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Unfulfilled Promises of Morocco's Vision 2015–2030: Gaps Between Policy and Implementation in Education Reform

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ABSTRACT

Morocco launched Vision 2015–2030 to make schooling fair and high quality, yet many goals remain unfinished ten years later. This study compares the promises of Vision 2030 with the real situation in 2024. It uses qualitative document review and secondary data from UNESCO, the World Bank, the Moroccan Ministry of Education, and the 2018 PISA file. Results show mixed progress. National net-enrolment now reaches 97 percent, and youth literacy climbs to 98 percent, but large gaps stay in place. Rural dropout is still 23 percent—double the urban rate—and girls in rural zones leave school far more often than boys. Morocco's PISA reading score is only 339 in 2022, far below the OECD average of 487, and 66 percent of ten-year-olds cannot read a simple text. Two main barriers slow improvement: an unclear language-of-instruction policy that shifts between Arabic and French, and a very centralised management system that gives little power to local schools. A brief look at Tunisia and Rwanda confirms that clear language rules and stronger local authority can raise learning results. The paper calls for deeper decentralisation, steady teacher support, and a stable bilingual roadmap to meet Vision 2030 on time.

Keywords: education reform; Morocco; policy implementation; rural–urban gap; Vision 2030

Contents

INTRODUCTION

Since Morocco became independent in 1956, it has tried many times to reform its education system. However, serious problems are still there. Historically, education reforms in Morocco have always been very ambitious, but the results have usually been disappointing. (Sanga et al., 2022). After that, the government launched emergency programs between 2009 and 2012, and another plan called "École de Demain" in 2012 (Sanga et al., 2022). Despite these programs, by the mid-2010s, Morocco was still struggling with many problems. These included high illiteracy rates, low school completion rates, and poor learning results, especially in rural areas (Boutayeb, 2024).

Due to these ongoing issues, in 2015, the Moroccan government, under King Mohammed VI, introduced another significant reform, known as "Vision 2030." This reform was officially named the "Strategic Vision 2015–2030 for Equity, Quality, and Promotion," and was prepared by the Higher Council for Education, Training, and Scientific Research (CSEFRS). Vision 2030 had clear goals: making education accessible for everyone, providing good quality education, and linking education better to people's lives and the country's development (ICMED Project, 2020). The government described Vision 2030 very positively, saying it was a big opportunity to fix the ongoing weaknesses in Morocco’s education system and put schools at the center of development (ICMED Project, 2020).

Although Morocco has shown strong political support for Vision 2030 and introduced a new law (Framework Law 51.17) in 2019 to help achieve these goals, many deep-seated problems remain. Independent reports and important education indicators show that Vision 2030 has not yet succeeded in solving major issues. Dropout rates remain very high, students' learning results continue to rank among the lowest globally, and there are big inequalities between cities and rural areas, rich and poor families, and boys and girls (El Amraoui, 2018). These persistent issues raise important questions about the reasons behind the gaps between policy and real-life outcomes.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The key question this paper addresses is why Morocco's education reforms under Vision 2015–2030 have not achieved the expected improvements. The problems still exist because there are gaps between policy design and how policies are actually carried out. Issues like large differences in education quality and access between cities and rural areas, continuing gender inequalities after primary education, the focus on increasing enrollment numbers without enough attention to learning quality, and confusion about language policies all indicate important weaknesses in Vision 2030. These issues must be examined closely to understand where the reforms have failed.

RESEARCH AIM AND QUESTIONS

This paper aims to critically analyze the education policy gaps in Morocco's Vision 2030 reform by assessing how far its goals have been achieved and by finding out the main reasons for its difficulties. The main research question is: "To what extent has Vision 2015–2030 delivered on its promises of equitable, quality education in Morocco, and what policy gaps explain any shortfalls?" The following supporting questions will help answer this main question:

1. How have educational results (such as enrollment, retention, and student learning) changed since Vision 2030 began, and do they match the targets set in the reform?
2. How do differences between urban and rural areas, and differences between boys and girls, show that equity goals are not fully achieved?
3. Has the strong emphasis on expanding access negatively impacted the quality of education, and what does this suggest about the priorities of the reform?
4. How have language-of-instruction rules and other system-wide factors like governance structures, funding, and politics helped or limited the success of the reforms?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Education Policy Development in Morocco and MENA:

To understand Morocco's education reforms, it helps to look at education systems in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), because many countries in this region face similar challenges with education quality and equity. After independence, Morocco and other MENA countries quickly

expanded public education as part of building new nations. For example, Tunisia started investing strongly in education from the 1960s, which greatly improved literacy rates and created a large educated population (Bouhlila, 2021). By 2015, Tunisia spent more than 20% of its national budget on education, or about 6.6% of GDP (Bouhlila, 2021). Because of this strong investment, Tunisia improved education access, especially for women, and developed a well-educated middle class (Bouhlila, 2021).

Morocco's situation was different. At independence in 1956, Morocco had a very high illiteracy rate (around 80%) and very few educated people (Sanga et al., 2022). Early education policies focused on “Moroccanization” and "Arabization," trying to replace French colonial influence and provide primary education to all children. A major step was the National Education Charter in 1999, which openly recognized previous failures and set specific goals for student enrollment and literacy. But similar to Tunisia, Morocco’s main challenge was that increasing student numbers did not improve the quality of education enough. In fact, across the MENA region, enrollment increases often did not improve students’ learning results. International tests clearly showed this problem: Tunisia ranked very low (66th out of 70 countries) in the PISA 2015 test (Bouhlila, 2021), while Morocco performed even worse, ranking 73rd out of 79 in the 2018 PISA reading test (OECD, 2019). These low results show deeper problems with teaching methods, curricula, and education management throughout the region.

Policy Implementation Theory and the Equity–Equality Distinction:

To study Morocco’s Vision 2030, policy implementation theory is very useful. This theory, developed by scholars like Pressman and Wildavsky, explains that even good policies can fail if there are problems during implementation, such as complicated bureaucracy, low capacity, or local resistance. According to Grindle (2017), reforms need "good enough governance," meaning that policies must match a country's political situation and institutions. In Morocco, the education system is highly centralized and very complicated, going from the central ministry through regional education academies, provincial delegations, and then finally schools (Sanga et al., 2022). This complicated system creates problems for implementing new policies. Often, important decisions are made centrally without asking local teachers or communities for their ideas, leading to differences between policy and actual school needs.

Another important idea for Vision 2030 is the difference between equality and equity in education. Equality means giving the same resources to all, while equity means giving resources based on the

specific needs of different groups to achieve fair results. Vision 2030 clearly states that its goal is to provide "equity and equality of opportunity" (ICMED Project, 2020). However, in practice, achieving equity has been difficult. Some groups, like girls in rural areas, students with disabilities, or students who speak different languages, need extra help that general policies do not always provide. Research about Morocco shows that past reforms, such as the Emergency Plan of 2009, mainly focused on increasing classrooms and schools (an equality approach) but did not pay enough attention to those who faced bigger obstacles, such as remote communities or girls who faced social restrictions (World Bank, 2018). Simply building more schools does not help if children cannot reach them or if cultural issues stop girls from attending. A more equity-focused approach would include special programs like cash transfers (giving money to poor families if their children stay in school), community schools, or dormitories for girls. Morocco has tried some of these programs, such as the "Tayssir" cash transfer program and dormitories in rural areas, but these efforts have been limited (UNESCO Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report, 2020).

There are also gaps in the existing research on Morocco's Vision 2030. Many studies focus separately on curriculum (Jabri, 2020), language policies (Errihani, 2017), or girls' education (Bourhim, 2019), but very few studies combine these areas to evaluate the whole reform effort. This paper aims to fill this gap by bringing together different aspects, like access, quality, and equity, to evaluate Vision 2030. Additionally, this paper compares Morocco's experience with other countries, which is uncommon in studies on Moroccan education. Such comparisons help show whether Morocco's educational challenges are unique or common in other contexts.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses qualitative policy analysis. It combines document review and the analysis of secondary data. The main data used are: (a) official policy documents and laws related to Vision 2015–2030, and (b) statistics and reports from international organizations such as UNESCO, World Bank, UNICEF, as well as Moroccan government sources. Important documents reviewed include the Strategic Vision 2015–2030 report published by the CSEFRS (2015), the Framework Law No. 51.17 (2019) for education, training, and research, and the Ministry of Education's action plans (2019–21) as well as the new Education Roadmap (2022–26). There is no official mid-term evaluation report available for Vision 2030 yet. Therefore, this study uses other available sources, like World Bank progress reports and independent policy reviews, to measure how far Vision 2030 has achieved its goals.

In terms of statistical data, the study analyzes secondary data related to student enrollment, dropout rates, literacy levels, and learning outcomes. Data sources include the UNESCO Institute for Statistics and World Bank EdStats, which provide information about school enrollment rates, completion rates, literacy, and international test scores like PISA. This research also uses national sources, such as the "Territorial Atlas of School Dropout" (2019) published by the CSEFRS, which gives detailed information about regional differences in Morocco. Additional qualitative information was collected from reliable news sources (such as Al Jazeera and Morocco World News) and academic articles to understand the views and experiences of teachers, students, and parents regarding these reforms.

The data and documents were organized and analyzed based on thematic coding. Four main themes were identified in advance, matching the policy gaps discussed in the research questions: (1) Territorial Disparities, (2) Gender Inequity, (3) Quality vs. Quantity (Access), and (4) Language Policy Confusion. All the collected data and documents were reviewed and coded according to these themes. For example, information about the differences between urban and rural areas was placed under "Territorial Disparities," and information about debates over language of instruction was coded under "Language Policy." This method helped organize findings clearly and directly answer the research questions. Each theme was analyzed by comparing the original policy intentions from Vision 2030 with the actual outcomes observed, highlighting any gaps.

METHODOLOGICAL LIMITATIONS

First, because this research mainly relies on secondary data, the findings depend on how available and reliable these sources are. For instance, the latest data (especially after 2020) on Morocco's education outcomes might not fully represent the situation due to disruptions from COVID-19. COVID-19 had significant impacts, such as causing around three months of learning loss for many students during school closures (World Bank, 2020). It can be difficult to separate the effects of COVID-19 from deeper, structural education issues clearly. Second, there is a possible bias in government-produced reports, as they might highlight positive outcomes more than negative ones. To reduce this bias, the research compares official government data with independent evaluations, such as those by UNESCO and the World Bank. Third, the comparative analysis with Tunisia and Rwanda does not cover all aspects comprehensively. Instead, it only uses selected indicators and examples to better understand Morocco's situation. Each country has its specific conditions, so these comparisons should be seen as general insights rather than exact explanations. Finally, this study does not include

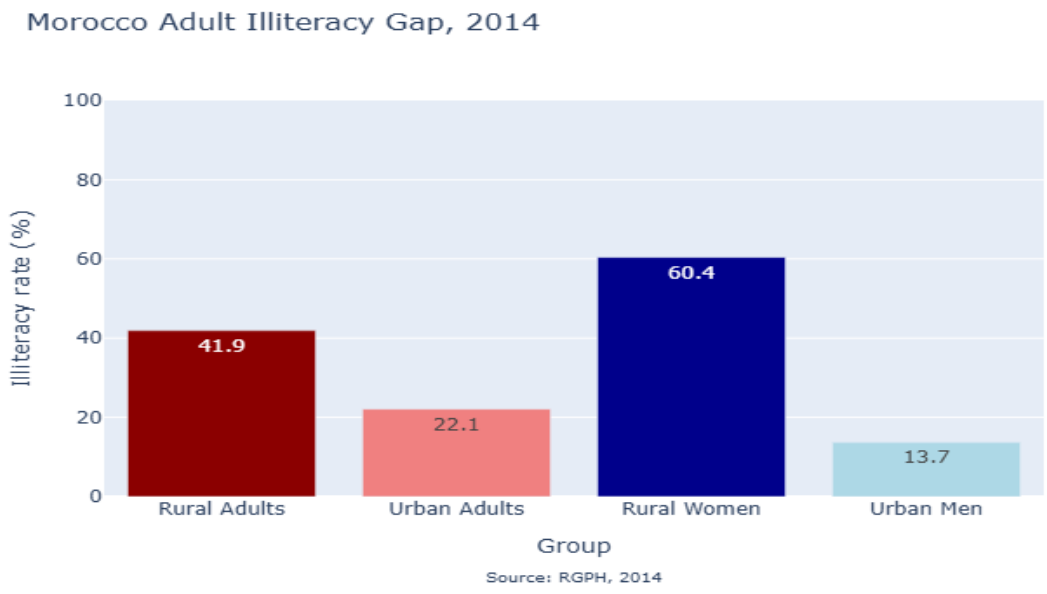
interviews or fieldwork, meaning that some important details from teachers' or communities' real experiences might be missed. A method like ethnography could provide more detailed insights into these issues. Despite these limitations, the chosen methodology suits the goal of broadly evaluating policy gaps, which commonly combines different data sources to provide an overall picture in education policy research.

FINDINGS / ANALYSIS

1: Territorial Disparities:

One important problem in Morocco's education system is the continuing inequality between different regions and especially between urban and rural areas. Vision 2030 planned to fix these inequalities, but the data show clearly that where a child lives in Morocco still strongly influences their educational opportunities. This shows a gap between Vision 2030's goal of fairness and reality. Rural areas remain far behind urban areas in many education indicators. For example, the illiteracy rate among rural adults is almost twice that of urban adults (41.9% compared to 22.1% in 2014) (Boutayeb, 2024). Even worse, rural women had a very high illiteracy rate of 60.4%, compared to only 13.7% for urban men (see figure 1 below) (Boutayeb, 2024). These numbers clearly show the ongoing educational differences between rural and urban communities, which Morocco's education reforms have not solved yet.

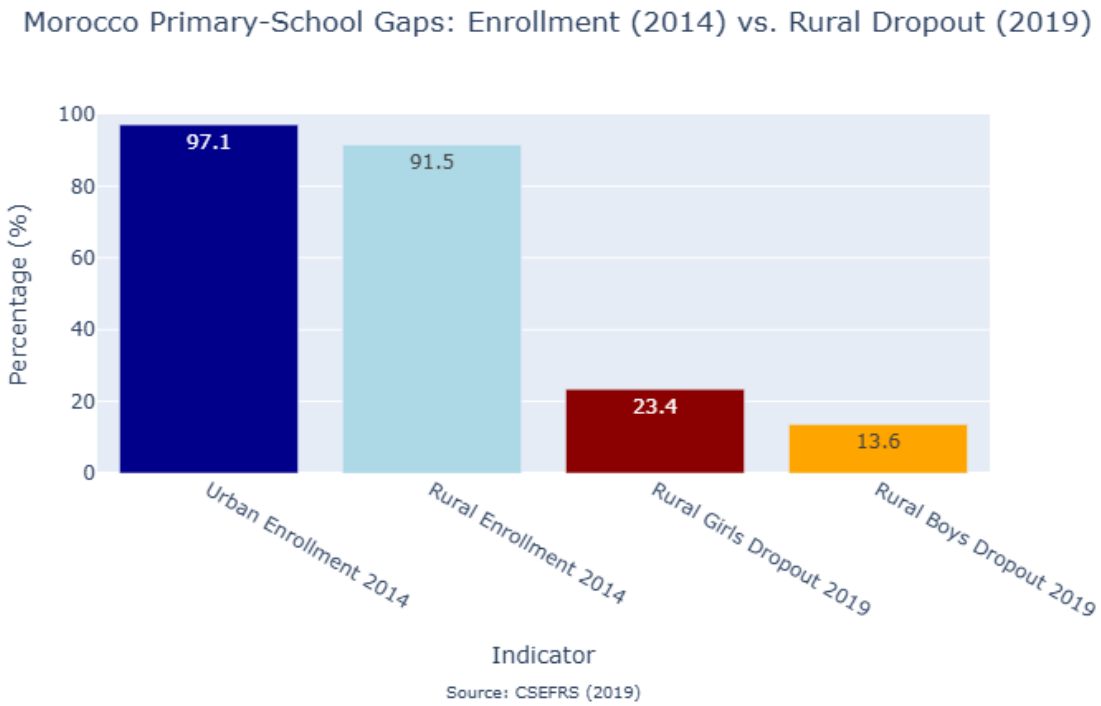
Figure 1:



School enrollment shows the same problem. According to official statistics, primary school enrollment in Morocco is almost universal in cities but not in rural areas. In 2014, the enrollment rate

for children aged 7–12 was 97.1% in cities but only 91.5% in rural areas (Boutayeb, 2024). Although rural enrollment at around 90% may seem good, the main problem appears as children move from primary to secondary school. Dropouts become very common in rural areas at this stage. For example, the CSEFRS "Territorial Atlas of School Dropout" (2019) showed that the biggest gender gap in dropout rates occurs in rural areas at the end of primary school: 23.4% of rural girls dropped out by grade 6, compared to 13.6% of rural boys (see figure 2 below) (Boutayeb, 2024). This means that almost one in every four girls leaves school by age 12, usually due to distance to middle school, early marriage, or family responsibilities. Dropouts continue to be a serious problem later as well, particularly in rural secondary schools. Across Morocco, over half a million students (508,000 or 8.8%) dropped out of school in 2015. Although dropout numbers improved slightly in 2016, they increased again to 431,000 students in 2018, with middle-school dropout rates reaching 14.3% (Boutayeb, 2024). Most of these dropouts were concentrated in poorer, rural provinces. A recent study of 75 Moroccan provinces confirmed large regional differences in dropout rates, linked mainly to poverty, poor school infrastructure, and family background (Ibourk et al., 2024). Simply stated, a child living in a remote village in the Atlas Mountains is much more likely to leave school early than a child living in a city like Rabat or Casablanca.

Figure 2:



These territorial differences highlight a major gap in policy implementation, especially in addressing local needs. Vision 2030 recognized the importance of supporting disadvantaged rural communities (Sanga et al., 2022). The government introduced several programs to tackle these issues, such as

building new rural schools and implementing the National Initiative for Human Development (INDH) that provided infrastructure and services in very poor rural areas (Sanga et al., 2022). Additionally, the Tayssir cash transfer program was introduced in the late 2000s to give poor rural families money if they kept their children in school (Sanga et al., 2022). Although these programs have shown some positive results, they remain limited in scope. Many rural schools still face serious problems such as overcrowded multi-grade classes, a shortage of teachers, and a lack of basic services like electricity and toilets. These conditions force many students to leave school early.

The average years of schooling also clearly demonstrate these regional gaps. Nationally, in 2014, the average years of schooling for Moroccans was only 5.6 years. However, this average varies significantly between regions, from only 4.8 years in the Marrakech-Safi region to 7.1 years in the Laâyoune-Sakia El Hamra region (Boutayeb, 2024). Even within a single region, there are shocking differences: the most educated urban areas or administrative centers often average more than 10 years of schooling, while some rural areas average as low as 1–2 years (Boutayeb, 2024). For instance, in the Rabat-Salé-Kénitra region, people living in the wealthy Agdal district of Rabat have on average over 12 years of schooling, while those in rural areas of the same region often have fewer than two years. Morocco's educational inequality can also be measured by its high Education Gini coefficient of 0.55, placing it 150th among 175 countries, which indicates very high inequality (Boutayeb, 2024).

In summary, territorial disparities are one of Vision 2030's most critical unfulfilled promises. Although the reform explicitly targeted unequal educational access, there has been limited success in reducing regional differences. Marginalized rural areas still do not have equal educational opportunities compared to urban areas. One reason might be the centralization of Morocco's education management. Regional education offices (AREFs) do not have enough power or funding to effectively solve local problems (Sanga et al., 2022). Without greater decentralization and specific measures like incentives for teachers to work in rural schools, building more dormitories for rural secondary students, and increasing community involvement, Morocco's rural-urban education gap will likely continue. This territorial inequality not only impacts social justice, but also means Morocco is not using the full potential of its population. It also affects balanced regional development and national social cohesion.

2: Gender Inequity:

Morocco has made important progress in girls' education, especially at the primary level. However, gender inequalities still appear strongly at higher education levels and in some situations, especially

in rural areas. Vision 2030 aimed clearly to achieve equality and reduce gender gaps. Morocco's education policies align with international goals for equal education between boys and girls. In fact, at primary school, Morocco reached close to equal enrollment rates for boys and girls, with nearly 99% enrolled in recent years (Boutayeb, 2024). But as girls move to secondary education and beyond, the gap becomes bigger. Experts call this problem the "leaky pipeline," meaning girls gradually drop out of school at higher stages.

Secondary Education and the Urban–Rural Female Gap:

In lower secondary school (ages 12–15), clear differences begin to appear. Nationally, girls have lower enrollment rates and higher dropout rates compared to boys. According to a World Bank report, almost 46% of Moroccan girls of secondary-school age were not enrolled in school, compared to 36% of (EPDC, 2018). This 10% gap clearly shows that many girls leave education before completing secondary school. These gender differences are even greater in rural areas. For example, only about one-third of rural girls finish high school, while more than 80% of girls in urban areas complete it (Boutayeb, 2024). In some provinces, almost no girls attend upper secondary school. The reasons for this gap are well-known: rural schools are often far from home, which worries parents about their daughters' safety; traditional cultural expectations often push girls into early marriage or household work rather than schooling; and financial hardships force many poor families to prioritize boys' education. Even in rural primary schools, where gender enrollment gaps have decreased, girls still commonly drop out at critical points, like the transition from primary to lower secondary school. For instance, as previously mentioned, 23.4% of rural girls leave school at the end of primary (6th grade), compared to only 13.6% of rural boys (Boutayeb, 2024).

Cultural and Economic Factors:

Research conducted in Moroccan villages, such as by Ennaji (2020), shows that families today are more open to girls' education compared to previous generations, mainly due to awareness campaigns and positive examples of educated women. But when girls reach adolescence, conservative social rules often restrict their freedom and increase household responsibilities. Economic factors also matter significantly. For poorer families, school-related expenses (like fees and uniforms) and the loss of girls' labor at home affect girls much more than boys. Vision 2030 recognized these barriers and suggested practical solutions such as boarding houses near schools, transportation, and scholarships for rural girls. Progress has been made in this area, with the government and NGOs establishing boarding houses ("maisons de l'étudiante") in some provinces, allowing rural girls to stay close to secondary schools during weekdays. Additionally, certain foundations, such as the Béatrice

Schönberg Foundation and programs like "Relais & Education," built safe accommodation for rural girls (UNESCO GEM Report, 2021). These programs have been successful in the places where they exist, reducing dropout rates. However, these solutions are not yet widely available; many rural areas still do not have enough facilities, and there is greater demand than what is currently provided.

Higher Education and Employment:

Gender inequality also exists at higher education levels and in the job market. Although women now enroll in universities more frequently—and in some areas, such as humanities, women outnumber men—women are still underrepresented in STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) fields and vocational training that lead to better-paying jobs. Furthermore, women face greater challenges in finding employment after completing their education. Youth unemployment rates are persistently higher for women compared to men in Morocco. In 2022, the unemployment rate was around 16% for young women compared to about 10% for men (ETF, 2023). This situation partly results from education quality issues and cultural attitudes: employers might be biased against hiring women, and women graduates often do not have the skills employers need. While employment is outside the direct scope of school policy, these issues connect closely to educational inequalities.

Policy Gaps and Partial Progress:

The Moroccan government has shown a clear commitment to girls' education since the 1990s, and Vision 2030 strongly reaffirmed this commitment. Important legal reforms, like the 2004 Family Code (which raised the marriage age to 18) and the 2011 constitutional statement on gender equality, clearly support equal opportunities for girls (UNESCO, 2021). Vision 2030 also introduced policies like compulsory education until age 16 and expanded programs like **Tayssir**, which financially supports poor families if their daughters continue schooling. Yet, gaps remain in applying these policies effectively. For example, enforcing compulsory education laws is weak in remote rural areas, and child marriage, although reduced, continues, and usually stops girls' education early. Additionally, Morocco's education system still lacks important girl-friendly features such as female teachers in rural areas or suitable sanitation facilities, which affects girls' school attendance after reaching puberty (ICMED Project, 2020). These important details were perhaps not given enough attention in broader policy discussions.

Overall, Morocco succeeded in formally achieving gender parity in enrollment at the primary level but still struggles to maintain this equality as girls move into secondary education. High dropout rates for girls, especially in rural areas, clearly show Vision 2030 has only partly achieved its goal of gender

equality. The main gap lies in turning the government's strong commitment into real local improvements: every community must have the necessary facilities, awareness, and economic support to keep girls in school. Without solving these issues, particularly for rural girls, Morocco's broader educational progress will remain incomplete, and a large part of the population will be left behind. Positively, public attitudes toward girls' education are changing, meaning that if the government provides enough practical support, more girls will remain in school. To succeed, Morocco must expand effective initiatives like boarding schools, transport, and mentorship programs for girls, making them a core part of future educational reforms.

3: Quality vs. Quantity: The Learning Crisis behind Increased Access

One of the most serious gaps between Vision 2030's goals and actual outcomes is related to education quality. During the past twenty years, Morocco has succeeded in enrolling more children in schools ("quantity"), but the quality of learning ("quality") remains very low. Vision 2030 and the related Framework Law 51.17 (2019) clearly state that the goal was not just to enroll children but also to improve what they learn (World Bank, 2020). However, evidence shows that while enrollment numbers have increased significantly, students' learning outcomes remain poor. This highlights a gap between quantity (more students) and quality (better learning).

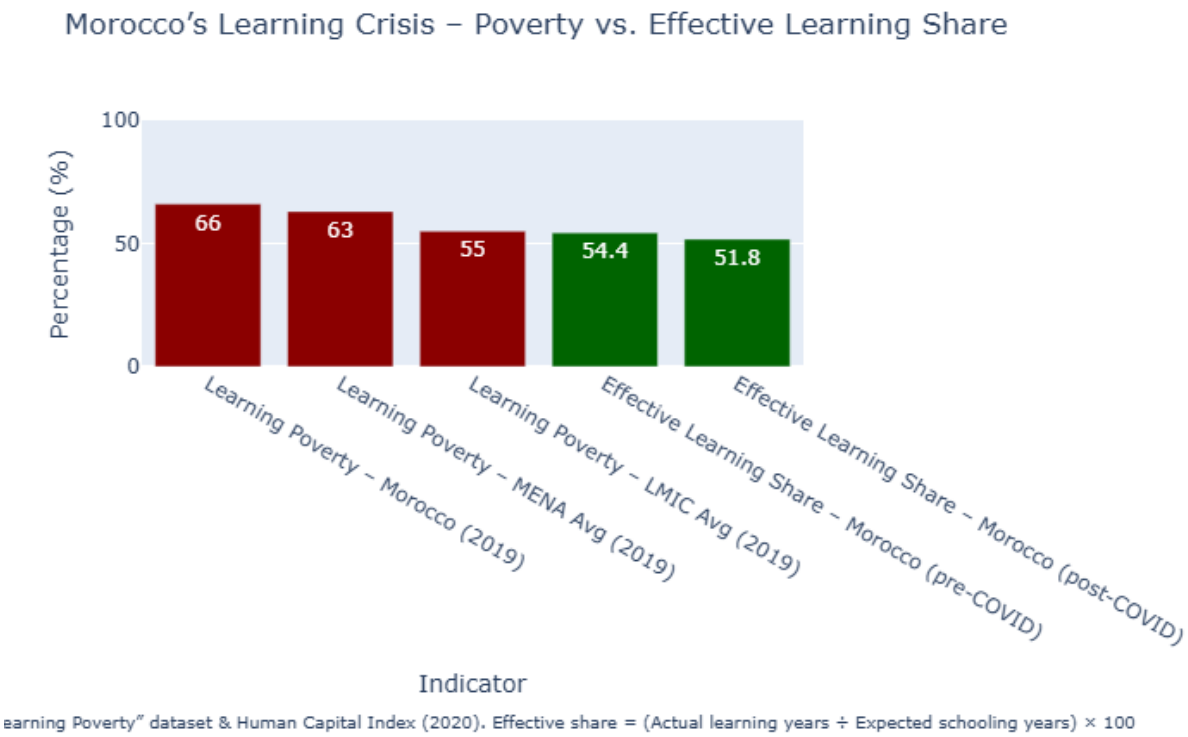
Access Gains:

By 2018, youth literacy rates (ages 15–24) reached 98% in Morocco, improving dramatically from 70% in 2004 and only 44% in 1982. Adult literacy (age 15+) also improved significantly, reaching about 74% in 2018, compared to about 52% in 2004. These improvements came from increasing access to basic education. At the primary school level, Morocco achieved almost universal enrollment. Secondary enrollment is still lower but improving steadily. Official statistics look positive—for instance, the primary school completion rate reached around 97% recently (World Bank, 2021). Morocco now has more students enrolled in secondary school than ever before. In addition, public spending on education is high, with 16.9% of Morocco's government budget allocated to education in 2021, higher than the global average of around 15% (Sanga et al., 2022).

Learning Outcomes – A Stark Contrast:

Despite these good enrollment figures, Moroccan students perform very poorly in terms of actual learning. For example, in 2019, 66% of 10-year-old children in Morocco could not read and understand a simple text, a problem known as "learning poverty" (see figure 3 below).

Figure 3:



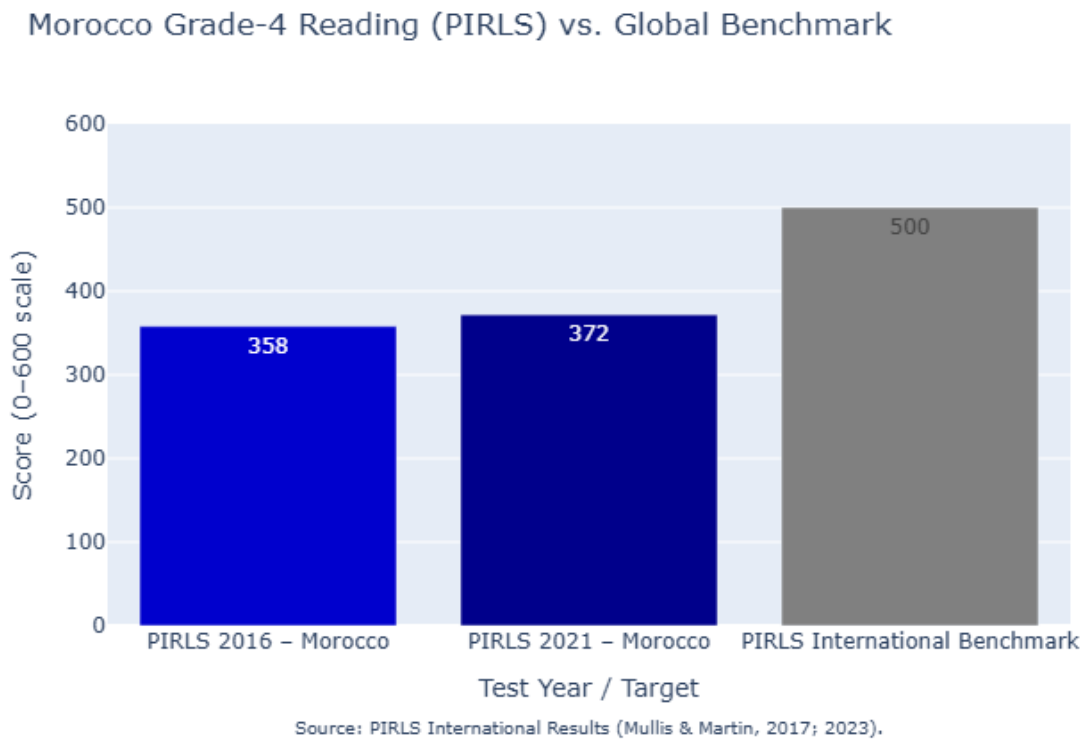
earning Poverty" dataset & Human Capital Index (2020). Effective share = (Actual learning years ÷ Expected schooling years) × 100

This percentage is worse than the MENA regional average (63%) and much worse than lower-middle-income countries LMIC (around 55%) (World Bank, 2020). This clearly shows that attending school does not always mean learning effectively. Another important measure is the World Bank's Human Capital Index: Moroccan children spend an average of 11.4 years in school by age 18, but they learn the equivalent of only 6.2 years, a learning gap of more than 5 years. After the COVID-19 pandemic school closures, this effective learning time further dropped to about 5.9 years (World Bank, 2020).

International assessments keep sending the same warning about Morocco's schools. In PIRLS, Grade-4 students scored 358 points in 2016 and only inched up to 372 points in 2021, still far below the 500-point international benchmark (see Figure 4 below) (Mullis, Martin et al., 2017, 2023). Research points to three main academic factors. First, the language switch from Arabic in early grades to French in science and maths lessons adds cognitive load and slows reading fluency (Benjelloun et al., 2024). Second, classroom conditions remain tough; multigrade classes in rural areas often exceed 35 students, and teachers report a lack of leveled reading materials (UNESCO, 2018). Third, many children start school with limited pre-literacy experiences at home, so they need extra support that the system does not yet provide (World Bank, 2020). Because these three factors persist, early shortfalls

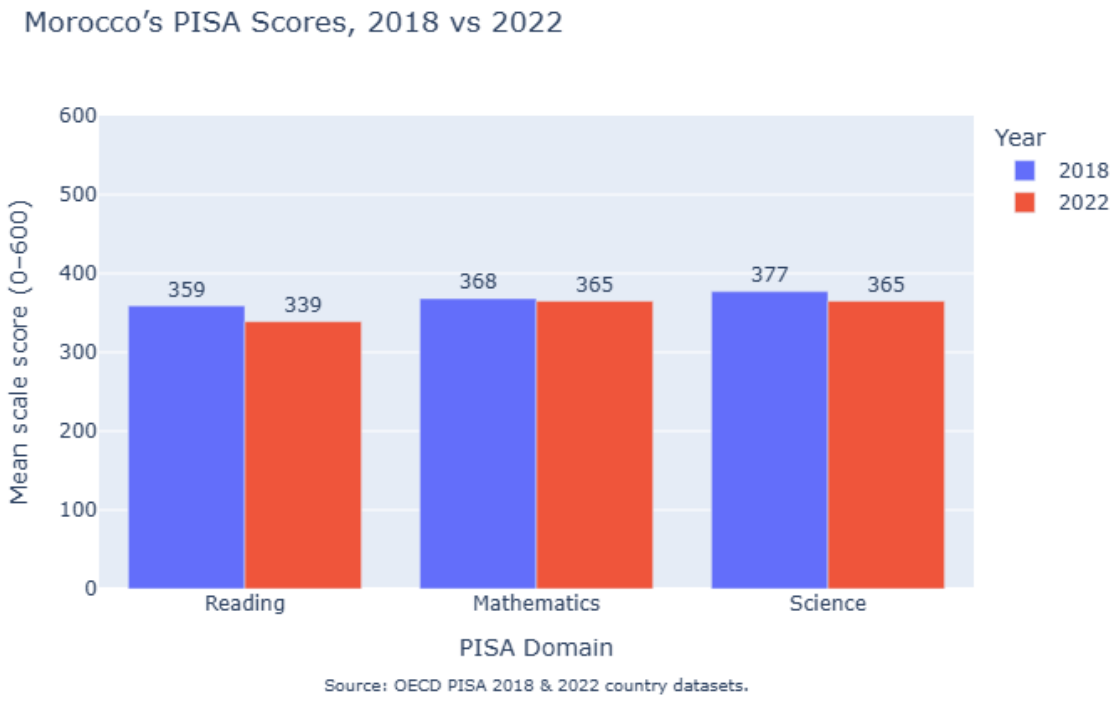
compound over time, and by age 15, the average learner is still below the basic proficiency line in every tested subject.

Figure 4:



In PISA 2018, Moroccan students averaged 359 in reading, 368 in mathematics, and 377 in science; by PISA 2022, reading had dropped to 339, mathematics held near 365, and science slid to 365 (see Figure 5 below) (OECD, 2019, 2023). Across both cycles, more than two-thirds of Moroccan test-takers remained below the basic proficiency line in every subject (OECD, 2019, 2023). Several schooling realities drive these low—and now lower—scores. The jump from Arabic to French and, more recently, to English during the secondary years slows comprehension just as texts become longer and more technical; reading suffers first, and science follows because it relies on language-heavy tasks (Benjelloun et al., 2024). Inside many lower- and upper-secondary classrooms, large groups and a shortage of subject-specialist teachers leave little time for guided practice or laboratory work, keeping science and maths performance flat despite curriculum reforms (UNESCO, 2018). At the same time, wider access policies have brought more students from poor rural backgrounds into Grade 10; they enter with weaker basics and need extra support that schools cannot yet provide (World Bank, 2020). Without a stable language plan, smaller and better-resourced classes, and targeted help for new rural learners, Morocco's PISA results are unlikely to climb above the world proficiency line

Figure 5:



Causes of Low Quality – Policy and Implementation Issues:

Curriculum and Pedagogy:

Many researchers criticize Morocco's curriculum for being outdated and based mainly on memorization rather than developing critical thinking or problem-solving skills. Although Vision 2030 aimed to reform pedagogy and curriculum, progress has been slow. Teachers often continue to use traditional methods because they lack training and support. As a result, employers frequently complain that graduates—even from universities—lack the skills required for work.

Teacher Quantity and Quality:

Morocco faces a serious shortage of qualified teachers, estimated at tens of thousands nationwide. This shortage leads to overcrowded classrooms and the hiring of contract teachers who often receive limited training. Teachers rarely receive sufficient professional development. Additionally, teacher motivation is often low due to delayed salaries and poor incentives. Vision 2030 planned to recruit around 200,000 new teachers to solve these issues(Sanga et al., 2022). While many teachers were hired quickly between 2017 and 2019, rapid hiring without enough training may have negatively affected quality. The International Monetary Fund noted that simply spending more on education without improving teaching methods does not improve learning results (Fayad et al, 2023).

Resources and Infrastructure:

Although Morocco spends significant money on education, much of it goes to administrative costs and salaries rather than improving classrooms or materials. Many schools lack basic resources like libraries and labs. Crowded schools often use double shifts (two groups of students per day), reducing classroom time. Additionally, the number of private schools is increasing (from 4% of students in 1999 to 15% in 2015) (El Amraoui, 2018). As more affluent families send their children to private schools, public schools face less pressure to improve. This creates a two-tier system, increasing inequality and lowering the quality of public schools.

Language of Instruction:

This will be discussed in the next subsection in detail, but it's worth noting here that the language policy issues also affect learning quality. Students must learn in languages not spoken at home—Arabic at early stages, French for science subjects later which can negatively impact their understanding and academic achievement.

In summary, the gap between quantity (more students attending school) and quality (students learning effectively) remains a critical challenge. Vision 2030 aimed to ensure students would receive a quality education, not just attend school. Yet, many students still do not learn enough at school. Even King Mohammed VI acknowledged that Moroccan education often produces graduates whose skills do not match job market needs (El Amraoui, 2018). This learning crisis affects Morocco's development, weakening the benefits of educational investment. Improving teacher training, curriculum reform, and focusing on student learning outcomes rather than only enrollment are essential. Recent adjustments in Vision 2030 (such as the 2019 law prioritizing student achievement) indicate that policymakers understand this issue. For example, a World Bank-supported program (2019–24) specifically targets improving reading and math skills and teacher training (World Bank, 2020). It is still unclear how effective these measures will be. But it is obvious that without significant improvements in quality, Vision 2030 will not fully succeed, even if enrollment targets are met. Increasing enrollment is easy to show politically in the short term, but improving learning quality is harder, though ultimately much more valuable. Morocco's experience clearly shows that enrolling more students does not automatically lead to better education.

4: Language Policy Confusion:

The language of instruction is one of the most complicated and controversial issues in Moroccan education, highlighting a big gap between Vision 2030's aims and the reality. Morocco has a diverse

language situation, with Classical/Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), Moroccan Arabic (Darija), French, and Amazigh (Berber). Due to this diversity, the education system has faced frequent changes in language policy, which can be confusing. Vision 2030 recognized language as important and supported multilingual education to improve educational quality (ICMED Project, 2020). However, the real implementation has often been unclear and controversial, creating a situation described as "language policy confusion."

Historical Background:

After independence, Morocco started a policy of Arabization from the late 1960s to the 1980s, gradually replacing French with Arabic in most subjects up to secondary school (Arab Center Unit for Political Studies, 2019). However, at universities, especially in science and technical subjects, French remained the main language. This created a difficult situation: students studied science and math in Arabic until high school but had to suddenly switch to French at university, leading to high failure rates and job-market difficulties. Over time, French became linked to better employment and higher status, while Arabic-only education often limited students' opportunities (ACRPS, 2019).

Vision 2030 and Law 51.17 – Policy Shift:

Vision 2030 aimed to solve this by proposing multilingual education. This was formalized in the Framework Law No. 51.17 (2019), which allowed teaching certain subjects like science and math in foreign languages—mainly French—in secondary schools (UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report, 2020). Although Arabic remained the main language, the law encouraged a gradual increase in multilingual education, including Amazigh, which became an official language in 2011 (UNESCO GEM Report, 2020). Practically, this meant a significant shift back to French, especially for science subjects, to better prepare students for higher education and the job market.

However, this policy shift created controversy. The Justice and Development Party (PJD), which had previously supported Arabization, initially opposed this move back to French, calling it "Frenchification" and arguing that it weakened national identity and Arabic language skills (ACRPS, 2019). On the other hand, supporters argued that teaching only in Arabic left students unprepared for university studies and international opportunities. Eventually, the law was passed in 2019 after internal political negotiations, but implementing it has been difficult. Many teachers who previously taught in Arabic did not have sufficient French proficiency or training, and new textbooks were not immediately available. Schools implemented this policy unevenly, causing confusion among teachers, students, and parents between 2019 and 2021.

Amazigh Language Policy:

Amazigh (Berber) was officially recognized as a school subject in 2003 and as an official language in 2011. Vision 2030 proposed making Amazigh a language of instruction to better include Amazigh-speaking students (Sanga et al., 2022). In practice, implementation has been slow. There are not enough trained Amazigh teachers, and by 2020, only a few schools offered Amazigh even as a subject. Often, Amazigh teachers were reassigned to teach Arabic or French, undermining the original goal (Minority Rights Group, 2022).

English vs French Debate:

Another ongoing debate is about the increasing role of English. Many young Moroccans now consider English more important than French. A British Council survey (2021) found that 40% of Moroccans aged 15–25 considered English the most important foreign language, compared to just 10% for French (Sanga et al., 2022). Vision 2030 expects students to learn at least two foreign languages (mainly French and English) by the end of secondary school (Sanga et al., 2022). However, the Ministry of Education still considers French as the primary foreign language for instruction, and a complete shift to English is not currently possible. While some middle schools are starting pilot programs to teach English earlier, French remains dominant for now. This uncertainty leads to confusion: students and parents are unclear if or when English will fully replace French, and teachers face frequent curriculum changes. There is currently no clear long-term plan publicly communicated, causing ongoing confusion.

Impacts and the Policy Gap:

Frequent language policy changes and requiring students to master multiple languages have negatively affected student learning. Students often have to learn three languages to succeed academically: Arabic, French, and increasingly English. This requirement is challenging and can lead to students not mastering any language fully. For example, Moroccan 15-year-olds took the PISA reading test in Modern Standard Arabic, which is not their everyday spoken language, potentially contributing to low scores (Sanga et al., 2022). Similarly, learning math and science in French without proper language support may negatively impact performance.

From a policy perspective, Vision 2030's idea of balanced multilingual education (Arabic-French-English plus Amazigh) is good on paper but difficult in reality. The major gap is implementation: Morocco lacks enough bilingual teachers and effective pedagogical plans. The rapid 2019 policy

change caused confusion and resistance, which education experts warn against when implementing reforms. Moreover, this policy risks increasing inequality: urban and wealthy students often have earlier and better exposure to French and English, while rural and poor students have less support. Reintroducing French without enough preparation could widen the educational gap, creating "two classes of Moroccans," one that speaks French fluently and another that doesn't.

Language policy remains a complicated and unsettled issue in Morocco's education reforms. While the goal of multilingual graduates is important, the path has been unclear and poorly implemented. Morocco needs a stable, clear, and realistic language policy that gradually introduces English alongside French, strengthens Arabic learning, and genuinely integrates Amazigh for native speakers from early grades. Constant policy changes damage teacher confidence and student learning. As a teacher from Tetouan summarized, the education field suffers from a gap "between theory and practice," referring to good reform ideas that don't translate effectively into classrooms. Language policy in Morocco clearly shows this gap.

DISCUSSION

The results above clearly show that Vision 2030 faced significant barriers, including systemic, political, and bureaucratic issues. To understand why these problems continue, we need to examine Morocco's situation and briefly compare it with other countries. We also explore how these problems affect social mobility and development beyond just education.

Systemic Barriers and Bureaucratic Problems:

A main issue is that Morocco's education system has deep problems that past reforms didn't fully address. These include a very centralized bureaucracy, a lack of investment in teaching quality, and traditional practices like rote memorization that are difficult to change. Although Vision 2030 aimed to decentralize education management, the Ministry of Education still maintains tight control over curricula, budgets, and staffing (El Amraoui, 2018). The regional academies (AREFs) have limited budgets and mainly follow directives from Rabat. This top-down approach often does not fit local realities, as we saw in rural education disparities. Additionally, Morocco's education administration can resist change, slowing down reforms. For example, after the 2009 Emergency Plan ended, many of its new teaching methods and local initiatives disappeared because they were not institutionalized.

Accountability is another issue. Historically, Morocco has had weak accountability in education. Previous reforms, such as the 1999 Charter, did not strongly measure student learning or hold officials responsible for results (UNESCO, 2018). Only recently has Morocco started participating regularly in international tests and discussing accountability openly. Vision 2030 created a national evaluation body under the CSEFRS, but acting on these evaluations remains challenging. Teachers and regional officials face little consequence if outcomes remain poor (UNESCO, 2018). Without clear accountability, reforms often don't reach classrooms effectively.

Political Will and Continuity:

Politically, education reform in Morocco has strong support from King Mohammed VI, which ensures priority and adequate funding. However, political changes often cause disruptions. Different governments and education ministers have changed the focus repeatedly, such as debates over Arabization versus French language policies, causing delays and confusion. After Vision 2030 began in 2015, it took until 2019 to finalize the education framework law due to political disagreements about languages. Additionally, teacher unions' protests about contract teachers' rights distracted from deeper pedagogical improvements. These political conflicts weakened the continuity and focus on implementing reforms effectively.

Disconnect between Centralized Policies and Local Realities:

Centralized decision-making often fails to address local educational needs effectively. For instance, centrally designed curricula often ignore rural realities like multigrade classrooms and high absenteeism rates. Central authorities assume uniformity across schools, which doesn't reflect real local conditions. Local teachers and communities rarely participate in policy decisions, causing implementation problems. For example, centrally produced textbooks often do not consider local languages or learning barriers, such as Amazigh-speaking students needing bilingual materials. Similarly, teachers sent from the central authority often refuse rural placements because there are not enough incentives or support. Decentralization, if properly done, could help solve these issues by empowering local education authorities.

Comparisons with Tunisia and Rwanda:

Comparing Morocco with Tunisia and Rwanda provides valuable insights. Tunisia had early successes in expanding access and reducing gender inequality due to strong government investment under President Bourguiba. Yet Tunisia now faces similar quality problems as Morocco, with low PISA scores and high unemployment among graduates (Bouhlila, 2021). This suggests regional

problems like centralized governance and outdated pedagogy can limit success, even with good funding.

Rwanda, although poorer, made quick progress by prioritizing education after its civil conflict. It achieved nearly universal primary enrollment by using community-based school buildings and enforcing school attendance strictly (Helgi Library, 2023). Rwanda also changed its language policy from French to English, supported by strong teacher training, and invested heavily in monitoring and accountability at local levels (through performance contracts known as "Imihigo") (World Bank, 2023). This approach has ensured steady policy implementation. Though Rwanda still faces challenges in education quality, its strong policy execution and clear accountability provide lessons for Morocco.

Summary of Systemic and Political Barriers:

Morocco's reforms often remained incomplete due to centralized control, political instability, and bureaucratic inefficiency. As the IMF (2023) analysis showed, spending more on education has not significantly improved learning results because of inefficiencies (Fayad et al., 2023). Another gap is the weak connection between policies and accountability. Moreover, teachers often felt excluded from reform processes, leading to weak implementation at the classroom level.

Implications for Social Mobility and Development:

These education problems have serious consequences for Morocco's broader development. Education is critical for social mobility. When the education system fails to provide fair opportunities, social inequalities increase. Morocco's growing private education sector mainly serves wealthier families, while poorer families remain stuck in low-quality public schools (El Amraoui, 2018). As a result, students from wealthy backgrounds access better universities and job opportunities, while poorer students fall behind, deepening social divides. A student from Rabat noted the big quality gap between public and private schools, making it difficult for public school students to enter major universities.

Economically, poor education reduces workforce skills, limiting Morocco's economic growth potential. The World Bank estimates that Morocco's human capital (education and health) accounts for only about 41% of its total wealth, lower than similar countries (World Bank, 2020). Employers often complain that graduates lack necessary skills, leading to high youth unemployment rates (around 29%) (Sanga et al., 2022). When half of Morocco's 10-year-olds cannot read properly, it signals that future workers will struggle to adapt, hurting economic growth (World Bank, 2020). Countries that

improved education quality, like Vietnam or South Korea, enjoyed significant economic benefits. Morocco risks falling behind globally if its education system remains weak.

Politically, frustrations over educational failures can cause instability. Regional inequalities in education contributed to social grievances like the Rif protests (Hirak) in 2016–2017. A failing education system can deepen social and political divisions, weakening national cohesion.

Comparative Reflections:

The comparisons suggest that Morocco should focus on improving teacher training and using education funding more efficiently, similar to Tunisia's earlier successes. Additionally, Morocco could adopt Rwanda's effective local accountability, community involvement, and consistent policy implementation. Morocco's larger size and complex politics require building national agreement on education reforms that survive political changes.

In conclusion, education reform is not just a technical issue but deeply political and structural. Vision 2030 identified key problems and set strong goals, but struggled due to political compromises and systemic resistance. Effective reform requires real decentralization, stronger accountability, active participation by teachers and communities, and continuous political commitment. As one academic stated, reforms fail because they don't involve local stakeholders enough, highlighting the need for a truly participatory approach. This analysis leads directly to the recommendations in the conclusion.

CONCLUSION

Morocco's Vision 2015–2030 was designed as a comprehensive education reform plan with ambitious goals. However, after ten years, many of its promises have not yet been fully met. This study has shown some progress, especially in getting more children into schools and introducing new education laws. However, significant gaps remain between the policy goals and actual outcomes. For example, regional inequalities persist: rural and poorer areas continue to have lower educational achievements and higher dropout rates than urban areas, meaning fairness and equal opportunity are still lacking. Although gender inequality in primary education has decreased, it remains an issue in secondary and higher education, particularly affecting girls from rural communities. This situation undermines the goal of education for everyone. Additionally, the quality of education remains low despite more students enrolling in schools. Many students still cannot read or perform basic math

well, contradicting the goal of “quality education for all.” Finally, the language policy is confusing due to frequent changes and has negatively affected learning outcomes.

The analysis shows systemic issues and problems in implementation are at the root of these challenges. Vision 2030 correctly identified equity, quality, and governance as key areas, but the implementation suffered due to centralized control, political delays (such as the delayed language policy law), and insufficient focus on teachers and classroom-level changes. Comparisons with Tunisia and Rwanda showed Morocco's challenges are not unique; improving education quality is difficult everywhere. However, consistent policies and strong accountability can help make faster progress.

If Morocco does not solve these education gaps, the country faces serious problems: lower workforce skills, continued social inequalities, and difficulties achieving economic and human development goals.

Policy Recommendations:

To close these gaps and fulfill Vision 2030’s promises, the following actions are recommended:

1. Advance Decentralization with Accountability:

Morocco should give more decision-making power and resources to local education authorities (AREFs) and strengthen accountability by regularly publishing performance reports for each region. School boards involving local parents and community members can help address specific local problems, such as transport for rural students or improving teacher attendance. The central ministry must also provide clear data on enrollment, dropout rates, and learning outcomes by region and gender to ensure transparency and accountability.

2. Invest in Teacher Development and Incentives:

Teachers are key to educational quality. Morocco needs a complete teacher development plan, including raising entry standards, improving teacher training (especially in early-grade reading), and providing ongoing professional development. Offering incentives such as higher salaries, housing, and faster promotions can help attract good teachers to rural areas. Reducing dependence on short-term contract teachers by offering them a path to permanent positions based on performance will also help improve teaching quality and motivation.

3. Stabilize Language Policy with a Clear Roadmap:

The government must stop frequent changes in language policy. Morocco needs a clear, stable language plan, perhaps continuing French temporarily but quickly preparing to shift towards English by around 2030, aligning with global trends. During this transition, Morocco should provide strong support: intensive language training for teachers, bilingual education from early grades, and quality teaching materials in chosen languages. Also, Amazigh instruction should be realistically expanded in regions with large Amazigh populations. Once announced, this plan must remain consistent, regardless of political changes, to avoid confusion.

4. Enhance Transparency and Data-Driven Management:

The Ministry of Education must adopt a transparent, data-driven approach, regularly evaluating reforms and publishing results openly. If certain programs improve dropout rates or learning outcomes, these successes should be shared publicly. Establishing an independent evaluation unit, as previously planned, could help institutionalize these evaluations.

5. Target Resources to Equity Gaps:

Education resources should be specifically directed towards disadvantaged regions and groups. Allocating extra funding for rural schools, girls' education, and low-income urban areas is crucial. Programs like Tayssir, school meals, and transport should be expanded. Innovative solutions like mobile classrooms or e-learning for remote areas should be explored. Additionally, non-formal education programs must be strengthened to give dropouts another chance at education or vocational training.

6. Foster Inclusive and Participatory Reforms:

Future education reforms should actively involve teachers, students, and parents. Creating formal channels (teacher councils, parent committees) for their feedback and participation is essential. When people feel included in decision-making, reforms become more successful. Past reforms often failed because local communities were not sufficiently involved in decision-making.

Final Thoughts:

Reforming education is crucial for Morocco's social and economic future. Vision 2030 correctly identified the challenges and set strong goals, but effective implementation requires deeper changes in governance, stronger accountability, more participation from local stakeholders, and consistent political commitment. As one researcher stated, effective reforms only work through broad

participation. Addressing these gaps in the next few years can help Morocco finally fulfill its promise of quality education for all students, fully unlocking the potential of its young population. The coming years are critical, and Morocco's success or failure will be closely watched by the global community.

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