

## Teacher Supply and the Quality Education Challenge

Education goals in Morocco went through at least two main phases. Up to early 2000s, the main challenge was to make access to basic education universal. Once the access challenge was overcome the quality of education took over in the Moroccan policy agenda, including reducing inequalities in students' access to quality teaching and learning as well as ensuring educational and social justice. Furthermore, recognizing the crucial role of teachers in education quality, enhancing the performance of teaching staff and the overall attractiveness of the teaching profession are top priorities to improve the overall quality of education.

### Universalization of Education and the Quality Learning Challenge

Over the past two decades, Morocco has implemented several reforms in its education system to guarantee basic quality education for all. Significant measures and policy initiatives have been taken to make education universal, with a focus on mandatory education cycles for individuals aged 4 to 15. As a result, notable advancements have been achieved, particularly in increasing girls' enrollment in rural areas and reducing territorial inequalities. Currently, the net enrollment rate stands at 99% in primary education, around 78% in lower secondary education, and attains 45% in upper secondary education.

However, the generalization of basic education must advance within an integrated framework that enables Morocco to move toward universal high-quality education in terms of high students' achievements, learning outcomes and wellbeing, which will. In fact, a significant percentage of students in schools, especially those receiving basic education, have low achievement and ability levels, as demonstrated through national and international standardized evaluations.

According to the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA 2018), only 24% of Moroccan pupils aged 15 have attained the minimal level of mathematics proficiency needed for successful social integration (compared to an average of 76% in OECD countries), whereas 27% have acquired the minimum skills in reading, and 31% in science.

In parallel to this, the National Program for the Assessment of Moroccan Students' Achievements (PNEA 2019), the Higher Council for Education, Training and Scientific Research demonstrates that, primary and lower secondary Moroccan students in the public sector do not master most of the curriculum by the end of the cycle. In fact, 76% of lower secondary students have mastered less than 21% of the prescribed French program, while 41% of students in their sixth year of primary school lack the necessary language abilities. Nevertheless, the mathematics program is relatively better mastered. For instance, 48% of students in the sixth grade of primary school grasp less than 23% of the prescribed mathematics program, compared to 44% of students in the third year of lower secondary school.

### The Teacher at the Center of the Reform

Several academic studies highlight the important role of the teacher, which has a great impact on student achievement, although many factors contribute to the students' low academic achievements. The Council's Strategic Vision for the reform 2015-2030 recognizes the significant role that teachers play in the quality of education.

The professionalization of educational actors and the renovation of the teaching profession are thus at the core of the Moroccan educational system reform. They are closely linked to the foundations of the 2015-2030 Strategic Vision, namely equity and equal opportunities, quality for all, and the promotion of the individual and society.

The Law on Education, Teaching, Training and Scientific Research, promulgated in 2017 by the Moroccan Parliament aims to accelerate this process. It includes a framework for the teaching profession qualifications and calls for a review of initial teacher training programs and curricula. These changes continued in the "2022-2026 Roadmap" of the Ministry, proposing practical solutions and strategies to improve public schools. To attain this goal, the roadmap recommends a systematic approach that considers the three main pillars of the education system: the student, the teacher, and the school.

### **Teacher Supply and the Quality of Supervision**

Since 2010, the student population has been steadily increasing, but the number of teachers followed a declining trend between 2011 and 2017. In the academic year 2023-2024, the total number of teachers falls below 300.000, while about 8 million students across all levels (primary and secondary) enrolled in public and private schools. This relatively slow increase in the teacher population compared to the educational system's demand has inevitably affected the quality of teaching and learning. In public primary education, the student-to-teacher ratio has slightly decreased from 27.5 in 2010 to 26.7 in 2023, with a peak of 31.0 recorded in 2017, bearing in mind the regional disparities. In public secondary education, this ratio is comparatively better. Nevertheless, the ratio of students per teacher has deteriorated moving from 24.4 in 2010 to 28.2 in 2023. The evolution of this ratio has been positive in the upper secondary, decreasing from 20.6 students per teacher in 2010 to 17.6 in 2023.

such national ratio hides the disparity in this ratio between urban and rural areas especially in primary education. but less prominent in secondary education. In sum, student-teacher ratios are national averages hiding substantial regional and provincial differences, as indeed, such a ratio reach unacceptable levels in certain provinces.

### **Changes in Teacher Recruitment**

It is projected that between 2018 and 2030, around 149.000 teachers will leave the system, either due to retirement or join training centers. To tackle the global teacher shortage and raise the quality of supervision, the Moroccan government recruited more than 100.000 contract teachers between 2016 and 2021. These efforts fall within the Ministry's plan to recruit more than 200.000 teachers by 2030. Nevertheless, the hasty recruitment of teachers especially between 2016 and 2020, to reduce the student-teacher ratio to an acceptable level has led to a lack of consistency in public actions regarding the management of teachers for over a decade.

Recruitment and teacher training policies have undergone several , including the establishment of Regional Centers for Education and Training Professions (CRMEF) in 2012, the separation of training and recruitment in 2015, and the recruitment on a fixed-term contract starting in 2016. These changes were followed by the phasing out of the contract system, the restructuring of training in 2018, the implementation of new recruitment and selection criteria and the introduction of a new teacher status in 2023.

These changes have led to prolonged strikes, prompting collaborative efforts between the Ministry and teachers' unions to comprehensively revise the unified regulation and policies (status) for teachers. The outcome of the dialogue between the Ministry of Education and teachers unions resulted, under the pressure of non-union affiliated teachers strikes, among other factors, resulted in several benefits for teachers including an increase in net salaries, the removal of the 30-year age limit for entering the profession, and the adoption of a new decree addressing the unified regulation of teachers. The focus on the quality of public education has been central to these comprehensive changes, triggering discussions between the ministry and educational stakeholders.

### **Attractiveness of the teacher profession: Career Paths and Motivations**

One of the major concerns in the Moroccan educational system lies in the attractiveness of the teaching profession. In its study on the teaching profession, the Higher Council for Education, Training and Scientific Research highlighted that the motivations for opting for the teaching profession are diverse and intricate. extrinsic motivations are related to economic and social factors such as job availability and stability are most prevalent in Morocco. In the context of the duality between regulated and open-access higher education institutions, graduates from the latter, who constitute the main pool for recruiting teachers, face a high unemployment rate and struggle to integrate into the job market (CSEFRS, 2021).

Teachers highlight the benefits that come with the teaching profession, particularly school vacations and the relatively convenient working hours (the weekly working hours for primary school teachers are 30 hours, compared to 44 hours in a private business sector). However, intrinsic motivations, stemming from a genuine interest in teaching, are also prevalent, but often tied to a sense of vocation or enthusiasm for the subject matter. These motivations are more frequently observed among secondary school teachers. It is noteworthy that teachers can be motivated by economic and social factors, while also having a teaching vocation.

To enhance the attractiveness of the teaching profession, it is crucial to consider the teachers' motivations. This involves improving teachers' working conditions, enhancing social recognition of the profession, and fostering a sense of vocation for teaching. Additionally, a situational judgment test will be implemented during recruitment exams to evaluate motivation, passion for the profession, empathy, integrity, and psychosociological balance. These specific criteria will be introduced to attract top talent and refine the selection of future teachers.

### **Teacher Training: Compulsory and Professionalizing Initial Training**

One of the key areas the education system focuses on is teacher training. The Strategic Vision published by the Council aims to make initial training compulsory and professionalize it according to the specificities of each profession. In light of this, a new five-year training program was implemented in 2018 along with the launch of the education bachelor's degree. The Ministry aims to ensure that by 2026, most newly recruited teachers would have completed a comprehensive teacher training program, encompassing a bachelor's degree in education sciences, followed by a year of professional training and a year of supervised internship in a school. Consequently, this type of training, will allow teachers to become experts in their field and acquire the necessary abilities to adapt their professional practices to the students' needs.

However, the new training program faces a major challenge in terms of attractiveness. Enrolling in an education degree program does not guarantee systematic recruitment for teaching, mainly since the revision and extension of the teacher training duration have not been translated into an improvement in the future teachers' salaries.

Furthermore, the first cohort of teachers who have completed the new teacher training plan, launched in the academic year 2018-2019, and spans five years, will only graduate in 2023. This raises questions about the time required to qualify a new professional teacher generation undergoing a long training program. This situation is more complex, particularly considering the gap between the needs and the training capacity of the university system, given the still low enrollment in education degree programs.

The Council places a strong emphasis on teacher professionalization, in both, its thematic report and an opinion on the subject. In its upcoming endeavors, the Council is drafting an opinion on professional development for teachers following the recent changes in the teacher recruitment and training process.

Furthermore, the taking part in the International Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) provides an opportunity to comprehend educational practices within the context of international comparison, facilitates the identification of shared challenges among countries and exploring perspectives and insights on teaching and educational practices. Additionally, it may help to reconsider public policies related to the education system's reform to enhance teaching and learning.

### **New Initiative to Enhance Quality of Education.**

The development of the centralized curriculum and program initiative is currently underway in Morocco. This initiative represents a significant effort to enhance the education effectiveness and quality in the country. It aims to address the changing needs of both students and teachers by streamlining the school curriculum to focus on essential elements for pedagogical continuity. Recently introduced in Morocco, the Teaching at the Right Level program (TARL) as well as explicit teaching is designed to ensure that all students, regardless of their geographical location, have access to quality education.

### **References**

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