

Translator Education and Graduate Employability in Morocco: Structural Misalignment and the Limits of Reform

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Abstract

This article examines the structural misalignment between translator education and labor market demands in Morocco. It evaluates the extent to which successive policy reform initiatives have resolved this gap. The study draws on a mixed-methods investigation of 329 Master's translation graduates from the 2020 to 2025 cohorts alongside 36 semi-structured interviews. It situates these empirical findings within the broader national policy architecture from the 1999 National Charter for Education and Training through the 2023 PACTE ESRI 2030 reform framework. The article argues that persistent graduate unemployment and professional displacement reflect a systemic configuration that has resisted successive reform cycles. The study identifies and empirically substantiates three dimensions of misalignment. First, the pedagogical dimension reveals that curricula remain predominantly theoretical and disconnected from professional practice. Second, the market dimension shows that the Moroccan translation sector lacks the regulation, geographic accessibility, and formal recognition necessary to absorb qualified graduates. Third, the policy dimension demonstrates that national reform frameworks have consistently prioritized general institutional metrics over the field-specific conditions that translator education requires. The article concludes with evidence-based policy recommendations that target curriculum renewal, sectoral market regulation, and the strategic repositioning of translation within national higher education policy.

Keywords: translator education; graduate employability; PACTE ESRI 2030; higher education reform; labour market misalignment; curriculum development

INTRODUCTION

In August 2018, His Majesty King Mohammed VI addressed the nation on the state of the Moroccan education system. The address was unusually direct. The King observed that it was unacceptable for one in four young people to be unemployed despite Morocco's overall economic growth, and that the education system had failed to produce graduates equipped for the jobs that existed. He singled out specific branches of study in which graduates found it particularly difficult to access the labour market, and he called for urgent and comprehensive reforms. The speech was a public acknowledgement, at the highest level of state authority, of a problem that researchers and graduates had been documenting for years: Moroccan higher education was producing credentials that the labour market did not reliably reward.

The data that contextualise this address have not improved substantially in the years since. The High Commission for Planning (HCP, 2025) reports that nearly 19 percent of Moroccan university degree holders remained unemployed in the third quarter of 2025, compared to 4.8 percent of those without a university qualification. Historical figures from the same source showed unemployment among holders of advanced degrees exceeding 60 percent at one point, a figure that reflects decades of accumulated structural misalignment between what the higher education system produces and what the labour market requires. Approximately 545,000 workers were affected by an education–job mismatch in early 2025, a number that signals not a cyclical downturn but a persistent structural condition.

Within this national picture, the situation of graduates from Master's translation programs has received almost no systematic empirical attention. Translation is a professionally specialised field whose graduates require specific technical competencies, market knowledge, and professional networks that general employability interventions cannot supply. The field has its own competence frameworks, its own technology landscape, its own market structures, and its own history of pedagogical critique. Yet Moroccan translation programs have largely

been treated as part of the general humanities and social science faculty problem rather than as a specific case requiring specific diagnosis.

This article provides that specific diagnosis. It draws on two bodies of material: the empirical findings from a mixed-methods investigation of 329 Master's translation graduates from the 2020 to 2025 cohort, which produced detailed evidence on self-perceived employability gaps and their structural drivers; and the policy record, from the 1999 National Charter through PACTE ESRI 2030, which provides the institutional context within which these graduates were trained and within which their professional futures are being shaped. The article asks what the graduate evidence tells us about the effectiveness of this policy record in the specific case of translator education, and what reform directions the evidence supports.

The article also provides a retrospective assessment of the work of Abdellah Amid (2012), whose book-length diagnosis of the Moroccan translation sector remains the most sustained and penetrating account of its structural problems available in the literature. Amid proposed a National Plan for Translation more than a decade ago. The article examines how his diagnosis holds up against the graduate evidence collected a decade later, and how much of what he identified as needing to change has changed.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The National Policy Architecture for Higher Education and Employability

Morocco's policy response to graduate unemployment has been active and multi-layered. The National Charter for Education and Training of 1999, accompanied by Law 01.00 of 2000, established the first systematic framework for aligning educational output with economic development priorities. The adoption of the Licence–Master–Doctorate system in 2003 harmonised degree structures with European norms and was intended to improve both international comparability and labour market relevance. The Emergency Plan of 2009 to 2012 accelerated implementation of Charter provisions and introduced quality monitoring mechanisms. The Higher Council of Education's Strategic Vision 2015 to 2030 prioritised equity and quality while embedding employability as a central

institutional obligation. Framework Law 51.17 of 2019 consolidated these provisions into a legally binding reform mandate.

The most recent and ambitious framework is the National Plan to Accelerate the Transformation of the Higher Education, Scientific Research, and Innovation System, known as PACTE ESRI 2030, launched in 2023. This framework explicitly targets the misalignment between educational outputs and labour market demands, promotes skills-based training, encourages institutional diversity, and seeks to build systematic channels of dialogue between universities and the private sector (Benhima, 2025). Alongside PACTE ESRI 2030, the National Employment Strategy 2015 to 2025 has funded active labour market programs through ANAPEC, including the Idmaj and Taehil insertion programs, and a 2024 to 2026 agreement between the Ministry of Higher Education and the Confederation of Moroccan Employers has formalised commitments to employer–university dialogue (Ibourk & Ghazi, 2024).

The persistence of graduate unemployment despite this policy activity is itself a finding that requires explanation. Mansouri (2022) argued in a qualitative study of Moroccan graduate employability that the failures stem from a combination of individual, institutional, and labour market factors whose interaction successive reform frameworks have not adequately addressed. Draissi et al. (2023) documented the specific dimensions of education–job mismatch in Moroccan urban workplaces, finding that soft skills deficits, practical competency gaps, and misaligned specialisation profiles were the most commonly reported sources of mismatch, a pattern consistent with the international literature on graduate employability in middle-income countries (Brown et al., 2020; Li, 2024). Bougroum and Ibourk (2011) demonstrated that graduates of open-access faculties, which include the Faculties of Letters and Human Sciences where most translation programs are housed, face substantially higher risks of long-term unemployment and underemployment than graduates of selective professional schools.

A consistent finding across this literature is that reform frameworks have tended to operate at the level of institutional structures and degree architectures rather than

at the level of specific field practices. The Bologna-inspired LMD system changed how degrees are organised; it did not change what translator education programs teach or how they teach it. PACTE ESRI 2030 incentivises employer dialogue and skills-based training as institutional practices; it does not specify what translator education specifically needs to address to close the gap between its graduates and the language services market. This gap between general reform intent and field-specific reform content is a recurrent theme in the evidence, and it is the primary policy dimension of the structural misalignment documented in this article.

Translator Education in Morocco

Translator education in Morocco operates within a higher education system characterised by linguistic plurality and institutional stratification. Arabic and French dominate instruction across most public institutions, with English occupying an increasingly significant position in business and technical fields. Translation programs sit primarily within Faculties of Letters and Human Sciences, where they function as tracks within broader language or English departments rather than as independent professional schools. The principal exception is the Ecole Supérieure Roi Fahd de Traduction in Tangier, a nationally distinctive institution offering a professionally oriented two-year Master's program with structured internships, research projects, and connections to international organisations, diplomatic bodies, and the media sector.

The research literature on Moroccan translator education is limited in volume but consistent in its diagnostic conclusions. El Karnichi (2012) identified pedagogical shortcomings in postgraduate translation programs across the country, pointing to limited technology training, insufficient specialisation in commercially valued domains, and the absence of structured professional socialisation mechanisms. El Boubekri (2023) found that undergraduate translation curricula suffered from insufficient practical exercises and near-total disconnection from the specialised document types that dominate professional practice. Elmaghnougi (2021) questioned how translation theory could be more effectively connected to practical application in undergraduate curricula, identifying a gap between

academic instruction and professional expectation that was structural rather than incidental. Others reported that students generally had positive attitudes toward skill development but expressed dissatisfaction with the allocated contact hours, assessment methods, and the near absence of career-oriented content in their programs.

A finding that recurs across this literature, and that intersects with Amid's (2012) more systematic critique, concerns faculty profiles. Multiple studies have noted that translation modules in Moroccan universities are frequently taught by language and literature academics rather than by practicing professional translators. The consequence is a curriculum shaped by philological and literary traditions rather than by the commercial, technical, and entrepreneurial realities of contemporary language services provision. Students receive instruction in translation theory, comparative stylistics, and linguistic analysis from people whose expertise in these areas is genuine; they receive no instruction in client management, project workflow, pricing, professional portfolio development, or the technological landscape of the industry, because their instructors have not operated within it.

Abdellah Amid and the National Plan for Translation

Abdellah Amid's 2012 book on the state of translation in Morocco remains the most comprehensive and theoretically grounded diagnosis of the sector available in any language. Amid moved beyond the descriptive catalogue of curricular shortcomings that characterises much of the pedagogical literature to provide what he himself described as a socio-economic critique of the entire translation ecosystem. His analysis treated translation not as a branch of language acquisition but as an independent transformative industry whose health had direct consequences for Morocco's capacity to participate in the globalised economy.

Several of Amid's specific arguments are worth examining carefully in the light of a decade's subsequent evidence. His claim that the era of pen and paper in translation is over, and that graduates must be trained to manage a Translator's Workstation integrating CAT tools, corpora, and specialised databases, anticipated by a decade the empirical finding from the present investigation that graduates of

Moroccan Master's programs cannot distinguish professional CAT environments from consumer machine translation tools. The professional literacy gap documented in the graduate data is precisely the gap that Amid identified as the consequence of training students with obsolete methods.

Amid's argument that translation programs must stop producing linguists and start producing qualified agents of a transformative industry found its empirical validation in the finding that 42.9 percent of the 2020 to 2025 graduate cohort was employed in fields entirely unrelated to translation at the time of the survey. These graduates had not failed professionally; many were employed in teaching, administration, human resources, and customer service roles where their linguistic competence and emotional resilience served them well. But the sector for which they had specifically trained had not absorbed them, and the investment in specialised translation education had not generated the field-specific returns that Human Capital Theory would predict.

Amid's proposed National Plan for Translation identified four reform domains: translation pedagogy, professional practice, scientific research, and professional organisation. More than a decade after his diagnosis, the evidence suggests that limited progress has occurred in the first and fourth domains. Some curricular innovation is visible in specific programs, and some professional association activity has developed. The second domain, professional practice, and the third, scientific research on translation in Morocco, remain substantially underdeveloped. The Moroccan Observatory for Translation Research that Amid called for has not been established. The market regulation and professional certification infrastructure that would provide a stable demand base for translation graduates has not been created. The National Plan for Translation that Amid proposed as a comprehensive strategic framework has not, to the knowledge of this investigation, been adopted as government policy.

The Structural Conditions of the Moroccan Translation Market

The translation market in Morocco presents a specific structural configuration that substantially determines graduate employment outcomes independently of

curricular quality. Formal translation employment is geographically concentrated in the Casablanca–Rabat–Tangier economic corridor, leaving graduates based in other regions with severely limited access to the formal market. Granovetter's (1973) analysis of the role of weak ties in job access is directly applicable here: entry into the Moroccan translation market is heavily mediated by personal and professional networks whose development requires physical proximity to the market's centres, and graduates without these networks face an access problem that no amount of better training can resolve.

The sector is characterised by precarity at the entry level. Unpaid and near-unpaid internships are the primary route to initial professional experience, which creates a socio-economic barrier that excludes graduates without independent financial resources. Rates for generalist translation work have been subject to downward pressure from the oversupply of language graduates with basic bilingual competence, the growing availability of machine translation tools, and the absence of professional certification requirements that would segment the market between qualified and unqualified providers. Amid (2012) identified this saturation of the generalist sector as a structural condition driving his argument for domain specialisation; the graduate data confirm that this condition persists and that it is experienced by recent graduates as a primary obstacle to professional entry.

The social legitimacy of translation as a career, particularly freelance translation, is a further structural factor that Western employability literature seldom addresses and that the Moroccan graduate data identify as consequential. Multiple interview participants described family expectations oriented strongly toward stable, publicly recognised careers, and described freelance translation as a career path that their families perceived as professionally risky and socially marginal. Several participants described being unable to pursue professional opportunities that would have required geographic relocation or extended financial insecurity, not because they lacked the ability or the will but because the social conditions within which their career decisions were made did not support those choices. These socio-cultural dynamics are constitutive of the structural misalignment, not peripheral to it, and

any reform framework that does not acknowledge them will misdiagnose the problem.

METHODS

This article draws on two sources of evidence. The first is the empirical dataset from a larger mixed-methods investigation of self-perceived employability among Moroccan Master's translation graduates. The second is the published policy record and the scholarly literature on Moroccan higher education and translator education. The two sources are integrated throughout the article: empirical findings are contextualised within the policy record, and the policy record is evaluated against the empirical findings.

Empirical Data

The quantitative phase of the study surveyed 329 graduates of Moroccan Master's translation programs from the 2020 to 2025 cohort using the CareerEDGE model of graduate employability (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007) with assessment items derived from the translation research. Participants were recruited through university alumni networks, professional association mailing lists, and academic social media platforms. The survey assessed self-perceived competence across five employability dimensions and the perceived influence of institutional, contextual, and personal factors on skill development. Data were analysed through descriptive statistics and multiple linear regression. The qualitative phase conducted 36 semi-structured interviews with purposively sampled graduates, analysed through Reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2019). Table 1 summarises the sample profile.

Table 1

Profile of Combined Research Sample

Variable	Quantitative Survey (N = 329)	Qualitative Interviews (n = 36)
Gender (% female)	61.7	61.1
Employed in translation (%)	26.4	22.2
Employed outside translation (%)	42.9	47.2
Unemployed (%)	19.1	16.7
In further study (%)	11.6	13.9
Graduation years covered	2020–2025	2020–2025
Universities represented	7	7
Regions represented	Multiple	Multiple

Note. Participants recruited through purposive–convenience sampling. Qualitative participants selected from quantitative survey volunteers using maximum variation criteria.

Policy Document Analysis

The policy evidence base comprises the major national legislation and reform frameworks relevant to higher education and graduate employability: the 1999 National Charter for Education and Training; Law 01.00 of 2000; the 2003 LMD reform; the Emergency Plan 2009 to 2012; the Strategic Vision 2015 to 2030; Framework Law 51.17 of 2019; and the PACTE ESRI 2030 framework of 2023. These are supplemented by statistical publications from the High Commission for

Planning, reports from the Higher Council of Education, and secondary analyses of these frameworks published in the scholarly literature. The policy record is treated as a documentary source whose claims are evaluated against the empirical evidence from the graduate survey and interviews, following a logic of analytical triangulation rather than independent confirmation.

RESULTS

The Pedagogical Dimension of Misalignment

The quantitative findings provide the most precise empirical picture available of how Moroccan translation graduates perceive the pedagogical preparation their programs provided. The overall employability mean of 2.92 on a five-point scale placed the cohort below the moderate readiness threshold. Career Development Learning returned the lowest component mean at 2.52, followed by Work and Life Experience at 2.62. Within the CDL component, the items with the lowest means were industry trends and knowledge update ($M = 2.41$), understanding recruitment processes ($M = 2.46$), and understanding the range of career options available in translation ($M = 2.48$). Within the Experience component, the lowest score was for personal translation projects ($M = 2.48$), followed by supervised professional internships ($M = 2.55$). The multiple regression analysis identified institutional factors as the unique statistically significant predictor of the CDL gap ($\beta = -0.237$, $p = .002$, $R^2 = .199$), meaning that after controlling for market conditions and personal motivation, the quality of the institutional environment was the primary determinant of whether graduates possessed career navigation knowledge.

The qualitative phase provided mechanistic explanation for these patterns. Graduates described curricula as overwhelmingly theoretical, oriented toward literary translation and linguistic analysis, and disconnected from the technical, commercial, and legal domains that constitute the bulk of contemporary professional demand. Internships were described with remarkable consistency as symbolic: they involved administrative rather than translation tasks, received no professional supervision, produced no formative feedback, and left graduates without any of the portfolio, client interaction experience, or market exposure that

a well-designed placement would have generated. Career guidance was effectively absent. As one participant observed, nobody told us how the market worked. We had a degree but no map (Interviewee 13). This institutional silence was experienced not as a neutral absence but as a form of professional abandonment.

These findings confirm and quantify observations that have appeared in the qualitative literature on Moroccan translator education for more than a decade. El Boubekri (2023), Elmaghnougi (2021), and El Karnichi (2012) had documented similar patterns through smaller-scale qualitative studies. The contribution of the present investigation is to provide the first large-scale empirical measurement of these deficits, to demonstrate their relative magnitude across different employability dimensions, and to establish through regression analysis which type of environmental factor most directly drives each specific gap. The pedagogical misalignment is not merely a perception; it is measurable, its components are identifiable, and its primary driver is the institutional environment rather than individual graduate motivation or external market conditions.

The Market Dimension of Misalignment

The regression finding that contextual factors are the unique predictor of the Experience gap ($\beta = -0.202$, $p = .014$) provides quantitative grounding for what the qualitative data describe in considerable detail: graduates' access to professional experience is determined primarily by the structure of the external market rather than by their motivation or their program's advice. This finding has a specific policy implication. Telling graduates to seek internships more proactively, or making internship completion a formal graduation requirement, cannot close the Experience gap when the primary obstacle is not institutional or individual but structural.

The qualitative accounts identified the specific market conditions that constitute this structural obstacle. Geographic concentration of formal translation employment in the Casablanca–Rabat corridor excluded the majority of participants, who were located in other regions, from direct access to the formal market. The absence of institutional guidance on remote work, digital freelance platforms, or market access

strategies outside the major centres compounded this geographic exclusion. Entry-level conditions in the accessible market involved unpaid or near-unpaid work as the price of initial experience, an arrangement that was financially impossible for graduates with immediate economic responsibilities. And the market's reliance on informal professional networks for opportunity distribution meant that graduates without pre-existing connections faced a form of social capital barrier that academic credentials could not overcome. As one participant described it, the market here is almost invisible. The offices that exist already know who they will hire (Interviewee 10).

The quantitative data on employment outcomes confirm the severity of these contextual barriers. Only 26.4 percent of the surveyed cohort was employed in translation at the time of the survey. A further 42.9 percent was employed in fields unrelated to translation, with teaching, administration, and customer service as the most common sectors. The remaining 30.7 percent were unemployed or in further academic study. These figures do not describe a cohort that lacked ability or commitment; they describe a cohort that had been prepared for a profession whose market conditions made sustained entry impossible for a large majority of its graduates.

The Policy Dimension

The policy record presents a picture of considerable legislative and institutional activity that has produced limited field-specific impact. The LMD reform harmonised degree structures but did not change pedagogical content. The Strategic Vision 2015 to 2030 prioritised equity and quality as system-level goals but did not establish field-specific standards for translator education. Framework Law 51.17 of 2019 created legally binding reform obligations but their implementation in translation-specific programs has been, on the evidence of the graduate cohort, minimal. PACTE ESRI 2030, which is the most ambitious and most recent of the frameworks, promotes skills-based training and employer-university dialogue as institutional practices, but it does not recognise translation as

a strategic professional sector requiring specific attention within its reform architecture.

This is not a criticism of the frameworks as such; it reflects the inherent difficulty of designing general reform interventions for a higher education system of several hundred thousand students across dozens of institutions and fields. The problem is structural: general employability interventions cannot substitute for field-specific reform. A translator education program that embeds career development learning in its core curriculum, hires practicing professional translators as faculty, establishes a simulated translation bureau for student practice, and builds relationships with language service providers will produce substantially better graduate outcomes than one that attends awareness workshops on PACTE ESRI 2030 employability goals. The general policy framework provides the mandate but not the content.

Table 2 summarises the major reform initiatives and their specific relevance to translator education as assessed against the graduate evidence.

Table 2

Major Reform Initiatives and Their Assessed Impact on Translator Education (1999-2025)

Reform Initiative	Year	Stated Employability Goal	Assessed Impact on Translator Education
National Charter / Law 01.00	1999/2000	Align education with economic development	No translation-specific provisions; structural changes nominal
LMD System	2003	Harmonise degrees with European standards	Changed degree architecture; did not change pedagogical content

Emergency Plan	2009–2012	Accelerate Charter implementation	General quality monitoring; translation not specifically addressed
Strategic Vision 2030	2015	Equity, quality, and employability	System-level goals; no field-specific translation standards
Framework Law 51.17	2019	Consolidate reform mandate	Legally binding but implementation uneven; minimal translation impact
PACTE ESRI 2030	2023	Market-aligned skills training	Promising framework; translation absent as strategic sector

Note. Assessment based on documentary analysis of framework provisions and comparison with empirical findings from the 2020–2025 graduate cohort. Impact categories reflect translation-specific rather than system-wide outcomes.

DISCUSSION

Why General Interventions Cannot Address Field-Specific Failures

The persistence of structural misalignment in Moroccan translator education across five successive reform cycles is not a failure of policy ambition. The 1999 Charter, the Strategic Vision, and PACTE ESRI 2030 all represent serious attempts to address the systemic relationship between higher education and economic development. The limitation is not ambition but specificity: none of these frameworks has engaged with the particular conditions that translator education requires, and therefore none has provided the specific interventions that would change outcomes for translation graduates.

Career Development Learning, for example, is not a concept that appears in any of the reform frameworks reviewed. Yet the regression analysis identifies it as the

employability dimension most directly driven by institutional conditions, and the graduate accounts identify its absence as the most consequential single failure of their programs. Embedding CDL in translator education curricula would require specific curriculum design work, faculty development, alumni network building, and partnership development with language service providers. None of these activities are addressed by general skills-based training frameworks, and they will not occur as a by-product of institutional compliance with PACTE ESRI 2030 employability metrics.

The simulated translation bureau model, which represents the most direct institutional response to the market's failure to provide accessible professional experience, similarly requires specific investment, infrastructure, and faculty expertise that general reform frameworks neither mandate nor fund. Kiraly (2012), Gouadec (2007), and Buysschaert et al. (2018) have each argued for variants of this model on pedagogical grounds; the contextual regression finding from the present investigation adds an empirical argument grounded in the specific structural conditions of the Moroccan market. When contextual factors uniquely predict the Experience gap, and when those factors reflect a market whose geographic concentration and financial precarity systematically block access for most graduates, the policy implication is that the institution must create the experience. This requires specific institutional investment, not general reform rhetoric.

Abdellah Amid's Diagnosis Revisited

The retrospective assessment of Amid's work that this article undertakes produces a finding that is at once encouraging and sobering. The encouraging dimension is that Amid's diagnosis has proved accurate. The professional literacy gap documented in the graduate data, in which graduates conflate consumer machine translation with professional CAT environments, is precisely the consequence of persisting with pen and paper pedagogical traditions that Amid identified as obsolete a decade ago. The career navigation gap, in which graduates leave their programs without any understanding of how the translation market operates, is the direct outcome of the institutional absence that Amid documented

in his analysis of Moroccan translation programs' failure to develop CDL. The geographic concentration of opportunities and the social legitimacy problem facing freelance translation are structural conditions that Amid described as requiring national-level policy intervention.

The sobering dimension is that the four reform domains Amid identified in his National Plan for Translation have seen only limited progress. Translator pedagogy has not been fundamentally reformed in the ways his analysis required. Professional practice remains under-regulated, with no national certification framework, no professional association with meaningful market authority, and no policy recognition of translation as a strategic sector comparable to the recognition given to engineering, medicine, or law. Scientific research in translation, and specifically the empirical research tradition needed to evaluate educational outcomes and inform reform decisions, remains thin; the present investigation is among the first large-scale empirical studies of Moroccan translation graduate outcomes to appear. And the professional organisation domain, in which Amid called for a Moroccan Observatory for Translation Research and a National Plan for Translation, has seen no institutional response at the level of national policy.

The most pointed question that Amid's analysis raises, and that the present evidence cannot fully answer, is why. Morocco has the political will, demonstrated repeatedly at the highest levels of state, to address graduate unemployment. It has a reform infrastructure, through CSEFRS and the successive reform frameworks, that is capable of generating sophisticated institutional analysis and policy design. It has a community of translation scholars and practitioners who have documented the problems and proposed solutions. The gap between diagnosis and action in translation education specifically may reflect the relatively small scale of the sector, the absence of a powerful professional lobby, the institutional inertia of Faculties of Letters where translation has historically been accommodated as a subset of language education, or some combination of all three. Understanding why reform has not occurred more effectively is itself a research question that the present article cannot answer but that deserves sustained attention.

Reform Priorities

The graduate evidence, combined with the policy analysis, supports a three-level reform framework whose components address different points in the structural misalignment.

At the institutional level, the most urgent and actionable priority is the systematic integration of Career Development Learning into the core curriculum of Moroccan Master's translation programs. CDL is not a soft addition to a rigorous academic program; it is the foundational professional literacy that allows graduates to navigate the market for which the academic program nominally prepared them. Its integration requires curriculum design, faculty development, alumni network building, and structured professional engagement activities that are assessed and progressive rather than left to individual initiative. The quantitative evidence is unambiguous on this point: institutional factors uniquely predict the CDL gap, and CDL is the competence dimension most directly linked to professional market entry.

The second institutional priority is experiential learning reform. The symbolic internship model documented in the graduate accounts is worse than useless: it gives graduates the impression of professional experience while providing none of the mastery, socialisation, or network development that professional experience actually requires. Replacing it with authentic experiential learning, whether through simulated translation bureaus, service-learning arrangements with non-governmental organisations, or project-based collaborations with language service providers, requires institutional investment rather than simply better placement agreements. Given the regression finding that contextual factors predict the Experience gap, the institution cannot depend on the market to supply this experience; it must generate it.

At the market and regulatory level, the evidence supports Amid's call for professional recognition and certification infrastructure. A national certification system for legal translators comparable to that operated by the Ministry of Justice, extended to cover technical, commercial, and conference translation domains,

would segment the market between qualified and unqualified providers in ways that would benefit both graduates and clients. Professional association development, supported by the state as a form of sector regulation, would provide the advocacy infrastructure needed to establish minimum rate standards, professional conduct norms, and market transparency that currently do not exist.

At the policy level, the most important change would be the formal recognition of translation as a strategic professional sector within PACTE ESRI 2030 and its successor frameworks. This would not require large financial commitments; it would require that reform monitoring mechanisms track translation-specific outcomes, that curriculum standards for Master's translation programs be updated to reflect current professional competence requirements, and that the recommendations that Amid made more than a decade ago, and that the present evidence confirms remain unaddressed, be incorporated into the agenda of the national higher education reform process.

Limitations

The graduate evidence base for this article is drawn from a single cohort period and uses a purposive-convenience sampling strategy that limits strictly inferential generalisability. The policy analysis draws on documentary sources that are evaluated against the graduate data through analytical triangulation rather than independent verification, which means that the assessment of reform impact is inferential and may not capture implementation variations that field research at specific institutions would reveal. The article does not provide a systematic comparative analysis of PACTE ESRI 2030 implementation across institutions, which would require institutional case study research beyond the scope of a graduate survey.

The retrospective assessment of Amid's work is based on the author's reading of the published text alongside the graduate evidence from ten years later, and is subject to the interpretive limitations that any retrospective assessment carries. Amid wrote in a specific socio-political moment, and aspects of his analysis reflected the conditions of 2012 rather than 2025. The article has tried to assess what of his

diagnosis remains accurate and what may need updating, but a full re-reading of Amid in the light of subsequent market and policy developments would constitute a substantial study in its own right.

CONCLUSION

The structural misalignment between Moroccan translator education and the translation labour market is not a recent or accidental condition. It is the outcome of a long-standing institutional configuration in which translation programs have been housed within general humanities faculties, staffed by language and literature academics, insulated from the professional market by weak internship systems and absent career guidance, and evaluated against academic quality metrics that do not capture professional readiness. Successive reform frameworks have not addressed this configuration because they have operated at the level of general institutional practices rather than field-specific conditions.

The graduate evidence generated by this investigation makes the cost of this configuration measurable for the first time in the Moroccan context. Nearly three quarters of the 2020 to 2025 cohort were not employed in translation at the time of the survey. Those who were employed in translation described careers characterised by precarity, geographic constraint, and the need for self-directed professional development that their programs had not provided. Those who were not employed in translation described career trajectories that were individually rational but represented a collectively significant displacement of specialised human capital away from the sector in which it had been developed.

Abdellah Amid described this configuration accurately in 2012 and proposed a comprehensive reform plan whose core elements the present evidence confirms have not been implemented. The fact that his diagnosis remains accurate a decade later is not evidence of fatalism; it is evidence of the specific conditions under which reform occurs and fails to occur in a complex national higher education system. Understanding those conditions more precisely, through sustained research on implementation rather than solely on outcomes, is the next step that the evidence base requires.

The reform priorities identified in this article are specific and actionable. Career Development Learning in the core curriculum. Authentic experiential learning replacing symbolic internships. Professional certification infrastructure segmenting the translation market. Formal recognition of translation as a strategic professional sector within national education policy. None of these requires resources that Morocco lacks; all of them require the political and institutional will to treat translator education as something more than a subset of language education, and to treat the professional futures of translation graduates as something that the system is responsible for shaping rather than leaving to individual initiative in a hostile and opaque market.

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