

## **The internationalization of higher education: A description of Morocco's current situation.**

L'internationalisation de l'enseignement supérieur : Une description de la situation actuelle au Maroc..

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## Résumé

Cet article examine l'internationalisation de l'enseignement supérieur, une tendance majeure qui est due à une combinaison de facteurs académiques, politiques et économiques. L'article met en exergue les initiatives du Maroc pour internationaliser son système universitaire. La méthodologie de cet article est théorique et repose sur l'analyse de documents, ainsi que sur l'analyse des réformes et des politiques éducatives de l'enseignement supérieur du Maroc. Il analyse les documents qui mettent en lumière l'internationalisation de l'enseignement supérieur, ainsi que les lois et réformes importantes mises en œuvre par le Maroc, notamment le Pacte ESRI 2030 et la Vision stratégique nationale 2015-2030. Ces programmes mettent l'accent sur l'amélioration de l'enseignement des langues étrangères, les collaborations internationales en matière de recherche et la mobilité des enseignants et des étudiants.

Le Maroc vise à renforcer sa position dans l'enseignement supérieur, à améliorer le niveau de ses offres éducatives et à produire des diplômés préparés à la mondialisation en adoptant l'internationalisation. L'analyse se limite au contexte et aux expériences spécifiques du Maroc et elle donne un aperçu de la manière dont les pays peuvent stratégiquement internationaliser leurs systèmes d'enseignement supérieur afin d'améliorer leur compétitivité mondiale. Les initiatives marocaines d'internationalisation de l'enseignement supérieur devraient également avoir des effets sociaux bénéfiques, tels que la promotion de la sensibilisation interculturelle et la production d'une main-d'œuvre plus compétente à l'échelle mondiale. En utilisant le Maroc comme étude de cas, cette recherche fait progresser les connaissances sur les forces motrices et les applications pratiques de l'internationalisation de l'enseignement supérieur. Cet article met en lumière la détermination du Maroc à améliorer la qualité de son enseignement supérieur, à accroître sa compétitivité internationale et à préparer une génération de diplômés pour un monde globalisé, tout en soulignant les défis à relever pour réaliser ces ambitions.

**Mots clés :** Internationalisation de l'enseignement supérieur ; Enseignement supérieur au Maroc ; Réformes éducatives ; Pacte ESRI 2030

**Abstract**

This article examines the internationalization of higher education, a major trend driven by a combination of academic, political and economic factors. The article highlights Morocco's initiatives to internationalize its university system. The methodology of this article is theoretical and based on document analysis, as well as on the analysis of Moroccan higher education reforms and educational policies. It analyzes documents that highlight the internationalization of higher education, as well as some important laws implemented by Morocco, including the Pact ESRI/HERI 2030 and the National Strategic Vision 2015-2030. These programs focus on improving foreign language teaching, international research collaborations and teacher and student mobility.

Morocco aims to strengthen its position in higher education, improve the level of its educational offerings and produce graduates prepared for globalization by embracing internationalization. The analysis is limited to Morocco's specific context and experiences, and provides insight into how countries can strategically internationalize their higher education systems to improve their global competitiveness. Moroccan initiatives to internationalize higher education are also expected to have beneficial social effects, such as promoting intercultural awareness and producing a more globally competent workforce. Using Morocco as a case study, this theoretical research advances knowledge on the driving forces and practical applications of the internationalization of higher education. This article, thus, highlights Morocco's determination to improve the quality of its higher education, increase its international competitiveness and prepare a generation of graduates for a globalized world, while also highlighting the challenges that must be overcome to achieve these ambitions.

**Keywords** Internationalization of higher education; Higher education in Morocco; Educational reforms; Pact HERI/ESRI 2030

**Introduction:**

Over the world, the internationalization of higher education is a concept that came out over the last 3 decades, it is the result of many political, economic and academic rationales. It is defined in Oxford Dictionary as “the act or process of bringing something under the control or protection of two or more nations; the act or process of making something international”. The internationalization of higher education has been defined as the integration of an international, intercultural, and global dimension in the university’s tripartite mission of offering education, research, and extension (Knight J. , 2003), this international dimension has been developed throughout the years and the concept went out of the frame of being a westernized paradigm and turned into a universal one; There is no one single model that drives internationalization, but at the same time, this concept is still mainly considered in terms of a westernized, largely Anglo-Saxon, and predominantly English-speaking paradigm (Jones & de Wit, 2012). It refers to a range of international efforts in academic mobility for instructors and students; international alliances; innovative curriculum; and international research projects. Other researchers view it as a spreading of education to other nations through a variety of in-person and online methods as well as cutting-edge structures like campuses, branches, or franchises. Many believe that it incorporates an international, multicultural, or global component to the curricula and the teaching and learning processes. Some view the expansion of trade in education or foreign development initiatives as internationalization (Knight, 2008). When the question of internationalization of higher education is raised, it is clear that this concept encompasses the teaching and research dimensions that are facing day to day challenges in terms of responding to the external requirements and living up to their levels of quality and expertise in order to reach an international standard. As Knight and De Wit (1999) aptly put it, “internationalization and globalization are two problematics as different but dynamically related concepts. Globalization is in a way the catalyst, while internationalization is the response, although this response is proactive”.

Besides having a political and economic reasons, the internationalization of higher education focuses also on the academic and cultural/social rationales where the concept becomes more linked to the idea of enhancing the education’s quality and become an agent of positive change knowing that the internationalization of higher education might become a catalyst for every institution’s plan and help increase the quality and work of the management, technical and human infrastructure systems. The cultural or social rationale lies in the fact that any country’s

own culture and language becomes important and holds a place in understanding other foreign languages and cultures.

It is possible at this level to see how the focus on the various justifications for internationalization has changed throughout time. Internationalization was initially centered on humanitarian goals of enhancing intercultural understanding for peaceful coexistence based on political concerns, and later on solidarity with nations in the non-industrialized world. Yet, issues with international competence and competitiveness, and consequently the economic justification, become increasingly significant. International labor markets are thought to demand higher education graduates with academic, linguistic, and intercultural credentials that are globally competitive. The academic and cultural/social justifications, as seen in policies like staff and student mobility, higher educational standards, greater academic program and degree compatibility, and improved linguistic and cultural proficiency, appear to all stem from the overarching economic justification of improving human resources for global competitiveness. It is also apparent that education and especially higher education, is often considered as a form of diplomatic investment for future political and economic relations. For example, scholarships for foreign students who are seen as promising future leaders are considered to be effective way of developing an understanding of and perhaps affinity for the sponsoring country. This affinity may prove to be beneficial in future years in terms of diplomatic or business relations. (Knight, 1997).

Besides, the first part of the book *Internationalization of higher education: the best of all worlds?*, "Concepts, strategies and policies" is divided into three chapters. "What is internationalization? A network to be clarified." is the first chapter that was written by the French authors Cosnefroy, De Ketele et al. (2020). It talks about the three stages of global openness that are internationalization, globalization, and the globalization of higher education. The term "internationalization" refers to a process that "leads to the integration of international and intercultural components in the educational activities of higher education institutions as well as in their governance" due to the international mobility of students and faculty. Globalization is defined as "a process of convergence with a transnational and transcultural component, marked by the creation of institutional methods in order to adapt to the new global economic, financial, technical, social, and political landscape". Last but not least is the term globalization of higher education which is defined as "a process of integrating a global and intercultural dimension, characterized by the development of new strategies, on the one hand, of the countries with regard to their higher education system in order to best adapt to the new

conditions of the economic, financial, technological, social, and political world; and, on the other part, institutions for the same purpose".

When it comes to research, the strategies of higher education institutions are to: improve the quality of higher education, help institutions create networks of researchers, use research as a lever to facilitate the financing of institutions, optimize the conditions for institutions, optimize the conditions for doctoral studies and the realization of research projects. of research around the world. These strategies are complementary to those of the internationalization of education.

### **1. Reforms and laws governing the internationalization of higher education in Morocco**

The field of education in Morocco has undergone a number of laws and reforms the objective of which is the amelioration of the quality of the teaching-learning affair and the promotion of education to meet the international standards and to integrate thereafter the world over in a smooth and adequate manner. These laws and reforms are worthy of some attention here.

"The project (of the Constitution) enshrines our country's position as an integral part of the Greater Maghreb, as well as its commitment to the construction of the Maghreb Union that resulted from it. It also marks our country's adherence to the consolidation of relations between Arab and Islamic brotherhood and African solidarity. It also illustrates our commitment to work for the enlargement and diversification of cooperation and partnership relations with its Euro-Mediterranean neighborhood and with the various countries of the world. This project is also an expression of Morocco's desire to be a modern state, attached to UN charters and conventions, and acting as a full stakeholder and actor in the international community". Excerpt from the speech of King Mohammed VI May God Glorify him of 17 June 2011.

#### **1.1 Constitution**

Throughout the Moroccan constitution, a very important charter put forward the openness of Moroccan education and its expansion through the world via the training of young people and the creation of a due system to enable students to build up knowledge capable to allow them to face challenges.

"To extend and generalize the participation of young people in the social, economic, cultural, and political development of the country; to help young people integrate into the active and associative life and to give assistance to those who have difficulty in school, social, or vocational adjustment; to facilitate young people's access to culture, science, art, sport, and leisure while creating the conditions conducive to the full deployment of their creative and innovative potential in all these fields" (Article 33, Constitution of the Kingdom of Morocco)).

## **1.2 The Law 01.00**

Law 01.00 is the main law governing and regulating the organization of higher education in Morocco. It was promulgated by Dahir on May 19, 2000, and it revisits the main points that address the principles and objectives of higher education, regulations on public higher education, and the rights and obligations of students without forgetting the aspect of control, which seeks to carry out the educational operation through regulatory bodies or tax incentives. It is important to note that the Law 01.00 is undergoing a reform that aims to integrate the aspect of internationalization of Moroccan higher education into its main objectives and, subsequently, to create an attractive center at the national as well as the international levels since several renowned universities are interested in the creation of their subsidiaries in Morocco and therefore need a legal framework that governs this creation, apart from that of a private institution.

Obviously, this legislation strengthens the academic, administrative, and financial independence of universities by allowing the planning, organization, development, regulation, and leadership of the whole system. A National Assessment Authority was created by Law 01.00, its main task is assessing the higher education system, assuring the quality, competitiveness, and variety of the training programs, fostering scientific research, and adjusting training to meet market demands.

## **1.3 Framework Law 51.17**

The Framework Law 51.17 authorizes the use of foreign languages in training programs with a new direction and an emphasis on alternating languages, with an investment in plurilingualism education and with a view to diversifying the languages of education in addition to the two official languages of the State by teaching some topics, in particular scientific and technical disciplines, or some contents or modules, in one or more foreign languages, namely English and French (The MHESRI).

## **1.4 The National 2015-2030 Strategic Vision**

The Moroccan Higher Council for Education, Training, and Scientific Research clearly declares in the National Strategic Vision 2015–2030 for education, training, and scientific research reform that "education should receive the most focus as a national priority, from the part of the state and local governments, education, training, and scientific research, trade unions, the commercial sector, families, civic society, intellectuals, artists, and the media."



### **1.5 The New Development Model (NDM)**

This report outlines a new model that defines a national ambition and proposes a credible and achievable path to change, based on a clear and frank diagnosis.

The examination of this trajectory in its economic, political and social context, as well as the consultations of all actors and the exploitation of existing analyses, have made it possible to identify four systemic nodes at the root of the current model's running out of steam:

- Lack of coherence,
- Slow structural transformation,
- Limited public sector capacity,
- A sense of judicial insecurity and unpredictability.

The New Development Model seeks to anticipate transformations at the national and international levels. It enshrines the irreversible choice of Morocco's openness to its regional and international environment and its continued commitment to defend multilateral causes and respond to global challenges.

The design of the New Development Model has also taken into account the national and global changes that will emerge by 2035 in order to integrate the risks and opportunities that result. Morocco then seeks openness to its regional and international environment.

A transformation that will trigger not only a greater creation of value but also an equitable sharing among all citizens; a transformation that enshrines the centrality of citizens in their rights and duties.

A more complex and unpredictable world, a plural, mature, and demanding society, a dynamic citizenship, now demands a change in our collective mode of action to be able to implement the necessary reforms at a sustained pace, overcoming the multiple resistances to change, unleashing all energies, and unleashing the full potential of our country.

The New Development Model makes the Constitution its normative framework and aspires to translate its principles into development levers and its values into methods of action. The concept of development is understood as a global and multidimensional process, a virtuous dynamic of wealth creation and human development that benefits all citizens and takes into account the need to value and preserve resources for present and future generations.

"In 2035, Morocco is a democratic country, where everyone is able to take charge of their future and unleash their potential, to live with dignity in an open, diverse, fair, and equitable society. It is a country that creates value and develops its potential in a sustainable, shared, and responsible way. Capitalizing on its significant progress, Morocco is setting itself up as an



exemplary regional power, at the forefront of the great difficulties that challenge the world.” (The New Development Model).

One of the objectives of the New Development Model is to create a strengthened human capital that is better prepared for the future. In education, the main subject of expectation for citizens and society, the ambition of the NMD is to initiate a real Moroccan educational renaissance.

The quality of higher and vocational education and the exploitation of scientific research are also among the prerequisites necessary to accelerate Morocco’s development trajectory and make it a sustainable and competitive nation. To this end, the Commission recommends a major modernization of public and private higher education institutions and a speeding up of the exploitation of vocational training and hybrid and alternate learning methods. The main objective is to provide young Moroccans with the means to acquire skills and improve their prospects for integration into the labor market. To achieve this goal, the Commission recommends four proposals:

i) empowering higher education institutions and revising their governance to improve their performance; ii) placing the student at the center of reforms and performance measures in higher and vocational education; iii) enhancing vocational training and establishing seamless links with the university system; iv) supporting research excellence within universities through an independent funding and evaluation mechanism; and training a new generation of PhD students.

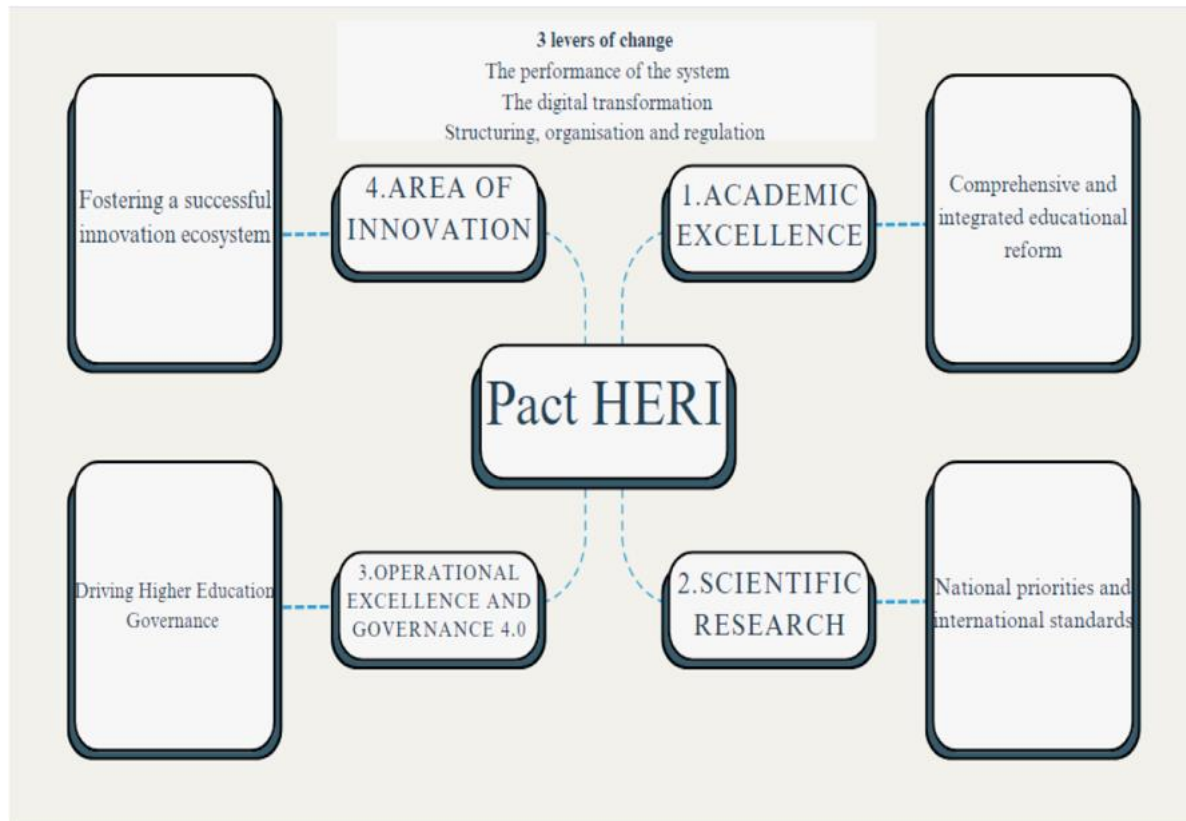
### **1.6 The Pact Higher Education, Research and Innovation (HERI/ESRI) 2030**

The purpose of the Pact HERI 2030 is to mobilize all stakeholders to prepare generations capable of meeting future challenges and to provide intelligent solutions that will contribute to the socio-economic development of Morocco and its international influence. Its main mission is to accelerate the development and sustainable transformation of the higher education, scientific research, and innovation ecosystems.

The Pact HERI 2030 is based on six core values: transparency, ethics, excellence, equity and equality of opportunity, resilience through capacity, and openness.

The following figure summarizes the three accelerators of change and the four strategic orientations of this Pact:

**Figure 1 Pact ESRI/HERI's levers of change and strategic orientation**



*Source: The Directorate of Cooperation and Partnership.*

The Pact HERI 2030 considers international openness a central objective of its strategic projects. We can consider the Pact HERI 2030 as one of the first steps that Morocco is taking towards the internationalization of its higher education. One of the projects that reinforce this orientation is that of student mobility at the national and international level, where the student must make mobilities during his academic course and where each doctoral student, within the framework of the New Generation of PhD Students, must be in joint or make mobilities throughout the period of his research. Within this same framework, the Ministry offers positions to these doctoral students with a grant that extends to 7,000 MAD so that they can conduct their research but also do vacancies within their institutions and take part in academic activities. This will therefore be done through the establishment of a national mobility system and the development of inter-university international mobility within the framework of international cooperation but also within the framework of joint research programs, without forgetting the mobility of research teachers and technical and administrative staff. It is important to note that Morocco is not limited to outgoing mobility but also gives importance to the country's attractiveness through incoming mobility (The MHESRI).

On the research side, the Pact HERI 2030 aims to align research with key national priorities. As mentioned before, the Pact HERI 2030 seeks to create a doctoral and post-doctoral cycle at international standards through the establishment of new national standards for the doctoral cycle and the training of the New Generation of Doctor-Monitors. This training will be done through a contract (priority themes, contribution to the supervision, and pedagogical and scientific production), through mobilities, but also by a strengthening of the capacities of these doctors and monitors. The fifth strategic objective of the Pact HERI 2030 puts a light on the importance of student mobility and aims to increase it. The promotion of these mobilities will be based mainly on co-supervision, international mobility, university-enterprise mobility, and inter-university mobility. Following this, the Pact HERI will set up research grant schemes for PhD students through the structuring and development of grant schemes: calls for projects, research contracts, national and international cooperation, and finally, the establishment of a post-doctoral program at the Moroccan level, which is imperative in order to have a regulatory framework that governs the post-doctoral program (The MHESRI).

It is equally significant to highlight the aspect of the internationalization of scientific research, which represents one of the strategic projects of the Pact HERI and which aims at positioning scientific cooperation at the global level through the evaluation of the international scientific cooperation programs and the establishment of scientific cooperation maps (thematic and geographical). The internationalization of Moroccan scientific research will improve the visibility of the Moroccan university in international rankings. Moreover, this will be done by setting up monitoring cells on the university's ranking, which will produce reports on the university's ranking and improvement measures. This approach aims to cover the paths of researchers and propel research to international standards; on another hand, The MHESRI also intends to restructure the systems for digitalized management of student mobility flows (The MHESRI).

When it comes to mobility the Pact HERI 2030 aims to:

- Implement incentives to mitigate the brain drain by encouraging the return of Moroccan students to contribute to the development of the country,
- Encourage the best ranked students in Morocco's target disciplines to plan their careers in Morocco.
- Implement bilateral and multilateral programs to increase the internationalization of academic staff in Moroccan universities.
- Award the best Moroccan students abroad and foreign students in Morocco.

- Improve the reception and integration of international students by harmonizing this process at the level of higher education institutions.
- Improve the attractiveness of Morocco as a study hub.

**Conclusion:**

In conclusion, a number of laws, reforms, and strategic visions demonstrate Morocco's dedication to internationalizing its higher education system. Morocco hopes to improve the caliber of its educational offerings, increase its competitiveness internationally, and produce a generation of graduates ready for the globalized world through international collaborations, faculty and student mobility, and research partnerships. Although there are still obstacles to overcome, Morocco's continuous internationalization efforts place it at the forefront of the region and have a great deal of potential for the country's higher education system going forward.

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