



## WHY THE CURRENT MODEL OF DEVELOPMENT HAS FAILED TO CAPTURE THE REALITY OF YOUTH IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH?

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### Abstract

Today, youth unemployment is deemed to be the most serious challenges confronting many developed countries. However, the situation is an especially serious concern in the Global South, where the neoliberal system has resulted in youth unemployment, marginalization and social exclusion. This article draws on the existing literature to analyse the issues of unemployment in Morocco. While the most recent reports show that university graduates are the most affected groups by unemployment rates, this article focuses mainly on the issue of unemployment among university graduates. This article argues that youth unemployment policy has to be understood in the context of neoliberal and its austerity policies, where youth unemployment can never overcome while the neoliberal state keeps decreasing public expenditure and privatising the public resources. These policies are meant to work as the ‘shock therapy’ of liberalization: the “highly visible action” that “was to make the ‘bitter pill’ of adjustment easier to swallow”.

**Keywords:** *Global South, unemployment, shock therapy*

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**INTRODUCTION**

Today, youth unemployment is deemed to be the most serious challenges confronting many developed countries (Kilimani 2017). However, the situation is an especially serious concern in the Global South, where the neoliberal system has resulted in youth unemployment, marginalization and social exclusion (Nelson 2017). In the Global South, youth define as socially excluded and remains outside the structured domains of society (Atkinson 1998). They have also a high potential of remaining in the margins in the near future (Raaum et al. 2009). They are excluded not just because they are presently lacking job opportunities, but because they have little prospects for the future (Atkinson 1998).

In fact, the issue of youth in the Global South is a complex one (ILO 2018a). In the countries of the Middle East and North Africa, the rates of educated, unemployed youth are the highest worldwide (World Bank 2017). In the Kingdom of North Africa, the stark reality is that, despite efforts being made to promote the inclusion of youth in recent years, huge inequalities and the various patterns of social and economic exclusion still face a large number of young population, especially university graduates. Indicators of persistent youth exclusion include the fact that youth unemployment rates had increased over the past decade (Ceicdata 2019).

Statistically, according to the official estimates of the Haut Commissariat au Plan (HCP), unemployment remains high — having increased to 9.40 per cent in September 2019, while it was 8.10 per cent in June 2019 (Ceicdata 2019, See figure 1), especially among youth, making Morocco one of the nations with the highest unemployment rates in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). These numbers have barely budged and they speak to the retrenchment of public employment and the entrenchment of structures of economic marginality and exclusion (Roy 2010). Thus, youth unemployment and questions of social exclusion have become a challenge for the future of development in Morocco.

This article draws on the existing literature to analyse the issues of unemployment in Morocco. While the most recent reports show that university graduates are the most affected groups by unemployment rates, this article focuses on the issue of unemployment among university graduates— mainly by addressing why the higher education is failing Moroccan youth, leaving them unskilled and underemployed. Moreover, while out-immigration is significantly linked to the lack of job opportunities and being as a consequence of high unemployment rates, this article concludes with providing certain statistics and facts, by showing how emigration to

other countries—mainly to Europe— has become a dream and a practice in the daily-life of many Moroccan youth.

Methodologically, the writing of this article is based mainly on up-to-date annual and regular reports, especially those published by the World Bank (WB), United Nations (UN), Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), High Commission on Planning Morocco (HCP), Development Finance International (DFI), etc. Furthermore, certain journal papers associated with the present article’s topic and published in international academic journals were considered in this article.

This article is important, as it will contribute to the literature on several fronts. First and foremost, it acknowledges available literature using a critical approach in dealing with the issues of youth unemployment in Morocco. As this article uses more recent data, it will therefore make a significant contribution to development policy discussion in Morocco, most notably to deal with the issues of youth unemployment. Additionally, this article can help to fill the gap in research in Morocco and provide bureaucrats with useful and critical data. By discussing the main constraints facing the state to address the challenges of youth unemployment, provided data can assist in gaining a better understanding of the most current published statistics and data, and, consequently, provide lessons from which other developing nations encountering similar unemployment challenges can learn.



**Fig 1 Morocco's unemployment rate from Jan 2017 to Sep 2019**  
**Source: Ceicdata, 2019**

This article proceeds as follows; section (i) issues related to development in Morocco are discussed in in chronological order, given the focus on why the state efforts have failed to find an effective development model. How higher education system is failing Moroccan youth, leaving them unskilled and underemployed is presented in section (ii). Section (iii) concludes with providing the most current statistics and showing how emigration to other countries—mainly to Europe— has become a dream and a practice in the daily-life of many Moroccans due to social exclusion and lack of job opportunities.

### **WHEN A DEVELOPMENT MODEL FAILS TO CAPTURE REALITY IN MOROCCO**

After Morocco achieved its independence in 1956, certain social services have provided for the entire population, targeting particularly healthcare, education, and access to basic food products (Bogaert 2011). The state's objective was to achieve social equality by addressing the existing gap between the poor and rich citizens (Zemni & Bogaert 2011). However, despite such efforts, Morocco has suffered from enormous challenges, notably pertaining to the unequal distribution of public spending, as three-quarters of the public spending budget has benefited urban zones more than rural ones (High Commission on Planning Morocco 2018). This was exacerbated with increased population growth in the 1970s and 1980s, resulting in the budget to be curbed by the state (Chtatou 2015).

The neoliberal policies which were already in existence since the 1980s have exacerbated inequalities and massively turned cities into spaces of violence and extremes, including mainly the bread riots of 1981 and the violent riots of December 1990 (Bayat & Biekart 2009). Despite the apparent efforts to reduce the poverty rate during the 1980s, the structural adjustment policies of that period prevented the public authorities of the needed financial means, especially to finance and plan massive subsidized public services (Bogaert 2011). After a provisional reduction witnessed in the late of the 1980s, the poverty number increased considerably again at the outset of the 1990s, and have pursued to grow at a rate of 4 per cent annually in the Kingdom (World Bank 2006).

While the beginning of the 2000s witnessed a shift in market-oriented government towards an obvious concern with security following the aftermath of 9/11, Morocco has been engaged in a more active role, most notably by inaugurating subsidized social programs (Zemni & Bogaert 2011), with the objective of fighting poverty and exclusion, and promoting human development (Benhassine et al. 2015). In this regard, the “Cities Without Slums Program” (VSB) and the

"National Initiative for Human Development" (NIHD), were inaugurated by the King in 2004 and 2005 (Ben Haman 2020).

These royal initiatives are based on targeting and prioritising the most marginalized groups and excluded localities, with the purpose of addressing the social deficit (United Nations Development Programme 2018). Indeed, some views (High Commission on Planning Morocco 2012) hold that these royal initiatives are the first personal engagement of Morocco in the country's poverty plan.

However, the political momentums behind the creation of these development projects are varied. Firstly, after the state had realized the political importance of the urban space increasingly conscious of the "security risks" caused by the people originated particularly from the slum areas (Zemni & Bogaert 2011), by considering them easy target for political violence and ideological indoctrination, e.g. the 2003, 2007, and 2011 suicide bomber incidents in Casablanca and Marrakech (World Bank 2006; Bogaert 2011), the state shifted to the logics of 'emergency urbanism' (Rachik 2012).

Secondly, these development projects were part of the Moroccan government's contribution to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (Huchzermeyer 2011). The effort is now part of the government's contribution to the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Economic Commission for Africa 2015).

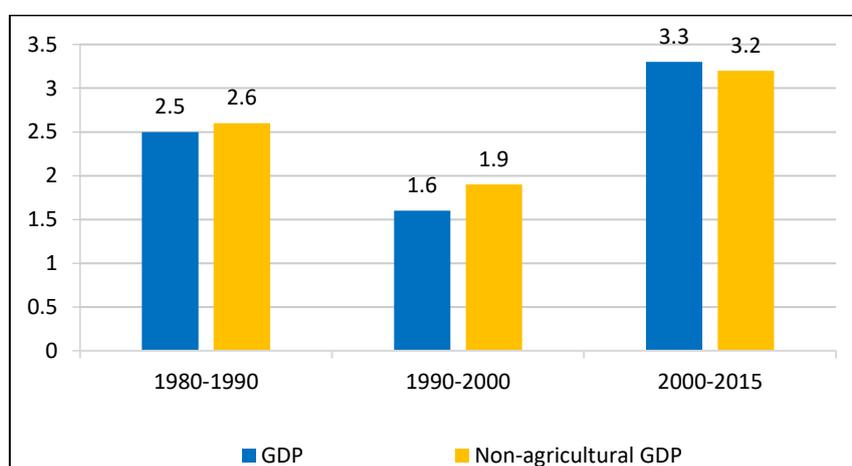
Thirdly, is the modernist vision of King Mohammed VI, who replaced his father in 1999. Strengthening the picture of the Kingdom at the international scale by fighting poverty and social exclusion nationwide has become a vital aspect of the political agenda of the new king and, consequently, poverty, as a symbol of backwardness has no place in his modernist national development vision. The King emphasized that the most disadvantaged categories of the population live in rural areas and in urban peripheries as the case of Casablanca peripheries and, therefore, should be the most targeted of the current development projects.

"Casablanca is a city of glaring social inequities, where the rich live alongside the poor. It is a city of both high-rise towers and slums. It is a financial and business center as well as a center of misery, unemployment and so on. Furthermore, there is waste and dirt that pollutes the city and distorts its reputation." (King Mohammed VI, Oct. 11, 2013)

Some views such as the recent World Bank's report (2018a) related to the progress of social development in Morocco highlights that the royal initiatives mainly the "National Initiative for

Human Development (INDH)” and the “Cities Without Slums Program (VSB)” — have resulted in significant improvement in deep social changes and poverty eradication. For instance, since the early 2000s, the Kingdom economy performance has been considerably improved, with annual per capita GDP growth averaging 3.3 per cent from 2000 to 2015 (See figure 2), as well as with around 1.7 million people moving out of poverty from 2001 to 2008 (High Commission on Planning Morocco 2012).

Additionally, the last decade has seen a tremendous increase both in greater access by the poor to basic public services and to decent housing (High Commission on Planning Morocco 2018). Morocco has also seen further improvement in public infrastructure, water, electricity, and transport (Chauffour & Diaz-Sanchez 2017).



**Fig 2 GDP per capita growth rate in Morocco, 1980-2015**

**Source: Haut-Commissariat au Plan**

Nevertheless, despite the royal efforts currently being made to fight social exclusion and promote human development, the existing indicators show that Morocco’s development models are limited. The limitation of the current development models justified by the social unrest has witnessed in the Kingdom in recent years.

Following the protest movement that began in Tunisia in 2010 and that spread throughout West Asia and North Africa, many Moroccans took to the streets in 53 cities to protest against corruption, marginalization, and social exclusion (Ghanem 2016; Badran 2019). Regarding this, with the purpose of easing and ending this popular anger, King Mohammed VI decided to grant a new constitution to the people, replacing the one promulgated in 1996, by strengthening

both the parliament and the elected government, consolidating the areas of personal freedoms and civil and political rights (Bahramitash & Esfahani 2016; Schaefer 2017; Badran 2019).

In fact, despite the new amendment in the constitution of 2011, which set the basis for a more modern state of law and institutions, a more democratic and open society, increased decentralization, and greater separation of powers (World Bank 2018a), the Kingdom's efforts towards fighting inequalities and poverty remains too ad-hoc and insufficient for the promotion of human and economic development (El-Kogali et al. 2016).

The explanations regarding the failure of development models recently adopted in Morocco is that the state has prioritized socioeconomic development over political reform, where the state remains a monarchy in which power is still concentrated in the palace. Coupled with the existing delay in human capital development accumulated by the country over the late decades, the royal efforts are also doubtful to succeed in the lack of efficient and pragmatic policies that address seriously the issues of poverty and social exclusion in Moroccan society.

Additionally, for other reasons, the Morocco's development models are mainly based on the recommendations of technocrats who are borrowing ready-made models from the West. The Morocco's development models are the products of the West: they are mainly produced by the World Bank as much as they are by the Moroccans. For instance, the Ville Sans Bionvilles program (Popularly known as VSB) and the National Initiative for Human Development (INDH) are all the products of World Bank and have not designed by Moroccan experts. In fact, it is the World Bank and other international development agencies that design and control the models of development, establishing rankings, metrics, norms, and best practices of development in the Global South (Roy, 2010). It is that they look at the Global South through their eyes rather than through local eyes (Robinson 2001). These unfitted models with the Global South reality have always resulted in a distorted development model, due to not taking into consideration the conditions of Global South's society, culture, and history (Ben Haman 2020).

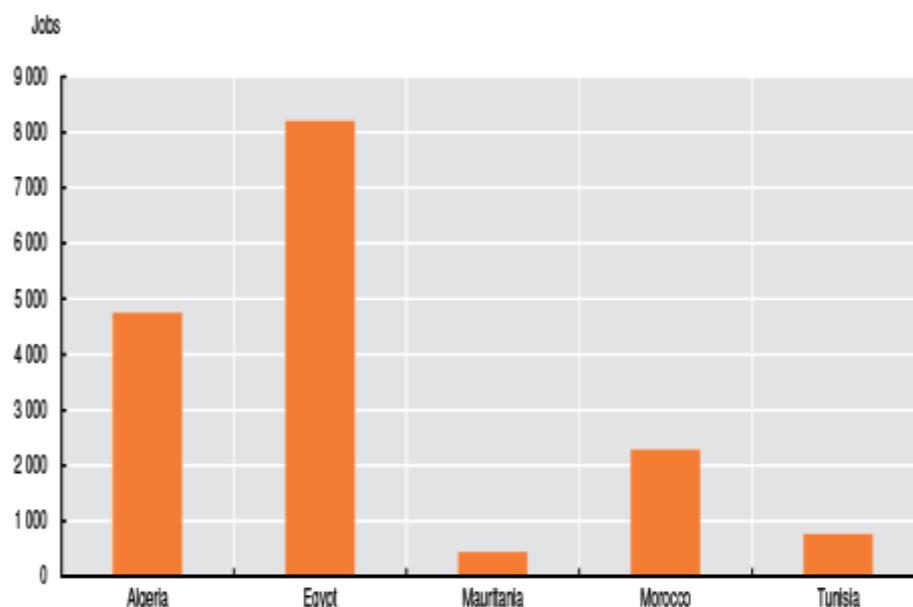
## **HIGHER EDUCATION IS FAILING MOROCCAN YOUTH, LEAVING THEM UNSKILLED AND UNDEREMPLOYED**

In many developing countries such as Morocco the levels of unemployment amongst university graduates are higher than most other labour market groups. Since the 1990s, many young

populations have arrived on the labour market - to some extent, they are better educated, however, they have faced the shortage of job opportunities in the market (Khachani 2009). With the purpose to decrease unemployment rate, as well as to create job opportunities for the graduate students, the government of Morocco has implemented a series of policies in recent times, including the National Agency for the Promotion of Employment and Skills (ANAPEC), which was established with a new vision called “2020” (Bördös, Csillag, & Scharl 2015). This vision endeavours to widen the agency’s coverage to target the unqualified job seekers. Through this vision, according to the World Bank report (2018b), ANAPEC has created three labor programs, which are: (1) Te’hil (youth training); (2) Idmaj (wage subsidies for unemployed graduates); and (3) Moukawalati (entrepreneurship promotion through training and financial assistance).

Besides the implementation of the above strategies, other policies are currently been embarked by the respective minister, including (1) youth integration, which aims to develop training systems and integrate youth into the labour market; (2) employment, which aims to increase employment and productivity; and (3) microenterprise promotion, which endeavours to support microenterprise financing (Word Bank 2018b). Nevertheless, despite the government’s efforts to integrate the young population into the labour market, these efforts, however, are not efficient enough while the unemployment has not been decreased over the last two decades. On top of this, the situation has been significantly worsened as the impact of growth on job creation has continued to diminish since the 2000s. This is, of course, proven by the statistics published by the national and international development agencies, including the recent report released by the Word Bank (2017). The statistics show that the number of jobs created by the Moroccan government does not exceed 2500 positions in the period between 2000-2015, whereas the number of people seeking jobs reached 11,979,000 in 2018 (Abinader 2019).

In the light of the above, and with a view to comparing the job creation in the region of North Africa, the neighbouring countries such as Algeria are doing much better than Morocco. For instance, between 2000-2015, Algeria created around 4500 job positions, while Egypt has created more than 8000 positions (OECD 2018, see figure 3).



**Fig 3 Job creation in North African countries, 2000-15 (thousands)**

**Source: World Bank database, 2017**

Obviously, this decade is marked by a reduction in public employment and investment public in Morocco (World Bank 2017). With regards to the employment of university graduates, in 2017, Moroccan universities produced more than 290,000 graduates, while fewer than a quarter of the 'economically inactive' graduates have been integrated into the formal labour sector (Koundouno 2019). Just recently, High Commission on Planning report reveals that, between 2011-2017, the number of job creation fluctuated between 75,000 and approximately 100,000, assuming that even though the existing gap, the Moroccan economy may still absorb nearly 40 per cent of the university graduates (Koundouno 2019).

These overall numbers hide substantial gaps between the university graduates and job positions created by the government. Much of this is due to the fact that many Moroccan universities do not provide better outcomes to meet the socio-economic demands of the labour market. This in turn causes the product of Moroccan universities, the graduates, to be deemed as substandard quality on the international scale and, consequently, due to the lack of skilled labour in Morocco, many foreign companies have chosen to employ foreign workers. And more importantly, the situation is worsening since, the report of Diorh-Mercer published in 2017 shows that the foreign employers are better paid 10 to 20 times than the locals who hold degrees in Morocco (El Masaiti 2017).

Over decades, the debate about competencies of job seekers and the requirements of the private sector creates a significant challenge in Morocco, where the skills gap is already a reality and getting worse by the day. Indeed, this is an issue which affects the direct perception of the quality of the public universities - that it is true that Moroccan universities have become a place of producing a huge number of unemployed graduates. The situation is even more critical when nearly half of the university students will not go on to get a degree (Ben Saga 2018). Therefore, policies that aim to engage university graduates in a way that enhance their empowerment are needed. This is to ensure they are listened, valued and involved in seeking solutions to challenges facing their integration into the formal labour market.

While, today, companies are looking for competencies and skills, not degrees, Moroccan government needs to focus not just on expanding the higher education sector but also ensuring quality at the same time if unemployed graduate is to be absorbed. Since youth employability is vital for driving the social and economic growth of the country (Tejan & Sabil 2019), it is important to set up the proper skills needed to enhance information and access to career development. This should be done at the early stages, by informing and preparing the university students for the newly required labour exigencies. This involves improving the strategies to master the foreign languages among university students, since there is a fact showing that nearly half of university students fail to complete their studies, as they are unable to master the French language (Ben Haman 2020). Moroccan graduates and students should bear in mind that being proficient in English is a must if they want to increase their chances in the job market.

Considering the above, the link between an increase in schooling rate and a more relevant educational structure for future employment opportunities, should be addressed in greater depth, even while acknowledging that the issue of graduate unemployment located in the broader neoliberal development policies. The graduate university employment policy has to be understood in the context of neoliberal and its austerity programmes — an ideology and practice that has become ubiquitous in both developed and developing nations, where youth unemployment can never overcome, while the neoliberal policies keep decreasing public expenditure and privatizing the public resources. The most obvious and shocking contemporary manifestation of the consequences of hegemonic neoliberalism is when the International Labour Organization (ILO) calculated that almost 1.4 billion workers are expected to be in precarious employment in 2017, and that an additional 35 million are projected to join them by 2019 (ILO 2018a).

To grasp a deep understanding of youth unemployment in the context of hegemonic neoliberalism, more qualitative studies are possible, particularly that enable a critical understanding of how the neoliberal system is operating successfully in its own terms to exacerbate the unemployment rates in the developing world nations.

The number of Moroccan youths want to migrate to Europe is growing because of social exclusion and inequality.

*“In Morocco, there is no future for the youth, that is why they escape and that is why they risk everything they have to reach Spain,” (Kasraoui 2019).*

The above statement shows the scale of poverty and social exclusion facing youths in Morocco. The existing data related to unemployment rate indicate that unemployment affects the youth more than any group. As of 2018, Morocco has a youth unemployment rate of nearly 22 per cent, compared to the estimated global youth unemployment rate of nearly 12.7 per cent (ILO 2018b). Indeed, as long as Morocco’s economic growth is unable to absorb the increasing demand for labour in the country, out-immigration pressure from the youth is expected to grow in the coming years.

A dream to leave Morocco is not only linked with the young people, but it is also a dream for many Moroccan children. Regarding this, according to a report published by the US.News in October 2019, thousands of Moroccan children are currently looking to migrate to Spain through the small Spanish enclave of Ceuta. On top of this, the Spanish news agency Europa Press shows that the number of Moroccan children attempting to cross the Spain’s border has risen from 800 in 2017 to more than 3,300 in 2018.

The current dire economic landscape drives many young Moroccans to think about emigration to other countries (Goldfarb 2019). Mass unemployment has meant that many Moroccans want to leave for Europe where they believe that there are job opportunities. It has become a common practice in Morocco that from time to time it faces a situation in which a couple of Moroccan teenagers say, “I want to emigrate to the European Union, I want to secure my future”. The recent Gallup organisation data shows that one out of three young Moroccans wants to emigrate to get a decent job in Europe. The situation is even more critical when the Arab Barometer report related to Morocco, reveals that 70 per cent of Moroccans under 30 want to flee their homeland.

In Morocco, immigration is not only an issue among unskilled youths, but it is also expanded among more educated elite (Highly educated, including doctors, academics, architects, civil engineers, etc.). The main reason is that most of them want to look for better employment conditions outside the country. Social exclusion, financial pressures, lack of opportunities or corruption within the country are the major factors leading many of them to quit the country. Within this context, the Ministry of Education recently released a report, showing that more than 600 engineers leave Morocco in search of better work conditions abroad every year (Kasraoui 2019) and, more significantly, a recent report published by Gallup warns that the North African Kingdom would lose 19 per cent of its young population if the current migration trends persist.

Imagine a country losing the most productive and creative strand of its population — what we are seeing today in Morocco is a lost generation. The situation is worsening since, the number of Moroccans living abroad (MLA) has continued to increase over the last 60 years. The World Bank data (2018b) highlights that the total population of Morocco is around 34 million, while nearly 10 per cent of the total population is living in Europe. At present, more than 380,000 of Moroccan expats live in Netherlands, representing 2 per cent of the total population (Meake 2017). These numbers make Moroccan expats one of the largest foreign diasporas in certain host countries.

Despite this, recent reports published mainly by the World Bank (2018a) have labelled Morocco a promising economy market and an example of the political stability in the regions of Middle East and North Africa (MENA). What is critical to this discussion is the notion that the future is now entirely uncertain. The government's sense of political stability and its slogans on its capacity to solve youth unemployment is being questioned. Today, unemployment rate has become an embarrassing reality—something that must be forgotten and be left behind. If the current unemployment crisis remains unresolved, this will have critical consequences for the future social and political stability of the country.

## **CONCLUSION**

This article has drawn on the existing literature to critically analyse the issue of youth unemployment in Morocco. This article argues that youth unemployment policy has to be understood in the context of neoliberal and its austerity policies, where youth unemployment can never overcome while the neoliberal state keeps decreasing public expenditure and privatising the public resources. Indeed, reforms of youth employment belong to a species of

policies. These policies are being considered as the vital components of neoliberal system and its distorted development models in the Global South. These policies are meant to work as the 'shock therapy' of liberalization: the "highly visible action" that "was to make the 'bitter pill' of adjustment easier to swallow" (Cornia & Reddy, 2001: 10). Within this context, Morocco's policies towards youth employment are subsequently driven by the thirty-five years of neoliberal policies. The situation will only worsen since the neoliberal state continues to oppress youth - often by violent means - any source of threatening its existence.

While there is ample evidence showing that the majority of young generation want to leave the country, this does not necessarily mean that they do not love their country or are less patriotic: rather, it is due to the fact that the state has failed to integrate them into the formal labour market despite article 31 in the new constitution (2011) stating that all Moroccans - men and women - have equal access to a decent job. To grasp a better understanding of youth unemployment and its link to the neoliberal policies in the Global South, more studies are possible, especially interdisciplinary ones. These studies should enable us to have a critical understanding of the challenges facing the Global South to integrate youth into the labour market, along with revealing the shortcomings of the faulty neoliberal policies and its distorted development models by highlighting why they are ineffective and therefore suggesting the correct solutions and the reasons why they should be adopted.

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