AmericanStrategicLeadership(ASL):CaseofPublicMoroccanUniversities

ABSTRACT

ItwouldseemthatinthemajorityofnonAnglo-Saxoncountries,includingMorocco,mostpublicadministrations/organizationsarenotyetfamiliarwiththeStrategicLeadership(SL)cultureinitiatedandlargelydominatedbytheAmericans.Inthiscontext,thestateoftheartrelatingtoSLintheUnitedStateshasempiricallydemonstratedthecause-and-effectrelationshipbetweentheimplementationofSLwithinlargeorganizationsandtheimprovementoftheirperformance,especiallythroughthedevelopmentofaclearanddynamicvisioncenteredonthedevelopmentof competencies not only at the individual level, but also and above all, those specific to leading large organizations,particularly within the Volatile Uncertain Complex and Ambiguous (VUCA) environment. From a closer qualitativeanalysis of the Moroccan public universities president's feedback, as leaders at strategic level, through a post-positivistepistemological approach *via* a hypothetico-deductive reasoning, we find many gaps comparing to the foundationalASL framework. Then, we discuss how these findings can help facilitate a smooth and progressive AmericanStrategic Leadership implementation within national public universities community through a smart and adaptedinduction.Therefore,theadoptionofSL,asamodeofgovernance,wouldbeacriticalandimportantcontributionto improving the overall performance of national public universities and their sustainability which would very likelyplay its fundamental key role in the development and upgrading of national human capital and ipso-facto launchthemtoabetterrepositioningonthe regionalandinternationalarena.

Keywords: Strategic leadership, Volatile Uncertain Complex and Ambiguous (VUCA), Moroccan universities,Vision,Alignment,change,PersonalLeadershipDevelopmentPlan(PLDP)

Abbreviations: VUCA: Volatile Uncertain Complex and Ambiguous; CSEFRS: Conseil Superieur de l' EnseignementdelaFormationetdelaRechercheScientifique;UC:UniversityCenter;LMD:LicenseMasterandDoctorat

INTRODUCTION

As the environment has changed, while becoming more Volatile,Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous (VUCA), especially in the21st century, the skills needed for Strategic Leaders (SLs) have alsochanged and require more specific leadership competencies inordertosucceedinthelongrun,withmorecomplexandadaptivestrategic critical and creative thinking abilities as a key factor inmaintaining competitive advantages. Because the economy hasbecomemoreglobalized,thenewenvironmentischaracterizedby an increased level of complexity and interconnectedness and wherethere are no boundaries anymore between countries along withseveralcriteriathataremorechallengingforfutureSLsworldwide such as the melting of traditional organizational boundaries duetonewtechnologiesthatdisruptoldworkpracticeswhiledifferent valuesandexpectationsofnewgenerationsenteringtheworkplace requiringtheneedtoleadacrosscultures[1].

These facts are more challenging in developing countries whereStrategic Leadership (SL) concepts are not adopted yet withinpublicorganizations,includinginMorocco.Inpublicuniversities,highereducationperformance,whichhasconstantlybeenstruggling with many problems, despite a series of reforms, isactuallyverypoor[2].Furthermore,severaltypesofresearchhaveestablishedthatmostbigAmericancompaniesandindustrieshavedeveloptheirperformancebymultiplyingtheirGrossDomesticProduct thanks to SL implementation processes at all the levels.Amazon, Apple, Google, Boeing, and Procter & Gamble forinstance have succeeded to improve their productivity, quality, andorganizational performance at international level recognitions tocreativity brought by SL concepts applied by their SLs who out-innovatedallcompetitors[3-5].Ontheotherhand,otherlarge

Comment [AP1]: Abstract: The keywords provided are very relevant and reflect the main theme of the article, but "American Strategic Leadership" could be added to further emphasize the main topic.

Comment [AP2]: The author has provided several literature references to support their claims, particularly regarding the success of American companies in implementing SL. However, this section could be strengthened with more references from relevant research on the challenges of implementing SL in higher education, both in developed and developing countries.

The introduction uses case examples from several American companies like Amazon and Kodak, which provide good illustrations. However, it would be better to also include specific literature on the implementation of SL in educational institutions.

The logical flow of the introduction is fairly coherent, but there is some redundancy in explaining global environmental changes and the need for adaptive leadership competencies. For instance, the initial part that discusses the VUCA environment and the impact of globalization could be condensed for greater efficiency.

The statement regarding cultural and traditional challenges that might be faced when implementing SL in Morocco is accurate, but it could benefit from some elaboration with specific examples of those challenges.

American organizations had gone bankrupt because their leaderscould not integrate SL concepts: Kodak in 2012 due to SL problemsand increasing competition from digital photography and wheredoubts surrounded the competence who failed to adapt to marketchanges and not investing enough in digital technology; LehmanBrothers in 2008 due to the global financial crisis where theexecutives were accused of taking excessive risks and mismanagingthe company's finances; Enron in 2001 and WorldCom in 2002due to fraud and mismanagement scandals where their leaderschallenged contentions of providing fabricated information toinvestorsandregulatorsandmanipulatingandfalsifyingfinancialresults to hide losses. Hence, through the success, influence, andtheinternationalrecognitionofAmericanuniversitieswhich10oft hem are continuously among the 20 top international prestigiousuniversitiescomplyingwithmostreliableuniversityrankingsindicators, we have got the idea to incense this research to tryprovidingsomekeyanswerstothefollowingmainquestion:Howca n we take advantage of the American experience and expertiseinSLwayofmanagingtoenableMoroccanpublicuniversitie stoimplement this governing mode that brings added value in terms ofacademicexcellenceandperformanceatalllevels(Table1).

Table1: Maininternationalrankingindicators.

International rankingindicators	**Shanghai**	**TimesHigherEducation(THE)**	**Center forWorld UniversityRanking(CWUR)**	**QS WorldUniversity**
Education quality		X	X	
Research		X quality		
Research articles'		X Xcitations		
Incomesfrom industry		X		
Nomberof Nobelawards	X	X		
Nomberof fieldmedals	X			
Articlespublished in highstandard scientificmagazines	X			
Employers' reputation				X
Academic reputation				X
Academicperformance	X			
International outlook		X		
Sizeofthe university			X	
International studentsratio			X	X
International professors ratioSource		X		X

:Author.

Atfirstglance,thisissueappearsverysimple;however,itisquitecomplex insofar as the American concepts of SL are not widelyadopted within Moroccan large organizations, including publichigh education sector, its implementation would very likely faceculturalandtraditionschallenges.

LITERATUREREVIEW

Theoreticalfoundationsofleadership

Leadershipdefinitionsanditsinteractionswiththeconceptofmanagement:Inourpreviousresearch,wehavededicateda complete and consistent article to the evolution of leadershipdefinitions since the beginning of the 20th century and anotheronetocharacterizetheinteractionsbetweenleadershipandmanagement[6,7].Inthefirstone,wesuggestednotanewdefinitionofthis concept,butourpersonalapproachofleadershipwhichwillenablelea dersofthe21stcenturytobettercopewith VUCAenvironmenttoenhancetheirorganizations'competitive advantages. The second one highlighted that the use and theperception of these two concepts have evolved according to thegeo-economics and technological contexts that have marked thehistoryofcommercialandindustrialrelations,particularlywithin developedcountriessuchasUnitedStates.

Levels of leadership: Many leadership researchers have explicitlyrecognizedthatleadershipneedsdependonthelevelofthele aderwithin the organization [1]. Within this framework, Jacobs andMcGeedistinguishthreegenerallevelsofleadershipthatcorrespondt o the organizational design of firms: At the low end, leadershipconsists of overseeing hiring, firing, and assigning tasks, which theauthors consider situational leadership. At a middle level, leaderssetoperationalgoalsandcoordinatetheeffortsrequiredtoachieveorganizationalobjectives.Commonlyconsideredtransactionallea dership.Finally,atahighlevel,thestrategictopoftheorganization establishes a vision and sets overall goals for the entireorganizationandisreferredtoastransformationalleadership[8] .

Infact,oneofthechallengesthatmanymanagersandleadersfaceis the distinction they must make between these different levelsof leadership. Although they share a common theoretical andpractical basis, tactical and SL have quite different requirements.In addition, there is an aspect of leadership-the operational level-thatmanydonotevenknowexists[9].

Theoreticalfoundationsofstrategicenvironment

Understanding the strategic level in VUCA environment: InVUCA environment, which is full of huge and evolving challenges,SLs need to better understand the strategic level environment, bothinternal and external, to be able to develop appropriate strategiesin order to efficiently respond in such environment (VUCA)especially when the problems being faced are "wicked or superwicked"[10,11].

SLs' competencies required to better lead large organizations:Alongwithindividualcompetencies(technical,interpersonal,andconceptual), SLs have to develop several specific ones to better leadlarge organizations and which we have detailed in our

previousresearch[12].Inthisregard,it'sworthtonotethatth
econceptofSLinMoroccoingeneralandinpublicuniversity
systemin

particularhadnotbeenaddressedyetintheliterature.

Conceptualmodel

In order to deal objectively with interviewees' answers to thequestionnaires at different levels, particularly at strategic level,we opted for an analysis concept that enabled us to compare theperceptions and practices of SL at national public universities onthe basis of SL concepts, theories, styles, and practices implementedwithinlargeAmericanorganizations(Figure1).

In order to answer the research questions prepared in this study,the researcher has gone through American SL and tries to comeup with a set of questions through four kinds of questionnaires(tactical, operational, strategic, and politico-strategic) related toexamination of individual competencies related to Moroccan publicuniversities' presidents (left-hand side of Figure 1) as well as thosespecific to leading large organizations (The middle of Figure 1).In other way around, the questionnaire method is used to extractouttheSLcompetenciesformulatedfromvariousleadership's pointofviewsatallthesefourlevelswhileensuringthecoherencebetween the political/strategic level and other levels–operationaland tactical. This strategic approach would allow our empiricalresearchtorunthroughasystematiciterationbetweenthequalityof the final outcome, and the systematic feedback process whileemphasizing the need for any involved leader to get a PersonalLeadership Development Plan (PLDP) to further enhance theirstrengths and refine the skills that require improvement through05 main Key Performance Indicators (KPI) which allowed us todiscussourfindings.

Epistemologicalpositioningandmethodologicalchoice

Epistemological framework: As our research is mainly conductedthrough the US SL framework of reference, we have adopted thepost-positivism epistemological approach through a hypothetical-deductive reasoning process and have specifically chosen to proceedwith a qualitative type of research in order to enrich our work asshownintheTable2below.

Comment [AP3]: It is recommended to add references from research focused on the implementation of SL in the education sector, particularly in developing countries. This would provide a stronger foundation within a context more relevant to the research subject.

Some of the more complex concepts, such as "super wicked problems," should be further explained or accompanied by footnotes referencing relevant literature.

Some paragraphs feel too long and could be broken up to improve readability and logical flow.

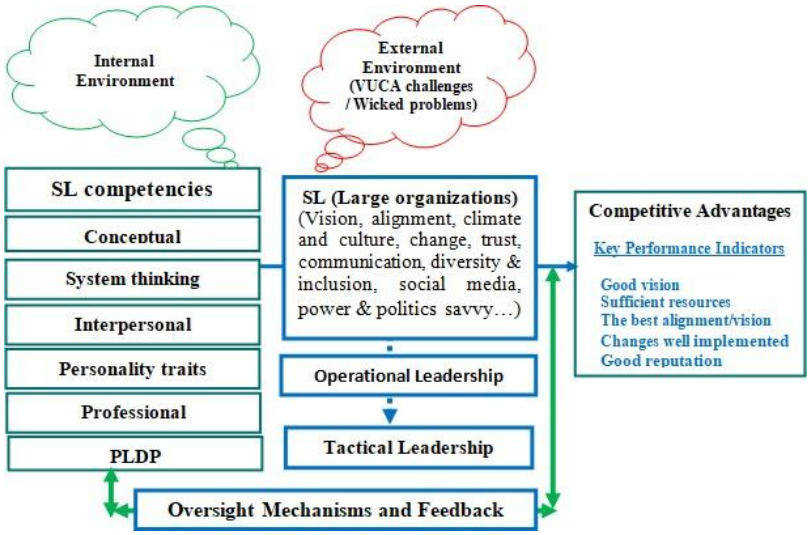

Figure1: Conceptualmodelfordataanalysis.Note:Adaptedfromintroductiontothestrategicleadershipcourse(NationalDefenceUniversity-Eisenhowerschool).

Table2: Epistemologicalframeworkadoptedfortheresearch.

Methodologicalaxis	Our choices	Reference
Theepistemologicalparadigm	Thepost-positivism	Nawrin,R.,andMongkolsirikiet,K.(2012).
Thereasoningprocess	Hypothetical-deductiveapproach	Pratama,W. P. (2021).

Source:Self-conceived.

METHODOLOGY

Inordertoanswerourresearchproblematic,wewentthrougha qualitative working method, as an empirical approach study,which aims to analyze a phenomenon, a situation, or individualsto come out with potential findings to be able to suggest relevantrecommendationswhicharenotincludedinthisarticle.Werelied on our case study insofar as it not only meets the criteria of largeorganizations; but also, and above all because of the strategicimportanceandtherecognizedsensitivityofthefieldofeducationin general and higher education in particular in the socio-economicdevelopmentofanycountry(Table3).

In this regard, within the qualitative methodology, we adopted ahypothetical-deductive approach, conducted through semi-directedinterviewsandsurveyscarriedoutwithMoroccanpublicuniversitiesstaff at all the concerned levels. This type of questionnaires hasseveraladvantages,particularlybecauseitwillallowustoanalyzetheperceptions and practices of the leaders interviewed and the degreeof their implementation within Moroccan public universities. Bychoosingaqualitativestudy,wewereinterestedintheperceptionsof the staff interviewed in order to get the big picture of how far SLconceptsareunderstood,appliedand/orimplementedinthislargeadministration(Ministry).

Researchprocessandhypothesis

Research process: Moroccan public higher education (universities)is one of the most important components of National HigherEducation System, among Partnership based Higher Education andPrivate Higher Education which all fall under the authority of theMinistryofHigherEducation,ScientificResearch,andInnovation (MHESRI). The Public Higher Education consists of universitiesand non-university Higher Education Establishments (SpecializedestablishmentsundertheadministrativeandfinancialauthorityoftechnicalministriesandunderthepedagogicalauthorityoftheMHESRI).Thescopeofourresearchisonlylimitedtopublicuniversitiesbecauseofitsimportanceroleinhumancapitaldevelopmentespeciallyfortheyouthemployability,andthereforeforsocioeconomicdevelopmentofourcountry.Ourchoiceisalsomotivatedbythesystemicandstructuralcrisiswhichundermines the role, mission, and place of public universities in the contextof globalization as evidenced by its non-ranking among the top1000 international universities before 2022/2023. In fact, all thesuccessive reforms carried out have been all so far, an unfinishedproject, despite the resources allocated to them. Several reportsissued by the Moroccan Higher Council for Education, Training,and Scientific Research point to governance as the weak link in ouruniversitysystem[13-16].

Sample studies: Through this sample, we also sought to enrichour knowledge in order to better understand what the necessarycompetencies are required to better lead national public universitiestaking as reference those implemented in the US. Our researchmainly focuses on the strategic level (Universities presidents)while including other levels (Ministry/State), as the vision andpoliciesmakers,and(facultiesandschools)astheimplementation componentsofthehighereducationministry/statevisionasoutlinedin Table4below.

Furthermore,thetwelveMoroccanpublicuniversitiesaredistributed asfollows(Table5):

Table3: Empiricalresearchprocessadopted.

Methodologicalaxis	Our choices	Reference
Theworkingmethod	Qualitative	Dana,L.P.,andDumez,H.(2015).
Theempiricalmethodofwork	Semi-directiveinterview	George,T.(2022).
Datacollectiontool	Questionnaires	Kohn,L.,&Christiaens,W.;2014

Source: Self-conceived.

Table4: PositionsofMoroccanpublicuniversitiesleadersinterviewed.

Leadership Levels	Numberofinterviewees	Ministry	University	Faculties	Establishments
			Presidents	Deans	Professors
Political-Strategic	3	3	-	-	-
Strategiclevel	9	-	9	-	-
Operationallevel	12	-	-	12/83	
Tacticallevel	24	-	-	-	24/62

Source: Self-conceived

Table5: Distributionofpublicnationaluniversitiesbyadministrativeregions.

N°	Administrativeregions	Universities	Faculties	Schools	Institutes
1	Tangier/Tetouan/ ElHoceima	AbdelmalekEssaadi Tetouan	Tetouan(04)	2	-
			Tanger(03)	3	
			Larache(01)	-	
			ElHoceima(01)	1	
			Ksar-Lekbir(01)	-	

2	Easternregion	MohammedPremier Oujda	Oujda(04)	3	-
			Nador(01)	-	-
3	Fes/Meknes	SidiMohammedBen AbdellahFes	Fes(07)	4	-
			Taza (01)	-	-
		MoulayIsmail Meknes	Meknes (03)	4	-
			Errachidia(02)	-	-
4	Rabat/Salé/Kenitra	MohammedV Rabat	Rabat(06)	4	5
			Salé(01)	1	-
		IbnTofaïlKenitra	Kénitra(03)	5	-
5	Beni-Mellal/Khenifra	SultanMoulaySlimane Beni-Mellal	Beni-Mellal(04)	4	-
			Khouribga(01)	1	
			Khenifra	1	
			FkihBenSaleh	1	
6	Casablanca/Settat	HassanIICasablanca	Casa(08)	6	-
		Mohammedia	Mohammedia(03)	1	-
		Hassan1er Settat	Settat(03)	2	2
			Berrechid	1	-
		ChouaïbDoukkaliEl Jadida	ElJadida(03)	3	
			SidiBennour(01)	1	
7	Marrakech/Safi	Cadi Ayyad Marrakech	Marrakech(06)	3	-
			Safi(01)	2	
			Essaouira	1	
			Kelaa Sraghna	-	
			(01UC[3])		
8	Draa/Tafilalet	IbnZohr Agadir	Ouarzazate(01)	-	-
9	SoussMassa		Agadir (05)	4	
			Taroudant(01)	-	
			Ait Melloul(03)	-	
10	Guelmim/OdNoun		Guelmim(01UC)	-	-
11	Laayoune/SakiaEl Hamra		Laayoune	1	
12	Dakhla/OuedEddahab		Dakhla	1	
			Smara(01)	-	
	Total	12	81	60	7

Source: Self-conceived Note; 3UC: University Center: smaller than a university.

Questionnaires: At the very beginning of the empirical research, we conducted exploratory interviews with a few deans of faculties and professors in higher education, using an interview guide that was adapted from the one used in auditing large American universities. Furthermore, and in order to ensure the content validity of our questionnaires, we followed the steps below: First, we conducted extensive research on the topic and then specified the structure of leadership at all the four levels, especially at the strategic one understudy. Then we consulted some expert practitioners and academics in the field of SL, primarily university presidents and faculties' deans which helped us to finally make the necessary corrections, by gathering relevant information about the contextualization of the conceptof SL within the Moroccan university system. In fact, these initial interviews and surveys were very important for us as they allowed us to develop, adapt and refine the questionnaires for each category of our interviewees. Then, our approach has been conducted through a iterative work between theory and field works surveys, until we have finalized our four questionnaires after having eliminated almost 25 questions and reworded a number of other questions to finally get a questionnaire that was valid in terms of content to university context.

The aim is to check the degree of understanding, coherence, and implementation of the strategic vision within the Ministry at all levels. It is useful to underline in this context that the elaboration of the questionnaires, dedicated to all the leaders involved in the present empirical research, was inspired by those developed for the conduct of the audit s carried out with the large American civil and military organizations, in which we participated in 2016 and which allowed us to reach the main objective of this research through the similar process and analysis. Alongside some leaders who were available to arrange face to face interview, the questionnaires were sent by email to the remain staff since November 2022, and the last answers were received in late April 2023.

Data collection: In accordance with our qualitative methodological approach adopted for our research subject, the interview technique was the best way to access the information insofar as interviews are considered to be the most correct method for the collecti

onof

informationservingtheproperscientificapproach.However,andfor practical reasons, we have mainly collected our data through theanalysis of all the answers to the questionnaires received by email orduringourface-to-facemeetings.Then,andwithinthisframeworkand based on the research questions, some specific themes werecarefully prepared and developed for each category of leaders whileleaving them the latitude to suggest and develop any particularaspect not provided by the questionnaire, which would certainlyenrichthehorizonsofSLintegrationinMoroccanuniversities.

Hypothesis

Giventhiscurrentalarminghighereducationsetbackinourcountry, wedo wish and have the ambition that the conceptsof SL be integrated, as a mode of governance within nationalpublicuniversities,torepositioningitselfminimumamongthe top thousand prestigious international universities. We arecertainlyveryawareofthedifficultiesofapossibleandimminententhronement of this concept within this system, but we believethatitsimplementationremainsoneofthekeysolutionsforimprovingtheperformanceofMoroccanpublicuniversities.

Therefore,andbasedonliteraturereviewandthecentralquestionofthisresearch,wehaveoptedforthefollowinghypothesis:

H1: Moroccan public universities may benefit from ASL through apartialimplementationtoenhanceitsoverallperformance;

H2: Moroccan public universities may fully take advantage fromASLimplementationthroughsmartadjustmentstakinginaccountitssocioculturalbackgrounds.

RESULTS

TheanalysisoftheanswersofthevariouslevelshasenabledustohighlightsomerecurringpreliminaryaspectsrelatedtotheperceptionsandpracticesrelatedtobasicnotionsofthetheoreticalconceptsofleadershipingeneralandSLenvironments'characteristicsandchallengesinparticular.

Conceptsofleadershipfoundationsingeneral

- **Incompletedefinitionoftheleadershipconcept:** Manyrespondentshavebeenabletoexplainthisconceptfromonlytheinfluenceperspectivebetweentheleaderandthefollowersas defined by several authors while it depends actually on otherfactorssuchastimeandspaceframeworkandalsothecontext wheretheseinteractionsoccur[17];
- **Leadershipasacrosscuttingconcept:** Someinterviewees who received the questionnaires by email, especially at thetactical and operational levels, did not respond to the saidquestionnaires. They argue that their faculties and/or schoolsare not dedicated to leadership, and therefore only thoseinstitutions that are specialized in management sciences areabletodealwiththiskindofquestions;
- **Lack of understanding of the different levels of leadership,particularly the strategic one:** This research revealed thatthemajorityknowthetacticallevelverywell;however,there is little confusion between tactical and operational level insome respondents' opinion, while others are unaware of theexistence of the intermediate level "Operational" which is anessentialcoordinationandsustainmentstagebetweentacticalandstrategicones;
- **Confusionbetweenleadershipandmanagementconcepts:** almost 50% of the interviewed consider them to be similarwhen in fact they are not. For presidents, a third only got arealperceptionofmanagementandleadershipandtheirinteractions.

Strategicleadershipframework

- **Strategicleadership:** The majority of respondents are notfamiliarwithitanditschallenges;
- **Strategic environment:** It has been noticed a partial knowledgeofthisenvironmentingeneralandacertainlackofawaranessof its characteristics and challenges. In fact, the majority ofinterviewees do not have sufficient knowledge about thevarietyoffactorsthatcharacterizethestrategicenvironment,particularlyattheoperationalandstrategiclevels;
- **VUCA environment and its challenges:** 10% of the interviewees are not familiar at all with this environment while 50% havealready heard this acronym but without understanding itsdeep meaning; 40% understand it partially and finally only10%seizetherealmeaningofit.

IndividualcompetenciesrequiredofSLs

In general, almost all the interviewees are aware of the mostimportantcompetenciesthatarenecessaryforanyleadertobetter manage the challenges faced at all levels, including in crisis timesuchastheconceptual,interpersonal,andprofessionalones.However, the creative and critical system thinking usually requiredfrom SLs in VUCA environment are not enough apprehendedespeciallyinthedecision-makingprocess.Forthemajority,tobeable to get and achieve all stakeholders' consensus, for a certaindecision, requires not only a good enough experience but alsocharismaandcredibility.

SpecificcompetenciesrequiredfromSLtobetterleadlargeorganizations

Regarding the vision, which is developed at political level, thefindingsrelatedtoalltheotherlevelsaresynthetizedintheTable6below.

Theexplorationoftable6below,whichsummarizestheresponsesto the questions relating exclusively to the vision, recorded in theleft-handcolumn,hasledtothefollowingfactfindings:

- Whilethespiritandletteroftheconceptarefairlywellunderstoodatthepolitical-strategicandstrategiclevels,they remainincompleteorevenunknownatlowerlevels.Only the third of the universities' presidents, at strategic level,understand the real process and the outcomes of the visionprocess and its right level of development, communication,andimplementationatallthelevels;
- The same applies to the concepts of vision and strategicobjectiveswheretheirconfusionisevenmorepronouncedattheoperationalandtacticallevels(morethan50%).Indeed,it was noted that the concept of vision, which remains exclusivelyat the political-strategic level (Ministry/State), is sometimesused at either university or deanery/school level. In addition,there is a tendency to confuse the Ministry's vision with theuniversity's objectives, particularly at the tactical level wherethe majority of professors interviewed are not familiar with allvisionprocess.
- Forthevisiondevelopment,theresultsshowedthatonly

Comment [AP4]: The choice of a qualitative method with a hypothetico-deductive approach is highly appropriate for research focused on the perceptions and application of strategic leadership (SL) concepts in public universities in Morocco. The author has also conducted exploratory interviews and used validated questionnaires, demonstrating thoroughness in designing this research.

Although the use of interviews and questionnaires is well explained, there is a slight lack of detail on how the data was analyzed after collection. Providing further explanation on the data analysis methods (e.g., thematic analysis or coding) would strengthen this section and offer a clearer understanding of how the research findings were derived.

Limited Sample: The focus on public universities alone, without considering other higher education institutions, might limit the generalizability of the research findings. While the author provides valid reasons for this choice, a brief discussion on these limitations and their impact on the research outcomes would provide greater transparency.

This methodology section is consistent with the research objectives outlined in the introduction. The chosen methodology supports the goal of exploring SL implementation in the context of public universities in Morocco and enables the author to address the proposed hypotheses.

It is recommended to include a more detailed explanation of how the data was analyzed after collection. This could involve a description of the analysis techniques used, such as thematic analysis or other methods relevant to qualitative research.

The author should consider adding a brief discussion on the limitations of this methodology, particularly concerning the focus on public universities alone. This would demonstrate an awareness of the research's limitations and enhance the credibility of the findings.

Comment [AP5]: Several recommendations for improvement of this part: (1) Provide more detailed explanations on how data were analyzed and the criteria for evaluating responses; (2) Address the limitations of focusing solely on public universities and discuss how this might affect the generalizability of the findings; and (3) Add a discussion on potential strategies for overcoming identified challenges and improving SL implementation.

10% of presidents contribute to it, while other collaborators,including deans and directors, are not generally involved inthisprocess;

- When it comes to communicating the department's vision,the table shows that efforts in this area are generally moreconsistent at presidency's level, particularly in terms of internalinstitutional communication;
- For the effective implementation of the vision at all levels,whose main mission is obviously the responsibility of theMinistry,ithasbeennotedthateffortsinthisareaatthislevelne ed to be further strengthened on one hand; and that thosemade to support the Ministry in the successful implementationof this vision are decreasing as they move towards lower levels,and even disappearing at the tactical level. We have also notedthat the effective implementation of the Ministry's visionvariesfromoneuniversitytoanother,anddependsonsever alfactors, such as available resources, the quality of teaching andadministrative staff, and the capacity of each institution toadapttothe proposedchanges;
- Withregardtotheprocessofmonitoringalignmentwith the Ministry's vision, we found that there are not enoughmechanisms for systematic assessment of the process alignmentto the vision within almost all the entities and establishmentsacrossthe country

Thealignmentprocesses

Almostalltheinterviewees atallthelevels(90%)respondthattheobjec tives of the universities, faculties, schools, and laboratoriesare aligned with the vision of the Ministry in charge, but withoutanyrelevantjustification.However,10%daredandconfirmed thatthe development projects of the universities remain aligned withthe general orientations of the Ministry but are not necessarilysynchronized with the general strategy of the Minister in office.Finally, no one at any level has put forward an approach ormethodology established for alignment process implementationwith the said vision, such as that advocated by Bradach in the USA,knownasthe7S model.

Thechange'sprocess

SL can be defined as "the leader's ability to predict and maintainflexibility and to empower others to create strategic change asnecessary"(Table7)[18].

Table6: ResultsontheVISIONquestioning.

Findings/Levels	Strategiclevel	Operationallevel	Tacticallevel
	Presidents	Deans/Directors	Professors
Incorrectdefinition	50%	75%	90%
Incompletedefinition	75%	80%	90%
AconfusionbetweenthevisionandtheMinistryobjectives	10%	30%	90%
Aconfusionbetweenthevisionandtheuniversityobjectives	10%	10%	80%
Whodevelopedthevision?	10%	0%	0%
Howisthevisioncommunicated?	50%	10%	0%
HowdoyouensurethatyourMinister'svisioniseffectivelyimplemente datalllevels?	10%	5%	0%
AspectsnonalignedtotheMinistryvision?	10%	0%	0%
Methodologytoalign?	--	--	--

Source: Self-conceived

Table7: ResultsontheCHANGEprocess.

Niveau	Political-Strategic	Strategiclevel
Challengesandconstraintsawareness.	90%	80%
Opportunitytoreformthenationaluniversitysystem,whichaspectswouldyouattac ksinpriority?	60%	80%
Methodology forany change process?	--	-

Source: Self-conceived.

Almostalltheinterviewees atstrategiclevel(presidents)(90%)areaware of the importance of the concept of resistance to change ingeneral, which is even more apparent and widened within Moroccansociety especially the university community that is traditionallyconservativeandoftenreluctanttochangeduetoitsculturalbackground. For those who experimented changes, especially atthelevelofuniversitiespresidency,theyespecially pointedoutthefollowinginternalandexternalchallenges:

Internalenvironment:

- Stafftrainingandmanagementofgovernancestructuressuchastheuniversity Council;
- Theobsolescenceofthemanagementstyleandthegovernanceoftheuniversity;
- Theinappropriateoverallorganizationalstructures;
- Thenon-generalizationofthedigitalworkingtools;
- Thedesuetudeofcurrentlegalnorm.

External environment: The lack of support of the local and regionalactors; the difficult exchanges with professional unions, includingthose representing professors-researchers (National Union of HigherEducation).Inanotherregister,theuniversitypresidentswereasked if they had the opportunity to make any changes, what would be,andwhichspecificintellectualapproachormethodologyshouldbeapplied to efficiently conduct and implement these changes. To thefirst part of the question, all the presidents interviewed agreed onthe fact that there are a lot of domains which requires change inordertobeintunewiththerapidevolutionoftechnology,society,andorganizations,andtheirprioritiesaresynthetizedasfollows:

- The revision of Law 01.00 on the organization of HigherEducation;
- Reduce the number of Institutional and University Councilsandestablishadedicatedfinancialdepartmentforeachuniversity;
- Ensurethatclearandpreciseobjectivesarecommunicatedandsetforallstakeholders;
- SetupandimplementaDigitalUniversity;
- Fightagainstthemassificationofstudents;
- SetupresearchCentersofexcellence;
- Reviewthefunctioningandthewayof theUniversity'sgovernancebodies;
- Adoptacomprehensivereformapproachtakinginaccountallstakeholders including education reform from the early years ofschoolingtobeinlinewiththehigheducationscope;
- StrengthenthefinancialautonomyoftheUniversity;
- Generalize the implementation of the Quality ManagementSystem to all components of the university, while combiningit with the development of the information and managementsystemthatprovideseffectivetoolsfordecisionmaking;
- Encourage more involvement of national, regional, and localpartners; and
- Share experiences and expertise with famous internationaluniversities.

Besidestheseproposals,therewereothersthatwehavenotconsidered because they fall under the operational and tacticallevels such as the pedagogical architecture (LMD system), curriculaand training programs and others, as it is explicit in the Figure 2,below.Forthesecondpartofthequestion,noonehassuggestedaworking methodology as a tool to analyze and implement changewithin an organization as performed by American SLs [19]. Finally,the remain 10% of the presidents interviewed confirm that theyhave never experimented any change event or such process in thisfield.

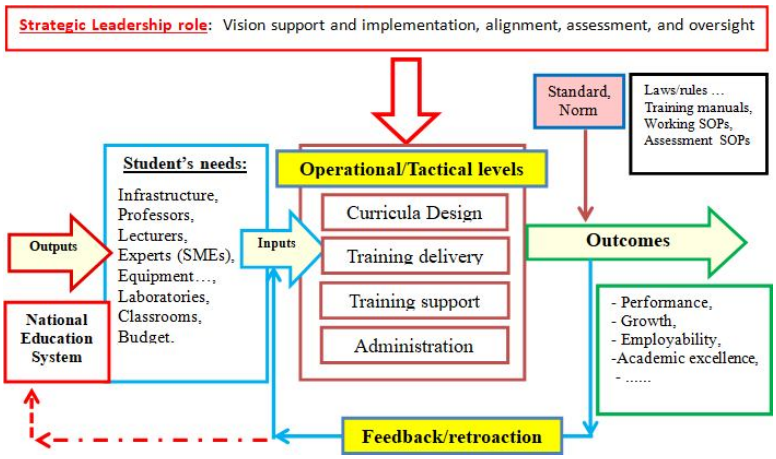

Figure2: Trainingcomprehensiveapproach(AdaptedfromICAOtrainairplus(Doc9941)2011).

Organizationculture

In all national universities, as for all other organizations, successdependsgreatlyontheculturalbackground.Thisresearchreveledthat it's possible to apply American leadership concepts withinnational public universities through a smart adaptation of theseconcepts while maintaining and respecting the national culturalvalues,norms,andpractices.Infact,eventhemosttalentedofleaderswill achieve little if the culture doesn't allow them to influencepeopletoworktowardacommongoal.Inthisregard,itshould benotedthatfromourexperienceintheUnitedStates,whichalsois characterized by a melt pot cultural background, American SLeasily apply these concepts because of the establishment of a strongprocedural framework which doesn't allow to anybody to improviseany initiatives or decision-making process based on a cultural orpersonalbackgroundorpersonalinterests.

Financingissues

Apart from the 30% of the interviewees who did not express anyopinionontheissubject,thefollowingfindingswerehighlightedtobetterenhancethefinancialaspectsthroughsufficientallocationofresources to support the implementation of the Ministry vision atalllevels:

- Lawandregulationsoutdatedandnotappropriate;
- Slowness, complexity of procedures and nonstop change oflawsandregulations;
- Statesubsidynotsufficient;
- The operating budget allocated to the university by the ministry,doesnottakeintoaccountthenewprojectcreations;
- Constructionandequipmentprojects,co-financedbytheregionorbyotherorganizationsorstakeholders,aregenerallydelayed interms ofexecution,mainlydueto delaysinpayment;
- Methods of control linked to the execution of the universitybudget, are too complex to implement, particularly for scientificresearchaspects;
- Complexity of the procedures applied which causes delays intransferdeadlines;
- Legalarsenalnon-adaptedtothespecificitiesofeachuniversity.

In this regard, one of the interviewees has highlighted that theimplementation of the vision requires the mobilization of substantialandsustainablefinancialresourcestosupporttheprojectedambition and ensure the feasibility of the transformative choicesadvocated by the vision implementation action plan. He addedthat a mixed financing policy is therefore necessary. This policymust be based on optimized budgetary and innovative financingmechanismscapableofcontinuouslygeneratingnewfinancialresources for the development of the high education ecosystem(administrativeregions,privatesectors,internationaldonors,etc.).In this regard, the State must provide universities with sufficientfinancial resources to implement any strategic vision.It is not enough to have the vision, but also to have the means toimplement it. Besides this, he added that SL within the nationaluniversity system must ensure that the university demonstrates itssocial and economic legitimacy much more than in the past. Inaddition to its traditional missions, it must also transfer and valorizescientificresearch,tobecomemoreentrepreneurial,especiallyin regional,national,andinternationalinnovation.

PLDPanditsimportance

Most important in this matter is that national universities SLsdeveloptheirownPLDPthatwillenablethemtoimprovespecificcompetenciesrequiredforcontinuousimprovementoftheirpersonalcareerpathandtheirorganization'sperformance.Forthisquestion,almost50%oftheanswersshowthatthePLDPcultureisnot established yet in national universities' governance culture. Infact, a personal leadership development plan is important for anystrategic leader, especially in large organizations because it allowsthemtotakeaproactiveapproachtofostertheirowndevelopmentbyidentifyingandleveragingtheirstrengthswhileimprovingtheirweaknesses and develop their self-awareness, strategic planning,skilldevelopment(communication,strategicthinking,creativeandcritical thinking), adaptability and agility especially through periodsofuncertainty.

DISCUSSION

We used three types of data: data from the theoretical frameworkmobilized from literature review mainly the American one, data fromour non-participant observation revealed during the interviews, andfinally documents that were delivered to us by some participantsat the end of the face-to-face interview or those we have got fromthe Ministry website and international research articles and reports.Indeed, thanks to this triangulation, we were able to respond toourhypotheses.Weelaboratedasynthesisoftheinterviewswhichhelped us to see what the limits of the effectiveness of a SL shortfallsare observed at the level of the universities in Moroccan context,before discussing some main aspects to consider in implementingand adapting the ASL to national universities' historical and culturalbackgrounds. Indeed, the discussion of these outcomes has beenconducted while keeping in mind our research hypothesis. In thiscontext,wewilltakeupthemainconceptsoftheSL,asthecentralsubject of this study, and submit them not only to a descriptiveinterpretation resulting from our observations, but also and aboveall to an explanatory theoretical interpretation resulting from ourtheoretical frame of reference (United States Strategic Leadershipapproach).

Throughourinterpretations,wewilltrytohighlighttheresultsthatconverge or diverge with the theoretical foundations of ASL. Wewill also check the degree of consistency between the strategic leveland the other levels as well as the convergence of operational andtactical strategies with respect to the strategic objectives establishedby the Ministry in charge. As such, it is useful to remember thatwhen analyzing the data, we tried to maintain as effectively aspossible our objectivity; however, it remains very likely that a degreeof subjectivity defects somehow our interpretation, particularly atthe level of our observations made during the interviews. Finally,thedatacollectedfromthevariousquestionnairesaddressedto the four levels categories, including the political and strategic levels(Ministry HQ and university presidents), enabled us to proceed tothe analysis and the synthesis of the national public university'soutcomes through the lens of the five main KPI as determined inourconceptualframeworkandhighlightedinFigure3.Infact,thefollowingfiveKPIwillallowustodiscussanddetermine,throughoutthe data collection results, whether the ASL concepts would benefitforMoroccanuniversitiesornot.Themainoutcomesareasfollows:

Figure3:SLmaindecisiveindicatorssuccess(KPI).

Vision

Accordingtoouranalysis,alllevelscombined,thevisionisnotanimportant concept for several interviewees insofar as, from theirviews, the universities' objectives are achieved. Other interviewees think that the vision is at the level of university or/and of the facultywhile it is actually at the level of Ministry and even at the Statelevel. This is a serious concern for us because, at least for the ASLs,the vision remains the foundation and the guiding thread for anytransaction carried out within large organizations, and this, in severalaspects including in particular the coherence between the levels, theinternal alignment, and consideration of the external environmentincludingthestrategicinterestsofallstakeholders.…Therefore,itshould be noted that the fact that national public universities arenot ranked among the best international universities all over theworld reveals that the outcome is not actually realized and recallconsequentlyforanactualimplementationofthevisioninlinewitha generalsensitizationaboutthisconceptatalllevels.

In this regard, the political level, at the headquarters of the Ministry,should guarantee consistency of the action plans established at alllevels (Strategic level (Universities presidents), operational level(Deans of faculties and Directors of Schools and Institutes) andtacticalone(ProfessorsandDirectorsofresearchlaboratories))tothestrategic orientation arising from of the Ministry vision. This degreeofconsistencyandconvergencetothepolitical-strategicobjectivesshould be assessed and monitored through adequate incrementaloversight mechanisms starting with universities, regions and atnational level. In fact, the lack of consistency and coordinationbetweenallthelevelsarelikelythemostimportantargumentsthatrequire the implementation of the US SL concepts in our nationalpublicuniversitiestobetterdealwithallthechallengeshighlightedinthis study.

Efficientresourcestrategicplanning(Funding,powers,andpolitics)

From the questionnaires results, we noticed that national publicuniversitiesareboundedtothelimitedbudgetandresourcesallocatedbythepoliticallevel(State)whereasitisdifficultatregional and local levels to collect necessary funds from the partners in orderto realize their own projects developments and therefore achieveuniversities' strategicgoals.Inthisregard,someinterviewees havesuggested that it necessary that the State increases the subventionand the budget allocated to universities to take in account the newprojectsdevelopment(Newconstructions,equipment).Theyadded that the government should allocate sufficient financial resources tothe universities to be able to implement the vision. Furthermore, theyadded that the distribution of resources, funding and regulation ofuniversitiesmightbeinfluencedbypoliticalconsiderations,which may lead to a situation where some universities are underfundedandunabletoprovidethenecessaryresourcestotheirstudentsand faculties. Meanwhile, universities that have strong politicalconnectionsorcaneffectivelynavigatethepoliticallandscape mayreceivemoreresourcesandfunding,evenifthey donotnecessarily have the best performance or outcomes. Additionally, power, andpolitical interference may also lead to the appointment of facultymembers and/or administrators who may not have the necessaryrequirementssuchasqualificationsor/andexperienceor/anddcompetencies,whichnegativelyaffectthequalityofeducationandresearch.

Alignmentprocessthroughacomprehensiveapproachtothevision

ComparingtoAmericanalignmentprocesswithinlargeorganizations, whichisbasedonacomprehensiveapproachrelyingon scientific tools such as the "7S model" our research revealed thatnationalpublicuniversities' communitysystemdoesnotapplyany methodologytodetectintimeanydeficienciesordiscrepanciestorealize the alignment process when necessary [20]. Indeed, whendysfunctions are identified, SLs must immediately proceed withthenecessaryalignmentatalllevels,payingparticularattentionto synchronization, convergence, and coherence with the vision.In short, SL focuses on strategic decisions that bind the future ofthe organization over a long period of time in terms of alignment,vision,andchangeprocesses[21].Thefundamentalobjectiveistounderstand the components, dynamics, and interdependencies oftheirinternal/externalenvironmentsingeneralandespeciallythe

endogenous reasons that led to the emergence of challenges, suchas any kind of resistance within their organizations, including apossible inappropriate structure and/or policies or procedures inforce.

Forinstance,intheUnitedStates,AmericanlargeorganizationsSLsresorttotheuseofthe"7-S"modeltoproceedtotheorganization'sdifferentcomponentsalignmenttosupportthevision,missionstatement, and the defined strategic goals and objectives [19].
Indeed,theseleadersusethisframeworkwhichinvolvesaproactiveandcontinuousalignmentoforganizationalcomponents,todiagnosethefollowing07differentaspects(Strategy,Structure,Systems,Skills,Staff, Style,andsharedvalues). Inthisregister,wepicked-upsomeexamplesofthe7Smodelwithinnationalpubliculniversitiessystemtobetterdemonstratetheimportanceofacomprehensiveapproachwithinanorganization.

Strategy: Fromthemainresultsoutcomes,andaswewentdeeplyin the analysis, we found out that the alignment process is verydifficult to achieve in the Ministry in charge because there is analmost systematic break with the achievements of the outgoingMinister general strategy, or even a complete reject to what havebeenrealizedsofar.Thereasonsgivenbysomeinterviewee'slieson the quasi-automatic breakup between political tendencies andideological objectives of the new elected political parties. In fact,in the United States as our framework of reference, the educationsystem policy is strictly independent from either politics or ideologyand therefore all the parties involved capitalize upon the realizedformerachievements[22].

Public high education structures: First of all, we have noted thathigher education structures in Morocco are too numerous anddilutedintoodiversefields(public,privateandpartnership;universitiesundertheMinistry'ssupervision,thoseoutsideuniversities,establishmentsundertheMinistry'spedagogicalauthority,engineeringschools;theNationalCommissionforHighEducationCoordination,High educationnationalevaluationand quality assurance Agency, the Scientific National Center forTechnical Researches and the National Office for cultural and socialactivities, university halls of residence and boarding schools) to suchan extent that at the outset, we were personally lost. In fact, it'svery difficult to grasp the overall architecture and by extension itscomplexity whichmakes us think about coherence issues and bigconcernsatalltheselevels.

Inthiscontext,andbywayofsampling,wehaveanalyzedonlythestructures linked to quality management systems in the Ministryof Higher Education, through the responses received, followingwhich we found that these structures are not established as theyshould be in the universities or faculties/schools. While it's truethat one university has been able to establish and maintain its ISO9001 certification in terms of quality management, and others arestriving to introduce this culture, it's worth pointing out that
otheradhocstructuresarenotyetwidespreadwithinalluniversities[23].

High education system: The analysis of the most important resultsreveals that other potential and relevant vocational stakeholdersinherentintheeducationsystemasawhole,arenotfullyintegratedinthecomprehensiveapproach.Infact,thehigheducationsystemshouldfullyconsidernationaleducation(Secondaryandhighschool), as inputs to the university system, as well as parents' andstudents'associations,unions,VocationalTrainingandLaborPromotion Office as stakeholders likely to impact the educationsystemasawhole,asillustratedinFigure2.

Skills: The analysis of interviewee's answers showed that theuniversities' presidents appointed to these positions are highly skilledinmanaging national universities thanks to their professionalbackgrounds and expertise in the education field. However,
fromtheSLperspective,theseSLsshouldgetmoreinvolvedinapplying the SL approach and concepts to better enhance their universities'performanceandregionalandinternationaloutlook.Indeed,they have very good individual competencies required of SLs, butthey need to develop or/and improve those specific competenciesrequired from SLs to better lead large organizations such as nationaluniversities.

In this regard, and from the answers of the interviewees, we havetaken a look, for instance, at how these SLs deal with their PLDP.Focusing on universities presidents, as Strategic Leaders withinnational universities, only 50% have answered to this questionwhich leads us to think that some of them are not aware yet of thenecessity and the importance to have a PLDP, especially at strategiclevel[24].

Staff: The comprehensive analysis of the interviewee's answersshows that almost all the staff of national universities is aware of theimportance of acquiring the concepts of SL, and the necessity to tryto implement this approach through an appropriate adaptation tonationalcultureandcontext.

Style: Fromtheanswersofthefourlevelsofquestionnaires,wegotthepicturethatallthepresidentsinterviewedunderstandverywellthevarietyofleadershipstyles.

Shared values (Culture): The analysis of the answers of someMinistry's staff, universities presidents, deans, and professors hasrevealed that adapting ASL approach to Moroccan universitiesrequires careful consideration of both the historical and
culturalbackgroundsofMoroccansociety.Whiletheremaybesomeuniversal principles of leadership that are applicable across cultures,itisimportanttounderstandtheuniquecharacteristicsofMoroccansocietyinordertoeffectivelyimplementthisleadershipapproachthat meets the needs of national universities. First, our traditional valuesand cultural norms have been shaped by several historical factors,and any leadership approach must take these into account theseinfluences. Second, Moroccan society is characterized by a strongsense of community, with a focus on family and social connections,whichrequiresfromanyleadershipapproachestoprioritizegroupcohesion over individual success to be more effective in this context.Therefore, the implementation of ASL within the national publicuniversities would likely be influenced by the country's culturalvalues and norms. Moroccan culture is characterized by strongtraditions,hierarchicalstructures,andacollectivistmindset,whichmightimpacttheimplementationprocessinseveralways.

Firstly, Moroccan culture tends to emphasize the importance ofrespect for authority figures, which may affect how the AmericanleadershipstyleisperceivedandreceivedbyMoroccanSLs. Furthermore,Americanleadershipapproachesthatprioritizeindividualism and participatory decision-making may be viewedaslesseffectiveorappropriateintheMoroccancontext.Secondly,Moroccanculturevaluescollaboration
andteamwork,maybeatoddswithsomeAmericanleadershippracticesthatprioritizeindividualachievementandcompetition.Therefore,implementingthese leadership strategies in national universities may need to adjusttheir approaches to align with national and even local cultural
normsandexpectations.Finally,ourculturealsoplacesastrongemphasisonrelationships andpersonalconnections,whichmayplayasignificant

role in the implementation process. Building trust and establishingstrongrelationshipswithMoroccanleaders,stakeholders, andstaffmaybecriticaltothesuccessofanyAmericanleadershipinitiative swithin the Ministry of Higher Education, Scientific Research, andInnovation.Infact,theimplementationoftheseconceptsneedsto be sensitive to the local cultural context and norms to ensure itseffectivenessandsustainability;however,thisconceptaffordsSLsacha ncetoexpandontheembeddingmechanismstheyshouldusetoshape these values over time. Overall, et from the Figure 4 below, wenotice that all the seven alignment pillars are well-adjusted within,AmericanSLalignmentprocesswhiletheyarenotwithinpublic national universities. In fact, strategy, structures, and systems are themostthreecomponentsthatarebasicallyneglectedinthealignmentproc esswhichappealsforfurtheractionstobetterimprovethese03compone nts.Inthefigureabove,andinaccordancewiththeBradach"7S"Model, allelementsmustbedealtwithinabalancedwayinordertoachievenear-perfectalignmentofthesystemthatistheobjectofthealignmentprocess .Tothisend,wehaveassigned the same percentage for the 7 theoretical pillars of the 7SModel(namedinthefigureastheoptimaltheoreticalalignmentto be achieved by Strategic Leaders, i.e., an optimal percentage ofaround15%or16%consideredasthebestscoreforeachaspect,which makesatotalpercentageof100%).Next,thealignmentofAmericanuniv ersitiescomesveryclosetotheobjectivessoughtforeach pillar, given that ASLs are continually seeking to develop thetoolsandmethodologiescapableofperfectingtheseresults.Finally,asu mmaryofthepillarsrelatingtonationalpublicuniversitieshasbeen accurately depicted in this figure, in line with the analysis ofresults presented previously. Briefly, it appears that Skills, Styles andShared values are well developed within our national universities;however,strategies,structuresandsystemsneedtobefurt herdevelopedtoensurethesuccessofanystructuralalignmentprocess withintheMoroccanpublicuniversitysystem.

Changeleadingstrategy

If there were three consistent themes that emerged from interviewees asthegreatestchallengesforcurrentandfutureSLs,itwast hepaceof change, its level initiation, and the way it is conducted. First, ithas been obvious to notice that the change in public universitiesoccursgenerallywhenanewMinistertakeovertheformer one,at the national election process frequency (5 years). This five-yearfrequencychangeistoolongtodetectanydiscrepanciesand/or deficiencies in the system because we are all living in VUCAenvironment where changes may occur or be triggered by anyevent at any time. Therefore, there should be regular assessmentfor a minimum of one academic cycle (One year) and through acomprehensiveapproachconsideringallthestakeholdersinvolveddi rectlyandindirectlyintheeducationsystem.IntheFigure5 below, the 8 steps should be assessed in a chronological waydepending on the effort done by SLs for each stage comparing toanother within the same change process event. With a starting pointat 20 (maximum point in the figure) for the first step for instance(Increasing urgency), means that the best effort has been done atthe beginning of the process change, while the upcoming stepswouldbegenerallydecreasinginnumbersaffectedtothefollowin gsteps. Indeed, and through the analysis of the Figure 5 below, wemay state that all the change processes eight steps within nationaluniversitiesarepoorlydealtwith,startingfromthetriggeringp ointwhich shows that the sense of urgency is not taken seriously as itshouldbeforanyexpectedchange.Thesamereasoningappliestoall other following steps which really require strong commitmentfrom universities' SLs to adopt this methodology in dealing withchangeswithinlargeorganizations(Figure5).

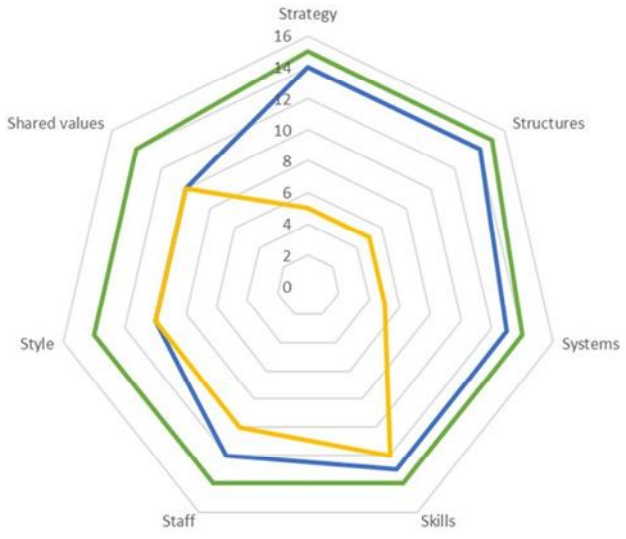

Figure4: ComparisonbetweenprocessesalignmenttotheVision.**Note:**( ):Optimalalignment;( ):USUniversitiesalignment;( ) : Moroccanuniversitiesalignment.

Figure5: Changeprocessescomparison.Note:( ):Optimalchangeprocess;( ):USUniversities;( ):Nationalpublicuniversities.

In fact, we did not notice, through all the answers, any changeinitiative at the levels of universities presidency or at faculties' deanery.Everybodyisactuallydealingwithroutineadministrationand management tasks. Second, at political-strategic level, almost allthe change processes have been conducted without any consistentstudiesorresearch.Someinterviewees stated that the change shavebeen sometimes decided in an improvised manner to only discardformer decisions or orientations. Even more, there were not anefficient strategy nor did a scientific methodology to implementthe changes decided at all the levels while ensuring the convergenceto the vision and the consistency with the strategic objectives oftheMinistryincharge.Finally,andbasedonourstudyframework,the adoption of American SL can help national universities toanticipate future changes by integrating all the stakeholders, througha scientific methodology based on relevant data and statistics wherethe patterns of change in universities are assessed, and the nature,degree,androotcausesofthemisalignmentarefactuallyanalyzedconsidering new economic, social, and technological conditionswithinuniversitiesenvironments[25].

Strengtheningthereputationoftheuniversity

During our empirical survey, we observed much dissatisfactioneither at the levels of universities and faculties, which do not helptogainactuallyanyreputationfornationalpublicuniversities[26]. First, Moroccan universities ranking performance is not satisfactoryatallforanystakeholderorshareholder(Professors,deans, presidents,politicians,unions,parents,students).Second,thefollowingperformanceindicatorsarenotenoughintegratedwithinnationalpublicuniversitiesstrategicobjectives:

- Academic performance regarding the size of the university(Qualityofeducation,teaching,andresearch,research articlescitationnumbers);
- Innovationresearch;
- Knowledgetransferandthesizeofresearchnetwork;
- InternationalStudentsandprofessor'sratiocomparingtouniversity'ssize;
- Revenueincomesfromindustries;
- Employers'reputation(Firms,organizations,enterpriseswhich highlyvaluepracticalskillsandcompetencies);
- Internationaloutlook.

To sum up, an effective adoption of ASL concepts would helpstrengthenthereputationofnationaluniversitiesbyfosteringacultureofacademicandresearch excellence, and thereforeattracttalentedstudentsandprominentprofessors, who willcontributetothe success of national universities reputationandoutlookalloverthe world. Hence,thevarious theoreticalarguments, analysis and empirical studies presentedpreviouslyallowustodeducetheupcomingfinaloutcomes:

- "There would be a positive impact of the ASL concepts throughtheunderstandingandthesmartimplementationoftheVISIONconceptatalllevels(universitiesandfaculties)";
- "Therewouldbeanefficientresourcestrategicplanning,especiallyonfinancialshortfallsaspects,whichwouldbenefittonationalpublicuniversitiesstrategicleaderstomanageandovercomethelimitedresourcestobeabletoinnovate";
- "Nationalpublicuniversitiesleaderswouldverylikelybenefitfrom American comprehensive approach in aligning all thecomponentsinvolvedintheMinistryvisionroll-out";
- "ASL implementation would be essential and beneficial tonationaluniversitiesleadersinsomuchtheywilladapteasilytonational culture to face any expected change while acquiringthe specific competencies to quickly adapt to new economic,social,andtechnologicaltrends";
- "Moroccanpublicuniversitieswouldbenefitfromtheimplementation of ASL concepts by fostering a culture ofacademic and research excellence as a necessary requirement tostrengthening their regional and international reputation andacademicranking";

Thus,amongourtwohypotheses,thesecondone"H2:Moroccan public universities may fully take advantage from ASLimplementationthroughsmartadjustmentstakinginaccount itssocioculturalbackgrounds"remainsthemostlikelyanswerto thisresearchcentralproblematic,becausethemostofanswersof all the targeted leaders, especially at the strategic level, showsthattheAmericanSLconceptsareessentialtoMoroccanpublic

universities and would benefit to likely become more competitiveamong international universities as already proven by the Americanuniversitiesallovertheworld[27].

Limitations

As per any research approach, ours has certain limitations thatneedtobeclarified.Firstofall,thechoiceofquestionsisofcoursesubjective, and may therefore be elaborated differently dependingnotonlyontheresearcher'sbackground,butalsoandabove allon his or her experience and expertise in the field of leadership ingeneralandSLinparticular,aswellasonthecontextofthestudy,in this case the public university system. The same applies to theanalysis of results due to any author subjectivity, which also dependson the above-mentioned parameters. In the same vein, it should alsobe recognized that the data collected (answers to questionnaires)during the empirical part of our work were not treated with thesame rigor by the various interviewees, insofar as certain answersweresometimestoogeneric,andthereforedidnotallowustocarryoutanin-depthanalysisofthematter,astheydidnotincludealltherelevantinformationforabetteroutcome.

Similarly,theresultsobtainedmighthavebeenrelativelydifferentif the research had been carried out on a larger sample or selectedaccordingtoveryprecisecriteria,whichwasnotthecaseinthisstudyinsofar as university presidents, who participated in this research,are officially nominated to these functions. Moreover, the notion ofleadershipinducesinitsdefinitionparametersofinfluenceinherentto the space-time framework and context in which it occurs. Onone hand, it's worth pointing out the limitations relating to theresults related to the current timeframe of our research (2019-2023),would most likely be different in the next 5 years or 10 years. On theotherhand,achangeofcontext,whichdependsonsocio-economicand cultural developments and technological paradigms, wouldundoubtedlyleadtootherresultsasconclusiveasthese.Examplesare numerous in this respect, and we may cite different contexts suchasprivatehighereducation(insteadofpublic);othervitalstrategic sectors of the country such as aeronautics or automotive industry;bankingsector;orevenwithindefenseorsecurityinstitutions.

Recommendationsforfutureresearch

Attheendofthisresearch,itshouldbenotedthattheresultsof this work could obviously be improved insofar as they can becompletedbystudieslikelytoassesstherealimpactsofapossibleimplementationofASLwithinnationalpublicuniversities,amongother things, such as their international ranking, and its influenceatregionalandinternationallevel.

In addition, other new avenues of research in the future couldfurthercontributetothepromotionofSLconcepts,asfollows:

- Adoptingamoreglobalapproachbybroadeningthesampletoother stakeholders would make a significant contribution tothe academic community. In fact, the empirical phase shouldinclude the various stakeholders in the national educationsystem, i.e., the Ministry of National Education (High, Middle,and Elementary schools), the vocational training and workintegration offices, the universities' main economic partners,sponsors,tradeunions,parents'associations,students,etc.
- ExtendingthescopeofSLtosmallandmedium-sizedorganizationsandfirmsinsteadoflargeorganizations;
- A consistent consideration and analysis of other parametersimpactingthedeterminantsofSLwithinlargeorganizations

and hence their performance, such as culture, traditions, andreligion,particularlyintermsofdecision-makingprocesses;

- The extension of this research to other vital strategic sectorsof the country, whatever the nature of their activities, insofaras leadership is a cross-disciplinary concept, in an attempt togeneralizetheSLculturewithinlargenationalorganizations;
- With the exception of the Anglo-Saxon countries that arepioneersandleadersinthefieldofSL(USAandGreatBritain inparticular),thisstudycouldbenefittoothercountries,includi ng those in Africa, by conducting specific research inthefuture;
- At the same time, similar research could be carried out on theother levels, i.e., tactical, and operational leadership, in orderto take a closer look at the impacts of day-to-day practices ontheorganization'soperationalandtacticalperformance;
- Thisstudycouldberefinedinthefuturebyresearcherschoosingforhybridquantitativeandqualitativeapproachesofwhichwebelieve the results would bring further insights to thisdiscipline…

Finally,theseexpectationresultsofthisworkwillbewidelydissemi nated,notonlywithinMoroccanpublicuniversitiescommunity, but also to the entire academic and business community,bothnationallyandinternationally.

CONCLUSION

TherelationshipbetweenSLandtheperformanceoflargeorganizati onsneedsnolongertobeestablished,insofarasresearchshows a positive correlation between the application of SL concepts,asawayofgoverningAmericanuniversities,andwhathase nabledthem to be the best ranked in the world. Therefore, and based onAmericanliteraturereviewrelatedtoleadershipingeneralandSL conceptsandfoundationsinparticularononehand;andonthe perceptions and practice analysis of these concepts withinMoroccanpublicuniversitiesontheotherhand,wewentthro ughapost-positivist epistemology approach using hypothetical-deductivereasoning process to detect gaps and discrepancies to better enhanceboth personal skills and specific competencies required to betterlead large organizations. In this regard, we adopted qualitativemethodologyconductedthroughsemi-directedinterviewsandquestionnaires with the staff involved in national public universitiesgovernance and management, at the four levels, to identify theneedsofindividualskills(technical,interpersonal,andconceptu al)and specific competencies required for national SLs (Universitiespresidentsinourcasestudy)tobetterleadpublicuniver sities.Theanalysisanddiscussionofthemainresultsandfindings,an dbasedon our study framework, this research has shown that nationaluniversitieswouldgainseveralcompetitiveadvantagesbyinte gratingthe American SL concepts. However, we clearly admitted that theimplementation of ASL concepts would be relatively difficult atthe outset due to some resistance to change. Therefore, with apoliticalandstrategicwilloftheministryincharge,nationalpublicu niversities' presidents could easily proceed through a gradualimplementationwithadjustmentsandadaptationsspecifict oMoroccan culture and traditions. This will certainly enable nationalSLstotakeupfuturechallengesinherenttotheadventofarut hlesscompetitivenesswithinanenvironmentthatisbecomingmore andmore VUCA. In this respect, by adopting these concepts, nationaluniversities SLs would align their structures to the vision of theMinistryinchargeandanticipatefuturechangesbyinvolvingall

stakeholders, through a scientific methodology based on relevantdata and statistics while taking into account their financial capacitiesandneweconomicchanges,socialandtechnologicalparadigms.

REFRENCES

1. DeChurch LA, Hiller NJ, Murase T, Doty D, Salas E. Leadership acrosslevels: Levels of leaders and their levels of impact. The LeadershipQuarterly.2010;21(6):1069-1085.
2. Ezzahra KABBA F, EJBARI Z. L'enseignement universitaire publicmarocain: une performance qui laisse à désirer. Revue Françaised'EconomieetdeGestion.2021.
3. Mendenhall ME, Osland J, Bird A, Oddou GR, Stevens MJ. Globalleadership:Research,practice,anddevelopment.Routledge.2017.
4. GoldsmithM,GreenbergC,RobertsonA,Hu-ChanM.Globalleadership:Thenextgeneration.FtPress.2003.
5. Doz Y, Santos J, Williamson P. From global to metanational: Howcompanieswinintheknowledgeeconomy.Ubiquity.2001.
6. ZamaniH,AitSoudaneJ.Définitionsduleadership:Contributionau développementdelalittérature.IntJBusInnovRes.2020;2(4):1-14.
7. Zamani H, AitSoudaneJ. Les concepts du Management et du Leadership:quelles interactions?. Revue Internationale des Sciences de Gestion.2021;4(1):2-10.
8. Jacobs TO, McGee ML. Competitive advantage: conceptual imperativesforexecutives.2001.
9. RichardMartin.Infolettre«Lecatalyseurduleadership»Mars.2011.
10. Hull RB, Robertson DP, Mortimer M. Leadership for sustainability:strategiesfortacklingwickedproblems.IslandPress.2020.
11. Zamani H, Ait Soudane J. Strategic Leadership and VUCA environment(Volatile,Uncertain,ComplexandAmbiguous).RevueInternationaledesSciencesdeGestion.2022;5(1).1-2.
12. Zamani H, Ait Soudane J.Quelles sont les competences requises des LeadersStrategiques pour une meilleure gestion des grandes organisations?.RevueInternationaledesSciencesdeGestion.2023;6(2). 91-92.
13. CSEFRS.Rapportanalytique-lamiseenœuvredelachartenationale del'éducationetdelaformation-Acquis,déficitsetdéfis.2014.
14. CSEFRS.LagouvernancedusystèmededucationetdeformationauMaroc.2016.
15. CSEFRS. L'enseignement supérieur au Maroc – Efficacité, efficience etdéfisdusystèmeàaccèsouvert.2018.
16. AyadK,BennaniKD,ElhachloufiM.EvolutionofUniversityGovernanceinMorocco:Whatistheimpact?IntJHighEduc.2020;9(5):94-104.
17. Kniffin KM, Detert JR, Leroy HL. On leading and managing: Synonymsor separate(andunequal)?.AcadManagDiscov.2020;6(4):544-571.
18. Hitt MA, Haynes KT, Serpa R. Strategic leadership for the 21st century.BusinessHorizons.2010;53(1):437-444.
19. KotterJP.Leadingchange.Harvardbusinesspress.2012.
20. BradachJL.Organizationalalignment:The7-Smodel.HarvBusRev.1996.
21. Nmili M, Bouaoulou M. La prise de décision stratégique au sein descollectivités territoriales à la lumière des paradigmes de décision. RevueFrançaised'EconomieetdeGestion.2021;2(4):10-20.
22. DanaLP,DumezH.Qualitativeresearchrevisited:Epistemologyof a comprehensive approach. Int J Entrepreneurship Small Bus.2015;26(2):154-170.
23. GeorgeT.Semi-Structuredinterview|definition,guideandexamples.Scribbrwebsite.2022.
24. Imbert G. L'entretien semi-directif: à la frontière de la santé publique etdel'anthropologie.Rechercheensoinsinfirmiers.2010;102(3):23-34.
25. Kohn L, Christiaens W. Les méthodes de recherches qualitatives dans larecherche en soins de santé: apports et croyances. Reflets et perspectivesdelavieéconomique.2014;53(4):67-82.
26. Nawrin R, Mongkolsirikiet K. Post-positivism and its implication onhuman resource and organization development. Hum Resour OrganDevJ.2012;4(1):10-34.
27. Pratama WP. The analysis of hypothesis-deductive reasoning ability inlearning particle dynamics. InJournal of Physics: Conference Series.2021.

Comment [AP6]: Suggestions for improvement like actionable recommendations such as adding more specific actionable recommendations for how Moroccan universities can begin integrating SL concepts, including potential pilot programs or phased approaches.

Then, it would be useful to briefly mention the study's limitations and suggest areas for future research to explore how SL concepts can be further adapted or tested in different contexts.

Lastly, broader implications are expanded on the broader implications of adopting SL concepts for Moroccan higher education, including potential impacts on student outcomes, faculty development, and overall institutional performance.

Comment [AP7]: Ensure consistent formatting for all references, including proper use of italics and punctuation. For example, titles of books and journals should be italicized, while article titles should be in sentence case. Verify that all references include complete details, such as publication years and page numbers where necessary. Ensure that all references are cited correctly and consistently follow the same citation style. For instance, some references have inconsistent formats or missing details.