

The Current University Reforms in Morocco: The Present Situation of Labour Market and Culture

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Abstract

The Moroccan university has undergone several reforms. The last dated from the academic year 2003/2004 with the introduction of the LMD (Licence, Master, and Doctorate). This reform has been the subject of several redevelopments in 2006 and in 2007. "Improve system performance" and "prepare the student for insertion into the socio-economic environment," the current reform has changed the pedagogical architecture and granted more autonomy to the university.

Keywords: Reform, university, Morocco, education

Introduction

The Moroccan educational system, together with that of other countries around the world, has undergone several reforms while searching to improve the quality of learning on the basis of the European models. The last reform, which dates back to 2000-2001 school year, is the National Charter of Education and Vocational Training (CNEF). This reform has affected the pedagogical design and granted more openness and autonomy to the Moroccan university. It has been introduced along with the competency-based approach (APC) that replaces learning by objectives which was adopted in the reform of 1985. Later on; the Integration Pedagogy (PI) replaces the competency-based approach. The major concern of this paper is to deal with this reform and its strengths vis-à-vis the professionalization of universities and culture. In this paper, we will try firstly to provide an outline of the main periods that marked higher education in Morocco before approaching the new reform. Secondly, we will draw parallels between the current university reform on the one hand and culture and the labour market on the other hand.

1. The Main Periods of Higher Education in Morocco

The itinerary of higher education in Morocco can be divided into three chronological periods: A pre-protectorate, protectorate, and post-protectorate.

1.1. Higher Education in Morocco before the Protectorate

The tertiary education in Morocco began with religious instruction before the 20th century. It was then with the Koranic schools of Quaraouiyine in Fez (859) and Ben Youssef in Marrakech (1570) as well as Rafiq (2010). Indeed, Quaraouiyine was split into faculties in several cities (Agadir, Tetouane, Marrakech, and Fez) to teach theology, Arabic language, Islamic law and Islamic sciences. The core study programs of Ben Youssef University were theology, mathematics, philosophy, astrology, medicine, etc.

1.2. Higher Education during the Protectorate

The establishment of certain institutions in the tertiary education marked this period. They were mainly the Centre for Legal and Judicial Studies in 1921, Scientific Centre for Higher Studies and training in 1940, and the Institute of Higher Studies in Morocco (1915) which was linked to the University of Bordeaux. Other institutions and schools have been put in place. This includes the National School of Agriculture in Meknes in 1945 and the *École Nationale d'Administration* (ENA) in 1948.

1.3.1. Before the Adoption of the LMD System

After the independence of in 1956, the Moroccan government laid down the strategic objectives of educational policy. These goals are mainly: Moroccanization, unification, generalization, Arabization, and centralization. Indeed, the Scientific Centre for Higher Studies and training was transformed into Science Faculty according to the Dahir of 1959. The first university created in Morocco was Mohammed V University in Rabat. It was founded in 1957 to train the executives in the public administration and education. However, the academic year 1959-1960 has known a limited number of students (3300) and professors (150)¹. During the sixties and the seventies of the 20th century, Morocco has chosen to integrate the global economy. It has therefore adopted an educational policy based on the creation of academic institutions, equality between the two sexes, the spread of scholarships, and free access to education. This policy has influenced the total number of enrolled students as well as teachers in the academic year 1979-1980 which exceeded 74 500 students and 2171 teachers including 391 women (18%)².

During the 80's, Morocco has undergone radical changes in the economic and social levels, which prompted it to adopt new education strategies that relate higher education to the socio-economic sector by creating engineering schools, graduate schools of technology and private institutions for higher education. Indeed, the number of teachers was approximately 6187 of which 1349 female (22%) and the number of students was around 198 054 in the academic year 1989-1990. Like the other periods, the 1990's witnessed a significant extension of institutions but with more emphasis on the creation of science and technology faculties, management and commerce schools (ENCG), multidisciplinary faculties as well as focusing on the training and the qualification of the human resources. The year 1997 was marked by a reform that mainly affected the postgraduate training by the Decree N°2- 96-796 of February 19th, 1997. The Higher Diploma for Advanced Studies (DESA) and the Doctorate of State were therefore introduced. The access to the DESA and DESS is selective and teachers who are accredited researchers by the Ministry of higher education for a period of four years propose the program.

1.3.2 The Current University Reform

1.3.2.1 The Implementation of the Reform

The Ministry of Education in Morocco has adopted a new reform in order to adapt its educational system with the international systems. It has developed a new law 01.00 that was enacted on March 3rd, 2000 by the parliament. This law granted autonomy (pedagogical, administrative, and financial) to the university. It has reformed the educational architecture into cycles, modules and courses and it allowed the university's openness to the outside world. Starting from the academic year 2003-2004, the LMD system (Licence, Master, and Doctorate) has been implemented in the Moroccan university. It was not until the academic year 2006-2007, that "the universities start to introduce masters to consider the implementation of the doctoral training. The reform has started to regulate access to the technical institutions (FST, EST, and ENCG). For the first time, in the academic year 2006-2007, universities will conduct an assessment and accreditation of BAs (licences) undertaken in 2003. They were preparing, in addition, to introduce the doctoral schools, which were expected to open later in the academic year 2007-2008. In the same vein, it was anticipated also to start the reform within the engineering schools" (Kouam, 2006:9). This was achieved during the academic year 2008-2009 with the new form of doctoral cycle and centres.

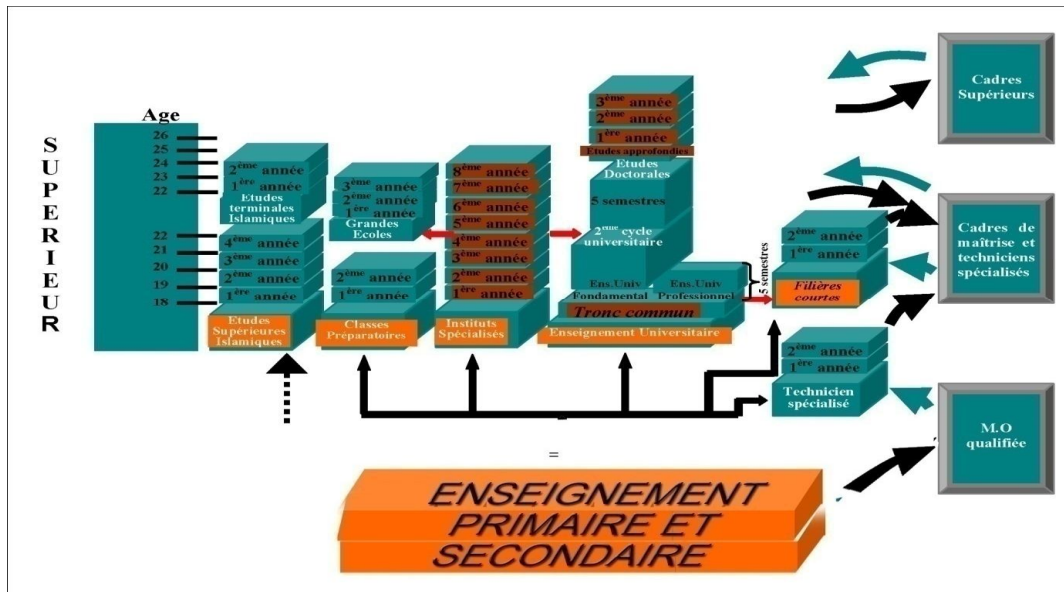
1.3.2.2 The New Educational Architecture

In the current structure of the Moroccan educational system, the academic year has two semesters. The semester is composed of 14 to 16 weeks of instruction and assessment, which is about 300 to 360 hours of learning according to stream. The license (BA) cycle consists of six semesters and passing the first four semesters ends up by obtaining DEUG or DEUP certificate. The master program consists of four semesters after the license while the doctoral cycle lasts three years minimum and five years maximum.

¹ Rresearch report on the governance system reforms in higher education in Morocco; pre-conference "Governance reforms in higher education: Its policy and effects" Dakar, November 14th, 2012, UNESCO 2012. Presented by Bashir Kouhlani and Moulay Mustapha Ennaji.

² Ibid

The Structuring of the Moroccan Educational System³



Source: Ministry of National Education, Staff Training and Scientific Research. Insight into the Moroccan educational system prepared and issued on the 4th session of the International Conference on Education, Geneva 8-11 September 2004.

The importance of culture in the new reform through its targeted objectives

The reform has set a number of objectives:

- Enable students who wish to pursue their graduate studies to develop the required skills and training.
- Enable students who wish to get access to labour market to get the prerequisite skills to facilitate their insertion.
- Improve the performance of the educational system.
- Respond to the constraints and evolution of the socio-economic environment.
- Provide and develop the methodological, linguistic, and communicative skills.
- Establish a progressive career guidance system
- Prepare for insertion into the socio-economic environment.
- Transmit and convey fundamental cultural values⁴.

Thus, the new reform advocates the ultimate goal of education is to convey the cultural values. “It also endeavours to develop the spirit of dialogue, accept differences and diversity, and lead to a democratic practice in the framework of a State of Rights”⁵. In fact, the educational system in Morocco is mainly based on “a dynamic interaction between cultural heritage of Morocco and the universal principals of human rights and dignity” (the National Charter: 6).

In other words, the revision of curricula and textbooks aims, among other things, to enable learners to:

- Enshrine mutual respect to the regional diversity of Moroccan cultural heritage
- Open up to the universal changes, accept the values of universal civilization, be prepared to assimilate other intellectual and creative productions, to understand and accept others and to participate in cultural exchange at world level⁶.

In this regard, His Majesty the king Mohammed VI, in his televised speech of March 18th 2009, has invited all Moroccans “to start the recon quest of reason and common values that are the basics to enhance a space for conviviality and social ties where the words of dignity, justice and freedom would be expressed in the same manner and combined with the same requirements, whatever are our origins, cultures and spirituality”.

³ Ministry of National Education, Staff Training and Scientific Research. Insight into the Moroccan educational system prepared and issued on the 4th session of the International Conference on Education, Geneva 8-11 September 2004.

⁴ Jamiati, the portal of Moroccan universities: http://www.jamiati.ma/universites/infos_generales/Pages/lmd.aspx

⁵ The first section of the National Charter on fundamentals P.6

⁶ Alliance of civilizations from the National Action Plan (2010-2012) P.11

The Evaluation of the Reform

In order to evaluate an educational system, two approaches have been adopted: the quantitative and the qualitative methods. The first approach relies on some measures such as the illiteracy rate, the number of graduates, etc. Thus, according to this approach, the rate of the learners aged 15 and over, who have higher educational level is growing. It reaches 9.6% of the Moroccan population in 2010. Yet, this ratio conceals gender disparities. In fact, only 7% of women aged 15 and over have higher educational levels (see Figure 1). Indeed, 418 000 was the number of Moroccan students in the public sector against 35 648 in the private sector for the academic year 2011-2012⁷. These students carry on their studies in twenty one universities in Morocco (see Annex) in which six are private (Al Akhawayn University, International University of Casablanca, Rabat International University, International University of Agadir (Universiapolis), private university of Marrakech, private university of Fez). Thus, the public universities include 106 academic institutions, 63 institutions for training of management executives, and 187 private schools (UNESCO, 2012)⁸. These institutions can be classified into two categories:

1- Open access institutions:

Faculties of Arts and humanities⁹
 Faculties of Legal, Social and Economic Sciences
 Science Faculties
 Faculties of traditional education
 Multidisciplinary faculties.

2- Regulated access institutions¹⁰

Faculties of Science and Technology
 Faculties of medicine and nursing, dentistry and pharmacy
 Faculty of educational sciences
 Schools of commerce and management
 Engineering schools and translation schools
 The technology graduate schools.

The qualitative approach, on the other hand, aims to identify the quality of education. Thus, the TIMSS (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study) (2003, 2007, 2011) and the PIRLS surveys (Progress in International Reading Literacy) (2006, 2011) fall in the framework of the qualitative approach to education. The results of these investigations have revealed that Moroccan students have poor learning skills compared to their counterparts in other countries.

Table 1: Proportion of the Population aged 15 and over with Higher Educational Level

Year	Male (in %)	Female (in %)	Total (in %)
1950	0.5	0.1	0.3
1960	0.8	0.2	0.5
1970	1.31	0.5	0.9
1980	3,93	1.5	2.7
1990	7,66	3,2	5.4
2000	9,77	4.9	7.3
2010	12,2	7	9.6

Source: the data of Barro and Lee (2010)

⁷ Leconomiste.com. Besides, the number of students enrolled at Cadi Ayyad University, for instance, has increased from 35 000 in 2010-2011 to more than 63 000 in 2012-2013; cited from: Moroccan universities and international rankings: Reflections and Challenges (the case of UCA) www.archives.auf.org

⁸ Rresearch report on the governance system reforms in higher education in Morocco; pre-conference "Governance reforms in higher education: Its policy and effects" Dakar, November 14th, 2012, UNESCO 2012. Presented by Bashir Kouhlani and Moulay Mustapha Ennaji.

⁹ While access is open to these faculties, enrolment in some courses is conditioned by obtaining a good grade in the Baccalaureate because of overcrowding in some faculties. For example, a student cannot enrol in the French Department with a lower grade at French (as a school subject) in the Baccalaureate.

¹⁰ These category comprises higher education institutions that are not affiliated to the Ministry of Higher Education. We cite for instance, l'APESA: l'Institut Agronomique et Vétérinaire Hassan 2 that belongs to the Ministry of Agriculture.

Two other negative reports have been published on the Moroccan educational system. The first is the Global Monitoring Report on Education by UNESCO in 2014 in which Morocco ranked 143rd out of 164 countries. The second is the CSE report in 2008. Years after the implementation of the reform, this report says, “the system has not been able to develop appropriate management tools for an effective running of the reform’s projects or even to avoid disparate initiatives and lack of coordination among programs”. (CSE, 2008:31). The fundamental Bachelor of Art degrees were evaluated in 2009. This evaluation gave rise to the Emergency Plan that was adopted for the period 2009/2012. Thus, the State is committed to monitor annually each university and track its progress on the implementation of the reform. Today, after many years of the establishment of this university reform, what are its shortcomings?

4. A Few Criticisms on the University Reform

A first point to make is that the pedagogical architecture has changed but the content remains the same. Kifani, in his article “Higher Education: false reform of modules” published on this matter in *L’économiste* on 24th January, 2014, states that “the necessary scientific knowledge and the duration of its acquisition to obtain a given degree are fairly similar, both within the framework and before the reform”. The modular system is beneficial. However, the associated conditions for its application are not favourable since “the Moroccan LMD is home to constant improvisation” as announced by Bouaziz in his article “University: another failure” published in the journal of *Zamane*. Thus, with a loose modular architecture, rising rate of exams, busy schedules, inadequate educational support and old curriculum content. The reform which was supposed to be innovative had emerged as a disabled system by unnecessary burdens” (ibid).

On the other hand, the autonomy advocated by the reform is not provided by the new system insofar as the “educational autonomy should concern both the student to choose modules and the university to choose courses. Nevertheless, instead of taking a “piecemeal approach”, we have “the daily menu”. Neither the student nor the university have the opportunity to choose”. (Kifani, 2014). To address these challenges and meet the objectives of the reform, Kifani (2014) calls for an adjustment of that reform to European and international systems through the introduction of the credit system, according to European model (European credit transfer system). Thus, the student is required to validate a number of credits: 30 credits per semester and 60 per year instead of modules such is the case, for example, with France where the credit is equal to 10 hours of learning and 20 hours of individual work (30 hours in total). It is to accord a certain number of credits to each element of the module according to its time volume. The professors should do this task since they are the only ones who decide the number of learning hours. Indeed, this operation will facilitate and help students to acquire knowledge. Concerning the issue of the computer record of students, Kifani (2014) proposes a codification of course units, as is the case of France where a code is given to the specialty and another to the scientific level of the course unit. This is done in place of designing the specialty of the module by its name or the module level by a semester.

4. The Moroccan Universities and the Requirements of the Labour Market

The Moroccan universities, according to the report of the COSEF, do not suitably train students to the requirements of the labour market. Thus, “despite the efforts made by universities (...), the system is perceived as being relatively irrelevant to public development strategies and to unclear demands of the economic environment”¹¹.

For these reasons, the Charter has set up the following objectives:

- Provide appropriate training to meet the socio-economical sector needs.
- Set up a system of monitoring and adaptation of training.
- Provide services (training, advice, expertise, and research...).
- Propose and provide to the applicants continuous certified trainings
- Develop competencies and create business structures including :
 - Create incubators
 - Provide advice and expertise. Make use of patents and licenses.
 - Marketing of products and related activities.
 - Invest in stakes of project companies.

¹¹ Ibid, p 48

- Create subsidiary companies.
- Establish public interest groups (PIG)¹².

The CSE (2008)¹³, years after the implementation of the reform, highlighted a number of facts behind the lack of university professionalization. This is due, on the one hand, to the radically increased number of graduates in Arts and Law. Thus, in 2006, 75% of graduates got their degrees in literature and law courses. On the other hand, the learning skills and knowledge are mostly theoretical while the economic world requires practical knowledge. Adding to this the lack of preparation of teachers for the reform as well as the teaching methods that are not learner-centered ones due to the large number of students. Taddei (2009) have proposed specific measures to promote creative knowledge at university. The aim is to encourage interdisciplinary approaches and to create study programs that enable students to initiate individual or collective projects and develop their creativity. Meanwhile, it is of high interest to create special spaces dedicated to project development and to encourage creativity among students and teachers by providing the necessary means in terms of time and administrative assistance. The selection admission of students should be based on their motivation to take the initiative. In this regard, Zerwali (1999), in his article *The University: a highway with several entrances and exits* published in *L'Economiste* on 15-04-1999, says that the university in Morocco is a “highway without intermediate outputs. The ideal consists of providing a highway that allows gradual outlets, and inflows” in order to reduce the gap between the university and the socio-economic world. Given the general aspect of this reform that affected all educational levels since its introduction in 1999, this reform has been subject to several adjustments. Indeed, the Moroccan university was reformed in 2002, 2006 and 2009 with the launch of Emergency Plan. In addition, a new reform has emerged in the academic year 2014-2015. Thus, to deal with the issue of overcrowdings in higher education and to cope with the absence of infrastructures and lack of professors (15 000 teachers for 615 000 students), the universities have excluded some interface modules that link the university programs and subjects. This elimination will certainly influence the students’ level of communication and constitutes barriers to achieving the objectives of the National Charter and the Emergency Plan.

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