

Evolution of University Governance in Morocco: What is the Impact?

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Received: June 19, 2020

Accepted: July 13, 2020

Online Published: July 14, 2020

doi:10.5430/ijhe.v9n5p94

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5430/ijhe.v9n5p94>

Abstract

The concept of governance has become ubiquitous because it is recognized as an important tool for improving quality in all aspects of higher education.

In Morocco, few scientific articles have dealt with the subject of university governance. Therefore, we will present a general review of the evolution of governance through the laws and reforms established by Moroccan governments from 1975 to 2019. The purpose of the study is to detect the extent of the presence of university governance principles in these reforms.

This study enriches the theoretical literature on the crisis of the Moroccan university system and opens the way to new empirical studies to better understand the perception of the university governance concept in the Moroccan context and to improve the quality of higher education and, subsequently, the economic development of the country.

The findings of this study show an evolution of the presence of university governance principles in reforms and higher education laws.

Keywords: evolution-governance, Moroccan university system, reforms, laws, impacts

1. Introduction

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The Moroccan education system suffers from several dysfunctions despite the significant investment devoted to it. Therefore, since its independence, Morocco has carried out several reforms aimed at improving and modernizing the education system.

However, these reforms have not been successful, despite the resources allocated to them. Various reports by the Higher Council for Education, Training, and Scientific Research (CSEFRS) bear witness to this. What, then, are the causes behind this crisis in the Moroccan education system in general, and the university system in particular? Several studies have been conducted to try to answer this question. But the diagnoses made, and the conclusions drawn, offer no consensus. One element of response may be governance, an increasingly important parameter in public policies. Indeed, several reports by CSEFRS (2014, 2016, 2018) point to governance as the weak link in our university system.

1.2 Study Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of the study is to highlight the importance and the extent of the presence of university governance principles and to follow their evolution over time and in the reforms established by Morocco, namely the reform of 1975, 2000, and 2019.

Additionally, this paper aims to briefly trace the impact of governance on the Moroccan university system and its relationship with its socioeconomic environment. Accordingly, two research questions drove this study:

1. How did governance arise and evolve in Moroccan higher education laws and reforms?
2. What impact does governance have on the university system and its socioeconomic environment?

We try to answer these questions in this article. This study enriches the literature on the Moroccan university system and paves the way for new studies that can inform decision makers to make optimal decisions for the governance reform of Moroccan universities.

1.3 Literature Review

In recent years, the subject of governance has grown considerably. This concept has been used in many fields, in many contexts, and various academic disciplines. In the field of higher education, Kezar and Eckel (2004) consider governance a process of policymaking and decision-making at the macro level. Similarly, several studies and research have been carried out specifically on university governance (Bleiklie & Kogan 2007; Kezar & Eckel, 2004; Musselin, 2001; Paradeise et al., 2009; Pusser, 2003; Trakman, 2008), and far-reaching university reforms have been developed, which could potentially have an impact on university governance (Jemielniak & Greenwood, 2015; Levy, 1986). Additionally, various authors, such as Héard and Mittlerle (2010), have declared the importance of this notion of university governance as a major lever for improving the higher education sector. Governance is increasingly seen as the weak link in our universities and as a fundamental element for improving the quality of higher education.

Morocco has experienced a change in the field of education and has developed various reforms and laws aimed at restructuring higher education, namely, the law of higher education in 1975 (law n° 1.75.102), law 01.00 in 2000, and the framework law 51.17 in 2019. Moreover, the concept of governance has become increasingly present, both in Moroccan legislation and in the official discourse on public policies. In fact, several publications have tried to clarify the crisis of the Moroccan university system. This article does as well, but it focuses on the issue of governance, which was long ignored in Morocco and which consequently had seldom been addressed in the literature.

1.4 Methodology

In this paper, we try to answer the aforementioned questions through a general review of the different laws and official documents relevant to the Moroccan higher education system from independence to the present day. To do this, we will adopt a descriptive methodology to describe the evolution of university governance and its impact on the socioeconomic environment through the three major reform packages for higher education in Morocco. In this way, we will try to reread, analyze and extrapolate the most important official documents, laws, and official reports on education and training, particularly in public universities. Thus, we will focus on the three stages that reflect the three major reforms that have been undertaken in Moroccan higher education, namely the reforms of 1975, 2000, and 2019.

In this research, we focus on the principles of good governance generally accepted by global groups and programs such as the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the African Development Bank, and the United Nations Development Program. To analyze the evolution of university governance, we will examine the phenomenon through the evolution of the following principles:

- Autonomy
- Equity and equal opportunity
- Transparency
- Responsibility
- Participation
- Evaluation and accountability

1.5 Outline

This article is divided into 5 sections: (1) brief introduction, (2) analysis of the evolution of governance through Moroccan higher education reforms, (3) the impact of governance on the university and its socioeconomic environment, (4) summary of the main findings, and (5) conclusion.

2. The Evolution of Governance Through Moroccan Higher Education Reform

The evolution of governance throughout Moroccan higher education can be divided into three main stages, namely, the reform of 1975, the reform of 2000, and the reform of 2019.

2.1 The First Stage—The 1975 Reform

Law 1.75.102 is the first law that regulated higher education. In this law, the word “governance” was completely absent. The word was not yet used in Morocco. However, some governance principles were mentioned such as:

- Autonomy: The word “autonomy” appeared only once in this law, in reference to financial autonomy; no provision was made for its administrative, educational, and scientific aspects.
- Transparency: Per law 1.75.102, the president is chosen by royal decree, and he is elected from among the professors of the university on the proposal of the authority’s government in charge of higher education (chapter 6).

There is, therefore, no method for appointing the president; the government authority chooses him. There are no clear criteria to approve the choice of president.

- **Responsibility:** Per law 1.75.102, the tasks of the university's president and the university's council were clearly defined by decree and the statutes of the teachers, researchers, and administrative and technical staff of the universities.
- **Evaluation and accountability:** In this law, the Board of Education presents for review all of the operations related to the organization in regard to education, research programs, and management of the institution. Additionally, it must report on the activities of the sectors submitted to it and should propose sufficient measures to contribute to the development of scientific life and its influence on the institution.

In short, in this first step, there was a complete absence of the word “governance” in the text of the law, and several important principles, such as equity and equal opportunities, were lacking.

However, there are references to some principles related to university governance, such as accountability and autonomy, though these were mentioned superficially and did not integrate all of the aspects. This absence of the concept of governance can be explained because it was not known in Morocco at that time, especially in the public sector.

2.2 *The Second Stage—The Years 1999–2000*

Over the years, and with the growing gap between the expectations of the people and the achievements of the Moroccan education system, the country introduced a new reform—the National Charter of Education, published in October 1999. It should be noted that this charter affects all levels of the education system. Thus, the focus was more on general education instead of higher education. However, shortly after the national charter, a new law was enacted dedicated exclusively to higher education—Law 01.00. So, we will first focus on the presence of governance in the National Charter and second on Law 01.00.

2.2.1 The National Charter on Education, Published in 1999

It is interesting to note that the word “governance” was not mentioned in the Arabic text of the National Charter of Education, despite appearing five times in the French version. The term “public management” was used instead of the word “governance” in the sixteenth section of the fifth chapter in other instances, the use of “governance” in the French text corresponded with “Management and Administration” in the Arabic text. The absence of the word *governance* in the Arabic text—that is, in the version in the official language of the country—despite its presence in the French text may indicate that the word was not familiar in Morocco at that time and little-known, which is why its use was avoided despite its prevalence in French.

The most important development in the fifth Space related to governance or “management and administration” is the approval of decentralization and deconcentration in the education and training sector as a critical and strategic choice and urgent responsibility.

In the area of governance, the National Charter for Education has emphasized the importance of decentralizing decisions and mitigating the failings of the centralized system. The Charter considered governance an essential part of the renovation process. Its deployment would allow the education system to acquire steering tools and management mechanisms consistent with the reform's objectives. The principles of governance in the National Charter included:

- **Equity and equal opportunity:** The charter set out the principle of equality of citizens, who were to have equal opportunity whether in rural or urban areas, following the Constitution of the Kingdom.
- **Autonomy:** The National Charter strengthens the autonomy granted to universities, granting it educational, financial, and administrative dimensions. According to Article 150, the university system enjoys effective financial autonomy and a distinctive scientific and educational personality.
- **Transparency:** The National Charter also emphasizes the need for transparency in the management of the education sector in general, such as the transparency of budgets, expenditure methods, contracts, accounting, and financial audit assessments.
- **Responsibility:** The National Charter stipulates the responsibility of education actors—teachers and students. It emphasizes clear accountability for results.
- **Participation:** The charter mandates the participation of students and personalities from the world of economics and culture in the university council.
- **Evaluation:** The National Charter indicates the need for the evaluation of central administrations involved in education at various levels and to achieve several objectives, including the reduction and rationalization of

administrative costs and the rationalization of human resources management. Additionally, it mentions the principle of evaluating the education system so that the whole education system is regularly evaluated in terms of its internal, external, pedagogical, and administrative performance.

The charter adds that educational authorities must prepare an annual report that will be presented to parliament on the state of the sector and its prospects and the results of internal and external audits. The summary of the aforementioned reports shall be published for public opinion. Here, we see that the National Charter has focused on important principles of governance, namely university autonomy, accountability, evaluation, and transparency. The affirmation of these principles can be seen explicitly as a major impetus in the process of developing governance in the structure of Moroccan education. However, the application of the National Charter has been criticized in several national reports, mainly the “The Higher Council for Education, Training, and Scientific Research of 2014” (CSEFRS, (Note 1) 2014).

2.2.2 Law 01.00—Established in the Year 2000

This law represents the legal embodiment of the National Charter of Education in its section dedicated to higher education. It gave rise to the famous reform, License-Master-Doctorate (LMD), from 2003 to 2004, to align with the Bologna Process in Europe and aims to harmonize Morocco’s study patterns with those of its partner countries to facilitate the mobility of students and teachers and to develop interuniversity cooperation.

This law approved most of the provisions of the National Charter of Education concerning decentralization and autonomy. It is considered a milestone in the development of higher education in Morocco. This law is accompanied by important developments, such as the appointment of university officials based on development projects and the mandate for the periodic evaluation of higher education. While the term “governance” was completely absent in the text, the legislation promotes important governance principles: autonomy, transparency, participation, responsibility, evaluation, and accountability.

- **Autonomy:** Articles four and five of Law 01.00 granted, for a period of 20 years, autonomy to Moroccan universities in financial, administrative, educational, and scientific matters. However, it cannot be said that the university is financially autonomous because the State remains the main source of funding for universities (Public funds constitute the main resource of the public university, up to 70–97% [CSEFRS, 2018], which affects the university’s ability to develop its material resources and human capital and, consequently, its autonomy). The same applies to the recruitment of teaching staff, which remains determined by the number of budgetary positions allocated by the ministry responsible (CSEFRS, 2018). In this sense, the university enjoys decentralized autonomy in which the State delegates its responsibilities to the university under its supervision (Bourricaud, 2008). Therefore, it has an executive role in the management of the university, in the training offer, in human resources, and budgetary policy. Therefore, to what extent does the autonomy granted to universities not lead to misappropriation? And is the training provided by these universities independently aligned with the needs of the economy?
- **Transparency:** Law 01.00 promotes clear transparency within the university system, through which a new method of naming university presidents and heads of institutions is introduced. Additionally, the law stipulates the appointment of members of the school and university council by regulation. However, in reality, problems have been identified concerning compliance with the selection criteria, specifically for master’s degree and Ph.D. students, where there is a lack of transparency and harmonization in the selection procedures according to the Court of Auditors’ annual report for 2018. Similarly, the promotion of professors (the advancement of their degree) is the reward of the efforts made by these professors in pedagogical and research terms. However, the procedures and criteria are not clear to meet this objective (Cour des Comptes, 2018).
- **Responsibility:** Law 01.00 specifies the responsibilities of the heads of university institutions and all university staff. However, the responsibilities are not clearly defined, and Moroccan universities still do not have an official organizational chart.
- **Participation:** The law has expanded the margin of participation. Compared to the previous law, we note that there is a significant expansion of the members of a university’s council to include external parties, such as the president of the Region, the president of the Council of Ulama (Note 2) of the Region, the president of the urban community, the director or directors of the relevant Regional Academies of Education (AREF), and seven representatives from various economic and social sectors, including the presidents of the professional chambers and one representative from private higher education. Additionally, Law 01.00 involves students in the management of institutions and the organization of cultural and sports activities through associations, and a given university can conclude partnerships with other universities and organizations. Indeed, one can question participation in the public university system because this participation is more formal than real, so the actors (students, professors, and administrators) and the partners

(territorial groups, public bodies, businesses, and the private sector) are members of the university council as appointed by voters, but not all of them regularly attend their meetings (CSEFRS, 2018). The composition of the University Council following Law 01.00 gives the impression of strong participation within the university system. The expansion of University Councils may make the decision-making process difficult (CSEFRS, 2018).

- Evaluation and accountability: In Law 01.00, universities set up internal audits as well because they are subject to a permanent evaluation of their performance and profitability. Therefore, it stipulates that higher education institutions must establish:
 - A self-assessment system.
 - Specialized regulatory bodies endowed with the required autonomy, notably, a national evaluation body that has been effectively created and an observatory for the adequacy of higher education to the economic and professional environment and for fulfilling audits and evaluation.

However, the law did not define the evaluation process and the elements subject to the evaluation. Thus, the president of the university and the heads of institutions are not subject to any evaluation in the performance of their duties or at the end of their term of office. The same applies to the central directorates of the Ministry as well as to the affiliated departments and bodies. As for higher education institutions, they are not subject to any evaluation of their internal and external performance, their curricula, the adequacy of these programs to the needs of the socio-professional environment, or the quality of the education they provide. For example, teachers are never asked about the feedback of their student, the consistency of their services, or the effectiveness of their interventions. Some of their scientific research is subject to evaluation only, and in relative terms, through procedures established in the context of the funding of research projects. Similarly, management services, administrative and financial procedures, service delivery structures at higher education institutions, and the services of university presidents are not subject to regular review (CSEFRS, 2018).

Law 01.00 gave the university system the prerogative needed for its development and allowed it to manage its projects and programs and to pursue innovative initiatives. Similarly, this law introduced new mechanisms of managerial inspiration insofar as those responsible are recruited based on development projects and where management is the responsibility of a council whose prerogatives are extended. Additionally, Law 01.00 strengthened the accountability of the university system through self-assessment, evaluation, and accreditation.

Perhaps the most important development is the new openness to modern management methods derived from management science in the appointment of university presidents and heads of academic institutions, where the university's development project and that of the faculty were included as criteria for the base. This represents several advances in the establishment of governance, which led to the granting of pedagogical, academic, administrative, and financial autonomy to universities.

2.3 The Third Step—The Years 2015–2019

After the reform introduced by the National Charter of Education and embodied by Law 01.00 in higher education, several evaluations were conducted by the Higher Council of Education and Scientific Research (CSEFRS) and have demonstrated the inadequacy of these reforms and the various dysfunctions of the education and higher education system, especially at the level of governance. Thus, a new reform was introduced by the “Strategic Vision of Reform 2015.2030,” forged by the CSEFRS in 2015, which will be embodied by the “Framework Law 17.51.” This framework law sparked great controversy in Morocco and was finally adopted by the end of 2019.

2.3.1 Strategic Vision of Reform 2015–2030

Governance holds an important place in the strategic vision of reform. The vision began by talking about the achievements of Moroccan schools, including the beginning of the implementation of new governance based on decentralization and deconcentration. The strategic vision is based on methodological terms for an effective governance approach in the conceptualization of the reform.

The second chapter of the report, “For a Quality School for All,” notes that quality work must be a priority of the strategic vision. This aim is a total and equitable quality among all the different actors in education, curricula, programs, and governance of the university.

In the fourteenth Section, devoted to the advancement of scientific and technical research and innovation, it was stressed that Morocco is required to renew the governance of scientific research and to establish responsible governance of its various components to ensure the rationalization of resources, the sharing of experiences, and the

increase of productivity and profitability. We will try to break down the role of governance in “The 2015–2030 Strategic Vision” and then in the Framework Law 17.51.

In the fourteenth Section, and in terms of the level of monitoring and evaluation, a reference was made to the establishment of governance and reasonable management system with indicators set to monitor scientific and technical research and innovation.

The strategic vision has dedicated the fifteenth Section to the issue of governance, entitled “Towards Effective Governance of the Education and Training System.” In this fifteenth Section, it was noted that “Governance is one of the school’s cross-cutting issues, both for reasons of management efficiency and those related to participation, transparency, responsibility, evaluation, and accountability” (CSEFRS, 2015, p.55).

The strategic vision notes that “The evolution of Moroccan society has placed good governance at the heart of the community’s overall development,” which reflects the growing importance of governance in the minds of Moroccan decision makers (CSEFRS, 2015, p.55). The strategic vision then focused on the role of governance in development: “To this end, and given its key role in the development and upgrading of human capital, the school is held, more than ever, to participate in this transformation and to integrate the elements of governance necessary to increase efficiency and effectiveness and to succeed in this upgrade” (CSEFRS, 2015, p.55). To successfully address the challenges raised for good governance, it is necessary to rely on:

- A convergence of public policies and programs.
- A system of territorial governance in line with advanced regionalization.

In the sixteenth section, on the adequacy of education and training with the needs of the country and future professions, it encouraged the establishment of good governance and regulation of the labor market, based on compliance with the legal provisions in force, mutual obligations, and the development of a sense of corporate social responsibility. Those who respond to this request will benefit from concrete incentives.

In the twenty-third Section entitled “STRONG LEADERSHIP AND EFFICIENT MANAGERIAL CAPABILITIES FOR THE VARIOUS LEVELS OF THE SCHOOL”, it was emphasized that the desired leadership should be based on governance that combines responsibility and accountability.

The word “governance” has been mentioned in the Arabic version as well as in the French version—about 28 times in the strategic vision of reform. This is unprecedented, and reflects the increasing interest the concept has engendered in the fields of education and scientific research in Morocco. Additionally, the word “responsibility” has been repeated (17 times), along with the words “participation” (18 times), “autonomy” (14 times), and “accountability” (2 times). Similarly, emphasis has been placed 41 times on the application of the principles of justice and equal opportunity.

2.3.2 Framework Law 51.17 (2019)

Unlike the Law of 1975 and Law 01.00 of 2000, which were exclusively dedicated to higher education, the Framework Law 51.17 aims to reform and regulate the education and scientific research sector as a whole. Most of the measures mentioned in the Framework Law come from the “Strategic Vision of Reform 2015–2030” formulated by the Higher Council for Education and Scientific Research. Because the recommendations made by this council are not legally binding, it was agreed to convert them into a mandatory framework law. The framework law aims to ensure quality education and equal opportunities for all.

Law 51.17 is part of a context characterized by a national consensus and a shared conviction among the different actors that the education and scientific research system in our country suffers from a deep crisis because of various considerations: structural, functional, and governance. The framework law comprises 10 chapters and 59 articles. It provides for the publication of a decree and 17 regulatory texts, in addition to legislative and regulatory texts that will replace or amend the existing texts (which mainly result from Law 01.00) before the implementation of Framework Law 51.17. Governance in the Framework Law 51.17 can be treated as follows:

- **Autonomy:** Framework Law 51.17 reaffirms the principle of autonomy granted to universities and institutions of education and scientific research by adopting the institution’s project as the basis for its continuous development and effective management. It stresses the need to strengthen the effective autonomy of universities and regional academies of education within a contractual framework while establishing a mechanism for monitoring, evaluation, performance measurement, and periodic review.
- **Equity and equal opportunities:** Framework Law 51.17 asserts the need to respect the principles of equity and equal opportunities in the various components of the education and scientific research system and in the provision of services to learners of all kinds. The principles of equity and equal opportunity are manifested in the free provision of

public education by the state in all fields and specialties and in the efforts of the state to mobilize and guarantee all available capacities to make it accessible to all citizens and to provide disadvantaged learners with the benefits of social services related to housing and food, scholarship services for people in difficult social situations, and a loan system for students who wish to pursue higher education. The Framework Law focused on this principle in many sections and raised the need to provide services and benefits to disadvantaged learners to ensure fairness. However, there are no clear selection criteria to distinguish disadvantaged learners from others.

- **Transparency:** In the field of transparency, the Framework Law 51.17 stresses that the state must take the necessary measures to enable learners at different levels of the education system and scientific research to benefit from social services, such as scholarships and loans, in accordance with the principles of eligibility, transparency, and equal opportunity. However, the law did not enumerate the selection criteria for these learners to qualify for these social services.
- **Responsibility:** The Framework Law 51.17 revives the principle of responsibility in its articles, where there is a definition of the missions and competences of pedagogical, administrative, and technical executives in a repository of jobs and competences, as required for assessment of the performance and career advancement of these managers. However, the Framework Law did not clarify the responsibilities of the various parties involved in the process of applying this Law. It sometimes talks about the government, the state, government authorities, the authorities, the territorial authorities or the public authorities, the actors, or the contributors. Here, it is legitimate to question the usefulness of this multiplicity of names, as it may open the door for some stakeholders to shirk their responsibility.
- **Participation:** Law 51.17 promotes the participation of various actors, especially the private sector, in the improvement of the education and scientific research system. Unlike the law of 1975 and that of 01.00, the Framework Law is more interested in scientific research and its improvement through the strengthening of the national fund dedicated to scientific research as well as the creation of productive partnerships and the establishment of a system of incentives for these programs and projects.
- **Evaluation and accountability:** Law 51.17 stipulates that the government authorities concerned must carry out a complete review of the school and vocational guidance system and the university council, to support the learner and help them make choices during education and to provide sustainable pedagogical support. The evaluation processes include an internal evaluation by the government authority responsible for education, training and scientific research on a periodic and ongoing basis, and an external evaluation carried out by the Higher Council for Education and Scientific Research following annual and multi-annual programming. These evaluation processes apply to different components and levels of the education, training, and scientific research system.

In short, evaluation, whether internal or external, was mandated in all three laws (Law 1.75.102, Law 01.00, and Framework Law 17.51). However, it should be noted that the specialized regulatory bodies provided for in Law 01.00 were not created until almost 20 years after this recommendation was first made.

Therefore, we can say it is Framework Law 51.17 that most effectively promotes evaluation because it demonstrated, in its articles, the evaluation process and the elements under evaluation. However, there is ambiguity about the teacher evaluation procedure. For instance, evaluation and promotion criteria for professors are based only on the quantitative aspect that requires some published scientific and/or pedagogical articles ignoring the qualitative aspect (CSEFRS, 2018) based on pedagogical innovation to distinguish between professors and which has a positive effect on students. Note that Law 51.17 is a framework law, and it will be supplemented by new laws that will provide additional guidance on several points that have remained vague.

3. The Impact of University Governance on the Socioeconomic Environment

Moroccan universities still have a long way to go toward successfully implementing good governance. Several CSFRS reports have pointed out that governance remains the weak link in our education system, pointing to several failures in governance that could have a negative impact on the socioeconomic environment. Thus, the report (CSEFRS, 2014) states that governance issues have not been addressed, as would have been necessary, throughout the chain of relations that link the various components of the system and the structure of each. The mechanisms of transparency, decision-making, government, steering, sharing, and exchange of procedures are to be examined and revisited to achieve effective and efficient management.

According to the report (CSEFRS, 2018), several prerogatives stipulated in Law 01.00 have not been implemented. Thus, several essential aspects for the development of universities, such as decentralization, have not been followed by the enactment of adequate regulatory texts. The same is true with wealth management and human resources.

3.1 At the Managerial Level

These failures can be summarized in the following points:

- The managerial orientation is not always shared between the leadership of the university and the managers of the institutions (e.g., deans and directors; CSEFRS, 2014, 2016, 2018);
- Strategic planning is limited to the short term in almost all public universities, the long term is not debated or discussed by the council (CSEFRS, 2018); and
- Strategic documents, activity reports, and evaluation reports are distributed only to the institutions (CSEFRS, 2018), and not to the public opinion.

3.2 In Terms of University Autonomy

Unsustainable autonomy: The large size of public universities reduces their capacity for flexibility in making decisions, defining their direction, and implementing the direction effectively (CSEFRS, 2018). This low autonomy presents:

- A negative impact on the ability of the university to develop its own resources and the value of its material and human capital (public funds constitute the main resource for the university, up to 70–97%).
- The complexity and slowness of financial management can be explained by the difficulties of diversifying university resources (research scholarships do not exceed 10% in the best of cases).
- Administrative difficulties owing to the lack an administrative organization chart that precisely defines the services, positions, and business lines of relevant parties to achieve effective management.
- A low administrative supervision rate of one executive per 130 students on a national average, according to 2017 statistics. This is because of the recategorization of administrative positions requiring a doctorate to assistant professor positions; this action made it possible to reduce the rate of pedagogical supervision, but aggravated the lack of administrative supervision.

3.3 In Terms of Accountability

Accountability is weak:

- The activity and financial reports are not disseminated to the media or the general public, they are posted only to the institutions (CSEFRS, 2018);
- The evaluation of learning outcomes is almost absent as a means of promoting the quality of education and academic integrity, only one university among nine universities that practice this evaluation, and less than half of the universities evaluate the teaching methodology (CSEFRS, 2018);
- The accountability dimensions include quality of education, financial accountability, and financial integrity; and
- In our universities, we are more interested in financial integrity than in other parameters because the public university has put in place and applied standardized sanctions in the case of misappropriation of funds, inappropriate spending, or dubious procurement (CSEFRS, 2018).

3.4 In Terms of Participation

According to the report (CSEFRS, 2014), universities are governed by a university council, the highest decision-making body, chaired by the president. It is made up of ex officio members, elected members, and appointed members. The number varies, depending on the size of the university and the number of academic institutions, from 50 to 60 members.

This presence in large numbers of all of the actors involved in higher education—education professionals, teachers by grade, the union, and the administrative staff—on the council of the university makes it a body where decisions are difficult to discuss, negotiate, and ratify. The composition of the council is not homogeneous. As a result, the expectations and projects that converge there are exceedingly varied. In general, the council operates with little involvement by the representatives of local authorities, companies, and social partners. Their endemic absence liberates the field for the exclusive benefit of the various components internal to the university.

3.5 In Terms of Evaluation

According to the report (CSEFRS, 2016), no structure for the evaluation system provided for in Law 01.00 has emerged, except for the government report that is discussed during the drafting of the Finance Law and the reports submitted by university presidents to regional councils. Additionally, the report adds that the only evaluation

experience mentioned by universities is generally that related to the self-assessment procedures imposed by the 2009–2012 Emergency Plan. The plan has developed a set of metrics on each of the projects it has developed, and has established a means of collecting information on the results achieved in its implementation.

4. Findings

The findings are organized according to the two research questions that guided this study. First: How did this element arise and evolve in Moroccan education laws and reforms? As has been pointed out previously, the presence of governance is constantly increasing under the influence of the massification of higher education and the constraints associated not only with its funding but also its effectiveness and efficiency. The presence of governance in Moroccan higher education has evolved over time through the three stages of university reform.

Our paper reveals both a quantitative and qualitative evolution of the concept of governance in higher education—a quantitative evolution in terms of the number of uses of the word “governance” and its principles, which constantly increase in official documents, and a qualitative evolution in that the principles of governance are undergoing considerable improvement. For example, the scope of the principle of autonomy is no longer limited to academic autonomy but has grown considerably to encompass administrative, financial, and scientific aspects.

Additionally, governance principles, such as participation, autonomy, responsibility, accountability, transparency, equity, and equality of opportunity, are increasingly reinforced in the legal arsenal for higher education. However, this alone is not enough to improve the governance system of our universities. That is why we must also strengthen the mechanisms for implementing these reforms. However, despite this evolution of governance in laws and reforms, these reforms have not been well-implemented. The CSEFRS shows that governance remains the weak link in our universities. This is not without consequences for the performance of our universities.

Turning to the second question: What impact does governance have on the university and its socioeconomic environment? Moroccan universities are still far from successfully implementing good governance, which remains the weak link in our higher education system and could have a negative impact on the socioeconomic environment:

- A managerial orientation is not always shared between the leadership of the university and the managers of the institution (deans and directors), and this hinders work that relies on a common vision and goals.
- The low autonomy presents a negative impact on the ability of the university to develop its resources and the value of its material and human capital.
- Accountability is weak in Moroccan universities. This could have a negative impact on the performance of the university and its outcomes because academic leaders have no accountability to the various stakeholders.
- The absence of an evaluation of learning outcomes could have a negative impact on university performance.
- Participation in university bodies is more formal than real. It may even have the opposite effect on decision-making and, therefore, hinder the operations of the university and its collaboration with its socioeconomic environment.
- Despite being required in law, evaluation is almost completely absent in the various structures and governance bodies within Moroccan universities, those in charge of the ministry, the presidents, the deans, and the professors (CSEFRS, 2016). This often has serious consequences on the performance of the university.

5. Conclusion

While it is home to one of the world’s oldest universities—the Al Quaraouiyine University, which began construction in 859 CE during the reign of the Idrisside dynasty—Morocco is still looking for ways to improve its higher education system.

The country has made an enormous effort toward the reform and modernization of its universities. Some progress has been achieved, particularly in the generalization and democratization of access to public universities, but the Moroccan university system is still experiencing huge dysfunction, especially in the area of governance. Governance is increasingly singled out as the weak link in our universities and as a fundamental prerequisite for improving the quality of higher education.

Consequently, the reform of the Moroccan university system requires a review of its system of governance, whether at the pedagogical, administrative, financial, or scientific level. Governance of the Moroccan university system remains a major challenge to be met, and it could have an impact on the performance of the university and, therefore, on the various stakeholders and the socioeconomic environment. This is why it should be given priority in the current reform of higher education to ensure the proper implementation of the governance provisions in Framework Law 51.17.

The Moroccan university system is obliged to leave its “ivory tower” and to forge close relations with actors in its social, economic, and cultural environment.

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Notes

Note 1. The Higher Council for Education, Training, and Scientific Research (CSEFRS).

Note 2. Council of Ulama or Scholars is an institution in Morocco created in 1981 to support the religious policy of Morocco.