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Continuous Training and the Competitiveness of Moroccan SMEs: A Strategic Approach

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Abstract

Continuous training constitutes a central component of the strategic and operational management of Human Resources. It aims to produce, maintain, and develop individual and collective skills within organizations, thereby directly contributing to performance and competitiveness.

For training to be effective, it must not be an end in itself but rather a strategic tool aligned with the company's objectives. This requires integrating evaluation mechanisms and tools from the design phase to ensure the relevance, usefulness, and effectiveness of training programs in relation to the expected outcomes.

At the national level, Morocco, as an emerging country, must raise the overall level of education and training of its population—an essential condition for improving the competitiveness of Moroccan enterprises. Continuous training enhances adaptation to labor market transformations, strengthens employee employability, and improves productivity.

To maximize its impact, training must be considered a strategic investment and integrated into the company's overall strategy. An effective training policy requires strategic thinking in human resource management and skills development, grounded in and aligned with the organization's strategy.However, in Moroccan SMEs, this strategic approach remains limited: material investments are generally prioritized at the expense of continuous training. This research aims to examine existing training practices within Moroccan SMEs in a strategic approach.

Keywords: Morocco, HRM, competitiveness, skills, SMEs, continuous training.

الملخص

تُعدّ التكوين المستمر عنصرًا محوريًا في التدبير الاستراتيجي والعملياتي للموارد البشرية، إذ يهدف إلى خلق الكفاءات الفردية والجماعية والمحافظة عليها وتطويرها داخل المقاولات، بما يسهم بشكل مباشر في تحسين الأداء وتعزيز القدرة التنافسية.

ولكي يكون التكوين فعالًا، ينبغي ألا يُنظر إليه كغاية في حدّ ذاته، بل كأداة استراتيجية منسجمة مع أهداف المقاولة. ويتطلب ذلك إدماج آليات وأدوات التقييم منذ مرحلة التصميم، لضمان ملاءمة برامج التكوين وجدواها وفعاليتها مقارنة بالأهداف المسطرة.

على الصعيد الوطني، يواجه المغرب، بوصفه بلدًا صاعدًا، تحدّي الرفع من مستوى التعليم والتكوين لدى ساكنته، باعتبار ذلك شرطًا أساسيًا لتحسين تنافسية المقاولات المغربية. ويساهم التكوين المستمر في تعزيز القدرة على التكيّف مع تحولات سوق الشغل، وتحسين قابلية تشغيل الأجراء، ورفع الإنتاجية.

ولتعظيم أثره، يجب اعتبار التكوين استثمارًا استراتيجيًا ودمجه ضمن الاستراتيجية الشاملة للمقاولة. كما تتطلب سياسة تكوين فعّالة تفكيرًا استراتيجيًا في تدبير الموارد البشرية وتنمية الكفاءات، منسجمًا مع استراتيجية المقاولة. غير أنّ هذه المقاربة الاستراتيجية تظل محدودة داخل المقاولات الصغرى والمتوسطة المغربية، حيث يُعطى غالبًا الأولوية للاستثمارات المادية على حساب التكوين المستمر. ومن ثمّ، يهدف هذا البحث إلى دراسة ممارسات التكوين داخل المقاولات الصغرى والمتوسطة المغربية من منظور استراتيجي.

الكلمات المفتاحية :المغرب، تدبير الموارد البشرية، التنافسية، الكفاءات، المقاولات الصغرى والمتوسطة، التكوين المستمر.

Introduction

In a globalized economy where markets increasingly transcend national borders, economic competition has reached unprecedented levels. Corporate efficiency now depends more than ever on the ability of firms to manage social and human dimensions effectively. To remain competitive, companies can no longer rely on employees who merely obey instructions and execute tasks passively; instead, they must build on solid skills and bodies of knowledge (Barzuchetti & Claude, 1995).

Modern organizations are increasingly grounded in qualifications and expertise. However, several factors have contributed to the emergence of a widening gap between the skills available in the labor force and those required by the labor market (Bezsonoff, 2000).

The past decade has been marked by an unprecedented acceleration of technological progress and intersectoral technology transfer, leading to the emergence of new categories of highly qualified professions (Bourgeois, 1999). These transformations have profoundly altered work organization and human resource management practices. Permanent employment is declining, professional instability is increasing, and feelings of social insecurity are intensifying, particularly as a result of mergers and acquisitions (Chahut, 1998).

Moreover, atypical forms of employment—such as part-time work, temporary agency work, and fixed-term employment—are expanding, thereby encouraging the growth of informal employment in many countries. Despite the rapid growth of the working-age population, the modernization of economic sectors remains limited. This situation can be explained by sluggish economic growth, low productivity, and political and macroeconomic instability, all of which constrain investment.

In this context, the urgency of promoting continuous employee training is no longer subject to debate. Training represents a key lever for developing individual and collective competencies, strengthening firms' capabilities, and enabling them to seize the opportunities offered by globalization. For an emerging country such as Morocco, raising the level of education and qualification of the population is a crucial prerequisite for ensuring the competitiveness of national enterprises. Continuous training facilitates adaptation to labor market changes and serves as a tool for enhancing productivity and employability.

To be effective, training should not be perceived as an isolated expense but rather as a strategic investment integrated into the company's overall policy (Dennery, 1999). However, the practice of evaluating the return on investment in training remains relatively recent, and few companies have fully incorporated it into their strategic decision-making processes.

In an increasingly interconnected and dematerialized economic environment, the valorization of intellectual capital has become a major challenge. Today, companies need employees who are capable of critical thinking, autonomy, and innovation, rather than merely providing executive labor. Responsiveness, initiative, and relational skills are now essential drivers of competitiveness and innovation. Continuous training thus emerges as a strategic tool for developing human capital, fostering employee loyalty, and strengthening organizational sustainability.

The research presented in this study aims to assess the degree of alignment between continuous training and corporate competitiveness. It focuses on how Moroccan small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) use training as a strategic lever to improve performance and adapt to an unstable economic environment. Based on a survey conducted among 100 companies from various sectors, this study analyzes current practices, barriers to continuous training, and prospects for improvement.

1. Continuing Training and Business Competitiveness

The concept of competitiveness, both in its definition and analytical scope, has been subject to diverse—sometimes even contradictory—interpretations. Economists are generally divided into two main positions: some consider competitiveness to be an inappropriate concept for economic analysis, while others restrict it to a narrower meaning, such as productivity or profitability.

1.1. Continuing Training: What Are We Talking About?

To address this question, it is necessary to define the key concepts related to continuing training and to clarify its roles at three levels: the firm, the individual, and the national economy.

1.1.1. At the Firm Level

According to Bélanger et al. (1993), training is defined as *"a set of planned learning activities aimed at acquiring knowledge, skills, and attitudes that facilitate the adaptation of individuals and groups to their socio-professional environment, while contributing to the achievement of the organization's efficiency objectives."*

From this perspective, continuing training constitutes an essential component of both strategic and operational human resource management. It must simultaneously respond to:

- market requirements and changes,
- the needs of internal and external stakeholders,
- and the firm's overall strategy.

It thus becomes a lever for anticipating the skills required in the short, medium, and long term, as well as a regulatory tool enabling the firm to adapt rapidly to its environment.

However, these functions of anticipation and regulation can only be fully ensured if the evaluative dimension is integrated at the core of training design. In other words, training must be conceived as a structured, dynamic, and regulated system in which evaluation is an integral component.

1.1.2. At the Individual Level

At the individual level, continuing training refers to a set of formal or informal learning activities that enable:

- the acquisition and development of competencies,
- the maintenance of employability,
- the improvement of professionalism and versatility,
- and adaptation to the requirements of an ever-changing labor market.

For Perrenoud (1994), continuing training is *"a vague notion that can be defined in a thousand ways."* It is also referred to by a wide range of terms—lifelong learning, upskilling, retraining, professional development, continuing professional education—whose meanings vary across organizations, socio-cultural contexts, and historical periods.

This terminological diversity reflects the multiplicity of forms and objectives of continuing training in serving individual development.

1.1.3. At the Macroeconomic Level

At the national level, training appears simultaneously as:

- an obligation for employers,
- a right for employees,
- and a major lever of economic competitiveness and social development.

National development thus depends on the involvement of all stakeholders in enhancing human capital.

Continuing training is therefore recognized as a strategic investment in human resources. It mobilizes significant financial, technical, and human resources, making reflection on its return on investment essential. As Gérard (2003) emphasizes, *"even more than for material investment, it is important to assess the return on investment of training in order to optimize and rationalize it."*

In this regard, Gilibert and Gillet (2010) note that training, despite being a concept with sometimes blurred boundaries, ideally follows a series of successive stages recognized by specialists in work psychology (Huteau, 2003; Arnold, 2005; Spector, 2006):

- needs assessment,
- definition of objectives,
- preparation and design of the training action,
- implementation,

evaluation of training outcomes.

1.2. The Concept of Competitiveness

Competitiveness is often confused with its financial translation, particularly profitability or productivity. In reality, it refers to a firm's ability, at a given point in time, to withstand competition. It represents a potential advantage, a comparative position relative to other market players. Profitability or productivity are only partial indicators of a broader concept, namely competitiveness.

When applied to a country's integration into international trade, competitiveness relies on multiple and interdependent parameters. International rankings are generally based on two main indicators:

- **The Growth Competitiveness Index (GCI)**, which measures a country's medium- and long-term economic growth potential based on the macroeconomic environment and institutional efficiency.
- **The Business Competitiveness Index (BCI)**, which identifies factors supporting productivity and economic performance, such as firm sophistication and the quality of the business environment.

To improve its competitiveness and global ranking, Morocco must continue reforms and adopt targeted measures to strengthen sectors where its position remains weak. In particular, in the field of technological development—where the country lags behind in innovation and research and development—specific incentives, notably fiscal measures, as well as appropriate training programs, are required to enhance technological competitiveness.

At the microeconomic level, the competitiveness of Moroccan firms depends directly on the environment in which they operate. The strengths and weaknesses of this environment have an immediate impact on firm performance, highlighting the importance of a coherent strategy and continuous adaptation to both domestic and international economic conditions.

Table 1: Determinants of Competitiveness

Internal firm conditions		Infrastructure and services
Innovation and technology	Investment climate	Judicial system
Access to finance		Relations with public administration

Source: Alami (2015)

1.3. Dimensions of Competitiveness

Competitiveness fundamentally comprises two dimensions: price competitiveness and non-price competitiveness.

1.3.1. Price Competitiveness

Price competitiveness refers to the ability of a firm or a sector to sell its products at prices lower than those of international competitors. It serves as an indicator of export performance relative to foreign competitors' prices.

This indicator is influenced by three main factors:

1.3.1.1. Production Costs

Production costs include wages, intermediate consumption costs, economies of scale, and above all, labor productivity. Productivity measures the efficiency of a worker or a group of workers in producing a given volume of goods or services. It is not constant over time, and improvements generate productivity gains, which constitute a fundamental lever of competitiveness.

Factors influencing productivity gains include improved working conditions, better organization, waste reduction, and higher qualification levels of employees (Alami, 2015).

In Morocco, several constraints limit productivity, including the near absence of research and development, underqualified labor, and insufficient managerial supervision (Hatem, 2019). Labor productivity is commonly measured as follows:

- **Labor productivity (quantity)** = Output quantity / Labor input
- **Labor productivity (value)** = Value of output / Wage bill

The French National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE) defines apparent labor productivity as value added per employee.

1.3.1.2. Exchange Rate

Currency appreciation or depreciation directly affects price competitiveness. A strong currency reduces export competitiveness, whereas depreciation indirectly protects the domestic market.

1.3.1.3. Firms' Margin Behavior

Margins represent the proportion of profit included in the selling price. To maintain price competitiveness, firms adjust their margins in response to variations in production costs.

It should be noted that price competitiveness does not depend solely on productivity or labor costs. Macroeconomic factors such as exchange rates, export subsidies, and non-tariff barriers also influence firms' performance in global markets.

1.3.2. Non-Price Competitiveness

Competitiveness is not limited to price factors. It also includes qualitative aspects such as delivery times, after-sales service quality, brand image, and customer relationship management. These elements are particularly crucial for firms operating in highly competitive markets.

Employee training constitutes a strategic lever for improving non-price competitiveness. Mobilizing human capital enhances work organization, production quality, and reduces delivery and operating costs.

A study by the Center for Economic and Social Research (CERES) reveals a strong correlation (0.80) between investment in continuing training and export rates, illustrating the direct impact of training on competitiveness.

1.4. Impact of Continuing Training on Firm Performance

Continuing training is a strategic investment whose return must be assessed through economic and social performance indicators. Evaluation enables:

- the identification of direct and indirect returns on training,
- the detection of areas for improvement,
- the measurement of investment profitability,
- the accumulation of experience to optimize future training initiatives.

The impact of training on productivity can be measured using a production function:

Log (VAt) = x log (KT) + y log (Lt) +ZTR +other factors

Where:

VA = value added; K = capital; L = labor; TR = training.

Empirical results indicate that the average impact of training on productivity is approximately **28%**, and this effect doubles when firms introduce new technologies within the three years preceding the evaluation. The impact is stronger in large firms and when training programs are implemented on a regular basis.

Training also affects other dimensions:

- **Socio-organizational**: cohesion, organization, information flows;
- **Cultural**: internal and external behaviors, responses to change;
- **Societal**: integration into the local environment, human and social development.

Thus, continuing training is simultaneously a tool for economic competitiveness, human resource development, and a strategic lever for corporate sustainability

Table 2: Forms of Training Impact

Impact Category	Associated Elements
Impact on operational parameters	Safety – Productivity – Environmental compliance – Integration into the local environment
Societal impact	Contribution to societal development – Human development of organization members – Social cohesion – People management
Socio-organizational impact	Information flows – Behavior management – Development of human competencies
Cultural impact	Interpersonal cooperation patterns – Organizational values and culture – Regulation mechanisms – Multiple affiliations – Conflict management styles

Source: Barzucchetti & Claude (1995)

1.5. Difficulties in Evaluating the Impact of Training

Evaluating the impact of a training program is a complex exercise due to several methodological and organizational constraints. Three major difficulties are generally identified.

1.5.1. Imprecision of Expected Outcomes

The first and perhaps most critical difficulty lies in the lack of clearly defined expected outcomes. In many organizations, employees attend training because they have expressed interest, because the company routinely offers such programs, or because training providers have effectively promoted their benefits. In such cases, the true objective of the training action is insufficiently specified, making rigorous evaluation impossible.

Even when objectives are stated, they are often vague or exclusively qualitative. For example, an intention such as “improving service quality” is insufficient unless it is translated into observable and operational indicators such as response time, complaint rates, or customer satisfaction levels.

Without this prior clarification, the organization cannot determine whether the training has actually produced the intended effects.

1.5.2. Multiplicity and Diversity of Impacts

A second difficulty relates to the plurality of possible effects generated by training. A training program may produce expected outcomes, but also unintended effects—both positive and negative.

Therefore, evaluation cannot be limited to verifying the achievement of a single objective; it must also identify other consequences, sometimes unforeseen, and analyze their scope and significance.

This approach requires a broader exploration of field realities, without prior certainty about where the most significant impacts will emerge. Training often acts as a catalyst for organizational, relational, or cultural changes, which must be taken into account in the evaluation process.

1.5.3. Inability to Isolate the Specific Effect of Training

The third difficulty concerns determining the extent to which observed effects can be attributed exclusively to training rather than to other factors.

Two key challenges arise:

- **Identifying what would have occurred in the absence of training.**

Some observed outcomes may result from natural organizational evolution or pre-existing dynamics. The actual impact of training may therefore represent only a portion of the observed change.

- **Distinguishing training effects from other variables.**

Employee or departmental performance may also depend on external factors such as the introduction of new technologies, organizational restructuring, managerial changes, or the social climate. These factors may either reinforce or neutralize the effects of training.

Although advanced statistical methods can sometimes isolate the relative contribution of different variables, their implementation requires that these factors be clearly identified and measurable—conditions that are often not met. Attributing an observable impact solely to training thus remains risky and, in some cases, methodologically unsound.

1.5.4. Limits of Direct Interpretation of Observed Results

Given these difficulties, it would be illusory to assert the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of a training action solely on the basis of observed outcomes.

In other words, observing change does not allow one to state with certainty that it is attributable to training. Conversely, the absence of observable change does not necessarily mean that the training was ineffective.

Evaluation must therefore be cautious, nuanced, and integrated into a broader analytical framework.

1.5.5. The Need for a Systemic Perspective

To overcome these obstacles, it is essential to mobilize all levels of evaluation identified in classical approaches (Kirkpatrick, Hamblin, Kaufman, etc.) and to articulate them within a systemic perspective.

Such an approach makes it possible to assess training at multiple levels:

- participants' reactions;
- acquisition of knowledge and skills;
- transfer to the workplace;
- organizational impacts;
- long-term strategic effects.

This methodological articulation offers the most robust pathway to genuinely understanding training effectiveness and its contribution to skill development and overall organizational performance.

1.6. Tools for Impact Evaluation: Performance and Competitiveness Indicators

Performance indicators are essential tools for assessing the various dimensions of a project, program, or development strategy. They provide information on mobilized resources, implemented processes, outputs produced, results achieved, and long-term impacts.

When based on a rigorous system of data collection, analysis, and dissemination, these indicators enable managers to monitor the progress of implemented actions, evaluate outcomes, and take corrective measures to improve service quality.

It is therefore essential to involve all stakeholders in defining these indicators. Such involvement fosters better understanding and ownership of measurement tools, enhancing their relevance and effective use in decision-making processes.

1.6.1. Main Functions of Performance Indicators

Performance indicators make it possible to:

- rapidly detect problems through an early warning system, facilitating the implementation of corrective actions;
- determine whether an in-depth evaluation or a reassessment of an existing mechanism is necessary.

In practice, the most commonly used indicators are those that measure easily quantifiable aspects, such as:

- productivity levels,
- quantity of defective output,
- number and nature of product returns,
- volume and type of customer complaints,
- absenteeism rate,
- employee turnover rate,
- number of workplace accidents,
- level of financial profitability.

Other indicators, although relevant, remain more difficult to measure due to their qualitative or diffuse nature, including:

- time losses,
- waste,
- direct and indirect maintenance costs,
- customer attrition,
- customer satisfaction levels,
- quality of the organizational climate,
- employee satisfaction,
- direct and indirect labor costs.

1.6.2. Benabou's (1997) Cost–Benefit Approach

To assess the profitability of an investment in training, Benabou (1997) proposes a cost–benefit analysis method aimed at calculating the return on invested capital. The author formulates the following equation:

ROI=(Net Savings/Training Costs)× 100

Where:

- **Net Savings** = Gross Savings − Training Costs
- **Gross Savings** = Cost reductions observed on one or more indicators
- **Training Costs** = All expenses related to the training program (trainer fees, salaries, logistics, social benefits, etc.)

This approach is particularly useful as it enables the measurement of the economic profitability of training. However, it requires the quantification of all incurred costs as well as the gains generated through improvements in both quantitative and qualitative indicators.

In practice, this exercise is often lengthy, complex, and delicate, as it is difficult to isolate the specific effects of training from those resulting from other organizational or contextual factors.

1.6.3. Limitations Related to the Definition and Use of Indicators

Poorly defined indicators inevitably lead to imprecise or misleading measurements. Moreover, multiplying indicators excessively may render the monitoring system costly and difficult to implement.

In many cases, a trade-off is required between methodological rigor and operational feasibility, leading organizations to prioritize indicators for which data are genuinely accessible and reliable.

For these reasons, the ultimate objective of training impact evaluation should not be to establish a single, direct causal relationship between changes in an indicator and the training itself—such causality is rarely demonstrable in isolation. Rather, evaluation should aim to understand the overall contribution of training to performance improvement and competitiveness development.

2. Prospects for the Development of Continuing Vocational Training in Morocco: SME Practices

2.1. Current Situation

2.1.1. Strong Disparities Among Training Beneficiaries

Although vocational training is widely present in the surveyed firms, access remains highly unequal depending on age, gender, and socio-professional category.

Low-skilled employees, particularly unskilled workers, remain largely excluded from training programs.

These inequalities are mainly explained by structural factors such as firm size and sector of activity.

2.1.2. Strong Sectoral Disparities

Based on our survey findings, certain sectors exhibit a strong tradition of continuing training, particularly banking and insurance, where financial participation rates exceed 20%.

Intermediate situations are observed in sectors where training effort reaches or exceeds 10%, notably electronics, chemicals, and petrochemicals.

In these sectors, training is used to support or anticipate rapid technological change or deep transformations of productive structures resulting from major restructuring processes.

In such sectors, access to training is more equitable, promotional dynamics are generally more active, and training tends to involve all employee categories.

Conversely, sectors operating close to the legal minimum—such as commerce, hotels, and restaurants—are characterized by:

- a high proportion of non-graduates,
- low qualification levels,
- limited promotion opportunities,
- high labor turnover.

In these cases, continuing training is still regarded as a secondary activity, disconnected from corporate strategies and projects when they exist.

2.1.3. Weaknesses of Training in SMEs

SMEs often limit training expenditures to the legal minimum. Several observations emerge:

- significant gaps between small and large firms due to limited resources, management difficulties, and lack of strategic vision;
- some firms have no training manager and do not implement training plans;
- others have more structured organizations but remain fragile;
- only a small number of firms adopt a strategic approach to training aligned with skills management;
- overall, financial effort remains limited (rarely exceeding 2% of payroll), and the institutional framework remains weak.

Identified constraints fall into four categories:

- firm-related constraints,
- institutional constraints,
- socio-cultural constraints,
- economic constraints.

2.2. Paths for Improving Corporate Training Systems

2.2.1. Redefining the Role of the Training Function

Training must be integrated into an overall human resource management policy.

This requires the active involvement of the entire managerial line to prepare employees for future roles and ensure coherence in competency development initiatives.

2.2.2. The Need for Individual Commitment

Employee motivation is a decisive factor for training success.

- Training must offer tangible personal and professional benefits to learners.
- Post-training organizational support is essential: the more acquired skills are recognized and valued, the more individuals will be willing to mobilize them.

2.2.3. Training as an Investment

The challenge is not to spend more, but to spend better.

- The training process must be formalized and evaluated using precise tools and indicators.
- Impact should be measured at both qualitative and quantitative levels.
- Evaluation helps shift perceptions of training toward that of a strategic investment.

Despite its importance, continuing training remains underestimated, particularly in SMEs, where it is still perceived as an intangible investment with delayed returns. Authorities have proposed several measures to strengthen the training system, yet many remain non-operational.

It can therefore be concluded that employee training has become a critical issue for any firm concerned with its survival in an increasingly unstable market. Unfortunately, even today—except for some large organizations or subsidiaries of international groups—the number of companies genuinely convinced of the value of training remains limited.

If firms remain reluctant to engage in training initiatives, it is also because they do not fully perceive its importance. Training is an intangible investment, difficult to measure and whose results are not immediately visible.

Aware of these challenges, public authorities have introduced several measures aimed at developing continuing training in Morocco. However, despite the wide range of proposed initiatives—most of which have not yet been fully implemented—continuing training in Morocco still has a long way to go before it can occupy a strategic position within Moroccan firms. Key priorities include:

- Establishing a genuine continuing training policy;
- Creating a national system for the validation of prior professional learning to facilitate assessment and guidance;
- Improving training quality and simplifying existing mechanisms;
- Developing a culture of the learning organization.

3. Perspectives: Toward a Comprehensive Policy for Continuing Vocational Training in Morocco

Given the national economic context and the urgent need to enhance the competitiveness of Moroccan firms, vocational training policy must be global, coherent, and oriented toward all relevant challenges and stakeholders.

3.1. Training for All

Continuing training must become a major societal issue and be developed as a priority along several key axes:

- Reducing inequalities in access, particularly for low-skilled employees in SMEs;
- Ensuring equitable distribution of training funds across employee categories;
- Extending mandatory training obligations to all firms, including those with fewer than ten employees;
- Strengthening information, awareness, and support for SMEs in developing training plans.

3.1.1. Lifelong Learning

To establish a genuine culture of lifelong learning, several measures are required:

- Recognizing the right of every person living in Morocco to lifelong vocational training, as a continuation of initial education;
- Establishing a training credit system based on a points mechanism recorded in an individual training passport, accumulating:
    - initial and continuing training,
    - acquired skills,
    - competencies developed through professional or associative activities;
- Enabling individuals to undertake periodic skills assessments (e.g., every five years), complementing those conducted within firms;
- Making the Individual Training Leave (CIF) a major social right, enabling professional reconversion or long-term career development;

- Reforming system governance by separating the roles of organization, management, and financing—currently largely concentrated within OFPPT, often criticized for acting as both judge and party.

3.1.2. Training in All Its Forms

The success of a training policy requires:

- Making continuing training a shared responsibility between firms and social partners;
- Valuing internal training programs and integrating them into formal training plans;
- Recognizing the firm itself as a learning space, where productive activity directly contributes to skills development.

3.1.3. Improved Investment in Training

For training to be perceived as a strategic investment, several actions should be considered:

- Encouraging proactive corporate behavior, for example by exempting firms from the statutory 1.6% levy if they invest beyond the mandatory minimum;
- Clarifying the training repayment clause by granting it simple legal validity linked to the time required to amortize training investment;
- Adapting accounting rules to allow:
  - capitalization of training expenditures,
  - amortization over several years;
- Encouraging banks to offer training loans, repayable over flexible periods, allowing training investments to be amortized like tangible assets.

Improving investment must be accompanied by a reorganization of the continuing training market:

- **On the supply side:** expanding the role of private training providers to enhance responsiveness and alignment with labor market needs, while strengthening work-study programs;
- **On the demand side:** supporting firms—especially SMEs—in:
  - identifying skills needs,
  - formulating training demand,
  - mobilizing the human and material resources required to implement training plans.

These stages represent the greatest challenges for Moroccan SMEs.

3.2. Establishing a National System for the Validation of Prior Learning

The effectiveness of the training system depends on the existence of a reliable mechanism for the validation of prior learning and qualifications. This system must be flexible, adaptable, and socially recognized.

The establishment of a national competency framework by sector constitutes the foundation of such a system. In the short term, the development of skills assessments may serve as an operational validation tool.

Key principles to be respected include:

- Clearly separating:

- the institution that provides training,
- the body that evaluates competencies,
- the entity that uses or recognizes qualifications;

- Allowing multiple pathways leading to the validation of the same competencies.

3.2.1. Improving Training Quality and Simplifying Mechanisms

The success of a national training system relies on a quality-oriented approach involving employees, firms, and training providers.

It is therefore necessary to:

- Encourage the creation of training quality agencies that may lead to certification;
- Simplify existing mechanisms, particularly Special Training Contracts (CSF), by:
  - reducing administrative procedures;
  - establishing information call centers;
  - adapting management to sectoral and firm-size specificities;
  - increasing procedural flexibility.

3.3. Toward a Learning Organization (Knowledge Management)

In an ever-changing economic environment, firms must adopt a new paradigm: shifting from simple consumption of skills to the continuous production of knowledge. The learning organization is characterized by:

- continuous collective learning;
- ongoing monitoring and foresight;
- knowledge creation and dissemination;
- capitalization of competencies;
- regular self-evaluation.

This model reduces risks associated with the departure of skilled employees and ensures the sustainability of corporate know-how.

Conclusion

This analysis highlights several key findings regarding the state of continuing vocational training in Morocco.

First, the legal and financial framework governing training remains insufficient and lacks coherence. Although more than 800 training organizations are officially registered, the supply paradoxically remains limited and poorly adapted: only a minority offer programs truly aligned with the specific needs of productive sectors.

Furthermore, while economic actors acknowledge the strategic importance of training as a competitiveness factor, actual investment remains very low. This gap between positive perceptions and financial commitment reveals a structural contradiction, particularly within SMEs.

This situation is compounded by weak evaluation practices. As long as the impact of training on organizational performance remains difficult to measure, its role will remain unclear and undervalued. The absence of rigorous evaluation tools makes it difficult to assess the effectiveness of training initiatives and prevents firms from clearly identifying the extent to which their objectives have been achieved.

In addition, training practices remain insufficiently disseminated within the Moroccan business fabric. They often remain at the level of intention rather than effective implementation. Several constraints explain this situation:

- technical constraints related to the lack of internal expertise for designing and managing training plans;
- institutional constraints stemming from complex mechanisms and fragmented responsibilities;
- socio-cultural constraints, where training is still perceived as a cost rather than a strategic investment;
- and economic constraints, particularly in contexts where short-term survival takes precedence over long-term skills development.

Thus, despite notable progress and growing awareness, continuing vocational training in Morocco still struggles to fully play its role as a lever for competitiveness and sustainable business development

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