

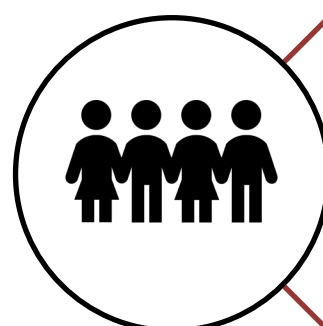
Introduction

Language policy in Moroccan public education has been a highly debated and controversial issue given the nation's complex history (Boutieri, 2016; Tomaščík, 2010; Zouhir, 2014). Currently, the Moroccan state recognizes two official languages: Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and Tamazight, the local indigenous language. While language instruction at the primary and secondary levels of public education is largely limited to MSA, higher education shows a greater degree of flexibility. Most Moroccan public universities use French as the language of instruction for STEM subjects and MSA for subjects in the humanities and the arts (Spolsky, 2018). This language dichotomy prevails in most of the Moroccan public sector, where French exists as the *de facto* official language of communication for business, government and science professions (Boutieri, 2016).

This presentation provides a *literature review* of the history and development of language instruction in Moroccan public education, beginning with the French Protectorate, and ending with the failure of Arabization. This presentation examines the major challenges that have prevented the Moroccan state from adopting a language policy for public education that promotes greater social equity and positive student learning experiences.

Quick Facts: Moroccan Public Education Landscape

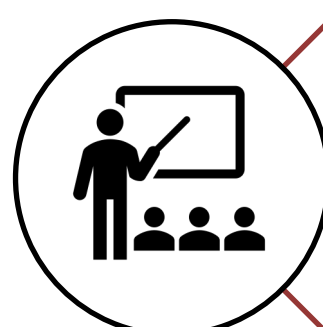
Data source: 2018 UNESCO Institute of Statistics



Primary Education (Ages 6-11)

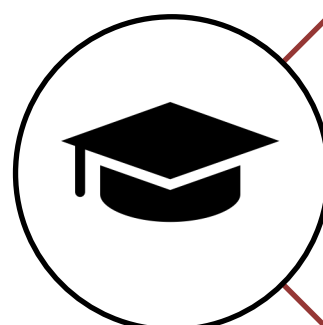
- 99.1% total net enrollment for students
- Average pupil to teacher ratio: 26.8
- Primary language of instruction: **MSA**
- French introduced in grade three as a foreign language subject

Compulsory education lasts 9 years from ages 6-14



Secondary Education (Ages 12-17)

- 64.49% total net enrollment rate for students
- Average pupil to teacher ratio: 19.42
- Primary language of instruction: **MSA**
- French used for technical and scientific disciplines in some secondary schools



Tertiary Education (Ages 18-22)

- 35.94% total net enrollment for students
- Primary language of instruction: **MSA** (humanities & social sciences)
- Primary language of instruction: **French** (scientific subjects)

Glossary of Useful Terms

- Arabization:** Policy implemented in Morocco after independence that aimed to replace the French language with Modern Standard Arabic in the private and public sphere
- Darija:** Generic term used to designate the local Moroccan-Arabic dialect
- Modern Standard Arabic (MSA):** The formal register of Arabic used primarily in writing and formal communication
- Net Enrollment Rate:** Total number of students in the theoretical age group for a given level of education enrolled in that level, expressed as a percentage of the total population

Key Dates: Policy Developments & Implementation

1916 - 1956 French Protectorate	<p>The French Protectorate developed a new system of education in the country that incorporated both French and traditional, (pre-colonial) Islamic elements of education with limited French language instruction as a foreign language (DeGorge, 2002).</p> <p>The demand for more French instruction and alignment with French national curriculums gradually increased as Moroccan students became increasingly convinced of the likely prospects of lucrative jobs under French rule (Alalou, 2018).</p> <p>Bilingual education became formalized in the country and the French language acquired a prestigious and elitist reputation (Spolsky, 2018).</p>
1956 Post-Independence & Arabization	<p>Higher education in Morocco largely resembled French secondary education with no public universities existing in the modern sense of the institution. The country's first university (Mohamed V in Rabat) was founded by royal decree in 1957 and used French as its primary language of instruction (Boutieri, 2016).</p> <p>The state also adopted the policy of Arabization which placed greater emphasis on MSA as a medium of instruction in public education. Arabization, was largely backed up by conservative, nationalist parties and gave rise to an additional elite minority (Zouhir, 2014).</p>
2011 Moroccan Constitutional Referendum	<p>With the introduction of <i>Tamazight</i> as an official language, (in addition to MSA) the government charged itself with the responsibility of adopting an inclusive linguistic policy that recognizes and promotes "diverse Moroccan cultural expressions" (Article 5, Title 1, Moroccan Constitution, 2011).</p>
2016 Arabization Repealed	<p>His Majesty, King Mohamed VI officially repealed Arabization and bilingual (MSA and French) education was formally recognized at the tertiary level of public education.</p>

Policy Challenges

The current language policy **does not address the language disconnect between primary, secondary and tertiary education** in the public sector. Fatine Guedira (2017) notes that "failure to reform the [Moroccan] education system... led to a loss of trust in public [schooling]," and preference for private schools where greater emphasis might be placed on French and English language proficiency needed to access several popular degree programs in higher education (p. 9).

Quality education in any language is not easily attainable by all Moroccans and attempts at positive reform may have had more negative impacts than positive ones. **Standardization of quality education is challenged** by social inequalities within the country, a multilingual and multicultural population, and legacies of occupation by outside powers (Boutieri, 2016; Alalou, 2018).

Alalou (2018) points out that while Arabic has a bit more representation in formal environments, it is normally **limited to a middle register of Arabic** that combines elements of MSA with local Moroccan Arabic (*Darija*).

Zouhir (2014) notes that, despite the state's official recognition of *Tamazight* and increasing pressure from various cultural movements in the country, **the implementation of a multilingual policy remains a large challenge** in Morocco.

Policy Implications & Further Considerations

The current language policy **reinforces a system of inequality** in Morocco, and on a broader scale, **perpetuates the system of elitism** that was initially introduced during French colonial rule. Alalou (2018) goes so far as to say that the use of French as a language of instruction promotes "internal colonialism," and clearly demonstrates "the stranglehold of the Francophone elite over affairs of the [Moroccan] state" (p. 151).

The findings from this presentation raise additional questions about the role that language instruction plays on student learning experiences, and how national governments representing multicultural and multilingual societies can promote policies that empower and give agency to all their citizens.

Some specific questions for further exploration of this topic might include (but are not limited to) the following:



To what extent, if any, does multilingual or bilingual education combat or exacerbate gender disparities in public education in Morocco?



How might language policy in Morocco define and/or reflect the role of public education in the country? To what extent is the role geared towards developing human capital? Social capital?



In what ways has the instruction of marginalized languages (*Tamazight*) and mother languages (*Darija*) in formal education benefitted multilingual and multicultural societies like Morocco?



To what extent, if any, does multilingual education develop intercultural competency in Moroccan students?

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