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Vocational training in Morocco in the face of reforms: institutional transformations, governance restructuring and employability challenges

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Abstract

This article analyses vocational training reforms in Morocco not only as institutional and organisational transformations, but as a gradual transition towards a governance model based on the analysis of training needs, the regionalisation of public policy, the involvement of economic stakeholders and the anticipation of emerging occupations. This research is grounded in a theoretical framework and employs a qualitative methodology. It is based on an in-depth literature review drawing on key Moroccan strategic and institutional documents; it analyses the evolution of the Moroccan vocational training system since the creation of the OFPPT, covering the various reforms of the system ranging from the National Charter for Education and Training to Framework Law 51-17, and then examines the reconfiguration of its governance through the 2021 National Vocational Training Strategy and the new 2019 roadmap for the development of the vocational training sector, of which the 'Cités des Métiers et des Compétences' (Cities of Trades and Skills) constitute the most significant institutional innovation. The analysis shows that these reforms reflect a gradual shift from an administered, supply-centred governance model towards a hybrid, cognitive, partnership-based, multi-level and

evaluative governance model. However, it highlights persistent limitations, namely: institutional fragmentation, tensions between centralisation and regionalisation, and weak monitoring mechanisms, which call for consideration of the conditions for a more forward-looking approach to skills governance – the only approach capable of sustainably strengthening the alignment between training, employability and regional development. Drawing on the Moroccan context, this research makes a theoretical contribution to understanding the trajectories of vocational training reform. It emphasises the need for more integrated, forward-looking governance, based on a continuous analysis of skills needs, in order to support economic and technological transformations.

Keywords: Vocational training; educational governance; territorialisation; employability; alignment of training and employment; skills anticipation; needs analysis.

Introduction

Vocational training systems worldwide are undergoing profound transformations under the combined influence of economic globalisation, technological change, the restructuring of labour markets and the emergence of new occupations. In this context, vocational training is

increasingly recognised as a strategic driver of economic and social development, in line with approaches derived from human capital theory (Mincer, 1958; Schultz, 1963; El Bouhali et al., 2024). International organisations now emphasise the need for training schemes capable of keeping pace with the rapid changes in contemporary economies, supporting individuals' employability and reducing the mismatch between the skills acquired through training and those required in the labour market (OECD, 2024; ILO, 2023; UNESCO, 2021). The alignment of training, employment and skills development is thus emerging as a central issue in public education policies and government action on qualifications. In Morocco, this issue has been central to development strategies since the creation of the Office for Vocational Training and Employment Promotion (OFPPT) in 1974. Since then, the sector has undergone several successive reforms aimed at enhancing its effectiveness, improving the quality of qualification schemes and better aligning training provision with socio-economic needs. The National Charter for Education and Training, the Strategic Vision 2015–2030, Framework Law No. 51-17 and the roadmap for the development of vocational training constitute, in this regard, major milestones in the sector's evolution (Elmajid, 2003; CSEFRS, 2015; Kingdom of Morocco, 2019). These reforms reflect a gradual shift from an approach centred on workforce qualifications towards one more focused on skills development, employability and adaptation to economic changes (Bedoui & Faraj, 2018). However, several reports continue to highlight persistent gaps between the skills produced by training programmes and employers' expectations, revealing the limitations of the alignment between training and employment and their effects on the integration of young graduates into the labour market (CSEFRS, 2019; ETF, 2007, 2022; OECD, 2024; ILO, 2023). These mismatches are reflected in particular in high levels of youth unemployment and situations of occupational downgrading (Azzouzi, 2023). At the same time, the rise of data analytics tools, artificial intelligence and monitoring systems is opening up new avenues for identifying and anticipating skills needs (Ridoini et al., 2024). Whilst not the central focus of this article, this development is helping to shift the focus from a logic of adapting to the immediate needs of the labour market towards a more forward-looking approach to training policies. It is within this context that the recent reforms of Moroccan vocational training are taking place. Beyond the modernisation of infrastructure and the diversification of provision, these reforms reflect a commitment to transforming the sector's governance models through the decentralisation of public action, the increased involvement of economic stakeholders, the development of partnerships and the adoption of a skills-led approach. The creation of the *Cités des Métiers et des Compétences* (CMCs)

represents, in this respect, a major institutional innovation, in that it aims to align training programmes more closely with regional economic realities and to anchor public policy more firmly within a framework of regional coordination.

The originality of this study lies in its analysis of vocational training reforms in Morocco not merely as a series of institutional and organisational changes, but as a gradual transition towards a governance model based on the analysis of training needs, skills monitoring, the anticipation of emerging occupations, and the regionalisation of public policy. From this perspective, the '*Cités des Métiers et des Compétences*' appear to be mechanisms capable of fostering the emergence of a more proactive form of governance, one that is more focused on matching training to employment needs and on regional development. Building on this observation, the proposed analysis aims to answer the following question: ***to what extent have recent reforms to vocational training in Morocco fostered the emergence of a governance model capable of anticipating skills needs and sustainably strengthening the alignment between training, employability and regional development?*** The main objective of this article is to analyse how these reforms have helped to transform the sector's governance models, reconfigure relations between public, economic and regional stakeholders, and foster the emergence of more structured mechanisms for adjusting to and anticipating skills needs. More specifically, the aim is to trace the institutional evolution of the system, to examine the new governance dynamics introduced by territorialisation and public-private partnerships, to highlight the persistent limitations of the reforms undertaken, and to explore the conditions for a more proactive approach to skills governance within the context of the CMCs. Methodologically, this study is based on a qualitative, hermeneutic-style literature review. The corpus used comprises Moroccan institutional reports, strategic reform documents, academic works on vocational training and educational governance, as well as texts relating to the 2021 National Vocational Training Strategy, the 2019 roadmap for the development of the vocational training sector, the 2015–2030 Strategic Vision, Framework Law No. 51-17, royal speeches on the reform of the sector, and reports from the Higher Council for Education, Training and Scientific Research. This is a critical analysis of documents, rather than an empirical field study. Beyond analysing the reforms undertaken, this study also aims to highlight its theoretical and empirical contributions to the examination of contemporary transformations in vocational training in Morocco. On a theoretical level, it draws on the framework of educational governance as applied to vocational training by linking concepts that are often considered in isolation, such as governance, employability, the alignment of training with

employment needs, territorialisation and skills anticipation. Such an approach allows the reforms to be interpreted not merely as institutional adjustments, but as the expression of a more profound restructuring of the sector's regulatory mechanisms, at the intersection of partnership-based, multi-level, cognitive and disciplinary approaches (Charreaux, 2004; Jeffery, 1997; Calame, 2013; Pinson, 2014; Hall & Soskice, 2001; Ansell & Gash, 2008). From an empirical perspective, the study offers a critical analysis of the reforms implemented since the 2015–2030 Strategic Vision, focusing in particular on the role of the 2019 roadmap, the 2021 National Vocational Training Strategy and the 'Cités des Métiers et des Compétences' in the reconfiguration of the sector's governance. It also highlights the persistent tensions between the stated ambitions of the reform, the promoted approaches to territorialisation and the actual capacity for implementation, particularly in terms of institutional coordination, the anticipation of skills needs and the link between training, employment and territorial development.

To address the issue at hand, the article is structured into six complementary sections. The first reviews the historical evolution of vocational training reforms in Morocco. The second analyses the shift from an institutional reform approach to a broader reconfiguration of the sector's governance models. The third examines the National Vocational Training Strategy for 2021 as a framework for the emergence of integrated, participatory and more demand-driven governance. The fourth focuses on the 2019 roadmap and the 'Cités des Métiers et des Compétences' (Skills and Trades Centres), regarded as one of the main institutional innovations designed to address the system's structural limitations. The fifth part highlights the persistent limitations of the reforms as well as the governance tensions that continue to affect the sector. Finally, the sixth part examines the conditions necessary for a more proactive approach to skills governance, in relation to the challenges of employability, the match between training and employment, and regional development.

1. The evolution of vocational training reforms in Morocco

The evolution of vocational training in Morocco is part of a long-term trajectory, marked by a succession of institutional reorganisations, pedagogical reforms and governance reconfigurations. Its modern forms date back to the protectorate period, with the creation of the first industrial school in 1917; the system was subsequently structured around technical institutions falling under the remit of several ministerial departments, according to distinct sectoral approaches (Elmajid, 2003). Between independence and

1984, this multiplicity of stakeholders resulted in fragmented governance that was difficult to understand and poorly aligned with economic needs (Benkerroum & El Yacoubi, 2005).

The creation of the Office for Vocational Training and the Promotion of Employment (OFPPT) in 1974 marked a major turning point: endowed with legal personality and financial autonomy, and governed by a tripartite structure involving the State, employers and employees, it became the sector's main operator and introduced an initial approach based on consultation with the productive sectors. The 1984 reform built on this approach by broadening the OFPPT's remit: the aim was no longer merely to train a workforce for manual labour, but to make vocational training a lever for competitiveness and the development of human capital, through the involvement of employers, the diversification of courses and the development of continuing professional development (Elmajid, 2003). This marked the transition from a focus on mere qualification to one of professionalisation.

The 1999 National Charter for Education and Training (CNEF, 1999) build on this momentum by establishing the reform of education and training as a national priority. It explicitly positions vocational training within a framework of alignment with the economic environment, sets ambitious targets for increasing enrolment and generalising the competence-based approach, and seeks to reconcile two long-opposing conceptions: vocational training as an educational provision for young people experiencing difficulties at school, and vocational training as a mechanism centred on the qualifications required by businesses. The National Charter for Education and Training opted to reconcile these two approaches rather than choose between them, thereby strengthening both the integration of vocational training into the educational framework and the role of the workplace, work-based learning and partnerships with businesses.

In the early 2000s, vocational training found itself at the intersection of two systems in tension: an education system characterised by high drop-out rates, and a labour market with little regulatory framework (European Training Foundation, 2002). The provision remained characterised by significant institutional heterogeneity, involving the OFPPT and sector-specific departments (agriculture, tourism, fisheries, crafts, health), which complicated overall coordination despite the four-tier structure (specialisation, qualification, technician, specialist technician). The development of work-study schemes, apprenticeships and continuing professional development addresses these limitations, but remains uneven across sectors. This period already foreshadows subsequent reforms, which will seek to move beyond ad hoc adjustments

towards a more integrated and regionalised governance model.

1.1. The 2015–2030 Strategic Vision: a reorganisation centred on skills, employability and regionalisation

The Strategic Vision for the 2015–2030 reform marks a decisive step by embedding vocational training within a broader project to overhaul the Moroccan education system, based on equity, quality and the promotion of the individual (CSEFRS, 2015). Building on a critical assessment – which highlighted limited capacity, the spatial concentration of provision and regional imbalances – the Vision recommends consolidating the skills-based approach, diversifying training pathways and strengthening work-based learning in partnership with economic operators. Above all, it introduces the regionalisation of governance, advocating the creation of regional education and training networks and an observatory to ensure that occupations and training programmes are aligned with the needs of the labour market. These guidelines directly address the well-documented lack of coordination between training programmes and regional productive structures (Benkerroum & El Yacoubi, 2005).

1.2. Framework Law No. 51-17: a regulatory framework for the new governance system

Framework Law No. 51-17 on the education, training and scientific research system (CSEFRS, 2019) translates these guidelines into fundamental legal provisions. It fully integrates vocational training into the education system, emphasising pathways and mobility between study programmes, and enshrines the decentralisation of governance through the transfer of responsibilities and contractual arrangements, requiring management that is more closely aligned with regional economic realities. It also establishes a management system based on democracy, delegation, transparency and accountability, as well as an integrated national information system enabling the use of digital technologies in the management and evaluation of the system. This is a crucial provision for a system of governance whose effectiveness depends on the availability of reliable data on skills needs and labour market integration. Finally, it institutionalises the partnership with the private sector through a strategic contractual framework, and enshrines regular monitoring and evaluation as levers for governance based on quality and results. Overall, Framework Law 51-17 can be seen as the normative framework for the reconfiguration of vocational training in Morocco: it shifts the sector from a predominantly administrative and sector-specific approach to a systemic, partnership-based and regulatory one, where the provision of training must be conceived at the intersection of

educational coherence, adaptation to labour market needs, consideration of regional realities and the accountability of stakeholders, whilst leaving open the crucial question of how this will be effectively translated into governance practices.

2. From institutional reforms to the reconfiguration of governance

An examination of the historical trajectory of Moroccan vocational training shows that successive reforms have not been limited to pedagogical adjustments: they have gradually shifted the system's centre of gravity towards the issue of its governance. The report by the Higher Council for Education, Training and Scientific Research, devoted to the overhaul of vocational training, specifically highlights this paradigm shift: the central issue is not merely one of capacity, but of the coherence of steering, the clarification of responsibilities and the system's ability to deliver provision that is relevant both regionally and economically (CSEFRS, 2019).

2.1. A historically pluralistic but fragmented governance structure

The CSEFRS report notes that the system brings together, under the supervision of the department responsible for vocational training, a diverse range of stakeholders: the department itself, entrusted with planning and evaluation functions; public and private providers, amongst whom the OFPPT plays a central role; and strategic partners such as professional sectors, employers' organisations and civil society. In theory, this diversity constitutes an institutional asset, but in practice it has resulted in fragmented governance, characterised by compartmentalised subsystems, poor coordination between involved and the absence of a comprehensive quality assessment system. This fragmentation directly imposes limitations in terms of regional equity, economic responsiveness and the employability of graduates. (CSEFRS, 2019)

2.2. From administrative governance to strategic governance

In light of this assessment, the CSEFRS proposes a shift from essentially administrative governance to strategic governance, structured around three principles: a balance between top-down, bottom-up and cross-cutting approaches, through multi-level governance where the national level sets the strategic direction whilst the regions identify needs and the institutions oversee their implementation; functional autonomy for local stakeholders, underpinned by explicit responsibilities; and results-based management, founded on contractual agreements and accountability. This

reorganisation also provides for a clarified four-function structure, namely national strategic steering, regional and local implementation, consultation with economic and social partners, and monitoring, as well as an enhanced role for decentralised services and institutions, which are set to become active units for steering and self-assessment (CSEFRS, 2019).

2.3. Business, consultation and decision-support tools

Institutional reports on vocational training emphasise the shift from peripheral involvement to the co-production of training by businesses and the social partners, as well as the need to establish multi-stakeholder regulation through consultation. Finally, it proposes several information-based management tools: up-to-date job-occupation and job-skills reference frameworks (REM/REC) developed in consultation with professionals; a configurable forecasting model incorporating the economic and social factors influencing skills demand; an observatory function monitoring the relationship between training, employment and skills at national, regional and sectoral levels; and a quality assurance system underpinned by technical and pedagogical monitoring. One of the report's most valuable contributions lies in the idea that governance reform can only have an impact on employability if it closely coordinates three key areas in particular: the region, which ensures territorial integration; the enterprise, which provides information on skills; and the training institution, which translates these needs into training pathways, supported by monitoring and planning mechanisms.

In light of this analysis, the reform of vocational training governance in Morocco can be interpreted as a gradual shift from centralised sectoral management towards multi-stakeholder, territorially-based and skills-oriented governance, transition that is neither linear nor complete, but which reveals a shift in vocational training—now conceived as an instrument of territorial development, integration and competitiveness—and a gradual alignment with contemporary frameworks for public action characterised by accountability. It is precisely within this framework that the proposals relating to observatories, monitoring, the regionalisation of planning and the closer links between training, business and employment are situated. These are the very proposals that the 2021 National Vocational Training Strategy will seek to translate into operational measures.

3. The SNFP 2021 as a framework for integrated, participatory and demand-driven governance

The National Vocational Training Strategy for 2021 (SNFP, 2021) does not merely set quantitative targets; it redefines the ways in which provision is structured, the role of businesses, the role of the regions, and the tools for steering, contractual arrangements and evaluation (Ministry of National Education and Vocational Training, 2016). This governance can be defined, following Charreaux (2004), as the set of institutional and relational mechanisms that delineate powers, provide a framework for decision-making and organise coordination between stakeholders – a definition that allows us to move beyond a strictly administrative interpretation of the reforms.

3.1. A structural diagnosis and cognitive governance

The policy document attributes the imbalances between supply and demand in the economy to a structural weakness: the inadequacy of mechanisms for identifying and anticipating needs. To address this, it provides for an integrated system for identifying economic and social needs, fed by data from the High Commission for Planning, the National Observatory for Human Development, sectoral observatories and the National Employment Observatory, which is intended to result in national, regional and sectoral forecast maps. This approach falls within what Charreaux (2004) refers to as the cognitive dimension of governance: observatories, employment-skills reference frameworks (REC), employment-occupation directories (REM) and training maps are not merely technical tools, but instruments enabling the system to gain a better understanding of its environment and to reduce uncertainty.

Ibourk and Ghazi (2024) confirm the accuracy of this assessment: 'despite the expansion of provision since 2015, expenditure on vocational training remains limited, continuing vocational training falls short of targets, and employment rates nine months after graduation reveal a persistent mismatch between training and labour market integration'.

3.2. A multi-level structure and a new central role for businesses

The 2021 National Vocational Training Strategy (SNFP) institutionalises a multi-level governance structure through a National Commission for Vocational Training (policy and evaluation), regional commissions (identification of regional needs, regional mapping) and sectoral commissions (skills needs, REM/REC). This architecture is consistent with analyses of multi-level governance, which show that contemporary public action is distributed across several

interdependent levels rather than being the responsibility of a single centre (Jeffery, 1997; Calame, 2013; Pinson, 2014). The region is no longer merely a channel for implementation; it has become a level of information generation and coordination, a point confirmed by Hall and Soskice's (2001) theory of varieties of capitalism, in which education is identified as one of the central institutional domains of economic coordination. The enterprise, for its part, is explicitly presented as a co-producing actor, involved in planning, programme development, assessment of learning outcomes and certification. This reflects a form of partnership-based governance in the sense described by Charreaux (2004), where value creation results from the interaction between several stakeholders rather than from the action of a single operator. This central role of the enterprise addresses a historical shortcoming – the insufficient involvement of SMEs in identifying needs – but it carries a corresponding risk: that of subordinating training to a logic of immediate demand, to the detriment of its educational function and the versatility of qualifications.

3.3. A strengthened disciplinary dimension and structural tensions

However, the adoption of a partnership-based approach and the regionalisation of public policy do not imply that the State's regulatory role is being sidelined. On the contrary, the 2021 National Vocational Training Strategy reaffirms steering mechanisms centred on contractual arrangements, monitoring and evaluation, the establishment of an accountability system and the strengthening of governance bodies, reflecting the gradual establishment of a governance model geared towards performance and results, in line with the recommendations made by the CSEFRS (CSEFRS, 2019; Department of Vocational Training, 2016). This hybrid approach—cognitive, partnership-based, multi-level and multidisciplinary—constitutes both the strength and the challenge of the reform. Several structural tensions arise from this: between the historical centralisation driven by the OFPPT and the ambition for regionalisation; between the diversification of providers and the overall coherence of the system; between the ambition for needs-based steering and the actual capacity for anticipation, which depends on the quality of data and the effective adoption of tools by decision-making bodies; and between the promise of constructive consultation and the persistence of power imbalances between regions, sectors and enterprises of different sizes. The 2021 National Vocational Training Strategy (SNFP) therefore does not resolve these tensions; rather, it formalises a new governance compromise – still a work in progress – in which the system's performance will depend on its ability to balance strategic

centralisation with regional autonomy, and immediate adaptation with the anticipation of future skills needs.

4. The 2019 roadmap for the development of the vocational training sector and the 'Cités des Métiers et des Compétences': an institutional response to the system's limitations

The Roadmap for the Development of Vocational Training, presented to King Mohammed VI on 4 April 2019, marks a turning point in the reconfiguration of the system's governance. The Department of Vocational Training's activity report emphasises that 2019 marked 'a decisive turning point', characterised both by Framework Law 51-17 and by this roadmap, which places vocational training 'at the heart of the Kingdom's new development model' (MENFPESRS, 2019, 2021). The reform is based on several pillars: the upgrading and restructuring of provision, a new generation of institutions, new pedagogical approaches, and the professionalisation of the informal sector, making it a reform that is at once infrastructural, organisational and institutional.

4.1. Territorialisation and the 'Cités des Métiers et des Compétences'

The most significant contribution of the roadmap lies in territorialisation: the royal directives had already emphasised the need to prioritise a territorial approach, taking into account the 'specific characteristics and needs of each region' (MENFPESRS, 2021), marking a break with standardised national planning. It is in line with this approach that the Cities of Trades and Skills (CMCs) were designed, established across the Kingdom's twelve regions as multi-sectoral and multi-functional structures. Their aim is not merely to increase capacity, but to offer training pathways aligned with regional economic priorities: agriculture and agri-industry, tourism and hospitality, healthcare, crafts, and even artificial intelligence and digital offshoring in the regions most closely integrated with emerging sectors, such as Rabat-Salé-Kénitra and Casablanca-Settat. This framework reflects a shift from supply-driven governance to governance based on needs and ecosystems—, a shift confirmed by research on multi-level governance, which shows that the state is no longer the sole authority defining supply (Jeffery, 1997; Bache & Flinders, 2004).

4.2. Tripartite and partnership-based governance

The roadmap affirms the need for a 'new mode of governance', one that closely involves professionals and allows for greater agility in response to changes in the labour

market – an approach closely aligned with collaborative governance models, where public and non-public stakeholders participate directly in policy-making (Ansell & Gash, 2008). This approach is reflected in the very governance structure of the CMCs: each Cité is organised as a public limited company, a subsidiary of the OFPPT, with a tripartite board of directors comprising the State (Wali, Regional Investment Centre), the Region and the professional sector (OFPPT, ANAPEC, federations, professional chambers, CGEM). This structure institutionalises shared leadership at regional level and seeks to make the multiplicity of operators manageable, without eliminating it. However, it is not without risks: the proliferation of stakeholders can lead to power imbalances and slow decision-making if coordination mechanisms are not clearly defined (Le Galès, 1995; Lascoumes & Le Galès, 2018).

4.3. A renewed approach to educational design: a prerequisite for effective governance

The reform is not limited to the institutional dimension: training design is being updated in line with the competence-based approach, incorporating ‘learning by doing’, practical application platforms, simulation centres, technology hubs, e-learning and the development of soft skills and languages, within shared spaces (career centres, co-working spaces). This pedagogical dimension is inseparable from governance, as a regionally tailored provision is only relevant if the system is capable of continuously adapting its standards to the actual changes in the professions. Without robust mechanisms for sectoral monitoring and analysis, there is a risk of reproducing a provision that is merely declarative – modernised in appearance but disconnected from actual needs. In this sense, the 2019 roadmap should not be seen as the culmination of the reform, but as the start of a new cycle of governance transformation, the success of which will depend on the ability to produce regular and forward-looking analyses of needs, to ensure consistency in decision-making between the State, the OFPPT, the regions and practitioners, and to provide the CMCs with the resources necessary for their effective management.

5. The persistent limitations of the reforms and governance tensions

The trends analysed in the previous sections – namely: territorialisation, the involvement of economic stakeholders, consultation bodies, and information-based management tools – remain partial and uneven. Several national and international reports highlight the persistent mismatch between the skills developed through training programmes and those sought by employers (CSEFRS, 2019; OECD, 2024;

ILO, 2023; ETF, 2002), which results in high unemployment among young graduates and recurring instances of professional downgrading (Azzouzi, 2023). Ibourk and Ghazi (2024) confirm this through the following indicators: limited training expenditure, insufficient participation in workplace training, and a persistent mismatch between qualification and labour market integration.

These limitations must be analysed as governance limitations rather than mere technical difficulties. The institutional fragmentation historically documented by the CSEFRS – compartmentalised sub-systems, duplication of effort and poor coordination – has not been fully resolved by the committees established under the 2021 SNFP, nor by the tripartite governance of the CMCs, whose capacity to bring about lasting change in coordination practices remains to be confirmed. Furthermore, the growing influence of the regions is hampered by a persistent tension between the inherited administrative centralisation, driven by the OFPPT and ministerial departments, and the ambition for regionalisation: previous attempts at decentralisation have often been hampered by ambiguities in mandates and uneven local capacities, meaning that territorialisation risks remaining largely symbolic in the absence of sufficient human, technical and financial resources at regional level.

The diversification of operators and partnerships, promoted by the SNFP 2021, carries a corresponding risk of increased fragmentation of provision if it is not accompanied by common quality standards – a challenge reflected in the growing number of stakeholders involved in the governance of the CMCs, which is likely to result in slow decision-making rather than the desired agility. More fundamentally, the commitment to needs-based management requires a capacity for foresight that remains uncertain: the quality of the available data, the effective uptake of monitoring centres and forecast maps by decision-making bodies, and the still uneven involvement of small and medium-sized enterprises in identifying needs all determine the actual scope of these instruments. Finally, multi-level and partnership-based governance does not eliminate power imbalances between regions, sectors and business ; it reconfigures them, which raises questions about which needs become apparent through consultation and which remain marginalised.

These tensions should not be interpreted as an indication that the reforms undertaken since the 2015–2030 Strategic Vision have failed; rather, they reveal the gap—inherent in any profound institutional transformation—between the normative ambition of the texts and the practical conditions for translating them into effective coordination, funding and evaluation practices. It is precisely this gap that calls for the

strengthening of a more proactive approach to the management of competences.

6. Towards a proactive governance of skills

All the preceding analyses point to the same conclusion: the reform of vocational training in Morocco entails a transformation of the mode of governance based on needs analysis, territorialisation, the involvement of economic stakeholders and the anticipation of emerging occupations. This final section offers a conceptual interpretation of the possible outcome of this trajectory, drawing solely on the evidence within the analysed corpus, without resorting to an external theoretical model.

6.1. From cognitive governance to the anticipation of needs

The cognitive governance framework used to analyse the SNFP 2021 (Charreaux, 2004) forms the foundation of this perspective: observatories, REM/REC, forecast maps and information systems are merely the first milestones in a form of governance that is no longer content merely to manage the gap between supply and demand at any given moment, but seeks to detect, at an early stage, changes in occupations, sectors and technologies. The acceleration of digital transformation, and the emergence of artificial intelligence and Big Data, are now opening up new possibilities for analysing skills needs and developing more effective forward-looking monitoring systems, thereby strengthening decision support and forward-looking skills management (Ridoini et al., 2024). The issue is therefore no longer simply a matter of meeting current needs, but of anticipating those of the coming years – a focus already reflected in the choices set out in the 2019 roadmap regarding emerging occupations.

6.2. The CMCs as regional platforms for foresight, subject to certain conditions

The Cités des Métiers et des Compétences, as regional, multi-sectoral and partnership-based organisations, provide an institutional framework that is potentially conducive to this forward-looking governance, provided that their tripartite governance is effectively harnessed to generate and disseminate information on the needs for skills and . However, their mere existence does not guarantee this outcome: their added value will depend on the quality of the mechanisms for feeding back information, engaging in dialogue with professionals and assessing the relevance of the training solutions provided.

6.3. The conditions for truly forward-looking governance

Building on the momentum already gained requires strengthening four key areas: consolidating information systems so that they become tools genuinely utilised in decision-making, rather than merely formal instruments; strengthening coordination mechanisms between the various levels and stakeholders, so that their proliferation leads to better-quality information rather than a dilution of responsibilities; deepening the involvement of economic stakeholders, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises; and strengthening the capacity of local areas themselves to produce and use data relating to skills needs. It is on these terms that the governance of vocational training could shift from a reactive approach, based on current needs, to a predictive approach, capable of identifying emerging occupations at an early stage and translating these forecasts into continuous adjustments to the provision of training and pedagogical design.

Conclusion

The aim of this study was to analyse the extent to which recent reforms to vocational training in Morocco have fostered the emergence of a governance model capable of anticipating skills needs and sustainably strengthening the alignment between training, employability and regional development. The literature review conducted provides a nuanced answer to this question.

On the one hand, the reforms undertaken since the creation of the OFPPT in 1974, and more specifically since the Strategic Vision 2015–2030, Framework Law 51-17, the 2021 National Vocational Training Plan (SNFP) and the new 2019 roadmap for the development of the vocational training sector , reflect a genuine and gradual transformation of the sector's governance model. This transformation is not limited to modernising the provision of training; it involves a shift from administrative governance – centred on the management of student flows and institutions – to strategic, regionalised, partnership-based governance that is progressively guided by an analysis of skills needs. It is precisely this perspective that sets this paper apart: viewing the Moroccan reforms not as a mere succession of institutional changes, but as a transition towards a governance model based on needs analysis, regionalisation, the involvement of economic stakeholders, skills monitoring and the anticipation of emerging occupations.

The 2021 National Vocational Training Plan (SNFP) and the new 2019 roadmap for the development of the vocational training sector represent, in this regard, particularly significant

turning points. The former institutionalised a multi-level governance structure and placed businesses back at the heart of the system, whilst strengthening the cognitive and disciplinary aspects of governance. The latter gave rise to the ‘Cités des Métiers et des Compétences’, whose tripartite governance concretely embodies the shift from supply-driven governance to governance based on needs and regional economic ecosystems. However, this transformation remains incomplete. This article has highlighted limitations that must be understood as governance limitations rather than mere technical difficulties: institutional fragmentation that has not been fully resolved; tension between inherited centralisation and professed regionalisation; a gap between the ambition of needs-based steering and the actual capacity for anticipation; and power asymmetries that have been reconfigured rather than eliminated by partnership-based governance. These limitations serve as a reminder that governance reform cannot be reduced to a change in organisational structure; it entails a more profound transformation of coordination, funding and evaluation practices, the effective implementation of which remains, at this stage, partial and uneven.

It is in this gap between reformist ambition and the practical conditions of implementation that the challenge of a more forward-looking governance of skills lies. The instruments already institutionalised – notably: observatories, job-occupation and job-skills frameworks, forecast maps and CMCs – constitute the first milestones towards such governance, though their mere existence does not guarantee its full realisation. Transforming them into a genuinely forward-looking governance framework requires consolidating information systems, strengthening coordination between stakeholders, deepening the involvement of small and medium-sized enterprises, and enhancing the capacity of local authorities to produce and utilise data on skills needs.

Ultimately, this article calls for Moroccan vocational training to be viewed not as a static system, but as one undergoing continuous restructuring, at the intersection of education policies, governance dynamics and the challenges of employability and regional development, as well as a space for transformation where the quality of governance will, in future, depend on the quality of the tools used to analyse, anticipate and translate labour market needs into relevant, responsive and region-specific training policies.

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