders) are the three key success factors of the poultry sector. Our paper aims to develop a governance approach of organizational performance to provide African leaders (particularly Moroccan leaders) of professional associations, especially in the poultry sector, a model to follow in the light of the creation of the African Poultry Confederation.

Keywords: organizational performance – professional associations – governance – poultry sector

Introduction

Professional associations are organizations brought together by interest groups related to a given product or sector (such as poultry farming) in a particular country, whether the product is destined for the domestic market, export or both. These associations draw their members from individual farmers, agribusinesses, processors,

and distributors. In some countries, government agencies are also members. Professional associations certainly play a vital role, and their existence is generally appreciated by governments. However, almost all these associations are experiencing financial difficulties.

Agriculture traditionally belongs to the primary sector. By contrast, Nefussi and Aznar (2007)

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consider agriculture to be the most recent tertiary sector. Professional associations in agriculture have evolved over time to adapt to changes in the socio-economic and political environment. Langreo (2002) notes that most professional associations in Europe were established to promote certain agricultural products, resolve problems between farmers and farm businesses, plan production and regulate marketing (including setting minimum prices). Several years later, they established new objectives, including promoting consumption, assisting the state in trade negotiations, fostering market transparency and promoting price determination. In recent years, other issues have arisen, such as food safety, traceability and environmental protection.

The performance of professional associations is measured in terms of the achievement of their objectives. Bourguignon (1997) defines performance as "the achievement of organizational objectives, whatever the nature or variety of these objectives" (1997, p.91).

The aim of this article is to provide a theoretical presentation of the various determinants of professional associations' organizational performance while paying attention to the role of governance within these associations. First, this article reviews the literature on professional associations and discusses the determinants of their performance as organizational networks. The concept of governance is then defined and its significance for professional associations is demonstrated. Second, we present the modes of governance adopted by professional associations and the main determinants of these modes while also establishing links between governance and the organizational performance of professional associations. Finally, a conceptual framework integrating our theoretical constructs is proposed.

Literature review of professional associations

Defining the concept of professional associations

Coronel and Liagre (2006) define professional associations as private state-recognized organizations that are brought together by members from all segments of the same commodity chain. Their aims are developing policies, guaranteeing the equality of members, promoting the improvement of commodity-chain performance and defending the interests of the sectors. Professional associations are collective

representative organizations [that] may be national or regional [and are] formed by bodies representing production, processing and even marketing, whatever their legal status" (Loma-Ossorio and Castillo, op.cit., p. 10).

Why establish professional associations?

Professional associations may vary according to the contexts in which they are created and shaped, their objectives changing over time and depending on the circumstances and particularities of each sector. Despite this diversity of missions, the action spectrum of professional associations revolves mainly around improving the competitiveness of the links that comprise the sectors (Posada, 1997).

The following objectives have been identified by authors as frequently pursued by professional associations (Rastoin and Ghersi, op. cit; Loma-Ossorio and Castillo, op. cit; Langreo, op. cit): defending the sector's interests and negotiating with relevant authorities. These aims involve lobbying government bodies (ministry, parliament, etc.); scheduling and pricing production (under certain conditions); improving product and process quality; presenting industry statistics and facilitating access to and exchange of information between members; conducting research and development as well as technical experimentation to disseminate new technologies throughout the industry; introducing new products and increasing the competitiveness of the entire industry; promoting consumption through generic product promotion and consumer information; upgrading exports by seeking and conducting studies on new markets and organizing missions and meetings with foreign professional organizations; pursuing environmental protection in the implementation of production-related activities in the sector; ensuring food traceability and safety; and coordinating the industry's internal relations, specifically by correcting disparities in the economic balance of power between the industry's different trades, to achieve greater fairness and parity in exchanges. It should also be noted that professional associations include commissions responsible for political representation of the industry, production and commercial issues, and technological innovation.

What are the guiding principles of a professional association?

Zoma (2006) as well as Coronel and Liagre (2006) believe that professional associations

should follow three guiding principles. First, the associations must draw their members from those representing industry actors, not from the actors themselves, and be fully representative of the industry segment(s) they represent. Otherwise, the professional associations will lose their legitimacy. Second, the associations must all be treated equally and have an equal number of votes. Third, there must be unanimity. Although disagreements between individual members are inevitable, professional associations should speak and act in a common interest. To achieve this, decisions must be taken unanimously and, consequently, every member of the board of directors must have the right of veto.

Characteristics, participants and financing of professional associations

What are the characteristics of professional associations?

Coronel and Liagre (2006) and Zoma (2006) have also identified the essential characteristics of professional associations. They must be a group of solely private associations and have been created spontaneously by industry professionals. Membership also needs to be optional. Furthermore, professional associations must represent the different segments or activities of the industry, and these organizations must be clearly representative of a majority of those who perform those functions. Additionally, the value chain must contain several clearly identifiable segments, and they must be covered by specific individuals or companies. Professional associations must also have a clear legal status, be able to collect membership fees and be recognized as arbiters in conflicts within the sector. Finally, there should be only one professional organization for each product or group of products to avoid potential conflicts.

Who participates in professional associations?

As mentioned above, professional associations differ according to the type of actors they acknowledge. Indeed, there is no single model. Some professional associations are formed exclusively by trade associations. Other organizations also grant membership to companies, individuals and governmental organizations (Sthepherd et al., 2010), and there are professional associations with hybrid characteristics who admit different types of members. Additionally, the value-chain links that are represented in the organization will depend on the specifics of each case. In fact, an inter-

professional association must generally bring together actors from the agricultural production and processing sectors. To this basic configuration, it is possible to add players from distributions and marketing sectors, suppliers, research agencies, universities, and even consumer-rights-protection associations.

How do professional associations finance their activities?

The financing schemes that are chosen by professional associations depend on the type of members who join them as well as the ability of these organizations to impose contributions or attract the interest of the wealthiest players in the sector. The predominant model is the annual subscription paid by the productive agents who are joined in the model. However, this version has its variants: In some organizations, membership fees consist of a fixed amount that can vary according to member type, while other organizations prefer to set membership fees as a percentage of sales. Most organizations combine two or more financing schemes. Although membership fees are the main source of funding, some professional associations also receive support from governments, donors. Others receive support from members. The funding from certain institutions or members may be essential to enable the associations to conduct their activities. Conversely, this financial support can jeopardize the independence and equitable representation of an association (Sthepherd et al., 2010).

After analyzing the different aspects of professional associations, we are drawn to the following question: "How does governance impact the organizational performance of professional associations?"

To answer this question, it is vital to study organizational performance on individual and collective levels to determine what makes a professional association efficient. As we are interested in the poultry sector, we will discuss two major cases of high professional performance, Thailand and Brazil, which are considered examples for Morocco. Finally, we will examine governance as a determinant of the organizational performance of professional associations. We noticed that researchers rarely focus on governance while studying performance, especially in the case of professional associations and even less in the case of the poultry sector. Our article is based on thorough desk research. Our documented

research is the product of several articles, thesis reading, and internal documentation of professional associations of the poultry sector in Morocco.

State of the art of the organizational performance of professional associations

Defining the organizational performance of professional associations

Performance has two dimensions: efficacy and efficiency. Efficacy is measured by the ratio between resources mobilized and results obtained, whereas efficiency is the ratio between a result and the expected objectives.

Bourguignon (1997) proposed a typology of performance that clearly distinguishes between performance result and performance success. He defines performance as "the achievement of organizational objectives, whatever the nature or variety of these objectives" (1997, p.91). However, some authors emphasize the lack of consensus in understanding the concept of performance (Cameron and Whetten, 1983, cited by P I. KEBE).

Performance can refer to a third uncommon dimension: effectiveness. In one sense, what is effective is what translates into tangible acts (i.e., what really exists, what is a reality). The question to be asked is as follows: Are the efficacy and efficiency of this performance effective? Effectiveness refers to the degree to which the rules established by law are applied in social practice. In this context, a professional association can be said to be effective if it achieves, to a high degree, the objectives outlined in the contract program signed with the government.

Assessing the performance of professional associations

The performance evaluation of professional associations comprises two levels: individual and collective.

Performance evaluation at the individual level

Performance evaluation at the individual level mainly concerns companies and is measured by factors such as sales growth and innovation rates (Lallemand, 2013). There are three main streams of literature on corporate performance. The first concern is financial measures, such as return on investment and activity-based costing (Cooper and Kaplan, 1988). The second stream addresses

the notion of value creation. In this context, performance consists in creating value for a company's various stakeholders. However, this assessment, which is based on the almost exclusive use of quantitative indicators, is reductive of reality (A- S. Lallemand, 2013). As such, it is necessary to consider non-financial criteria when measuring value (Wallman, 1995, in A-S. Lallemand, 2013). Porter (1986) emphasized the devaluation of the company in relation to its environment.

Hence, the notion of benchmarking becomes relevant: a company's performance must be compared with that of its competitors. There is also discussion of global performance, which integrates the environmental dimension, but this remains difficult to operationalize.

The criteria used to assess the performance of members of organizational networks include competitiveness, growth in sales (domestic and export) and employment, growth in added value (innovation) and profitability growth.

In Morocco, research on professional organizations, especially those in livestock sectors, is rare. The individual performance of an association's members is indicative of its performance as a whole.

Assessment of collective performance

Collective performance on the scale of a professional association is called "meta-performance" (Leseure, et al, 2001) and is an evaluation of organizational relations. The collective performance of networks mainly concerns the quality of organizational relations, or the degree of cooperation between members (O. Desplébin, 2014).

The aim of such evaluations is to assess the object of members' cooperation, such as the degree to which objectives are achieved, as well as the cooperative relationship through aspects linked to trust (Pelé and Pluchart, 2007, cited by Lallemand, 2013). The literature on inter-organizational performance has focused on the positive consequences of organizational relationships. For example, Assens and Abittan (2010) cite competitive advantages on a collective scale, including information sharing and resource pooling. However, these networks can be marked by cooperation difficulties linked to cultural differences between members, divergent objectives, the capture of skills by certain members, or even over-embedding, also known as operating in a vacuum (Uzzi), which

involves an absence of openness leading to a lack of innovation.

We conclude that collective performance is conditioned by the internal dynamics of professional associations, that is, interactions between the members forming the professional associations. Some studies have focused on the performance of professional associations using impact-measurement indicators, such as international competitiveness of the sector, sustainable competitive advantages, human resources and knowledge created (Graversen and Rosted, 2009). This performance is measured primarily by job creation (Bocquet and Mothe, 2009; Porter, 2000). Thus, a connection can be made between the performance of professional associations and societal performance.

It is worth noting that the literature on organizational performance has emerged from work on corporate performance, organizational relations and public policy, but "no real school of thought has emerged to date" about this specific subject (Lallemand, 2013).

After analyzing the professional associations' performance at the individual and collective levels, in a broad way.

We are also concerned with identifying the determinants' organizational performance in a specific case: the poultry sector. It should be noted that the perception of performance changes according to the nature of the sector. A more in-depth analysis of the determinants of performance in the sector under study requires an empirical approach. In what follows, we propose the case analysis of two emerging countries, Brazil and Thailand, with successful poultry-sector management.

Determinants of poultry-farming performance in Brazil and Thailand: an empirical approach

Integrated production systems around slaughterhouses and processors

There is a vertical industrial-integration model: 90% of poultry-meat production and an integration upstream and downstream (Slaughterhouses) in both Brazil and Thailand.

Strategies focused on the search for added value

First, there is product diversification and adaptation to the specific demands of international markets, such as the halal market for Brazil. Additionally, partnerships are signed with international leaders to acquire production techniques, such as the high value added by Thailand (selling price 4 USD/kg). Therefore, we noticed an aggregation of small breeders through performance-based service contracts and the creation of breeders' cooperatives. There is also a concentration: in Brazil, three (03) main operators are controlling between 40% and 55% of production and over 70% of exports. Operators are also focused on strategic high-value-added businesses, including selection and breeding stock. Other activities are outsourced.

Territorial organization and compartmentalization

First, there is the creation of regional monopsony, wherein one industrial aggregator per region buys from multiple breeders. Second, state support is highlighted in several aspects: by support for the emergence of global giants through equity investment, the approval of M&A and external-growth transactions in the form of loans and bond purchases and the encouragement of SMEs to over-invest; by government support for the economic and industrial concentration of actors; by massive tax exemptions on exports; and finally, by bilateral market-opening negotiations.

State of the art on professional-association governance as a path to organizational performance

Etymology and history of the notion of governance

Governance in African civilization: It is difficult to say exactly where the word "governance" originates (Carnet, 2004), but it is an etymologically ancient word. In Africa, within the central core of the Pangea from which the prodigious adventure of the human species began, the people have established a basic social organization to facilitate life in society: governance.

The *palabre*, born in Africa, was the first form of governance to appear in human history, according to current knowledge. Governance, therefore, appeared in Africa before it appeared in the West. The *palabre* conceals four prerequisites that are part of modern

governance: coordination, transparency, accountability and compromise (consensus).

Traditional African societies have succeeded in creating a public space for discussion that modern African states have not. Are we to conclude that emerging African states are in decline because they have adopted the style of governance of colonial rulers who oppressed the *palabre* in the African continent? Only one thing is certain: the *palabre* is compatible with political pluralism, participatory democracy and modern governance.

Governance in Arab-Muslim civilization:

The word "*fiqh*" is a noun derived from the verb "*faqiha*" meaning to understand or to learn. The main principles on which Islamic *fiqh* is based are the Koran, the Sunnah, the Consensus of the Ijma, the analogical reasoning called *qiyas* and the effort of interpretation called *ijtihad*. To address the subject of governance in Arab-Muslim civilization, we turned to the thought of Ibn Khaldun. The fundamental principles of Ibn Khaldun's thoughts are the same as those of the spirit of Islam.

Islam established itself successfully in diverse societies and cultures because it did not attempt to radically change society all at once. Islam addresses the individual without changing the social structure. Rather, social change comes from individuals, who will eventually modify their daily lives and experiences.

Today, civil society, comprised in part of professional associations, is a popularized form of good governance. Its multi-ethnic and multi-functional characteristics are important. Professional associations encompass notables who mechanize their agriculture and adopt the latest technologies once they are widely accepted. These notables run their businesses like a family unit, impose their logic on political power, and shun the state if it does not respond to their interests. Their interests dictate their acts, and the support of political power is limited to a system of favors and actions to their benefit (Hammoudi, 2001).

We have shown that the rationality of Arab-Islamic thought is rooted in the Muslim faith. Arabs act reasonably in public and use common sense when making decisions, and reasonable people allow common sense to influence their judgment and actions. It is remarkable with ties to the land and agriculture are therefore obliged to forge

government relationships to serve their interests.

Governance in Western civilization:

Governance is derived from the Greek word "*kubernan*," meaning to steer a chariot or ship, which was used by Plato to refer to the act of governing men. *Kubernan* is the origin of the Latin verb *gubernare*, which has the same meaning. Its derivations, including *gabernantia*, have spawned many concepts in several languages, such as French (e.g., *gouvernement*, *gouvernance*), English (e.g., *governance*, *government*), Spanish (e.g., *gobernar*, *gobierno*, *gobernanza*) and Portuguese (e.g., *governor*, *governoraro*, *governorazon*, *governoranza*).

In the 16th century, the notion of governance was dissociated from the term "government" to become its own concept. From the 19th century onwards, the concept of governance surfaced with the development of economic theories (Tournier, 2006), and in the 20th century, modern governance was born with the Americans. The idea of governance in Europe today stems from the institutional innovation policies of the new public management of the 1980s in the United States and of Tony Blair in Great Britain (Gaudin, 2002). "New public management" seeks to improve administrative efficiency by introducing the principles of market competition into the delivery of public services. We are thus witnessing a shift from a culture of regulation to a culture of performance (Saint-Martin, 2005; Bruno, 2007).

The benefits of governance

The usefulness of governance within networks (i.e., the professional associations in our study) face the following constraints, the first being members' diversity. According to Freeman (1984, in Chabault, 2009), stakeholders are "any group or individual who can influence or be influenced by the achievement of the firm's (organization's) objectives." The diversity of members helps avoid network rigidity. However, this diversity can also impede development. Indeed, the individual logics of multiple actors and a lack of consensus on common objectives are likely to create tensions (Provan and Kenis, 2008).

A lack of interaction must also be considered. The heterogeneity of members may make interaction difficult given their differences in size, resources and activities. There are, however, several differences linked to obstacles to the creation of collective dynamics within SME-dominated

networks (Bocquet et al., 2009). Regardless, knowledge is the main strategic resource of networks and cannot be shared without efficient interactions between members.

Another constraint is the difficulty of transferring and creating resources. Social relationships facilitate the exchange of knowledge and information due to their important role in establishing mutual trust (Berthinier-Poncet, 2012). The collective learning process is underpinned by the existence of a common language and an attitude of trust (Langier et al., 2008). However, while the heterogeneity and diversity of actors can accelerate the exchange and creation of resources within networks, it may also hinder cooperation. As such, organizational networks experience real difficulties in creating and transferring knowledge (D. Chabault, 2009).

The role of governance, therefore, improves the absorption capacity of SMEs and creates what we might call "knowledge bridges" (Koch and Strotmann, 2008, in Berthinier-Poncet, 2012).

Typology of professional-association governance

Researchers have established various typologies of governance. Fréry (1997), Forgues et al. (2006), Provan and Kenis (2008) and Hendrikse et al. (2008) distinguish two main modes of network governance: centralized and decentralized.

Centralized governance is provided by a focal organization or pivotal player occupying a central position within a network (Fréry, 2003, 2007). This governance mode has been predominantly studied in the literature (Lallemand, 2013). Decision-making and the development of network strategy are centralized. However, it should be stated that the decision-making process is hierarchical (Provan and Kenis, 2008). The literature is essentially unanimous on the superiority of centralized governance. "To be efficient, the network needs a pivot" (Dumoulin R., 2001, p. 209).

In the second case, individuals play a key role in a centralized network (Jameux, 2004). A pilot is a "strategic center" (Lorenzoni and Baden-Fuller, 1995). DiMaggio (1988), Mandematin et al. (2005), Delemarle (2007) and Chabault (2009) highlight the central role of this actor, whom they describe as an "institutional entrepreneur." Other authors consider this actor to be a "macro-

entrepreneur" (Chiles and Meyer, 2001). On the other hand, with decentralized governance, the various partner members of a community network share decision-making power. In the absence of a pilot, decentralized governance is characterized by self-determined steering of the network.

It is possible to distinguish between two types of governance: associative governance (self-organization), where governance involves the participation of all members who make decisions collegially (Provan and Kennis, 2008); and structured collective governance, which is based on the constitution of a formal structure, representing the interests of the various members of a network (A-S. Lallemand, 2013).

Determinants of governance modes

The determinants of governance modes are power relationships. Members who govern have more resources and therefore more power. In fact, power relations or the sharing of power between members of a network, in this case professional associations, are proven to be accurate by the resources they bring to the table, whether financial, cognitive or social (Chabault, 2011). Trust and legitimacy come after this: The relational approach assumes that the governance of exchanges tends to be based on trust, sharing and solidarity (Heid and John, 1992; Souid, 2013).

Combining contracts with relationality seems to be the optimal combination. The history of relations between actor-members of the association is intimately linked to trust. One trusts someone they have known for a long time more than someone they have just met. The more members know each other, the more relational governance becomes. This trust is the fruit of repeated positive collaborations, which implies an informal mode of regulation within the organization. In this circumstance, the reputation of members is a major condition for establishing relationships of trust (Pesqueux Y., 2009). According to Newel and Swan (2000), there are three types of trust relationships: companion trust, competence trust and commitment trust. These are also criteria for choosing the people who will steer a board of directors.

The last determinant is the degree of coherence among professional association "members which determines the degree of centralization of power within the governance structure." This coherence

manifests itself through consensus on objectives and skills. According to Chabault (2009), "the network's articulation around a common objective is a prerequisite for its stability." The matching of skills is also significant (Provan and Kenis, 2008). An association comprises members with heterogeneous skills, which makes collaboration more difficult. However, these skills are not immutable: they evolve over time, as do knowledge and relationships between members.

Recommendations and Conclusion

Professional associations are created to defend the interests of a sector. To achieve organizational performance, which requires achieving the collective objectives of the professionals, effective governance is necessary. Members' diversity, lack of interaction and difficulties in creating and diffusing information are relevant governance factors.

Governance may be centralized or decentralized, although the literature indicates that the former is superior to the latter: "To be efficient, the network needs a pivot" (Dumoulin R., 2001, p. 209). Such a pivot will bring members of a group together to achieve their professional goals, which in this case include lobbying, scheduling and pricing production, improving product and process quality as well as promoting consumption and exports by seeking new markets. Effective communication and relations between members are essential to advance the collective objectives of an association because the group will communicate those ambitions with external partners to gain their support.

However, the pivot will not be taken seriously if they do not have the trust of their fellow members, and without state support, it is difficult for the professional association to succeed. This support includes the following: the emergence of global giants through equity investment and the approval of M&A, external growth transactions in the form of loans and bond purchases and the encouragement of SMEs to over-invest; government support for the economic and industrial concentration of actors; massive tax exemptions on exports; and bilateral market-opening negotiations.

The results of our research study show that governance does impact the organizational performance of professional associations. Consequently, professionals must choose their representatives wisely based on their leadership, experience and skills. They must be institutional entrepreneurs capable of defending the

professionals' interests with courage and determination.

To complete our research study, it would be interesting to analyze the role of professional associations' leaders, who play a major role in the way governance is practiced. Because of limited time, our research did not emphasize this aspect. We recommend that other researchers, especially those specialized in entrepreneurship studies, illuminate the impact of leadership on the organizational performance of professional associations. It is also recommended to expand the research circle by examining other livestock sectors: milk production, the cattle industry and fish breeding. Finally, it is always useful to study cases of failure to identify lessons and develop risk-management recommendations.

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