

Effectiveness of Employment Policies and Social and Human Development in Morocco: The Mediating Role of Socio-Professional Integration

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Abstract

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This paper examines the effectiveness of public employment policies in Morocco and their contribution to social and human development, highlighting the mediating role of socio-professional integration. Drawing on six complementary theoretical frameworks – human capital, entrepreneurship, neo-institutionalism, social protection, human development, and decent work – the study demonstrates that sustainable labor market integration is a key driver to reduce unemployment, promote equal opportunities, and enhance citizens' well-being. The proposed conceptual model shows that active employment policies, institutional reforms, and poverty reduction programs positively influence social and human development through improved socio-professional integration. The paper offers insights for designing more inclusive and effective public policies.

I. Introduction

The issue of employment currently represents one of the major challenges for public policies in Morocco, both in terms of its quantitative scale and its economic, social, and human implications. Despite a strong state-driven commitment, reflected in the proliferation of public employment programs (Idmaj, Tahfiz, Awrach, Forsa, self-employment schemes, initiatives for the integration of young graduates, etc.), labor market indicators continue to reveal mixed performance: persistent structural unemployment, low levels of productive employment, predominance of informal work, mismatch between training and job requirements, and increased vulnerability of certain social groups, particularly youth, women, and low-skilled workers (ANAPEC, 2023).

In this context, the challenge is no longer solely about the number of policies implemented, but rather about their actual effectiveness, understood as their ability to produce sustainable effects on access to decent work, reduction of social inequalities, and enhancement of human development. This issue aligns closely with the strategic orientations outlined in the 2011 Constitution, the New Development Model (NDM), and Morocco's international commitments regarding sustainable development and social justice.

However, the evaluation of the effectiveness of employment policies remains a field that is still insufficiently explored from a theoretical perspective, particularly in developing countries. Existing analyses often focus on operational or budgetary dimensions, without mobilizing integrated theoretical frameworks that can account for the institutional, organizational, and social mechanisms shaping policy outcomes.

From this observation, the present article aims to propose a theoretical framework for analyzing the effectiveness of employment policies in Morocco, in relation to their impact on social and human development. The goal is to go beyond a strictly instrumental approach and to adopt a multidimensional perspective that integrates interactions among actors, institutions, norms, and beneficiaries.

The central research question can be formulated as follows: Which theories allow the construction of a relevant conceptual framework to analyze the effectiveness of employment policies in Morocco, and what are the main determinants influencing their outcomes?

In this context, this article proposes an integrative theoretical framework to analyze the effectiveness of employment policies in Morocco and their contribution to social and human development. It draws on a combination of complementary theoretical perspectives—human capital, entrepreneurship, institutionalism, social protection, human development, and decent work—to understand how active employment policies, institutional reforms, and poverty reduction programs influence socio-professional integration and, ultimately, citizens' well-being. The study aims to provide a comprehensive and coherent vision, both conceptually and operationally, to guide the design of more inclusive and effective public policies. It pursues five main objectives:

- To identify the impact of active employment policies on socio-professional integration;

- To examine the role of institutional reforms in facilitating access to decent work;

- To analyze the contribution of poverty reduction programs to socio-professional inclusion;

- To evaluate the effect of socio-professional integration on social and human development; and

- To propose an integrative model linking public policies, socio-professional integration, and human development.

By doing so, this article contributes to understanding the mechanisms through which public interventions can transform the labor market into a genuine lever for social justice, equal opportunities, and collective well-being.

II. Theoretical Perspectives

The theoretical grounding of research constitutes the foundation on which concepts, variables, and causal relationships are structured, allowing the formulation of coherent and operational hypotheses. In a study examining the impact of public employment policies and institutional arrangements on socio-professional integration and, ultimately, on social and human development, it is essential to mobilize robust conceptual frameworks. These frameworks must account for individual mechanisms (skills, entrepreneurship), institutional mechanisms (regulated labor market, social protection), and structural factors (poverty, inequalities).

This section presents and articulates six major theories underpinning our conceptual model: human capital theory, entrepreneurship theory, neo-institutional theory, social protection theory, human development theory, and approaches of decent work and social justice. Each theory is described, related to the research concerns, and synthesized to highlight their complementarities.

a) Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1964)

Human capital theory is a cornerstone of modern economic analysis of the labor market. Developed by Gary Becker in the 1960s, this theory posits that individuals are not merely economic agents with initial endowments, but possess a measurable “capital” that can be increased through specific investments (education, health, experiential learning). Becker argues that these investments yield both private and social returns, as a more skilled workforce increases productivity, leading to higher wages and overall economic performance (Becker, 1964).

In the context of public employment policies, human capital theory provides a central explanatory framework: professional training and qualification programs are designed to enhance the skills of job seekers and workers, thereby reducing the gap between labor market demands and actual individual capabilities. Employability—the ability of an individual to obtain, maintain, and regain employment—largely depends on the accumulation of this human capital.

This paradigm also justifies the emphasis on lifelong learning and continuous training. In a labor market characterized by automation, digital transformation, and globalization, initial skills alone are insufficient. Human capital must be maintained and updated to meet evolving labor market demands.

In this study, human capital theory allows socio-professional integration to be conceptualized as a dynamic process: enhancing skills through training policies improves not only employability but also individuals' capacity to secure decent and stable employment. This contributes to reducing structural unemployment, particularly among youth and graduates, and acts as a driver of social development.

b) Entrepreneurship Theory (Schumpeter, 1934)

Entrepreneurship theory, articulated by Joseph Schumpeter in *The Theory of Economic Development* (1934), views the entrepreneur as an agent of economic change. Schumpeter highlights the role of innovation, "creative destruction," and

entrepreneurial dynamism in transforming economic structures. The entrepreneur is not merely a manager but an actor capable of recombining resources in novel ways, thereby stimulating growth, job creation, and innovation.

Applied to employment policies, this theory justifies support mechanisms for entrepreneurship—such as access to financing, startup support, simplified administrative procedures, and incubation programs—as effective ways to generate new employment opportunities, diversify the economy, and reduce dependence on traditional job creation.

Entrepreneurship also has a dual social function: it directly creates jobs within new enterprises and produces economic spillovers through increased demand for goods and services, value chain creation, and integration into local economic networks.

This theory complements human capital theory by emphasizing that sustainable socio-professional integration requires not only individual skills but also a socio-economic environment capable of absorbing these skills. By fostering entrepreneurship, public policies can expand employment opportunities and stimulate individual initiative, particularly for marginalized populations.

c) **Neo-Institutional Theory (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983)**

Neo-institutional theory proposes that institutions—understood as socially constructed rules, norms, and practices—significantly shape the behavior of economic and social actors. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) demonstrated that organizations respond not only to economic efficiency logics but also to normative, mimetic, and coercive pressures arising from their institutional environment.

Applied to labor market analysis, this theory suggests that institutional reforms—such as labor regulation, employment contract legislation, and worker protection mechanisms—are not merely technical adjustments but transformations that redefine the rules of the game and influence employer and worker behavior.

Stable and protective institutions reduce information asymmetries, lower uncertainty, and build trust, facilitating broader participation in the labor market. Conversely, weak or unstable institutions may perpetuate power imbalances, restrict access to decent jobs, and increase precarity.

In our research, neo-institutional theory emphasizes the importance of regulatory frameworks and social norms for ensuring sustainable integration. Labor market regulation and institutional reforms should be viewed as structural instruments capable of reshaping employment opportunities.

d) **Social Protection Theory (Esping-Andersen, 1990)**

Social protection theory, developed by Esping-Andersen in *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* (1990), examines how social security systems—health insurance, unemployment benefits, pensions, and family allowances—affect labor market structures and individual trajectories. Esping-Andersen distinguishes welfare regimes (liberal, corporatist, social-democratic) based on coverage levels, funding mechanisms, and redistributive effects.

From the perspective of socio-professional integration, well-designed social protection can mitigate economic and social risks associated with job loss or career transitions. It encourages mobility and investment in human capital, as individuals are less fearful of catastrophic losses when changing careers or engaging in prolonged training.

Social protection thus shapes how individuals perceive the labor market, reduces poverty traps, and limits social exclusion of vulnerable workers.

Link to socio-professional integration: Incorporating social protection into employment strategies ensures that integration is not limited to entering the labor market but also includes maintaining economic security while actively participating in professional life.

e) **Human Development Theory (Sen, 1999)**

Human development theory, developed by Amartya Sen, challenges traditional development approaches focused solely on economic growth. In *Development as Freedom* (1999), Sen argues that development should be assessed in terms of the expansion of real freedoms individuals enjoy to lead lives they value.

Public policies should enhance capabilities—the real opportunities available to individuals—rather than maximizing aggregate indicators such as GDP. Access to decent work, education, health, and adequate living standards is an end in itself, not merely a means to increase productivity.

Reducing poverty, inequality, and social exclusion becomes a priority, enabling individuals to realize their potential and participate fully in society. Sen emphasizes the interdependence of economic, social, political, and cultural dimensions of human development.

Link to socio-professional integration: Human development theory places socio-professional integration at the heart of public policy objectives. Beyond job creation, it ensures individuals have the resources, skills, and opportunities for dignified, autonomous lives, highlighting the need for policies to consider well-being and social justice.

Decent Work Theory (ILO, 1999) and Social Justice (Rawls, 1971)

Finally, approaches based on the ILO's concept of decent work (since the late 1990s) and John Rawls' theory of social justice (1971) provide crucial complementary perspectives.

The ILO defines decent work as productive work in conditions of freedom, equity, security, and human dignity, encompassing social protection, freedom of association, equal opportunities and treatment, and adequate remuneration.

Rawls, in *A Theory of Justice* (1971), argues that social institutions should ensure fundamental freedoms and arrange social and economic inequalities to benefit the least advantaged (difference principle). While Rawls does not directly address employment policies, his normative principles provide ethical justification for policies promoting equal opportunity and redistribution.

Integrating decent work and social justice concepts emphasizes the quality of employment and structural conditions necessary for meaningful inclusion. Socio-professional integration is not merely entering the labor market but doing so under conditions of dignity, security, and fairness—essential for social and human development.

II. Articulation of Theoretical Frameworks

The preceding theories converge on a central point: socio-professional integration is a critical mediator between public interventions—active employment policies, institutional reforms, and poverty reduction programs—and social and human development. This theoretical articulation demonstrates that policy effectiveness should not be measured solely by economic outputs (job creation rates, number of beneficiaries) but also by the capacity to generate lasting inclusion and tangible improvements in living conditions.

Complementary insights from the integrated perspectives:

Human Capital & Entrepreneurship: Individuals enhance employability and create economic opportunities through technical, entrepreneurial, and transversal skills. Investments in human potential facilitate employment access and economic value creation.

Institutionalism & Social Protection: Labor market structures, norms, and regulations shape individuals' capacity for sustainable integration. Regulation and social protection are mechanisms that structure behavior and reduce uncertainty and vulnerability.

Human Development & Decent Work: Access to decent and secure employment is a vector of freedom and well-being. These theories emphasize the qualitative aspects of integration—dignity, stability, and equity—beyond mere economic participation.

Combining these perspectives allows the formulation of an integrative hypothesis: socio-professional integration acts as a critical channel through which public interventions influence social and human development. It provides a conceptual framework for analyzing how well-designed policies can transform individuals' real opportunities and living conditions.

III. Literature Review and Proposed Theoretical Model

Employment Policies: Definitions and Issues

Employment policies encompass all public interventions aimed at improving labor market functioning, reducing unemployment, and promoting access to decent work. They include active labor market policies (integration programs, vocational training, hiring subsidies, self-employment) and passive policies (unemployment benefits, social protection).

Effectiveness should be assessed not only through quantitative indicators (unemployment rates, number of beneficiaries) but also through:

- Job quality,
- Sustainability of professional integration,
- Training-employment match,
- Reduction of social and territorial inequalities,
- Enhancement of human capabilities (Sen, 1999).

In developing countries like Morocco, these policies are strategically important due to demographic pressure, weak productive employment, and persistent social and territorial inequalities (HCP, 2023).

Active Employment Policies and Socio-Professional Integration

International and Moroccan literature shows that active employment policies—vocational training, qualification programs, and entrepreneurship support—enhance skills and employability. Becker (1964) highlights the direct impact of

human capital investment on productivity and professional success, while Schumpeter (1934) emphasizes entrepreneurship in creating new economic opportunities.

Moroccan initiatives such as Idmaj (integration of young graduates) and Tahfiz (strengthening youth employability and entrepreneurship) exemplify these approaches. However, effectiveness varies by region, sector, and beneficiary profile (HCP, 2022; ANAPEC, 2023). Limitations include training quality, mismatch with labor market needs, and coordination with local economic actors.

H1a: Training and qualification improve skills and access to employment.

H1b: Entrepreneurship support enhances socio-professional integration.

Institutional Reforms and Socio-Professional Integration

Institutional reforms, including labor market regulation and social protection, are essential for reducing uncertainty and improving labor market inclusion. DiMaggio & Powell (1983) show that institutions shape organizational and individual behavior, while Esping-Andersen (1990) highlights the importance of social security systems for reducing employment risks and enhancing economic stability.

Recent Moroccan reforms aim to strengthen legal security for workers, regulate contracts, and improve social protection, creating a more favorable employment environment and encouraging investment in skills and entrepreneurial initiative (OECD, 2021).

H2a: Labor market regulation facilitates access to decent work.

H2b: Social protection contributes to socio-professional inclusion.

Poverty Reduction Programs and Socio-Professional Integration

Targeted social assistance and local development programs are complementary levers for integration and inequality reduction. Sen (1999) emphasizes that human development requires access to resources and opportunities, while Chambers (1997) highlights community-based approaches to strengthen autonomy and social inclusion.

Moroccan poverty reduction programs, such as the National Program for Poverty and Social Exclusion Reduction and rural development initiatives, now incorporate training and employability support, though effectiveness depends on coordination among institutional, social, and economic actors and local context adaptation (World Bank, 2022).

H3a: Targeted social assistance improves access to employment and skills.

H3b: Local development promotes socio-professional inclusion.

Socio-Professional Integration and Social & Human Development

Sustainable labor market integration is a central vector of social and human development. The ILO (1999) defines decent work as productive, secure, and dignified employment, while Rawls (1971) argues that social institutions should arrange inequalities to benefit the least advantaged.

Successful socio-professional integration enables:

Poverty reduction through sustainable income and economic opportunities,

Strengthening equality of opportunity via stable and accessible career pathways,

Improved well-being through social participation, autonomy, and dignity.

Empirical studies in Morocco confirm that youth and vulnerable populations benefiting from integrated training and socio-professional support programs experience significant improvements in employability and living conditions (HCP, 2022; ANAPEC, 2023).

H4a: Better socio-professional integration reduces poverty.

H4b: Access to decent work enhances equality of opportunity.

H4c: Socio-professional integration improves citizens' well-being.

IV. Proposed Integrated Conceptual Model

The integrated conceptual model positions socio-professional integration as a mediator between:

Active employment policies (training and entrepreneurship),

Institutional reforms (regulation and social protection),

Poverty reduction programs (social assistance and local development),

and social and human development (poverty reduction, equality of opportunity, well-being).

General Hypothesis: Public policies and social programs positively influence social and human development through improved socio-professional integration.

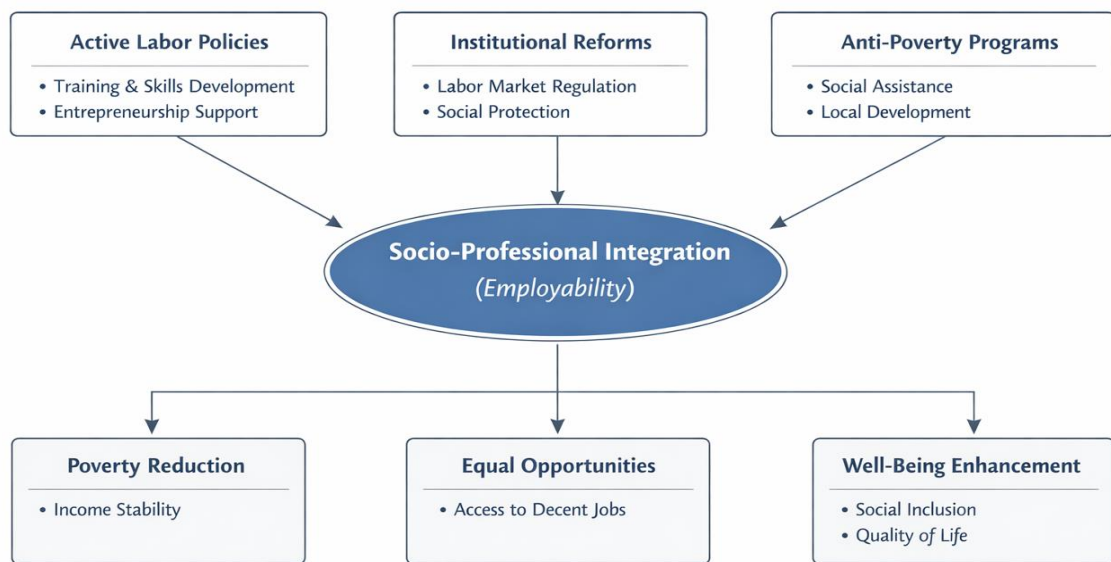


Figure 1: Conceptual Model – Influence of Public Policies on Social and Human Development via Socio-Professional Integration

Figure 1 shows that the three blocks located at the top of the diagram represent the main public and social interventions: active employment policies (H1a, H1b), institutional reforms (H2a, H2b), and poverty reduction programs (H3a, H3b). These interventions exert a direct influence on socio-professional integration, which acts as the central mediator of the model.

In turn, socio-professional integration channels its effects toward social and human development, in line with hypotheses H4a, H4b, and H4c. The integrative hypothesis H5 illustrates that all the public policies and programs examined contribute positively to human development through improvements in socio-professional integration.

This interpretation highlights the central role of socio-professional integration as a transmission mechanism, transforming public interventions into sustainable social and human outcomes.

V. Conclusion

This article highlights the importance of an integrated approach to understanding the impact of public policies on social and human development. The theoretical frameworks mobilized—human capital theory, entrepreneurship theory, institutionalism, social protection, human development, and decent work—converge on the idea that socio-professional integration is a key lever.

The theoretical and empirical findings suggest that:

Public interventions must combine training, entrepreneurship support, and social protection mechanisms.

Institutional reforms should secure access to stable employment and guarantee worker protection.

Poverty reduction programs should include skills development and local development components.

Overall, a multidimensional and integrated approach is necessary to transform employment into a genuine driver of social and human development and to ensure that public policies generate sustainable and equitable impacts on society.

The Conclusion summarizes the project's impact in 3–5 sentences. Restate the main achievement and its benefits. End with a forward-looking statement.

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