

THE SYSTEM OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN MOROCCO: A BRIEF INTRODUCTORY REPORT

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Introduction

Since its independence in 1956, Morocco has understood that its economic and social progress depends very largely on the knowledge and skills of its people. This is why it has put so much emphasis on education and training. For that purpose, it set itself four objectives: (1) the arabisation of the school and administration sectors, (2) the moroccanisation of the personnel, especially in teaching and public administration, (3) the unification of the school systems, and (4) the generalisation of schooling to all school age children.

While moroccanisation and unification have so far been largely satisfied, the other two objectives still lag far behind. Concerning higher education - which was supposed to pave the way to these objectives - there was not a single University in the country in 1956. There was, of course, the Quarawiyine University in Fes, which is one of the oldest in the world. But this institution provided (and still does) traditional education such as religious studies, Islamic law, Islamic tradition, Arabic language and culture. There were, however, a few institutions of higher education which were part and parcel of the French University in Bordeaux. This is why just one year after independence, the first modern University was created in Rabat with just the two faculties of letters and law. Other institutions were created later in the early sixties, viz. medicine, engineering, and public administration.

The main aim of higher education in Morocco was then to provide the country with citizens with specialised skills. At first, this work force was to replace the French personnel in administration and teaching, as well as to provide qualified manpower for the various agricultural and industrial fields. In line with its major planning priority of increasing the output of persons with specialised skills at all levels, the Government established in 1964 the *Sous-Secretariat d'Etat pour l'Enseignement Technique, la Formation Professionnelle et la Formation des Cadres*. In the late eighties the Ministry of Education was split into the *Ministre de l'Education Nationale*, responsible for primary and secondary education, and the *Ministre de l'Enseignement Suprieur de la Formation des Cadres et de la Rechrche Scientifique*. It is against this background that the system of higher education in Morocco will now be presented.

Higher education in Morocco

Higher education in Morocco, which has developed quite rapidly owing to a fast growing population and to the system of free education for all, is catered for by three types of post-secondary institutions. These are: (1) the public university system, (2) the public non-university system, and (3) the private system.

The public university system

From independence and up to the late 70s, the University in Rabat was the only institution for higher education in the country, catering for about 62,000 students in 1978. From this date and up to the year 1990, twelve other universities were created resulting in a student body of 243,000 in 1997-1998. Of these, 227,920 were pursuing their education at the University level, 9,100 in institutes of higher education, and the remainder in pedagogical schools. Table 1 gives details of the repartitioning of this population according to the institution attended.

In the sixties however, the higher education system was still very small providing place for less than 1% of the school age group. In 1963-1964 for example, there were just over 8000 Moroccan students pursuing higher education, of whom 7,000 were studying in Morocco, and the remainder abroad, mainly in France and Belgium. At that time, nearly half the students were studying law, economics, and social and political sciences. A further fifth were studying Arts, while just over one fifth were studying agriculture, engineering, and other scientific and technical subjects. A further 8% were following courses of study and training to become secondary school teachers. During the academic year 1994-1995, the picture has changed a little: 28.8% were studying Letters and Social Sciences, 36.6% were studying Law and Economics, 27.2% Sciences and Science and Technology, 3.3% Medicine and Pharmacy, and the remainder were studying other subjects like Islamic Studies, Engineering, Translation, Business and Marketing.

Non-university public higher education

This type of education is provided by 36 schools and institutions of training which operate under the umbrella of various ministries, e.g. agriculture, mining, fisheries, architecture, health, tourism, transport, etc. Usually, the number of students in these schools is limited because access to them is via exams or necessitates a (very) high average in the high school *Baccalaureat* exam.

However, even if these schools are supposed to form a skilled personnel to work within their respective ministries, many graduates find work in other

TABLE 1: Repartition of undergraduate students by University for the accademic year 1997-1998

University	Moroccans		Foreigners		Total	
	Total	Women	Total	Women	Total	Women
Rabat-Souissi	13915	6510	239	74	14154	6584
Rabat-Agdal	23643	11362	301	96	23944	11438
Fes 1	26510	10304	191	24	26701	10328
Fes-Quarawihin	5939	2057	29	-	5968	2057
Oujda	19062	8400	184	32	19246	8432
Marrakesh	32207	11928	207	27	32414	11985
Casa 1	28823	14404	379	119	29202	14526
Casa 2	16246	7955	66	12	16321	7967
Tetouan	9837	4658	92	25	9929	4683
Meknes	21917	8405	86	7	22003	8412
Agadir	11120	3962	85	20	11205	3982
El Jadida	7761	3552	35	10	7796	3562
Settat	3089	1268	46	10	3135	1278
Total	227922	98419	1982	403	229904	98882

Source: *Annuaire Statistique du Maroc - 1998*

departments. This tendency has been on the increase recently, resulting in an internal brain drain.

In 1997-1998, the total number of students registered in these institutions was 9,043 of whom 5,850 were pursuing their studies in science and technology dominated subjects, and the remainder were studying other subjects such as economics, law, literature and Arts in general.

Private higher education

The private sector of higher education has been able to function only since 1985-1986. Thirteen years later, the number of private schools reached 79. The total number of graduates from these schools reached 8,500 in 1998, excluding

Al Akhawayn University. The latter is a private anglophone institution built on the Anglo-Saxon model. It opened for the first time in Ifrane in 1993 with a student body of 500.

This type of schooling is open to only a small category of the student population, owing to the fact that they have to pay tuition fees, which at times are quite high. Courses offered at these institutions usually centre around computer science, marketing, business and finance and the like. In general, this type of education seems to favour the practical and applied side of the courses chosen. The language of teaching is French with some rare exceptions. In fact, there is only one University (Al Akhawayn in Ifrane) and two institutes where the teaching is done in English. A new reform to take place shortly, projects to group the various private institutions in Universities which will remain private.

The Moroccan university: a state institution

Autonomy

Moroccan Universities are public organisations governed by the Ministry of Higher Education. They are created and controlled by law like any other public institution in the country. The type and length of study, as well as that of exams are instituted by government decree. The Ministry of Higher Education elaborates and oversees the carrying out of the official policy concerning higher education. It signs and oversees all agreements between national and international universities.

Each University is presided over by a Rector who, like all faculty deans, is appointed by royal decree after a proposition of the Minister of Higher Education. The Rector makes sure that the Government decisions concerning Higher Education are carried out. He is, in theory, helped by a University Council, but the latter has mere consulting power.

Financing

The University financing is supplied by the State which controls all expenditure. The Ministry of Economy and Finance decides on the yearly budget to allocate to each University. The budget of the Ministry of Higher Education is about 10% of the National budget. A large part of this budget, however, goes to the salaries of the teaching staff. The Ministry also gives scholarships to students and subsidises very highly their accommodation and meals. During the academic year 1997-1998, it did so for 35,000 students and 6,300,000 meals.

Teaching Staff

University teachers, like all its other staff, are government employees and are therefore paid a monthly salary by the Ministry of Economy and Finance. In 1997-1998, there were 9,667 teachers of whom one fourth were women. Of these, 1 634 were full professors (Professeurs de l'Enseignement Suprieur), 1,357 were associate professors (Professeurs Habilités), and the remainder Assistant professors and Assistants. The larger number of the latter group testifies to the relatively young staff of the Universities, especially of those recently created. A cursory look at the development of the number of the teaching staff during the last five years is presented in Table 2.

TABLE 2: Development of teacher population in higher education

	1993-94	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98
University	7566	7927	8620	9418	9627
Women	1698	1818	1991	2201	2274
Non University	1106	1113	1124	1271	1229

Source: *Annuaire Statistique du Maroc, 1998*

Concluding remarks

This report has tried to give an objective and clear - albeit brief - picture of the Moroccan system of higher education. Obviously, many areas had to be left out for obvious reasons. The alert reader, however, will foresee the presence of several problems resulting from such a system. Let us ask just one question to make the point. Can this centralised system, at the dawn of the 21st century and in the age of globalisation, produce the necessary wo/man- and brain-power to launch the economic and social development of the country, or will it continue in its rigid structure to produce citizens with higher degrees that do not fit the job market as is the case now?

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