

Higher education and territorial development in Morocco

L'enseignement supérieur et le développement territorial au Maroc

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Abstract:

The main objective of this article is to make clear the impact of the contribution of higher education to territorial development in Morocco, from a practical point of view, and this via a detailed review of the sector (genesis, objectives, and missions) and its contributions to territorial development in Morocco. This is made based on a database of the main publications essentially dealing with our research subject.

To this end, this article aims to analyse the development of higher education in Morocco from the perspective of the new paradigm of territorial development, to detect the inadequacies and strengths of our education system, in order to help design an educational development model taking into account the logic of territorial development.

At the end of our analysis, we managed to conclude that the challenge is to make Moroccan universities real levers of territorial development, by strengthening their efficiency and their impact at the local level. And this, by training the necessary human factor and carrying out research and innovation activities adapted to local needs.

Keywords: Higher education, university, territorial development, local needs.

Résumé :

L'objectif principal de cet article est de rendre claire l'impact de l'apport de l'enseignement supérieur au développement territorial au Maroc, d'un point de vue pratique, et ce via une revue détaillée sur le secteur (sa genèse, ses objectifs et ses missions) et ses apports au développement territorial au Maroc. Cette dernière se base sur une base de données formée des principales publications traitant essentiellement notre objet de recherche.

A cet effet, cet article vise à analyser le développement de l'enseignement supérieur au Maroc sous l'angle du nouveau paradigme de développement territorial, pour déceler les insuffisances et force de notre système d'enseignement, afin d'aider à concevoir un modèle de développement de l'enseignement prenant en compte les logiques de développement territorial.

A L'issue de notre analyse, nous sommes parvenus à conclure que le défi est de faire des universités Marocaines de véritables leviers du développement territorial, en renforçant leur efficacité et leur impact au niveau local. Et ce, en formant le facteur humain nécessaire et en menant des activités de recherche et d'innovation adaptées aux besoins locaux.

Mots clés : Enseignement supérieur, université, développement territorial, besoins locaux.

Introduction:

The development of Morocco has largely been constructed through a sectoral approach that induces a dynamic investment necessary for the modernization of its production fabric and the integration of its economy into the global economy. However, sectoral plans, including those for higher education, have not always had a leverage effect on all territories, whose sustainable development is linked to their geographical, spatial, sociological, and cultural specificities¹.

Higher education in Morocco, like other global education systems, has undergone historical evolution influenced by social and cultural events and institutional and governance changes. Initially marked by the pre-colonial period where religious inspiration dominated teachings, it evolved through the protectorate phase, which aimed to impart a touch of modernity to Moroccan institutions and hence to our higher education system, albeit weakly. Post-independence, a dynamic was initiated to gradually generalize education to meet the population's expectations and the developmental needs of independent Morocco.

In this study, we aim to conduct an exploratory analysis to better understand the position and role of the university in sustainable territorial development. Our goal is to create a matrix that identifies the strengths and weaknesses of our educational system, stimulating discussion on a model for educational development that incorporates principles of sustainable territorial development.

So, what is the place of the university in the new model of territorial development in Morocco?

In order to answer this question, we will begin our article firstly with a detailed presentation of higher education in Morocco and the definition of the concept of the entrepreneurial university, then we will present higher learning in a context of decentralization and thirdly, we propose a practical case study of the involvement of the Hassan II University of Casablanca in the development of its region, with the aim of presenting a mapping of the research results, reporting the impact of the contribution of the higher education to sustainable territorial development in Morocco.

¹ Territorial intelligence and regional development by the enterprise: Comparative international experiences, at the edition L'Harmattan.2011.

Morocco has embarked on a sustainable development dynamic defined in 1987 by the UN Brundtland Commission report titled "Our Common Future" as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."² Our country has also committed to a balanced territorial development policy that involves integrating higher education as a key sector for the success of this transition by responding to local needs and challenges. This research aims to demonstrate the significant role that Moroccan higher education plays in promoting territorial development by training necessary skills and conducting research and innovation activities tailored to local realities.

The approach developed in this study illustrates the role of the university and its place within its region. It then drafts a framework for analysing and evaluating the impact of the contribution of higher education to territorial development in Morocco.

1. Higher Education in Morocco:

Since the establishment of a legal framework for higher education in Morocco and until the adoption of the latest law No. 01-00 regulating higher education³, the latter has been founded on a number of principles that shape the national identity and universal common values. These principles are outlined today in law No. 01-00 as follow:

Table 1: Founding principles of higher education

<i>Principles</i>	<i>Description</i>
<i>Respect for Principles and Values</i>	Referring to the values of the Islamic faith that guide the development and evolution of higher education in Morocco.
<i>Openness</i>	Open to all citizens meeting the required conditions based on equal opportunities.

² Brundtland, G.H. (1987). Our common future. “Report of the world commission on environment and development”, Report of the United Nations.

³ Dahir No. 1.00.199 of 15 safar 1421 (19 May 2000) promulgating Law No. 01.00 on the organization of higher education.

<i>Respect for Human Rights Principles</i>	Respect for principles of tolerance, freedom of thought, creativity, and innovation while strictly adhering to academic rules and values of objectivity, scientific rigor, and intellectual honesty.
<i>Sector Orientation</i>	The state's responsibility includes planning, organizing, developing, regulating, and orienting according to the economic, social, and cultural needs of the nation, with national policy defined with the help of the scientific community, the labor market, and local authorities, particularly the regions.
<i>Adopted Language</i>	Working towards the continued development of education in the Arabic language in various fields of training, mobilizing necessary means for studies and research on the Amazigh language and culture, and mastering foreign languages within a defined programming framework to achieve these objectives.

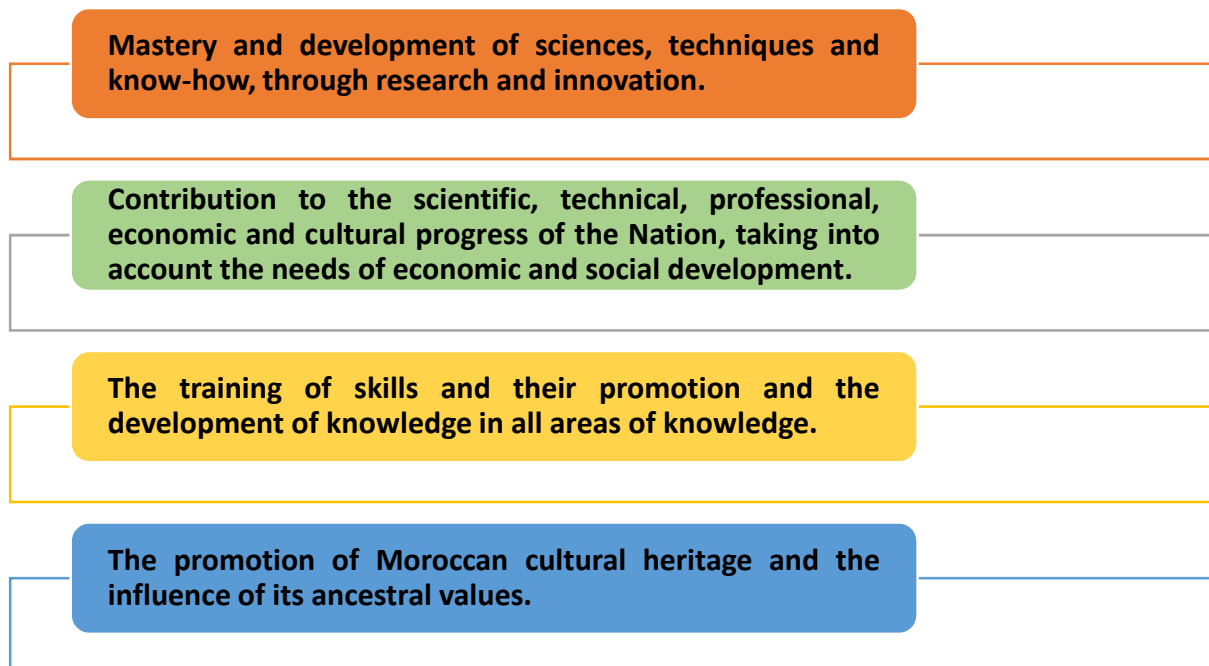
Reference: The Author

1.1. Objectives of Higher Education:

The university is an integral part of society and undergoes many of the changes and upheavals that affect it and transform it (Rajhi, 2013). In order to succeed in the national policy regarding Moroccan higher education, the Department of ES1 is constantly required to revise its management methods. This multifaceted reality (BENESERIGHE & ABDERMA, 2015) involves successfully carrying out multiple actions within a climate encompassing various portfolios spread across several projects.

In this respect, the university must determine its directions and strategy with great precision, aligning them closely with the primary objectives of the sector. The objectives of higher education, both public and private, are part of the national strategy for higher education which aims to make Morocco a destination of choice for higher education and research in Africa. These objectives are outlined as follows:

Figure 1: Objectives of Higher Education



Reference: The Author

As for the components of higher education, according to Article 2 of the aforementioned law⁴, "public higher education is provided in universities as well as in higher education institutions not affiliated with universities." Education is delivered in faculties, engineering schools preceded by preparatory classes, higher schools and institutes, institutions for the training of pedagogical staff, and training of specialized technicians or their equivalents. Public higher education can also be provided in specific cycles of vocational training organized either within universities or within existing higher institutions or specially created for this purpose.

1.2. The entrepreneurial university and territorial development

This work is part of a context where many transmutations are affecting academics. Because, in recent years have seen a multiplication of publications relating to the entrepreneurial university, worldwide. Because, the idea of the entrepreneurial university attracts not only for theoretical and practical reasons, but also for purely financial reasons. This implies that universities must operate in the light of external pressures and in a context from which they depend. According

⁴ Dahir No. 1.00.199 of 15 safar 1421 (19 May 2000) promulgating Law No. 01.00 on the organization of higher education.

to Etzkowitz (2003), the birth of the entrepreneurial university is part of a historic process and occurs when the two teaching and research missions are added to a third one, that of “economic and social development” (Etzkowitz 2003, p. 110). This form of academic entrepreneurship will stimulate collaboration with the region, thus inducing territorial development. “There has been a tendency in the last decades to call upon a set of diverse stakeholders to participate in regional innovation and development strategies, and policies (Brandstetter et al., 2006; Dąbrowski et al., 2014; Purkarthofer, 2019)”⁵.

The geographical positioning of the university in a regional context is an incentive to make it participate in cultural and economic changes at the level of its region, and through this role assigned to this institution, all researchers at the levels of scientific research, entrepreneurship and geographic economics agree on the "entrepreneurial" character of the University. According to Etzkowitz (2000), the university, which carries the character of “entrepreneurial university”, contributes to economic and social development after teaching and research. Others see it as an innovative and flexible university that adopts an entrepreneurial position at the level of its organization and management (Zakaria et Gibert, 2005; Guerore, Kirby et Urbano, 2006). The capacity for innovation within a territory is strongly linked to the capacity of universities, higher education institutions and their research centres to create and transmit knowledge. (Chrisman et al., 1995; Doutriaux, 1987, Garnsey et Cannon-Brokes.,1993).

Thus, the universities, through their entrepreneurial character and their autonomy and the professionalization of the training, will be more anchored in their territory and re-establish relations with the territorial communities.

2. Integrating Higher Education into Decentralization:

The university is considered a key factor in sustainable territorial development through its scientific achievements, contribution of qualified human resources, and continuous innovation it provides to its region. The innovation capacity within a territory is closely linked to the capabilities of universities and their research centers in creating and transmitting knowledge (Chrisman et al., 1995; Doutriaux, 1987; Garnsey and Cannon-Brokes, 1993). Based on this foundation, effective decentralization of higher education has been opted for several years.

2.1. Directing higher education to cover the national territory

⁵ The role of universities in regional development strategies: A comparison across actors and policy stages, Iliana Fonseca, Lisa Nieth, April 2021, European Urban and Regional Studies.

In 1970, all the vital forces of the nation, whether political or trade unions, participating in the first Ifran colloquium insisted on building a true Moroccan University and a clear scientific and technological policy responding to the aspirations of our citizens. However, the year 1975 can be considered the first real turning point in the history of the Moroccan University. The Dahir of 25-02-1975 promulgated in 1975 on higher education constituted the milestone of a comprehensive reform of university higher education. One of the major objectives assigned to this reform, among others, was the implementation of a policy of decentralization of university establishments capable of responding to a proximity policy of higher education by bringing the University closer to the citizen and absorbing the pressure of student flows exerted on existing establishments.

While during the first two decades of independence, the Moroccan university system developed very little and remained generally concentrated in the city of Rabat with branches in Fes and Casablanca, the year 1975 saw the initiation of a process of creation and decentralization of university teaching institutions. This process has continued to this day and covers 26 cities spread over almost all regions of the Kingdom.

The local space has always been considered a place where national decisions and policies are expressed: establishment of administrative, tourist, industrial, and university infrastructures. University and training establishments appear as facilities capable of leading urban and socio-economic dynamics at the local level and contributing to the improvement of the living conditions of inhabitants.

“A region’s location seems to be a crucial factor for its development in groups’ movability especially in cases of isolated regions. Location becomes an obstacle in the process of attracting economic activities whose operations involve the production and transportation of tangible goods”⁶. In reality, the willingness to involve higher education in the outreach and territorial development remains timid even if it has sometimes been integrated into broader urban development projects. The development that follows will focus on describing the development of higher education in Morocco and its implementation logic in relation to territorial development issues.

⁶ Vassilis Angelis, Maria Mavri, Eleni Gaki and Iason Koufodontis, The Role of Universities on Regional Development, April 2007, Conference: Regional Studies Association International.

2.2. Implementation of the autonomy of the university and decentralization:

2.1 Extension de l'infrastructure universitaire :

The reform of higher education implemented since 2000 has changed the landscape of university training offerings both in terms of the geographical distribution of university establishments and the training programs.

The year 2000 can be considered a second major turning point in the history of the Moroccan University. This year saw the promulgation of Law No. 01-00 regulating higher education. This is essentially a comprehensive reform of the system, with the major feature being the autonomy of the University and its provision with the necessary tools to guarantee this autonomy and its sustainability. In this context, the creation of establishments during this period responds to the need for the university to become even more embedded in its regional socio-economic environment as stipulated by the Charter of Education and Training. Thus, the training offer at the regional level should take into account the diversification of training programs, the balance between open and selective access, and the specific needs of each region.

The creation of higher education university establishments is, under the new law, the result of a proposal from the University. The role of the supervising department is to decide on the creation or non-creation after consulting the

CNCES (National Coordination Commission for Higher Education). In this new context, 30 establishments offering a wide diversification of training programs have been opened: Engineering Schools, Technology, Medicine, Commerce and Management, Law, Economics, and a new type of establishments in small towns not yet equipped with a university core; namely, multidisciplinary faculties which currently number 11. Additionally, the university landscape was enhanced by a new university born from the split of the Cadi Ayyad University into two universities in 2009, resulting in the Sultan Moulay Slimane University of Beni Mellal.

2.2 Diversification of Programs and Professionalization of Education:

The implementation of higher education reform has enabled a complete overhaul of the higher education university training system. In addition to the reorganization of the pedagogical

architecture into the LMD (Licence, Master, Doctorate) system, the restructuring of education and the renovation of training content, this pedagogical innovation has introduced flexibility in the process of updating training programs and strengthened the university's capacity to diversify its training offer and adapt it to the needs of the socio-economic environment. The transition from a situation where training programs and their content were fixed by regulation to a situation where the university's autonomy is expressed through the proposal of training programs adapted to an integrated university strategy has resulted in an unprecedented diversification of the training offer. This diversification of the university's training offer integrates its policy of openness to its regional environment while adhering to national priorities. The training programs for fundamental studies licenses also incorporate this concern for adaptation to regional specificities.

The reform has also introduced the possibility of offering university diplomas to meet specific needs, particularly at the regional level. This provision has allowed universities to develop a very wide and diversified range of training programs more specific to the regional context and to respond more immediately to the needs expressed by the university's direct environment.

2.3. The Impact of Higher Education on Sustainable Territorial Development in Morocco:

The territory is considered the scale for implementing environmental policies⁷. The objectives defined at the national or supranational level must be incorporated into and respond to what appears as local specificities. In other words, it is about maintaining a necessary global/local dialectic given the observed disparity of territorial issues, particularly in terms of economic and social development. It is a matter of implementing concrete actions⁸.

In the context of our study, higher education constitutes an essential lever to stimulate territorial development and the attractiveness of territories through the role played by the university as a driving force in the ecological transition and the construction of sustainable territorial⁹ development. The ultimate goal is to create greater synergy between universities and their socio-economic environment while opening up more to the international scene. He seems important that universities tend more and more towards an entrepreneurial model both in terms

⁷ Lascoumes, P. (2012). *Public Action and Environment*. Paris : PUF

⁸ Boudra, L. (2019). Human activity, space and territory. *Elements of reflection from a systemic and multiscale analysis*. *Ergologia*, 22, 69-90.

⁹ Sustainable development is defined in the Brundtland report at the World Commission on Environment and Development (1987) as "development that meets the needs of present generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs".

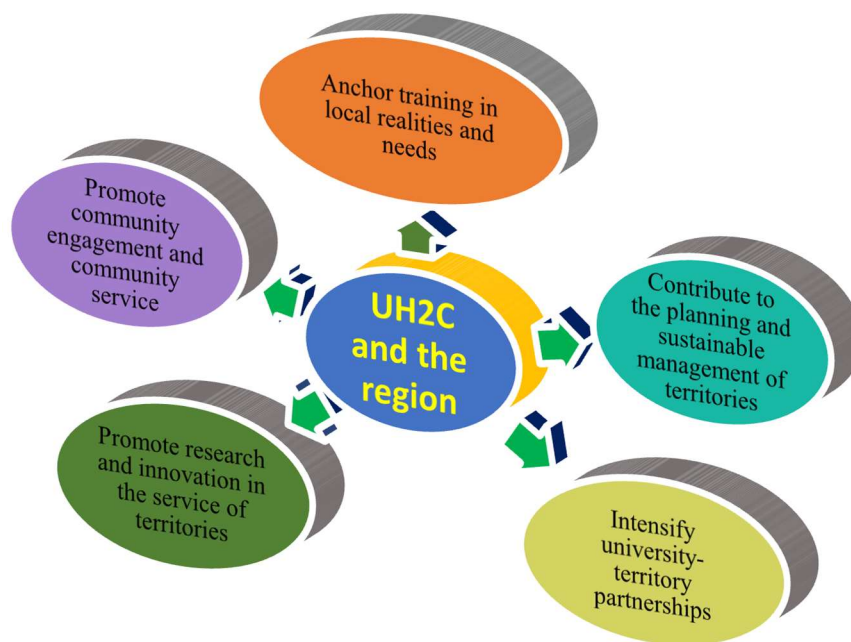
of governance and in terms of carrying out their training missions, research and contribution to territorial development¹⁰.

In this regard, the university is called upon to establish dialogue and consultation bodies bringing together the university and local actors and involving them in the reflection, decision-making, and implementation processes of sustainable initiatives.

3. The Moroccan University and Regional Development: case of the Hassan II Universities of Casablanca

The Hassan II Universities of Casablanca (UH2C) is considered a driver of development in the territory where it is located and this close link between the university and its host territory creates a mutually beneficial relationship, providing the university with tools to meet the needs of its region. and the sustainable development of its host community.

Figure 2: Interaction of the UH2C and territory



Reference: The Author

Indeed, the design of training programs is closely linked to economic, social, and political actors at the regional level by orienting curricula towards promising fields and strategic sectors for

¹⁰ ELAFQIH, B., & MESSAOUDI, HAS. (2021). Impact of internationalization on the entrepreneurial mission of universities. *Journal of Control, Accounting and Auditing*, page 497.

local development by promoting internships, tutored projects, and work-study programs within companies and local authorities. The UH2C is also called upon to develop formal partnerships with local authorities (regions, provinces, municipalities) and involve local actors (companies, associations, NGOs, etc.) in university governance to pool resources and infrastructure between universities and regional actors.

The UH2C should aim to direct part of its research towards regional development issues and facilitate the transfer of technology and knowledge from laboratories to local businesses. It should continuously encourage the creation of spin-off companies and start-ups resulting from research activities¹¹. To ensure sustainable local development, the university should initiate student initiatives within local communities and involve students in sustainable development projects in the territories to value the skills acquired in these engagement activities.

This increased involvement of universities will allow them to put their expertise at the service of communities in various fields (urban planning, development, environment, etc.) and actively participate in local consultation and decision-making processes, proposing innovative solutions to meet the challenges of sustainable regional development.

3.1. The involvement of universities in territorial development

The Hassan II Universities of Casablanca have established fruitful partnerships with various private Moroccan universities such as the International University of Casablanca, the Mundiapolis University in Casablanca, among others. These collaborations create opportunities for internships, employment and research projects aligned with the needs of the territory and the local and national labour market.

Hassan II University has been actively involved in innovation and technological development projects, promoting the transfer of knowledge between the University and the private sector. And this through its innovative cooperation with Moroccan companies at the level of its region, such as Medi Telecom Orange, Bank of Africa, Huawei Morocco, the company SEGULA Technologies, The company SELEVAL, etc. The latter enabled the creation of an academic environment in line with the territorial needs.

¹¹ Report of activities Hassan II University of Casablanca 2021-2022

To this end, the strengthening of these national or international partnerships within the Hassan II University of Casablanca stems from a strategic vision that is part of a broad process, aimed at making the University a motor of territorial development.

Figure 3: National and international conventions at the UH2C between 2014 and 2022

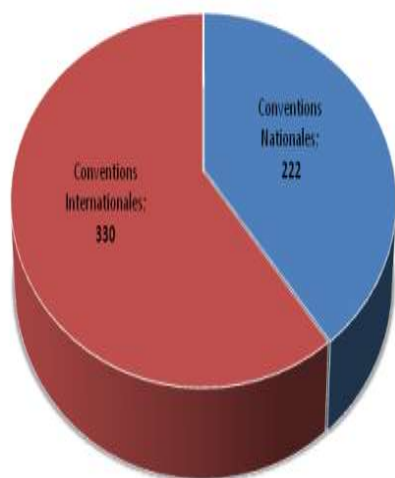
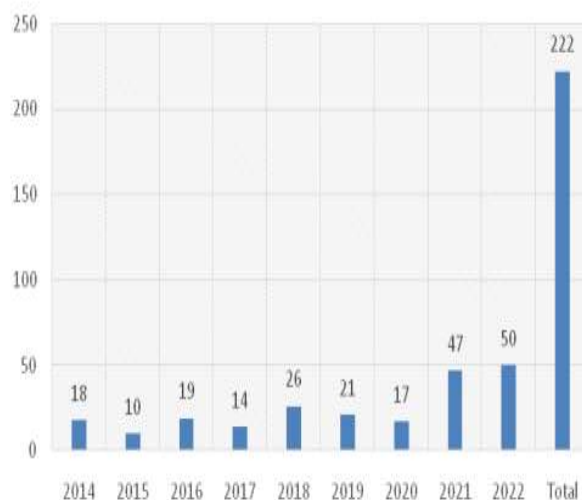


Figure 4: Number of national conventions at the UH2C between 2014 and 2022



Reference: Report of activities Hassan II University of Casablanca 2021-2022

The Hassan II Universities of Casablanca concluded a total of 552 national and international conventions during the period 2014-2022¹². This reflects its willingness and commitment to develop diversified partnerships, covering multiple sectors and focusing primarily on local and regional development. The same period also saw the signing of more than 222 national conventions, most of them at the local level, as shown in the chart below. These partnerships also include collaborations with departments and local communities. This is how the institution has managed to introduce the sustainable development dimension as an integral part of its strategic vision while aligning itself with “the dynamics of the Casablanca-Settat Regional Development Plan (RDP), the National Sustainable Development Strategy (SNDD) and the United Nations Sustained Development Goals (SDGs) through the following projects:

- Smart Green Inclusive University;

¹² Report of activities Hassan II University of Casablanca 2021-2022.

- Student Coworking Space;
- Entrepreneurship, Inclusion and Incubation Platform.”

From this we can conclude the degree of importance accorded by the University to its relations with national institutions and key enterprises in the territory, thus illustrating its willingness to collaborate through the exchange of students and researchers, research projects, and academic programmes.

3.2. Impact and results of the study

According to several studies on the impact of higher education on territorial development in Morocco, we concluded with a matrix summarizing the different targeted development axes and reflecting the impact of higher education on territorial development and the results achieved in terms of innovative initiatives at the territorial level.

Table 2: impact and results of the study

<i>Development Axes</i>	<i>Impact of Higher Education on Territorial Development</i>	<i>Results in Terms of Innovative Initiatives at the Territorial Level</i>
<i>Local Economic Development</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training of qualified workforce meeting the needs of local businesses; • Support for entrepreneurship and innovation through the creation of start-ups and projects derived from university research; • Technology transfer and know-how from universities to SMEs/SMIs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many universities have developed support structures for innovative project holders. • These incubators offer workspace, mentoring, funding, and access to networks to support business creation.
<i>Sustainable Land Management and Planning</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University research and expertise at the service of territorial planning, development of innovative solutions in environment; • Urban planning, transportation, etc., involvement of universities in local decision-making processes; • Equitable distribution of higher education institutions across the territory, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universities offer training, diplomas and specialized courses in entrepreneurship and innovation. • This raises awareness and equips students to embark on an entrepreneurial adventure. • The establishments promote applied research projects linked to

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programs to encourage and support students from disadvantaged regions, • Creation of regional centers of excellence highlighting local specificities. 	<p>the needs of businesses and regions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laboratories and research centers work on local development issues.
<p><i>Innovation and International Influence of Regions</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attracting territories for foreign students and researchers, • Enhancing the visibility and competitiveness of regional universities, • Development of international partnerships and collaborations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouraging all university hubs to develop networks of businesses, start-ups, experts, and investors. Establishing facilitation of international exchanges, collaborations, and entrepreneurial dynamics and influence in territories. • Universities have enabled technology transfer and commercialization of innovations derived from research. • The creation of spin-off companies and the development of innovations adapted to local needs.
<p><i>Social and Cultural Dynamism</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening access to higher education for vulnerable populations, • community engagement and service programs, • valuing and preserving regional cultural heritage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some universities have set up seed funds and scholarships to support the creation of innovative companies. • Partnerships are established with private investors and financial institutions.

Reference: The Author

As outlined above, higher education plays a crucial role in constructing an equitable and resilient model of territorial development in Morocco, as evidenced by the following achievements:

Figure 5: Achievements of UH2C at the Local Level



Reference: The Author

These varied initiatives allow higher education institutions to play a leading role in promoting entrepreneurship and innovation within Moroccan territories.

3.3. Discussion of results: Challenges and Prospects

Higher education institutions in Morocco face several challenges and obstacles in implementing resolutions aimed at encouraging entrepreneurship and innovation in territories. This obliges them to strengthen their means to promote the territorial anchoring of higher education institutions by developing training programs adapted to local socio-economic needs, improving governance and coordination between universities, businesses, and local authorities. However, universities must strengthen their resources and partnerships and develop their skills to integrate an inter-institutional collaboration approach through:

Figure 6: Challenges and obstacles of UH2C to the development of its territory



Reference: The Author

The UH2C play a vital role in driving the implementation of regional development strategies through their technology transfer efforts, entrepreneurship support, and contributions to local innovation. Consequently, significant disparities between regions can be attributed to varying levels of university leadership and the development stages of innovation ecosystems. To meet these challenges, universities will need to engage in profound transformations of their governance models and practices.

Conclusion:

This study has tried to describe the logic of the development of higher education in Morocco from its genesis to the present day. We have found that its creation was marked during the protectorate era by a dualism opposing tradition and modernity, notably through the coexistence of traditional education with religious foundations and education imposed by the protectorate regime and modernity.

Subsequently, the system evolved during the independence era, marked by the concern to strengthen national identity and diversify education until decentralization. It has been demonstrated that the higher education system has undergone continuous reform efforts to adapt to changing challenges and societal and economic needs, including decentralization.

Since then, the education system has experienced changes in its organization through institutionalization and the implementation and strengthening of university autonomy, pursuing a policy of decentralization, diversification of training to meet the economic and social development needs of our country and also serve its environment, including territories.

In this context, the University is called upon to strongly demonstrate its commitment to the sustainable development of its territory and to set as its main objective to develop a civic consciousness of sustainable development among stakeholders.

In summary, the challenge is to make Moroccan universities real levers of sustainable territorial development by strengthening their relevance and impact at the local level. This will require a profound reform of current university models by enhancing their interactions and local anchoring, implicitly involving communities and local actors in their governance and decision-making processes.

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