

A Literature Review on The Social and Solidarity Economy as A Lever for The Professional Integration of Young Graduates: Comparative Studies of Cases from Morocco and Quebec

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Received: November 7, 2025, Accepted: December 16, 2025, Published: December 22, 2025

Abstract

This scientific communication explores the role of the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) in the professional integration of young graduates, focusing on the cases of Morocco and Quebec. SSE, representing solidarity and sustainability, constitutes an authentic alternative in addressing youth unemployment and the skills mismatch. In Quebec, where SSE accounts for 8% of GDP, programs such as Youth Employment Centers have demonstrated their effectiveness by providing training and support services. Although SSE is still emerging in Morocco, initiatives like IDMAJ show promise, highlighting the need to move beyond symbolic employment and bridge the skills-market gap. The full potential of SSE can be realized through mechanisms such as public-private partnerships, tailored training programs, and a supportive legal framework. Morocco's SSE ecosystem, even in its early stages, can benefit from Quebec's experience, including youth cooperatives, to strengthen this developing sector. Overall, SSE appears to be a viable pathway for enhancing the professional integration of young people, offering opportunities for knowledge transfer and collaborative initiatives between Morocco and Quebec.

Keywords: Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE); Youth Graduate Unemployment; Professional Integration; Morocco; Quebec; SSE Initiatives; Comparative Studies.

1. Introduction

The social and solidarity economy (SSE) is a relevant response within a context of globalization burdened with ever more pressing socio-economic challenges such as youth unemployment, skills mismatches, and the limits of traditional economic models. With its three founding principles of solidarity, democratic governance, and social utility, SSE represents an inclusive and sustainable alternative. These are values in a clear and connected triptych, shaping the actions of the SSE and enhancing the impact on communities and human well-being (Laville, 2010).

The concept of solidarity is at the heart of the SSE, serving as an ethical and operational cornerstone. It encourages solidarity, especially in a world increasingly plagued by inequality. More specifically, this translates as professional integration projects that reintegrate people in need and help foster social bonds (Evers, 2001; Defourny and Nyssens, 2017).

Democratic governance makes it happen because it brings everyone into the decision-making processes. This provides transparency, accountability, and justice in ways that respond to the needs of beneficiaries. In the employment integration arena, this participatory governance is characterized by involving young people in the design and implementation of projects (Pestoff et al., 2012; Defourny and Borzaga, 2001).

The success of the social and solidarity economy can ultimately be measured through its social utility. This utility is reflected in the creation of green jobs, the provision of services that would otherwise be unavailable, and local development. A higher level of professional integration contributes to improved living conditions for young people and supports their socioeconomic inclusion (Nyssens, 2006).

The arrangement of values is presented in a logical sequence: Solidarity (ethical foundation) comes before democratic governance (implementation mechanism), which then results in social utility (purpose). This order illustrates how SSE values collaborate to form an ecosystem that supports sustainable professional integration and fosters a more inclusive economy.

With its structured and territorialized SSE model, Quebec exhibits a capacity for social innovation, ultimately functioning as a point of reference for Morocco, where the initial SSE-related elements are being forged. Based on scientific references and the comparison of experiences in sustainable professional integration between Morocco and Quebec, this represents a tailor-made opportunity for sharing and innovation. This not only helps in better discerning the localized nature of the problems in every context but also gives context-appropriate

and effective solutions to tackle unemployment issues. This approach is both a prerequisite for generating sustainable jobs and a means of enhancing the living conditions for affected populations.

In this regard, it is useful to compare the situation of the SSE with that of Quebec, where the unemployment rate is relatively low (about 4.5% in 2022) due to a diversified economy and an active policy of job creation. The SSE represents approximately 8% of Quebec's GDP and employs over 220,000 people. The local economy depends on cooperatives, mutual societies, and non-profit organizations. The Quebec government has been encouraging the SSE by providing them with grants, training programs, and tax benefits.

At the same time, the social and solidarity economy, although underutilized, offers significant potential by proposing inclusive economic models that are tailored to the needs of communities and focused on social objectives (Moulaert and Ailenei, 2005; Defourny and Nyssens, 2010).

This paper offers a literature-based analysis of a central question: through which mechanisms and under what conditions can the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) enhance professional integration and expand employment opportunities for young people? It also examines how lessons from regions with mature SSE ecosystems, such as Quebec, can inspire approaches adapted to the Moroccan context.

The study explores these issues by examining the specific characteristics of youth employment in Morocco, the structural constraints faced by SSE actors, and the potential for strengthening this sector as a driver of inclusive development. A comparative reading of the Moroccan and Quebec experiences is conducted to highlight success factors, limitations, and areas where Morocco could benefit from international best practices. Ultimately, the objective is to demonstrate the role the SSE can play as a strategic pillar for socio-professional integration in Morocco and for promoting a more inclusive and sustainable economic model. More specifically, the article is guided by the following research questions:

- 1) Through which mechanisms does the SSE contribute to the professional integration of young graduates?
- 2) Which contextual elements influence the effectiveness of SSE initiatives in Morocco and in Quebec?
- 3) What actionable insights can Morocco draw from the Quebec experience to consolidate its SSE ecosystem?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Conceptual framework

The social and solidarity economy is diversified and constantly redefining itself in increasingly pertinent historical contexts and territorial specificity. A variety of terms are applied to this type of economic model: social economy, solidarity economy, and local economy (Laville, 2016). SSE forms, however, may take place in cooperatives, associations, mutual societies, or social enterprises, organizations that blend commercial activity with social aims.

In this perspective, Polanyi (1944) views the SSE as a countermovement to market hegemony, promoting democratic participation and social sustainability.

According to Lévesque and Mendell (2005), the SSE encompasses at least five definitional approaches. The first of Desroche (1983) focuses on well-defined components, but somehow restricts the SSE to legal configurations and disregards social practices. The second definition belongs to Vienney (1994), who defines SSE as a set of people and companies in the market economy that orders its relations in accordance with defined rules, and confines SSE to the market economy.

Laville (1994) is the source of the third definition, and he defines the SSE as a hybridization of various economic forms, focused on local service provision. The associative logic is described by Enjolras (2000), and key concepts useful for defining the SSE—such as community-service and democratic management—are found in (Defourny and Develtere, 2009).

Monzón and Chaves Ávila (2012) define the SSE as a group of organizations based on common values that can contribute to social and economic development. According to Musgrave (2003), there are three functions of the public sector chez Musgrave (2003): allocation, redistribution, and regulation of imbalances.

In 1995, the Social Economy Charter was established as a definition of the SSE based on five characteristics: voluntary membership, limited profit distribution, democratic management, a social purpose, and the pooling of resources (Sahmi et al., 2022).

The SSE is composed of economic activities not primarily intended for profit; it often takes varying legal forms while focusing on health, social inclusion, culture, community development, or recreation. This was designed to address needs that neither the state nor the market was properly addressing.

The phenomenon of employment and professional inclusion is a multifaceted issue involving several actors and mechanisms aimed at improving employment opportunities. According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), employability is the use of skills, education, and experience to obtain a job and the ability to perform in a given market. For an individual to be successful, they must acquire relevant skills and market intelligence that facilitate professional mobility.

Many authors define employability. Its definition is broad and changes based on the perception of researchers. In the definition, Ledrut (1966) states that employability is the capacity to be employed, and on the other side, Gazier (1999) states that employability is not a kind of property but it is an attribute of a person appropriate to the market, which is ever more changing. Higher education employability encompasses (1) the education-to-employment transition stage, (2) inter-company movement, and (3) intra-company movement (Cheng et al., 2022).

The literature review on professional sustainable integration highlights several important dimensions. It refers to the sustainable inclusion of an individual into the labor market, considering both job quality and personal satisfaction (Gazier, 2003). Gazier long ago called for the maintenance of conditions that support professional stability, and Lefresne (2005) argues that continuing education and flexibility should be required for professional groups.

These challenges range from fighting unemployment and the quality of jobs, as well as the problems of young people. According to Méda and Vendramin (2016), the equation of providing economic security and well-being at work is necessary to be maintained.

But training is needed for sustainable integration, as Tanguy (2016) discusses vocational training systems. Appropriate policies will address challenges inherent to the informal market in developing countries.

Morocco boasts a solid foundation for the social and solidarity economy, based on local traditions, with the first cooperatives and associations appearing as far back as the 1930s. Politically supported at the highest institutional level, the National Initiative for Human Development (INDH) is an example of an interest-based economy based on civil society and cooperatives. This is a network created in 2006, specializing in fair trade-tourism and solidarity-financial activities. The sector has to be supported to fight poverty, employment creation, and the formalization of the informal sector.

Regarding 2020, the Moroccan authorities defined strategic priorities, including sector structuring, product promotion, and economic environment improvement. The social economy, which includes cooperatives, NGOs, etc.

A law that defined the social economy as all economic activities with a social purpose performed by businesses in Quebec was passed in 2013. Such activities must fulfill community needs and comply with certain principles, such as exclusion from decision-making power of public bodies, democratic governance, economic self-sufficiency, and, if dissolved, the remaining assets must be transferred to an organization with a similar purpose. It is a valuable laboratory of social innovation with structured shaping for living conditions, work, and territories (Bouchard, 2011).

A simple economic analysis cannot explain such an important question, and the choice of sociology shows an understanding of the nature of the competitive and surplus demands of the professional integration of young university graduates into the SSE (Laflamme, 2012).

Newly graduated SSE students are drawn to meaningful work, even if they are aware of the probable challenging labor market conditions and alternative principles of wage justice (Lanciano and Cristofari, 2020).

However, despite their awareness of the likely tough employment conditions, they are not deterred from entering non-profit work. Yet it is also uncertain whether the SSE can liberate itself from the dominant economics, urged by the state and the market, thus ultimately rooted in co-dependence, and so subject to scrutiny, as to the practices and the logic of this sector to understand what its specification really means (Hély and Moulévrier, 2013).

Across these definitions, three converging dimensions emerge: the centrality of social utility, the predominance of democratic governance, and the hybridization of economic logics. This synthesis shows that the SSE is not a homogeneous field but a set of organizational forms combining market, public, and community logics.

2.2. Theoretical framework

Building on the conceptual foundations of the SSE, the following section introduces the theoretical frameworks used to analyze its mechanisms.

At its core, the social and solidarity economy (SSE) remains a field, bringing together diverse theoretical perspectives to interpret its processes, targets, and results in society. These methods give a more in-depth understanding of the rationale of the SSE and can confirm its position as an alternative or a complement to traditional economic systems. Examining theories of common goods, institutionalism, social entrepreneurship, sustainable development, human capital, and social capital provides insight into the particularities and values of the SSE and elements of its contribution and significance to current challenges.

One group of theoretical genres that can give a relevant insight into some of the dynamics of the SSE is the theory of common property, developed by Ostrom (1990) in her book *Governing the Commons* (1990). Using case studies from around the globe, Ostrom proved that collective use of resources escapes the overconsumption and overexploitation described by Hardin in his *Tragedy of the Commons*. This framework holds for pooled organizations in the SSE, like agriculture or credit cooperatives, with participatory governance. Youth integration programs in Morocco and Quebec can be analyzed through the lens of common goods.

In Morocco, collective management is done by the INDH, which finances support or training; however, access to such programs is difficult and often saturated. In Quebec, Carrefours Jeunesse-Emploi (CJE) has delivered comparable services, underpinned by public funding with a public governance model. In either case, the success of these programs relies on proper management guidelines to curb overharvesting and to provide a fair method for access.

Douglas North, in 1990, emphasized that institutions shape human interaction and influence economic outcomes. In the SSE, these institutions help correct market and state failures by embedding social values into economic activities, thereby affecting how young people access and transition into employment (North, 1990).

Research conducted on states like Morocco by El Aoufi et al. (2005) proves that policies like Idmaj are limited by the rigidity of the labor market, as well as the predominance of the state. Despite this, in Quebec, programs like Carrefours Jeunesse-Emploi outline the relationship between support policies, businesses, and young people's integration. Social entrepreneurship theory, developed by Dees (2012), characterizes social entrepreneurs as change agents: those who are looking to make a meaningful social impact by innovating and/or mobilizing resources (financial, human, etc.) needed to meet and address an unmet need or void, particularly unmet needs or voids that are being felt in marginalized communities.

This perception is often taken on by the SSE, focusing on social impact as a primary goal but still maintaining the ability to sustain a business. A pertinent example is the one linked to the Moukawalati program, which was examined in several studies, such as Boussetta et al. (2013), that analyze the role of these youth entrepreneurship support programs in integrating them economically via the social and solidarity economy. It is a program that involves accompanying young people to build their own companies through financial and technical support.

For instance, in Quebec, the social economy sector in construction is a major actor behind integration enterprises focused on providing jobs through social enterprises for young people who are distant from the labor market (Mendell and Neamtan, 2010).

To synthesize these perspectives and clarify their analytical convergence, the following integrative framework is proposed. Common goods theory, institutional theory, and social entrepreneurship converge around a central idea: value creation in the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) relies on collective governance, institutional arrangements, and social innovation.

Common goods theory highlights the role of collective stewardship and locally embedded rules in preventing resource depletion and sustaining cooperative activity. This perspective is particularly relevant for cooperatives and mutual organizations within the SSE, where participatory governance strengthens resilience and supports employment creation (Ostrom, 1990; Berkes, 2017).

Institutional theory complements this view by demonstrating that economic outcomes depend on the quality and coherence of formal and informal rules. Stable and predictable institutions allow SSE initiatives to translate social capital into employability opportunities more effectively (North, 1990; Hodgson, 2018).

Social entrepreneurship adds a further dimension by focusing on actors who mobilize resources and innovation to address unmet social needs. These entrepreneurs play a crucial role in developing hybrid models that combine economic viability with social missions (Ji and Konrath, 2024).

When combined, these approaches suggest that SSE initiatives succeed when institutional structures support participation, communities uphold collective governance, and social entrepreneurs introduce innovations that generate sustainable jobs.

The SSE is also a part of the approach to sustainable development stated in the Brundtland Report (1987). This paper highlights the need to strike a balance between economic, social, and environmental sustainability. The SSE transcends the short-term profit motive by adding a horizon that extends well into the future, rendering it a model for today—with its ecological crisis, social inequalities, and economic insecurities. A recent study by Ibourk and Bensaïd (2014) examined the issue of cooperative entrepreneurship as an integration tool for

young graduates in Morocco, suggesting that cooperatives have great potential; however, many remain underexploited as they are often only subsidy-catching initiatives. The Network of Youth Employment Centers of Quebec studies the case of Carrefours Jeunesse-Emploi in the province of Quebec, which are community-based structures providing personalized guidance and training services designed to heighten the employability and autonomy of young people (Réseau des Carrefours Jeunesse-Emploi du Québec, 2025).

These theoretical ways forward illuminate the particularities and advantages that the SSE offers as an alternative paradigm. The theory of common goods shows us how the social economy can contribute to a collaborative and sustainable use of natural resources. Thus, while it is the economic aspect of market and state failure elimination that institutional theory is based upon, the theory of social entrepreneurship emphasizes the potential to be entrepreneurial and socially productive. Sustainable development theory, in turn, legitimizes its professed compatibility with long-term economic and environmental aims.

All these theories, combined, help explain the importance of SSE against modern issues like unemployment, inequality, and ecological crisis. The SSE is rooted in the dynamics of cooperation, community resilience, and social innovation that can be applicable to different cultural and economic contexts. Through these mixed strategies, SSE presents itself not merely as a viable option to a dominant economic model but also provides true alternatives to drive towards a more equitable and sustainable society.

Despite its potential, the SSE faces several limitations. First, many initiatives remain financially dependent on public subsidies, which may affect long-term sustainability. Second, governance structures can become inefficient when participation is low or dominated by a few actors. Third, mission drift may occur when organizations prioritize economic viability over social purpose. Finally, scaling up SSE projects in developing economies often encounters institutional rigidities and limited access to finance.

The issue of employability and professional integration within the SSE is considered in various theories. These theories attempt to analyze the difficulties and characteristics that influence an individual's ability to obtain and maintain employment. These include social capital theory, human capital theory, job search theory, filter theory, insider-outsider theory, efficient wage theory, matching theory, competition for jobs theory, and sorting theory.

We will limit our analysis to the first two theories discussed here: human capital theory and social capital theory. In essence, human capital theory argues that education and training are investments that increase the output of individuals, and thus their employability. According to Becker, the skills acquired by young graduates constitute capital that can be valued on the labor market.

In Morocco, the gap between the skills acquired at university and the needs of the labor market is a major obstacle to professional integration. Investing in training tailored to the needs of businesses, particularly in promising sectors of the social and solidarity economy, could improve the employability of young graduates. Cooperative internship programs and university-business partnerships in Quebec illustrate the application of this theory. These initiatives enable young graduates to acquire practical skills and familiarize themselves with the expectations of the labor market (Becker, 1994).

The comparison between Morocco and Quebec illustrates how these mechanisms operate differently across contexts. In Morocco, institutional rigidities, limited coordination, and dependency on public interventions often weaken the capacity of SSE projects to foster stable professional trajectories. In Quebec, by contrast, the SSE benefits from a strong institutional framework, democratic governance, and dense social networks, which reinforce its contribution to youth employability (El Aoufi et al., 2005; Lévesque and Petitclerc, 2008).

Recently, two key perspectives have emerged in the theoretical literature on social capital theory, depending on whether social capital is perceived as a private or public good. The dimensions of the private good approach to social capital are: "the strength of ties," "the structure of the network," and "the nature of accessible resources."

In the public goods approach, "social capital is considered a collectively owned asset or good." In the context of youth integration in Morocco, programs such as local training and development programs (PFDL) strengthen young people's social capital by facilitating their integration into professional networks. In Quebec, initiatives such as Jeunesse en action strengthen young people's social capital by connecting them to social and professional networks, in line with the ideas of Putnam (2000), who emphasizes the role of networks in social and economic success.

This theory of social capital emphasizes job transparency in the labor market, job selection from the perspective of employers, as well as peer effects and nepotism effects—the various roles that may be attributed to social capital (Garrouste et al., 2018).

Theoretical frameworks of social and solidarity economy (SSE) and employability and professional integration theories complement each other as perspectives to address contemporary socio-economic issues. This innovative and inclusive model, rooted in collaborative management, institutional innovation, social enterprise, and sustainable development, has specific characteristics that allow SSE to stand out. It provides sustainable answers to these concerns over market failures, inequality, and job creation, driven by the necessities of communities.

Concurrently, theories on employability suggest that a multidimensional view is needed for improving professional integration, underlining factors such as skills, education, organization, and social networks. Such lessons demonstrate the need to tailor employment policy to country-specific realities. In aggregate, these two methodologies make the SSE a key tool for enhancing employability and professional integration more robust, all the while fostering a fairer and more sustainable economy. Application of SSE principles to employment and economic development policies is an encouraging avenue to set foundations for the reconciliation between economic performance, social inclusion, and environmental sustainability with the 21st-century challenges.

2.3. Empirical framework

Having established the theoretical foundations, the next section reviews empirical evidence on the role of SSE in youth employability.

In both Morocco and Quebec, the social and solidarity economy (SSE) plays a vital role in integrating individuals into the workforce and generating employment opportunities, as indicated by numerous empirical studies. In Morocco, research by Tirou and Douayri (2023) revealed that dairy cooperatives in the Middle Atlas have positively impacted local communities socioeconomically by enhancing economic inclusion, improving living standards, and aiding in regional economic development. This study employs a mixed-methods approach, integrating qualitative interviews with an analysis of local economic data.

Angel-Urdinola et al. (2010) similarly pointed out important operational difficulties in executing active labor market programs in Morocco, underscoring the necessity of improved coordination, monitoring, and evaluation systems to boost their efficacy.

Covering 75 labor market policies in 8 countries, the research revealed that the majority of policies either lacked the evidence base to regulate the workforce or simply did not operate at an international level. Such programs—especially for entrepreneurship and professional integration—represent a key investment for economic and social development. For example, Schonholzer (2008) explored the determinants of graduate employability in Morocco. She found that women and students with less education had trouble finding jobs. University graduates have good career advancement prospects, as do those with degrees in specific disciplines (such as construction) and even specific post-secondary education (those who graduated from a public institution).

According to Omar (2019), even in the case of inclusion of graduates in the Moroccan labor market, a great gap exists between supply and demand, as well as a lack of experience and skills.

Saadi and Liouaeddine (2022) show that the Idmaj project has a positive impact on the professional competitiveness of graduates. In addition, Chatri and Abdouni (2023) analyzed healthcare utilization after the COVID-19 epidemic, which showed that significant changes in practice occurred across the social structure underlying the system.

In contrast, Bouasria and Azami Hassani (2023) studied the impact of the INDH's ARIEJ (Income Insurance and Youth Participation) program on the role of young people in the economy of the Tangier-Tetouan-Al Hoceima region. The study showed that an in-depth analysis of data from 300 beneficiaries (2019–2022) revealed that the program had a limited impact, with only 1,500 young participants and 140,000 unemployed people in 2021. Lastly, Kholti and Liouaeddine (2023) explored the integration programs of ANAPEC, in particular Idmaj and Taehil. These types of employment programs play a major role in decreasing unemployment and increasing employment among youth, proving how pivotal these programs are in the Moroccan labor market.

Finally, concerning Quebec, Lévesque and Petitclerc (2008), in *Social and Solidarity Economy: Employment Challenges*, focus on social and solidarity economy organizations in this province and on the working conditions within these organizations. The method included the comparative analysis of working conditions in SSE in relation to the public and private sectors, with a sample of different SSE organizations. The findings reflect favorable working conditions in SSE organizations in Quebec, stressing job quality and its role with regard to professional integration and sustainable job creation.

The SSE emerges from the study as a powerful lever of professional integration, not only by constituting a habitat of numerous jobs but also by promoting employability and sustainable work environments. Further, the emphasis on inclusive and good job quality within these organizations could inform local adaptations for the Moroccan labor context, considering the local cultural and economic contexts.

For instance, initiatives like Carrefours jeunesse-emploi (CJE) and the PRIIME program are conducive to this dynamic. They provide personalized support (training, psychological support, professional networks) because entering the labor market successfully requires time and support for young people.

This support model is effective in fostering the professional integration of youth in Quebec and could be redesigned to fit the Moroccan context. Lastly, actors like Éco-tech Québec demonstrate that SSE can truly provide sustainable jobs and meet local community needs, a development model that could also add considerable value to ongoing initiatives in Morocco.

Recent international research reinforces the view that SSE models can significantly facilitate youth transitions into employment when three conditions are present: strong institutional frameworks, inclusive governance structures, and accessible training or mentorship pathways. In Southern Europe, social cooperatives played a pivotal role during the economic crisis by integrating young graduates into productive activities while maintaining a clear social mission, thereby demonstrating the resilience and adaptability of SSE organizations (Defourny and Nyssens, 2017; Durán and Kyroglou, 2021).

In Latin America, solidarity economy networks have continued to create jobs and strengthen social cohesion, particularly in contexts marked by informality and social inequality; however, their growth remains constrained by limited financial resources and institutional fragility (Laville, 2019; Chaves and Monzón, 2020).

In Sub-Saharan Africa, community-based SSE initiatives have improved youth participation and employability by leveraging local resources and collective action, yet they often face challenges related to organizational capacity, access to finance, and governance stability (Bebbington et al., 2020; Agyeman and McLaren, 2022).

Across these diverse contexts, more recent comparative studies highlight that SSE interventions succeed when they combine participatory governance with stable funding mechanisms and strong linkages to educational or vocational systems (Moulaert and MacCallum, 2020; Nyssens and Pierantoni, 2022).

Taken together, these findings suggest that the SSE offers a credible pathway for enhancing youth employability, particularly when institutional environments foster transparency, democratic participation, and organizational autonomy. Such conditions enable SSE structures to translate social values into sustainable employment opportunities, thereby addressing both economic and social inequalities.

3. Stylized Facts on The Labor Market Situation of Young Graduates in Morocco and Quebec

Graduate unemployment is a serious issue that affects both the lives of young graduates and the national economy, especially in two regions — Morocco and Quebec. Although several initiatives target youth unemployment as a priority, graduate unemployment rates remain high in both regions. The situation is further compounded by the skills gap between training and labor market requirements, low economic growth that fails to create sufficient jobs for graduates, and the preference of employers for experience over university papers.

The goal of this analysis is to provide a snapshot of youth unemployment in Morocco and Quebec. To achieve this, the paper analyzes the driving indicators as well as the related rates, such as: aggregated and age-specific unemployment rate of the whole population; type of degree-specific unemployment rate; and type of degree-specific activity rate.

To summarize, knowing these dynamics will lead us to recommendations on how to provide the skills to young people that improve their employability, but also to ensure that the labor market has the necessary skills in both regions. These challenges, of course, are not unique, and the private sector often proves to be a key partner to the public sector in driving reform of education and vocational training systems. Figure 1 illustrates the unemployment profile of young graduates in Morocco for 2023. The graph highlights a pronounced gap between graduates with average qualifications and those with higher qualifications. While the general unemployment rate stands at 13%, youth unemployment reaches 35.8%, indicating a disproportionate impact on young people. Graduate unemployment remains elevated, with rates of 15.8% for average-qualified graduates and 25.9% for highly qualified graduates.

These figures reflect a broader structural challenge: the mismatch between university training and labor market needs, limited economic diversification, and recruitment practices that favor prior experience. Consequently, the overall employment rate declined to 43.6% in 2023, with particularly low participation among women and youth.

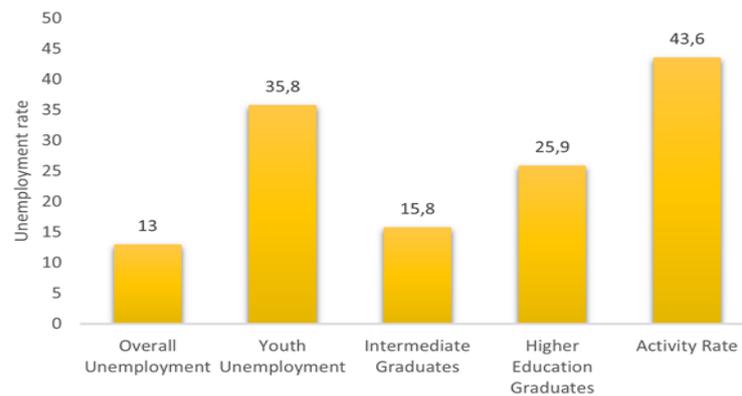


Fig. 1: Unemployment Rate Among Young Graduates in Morocco in 2023.

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Figure 2 displays unemployment rates in Quebec by educational category. Unlike Morocco, the overall unemployment rate remains relatively low (5.5%), and youth unemployment (10.8%) is only slightly higher than the general rate. Unemployment among medium-skilled graduates reaches 7.5%, while highly skilled graduates remain stable at around 6.2%. The employment rate rose slightly, reaching 72.4% in 2023, but labor market participation of women and young people remains a concern.

Job quality is a key measure of sustainable integration. About 60% of young graduates in Morocco hold a vulnerable or under-qualified position, often in the informal sector (World Bank, 2021). In Quebec, by contrast, 68% of recent graduates are in stable positions matching their qualification level (ISQ, 2022). Such inequality is due to structural differences between the two economies, especially with respect to labor market formalization and integration policies that govern the professions.

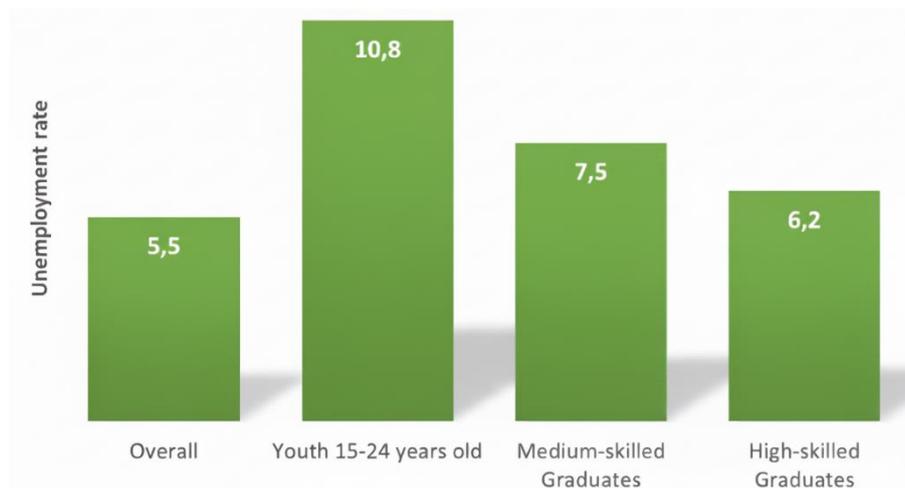


Fig. 2: Unemployment Rates in Quebec by Category In 2023.

Source: Elaborated by the Authors.

Another key measure is the duration of the transition to employment. It normally takes a young graduate in Morocco between 12 and 24 months to find their first job (HCP, 2022). The duration is longer for female graduates, who face additional challenges related to socialization and discrimination.

However, young graduates in Quebec have a much shorter transition period before they find employment — around 3 to 6 months on average (ISQ, 2022). This contrast can be attributed to Quebec's professional integration programs and university-business partnerships. Job satisfaction, though subjective, is a crucial indicator of long-term integration. Only 35% of young graduates in Morocco report being satisfied with their jobs due to job insecurity and low salaries (HCP, 2022). By comparison, in Quebec, 65% of young graduates report being satisfied with their jobs (ISQ, 2022). This disparity speaks to the superior working conditions and career development opportunities that are extended to newly minted professionals in Quebec.

Sustainable integration indicators contrast sharply between Morocco and Quebec. In Morocco, challenges are specific to insecure jobs and sectors with high unemployment among young graduates and the informal sector. Meanwhile, in Quebec, the labor market is more structured, resulting in better job conditions for young graduates, though problems of precariousness and competition persist. This explains these differences — structural factors, including the quality of the education system, professional integration policies, and legal and economic framework. In Quebec, easily accessible, well-organized professional integration programs, including cooperative internships and university-business partnerships, prepare students for the labor market. Conversely, Morocco needs to have more effective skill-matching policies and reduce the gap between graduate skills and labor market needs.

Evidence from Morocco and Quebec shows few established benchmarks for sustainable integration in these two contrasting contexts — but plenty of potential for two-way learning. In its relationships with Morocco, Quebec can be of good inspiration through its professional integration programs, but also its structured labor market. On the other hand, Morocco has much to share in terms of innovative solutions, especially concerning the development of the social and solidarity economy (SSE) to address educational challenges associated with professional integration for young graduates. This synergy could lead to customized and sustainable solutions, thereby increasing the effectiveness of the SSE in promoting youth professional inclusion.

4. Methodological Choices and Proposed Model

Although this paper is primarily a literature review, the methodological model presented below is not intended to produce empirical results for this study. Rather, it provides a structured framework that can guide future empirical research on the effects of Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) initiatives on youth professional integration in Morocco and Quebec.

Understanding how SSE initiatives influence employment outcomes requires methodological choices that align with the complexity of the research questions. The proposed model offers a way to operationalize insights drawn from the reviewed literature and to structure future analyses consistently with the comparative perspective adopted in this article.

The model relies on panel data, combining temporal and cross-sectional variation to capture changes in professional integration—measured through access to stable employment—according to participation in SSE initiatives, individual socio-demographic characteristics, the nature of the initiatives, and the territorial context. A fixed-effects framework is suggested, as it allows controlling for unobserved heterogeneity (institutional or cultural factors, regional specificities) that may bias the estimated relationships. This design would also facilitate comparisons between Morocco and Quebec and would help identify success factors that could inform policy transfer or adaptation.

In this perspective, the model serves as a conceptual and methodological blueprint for future empirical applications. As shown in Equation (1), it provides a formal structure for future empirical estimation. It combines quantitative data (surveys, administrative sources) and qualitative insights (interviews with SSE practitioners) to enable a contextualized understanding of mechanisms highlighted in the literature.

The fixed effects model can be used to estimate the impact of SSE initiatives on professional integration, as well as to control for any (observed or unobserved) other factors contributing to the integration. The model will answer questions such as:

- 1) Do SSE initiatives have a significant impact on professional integration?
- 2) What factors (individual, contextual, or initiative-related) amplify or reduce this impact?
- 3) Are there significant differences between Morocco and Quebec?

The dependent variable is the rate of professional integration, measured by obtaining stable employment (binary variable: 1 if the person has stable employment, 0 if not).

Independent variables include:

- 1) Participation in an SSE initiative (binary variable: 1 if the person participated in an SSE initiative, 0 if not).
- 2) Socio-demographic characteristics: age, gender, level of education, family situation, region
- 3) Characteristics of SSE initiatives: Type of initiative (cooperative, association, integration enterprise, etc.); Duration of participation; Sector of activity (social integration, culture, housing, etc.).
- 4) Territorial context: Location (Morocco vs. Quebec); Economic situation (regional unemployment rate, economic growth); Values of solidarity; Democratic governance; Social utility.

To isolate the effect of SSE initiatives, it is essential to control for other factors influencing professional integration, such as access to other integration programs; the individual's social and professional network; and the overall economic situation (crisis, recovery, etc.).

The fixed-effects model assumes that everyone, region, or country has specific characteristics that are time-invariant and may influence the dependent variable. These characteristics are captured by a fixed effect specific to everyone. The idea is to control for these effects to isolate the impact of the explanatory variables on the dependent variable:

$$Y_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_{1it} + \beta_2 X_{2it} + \dots + \beta_k X_{kit} + \alpha_i + \epsilon_{it} \quad (1)$$

Where:

Y_{it} : Dependent variable (professional integration rate for individual i at time t)

$X_{1it}, X_{2it}, \dots, X_{kit}$: Explanatory variables for individual i at time t .

α_i : Individual-specific fixed effect. It captures all unobserved characteristics that are time-invariant for everyone.

ϵ_{it} : Error term, assumed to have a zero mean and to be uncorrelated with the explanatory variables.

5. Discussion

5.1. Mechanisms and conditions necessary to maximize the impact of the social and solidarity economy on the professional integration of young graduates

To maximize the impact of the social and solidarity economy on the professional integration of young graduates, it is essential to put in place favorable mechanisms and conditions. Bernier et al. (2003) emphasized the importance of public-private partnerships in mobilizing financial and technical resources to support SSE initiatives. Regarding the levers that need to be activated, a major area is financing.

In Morocco, this could take the form of financing programs for cooperatives, while in Quebec, the Construction site of the social economy is already demonstrating that partnerships of this kind work. Training and support are equally important since they increase the employment of young people.

According to Defourny and Nyssens (2017), economic sustainability results from very specific things, such as the mastery of certain skills, in this case, participatory management. It is perfectly conceivable to incorporate this type of training into university programs in Morocco. In Quebec, the concrete experiences provided by the SSE enterprises could be consolidated. Financing is also a significant lever. The importance of having stable sources of funding should be emphasized.

In Morocco, innovative solutions could be instrumental, such as microcredit or social impact bonds, while in Quebec, further development of funds like the Solidarity FTQ—a Quebec-based investment fund created in 1983 by the Quebec Federation of Labour (FTQ) to promote economic development and job creation—could yield positive outcomes (Laville and Nyssens, 2001; Mendell, 2015).

However, a set of conditions is also needed to foster the SSE. One important factor (as emphasized by Defourny and Nyssens (2010)) is an appropriate legal and political context. In Morocco, A framework law on the SSE could be adopted in Morocco, while in Quebec, the Social Economy Act could be further strengthened. Lévesque and Mendell (2009) talk about this culture that should be promoted, the values of solidarity and democracy.

Awareness campaigns could be carried out in Morocco, and modules on SSE integrated into the school curricula in Quebec to develop this culture. Lastly, Networks and Cooperation, an important essential according to Moulaert and Ailenei (2005), allows the sharing of resources and best practices. Regional and national networks can also be built in Morocco, as well as take the opportunity to enlarge the existing networks, like the construction site of the social economy in Quebec (Defourny and Nyssens, 2010; Lévesque, 1999).

First, a blend of mechanisms (partnerships, training, financing) and conditions (legal framework, culture, networks) is needed to make the most significant impact of the SSE on the professional inclusion of young graduates. Both Morocco and Quebec can build on their experiences to inspire each other in finding the appropriate solutions sustainably. Partnerships among these two regions, around these themes, could enable new social and economic innovations at scale.

5.2. Drawing on Quebec experiences and adapting them to the Moroccan context

Quebec's mature SSE ecosystem provides insightful lessons for addressing youth integration challenges. The Construction Site of the Social Economy, created in 1996, has supported the emergence of thousands of collectively owned enterprises and cooperatives, generating long-term employment opportunities (Bernier et al., 2003).

Youth Service Cooperatives (CJS), implemented since the 1980s in several countries, illustrate how entrepreneurship training can mobilize young people's skills while strengthening their employability. Likewise, social economy hubs foster territorial development by connecting local actors, encouraging experimentation, and stimulating social innovation (Lévesque, 1999; Mendell, 2015).

Transferring these practices to Morocco requires a structured and context-appropriate roadmap. The first step is to establish an enabling institutional ecosystem, notably through the adoption of a comprehensive SSE framework law and the creation of coordinating bodies similar to Quebec's governance architecture (Defourny and Nyssens, 2010).

The second step involves strengthening capacity-building mechanisms—training, incubators, mentorship programs—to reinforce both young graduates' skills and the managerial capabilities of social entrepreneurs. Integrating SSE modules into university curricula and establishing social innovation incubators represent high-impact measures (Laville and Nyssens, 2001).

Third, encouraging cooperatives and social enterprises can help generate stable and quality employment while meeting local socio-economic needs. Youth cooperatives inspired by Quebec's CJS and territorial networks modeled on Quebec's Social Economy Hubs (SEH) could play a pivotal role (Moulaert and Ailenci, 2005).

Adapting Quebec's experience, however, requires careful consideration of macroeconomic realities. In Morocco, systemic constraints such as limited access to credit, the persistence of informal employment, and institutional rigidities may slow the expansion of SSE initiatives. Effective policies must therefore combine targeted economic incentives, regulatory flexibility, and stronger inter-institutional coordination to allow the SSE to scale and contribute meaningfully to youth employability.

Moreover, several complementary dimensions deserve further emphasis. First, Morocco would benefit from a clearer policy roadmap when implementing Quebec-inspired models. A phased strategy could include:

- 1) adopting a dedicated SSE framework law;
- 2) creating regional support hubs;
- 3) integrating SSE training across universities and vocational centers; and
- 4) Establishing dedicated funding instruments, such as social innovation funds, youth cooperative grants, and fiscal incentives for collective enterprises. This sequencing would enable coherent development, gradual expansion, and continuous institutional learning.

Second, attention should be given to the nature of employment created. International research shows that SSE organizations generate quality, durable jobs when they adopt professionalized management practices, diversify their revenue streams, and maintain long-term partnerships with public institutions (Ridley-Duff and Bull, 2022; Chaves and Monzón, 2018). For Morocco, promoting SSE activity in emerging sectors—green industries, digital services, care economy—may reinforce job quality while supporting territorial development.

Finally, the expansion of SSE must be understood within broader macroeconomic constraints. Although SSE organizations can mitigate youth exclusion, their capacity to absorb graduates depends on conditions such as investment levels, regional disparities, fiscal space, and access to finance. Economic downturns often increase social needs but reduce available funding, creating dual pressures. Aligning SSE measures with national industrial strategies, regional development plans, and youth employment policies is therefore essential to avoid structural bottlenecks and ensure that SSE contributes simultaneously to social cohesion and inclusive economic growth.

In sum, Quebec's experience offers Morocco a set of adaptable mechanisms that, if contextualized and supported by coherent public policies, can significantly strengthen the professional integration of young graduates. Enhanced cooperation between the two regions could stimulate innovative, sustainable solutions and promote a more inclusive and resilient development model.

6. Conclusions

This review set out to address a central question: through which mechanisms, and under what conditions, can the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) enhance the professional integration of young graduates, and how can the experience of mature ecosystems—particularly Quebec—inform approaches adapted to the Moroccan context?

The analysis demonstrates that, across different institutional settings, the SSE offers a viable pathway for generating quality employment, strengthening youth skills, and responding to persistent social and territorial needs.

The Quebec case illustrates how a consolidated SSE ecosystem—supported by strong institutions, diversified financing tools, structured training programs, and territorial networks—can create stable and meaningful employment. Initiatives such as the Chantier de l'économie sociale (CES), Youth Service Cooperatives (CJS), and Social Economy Hubs (SEH) reveal the capacity of SSE organizations to combine economic viability with a social mission, thereby reinforcing both employability and community resilience.

For Morocco, these insights highlight not only what is possible but also the conditions required to achieve it. Building an enabling ecosystem would involve adopting a dedicated SSE framework law, expanding capacity-building programs, strengthening cooperative governance, and establishing intermediaries capable of coordinating national and regional strategies. Adapting Quebec-inspired models—such as CJS or territorial hubs—could help reduce unemployment among young graduates while improving service provision and local development outcomes.

The comparative perspective also shows that SSE expansion cannot be isolated from broader macroeconomic and institutional constraints. Access to finance, labour-market informality, regional disparities, and administrative rigidity remain structural factors that influence the ability of SSE organizations to create sustainable jobs. Addressing these constraints through coherent public policies is essential for scaling up SSE impact.

Overall, this review contributes to existing knowledge by clarifying the mechanisms through which the SSE supports youth integration, specifying the contextual factors that shape its performance, and illustrating how international experiences can be strategically adapted rather than simply replicated. The study underscores that cooperation between Morocco and Quebec—through knowledge sharing, institutional partnerships, and joint capacity-building initiatives—can catalyze innovative and context-sensitive solutions.

The findings reaffirm the potential of the SSE to act as a lever for inclusive and sustainable economic development, provided that its expansion is guided by clear institutional frameworks, adequate resources, and collaborative governance. By mobilising lessons from Quebec and tailoring them to local realities, Morocco can strengthen its SSE ecosystem and offer young people more stable, meaningful, and future-oriented employment opportunities. Overall, the review contributes to the literature in three main ways:

- 1) Synthesizing theoretical and empirical studies linking SSE dynamics to youth employment outcomes;
- 2) Offering a comparative perspective on the Moroccan and Quebec models;
- 3) Proposing a methodological framework that can guide future empirical research on SSE and youth integration.

Acknowledgement

The authors would like to thank all colleagues and practitioners who provided support and constructive input during the preparation of this work. We are also grateful to the participants who contributed valuable information throughout the research process.

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