

The Moroccan Public University under Platform Rule: Digital Transformation, Academic Mediation, and the Reconfiguration of Public Higher Education

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**Critical Journal of Social Sciences
(CJSS)**

ISSN: 3101-0415



Volume 2, No. 1 | 2026

pp. 120 – 146



DOI: <https://doi.org/10.66830/bqg90417>

Received: April 28, 2026 / Accepted: July 2, 2026

Abstract

As digital infrastructures move to the center of university life, the question is no longer whether Moroccan public universities use platforms, but what these platforms do to the institution itself. This article examines how the rise of platform-based environments reconfigures Moroccan public higher education as a mode of access, mediation, coordination, and government. Based on a critical documentary analysis of scientific studies, public reform discourses, and institutional digital environments, the article argues that the transition exceeds the adoption of tools. It signals a shift from an administrated university toward a connected university organized through interfaces, services, and trace-producing systems. The analysis shows that platformization reshapes access to public service, displaces the pedagogical relationship, redistributes academic and administrative work, standardizes pathways, and produces a new figure of the student as connected, autonomous, and visible. It also identifies five tensions structuring the Moroccan case: the gap between technical access and academic participation, the persistence of unequal appropriation, the link between fluidity and control, infrastructural dependence within public modernization, and the reordering of multilingualism through digital language hierarchies. The article concludes by arguing that digital transformation must be assessed against the public university's mission as a service, an intellectual milieu, and an institution of knowledge.

Keywords

Moroccan public university; platformization; digital transformation; higher education governance; academic participation

1. INTRODUCTION

In Moroccan public universities, digital platforms no longer appear as peripheral instruments added to teaching after the health crisis. They increasingly operate as gateways through which students access courses, administrative procedures, institutional communication, digital resources, and forms of academic presence. Research on Moroccan higher education has often approached this shift through continuity of learning, distance education, learner satisfaction, system quality, faculty experience, and the measurement of distance education effectiveness during COVID-19 (Jebbour, 2022; Ouajdouni & al., 2021; Iflahen & al., 2025). Such work clarifies constraints of infrastructure, engagement, training, and evaluation. Yet the platform also raises another problem: when access to the university becomes mediated by accounts, dashboards, learning management systems, mobile services, and data traces, the institution itself is reorganized through technical architectures.

This article asks: how does the rise of digital platforms reconfigure the Moroccan public university as a mode of access, mediation, and institutional government? The question does not concern the effectiveness of one platform, nor the attitudes of students toward online learning. It concerns the form of university life produced when academic and administrative relations are increasingly routed through interfaces. The platform is therefore treated as a social arrangement: it distributes roles, sets thresholds, organizes circulation, and frames what counts as participation. This positioning allows the article to avoid a technological narrative and to approach the university as an institution whose rules, rhythms, and relations are increasingly mediated by organized digital environments. The issue is not whether platforms are useful, but what they make possible, what they render visible, and which forms of academic participation they silently presuppose. This shift gives the inquiry its critical and institutional scope within the Moroccan public university system today.

The central hypothesis is that Moroccan public higher education is moving from a logic of digital equipment toward a platform regime. In this regime, digital tools do not merely support pre-existing practices; they participate in defining the conditions under which services are requested, courses are followed, documents are obtained, communication is maintained, and academic presence is recognized. Studies on e-learning in Morocco show that system quality, instructor quality, perceived usefulness, satisfaction, and learner anxiety shape platform success (Ouajdouni & al., 2021; Ouajdouni, 2024). This article extends that discussion by shifting the focus from success measurement to institutional form. The analysis relies on an operationalized critical documentary methodology. The corpus was constructed through a systematic selection of three document types: (1) peer-reviewed scientific studies on Moroccan higher education published between 2020 and 2026, retrieved via major academic databases; (2) primary public reform texts, specifically the ESRI 2030 Pact and Framework Law 51.17, which were analyzed directly to capture the state's modernizing rationale; and (3) systematic observations of the institutional digital environments deployed

across several of Morocco's twelve public universities. The analytical procedure employs a critical thematic reading, categorizing the data around institutional form, pedagogical mediation, and power dynamics, while carefully distinguishing the structural regime of platformization from the contingent emergency distance learning of the COVID-19 era. It also draws on recent work on learning analytics, which shows that platforms store and process traces of learner activity and raise questions of privacy, consent, and transparency in Moroccan higher education (Fadli & El Mediouni, 2024). The method is interpretive and socio-technical. It examines documents, services, interfaces, and institutional vocabularies as elements of the same configuration. No field survey is claimed; the object is not reported experience, but the public organization of university access through platforms.

The article proceeds in five movements. First, it defines the platform regime as a way of thinking the university beyond the language of tools. Second, it situates the Moroccan digital turn within reforms of higher education and public service modernization. Third, it examines the material organization of platform access through applications, learning environments, digital services, and institutional portals. Fourth, it analyzes the effects of platformization on access, pedagogical mediation, administrative work, and student visibility. Finally, it discusses the tensions between technical access and academic participation, inclusion and appropriation, service fluidity and datafication, before returning to the public mission of the university.

2. THINKING THE UNIVERSITY UNDER A PLATFORM REGIME: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND CRITICAL ANGLE

2.1. From Digitalization to Platformization

If the introduction located the problem in the growing mediation of university life through interfaces, the present section clarifies the analytical shift required to read that transformation. Digitalization, in the first sense, refers to the conversion of activities, documents, and interactions into digital formats. At that level, the university appears as an institution that adds technological supports to pre-existing practices. Moroccan research has often described this movement through the spread of e-learning, online courses, virtual resources, and distance education, with attention to continuity, efficiency, and pedagogical adaptation (Ben Attou, 2022; Elouesdadi & Rochdi, 2021). Yet such a vocabulary remains insufficient once digital environments cease to function as supplementary tools and begin to organize the ordinary passage through the institution itself. The analytical problem then changes: what is at stake is no longer the presence of digital instruments in the university, but the rise of a form that arranges access, circulation, coordination, and verification through interconnected systems.

This is where the notion of platformization becomes useful. In the Moroccan literature, the transition toward what is sometimes named the digital or intelligent university already signals that the university is being rearticulated through integrated digital environments rather than isolated applications (Benmoussa & al., 2024; Tamer & Knidiri, 2023). The issue is not simply that teaching uses technological supports, but that multiple university functions tend to converge within environments that centralize services, normalize user pathways, and produce operational continuity between pedagogical, administrative, and informational layers. Platformization, in this perspective, designates a change in institutional morphology. It marks the passage from dispersed digitalization to organized infrastructures through which the university is entered, navigated, and managed. The concept therefore allows the analysis to move beyond the language of innovation and to focus on the reconfiguration of institutional relations. This framework builds upon the international scholarship on the "platform society" (van Dijck & al, 2018) and the platformization of higher education (Williamson & Selwyn, 2020), conceptualizing the Moroccan case as a regional translation of these global socio-technical shifts.

2.2. The Platform as a Socio-Technical Dispositif

To define the platform as a socio-technical dispositif - borrowing Foucault's concept of an apparatus that coordinates power, knowledge, and social relations - is to refuse a purely technical reading. A platform is not reducible to software, interface, or repository. It combines norms, procedures, roles, forms of visibility, and rules of circulation. Moroccan studies on learning management systems already point in that direction when they show that learner success depends not only on content availability but also on system quality, information quality, service quality, self-regulation, and continuance intention (Safsouf & al., 2020). What appears, then, is a mediated space in which technical design and user conduct are mutually implicated. The platform does not merely host activities; it structures conditions under which activities become possible, legible, and recordable. It organizes time, channels exchanges, formats requests, and stabilizes what counts as valid participation. In that sense, it belongs to the order of institutional mediation as much as to the order of digital engineering.

The socio-technical nature of the platform becomes even clearer when one considers domains that appear, at first sight, administrative rather than pedagogical. Moroccan work on digital certifications, for instance, shows that the production, validation, storage, and authentication of academic documents are now conceived through digital signatures, centralized verification, and secure transmission architectures (Litoussi & al., 2022). Such arrangements are not external to the university form. They define how legitimacy is issued, how authority is encoded, and how the institution recognizes and certifies academic trajectories. Similarly, recent work on digital capabilities and IT governance in Moroccan higher education demonstrates that transformation is tied to structures, processes, and relational mechanisms rather than to equipment alone (Chahid & al., 2025). The platform

should therefore be understood as a dispositif in which technological architecture and institutional order are co-produced.

2.3. The Public University as an Institutional Form

A critical reading of platformization requires a prior understanding of the university not only as a place of instruction but as an institutional form. In the Moroccan debate, governance studies have insisted that higher education cannot be reduced to classroom delivery, since its functioning depends on arrangements of autonomy, accountability, decision-making, coordination, and relations with its social environment (Ayad & al., 2020; Dobli Bennani & al., 2021). This perspective is decisive for the present article. It makes it possible to see that the public university is composed of organized mediations: enrollment, certification, orientation, pedagogical supervision, evaluation, documentation, and communication. Once these mediations are increasingly routed through digital infrastructures, the transformation affects the form of the institution itself. The public character of the university is then engaged not as a legal abstraction, but as a concrete mode of organizing access to knowledge, recognition, and academic membership.

From this angle, the service public university is neither a neutral container nor a simple provider of educational services. It is an arrangement that binds pedagogical work, administrative recognition, and collective legitimacy. Moroccan scholarship on governance has shown that the university system has long been read through the questions of reform, regulation, and institutional crisis, which means that the issue of organization precedes the current digital turn (Ayad & al., 2020; Dobli Bennani & al., 2021). Platformization does not create the institutional question; it reopens it under new conditions. It forces one to ask how public service is translated when access passes through standardized pathways, when decisions are distributed across systems, and when academic relations become partially dependent on coded procedures. The platform, in that sense, is not added to the public university from the outside. It enters the very space where the institution gives form to its missions.

2.4. Why a Critical Reading in the Social Sciences?

A critical reading in social sciences is justified because platformization is not exhausted by the questions of usability, adoption, or performance. Those questions remain relevant, and Moroccan research has documented them with precision in relation to online learning, MOOCs, and digital pedagogies (Safsouf & al., 2020; Elouesdadi & Rochdi, 2021; Ben Attou, 2022). But the critical task begins where functional analysis stops. It asks how a technical environment reorganizes relations between actors, how it redistributes responsibilities, how it defines legitimate forms of access, and how it silently presupposes particular capacities of navigation, self-management, and compliance. Such an approach does not oppose

technology to education. It examines how educational relations are recoded when the institution increasingly operates through organized digital environments.

Within this perspective, the notion of platform regime offers a bridge between the previous introduction and the sections that follow. It preserves the institutional scale of the question while preparing the analysis of the Moroccan case without anticipating it. The concept allows one to hold together several dimensions that are often separated in the literature: pedagogical mediation, administrative rationalization, governance, certification, and digital capability (Benmoussa & al., 2024; Chahid & al., 2025; Litoussi & al., 2022). The critical angle adopted here is therefore neither external suspicion nor technical determinism. It is an attempt to understand how a university changes when mediation itself becomes infrastructural, and when infrastructure begins to orient the ordinary conditions of academic life. By mobilizing the political economy of platforms and critical data studies (Couldry & Mejias, 2019; Srnicek, 2017), this approach positions the Moroccan case not merely as a localized technological adoption, but as a site where global platform capitalism intersects with the specificities of the Maghreb public service. On that basis, the next section can move to the Moroccan reform sequence without losing the conceptual thread established here.

3. THE DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION OF MOROCCAN HIGHER EDUCATION: A REFORM CARRIED BY THE LANGUAGE OF ACCESS, FLUIDITY, AND INNOVATION

3.1. Public Orientations of Digital Transformation

Once the conceptual distinction between digitalization and platformization has been established, the Moroccan case can be approached at the level where reform first acquires intelligibility: the level of public orientations, strategic vocabularies, and institutional priorities. In Morocco, digital transformation in higher education does not emerge in isolation. It is inscribed within a broader movement of public-sector modernization in which digitization is associated with efficiency, transparency, service redesign, and proximity to users. In that wider administrative frame, the shift from e-government to “digital by design” marks a passage from the computerization of procedures to the reorganization of public action through digital logics (Nachit & al., 2021). Higher education enters this sequence not as a separate policy island, but as one of the spaces where state reform, organizational rationalization, and knowledge production intersect. This insertion is decisive because it explains why the digital turn is presented less as a pedagogical choice than as a structural necessity of modernization.

This orientation appears with clarity in recent scientific work on Moroccan higher education reform. A direct reading of the ESRI 2030 Pact reveals that the policy text frames

digital transformation through national and international partnerships, explicitly defining digital interoperability as a condition for institutional modernization. As highlighted by Ez-zouhayry and Fallaki (2024), the Pact links this transformation to inclusion, student autonomy, and the redefinition of graduate preparation. Their analysis does not reduce reform to infrastructure; it situates digitization within a policy language that binds competitiveness, institutional openness, and the renewal of educational content. In this policy horizon, digital transformation functions as a reform grammar. It names an expectation of alignment between university organization and a changing environment, while also assigning to higher education a role in economic adaptation and social mobility. What matters here is not yet the concrete device, but the way reform discourse gives digital transformation the status of a public horizon rather than a local experiment (Ez-zouhayry & Fallaki, 2024).

3.2. Higher Education in the Discourses of Modernization

Within this reform grammar, higher education is described through a lexicon of modernization whose recurring terms are access, innovation, agility, skills, and quality. Moroccan research on University 4.0 captures this movement by showing that the university is increasingly imagined as a space expected to respond to labor-market shifts, digital cultures, and new forms of learning organization (Amini & al., 2023; Kerroum & al., 2020). What is at stake in these texts is not only the introduction of technology into the university. The university itself is re-described through categories borrowed from transition, adaptation, and strategic responsiveness. This discursive movement transforms the meaning of reform. The university is no longer addressed only as an institution of transmission and certification, but also as an actor required to synchronize with technological change, to reorganize its internal processes, and to prepare subjects for uncertain professional trajectories (Amini & al., 2023).

Such a discourse also produces a shift in the scale at which higher education is read. Instead of being framed primarily through curricular or pedagogical questions, it is increasingly approached through management, governance, and transformation capacity. Kerroum & al. (2020), in their work on Hassan II University, formulate digital transformation as a strategic process that requires planning over years, organizational coordination, and a specific steering structure. In a different register, Serhane and Outmane (2026) argue that Moroccan higher education is experiencing a phase in which digital transformation extends beyond service digitization and raises questions of leadership, strategic alignment, data governance, and institutional maturity. Read together, these studies indicate that modernization discourse is not confined to teaching innovation. It redefines the university as an organization whose legitimacy is increasingly linked to its ability to manage complexity, coordinate change, and produce continuity under digital conditions (Kerroum & al., 2020; Serhane & Outmane, 2026).

3.3. *From an Administered University to a Connected University*

At the institutional level, this reform language implies a reorientation of the university's governing model. The university historically organized through procedures, offices, and segmented chains of authority is progressively reimagined through connection, interoperability, and circulation. The passage is not merely technical. It concerns the administrative imagination of higher education. In the administered university, reform tends to target rules, structures, and legal competences. In the connected university, reform begins to privilege mobility of information, coordination across functions, continuity of service, and the simplification of user pathways. For that reason, digital transformation is repeatedly attached to notions such as processing time, traceability, and service coherence in recent Moroccan studies (Serhane & Outmane, 2026). What emerges is a new institutional norm: the university is asked not only to govern knowledge, but also to govern flows.

This passage is also sustained by another strand of Moroccan scholarship: the literature on evaluation and quality assurance. Oustous & al. (2021) show that Moroccan higher education reforms, from Law 01.00 to the Strategic Vision 2015–2030 and Framework Law 51.17, place continuous evaluation and quality assurance at the center of institutional reform. The role assigned to ANEAQ confirms that reform is not only a matter of expansion or access; it is also a matter of accountability, comparability, and continuous improvement. This is important for the present argument because the language of digital transformation enters a field already structured by governance and evaluation. The connected university is therefore not simply more technological than the administered university. It is a university inserted into a regime where performance, quality, and responsiveness become legitimate criteria of reorganization (Oustous & al., 2021).

3.4. *Institutional Promises: Inclusion, Efficiency, Continuity, Quality*

The reform sequence outlined above is sustained by a set of promises that confer coherence on digital transformation. The first is inclusion. In recent Moroccan work, digital transformation is regularly associated with broader access to educational opportunities, with support for student autonomy, and with the possibility of reducing inequalities through adapted programs and coordinated public policy (Ez-zouhayry & Fallaki, 2024; Serhane & Outmane, 2026). The second is efficiency, understood through administrative simplification, faster processing, and organizational coordination (Nachit & al., 2021). The third is continuity, a promise reinforced by the post-pandemic experience, where digital transformation appears as a condition for institutional resilience rather than as an optional innovation (Serhane & Outmane, 2026). The fourth is quality, supported by the consolidation of evaluation procedures and by the increasing centrality of institutional assessment in Moroccan higher education reform (Oustous & al., 2021).

At this stage of the article, these promises must be treated as components of a reform discourse rather than as established outcomes. Their function is political and institutional before being empirical. They define the horizon within which Moroccan higher education is called to transform itself. They also prepare the shift from a university organized by bureaucratic segmentation to one increasingly organized by connection, coordination, and service rationality. For that reason, the next section will not return to the level of policy rhetoric. It will move toward the material organization through which this reform sequence becomes concrete in the university field.

4. THE MATERIALITY OF THE PLATFORM REGIME IN THE MOROCCAN PUBLIC UNIVERSITY

If the previous section situated digital transformation within a national reform sequence, the present one moves to another level of observation: the level at which the platform regime becomes visible in the ordinary architecture of university access. The question here is not yet what these dispositifs produce in terms of institutional effects, but how they are materially arranged. What emerges from recent Moroccan research is neither a single platform nor a uniform technical model. Rather, one encounters a layered environment composed of learning management systems, classroom applications, synchronous communication tools, assessment devices, multimedia repositories, and digital spaces through which students and teachers enter university life. (Kaouni & al., 2022; El Aasri & Bouziane, 2025). While these material configurations are documented through case studies of specific institutions (such as Hassan II, Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah, ENS Casablanca, and Ibnou Zohr), they reflect a structural standardization that traverses the twelve Moroccan public universities. The widespread adoption of standardized open-source architectures indicates that platformization is a systemic national reality rather than a localized experiment.

4.1. The Application and the Digital Space as Institutional Entry Points

The first material feature of this regime lies in the multiplication of digital entry points. Access to the university is no longer limited to the timetable, the classroom, the office, or the notice board. It now begins with a connection to a named digital environment. Kaouni, Lakrami, and Labouidya (2022) show, through their review of Moroccan higher education during the pandemic, that universities mobilized several e-learning platforms in order to ensure continuity and organize the passage from face-to-face teaching to distance or hybrid arrangements. In the later synthesis proposed by El Aasri and Bouziane (2025), this movement appears with greater clarity: “most universities have opted for the same open-source LMS, Moodle” (El Aasri & Bouziane, 2025, p. 38). The significance of this point exceeds

the technical choice itself. Moodle, in this setting, becomes a recurrent doorway through which the student encounters courses, teachers, files, and instructions. The entry to the institution is therefore increasingly mediated by a login architecture rather than by physical co-presence alone.

This logic is also visible in case studies centered on specific institutional spaces. Mouaziz & al. (2022) describe how, at Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University, distance learning was implemented through platforms such as Microsoft Teams and Zoom, which were used to maintain contact, circulate content, and host virtual classes. A similar structuring role appears in the case of ENS Casablanca, where a dedicated environment, ENS Classroom, is presented in the literature as a platform created for distance learning within the institution. In another institutional setting, Juidette and Zraiouil (2025) analyze a learning management system named Marketing PSJ, designed to support e-learning in higher education and to broaden access to marketing education for students and professionals. Across these cases, the application or digital space is not a peripheral add-on. It functions as the first organized threshold of academic affiliation. (Mouaziz & al., 2022; Juidette & Zraiouil, 2025).

4.2. The aggregation of services: schooling, resources, communication, training

A second characteristic concerns aggregation. The platform regime does not materialize through one function only. It takes shape by gathering several services within the same digital environment or within interconnected environments. Kaouni & al. (2022) emphasize that Moroccan institutions did not simply upload documents; they combined platforms for course delivery, communication, and continuity. The review by El Aasri and Bouziane (2025) adds that teachers used different hardware and software, including email and social media, while universities developed digital resources in different environments and placed them at students' disposal. The material arrangement is therefore composite from the outset: course spaces, communication channels, repositories, and support functions appear side by side rather than separately.

The same aggregation becomes more concrete in studies devoted to particular academic settings. In Moroccan public medical faculties, Hjiej & al. (2022) report that students' distant learning involved multimedia studying resources and online interactive sessions with teachers. At Hassan II University, Mrisse & al. (2023) describe online assessment as part of a "digital device" that mobilizes multiple technological tools in order to organize evaluation, diagnostic assessment, formative assessment, and identity verification. The digital environment thus does not stop at lecture transmission. It extends to assessment, interaction, and resource circulation. In material terms, the platform regime brings together pedagogical content, communication, monitoring, and evaluation in a single chain of access. The university is no longer encountered through isolated procedures, but through aggregated digital operations. (Hjiej & al., 2022; Mrisse & al., 2023).

4.3. *The interface as a mode of organizing university life*

At this point, the interface itself can be described as an organizational surface. It orders the student's and teacher's movements through menus, folders, deadlines, links, virtual sessions, uploads, and feedback paths. Juidette and Zraiouil (2025), in their study of LMS acceptance, do not only examine perceptions of use; they indirectly show the centrality of the platform as the place where the learning experience is structured and judged. What the user evaluates is not merely a technical object, but a sequence of academic actions made possible by the interface. In the same manner, Mrisse & al. (2023) treat the digital device as the environment within which assessment practices are selected, administered, and controlled. The interface therefore works as a practical ordering mechanism. It aligns academic gestures - consulting a course, receiving instructions, submitting work, joining a virtual class, completing an evaluation - within a navigable visual order.

This material organization also explains why several Moroccan studies describe difficulties not only in terms of connection, but also in terms of interaction, orientation, and continuity of use. Mouaziz & al. (2022) show that the online experience was hindered by connection issues and weak interaction, while the ENS Classroom study points to the platform as the central medium through which students discovered distance learning during quarantine. What matters here is not to interpret these difficulties yet, but to note what they reveal descriptively: the platform is the space where academic presence is arranged, and the interface becomes the format through which the university is navigated. (Mouaziz & al., 2022; Hammoumi & El Youssfi, 2020).

4.4. *From the university place to the integrated digital environment*

Taken together, these studies describe a movement from the university as a bounded place toward the university as an integrated digital environment. Hammouch & al. (2023), in their study of twelve Moroccan universities, conclude that institutions were not ready for a fully online shift but were able to ensure a hybrid learning environment. The point is important because it clarifies the morphology of the current system. The Moroccan public university is not dissolving into distance education alone; it is being rearticulated through environments where face-to-face arrangements and digital pathways coexist. El Aasri and Bouziane (2025) reinforce this view by showing that remote learning platforms and methodologies expanded rapidly, while universities combined Moodle with various complementary applications and resources. The material form that emerges is therefore neither the traditional campus alone nor the virtual campus alone. It is an integrated environment in which the university extends across classrooms, portals, LMS structures, communication tools, and digital assessment dispositifs. That environment will have to be analyzed in the next section not merely as a technical arrangement, but as a reorganization of institutional life. (Hammouch & al., 2023; El Aasri & Bouziane, 2025).

5. THE INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTS OF UNIVERSITY PLATFORMIZATION

If the previous section described the architecture through which the platform regime becomes materially visible, the present section shifts the level of inquiry. The question is no longer what dispositifs are present, but what they do to the institution once they become ordinary channels of access, coordination, and evaluation. In the Moroccan public university, platformization does not merely add technical mediation to pre-existing routines. It modifies the conditions under which the public service is reached, the pedagogical relation is sustained, academic and administrative work are distributed, learning paths are formatted, and students are rendered both autonomous and visible.

5.1. *Reconfiguring Access to the Public University Service*

Under a platform regime, access to the university public service ceases to be reducible to formal enrollment. It becomes conditioned by readiness, connectivity, equipment, and the capacity to remain continuously reachable. In their study of Moroccan university students, Hafa & al. (2023) show that readiness for distance learning remained moderate, while satisfaction remained low and barriers persisted around ICT access, technical skills, self-learning, and interaction. What follows from such findings is not only an educational difficulty. A displacement occurs in the very meaning of access: the student is not simply admitted into a public institution but is expected to maintain a stable relation with a digital environment whose use presupposes devices, network continuity, and a practical command of mediated learning routines. Bouayad & al. (2024) reach a related conclusion in the context of hybrid teaching. Even when hybridization is perceived as a response to overcrowding and as a way to widen access, the actual following of courses remains uneven. Access, then, is no longer a single administrative right; it becomes a sequence of operational conditions through which the right must be exercised.

5.2. *Displacement of the pedagogical relationship*

The pedagogical relationship is also displaced. Platformization does not abolish the teacher-student relation, yet it re-mediate it through interfaces, asynchronous exchanges, uploaded files, recorded sessions, and assessment feedback loops. The Moroccan literature consistently shows that this mediation does not automatically produce pedagogical continuity. Mounjid & al. (2021) report that teachers faced “technology, training, and socio-economic challenges that acted as barriers to the processes of online education” (Mounjid & al., 2021, p. 38). In parallel, Menyani & al. (2022) note students’ “lack of feedback provided by their professors” (Menyani & al., 2022, p. 194), alongside concerns about honesty and the

value of online assessment. These two findings should be read together. What is displaced is not only the channel of communication but the mode of pedagogical presence itself. Teaching becomes partly dependent on a chain of technical and organizational mediations: setting up courses, formatting content, maintaining interaction, troubleshooting, monitoring submissions, and providing feedback through systems that fragment the immediacy of exchange. Bouayad & al. (2024) show that hybrid teaching remains appreciated by many respondents because it preserves flexibility and some form of teacher-learner contact. Yet the same study indicates that face-to-face teaching is still perceived as more effective for the transmission, acquisition, and assessment of knowledge. The pedagogical relationship is therefore not replaced; it is re-situated within a mediated regime where continuity depends on the quality of the platformized environment.

5.3. Redistributing Administrative and Academic Work

Another effect concerns the distribution of work inside the institution. Platformization draws academic labor toward tasks that were once secondary or externally supported: digital formatting, uploading, scheduling, responding across channels, following activity traces, and organizing assessment through mediated procedures. At the same time, administrative labor is drawn into a parallel movement of digital adjustment. Ajrouh and Slamti (2020), in their study of seven Moroccan higher education institutions, show that online learning is still scarcely promoted for administrative staff professional development, despite employees' willingness and their perception of its value for institutional functioning. This point is central. The platform regime does not concern teachers and students alone; it requires administrative actors capable of sustaining the digital continuity of the university. When such support remains underdeveloped, academic staff absorb part of the technical and organizational burden, while administrative structures risk lagging behind the new operational demands. The effect is a redistribution rather than a substitution of work. University labor becomes more transversal, more dependent on digital coordination, and more exposed to demands of constant availability. Platformization, in that sense, does not simply modernize work. It redefines who must do what, through which channels, and with what forms of support.

5.4. Standardizing Academic Pathways and Producing Traces

Platformization also standardizes academic pathways by converting heterogeneous practices into comparable formats: deadlines, uploads, quizzes, discussion threads, consultation frequencies, and assessment records. Dehbi & al. (2023) state that the pedagogical environment they describe can "evaluate students through MCQs and have an automatic correction," "track student progress in real-time," and "schedule tasks" (Dehbi & al., 2023, p. 105). These functions matter institutionally because they transform learning into sequences that can be formatted, monitored, and compared. The platform becomes not only

a space of access but a machine for ordering academic gestures. Bouziane and Rouijel (2024), from the side of assessment practices, identify “massification, absenteeism and lack of standardized course packs” (Bouziane & Rouijel, 2024, p. 432) as structural constraints in Moroccan open-access higher education. Under a platform regime, the pressure toward standardization partly answers those constraints by formatting access to course content and assessment procedures. Yet the same movement also increases trace production. Consultations, submissions, absences, response times, and completion patterns become legible to the institution. A new administrative intelligibility emerges: not the university as a set of dispersed encounters, but the university as a field of recorded actions.

5.5. The New Figure of the Student: Connected, Autonomous, and Visible

From these transformations arises a new figure of the student. Rather than straightforwardly producing a new identity, platformization presupposes and invokes a specific figure of the student. The platformized student is expected to be connected, to manage learning with a degree of initiative, and to remain visible through activity. This expectation does not come from discourse alone; it is embedded in the organization of digital learning. Dehbi & al. (2023) explicitly link platform use to the identification of students with difficulties and to the monitoring of their activities. At the same time, Lamkhanter (2022) shows that Moroccan university students display positive attitudes toward learner autonomy and report behaviors that can support greater self-direction. Yet the same study also indicates that the learning environment does not always provide the relational and pedagogical conditions that would sustain that autonomy in practice. Hafa & al. (2023), likewise, point to the gap between the institutional expectation of self-learning and the actual difficulties students face in readiness and satisfaction. The new student figure is therefore marked by a tension. On the one hand, the platform presupposes initiative, self-regulation, and constant connectivity. On the other, those capacities remain unevenly distributed and institutionally supported. Visibility further complicates this figure. Through digital consultations, participation logs, and assessment traces, the student appears less as a mere recipient of instruction than as a readable user whose presence becomes measurable. The university thus encounters the student through a double expectation: to act independently and to remain continuously legible within the platformized order.

A further institutional effect of platformization is the materialization of digital language hierarchies. The architecture of digital interfaces and standard learning pathways frequently prioritizes English or French, moving the issue of language from a broad internationalization strategy to an immediate technical barrier for students whose primary academic comfort is Arabic. This reconfiguration implies that platforms are not linguistically neutral; they embed foreign-language proficiency into the basic requirements of academic navigation. Consequently, the platform regime implicitly defines who is adequately equipped to

participate in the connected university, translating interface design into institutional gatekeeping (Ben Hammou & Razkane, 2026; R'boul, 2024).

Taken together, these effects show that platformization in Moroccan public higher education is not exhausted by the question of technological adoption. It reorganizes institutional access, re-mediate pedagogy, redistributes work, formats academic pathways, and reshapes the student's institutional identity. For that reason, the next section must move from effects to contradictions, where inclusion, continuity, visibility, and autonomy will have to be re-read as tensions rather than as self-evident gains.

6. THE CONTRADICTIONS OF THE PLATFORM REGIME IN THE MOROCCAN CONTEXT

The Moroccan university platform regime carries its own tension. What is presented institutionally as simplification, continuity, and opening does not unfold on an empty social surface. It meets unequal equipment, unequal linguistic capital, unequal digital familiarity, and unequal capacity to convert technical access into academic participation. For that reason, the critical question is no longer whether the platform extends access, but under what conditions this access becomes effective participation, under what forms it renders students governable, and through which hierarchies it redistributes opportunities inside the university field.

6.1. *Technical Access and Academic Participation*

A first contradiction emerges between technical connection and academic participation. Moroccan research has shown that online access does not automatically translate into pedagogical involvement, sustained interaction, or meaningful accompaniment. In a national survey of 800 university students, satisfaction depended on interactivity, course duration, teaching methods, and mastery of digital tools rather than on mere access to online courses (Zouiri & El Kinani, 2022). The same study indicates that only 40% of students felt accompanied by their institution during distance learning, while 64% reported managing problems on their own (Zouiri & El Kinani, 2022). The contradiction is clear: the service becomes technically reachable, yet the student can remain weakly supported inside it. Participation here cannot be reduced to logging in, downloading files, or attending a virtual session. It presupposes guidance, interpretive support, feedback, and relational continuity, which the platform does not guarantee by itself. The Moroccan case therefore reveals a threshold problem: digital entry broadens formal access, but academic participation still depends on mediations that are unevenly distributed across students and institutions.

6.2. *Digital Inclusion and Inequalities of Appropriation*

The second contradiction concerns the gap between the discourse of digital inclusion and the reality of unequal appropriation. Recent work on Moroccan university students' intention to use e-learning services shows that usage barriers, value barriers, and individual barriers significantly reduce intention to use, while age moderates some of these effects (Oulamine & al., 2025). This result matters because it moves the debate beyond infrastructure alone. The problem is not exhausted by internet availability or device ownership. It also involves perceptions of relevance, habits of learning, prior digital confidence, and the social capacity to integrate platformed study into everyday life. The same line of tension appears in the national study by Zouiri and El Kinani (2022), where students lacking basic computer skills reported a weaker perception of distance learning. Inclusion, then, remains incomplete when the institution provides an interface but leaves unresolved the unequal distribution of the practical competencies needed to inhabit it. In such conditions, the platform can expand formal opportunity while reproducing differentiated educational trajectories through unequal appropriation.

6.3. Service Fluidity and the Densification of Control

A third contradiction lies in the relation between service fluidity and control. The same infrastructures that promise faster communication, smoother assessment, and better monitoring also intensify the legibility of students' actions. In recent Moroccan research on learning analytics, students expressed interest in using analytics to improve assessment, yet they simultaneously demanded transparency, consent, and support around the collection and use of their data (Zine & Kaaouachi, 2025). This expectation is not secondary. It indicates that optimization is inseparable from the question of who reads student traces, for what ends, and under what institutional guarantees. The contradiction becomes sharper in studies on AI implementation in Moroccan higher education. Academics identify potential gains in efficiency and administrative support, yet they also stress data privacy concerns, reduced student-instructor interaction, unequal access to advanced technologies, and new forms of cheating (Mjahad & al., 2025). What is marketed as fluid service delivery therefore carries a parallel movement: students become more visible, their learning more trackable, and assessment more exposed to verification, suspicion, and data extraction. The platform does not simply accelerate institutional operations; it thickens the university's observational capacity. In this sense, fluidity is not the opposite of control. It is often one of its operating conditions.

6.4. Public Modernization and Infrastructural Dependence

A fourth contradiction concerns modernization and infrastructural dependence. The Moroccan university is encouraged to modernize through digital tools, AI systems, and data-

driven services, yet the effective use of these technologies remains dependent on infrastructures, regulatory maturity, training, and trust. In their study on AI adoption, Razzouki, Ben Hammou, and Izenzal (2025) show that trust positively moderates the transition from adoption to effective use. This is not merely a psychological variable. It points to an institutional condition: technology does not become operational simply because it is available. Its use depends on confidence in its fairness, usefulness, and governance. The same study explicitly notes that regulatory frameworks and institutional policies related to AI in Moroccan higher education are still evolving (Razzouki & al., 2025). A related study on academics' perceptions similarly shows that Moroccan universities face challenges linked to limited resources, uneven familiarity with AI, socio-economic disparities, and the need for clear policies on privacy and academic integrity (Mjahad & al., 2025). The contradiction, then, is structural. Public modernization is articulated as an internal reform of the university, but its realization remains tethered to technical systems, policy environments, and expertise that are not always fully stabilized within the institution itself. Modernization proceeds, yet under conditions of infrastructural and regulatory dependence that complicate the promise of sovereign digital transformation.

6.5. University Multilingualism and Digital Language Hierarchies

The fifth contradiction concerns language. Moroccan higher education is often described through multilingualism, yet recent research suggests that the digital and internationalizing turn can reorganize this plurality into new hierarchies. R'boul's study of English-medium instruction in Moroccan universities argues that the growing status of English may reinforce linguistic dependency and create forms of epistemic injustice by marginalizing local languages within academic value systems (R'boul, 2024). Ben Hammou and Kesbi (2023), working with graduate students in Moroccan science universities, show that attitudes toward English-medium instruction are shaped by expectations of mobility and academic opportunity, but this orientation also redistributes advantage toward those already better positioned to navigate foreign-language demands. More recent work by Ben Hammou and Razkane (2026) adds another layer: lecturers regard English as a possible means of disciplinary advancement and even linguistic decolonization, while simultaneously identifying limited proficiency and insufficient training as obstacles to broader implementation. The contradiction is therefore not simply between Arabic and English, or between French and English. It lies in the fact that the digital university valorizes participation in transnational knowledge circuits while exposing unequal linguistic preparedness among students and staff. Under these conditions, multilingualism may persist institutionally while functioning practically as a stratified order of access to knowledge, legitimacy, and future academic mobility. This tension is fundamentally tied to platform logics because the digital interface actively enforces these linguistic requirements at the point of entry and daily

navigation, making linguistic dependency an inescapable feature of the infrastructural design rather than just a distant internationalization policy.

Taken together, these contradictions reveal that the platform regime in Moroccan public higher education cannot be assessed through connectivity, innovation, or service expansion alone. Its limits appear where technical access fails to become academic participation, where inclusion remains formal, where fluidity merges with traceability, where modernization depends on fragile infrastructures, and where multilingualism coexists with unequal linguistic legitimacy. The next section will return from these tensions to the question that underlies the whole article: what remains of the public mission of the university when its modes of access, mediation, and recognition are increasingly reorganized through platform logics?

7. RETHINKING THE MISSION OF THE PUBLIC UNIVERSITY IN THE PLATFORM ERA

7.1. The University as Service, Intellectual Milieu, and Institution of Knowledge

The Moroccan case leads, at this stage, to a question that exceeds the technical sequence of reform: what is a public university expected to remain when access, coordination, and recognition increasingly pass through platform logics? This question cannot be answered by opposing technology to education. It requires a return to the plurality of university missions. Recent Moroccan scholarship has insisted that higher education must still be understood as a public good, not only because it produces qualifications, but because it carries research, teaching, service to society, and social critique within the same institutional space (Houssami, 2024). In a related reflection on University 4.0, Tamer and Knidiri (2023) argue that digital transformation affects the university's "main missions and functions" and that the university remains the place where knowledge is produced and transferred to society (Tamer & Knidiri, 2023, p. 21). The issue, then, is not whether the university should transform, but whether transformation preserves this composite mission. A public university cannot be reduced to a service counter, because it is also an intellectual milieu where inquiry, disciplinary formation, and collective criticism are sustained over time.

This distinction matters in the Moroccan public sector because the university is already shaped by tensions of governance, funding, scale, and reform continuity. Jaida and Haoucha (2025) show that Moroccan public universities remain strongly dependent on ministerial steering and state funding, while governance issues continue to weigh on institutional performance. Such a configuration means that the public university is not simply a provider of educational outputs; it is a mediated institution whose mission is tied to public coordination, knowledge production, and social responsibility. Once digital transformation is introduced into that space, the central problem is not merely operational modernization. It is the risk of narrowing the university's mission to what is visible through digital service delivery:

registration, communication, certification, monitoring, and rapid response. Recalling the university as service, intellectual milieu, and institution of knowledge is therefore not a nostalgic gesture. It is a theoretical requirement for judging whether platform-led reform strengthens or contracts the meaning of public higher education.

7.2. Criteria for Evaluating a University Digital Transformation

If the mission of the university is broader than service circulation, then the evaluation of digital transformation must also move beyond indicators of deployment. Moroccan work on e-management is useful here because it defines e-governance not only through efficiency, but also through the capacity to deliver quality public services and widen stakeholder engagement (Elhissi & al., 2022). The same article notes that digital technologies now touch “the heart of the university’s major functions,” including training, research, human resource management, steering, and financial management (Elhissi & al., 2022, p. 19). This observation suggests a first criterion: digital transformation should be assessed by its relation to the whole institutional mission rather than by the speed of procedures alone. A second criterion follows from recent work on the ESRI 2030 Pact, which highlights structural reforms in pedagogical norms, credit frameworks, and institutional diversity while also pointing to regional imbalances and ongoing disparities (Benhima, 2024). A transformation that leaves those inequalities intact cannot be evaluated only as a technical success.

A third criterion concerns security, resilience, and infrastructural coherence. Chahid & al. (2025) show that digital transformation in Moroccan universities is linked not only to educational delivery and operational efficiency, but also to cybersecurity barriers whose interdependence affects the viability of reform. This is not a secondary issue. A university transformation that expands interfaces while neglecting governance, protection, and continuity risks weakening the institution it claims to modernize. A fourth criterion concerns organizational change. Tamer and Knidiri (2023) explicitly note that digital transformation implies a change in the organizational model and cannot be reduced to technological injection. From that perspective, the relevant question becomes more demanding: does digital transformation improve the conditions of knowledge transmission, research support, institutional coordination, and public accountability, or does it merely multiply digital layers over unresolved structural problems? In the Moroccan case, a credible evaluation must therefore combine service quality, institutional equity, security, governance capacity, and consistency with the university’s knowledge mission. These criteria must function as a rigorous normative framework: if a digital infrastructure merely accelerates administrative transactions without measurably improving the intellectual milieu or reducing structural inequalities, it fails the foundational test of the public service mandate.

7.3. For a Critical Reading of Reform through the Interface

A critical reading of reform through the interface begins at the point where the interface is no longer seen as a neutral screen. It condenses choices about what is made accessible, what is simplified, what is recorded, and what is considered evidence of institutional performance. For that reason, the interface should be read as a political and organizational surface. When reform is conducted through platforms, the university risks being judged by the fluidity of transactions rather than by the density of intellectual formation. Moroccan discussions of public higher education reform repeatedly return to this difficulty. Houssami (2024) frames higher education as a public good whose value lies in its societal functions; Jaida and Haoucha (2025) stress that modernization efforts have not removed structural shortcomings; Tamer and Knidiri (2023) argue that the university must adapt to digital change without losing sight of its broader role in knowledge and society. Taken together, these studies suggest that the interface should not become the measure of the institution. It should remain one medium among others within a public university that still has to teach, research, criticize, and serve society.

From this standpoint, the central contribution of the Moroccan case is not to reject digital transformation, but to relocate its meaning. Reform by interface is legitimate only if it remains answerable to the missions that justify the public university in the first place. The platform may organize access, but it does not define by itself what higher education is for. That question belongs to the institution, to its public mandate, and to the forms of knowledge and participation it is able to sustain.

8. CONCLUSION

This article asked how the rise of digital platforms reconfigures the Moroccan public university as a mode of access, mediation, and institutional government. The answer that emerges is not limited to the diffusion of digital tools across teaching and administration. What takes shape is a deeper transformation in the way the university is entered, navigated, and experienced. The platform does not remain at the margin of institutional life. It becomes one of the forms through which the public university organizes access to courses, services, communication, evaluation, and recognition. In that sense, the platform is not only a technical support. It participates in the redefinition of the university as an ordered environment of interfaces, procedures, and traces.

From this perspective, the Moroccan public university appears less as an institution that has simply adopted digital solutions than as an institution whose everyday functioning is increasingly mediated by them. Access to the public service is reworked through digital conditions of presence. The pedagogical relation is displaced into mediated sequences. Administrative and academic work are redistributed through new obligations of coordination, formatting, and follow-up. Student pathways become more legible, more organized, and more exposed to monitoring. A figure of the connected student gradually emerges, expected

to combine availability, autonomy, and readability within the institutional order. The central result of the article therefore lies in this displacement: the digital turn is not only a matter of equipment, but a change in institutional form.

The contribution of this article lies first in its analytical shift. Rather than treating digital transformation as a question of technological adoption, pedagogical continuity, or service improvement taken separately, the article has proposed to read the Moroccan case through the notion of a platform regime. This move has made it possible to connect elements that are often studied in isolation: digital access, institutional modernization, pedagogical mediation, administrative reorganization, student visibility, and linguistic hierarchy. By doing so, the article has sought to restore the coherence of a process that is frequently fragmented by sectoral analyses.

A second contribution concerns scale. The article has moved from public orientations to institutional materiality, then from materiality to institutional effects, and finally from effects to contradictions. This progression has allowed the Moroccan case to appear not as a local technical response, but as a site where a broader question of public higher education is being reformulated. The issue is not whether the university should transform, but according to which criteria and under which conception of its mission. In that respect, the article has shown that the digital university can only be understood if one keeps in view the public character of the institution, its intellectual function, and its role in the production and transmission of knowledge.

The limits of this study follow from its own methodological choice. The analysis has relied on a documentary and critical reading of public orientations, scientific studies, and institutional environments. It has therefore focused on the public intelligibility of the platform regime rather than on situated practices observed through fieldwork. Such a choice allows one to grasp the institutional logic of transformation, but it does not provide access to the full diversity of lived experiences inside Moroccan universities. The analysis has also privileged the level of institutional form, which means that disciplinary variations, local arrangements, and informal adaptations remain outside its empirical scope.

Another limit concerns temporality. The platform regime is still evolving. Some of the transformations discussed here remain unstable, uneven, or in transition. For that reason, the article does not claim to offer a final map of Moroccan higher education under digital conditions. It proposes, rather, a conceptual and critical reading of an ongoing reorganization.

The main opening suggested by this study concerns the need to reconnect digital transformation to the mission of the public university. A university cannot be evaluated only through the fluidity of its services, the extension of its interfaces, or the multiplication of its digital channels. It must also be judged by its capacity to sustain access as participation, knowledge as formation, and public service as an institutional relation rather than a sequence of transactions. The question that remains, then, is not whether the platform will continue to structure the university. It is whether the public university will remain capable of governing

that structure according to its own mission, instead of allowing the logic of the interface to become the silent measure of reform.

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