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Education in Morocco at the crossroads of globalization and local identity

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Abstract

This paper examines the multifaceted challenges facing Morocco's education system in the context of globalization. It traces the historical evolution of education in the country, highlighting colonial legacies and subsequent reform efforts. The analysis delves into the pressures globalization exerts –ranging from international benchmarks and digital divides to cultural tensions– and their intersections with enduring domestic issues such as linguistic complexity, infrastructure disparities, and teacher retention. Furthermore, the paper explores equity concerns, especially among rural, low-income, and marginalized groups, and critiques systematic governance and implementation policy gaps. Despite these challenges, it also identifies areas of promise, including educational technology, international collaboration, and youth entrepreneurship. The study concludes with actionable recommendations for building an inclusive, adaptive, and culturally grounded education system that equips Moroccan learners to thrive in both local and global contexts.

Keywords: Morocco; Education reform; Globalization; Multilingualism; Equity; Teacher training; Infrastructure; Curriculum development; Policy implementation; Educational technology; Inclusion

1. Introduction

In the era of globalization, education systems around the world are grappling with the challenge of preparing students not only for their local realities but also for an interconnected and rapidly evolving world. Nowhere is this more complex than in countries like Morocco, where historical legacy, linguistic diversity and socio-economic inequalities intersect with global pressures.

Morocco has made notable strides in expanding access to education in recent decades, yet the system continues to wrestle with significant obstacles. Globalization has introduced new benchmarks for knowledge, innovation, and competitiveness, forcing traditional structures to adapt. At the same time, it has exposed the limitations of one-size-fits-all reforms and underscored the necessity of culturally responsive, inclusive approaches.

This paper investigates the complex challenges confronting Moroccan education today, viewed through the lens of globalization. Drawing on socio-political, economic, and cultural dimensions, we will explore how Morocco is navigating this delicate terrain and what it might take to create an educational system that is both globally competitive and locally grounded.

Beyond Morocco's borders, the challenges it faces resonate strongly with broader Global South debates on education in the age of globalization. Countries such as India, South Africa, and many across Latin America grapple with similar tensions between expanding access and ensuring quality, between honoring local linguistic and cultural diversity and meeting international benchmarks. In India, for instance, the coexistence of dozens of regional languages alongside English as a global lingua franca mirrors Morocco's own struggles with multilingualism and equity. South Africa's post-apartheid reforms highlight the difficulty of reconciling historical inequalities with the demands of a competitive global

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economy, a dilemma Morocco also confronts in balancing rural-urban disparities. Likewise, Latin American nations have long wrestled with the pressures of international assessments such as PISA, where low performance often sparks reform agendas that risk privileging global rankings over local needs. Situating Morocco within this comparative landscape underscores that its educational dilemmas are not isolated, but part of a wider struggle among Global South nations to craft systems that are simultaneously inclusive, culturally grounded, and globally responsive.

2. Materials and Methods

Understanding the multifaceted challenges of Moroccan education in a globalized era requires a research design that accommodates depth, nuance, and contextual sensitivity. This study adopts a qualitative, interpretive methodology, enabling a comprehensive exploration of policy texts, cultural influences, and systemic constraints through interdisciplinary lenses. The approach consists of four integrative strategies: documentary analysis, comparative education frameworks, sociolinguistic and cultural inquiry, and thematic coding.

2.1. Documentary Analysis

At the core of this research lies a systematic analysis of primary and secondary documents that chart the trajectory of Moroccan educational reforms. Key national policy documents, including the *National Charter for Education and Training* (1999) and *Vision 2015-2030*, serve as foundational texts that reflect evolving governmental priorities and strategic aims. These are supplemented by international policy reports such as UNESCO's *Global Education Monitoring Report* (2021) and OECD's *Policy Outlook* (2020), which contextualize Moroccan efforts within broader global development trends.

By examining these documents, the study identifies critical gaps between policy ambitions and implementation realities. Issues such as disparities in rural access, inconsistencies in curricular reform, and underinvestment in infrastructure emerge as recurrent themes. The documentary analysis also enables a diachronic review of reform attempts, illustrating how shifts in global education paradigms influence national discourse and strategy (UNESCO, 2021; OECD, 2020).

2.2. Comparative Education Frameworks

To move beyond a single country analysis, the study employs comparative education frameworks that draw insights from both Global South and North African contexts. By looking at reform trajectories in countries like Tunisia, Senegal, and Egypt, the research isolates patterns and strategies that either increase or alleviate educational challenges common to the region. "Digital inequalities exacerbated learning disparities during COVID-19", say (Ndiaye and Diop, 2021).

These comparisons are not aimed at benchmarking performance but rather at discerning transferable lessons, especially around teacher training, decentralization, and language policy. For instance, Tunisia's integration of digital pedagogies and Senegal's experimentation with indigenous language curricula offer compelling counterpoints to Morocco's more centralized, French-Arabic bilingual approach. Such comparative analysis enriches understanding of regional commonalities and divergences, providing a framework for more adaptable and culturally aligned policy responses.

The choice of Tunisia, Senegal, and Egypt as comparative cases is deliberate, reflecting both geographic proximity and shared postcolonial trajectories that illuminate Morocco's own reform challenges. Tunisia provides a valuable point of reference due to its early and relatively systemic integration of digital pedagogies and its experimentation with decentralized governance structures. These initiatives highlight alternative pathways for addressing teacher training and curriculum modernization in North Africa. Senegal, by contrast, offers insights from a Sub-Saharan context where indigenous language curricula have been piloted with varying degrees of success. This experience is particularly relevant for Morocco, where debates among Amazigh integration echo Senegal's struggles to balance linguistic equity with resource constraints. Egypt, as the most populous Arab country, represents a large-scale system grappling with similar issues of overcrowding, centralized governance, and the tension between Arabization and English-French medium instruction. Together, these cases provide a methodological value by enabling a regional triangulation: they allow the study to distinguish between challenges that are structurally common across the Global South (e.g., resource disparities, global benchmarking pressures) and those that are uniquely Moroccan (e.g., the French-Arabic-Amazigh linguistic nexus). This comparative lens thus enriches the analysis by situating Morocco's educational dilemmas within a broader constellation of reform trajectories, while also identifying potentially transferable lessons.

2.3. Sociolinguistic and Cultural Inquiry

Morocco's educational system exists at the intersection of complex linguistic realities and sociocultural dynamics. As such, the study incorporates a sociolinguistic lens to examine how multilingualism –involving Arabic, Amazigh, French, and increasingly English– affects instructional delivery, curriculum design, and social equity. Drawing on works by El Kirat (2017) and Benhaddouch (2018), the research explores how language functions as both a bridge and barrier in educational practice.

Multilingualism presents pedagogical challenges, particularly in ensuring equitable access to quality instruction across linguistic regions. "Multilingualism remains both a cultural asset and a pedagogical challenge", says (El Kirate, 2017). The sociolinguistic inquiry also examines the symbolic capital attached to certain languages and its implications for educational mobility and social stratification. This dimension of the methodology foregrounds language policy as not merely a technical issue but deeply a political and cultural one.

While this study primarily relies on documentary and secondary analysis, it also acknowledges the methodological potential of ethnographic approaches in unpacking Morocco's complex sociolinguistic landscape. Classroom observation, for instance, could reveal how teachers and students navigate multilingual instruction in real time – switching between Arabic, French, Amazigh, and increasingly English depending on subject matter and context. Similarly, semi-structured interviews with educators, parents, and learners could provide rich insights into the symbolic hierarchies of language, perceptions of equity, and the lived realities of policy implementation. Although such methods were not employed in this study, reflecting on them underscores the importance of ground-level perspectives in complementing policy analysis. Ethnographic inquiry would not only capture the micro-dynamics of code-switching and identity negotiation but also highlight the disjunctures between official discourse and classroom practice. By situating the present research within this broader methodological landscape, the study signals openness to future mixed-methods designs that could deepen understanding of Morocco's educational challenges.

2.4. Thematic Coding

Finally, thematic coding is employed to structure the analysis across six major challenge domains: governance, infrastructure, teacher training, language policy, equity, and globalization pressures. This coding allows the research to distill patterns within and across data sources, ensuring that interpretations are grounded in observable trends rather than abstract theorizing.

For instance, governance challenges are coded around decentralization struggles and bureaucratic inertia, while infrastructure issues focus on urban-rural divides and digital access limitations. Language policy themes capture tensions between francophone legacy structures and emerging Anglophone orientations, highlighting the fluid dynamics of identity and pedagogy in Moroccan classrooms.

Through thematic coding, the study is able to synthesize findings in a coherent narrative that respects both the empirical richness of the data and the theoretical implications of global-local intersections in education.

3. Historical Background of Education in Morocco

To fully grasp the complexities facing Moroccan education today, it is essential to first understand the historical evolution of the system. "The evolution of Moroccan education reflects a complex interplay of colonial legacies, Arabicization policies, and post-independence reforms aimed at national identity and equity" (Llorent-Bedmar, 2014). Before independence in 1956, the education landscape in Morocco was marked by colonial influences, particularly the French model, which created a parallel structure that prioritized colonial administrative needs over universal literacy or indigenous knowledge systems. Access was extremely limited, especially in rural areas and among girls.

After independence, Morocco launched extensive reforms to reclaim and reshape its educational identity. Arabic was promoted as the language of instruction in a move to reinforce national culture, while universal primary education became a government priority. Throughout the latter half of the 20th century, efforts to expand school infrastructure, revise curricula, and introduce vocational training began to take root.

Despite these efforts, the education system continued to reflect structural imbalances: high dropout rates, overcrowded classrooms, and inequalities between urban and rural regions persisted. By the late 1990s, Morocco initiated a more ambitious series of reforms aimed at aligning education with economic development goals. "*The National Charter for Education and Training (1999)* was a landmark reform" (Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, 2015). It was really a step toward modernizing pedagogy, improving governance, and encouraging community participation.

The colonial legacy of the French protectorate (1912-1956) left an enduring imprint not only on Morocco's linguistic landscape but also on its administrative and pedagogical structures. French authorities established a dual-track system: elite schools designed to educate a small cadre of administrators and professionals in the French language, and limited provision for the broader population, particularly in rural areas. This bifurcation entrenched inequalities that persisted well beyond independence. Teacher training was also heavily shaped by the French model, with normal schools (Écoles Normales) preparing instructors according to metropolitan curricula and pedagogical standards. As a result, French became not only the language of science and administration but also the medium through which professional identity and authority were constructed in the educational sector. The bureaucratic culture of centralized planning and inspection, inherited from the protectorate, continues to influence Moroccan educational governance today.

In addition to the French presence, Spanish colonial influence in the north (Rif region) and the south (the Southern Sahara) added further complexity to Morocco's multilingual heritage. Spanish-language schools and missionary institutions introduced Castilian as a medium of instruction and administration in these regions, creating localized linguistic legacies that still resonate in broader communities and among older generations. The coexistence of French, Spanish, Arabic, and Amazigh during the colonial period produced a layered linguistic environment that shaped not only communication but also social mobility and identity formation. This colonial mosaic helps explain why Morocco's post-independence education reforms have been so deeply entangled with questions of language policy, national identity, and equity.

In 2009, the *Emergency Plan* laid out additional strategies to tackle quality and performance. More recently, the 2015-2030 *Strategic Vision for Reform* has pushed for inclusive, quality education and increased global competitiveness. Yet despite these advances, deep-rooted challenges remain –some tied to legacy issues, others emerging from the increasingly globalized context Morocco now operates within.

4. Globalization and its Pressures

Globalization has ushered in an era of unparalleled connectivity, where economic, cultural, and technological forces transcend borders. "Globalization has intensified pressures on Moroccan education to align with international standards, often privileging foreign languages and market-driven reforms" (Houssami, 2024). For Morocco, this means both opportunity and pressure –particularly for its education system. Schools and universities are now expected to cultivate globally aware fluent in multiple languages, skilled in digital technologies, and prepared to compete in a borderless job market.

"Globalization has intensified the interdependence of economies, cultures, and political systems, but it also exacerbates inequalities and cultural homogenization", say (Alkharafi and Alsabah, 2025). One major pressure comes from international benchmarks, like the PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) rankings, which have exposed systemic shortcomings. Moroccan students often score below average in reading, mathematics, and science –results that trigger waves of public debate and political urgency. These metrics, while useful, do not always account for local complexities and risk creating a reform agenda focused more on rankings than meaningful change.

Culturally, globalization presents another tension. Western norms and values –amplified by media, entertainment, and digital platforms– can conflict with traditional Moroccan practices, creating an identity push-pull in the classroom. Educators must navigate this landscape while fostering students' openness to the world without eroding local values.

Technologically, while global access to online resources and education platforms has exploded, Morocco continues to face a digital divide. Urban students may benefit from internet-enabled tools and private tutoring services, while rural peers struggle with limited connectivity and digital literacy. This imbalance magnifies existing inequalities and place disadvantaged students at even greater risk of exclusion in the global race.

4.1. Higher Education and Globalization

Globalization has had a particularly pronounced impact on Morocco's higher education sector, where international frameworks and mobility trends are reshaping institutional priorities. The influence of the Bologna Process, though not formally adopted by Morocco, has indirectly encouraged universities to align degree structures and credit systems with European standards in order to facilitate student mobility and recognition of qualifications. This alignment has been especially visible in partnerships with French and Spanish universities, as well as in joint degree programs that seek to enhance Morocco's competitiveness in the global academic marketplace.

The Bologna Process is a European higher education reform initiative launched in 1999 to harmonize degree structures, credit systems, and quality assurance across participating countries. It created the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), making degrees more comparable and facilitating student mobility and recognition of qualifications internationally.

International student mobility is another aspect of this globalization. Thousands of Moroccan students pursue higher education abroad each year, particularly in France, Spain, Canada, and increasingly Anglophone destinations such as the United States, English-speaking Canada, and the United Kingdom. This outward mobility reflects both the prestige associated with foreign degrees and the perception that international exposure enhances employability. At the same time, Moroccan universities are beginning to attract more students from Sub-Saharan Africa, positioning the country as a regional hub for higher education.

The rise of English-medium programs further illustrates the globalization of Moroccan higher education. While French remains dominant in scientific and technical fields, universities are increasingly offering courses and even full programs in English to align with global research and labor market demands. This reflects a strategic shift: English is not only a tool of internationalization but also a means of integrating Moroccan graduates into global knowledge economies. However, it also raises questions about linguistic equity and the marginalization of Arabic and Amazigh in higher education spaces.

4.2. Cultural Dimensions of Globalization

Beyond institutional reforms, globalization exerts a profound cultural influence on Moroccan youth, shaping values, identities, and aspirations. Exposure to global media, digital platforms, and transnational cultural flows has created new imaginaries of success and belonging. Young Moroccans increasingly aspire to lifestyles, careers, and identities that transcend national borders, often measuring themselves against global rather than local benchmarks.

This cultural globalization produces both opportunities and tensions. On one hand, it fostered openness, cosmopolitanism, and a sense of global citizenship. On the other, it can generate dissonance between traditional Moroccan values and imported cultural norms. For example, debates around gender roles, consumer culture, and individual autonomy are increasingly influenced by global discourses, sometimes clashing with local expectations. In classrooms, teachers often find themselves mediating between curricula rooted in national identity and students' aspirations shaped by global media and digital networks.

The result is a dynamic but fragile negotiation of identity. For many Moroccan youth, education is not only a pathway to employment but also a means of positioning themselves within a global cultural economy. This dual aspiration –to remain rooted in Moroccan heritage while participating in global modernity– underscores the complexity of educational reform in a globalized era.

In short, globalization has raised the bar for what education systems should deliver –but it has also spotlighted the uneven starting points many nations, including Morocco, must confront. Meeting these expectations requires not only systemic investment but also thoughtful calibration to Morocco's unique socio-cultural fabric.

5. Infrastructure and Resource Challenges

One of the most valuable obstacles to quality education in Morocco lies in its physical and material infrastructure. Despite national commitment to universal access, glaring disparities persist between urban centers and rural or remote areas, where basic school facilities are often lacking. “Despite increased enrollment, Moroccan schools still face persistent disparities in infrastructure and access to educational resources, especially in rural areas” (El Mahzani, Khaldi and El Ganich, 2024).

In urban environments, students tend to benefit from better-equipped classrooms, libraries, and internet access. In contrast, rural schools may operate in deteriorating buildings with limited electricity, sanitation, and basic learning materials. These disparities create a two-tiered system where geography determines opportunity.

Overcrowding is another chronic issue. In densely populated areas, classrooms often accommodate more than 40 or even 50 students, overwhelming teachers and diluting the quality of instruction. The shortage of schools in some regions also forces children to travel long distances –especially burdensome for girls, whose families may prioritize safety over education.

Furthermore, Morocco's digital infrastructure has yet to meet the demands of a tech-driven world. While recent initiatives have sought to integrate information and communication technologies (ICT) into classrooms, the results have been uneven. Equipment is sometimes outdated or underutilized due to insufficient training for educators and maintenance issues. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted these weaknesses, with many students unable to participate in remote learning due to lack of devices or reliable internet connection.

Investment in infrastructure is not just about bricks and bandwidth –it is about creating environments that motivate learners and support teachers. Addressing these issues requires a multi-pronged approach: building new schools, upgrading existing ones, ensuring equitable digital access, and providing ongoing support to make technology an integral –not incidental– part of learning.

The digital divide remains one of the most pressing dimensions of Morocco's educational infrastructure gap. According to the National Telecommunication Regulatory Agency (ANRT), internet penetration in Morocco reached approximately 84% of the population in 2022, but this figure marks stark disparities between urban and rural areas. While most households have access to broadband or mobile internet, many rural communities still rely on limited or unstable connections. Device ownership follows a similar pattern: although smartphone penetration is relatively high (over 80% nationally), access to laptops or tablets –crucial for effective online learning– remains concentrated among middle- and upper-income families in urban centers. This uneven distribution of digital resources reinforces existing socio-economic inequalities, leaving rural and low-income students at a significant disadvantage in accessing modern learning tools.

The Moroccan government has launched several initiatives to address these gaps, including the GENIE program (2005), which aimed to equip schools with ICT infrastructure and train teachers in digital pedagogy. More recently, the Ministry of Education has promoted the integration of digital platforms into classrooms, though implementation has been uneven due to resource constraints and limited teacher training. Despite these efforts, the digital divide continues to hinder equitable access to quality education, particularly in remote areas where connectivity remains unreliable.

The COVID-19 pandemic starkly exposed and amplified these challenges. When schools closed in March 2020, the Ministry of Education rapidly deployed the TelmidTICE platform, offering online lessons and resources. However, many students –especially in rural areas– were unable to benefit due to lack of internet access or appropriate devices. To mitigate this, the government also turned to television and radio broadcasting, with national channels airing educational content across grade levels. While these measures ensured a degree of continuity, they highlighted the limitations of one-size-fits-all solutions: students without stable electricity, quiet study spaces, or parental support still struggled to keep pace. The pandemic thus underscored the urgent need for a multi-modal digital strategy that combines online platforms with accessible, low-tech solutions, while also investing in teacher training to ensure technology is used effectively rather than superficially.

In sum, bridging Morocco's digital divide requires more than distributing devices or expanding connectivity. It calls for a holistic approach that integrates infrastructure investment, equitable access policies, and sustained professional development for educators. Only then can digital tools become genuine enablers of inclusion rather than amplifiers of inequality.

6. Language and Curriculum Dilemmas

Few aspects of Moroccan education illustrate its complex identity more vividly than the ongoing debates around language and curriculum. Morocco is a multilingual country, where Arabic, Darija, French, Amazigh, and increasingly English coexist. This linguistic mosaic enriches the national culture but also poses a significant challenge for teaching and learning. "According to the latest figures released by the High Commission of Planning (HCP), there are 7 languages used in Morocco, which are, according to their number of users: Darija (91%), Tashelhit (14%), Tamazight (8%), Tarifit (4%), and Hassani (1%), together with French (32%) and Spanish (5%)", (Fathi, 2017).

Historically, French has dominated technical and scientific instruction, a legacy of colonialism that continues to influence higher education and professional spheres. Meanwhile, Arabic is used in early schooling and religious studies, while Amazigh has only recently been integrated into the curriculum. The government's push to introduce English earlier in the educational cycle reflects globalization's influence, positioning it as the language of international commerce, science, and diplomacy.

"Morocco's shifting language-in-education policies –from Arabicization to language alternation– have created pedagogical tensions and equity concerns (Errihani, 2023). However, these shifts often cause confusion for students and strain for teachers. Switching between languages across subjects creates inconsistency in comprehension and

performance. Students may master content in one language but struggle to express or apply it in another. Moreover, not all teachers are equipped with the training to teach in multiple languages, particularly in science and technology disciplines.

At the curriculum level, there is an urgent need to balance traditional content with 21st-century competencies: critical thinking, creativity, civic education, digital literacy, and environmental awareness. "Curriculum frameworks often prioritize standardized language instruction, overlooking the diverse linguistic backgrounds of students and reinforcing systemic inequities", (UNESCO, 2015). Many curricula are still geared toward rote memorization rather than active learning. As a result, students often leave school without the skills needed to thrive in a knowledge economy.

Amazigh integration into public education remains uneven, shaped by teacher shortages, material constraints, and regional variation. Despite curricular inclusion, many schools struggle to staff qualified Amazigh-language teachers, particularly in rural areas where recruitment and retention are difficult. Textbook production and distribution have not kept pace with demand, leading to mismatches between official curricula and classroom realities. Regional variation further complicates implementation: Tashelhit, Tamazight (Central Atlas), and Tarifit require differentiated resources and teacher preparation, yet standardized efforts have sometimes overlooked local linguistic features, reducing relevance and learner engagement. These gaps risk relegating Amazigh to symbolic inclusion rather than substantive literacy and learning, unless teacher pipelines, materials development, and localized pedagogical support are strengthened.

Linking curricula reform to 21st-century skills is essential to move beyond language alternation toward meaningful competence. Embedding critical thinking, problem-solving, and project-based learning across subjects would help students apply knowledge regardless of the instructional language. Aligning curricula with Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4 on quality education, SDG 5 on gender equality, SDG 9 on innovation, and SDG 13 on climate action) can anchor learning in real-world challenges and civic responsibility. Digital literacy should be treated as a cross-cutting capability –coding, media evaluation, data interpretation, and ethical technology use– supported by bilingual or trilingual resources to ensure accessibility. Assessment practices need recalibration toward performance tasks, portfolios, and collaborative projects that value creativity, communication, and intercultural competence. A coherent multilingual strategy coupled with 21st-century pedagogy would position students to navigate Morocco's linguistic diversity while engaging confidently with global knowledge economies.

A more coherent, inclusive curriculum –delivered in accessible relevant languages– could empower Moroccan students to connect with their heritage while engaging with the world. Achieving this delicate balance is a central challenge in the pursuit of a truly global yet grounded education system.

7. Teacher Training and Retention

At the heart of any educational system lies its teachers. In Morocco, educators often shoulder an immense burden, balancing overcrowded classrooms, scarce resources, and shifting curricula demands– all while navigating their own professional development in a rapidly evolving global context.

One of the most pressing issues is the shortage of qualified teachers, especially in rural and remote areas. Many regions rely on contractual teachers, whose employment conditions are frequently unstable and whose training is sometimes rushed. This creates not only inconsistency in instruction but also frustration and low morale among educators. Strikes and protest by teachers have become a recurrent feature of Moroccan education discourse, underscoring systemic discontent. "Teacher professionalism efforts remain fragmented, with gaps between university preparation and classroom realities" (Ouasri, 2021).

Compounding this is the challenge of retaining educators. Low salaries, limited promotion pathways, and lack of continuing education opportunities push many teachers to seek alternative careers, particularly younger professionals with global aspirations. Those who remain often struggle to access quality in-service training, leaving them ill-prepared to implement new pedagogical methods or digital tools.

Efforts to reform teacher training have included the creation of specialized institutes and mandatory professional development programs. However, these initiatives sometimes lack coherence or fail to reach teachers on the ground. Moreover, effective mentorship systems –where experienced educators support newer ones– are still underdeveloped.

Teacher protests have become a recurring feature of Morocco's educational landscape, reflecting deep-seated frustrations with employment conditions and professional recognition. Since 2016, large-scale demonstrations have

been organized by contractual teachers, who represent a significant portion of the workforce, particularly in rural and underserved regions. Their demands typically center on the call for integration into the civil service, stable contracts, improved salaries, and access to social security and pension schemes equivalent to those of permanent staff. Protesters also highlight the lack of coherent career pathways and limited opportunities for professional advancement, which contribute to low morale and high attrition rates among younger educators.

Government responses have been mixed. While authorities have occasionally offered concessions –such as increment salary adjustments, partial benefits or promises of dialogue–these measures have often been perceived as temporary fixes rather than structural solutions. The persistence of protests underscores the inadequacy of piecemeal reforms and the need for a comprehensive strategy that addresses both the material and professional dimensions of teaching. The recurrent tensions between teachers and the state not only disrupt classroom continuity but also erode public trust in the education system, making reform more urgent and politically sensitive.

One promising avenue for addressing these challenges lies in the development of professional learning communities (PLCs) and structured mentorship programs. PLCs encourage teachers to collaborate regularly, share best practices, and collectively problem-solve around pedagogical challenges. Such communities can mitigate feelings of isolation, particularly in rural postings, and foster a culture of continuous improvement. Mentorship programs, where experienced educators guide novice teachers, can also bridge the gap between university preparation and classroom realities. By institutionalizing mentorship, Morocco could strengthen teacher induction, reduce early-career attrition, and cultivate leadership within the profession. These approaches, while not substitutes for fair contracts and adequate compensation, represent complementary strategies that can enhance teacher agency, professional identity, and instructional quality.

In a globalized world, the demands on educators are higher than ever. They are expected to be not only subject experts but also facilitators of critical thinking, inclusive practices, and digital fluency. Addressing Morocco's teacher crisis calls for a holistic approach: better salaries and career support, robust pre-service and in-service training, and recognition of teachers as central agents of change.

8. Equity and Inclusion

Despite national progress in expanding access to schooling, Morocco continues to grapple with significant equity gaps –particularly when it comes to gender, geographic location, disability, and socio-economic background. “Territorial and gender disparities continue to undermine inclusive education, particularly in rural and marginalized communities”, says (Ibnessidiq, 2025). These disparities undermine not just individual potential but the overall effectiveness and fairness of the education system.

Gender equity in Moroccan education has improved significantly over the past two decades, yet persistent gaps remain. According to the High Commission for Planning (HCP, 2022), female enrollment in primary education now exceeds 95% nationally, a remarkable achievement compared to the 1990s. However, dropout rates reveal a more troubling picture: nearly 12% of girls in rural areas leave school before completing lower secondary, compared to about 6% in urban areas. Early marriage, long travel distances, and household responsibilities continue to disproportionately affect girls' educational trajectories. At the upper secondary level, the gender gap widens further, with female participation dropping to 55% in rural regions, underscoring the need for targeted interventions that go beyond access to address retention and completion.

Inclusive education for children with disabilities represents another critical frontier. Although Morocco ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2009 and has since adopted policies promoting inclusive education, implementation remains uneven. Many mainstream schools lack ramps, adapted materials, or trained staff to accommodate learners with physical, sensory, or cognitive disabilities. Nevertheless, promising pilot programs and NGO initiatives are emerging. For example, the “Inclusive Schools” project launched with partnership with UNICEF has piloted resource classrooms in several regions, providing specialized support with mainstream schools. NGOs such as “Hand in Hand” (Main dans la Main) and the Moroccan Association for the Integration of the Blind have also developed community-based programs that train teachers, produce Braille textbooks, and advocate for policy reform. These initiatives demonstrate that inclusive education is possible when systemic support is combined with grassroots innovation, but scaling them up requires stronger state commitment and sustainable funding. Socio-economic inequalities play a decisive role as well. Children from low-income families often enter school with fewer early learning opportunities, less academic support at home, and greater vulnerability to dropout pressures. The education system can unintentionally reinforce these inequalities through selective entrance exams, limited scholarship opportunities, and hidden costs like schools supplies and transportation.

While geography is often used to explain disparities, socio-economic class plays an equally decisive role. The urban poor face challenges that mirror those of rural communities: overcrowded classrooms, limited access to private tutoring, and hidden costs such as uniforms, transportation, and school supplies. Children from low-income families in urban peripheries often attend under-resourced schools that lag behind elite institutions, creating a two-tiered system within cities themselves. By contrast, wealthier families can supplement public education with private schooling or extracurricular support, reinforcing cycles of privilege. This intersection of geography and class highlights that equity is not simply a rural-urban divide but a broader socio-economic issue that requires redistributive policies and targeted support for disadvantaged households.

“Inclusion is not merely about access—it requires systemic change to ensure that all learners, regardless of background, experience fairness and belonging in education”, (UNESCO, 2017). Creating an inclusive education system requires more than just opening school doors—it calls for systemic change, including community engagement, adaptable teaching strategies, and targeted investments in the most vulnerable populations. Only by addressing the barriers that marginalized groups face can Morocco build a truly equitable foundation for its next generation.

In sum, equity in Moroccan education must be understood as a multidimensional challenge –encompassing gender, socio-economic class, and disability. Addressing these disparities calls for a holistic approach: targeted stipends and housing for rural girls, subsidies and support for urban poor families, and comprehensive investment in inclusive infrastructure and teacher training. Only by tackling these intersecting inequities can Morocco move toward a genuinely inclusive education system that fulfills the promise of fairness and belonging for all learners.

9. Policy, Governance and Funding

The effectiveness of any education system depends not just on teachers and classrooms, but on the broader framework of policy, governance, and financial investment, that supports them. In Morocco, educational reform has long been a national priority –but policy ambitions often collide with implementation gaps and bureaucratic inertia.

Since the turn of the century, Morocco has launched several reform blueprints, such as the *National Charter* and the *Strategic Vision for 2015-2030*. These plans underscore important goals: universal access, quality assurance, inclusivity, and alignment with national development strategies. Yet, translating these goals into reality has proven difficult. Fragmented decision-making, inconsistent follow-through, and frequent changes in leadership often hinder long-term continuity. “Frequent policy shifts and centralized governance have hindered long-term planning and sustainable funding in Moroccan education” (Mabrouk, 2023).

Decentralization efforts aim to give more autonomy to regional education authorities, encouraging localized solutions. However, disparities in administrative capacity across regions have created uneven results. Some local authorities excel in customizing programs to community needs, while others struggle with limited expertise and resources. “Fragmented governance and inconsistent funding mechanisms hinder coordinated education reform, especially in context where strategic enablers and long-term planning are absent”, (Wolff et al., 2025). Another challenge lies in coordination – between ministries, between education levels (primary, secondary, higher), and between public and private stakeholders. Without streamlined governance, even the most promising policies risk getting lost in translation on the way to the classroom.

Funding is another perennial concern. While Morocco allocates a notable share of its national budget to education, critics argue it is still insufficient to address infrastructure gaps, technology upgrades, and teacher support. Moreover, concerns about transparency and accountability sometimes overshadow investment plans, raising questions about whether funds reach the intended beneficiaries.

International donors and multilateral organizations have also played a significant role in shaping Morocco’s education reform agenda. The World Bank has been a long-standing partner, providing both financial support and technical expertise for large-scale reform initiatives, particularly in areas such as governance modernization, teacher training, and performance monitoring. Its emphasis on accountability and measurable outcomes has influenced Morocco’s adoption of evaluation frameworks and data-driven policy tools. The European Union (EU) has contributed through budgetary support and capacity-building programs, often linking education reform to broader socio-economic development and labor market integration. EU-funded projects have promoted vocational training, employability skills, and regional cooperation, aligning Moroccan education with European neighborhood policies. Meanwhile, UNESCO has provided normative guidance and comparative benchmarks, especially through the Global Education Monitoring Reports and initiatives tied to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4). UNESCO’s advocacy for inclusive, equitable,

and quality education has reinforced Morocco's commitments to gender equity, multilingualism, and disability inclusion.

While these partnerships have brought valuable resources and expertise, they also raise questions about dependency and policy alignment. Donor-driven priorities sometimes risk overshadowing local needs, creating tensions between international benchmarks and Morocco's socio-cultural realities. The challenge, therefore, lies in leveraging donor support to strengthen institutional capacity and innovation while ensuring that reforms remain contextually grounded and nationally owned.

To turn good intentions into meaningful change, Morocco must prioritize effective governance mechanisms, invest in institutional capacity building, and foster a culture of accountability and collaboration. Only then can policy become a true engine for systemic transformation.

10. Opportunities and Innovation

Despite its challenges, Morocco's education system also holds immense potential for innovation and progress – especially as the country embraces digital transformation, youth-led initiatives, and international collaboration. “Innovation in education flourishes when institutions recognize authentic, real-world needs and integrate contextually relevant solutions –often through thoughtful technology use”, (Cellik and Baturay, 2024).

EdTech is one of the most promising frontiers. Start-ups and public-private partnerships are emerging to provide e-learning platforms, mobile applications, and AI-powered tutoring services. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the rapid rollout of platforms like *TelmidTICE* illustrated the system's ability to adapt when pushed. Although access and equity remain hurdles, these initiatives lay the groundwork for a more flexible, learner-centered model of education.

Youth entrepreneurship is another growing opportunity. Programs in vocational training and skills development are encouraging young Moroccans to think creatively and build their own futures rather than rely solely on public or corporate employment. With a youthful population and a rising interest in innovation hubs, Morocco is well placed to foster a culture of problem-solving and social enterprise.

International partnerships with institutions in Europe, Africa, and the Middle East offer avenues for curriculum development, research exchange, and capacity building. Multilingualism long seen as a challenge, can become a strategic asset if nurtured thoughtfully. English-language instruction, for instance, opens doors to global science and technology fields, while preserving Arabic and Amazigh strengthens cultural literacy.

The Moroccan diaspora also plays a vital role. Many successful Moroccans abroad actively mentor, invest in, or advocate for educational progress in their homeland. Tapping into this global network could unlock resources, knowledge, and inspiration.

Vocational education has emerged as a critical pillar in Morocco's strategy to align schooling with labor market needs. Recognizing that traditional academic pathways cannot absorb the country's growing youth population, the government has invested in expanding vocational training centers and diversifying their offerings. The Office for Vocational Training and Employment Promotion (OFPPT) has played a central role, offering programs in fields ranging from construction and agriculture to information technology and renewable energy. These initiatives aim not only to provide technical skills but also to enhance employability by integrating soft skills such as teamwork, communication, and problem-solving. However, challenges remain in ensuring that vocational training keeps pace with rapidly changing economic demands and that it is perceived as a prestigious and viable alternative to university education. Strengthening partnership with industry, updating curricula to reflect emerging sectors, and improving pathways for graduates to transition into higher education could elevate the status and effectiveness of vocational education.

Entrepreneurship represents another promising frontier for Moroccan youth. With high levels of unemployment among university graduates, self-employment and small business creation are increasingly seen as pathways to economic empowerment. Government programs such as “Intelaqa” (2020) have sought to provide financing, mentorship, and training for young entrepreneurs, particularly in rural and marginalized areas. Innovation hubs and incubators, often supported by universities or private-sector partnerships, are fostering a culture of creativity and problem-solving among students. These spaces encourage youth to develop start-ups in areas such as digital services, agri-business, and green technologies, aligning entrepreneurial activity with Morocco's broader development priorities. The rise of social entrepreneurship is particularly noteworthy, as young innovators seek to address community challenges –such as waste management, literacy, or women's empowerment– through sustainable business models.

Together, vocational education and entrepreneurship initiatives highlight a shift in Morocco's educational vision: from preparing students solely for wage employment to equipping them with the skills, resilience, and creativity to generate their own opportunities. If adequately supported through policy, funding, and mentorship, these pathways could transform Morocco's youthful demographic into a powerful engine of inclusive growth and innovation. "Recent reforms, such as '*Teaching at the Right Level*' initiative, signal a shift toward evidence-based, student-centered learning models" (Akdi and Belamhitou, 2024). In short, while Morocco's educational journey is far from finished, there are bright spots worth nurturing –bold experiments, young innovators, and cross-border bridges that could help the system not just catch up, but leap forward.

11. Conclusion

The educational challenges Morocco faces in a globalized world are undeniably vast –ranging from linguistic and technological divides to policy fragmentation and resource disparities. Yet the path forward is not one of despair but of determination, creativity and strategic action. Education is both a mirror and an engine of society, and the way Morocco is evolving its system will shape not just the country's future workforce, but its identity and values in an interconnected world.

While globalization introduces pressures –through rankings, competition, and cultural diffusion– it also opens gateways to innovation, collaboration, and empowerment. Morocco's rich multilingual heritage, youthful population, and strategic geographic position give it unique tools to navigate this transition.

If Morocco's current reforms are implemented with consistency, transparency and adequate investment, the education system by 2030 could look markedly different. Rural-urban disparities would be significantly reduced through expanded infrastructure and digital connectivity, ensuring that geography no longer dictates opportunity. A coherent multilingual policy would allow students to move fluidly between Arabic, Amazigh, French, and English, transforming linguistic diversity into a strategic asset rather than a barrier.

Teachers supported by stable contracts, professional development, and mentorship networks, would be recognized as central agents of change, fostering classrooms that emphasize critical thinking, creativity, and digital literacy. Vocational pathways and entrepreneurship programs would empower youth to become innovators and job creators, while inclusive education policies would ensure that girls, children with disabilities, and marginalized groups participate fully and equitably. In such a scenario, Morocco would not certainly only meet the benchmarks of SDG 4 but also position itself as a regional leader in building an education system that is both globally fluent and proudly rooted in its cultural heritage.

At the same time, this study has limitations that must be acknowledged. Its reliance on documentary analysis and secondary sources means that it cannot fully capture the lived experiences of teachers, students, and families navigating the system on a daily basis. Ethnographic or longitudinal fieldwork would provide richer insights into how policies are enacted in classrooms and communities. Moreover, while the comparative lens highlights regional parallels, deeper quantitative analysis of outcomes across countries could strengthen the generalizability of findings. Future research should therefore combine policy analysis and classroom-level observation, stakeholder interviews, and cross-national data to build a more holistic understanding of Morocco's educational transformation. Such work would not only refine the diagnosis of challenges but also generate actionable lessons for policymakers, educators, and international partners.

Recommendations

To move from aspiration to transformation, the following seven recommendations are suggested to discuss their employability:

- **Strengthen Teacher Support:** Prioritize sustainable career development, improve training programs, and recognize educators as vital change agents.
- **Bridge Urban-Rural Gaps:** Expand infrastructure investment with a focus on rural schools, transportation access, and digital connectivity.
- **Harmonize Language Policy:** Promote a coherent multilingual strategy that supports comprehension and cultural identity without overburdening students.
- **Modernize Curriculum Delivery:** Shift from rote learning to active, skills-base approaches with emphasis on global competencies and adaptability.
- **Promote Inclusive Policies:** Ensure equity for girls, students with disabilities, and marginalized communities through targeted support and community engagement.

- Enhance Governance and Transparency: Streamline inter-agency coordination and reinforce accountability at all levels of educational leadership.
- Advantage Innovation and Partnership: Empower local EdTech, nurture entrepreneurship, and engage international and diaspora networks in system-wide reform.

Compliance with ethical standards

Acknowledgement

Acknowledging that these recommendations can still be enriched and constructively criticized, the goal is not ultimately to mimic other systems, but to build an education model that is proudly Moroccan, globally fluent, and genuinely inclusive. With commitment, courage, and collaboration, Morocco can construct an education future worthy of its youth –and of its place regionally and in the world.

Disclosure of Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

Statement of Informed Consent

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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