

Privatisation of education in Morocco

A multi-speed education system and a polarised society

SUMMARY

This document sums up the main findings from the research project: *Privatisation of Education in Morocco-A Multi-speed Education System and A Polarised Society* by Khadija Abdous (2020). The study is a detailed examination of the trends and current manifestations of privatisation in education in Morocco. The report also sheds light on various public education reforms implemented in Morocco and how privatisation policies have affected these reforms.

Privatisation of education has become a global phenomenon, both in developed and developing countries, and this upward trend has prompted governments to transfer funds to the private sector, often to the detriment of investment in the public education sector. Private school enrolment has become part of what has become known as the Global Education Industry (Robertson, Macpherson, & Walford, 2014; Sahlberg, 2011; Spreen & Vally, 2014; Verger, Lubienski, & Steiner-Khamsi, 2016) where education is subject to commercialisation.

Morocco is no exception to global privatisation trends. The growing number of

private school providers has created levels of stratification in existing private schools where you find a three-tier system. First, there are elite private schools for upper-class families that use foreign curricula (mainly French, but increasingly foreign). Second, there are private schools for middle class families which use a bilingual education system focused on foreign languages and “global skills”. Third, there are lower-quality private schools for lower-middle and working-class families. These have lower fees than the other types of private schools but nonetheless require a significant financial investment from families.

In order to have a clear overview of how privatisation has expanded in the Moroccan education system, it is essential to understand how numerous reforms have led to the privatisation of a sector that, traditionally, has been provided by the Moroccan state. A few key policies are worth



pointing out. As a result of government reforms facilitating procedures for private entities to enter the education market, local and foreign actors have come to progressively invest in private education as an increasingly profitable market. Insufficient regulations for private schools have also led to an increase in providers of varying quality (some senior state and government officials are involved in the private education industry themselves, perhaps challenging their ability to make impartial decisions on regulating the sector). Last but foremost, the loss of tenure through the growth of limited contract employment of the teaching profession has introduced a level of precarity in employment not witnessed before.

Main education reforms

Education reforms have been among the many ways through which Morocco has tried to rid itself of former colonial policies and thus “Moroccanise” and unify the Moroccan education system. Education has always been a field of political struggle. Following independence, the government was torn between modernizing the Moroccan school and leaving it segregated (with different types of schools), for fear that pro-democratic beliefs might emanate from a modern school system. Morocco, however, was ultimately forced into implementing education reforms based on the recommendations of international finance institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF. Thus followed the structural adjustment program in 1983, which saw the decrease of the role of the state in providing vital social services like education and

opened the door for international actors to dictate the education policies that Morocco should follow. Morocco’s education policies at that time were characterised by a lack of consistency – this is reflected in the current state of education in the country, described as deplorable by many international institutions (OECD, 2018; TIMSS, 2015; UNESCO, 2014; World Bank, 2018).

The *Strategic Vision 2015-2030* as the latest reform plan (a continuation of the previous reforms that preceded it, starting with the National Charter of Education in 2000 and then the Emergency Education Program 2009-2012) explicitly states that *private education is a partner of public education in the generalisation and realisation of equity*. This has enabled local and foreign actors to invest in education with the support of the state government, who provide administrative and financial facilities for that matter.

Local and foreign private actors

The government’s explicit support for the private sector to invest in education has enabled private investment firms to take over school institutions and turn them into business enterprises subject to expansion beyond national borders. It has also enabled local actors to benefit from facilitated procedures to invest in education by virtue of their high-ranking positions. This has created a potential conflict of interest between what is officially stated about the government’s view of the private sector as a partner to realise education equity, and the

current state of affairs, where the private sector is largely unregulated (particularly when it comes to registration and school fees, as well as its extensive use of public teaching and administrative personnel).

Degrading the public-school

The quality of public schools in Morocco have suffered the consequences of many failed education reforms. The adoption of the *Program of Voluntary Departure* of civil servants in 2005 and later the *Early Retirement Program* were notable in this regard as many highly qualified personnel left the public profession to benefit from retirement and migrated to the private sector to work as teachers and administrators. The mass departure of personnel from the public sector as a result of these policies led to combined classes and overcrowded classrooms, negatively affecting quality. This, in turn, led a lot of Moroccan families, mainly in urban areas, to invest in the private schooling of their children, particularly at the primary level.

Contract employment and *Teach for All*

The huge shortage of teachers and the government's lack of a pro-active policy to prevent the current shortage in human

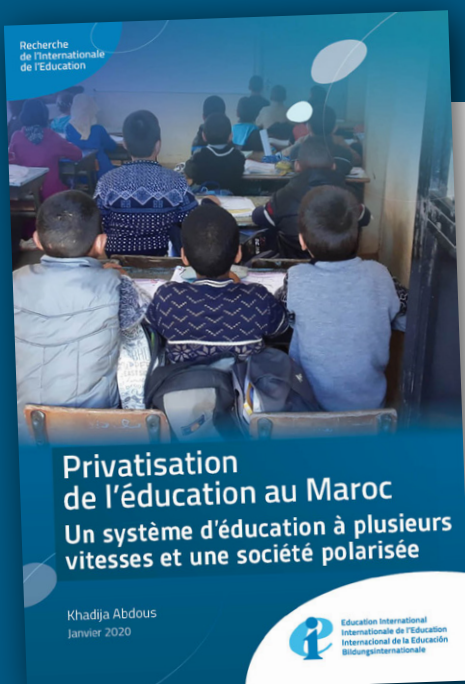
resources has been exacerbated by the state government's adoption of limited contract employment in the public teaching profession. Since 2016, the government employed 70,000 contract teachers to be directly assigned to schools, with minimal-to-no training, in response to the immediate need for teaching personnel. These contract teachers have since been taking to the streets to protest their employment terms which do not guarantee the same rights as their fellow colleagues affiliated with the ministry of education. This has negatively impacted students' class time and led to hundreds of hours of learning lost.

Teach for All, which places non-teaching graduates in schools after a few weeks training, has also contributed to the further deprofessionalisation of teachers. Its local entity, *Teach for Morocco*, partnered with the ministry of education in 2019 and has since assigned its own (unqualified) fellows into a number of public schools in Morocco.

A multi-speed education system and a polarised society

The weakened state of the public education system has resulted in an increase in private school enrolment. Different types of private schooling cater to Moroccan families based on their socio-economic level and the public school is left as the last resort for the poor, particularly at the primary level. Upper class and middle-class students who attend French schools, other foreign institutions and private schools of relatively high quality have different life experiences and are exposed to different value systems to working class and poor students who attend low-cost private schools and public institutions. The segregation of the Moroccan education system and the large disparities in terms of access and quality have created a parallel and multi-speed education system where students experience different values and live

in different “Moroccos” in which they might never cross paths. This goes counter to one of the principal sections in the *Strategic Vision 2015-2030* in which *a school of equity and equal opportunity* is stated as one of its principal objectives. Thus, school segregation has created social disparities and has led to a polarised society where social injustice is exacerbated. In Morocco, education is increasingly no longer portrayed as a right and a public good but more of a commodity that is subject to offer and demand.



<https://go.ei-ie.org/GR2020Maroc>



Education International
Internationale de l'Éducation
Internacional de la Educación
Bildungsinternationale

www.ei-ie.org
#unite4ed