

VET, SKILLS DEVELOPMENT & SCHOOL-TO-WORK TRANSITION IN MAGHREB COUNTRIES

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**Proposal for the Sub-theme 1: What skills for the future ? We can present the
paper in English or French indifferently**

I. CONTEXT AND PROBLEMATIC

Youth employment and the school-to-work transition issues have preoccupied all governments since the economic crisis in the seventies

This research talks about the ways to perform the school-to-work transition through setting VET as a part of policy skills management system.

In both, developed and developing countries, when unemployment and inactivity concern more and more young qualified people and when deskilling are increasing, both employers and individuals are putting into question the efficiency and the quality of the education system. When in some sectors, even if they are not attractive, employees have difficulties to respond to the needs of flexibility and suffer from the deficit of skilled labour force and high turnover, therefore the education system is accused also to produce obsolete qualifications and not the skills needed by the economy.

The paper focuses on youth at the entrance of labor markets in Maghreb countries because they are: (i) representative of a global and social unease vulnerable (ii) globally, approximately tierce of the younger than 30 years is touched by unemployment and don't think having a future in their countries whereas they represent from 50% to 65% of the population regarding the countries (ii) overrepresented in informal employment (iii) work for low wages (iv), and discriminated regarding their capabilities and skills meanwhile they are more qualified than the previous generations.

As youth don't have experience or a short one, the signs given to employers lean on their qualifications or networks often linked. Consequently, elitist schools and training are sought by all employers. The problem of unemployment concerns above all non qualified young people, youth without networks (poor social conditions, minority, girls...) and graduated youth in common qualifications often general education (university in human and social sciences). These categories of youth benefit of strategies and policies for enabling their training and access to the labor market as public aids, alternating training, specific contracts, technical and vocational training....However and despite budgets affected to employment policies and education reforms, in Maghreb countries, globally youth have a weak probability to obtain a formal job with only their capital of qualifications because of specific characteristics of employment and education systems.

1. The reforms and employment policies progress in an environment non-transparent in the recruiting process and where the youth are suspicious towards all public policies considered inefficient to manage unemployment and responsible of reproducing inequalities and favouritism. Many structural social and political

reasons explain this ambiance (leaders have more importance than institutions and law, corruption existing at all steps of the policy making, public decisions which are not framed according to the needs miss legitimacy; recruiting is based on vote-catching system...).

2. The characteristics of employment don't facilitate investment in human capital. For example, the annual rhythm of creation of formal jobs is insufficient to absorb new graduates each year. Furthermore, many activities principally in the sector of services are underdeveloped or informal. Also in transition economies, the period of reforms implemented in 1990's led to under-funding, lack of performance in public services and social security systems and to the "informalisation of employment". Informal economy consists for a large part of micro and small enterprises and substantial self-employment and most of informal workers are youth and women.
3. The enable environment encourages underproduction or *x-inefficiency* from employers and employees (i) employers are not encouraged to develop their skills (low wages, absence of career opportunities, low productivity rate, bad working conditions, deskilling, misesteem of qualifications) (ii) employees for the majority don't have the structure and the size to develop skills (participative management, investment in continuing training, faire wages...) and to accumulate trust inside firms.

So, the crucial question is how - in an economic and politic constraining environment where the labour markets regulations bring social identity crisis, poverty and *x inefficiency* - skills can be developed for better school-to-work transition?

It's why the research is focused on the place of VET to set up skills management system which can contribute to accumulate trust on individuals' capabilities, recognize skills and boost entrepreneurship.

- We will evaluate the effects of VET on better school-to-work by examining the place and the role of VET on (i) developping spaces where schools can enter inside companies and the inverse (ii) giving to young people the access to a network and the crucial first experience. We will study in details the place of VET in the following measures : the development of alternating training¹ at all level and in all domains of education, continuing vocational training for careers and guidance advisers, the integration of technical education as labour law, project leading and entrepreneurship within curricula in tertiary education, the development of financial and pedagogical partnerships between schools and companies, between schools and recruiting agencies or between schools and employment intermediates.

II. HYPOTHESIS AND DEFINITIONS

Our hypothesis of research is that the results of employment and education reforms for better school-to-work transition depend on the role of skills development in regulating labor markets. This efficiency is there not depending on the quality neither on the pedagogical contains of training.

¹ If alternating training is the main axis of the skills management, it's also the weakness field of the education system because of the low esteem given to technical education and the suspicious of high schools to develop it.

The skills are defined as the process which puts into action a potential stemming from a whole of qualification experience and personal abilities. This potential is mainly produced inside initial and continuous formal education and training systems (social and familial capitals produce also a great part of the production of skills, but this will not be the object of my research). The skills belong to individuals even if they can appear collectively. The skills move with school path and working experience and individuals could accumulate them when they are motivated or satisfied to do (means that their skills are recognized and paid) or when they have the possibilities of learning by doing. So to develop skills, companies should settle a framework stimulating the motivation of workers, recognizing skills and offering regular continuing training, alternating training opportunities.

This hypothesis is referring on the analysis of the theory of regulation for which employers-employees relationship is a conflict and social relationship which has been transformed since 20 years, consequently to the transformation of the labour markets. Since seventies, the labour markets have been transformed by two movements: individualisation and flexibility.

The new *post-fordism* regulations, not stabilized yet, take multiple forms that we called flexicurities. These flexicurities are social compromises needed to manage social and economic constraints. We can identify 4 sets of flexicurities according to their purpose:

1. improving the mobility of workers and boosting employment creations,
2. keeping labour markets competitiveness,
3. developping cooperation and network based on knowledge economy,
4. capitalizing human capital and capabilities

However, it's difficult to specify if one country is characterized more by one set than another, because all of the countries use a mix of all these four sets according the opportunities and the period. In this paper we will focus attention the main role playing by VET in certain forms of flexicurity.

This research goes beyond the conception of education or training as investments or stocks, but considers them as social relationships participating to the transformations of labour markets regulations.

The hypothesis of this research will help us to "deconstructing" systematic relations made for examples between level of qualification and capabilities, investment in education and skills development, public expenditure and public policies. Also, the national coherence is taken into account because applying policies without social coherence and legitimacy contains the risk to reach growth without development!

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHOD

Our theoretical framework is Keynesianism, Institutionalism and Theory of regulation.

We study large review of literature and numerous databases coming mainly from international organisations (UNESCO, ILO, UNDP, OECD, World Bank) and European Union agencies (CEDEFOP, ETF, Eurofound) about the evolution of youth employment education, training and employment policies in Maghreb countries.

We have also a sociological approach in referring to the concepts *habitus* of Bourdieu, *the logic of honour* of D'Iribarne, *social identity of labour* comprehended by Mauss & Durkheim and *social cohesion* defined by Castel.

Furthermore, we exploit psychological concepts such as recognition, identity, trust, donation...

Our theoretical analyse is completed by a study on the field in Algeria (interviews of education and employment stakeholders and policy makers about youth employment policies), that we expect to do also in Tunisia and Morocco.

IV. KEY WORDS

Employment, Education, Skills, Training, labour markets, youth, Maghreb countries

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