

# Examining the Interplay Between Islamic Education and Science Domains in Morocco's Educational Policy

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## Abstract

King Mohammed VI bestowed special emphasis upon Morocco, a country with a population of 30 million people and a Muslim majority of 99%. In 1999, Moroccan students' performance in mathematics and science fell below the global average. The education system in Morocco is perceived as being unresponsive to the demands of the labour market, prompting the implementation of the National Education Emergency Support Programme in 2009. This study aims to examine the educational policies established by the Moroccan government. This research involves conducting a literature review, specifically employing content analysis tools. Research findings indicate that the majority of Islamic schools or madrasas in Morocco are predominantly overseen by autonomous or privately-owned organisations. The government's involvement is necessary to promote the development of these schools in alignment with the requirements of the labour market, particularly in the realm of science.

## Abstrak

Maroko dengan jumlah penduduk 30 juta jiwa dan 99% mayoritas beragama Islam mendapat perhatian khusus oleh raja Mohammed VI. Pada tahun 1999 prestasi siswa maroko dalam bidang matematika dan sains berada di bawah rata-rata internasional. Pendidikan di Maroko dinilai lambat dalam merespon kebutuhan di dunia kerja, sehingga terbit kebijakan mengenai Program Dukungan Darurat Pendidikan Nasional pada tahun 2009. Penelitian ini mencoba membahas kebijakan-kebijakan yang dilakukan oleh

pemerintah Maroko dalam pendidikan. Jenis penelitian ini merupakan kajian pustaka (*Library Research*) dengan menggunakan teknik analisis isi. Dari penelitian yang dilakukan, ditemukan bahwa sekolah-sekolah Islam atau madrasah di Maroko lebih banyak dikelola oleh instansi-instansi secara mandiri atau swasta. Sehingga dibutuhkan peran pemerintah dalam memajukan sekolah-sekolah tersebut sesuai dengan tuntutan dunia kerja terutama di bidang sains.

### **Keywords**

Policy, Morocco, Islamic education, science

### **Introduction**

The ongoing enhancements in Morocco's education system mirror those observed in several Muslim nations globally, particularly endeavours to augment human capital. The advancements primarily pertain to the domains of science and technology. In Morocco, the labour market is mostly controlled by individuals who possess specialised knowledge and skills in the areas of science and technology. Concurrently, there is a prevailing trend among Moroccan students to prioritise the study of social sciences above engineering, technical, and business studies. Education expenditure in Morocco is comparatively high and shows a consistent upward trend. In 2014, government expenditure on education accounted for around 5.9 percent of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and 21.3 percent of the overall government expenditure. The annual growth rate has consistently exceeded 5 percent since 2002, as reported by Blancher et al. (2016). According to Thomas Pereira Da Silva's research, there are four factors contributing to the rising unemployment rate in Morocco. These factors include: (a) difficulties in finding suitable jobs, mismatch between job requirements and skills, and overall low quality of the education system; (b) inflexible labour market and behaviour of skilled workers; (c) changes in technology and economic structure, along with external shocks; and (d) an excessive supply of specialised university degrees or skilled labour (Pereira & Silva, 2017).

Rachid Aourraz categorises the deficiencies of the education system in Morocco into two distinct categories: internal and external. Internally, the research revealed that Moroccan schools are deficient in language proficiency, knowledge acquisition, skill development, and value cultivation. Additionally, there is a misallocation of resources in schools, colleges, and vocational training centres throughout the country. Furthermore, scientific research within educational institutions is inadequate. Furthermore, the study found that Moroccan university graduates face difficulties in

effectively integrating into society in terms of economics, social interactions, and cultural assimilation. This is mostly due to the isolated nature of Moroccan schools, which lack exposure to broader national and global perspectives, as well as the absence of advancements in technology. The report utilises data derived from the International Comparative Assessments of Student Achievement in Mathematics and Science (TIMSS) and in reading (PIRLS) (Aourraz, 2017). For an extended period, it has been established that Moroccan pupils' performance in mathematics and science fell below the global average in 1999. Mathematically speaking, Morocco achieved a score of 337 points, which is lower than the international average of 487 points. In terms of scientific achievement, it is significantly below the international average by 165 points, with a score of 488. In 2003, out of the 50 countries that took part, Morocco was rated 45th. In 2007, Morocco's ranking among 36 countries was below the global average. In 2011, a total of 66 countries took part in the competition, with 14 of them being Arab countries. Among these participants, Morocco obtained the lowest ranking. In 2015, Morocco was among the three lowest-ranked countries on the list. Concisely, the evaluation of Moroccan pupils' performance in mathematics and science indicates persistently low levels of achievement (Ben & Rachid, 2022). Hence, the Moroccan Government put out a fresh approach, specifically the strategic vision 2015-2030 (Learning Achievement in Morocco: A Status Assessment).

Prior research provide insight on the education system in Morocco. The research conducted by Llorent Bedmar and Vicente highlights the challenges and issues faced by Morocco, particularly in relation to the implementation of syllabi and courses that do not align with the demands of the labor market (Llorent-Bedmar, 2014). Furthermore, a thesis authored by Razane Boustany. The study examines the modification of textbooks and curriculum for the instruction of Islam in public educational institutions. The implementation of this reform has sparked significant controversy among specialists and educators in Islamic education, giving rise to several inquiries on its efficacy and significance. The creation of the organization was initiated upon the request of King Mohammad VI, with the aim of advancing a form of Islam that is characterized by moderation (Gunn, 2016). Following is Alalou's study that examines the ongoing dispute on the prominence of either French or Modern Standard Arabic as the primary languages in Morocco (Alalou, 2018). Researchers primarily investigated the government's involvement in Islamic educational institutions, particularly private ones, to ensure the integration of Islamic education with science. The aim is to address Morocco's national challenges, specifically the demands of the workforce.

## Method

This study involves conducting library research. A literature review is an examination of written works that are directly relevant to a certain subject, conducted by individuals other than the author. The referenced reading material often consists of articles, theses, and dissertations, which might be either unpublished or published (Ratna, 2010). Concurrently, the data analysis technique employs content analysis. Content analysis is a research method used to draw reliable and accurate conclusions from text or other significant material, taking into account the context in which it is used (Krippendorff, 2004).

## Results and Discussion

The Kingdom of Morocco is the most westerly country among the North African nations collectively referred to as “Western Arabia”. It possesses shorelines along the Atlantic and Mediterranean. From a political standpoint, Morocco operates as a constitutional monarchy, where the monarch’s powers are limited by a constitution, and the parliament is elected by the people. In 2018, the kingdom’s population was approximately 36,283,713. Morocco is classified as a lower middle income country. Its gross domestic product (GDP) had a decline from 4.5% in 2015 to 1.2% in 2016, however it showed a rise in 2017. The agricultural industry is expected to contribute to a 4% increase in GDP. The growth rate was 3% in 2018, increased to 3.5% in 2019, and experienced a further increase to 3.7% in 2020. From 2001 to 2004, extreme poverty was completely eliminated. Per capita consumption experienced an annual growth rate of 3.3% (3.9% for the poorest 20% of the population). Monetary poverty decreased to 4.8% and vulnerability decreased to 12.5%. The poverty percentage in the country has consistently decreased from 15.3% in 2001 to 8.9% in 2007 to 4.8% in 2016. The unemployment rate in Morocco has continued to increase, rising from 9.9% in 2016 to 10.2% in 2017. This rise in unemployment is particularly prevalent among young individuals (26.5%), those with higher education (17.9%), and women (14.7%). These statistics indicate the limited ability of the country’s economy to provide inclusive growth, as highlighted in the Country Youth Profile report of 2019.

The official language of the country is Arabic, specifically classical Arabic or modern standard Arabic (MSA). However, most children in Morocco speak the Moroccan version of colloquial Arabic, known as Darija, or one of the Amazigh languages, such as Tamazight in the South or Tachelhit in the North. Arabic exhibits a linguistic phenomenon known as “diglossia” wherever it is spoken. This refers to the presence of two distinct forms of the language: one that is utilized in formal schooling and has been standardized, and another that is employed in informal daily interactions. In

Morocco, Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) is employed in educational institutions and governmental establishments, but Darija is a regional variant mostly utilized for spoken communication and lacks a standardized written form. (Task Order 15: DEP/AME Research on Reading in Morocco: Analysis of Teachers' Perceptions and Practices) Final Report: This document is the culmination of the Component 3 EdData II Technical and Managerial Assistance, specifically Task Number 15, under Contract Number 2014.

### **Moroccan Government Policy in Developing Education**

As per a 2010 UNESCO assessment, the education system in Morocco is currently facing a crisis. The primary difficulties include the need to standardize the system, the inadequate quality of learning, the inefficiency of both internal and external systems, and the ineffectiveness of the education sector. Additional issues, as stated in the UNESCO study, encompass elevated percentages of high school students leaving schooling prematurely and a significant disparity between the number of graduates and the demands of the job market. The Moroccan education system incorporates the job market as a means to address the obstacles encountered by the education sector (Diyen, 2013). Regarding the SAHWA Survey data, 39% of individuals aged 15 to 29 are actively participating in the labor market (40% of them are now employed and 60% are unemployed). Additionally, 35.4% of unemployed young people are not involved in the school system (Kamal, 2022).

As per a 2010 UNESCO study, the education system in Morocco is facing a crisis. The primary concerns include the lack of uniformity in the system, poor quality of learning, inefficiency in both internal and external systems, and the ineffectiveness of the education sector. Additional issues, as stated in the UNESCO study, encompass elevated percentages of high school students leaving schooling prematurely and a significant disparity between the number of graduates and the demands of the job market. The Moroccan labor market is a characteristic of the Moroccan education system, which aims to address the difficulties encountered by the education sector (Diyen, 2013). Regarding the SAHWA Survey data, 39% of individuals aged 15 to 29 are actively participating in the labor market (with 40% currently employed and 60% jobless). Additionally, 35.4% of unemployed young people are not involved in the school system.

In 2009, the Moroccan Government introduced a National Education Emergency Support Program that encompassed: The program underwent evaluation during the dates of January 12th and January 26th, 2009. This aligns with the Government's economic recovery and poverty reduction policy, which was presented to the DPR in October 2007. This program is also aligned with the Country Strategy Paper (CSP) for the period 2007-

2011, which was approved by the Bank Group Board of Directors in April 2007. Requirements have been considered in accordance with best practice guidelines. The management has presented a report and suggestions concerning a loan proposal of EUR 75 million to the Kingdom of Morocco from the Asian Development Bank (ADB). The loan is intended to finance the National Education Emergency Program, which will be carried out over a four-year period from 2009 to 2012.

Furthermore, the National Education Emergency program seeks to expedite the execution of changes derived from the National Education and Training Charter (CNEF) by solidifying achievements and implementing essential modifications. The primary objective is to ensure universal access to education while enhancing teaching standards and overall educational system performance. The primary anticipated outcomes of this endeavor include: (i) obligatory enrollment of children aged 6 to 15 years in schools, (ii) enhanced accessibility and enhanced quality of qualifying secondary education, (iii) increased availability of higher education and assurance of employability, (iv) advancement in research, (v) reinforcement of the competencies of teaching and administrative personnel, and (vi) efficient management of human, financial, and material resources allocated to the education sector.

By implementing this program, the Government has adopted a comprehensive strategy to address multiple issues in the Moroccan education sector that necessitate urgent actions to enhance the overall performance, effectiveness, and quality of the education system. The Bank will provide fiscal support as Morocco has fulfilled the requisite criteria for this type of operation. Furthermore, the Bank has a longstanding practice of providing financial assistance to Morocco through budget support. The outcomes of this type of intervention are seen as excellent, as stated in the Appraisal Report of the National Education Emergency Support Program in Morocco in 2009.

The initial accomplishments of the Emergency Plan were observed in the domain of formal education and higher education institutions. At the formal education level, several initiatives have been undertaken to enhance the quality of education. These include the construction of 499 new schools between 2007-2008 and 2010-2011, the qualification of 2035 school units and 267 Islamic boarding schools, the provision of drinking water facilities to 2314 companies, and electricity to 632 companies. Additionally, efforts have been made to train and motivate human resources. The education system has been improved through the implementation of various actions, such as the establishment of integrated pedagogy, enhancement of information and guidance systems, promotion of educational research, and the establishment of superior schools to foster excellence. Individual student follow-up systems have also been put in place, and schools have been

equipped with new ICT tools. (f) The dropout rate for elementary school is decreased to 42%, for middle school it is cut to 19%, and for high school it is lowered to 36%; (g) There is a 150% increase in investment and recurring capital budgets, excluding salary expenditures, from 2008 to 2011. (h) - The new reform plan includes providing free school materials to elementary and high school students in rural areas; (i) Implementing a financial transfer mechanism to support the poorest rural towns. A total of 357,000 households and 590,000 students have received benefits from this transaction. Additionally, the participation percentage for children aged 6-11 years has risen from 84.6% in 2000 to 97.5% in 2010. The rise in percentage from 76.7% in 2000 to 95.4% in 2010 had a positive impact on rural areas. Meanwhile, at the higher education level, there has been an increase in the availability of educational options in tertiary institutions. Furthermore, there was a 9% surge in the student population, rising from 336,000 in 2007-2008 to 370,000 in 2009-2010. The enrollment of students in technical and scientific fields experienced a 54% increase between the academic years 2007-2008 and 2009-2010. Additionally, there was a 78% increase in the enrollment of students pursuing professional licenses during the academic year 2009-2010 compared to the previous year, 2008-2009. In the academic year of 2009-2010, there were 1660 study programs that received accreditation, which is a 47% increase compared to 2007-2008. Progress was also made in the 10,000 engineers initiative. Additionally, the 3300 doctors per year initiative was launched. The number of scholarship recipients increased by 27% between 2007-2008 and 2009-2010. The university hall reception capacity increased by 10.5% in 2008-2009, resulting in the creation of over 4000 new beds. Furthermore, in 2010-2011, 11,000 students enrolled in Masters programs received scholarships (Aomar & Amaghous, 2014).

In his 2012 throne speech, King Mohammed VI conveyed a pressing need to revamp the education system in order to address the expectations of the youth and meet the developmental requirements of the country. CSEFRS conducted a thorough evaluation of the education sector's progress since 2000, as directed by The World Bank (2018). Following the World Education Forum meeting in Dakar, Senegal in April 2000, the Moroccan government established six objectives based on the Education for All (EFA) national report 2013-2015. These goals are: (1) Enhancing holistic early childhood care and education, (2) Guaranteeing universal access to free and mandatory primary school education, (3) Ensuring equitable access to relevant life skills and learning opportunities for all youth and adults, (4) Attaining a 50 percent increase in adult literacy rates, (5) Achieving gender equality by 2005 and gender parity in education by 2015, and (6) Enhancing the caliber of education (Morocco, 2018).

In Morocco, the Ministry of Education has implemented a policy initiative called 'For Fair, Quality and Promoting Schools: Strategic Vision for Reform 2015–2030' to revamp the education system. This was done in conjunction with the re-establishment of the Higher Council for Education, Training and Scientific Research. The document outlines 23 priority projects, which encompass the promotion of values education, life skills, and personality development. The primary objective of Vision 2030 is to establish a society that upholds the principles of active citizenship, democracy, and equality (Idrissi et al., 2021).

In addition, Morocco also offers a non-formal educational program. The NFE program was implemented in Morocco during the 1997-1998 academic year with the aim of enhancing the circumstances of children who are not attending school by providing them with an opportunity to reintegrate into the mainstream education system. The program is executed via contractual collaborations with civil society organizations, which are tasked with recruiting specific individuals, establishing and overseeing classes, and entering into agreements with educational facilitators to guide these children in accordance with the curriculum set by the MENFP. The Ministry offers financial assistance to these associations to cover the expenses associated with the implementation, oversight, and training of educational facilitators. Furthermore, the Ministry oversees and evaluates the execution of projects. The NFE program has seen substantial transformations over the past fifteen years in terms of its methodology, performance, and the number of individuals it serves. The enrollment in second chance and remedial schools witnessed a growth from 33,177 in 2009 to 47,088 in 2014, as reported in the Task Order 15: Data for Education Programming in Asia and the Middle East (DEP/AME) Research on Reading in Morocco: Analysis of Non-Formal Education Textbooks EdData II Technical and Managerial Assistance, Task Number 15 Contract Number, 2015.

From the start of 2020, the Covid-19 crisis and the required steps to control it have been the main focus of attention and discussion on human resource development. The school system had a rapid transition to internet platforms in order to facilitate Distance Learning (DDL) during the shutdown. The Ministry of Education is developing an e-learning platform to guarantee seamless continuation of the teaching and learning process. Public television and radio also transmit educational information. Nevertheless, concerns regarding access, inclusiveness, and quality persist.

### **Primary and Secondary Education**

In Morocco, basic education is both cost-free and compulsory for children aged 6 to 15. The curriculum should span a duration of 9 years, including of two tiers: 6 years of elementary education and 3 years of lower

secondary education. Notwithstanding the availability of free education, a significant number of students, particularly females residing in rural regions, continue to be absent from school or prematurely discontinue their education. The Moroccan education system follows a cycle that includes the PAUD, SD, SMP, and SMA levels (Forming Responsible Citizens Diagnostic Study Morocco, n.d.). The academic year commences in September and concludes in June.

In Morocco, primary education consists of two “cycles” that span a duration of six years. The initial phase, known as the foundational cycle (*le cycle fondamental*), has a duration of two years, whereas the subsequent phase, referred to in French as the middle cycle (*le cycle moyen*), encompasses grades three to six. Nevertheless, the National Education and Training Charter also presented a fresh perspective on early childhood education, specifically targeting children between the ages of 4 and 6, by establishing a strong connection between preschool and primary schooling. The White Paper, also known as *Le Livre Blanc*, serves as the primary document that delineates the curriculum of the national public school system. As stated in the White Paper, preschool is considered an essential aspect of the initial phase of education, where it is integrated with the first two years of future basic education, forming a fundamental cycle that spans four years. By employing an educational approach that emphasizes immersion and awareness, this two-year program aims to equip students with the necessary skills to excel academically. One of the key qualities that students are expected to achieve is proficiency in oral communication in their mother tongue. The latter will provide the child with the necessary skills to comprehend and produce written Arabic language, as stated in the Task Order 15: Data for Education Programming in Asia and the Middle East (DEP/AME) Research on Reading in Morocco: Analysis of the National Education Curriculum and Textbooks (Component 1) Final Report, 2015. The user's text is empty.

The curriculum implemented in 2016 demonstrates that the foundational educational content is categorized into three distinct divisions. (1) The language domains include Arabic, Tamazight, French, and English. (2) The mathematics and technology sectors encompass mathematics and scientific activities. (3) The fields of social humanities include: (a) Islamic education, (b) social sciences such as history, geography, and citizenship education, (c) the development of personal and social competencies such as education on traffic signs, career exploration, financial education, entrepreneurship education, and personal projects, (d) arts education, and (e) sports. The duration for each subject is from 30 to 45 minutes, as stated in the Ministry of Education's document titled “*Wizārah al-Tarbiyyah al-Wathaniyyah wa al-Takwin al-Mihni wa al-Ta'lim al-'Ali wa al-Bahts al-'Ilmi*, 2020”.

## Higher Education in Morocco

Morocco possesses a total of 16 public universities, with one of them, Al-Akhawayn, operating on a distinctive public-private model and offering education exclusively in English. As of autumn 2014, two significant university consolidations are now in progress in Rabat and Casablanca, and efforts are being made to establish inter-university hubs. Simultaneously, the Université Polytechnique Mohammed VI in Beni Guerir, a recently established public institution in collaboration with the Office Chérifien des Phosphates, is getting ready to commence its operations. Additionally, there are indications of progress in the development of a new university in Errachidia. There are a total of 61 specialized educational institutions that provide training for various professions, including airline pilots, judges, architects, senior public servants, and teachers. There are a total of 196 private institutions, including universities like Mundiapolis in Casablanca, Universiapolis in Agadir, and UIR in Rabat, as well as smaller, more specialized colleges. The majority of them are concentrated in Rabat and Casablanca.

The Higher Education System in Morocco consists of various programs. These include the Diploma of the University of Technology (DUT), which has a study duration of 2 years. Additionally, there are Bachelor's degrees available in fundamental studies (LEF), professional studies, science and technology, and education, all of which require a study duration of 3 years. (3) The degrees available are Master's degree, Special Master's degree, Master of Science and Technology, Engineering degree, ENCG degree (business degree), and degree in translation. The length of study for these degrees is 5 years. (4) The degrees available are Doctor of Medicine, Doctor of Dentistry, and Doctor of Pharmacy. The length of study for these degrees is 6 or 7 years. (5) The degree available is a PhD degree, which requires a length of study of 8 years. The user's text is incomplete. Blended Learning at Moroccan Universities: Accomplishments and Prospective Obstacles The dialogue focuses on the Research, Innovation, and Higher Education Action A7, specifically on the topic of "Blended Learning for Increasing Youth Opportunities" in 2021. The Moroccan educational system has completely embraced the Napoleonic model, characterized by its centralized structure, elitism, rigorous selection process, and rigid curriculum. In Morocco, the higher education system comprises many sorts of institutions that offer different types of curricula, either academic or vocational, depending on their nature. In Morocco, the higher education system is structured according to the LMD system, which stands for "License", "Master", and "Doctorate" (Bac + 7). This system is arranged into semesters and includes both disciplinary and required course units. (Moroccan Educational System National Report, 2019).

Morocco's strategic vision for the period of 2015-2030 encompasses several key objectives. These include: (1) facilitating the movement of students on an international scale, (2) ensuring that Moroccan researchers have the opportunity to engage in international exchanges, (3) promoting the adoption of best practices, successful international experiences, and international standards, (4) fostering the development of international partnerships and cooperation, (5) enhancing Morocco's standing within the global international system, and (6) actively pursuing Morocco's integration into the international knowledge, technology, and innovation landscape. The Moroccan Ministry's plans for 2018-2022 encompass various projects, including: (1) enhancing existing cooperation programs with foreign nations, (2) establishing new partnerships in higher education and scientific research, (3) reinforcing collaboration with regional entities within the framework of south-to-south cooperation, and (4) promoting the mobility of Moroccan students and professors (Kaaouachi, 2022).

The Moroccan Government has established the Governance Bodies to ensure the quality of education. These bodies include the Higher Council for Education (CSE), which oversees and assesses public policies in education, and the National Coordinating Committee for Higher Education (CNCES) and the Private Higher Education Coordinating Committee (COCESP). Two committees have been established as part of the quality assurance reform process. The first is the National Evaluation Agency, which is tasked with auditing and evaluating educational policies. It operates under the supervision of the Higher Council of Education. The second committee is the National Accreditation and Evaluation Committee (CNAE), which is responsible for accrediting master's and doctoral degrees as well as private institutions (Bounahai, 1103).

Private higher education has emerged as a new development in Morocco. The sector was established in 1984-1985 with the establishment of two private management institutes that admitted a total of 71 students. Currently, there are around 200 firms operating in this sector, with a student enrollment of 39,000 and a faculty of 4,315 professors, including 512 full-time faculty members. These institutions have expertise in various disciplines, with 71% of students studying administration, management and communications, 24% studying science and technology, and 5% studying paramedicine. The swift progression is closely linked to the government's commitment to consistently revise and enhance legislation pertaining to private higher education. These regulations encompass several aspects such as the institution's goal, objectives, governance, as well as quality assurance and accreditation. Starting from 25 October 2010, it has been allowed to use the term "private university". The government has developed a framework, in partnership with the Central Guarantee Fund, to provide loan guarantees for investors seeking to construct private universities. Based on the

statements provided in the interview, it is evident that this assurance is functioning effectively and has the potential to stimulate the establishment of additional private universities. The forthcoming actions of the government program involve completing the regulatory framework, establishing incentives for the establishment of public-private partnerships, and promoting the expansion of the sector. The objective is to achieve a 14% enrollment rate by 2015, which corresponds to approximately 84,000 students (Enseignement Supérieur Au Moyen-Orient et En, 2016).

The official database of the Moroccan government indicates the existence of approximately 3,000 privately-owned educational institutions at all levels in the country. Out of the total number of schools in Morocco, which includes 7,574 public elementary schools and 2,757 secondary schools (colleges and high schools), around 22% are private schools (Dichter, 2017).

There are numerous possible issues and hazards associated with perceiving the relationship between religion and science as one characterized by conflict and/or independence. Optimally, a partnership that fosters communication and assimilation between the two parties is much superior. According to Ian G. Barbour and Holmes Rolston III, the relationship between religion and science can be described using three keywords: semipermeable, intersubjective testability, and creative imagination. These keywords represent dialogic and integrative patterns. (Abdullah, 2014).

The urgent cessation of the division between science and religion is imperative, and concerted efforts should be undertaken to integrate the two under an integrative educational framework. Nevertheless, the matter of upholding the credibility of science and religion inside the early childhood education system is a complex one. Nevertheless, it is imperative that the foundation of the argument is rooted in rigorous philosophical reasoning to avoid any appearance of inconsistency. Prior to implementing educational changes, it is essential to establish a fundamental philosophical framework for education that aligns with Islamic teachings. Subsequently, it is necessary to construct empirical principles that serve as the foundation for implementing this framework within the environmental and sociocultural context (Nurdin, 2020).

### **Development of Education in Morocco**

As stated in Barbara Degorge's citation of Robin Bidwell's book "Morocco Under Colonial Rule, French Administration of Tribal Areas 1912–1956," General Louis H. Lyautey assumed the position of resident general when Morocco became a protectorate in 1912. One of his initial endeavors was to analyze the educational requirements of Moroccan society. In order to accomplish this, Lyautey established the Service de l'Enseignement with the specific purpose of addressing the requirements of

the native population. He believed that the children of the colonizers could be taught anew in France. The primary focus is not necessarily on altering the current education system, but rather on enhancing its capabilities. The objective is to establish a comprehensive system that encompasses both conventional and contemporary education. Curiously, Lyautey's objective was not to alter the prevailing social structure in Morocco, but rather to enhance the education of individuals belonging to each social stratum, enabling them to effectively assume the roles they were destined for (Degorge, 2002). Following the Second World War, the Moroccan school plans implemented by the protectorate resulted in a significant rise in the enrollment of children in schools. The number of students increased from 35,000 in 1945-1946 to 213,000 at the time of independence. This represents a growth rate of 19% per year, which is twice the rate observed between the two world wars (9% between 1919-1920 and 1944-1945).

Following Morocco's independence on March 2, 1956, the education system in the country continued to be strongly influenced by the political dominance of the former French colonial power (Elkhouzai et al., 2014). This is evidenced by the continued use of French as the medium of teaching in science, economics, and engineering and technology faculties in Moroccan universities (El et al., 2016). Simultaneously, Morocco implemented an educational system that aligned with its national cultural and economic objectives. The efforts focused on four key principles: generalization, Arabization, Moroccan identity, and unification/standardization, as well as providing tuition-free education. Generalization refers to the provision of education to all pupils in Morocco, regardless of their socioeconomic background, whilst Arabization intends to replace French with Arabic as the medium of teaching in all schools (Amghar, 2018). The emerging government implemented a linguistic policy with the aim of diminishing the predominant impact of French culture and language, and reinstating what was perceived as a Moroccan national identity. French education was perceived as a potential threat to the traditions and cohesion of the nation (Elboubekri, 1930). In 2016, King Mohamed VI formally ended the practice of Arabization and officially acknowledged the use of both Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and French in higher education within the public school system (Gonzalez-Calvillo, 2020).

Laroui, as cited by Moha Ennaji, classifies Arab intellectuals into three distinct types. Initially, there exist ulama and kiai who endeavor to enhance society while upholding the supremacy of Islamic ideology and principles. Furthermore, there exist liberal politicians who strive to modernize society through the adoption of Western standards, ideals, and political reforms. The third group consists of technocrats and intellectuals who have received a Western education and are not involved in politics.

They aim to enhance society by embracing socialist or Western ideas and employing rational thinking (Ennaji, 2009).

The nineteenth century witnessed a period of intense intellectual activity among professors and students studying at Moroccan mosque universities. Despite the growing participation of European powers in Morocco following the conflict of the 1830s and the worsening financial condition of the Moroccan state, madrasa education prospered and thrived due to reform initiatives. The reintroduction of mathematics, engineering, and astronomy as disciplines taught at Qarawiyyin occurred in the latter part of the nineteenth century. The Ulama and the government are leading the reform effort, with the goal of recommitting to the principles that contributed to the former greatness of Muslims. The ulama believed that Islamic civilization could be rejuvenated and adapt to European difficulties by individuals making personal efforts, engaging in *ijtihad* (independent reasoning), practicing discipline, and by implementing education and regulation. They also advocated for accepting beneficial contemporary inventions.

As stated by Helen N. Boyle and Abdenour Boukamhi, Wagner observed that Moroccan Islamic schools were generally disorganized in terms of administration before and during the French colonial period (1912-1956). These schools were typically funded and managed by community members and, in urban areas, by wealthy benefactors. These institutions are really community-oriented, addressing community needs and values while avoiding excessive centralization or bureaucracy (Boyle & Boukamhi, 2018). Within the institutional framework, the educational establishments that currently persist are *kuttabs*, madrasas, and mosque-universities. During the precolonial and colonial eras, *kuttabs*, which were present in both rural and urban areas, functioned as the primary educational establishments for children, often representing their sole exposure to formal education. The curriculum primarily focuses on rote memorization of the Koran. Madrasas and the majority of mosque-universities are often situated exclusively in urban areas. Madrasas typically cater to older children who have excelled in the *kuttab* or whose parents possess sufficient financial means to sustain their education. Madrasa students engage in a comprehensive curriculum that encompasses various disciplines such as grammar, *fiqh* (Islamic law), *tafsir* (Qur'anic interpretation), and more. University-mosques are educational institutions that provide advanced learning in courses taught in madrasas, as well as extra subjects such as philosophy and history (Boyle & Boukamhi, 2018).

According to a report by Asharq Alawsat newspaper, as cited by Helen N. Boyle and Abdenour Boukamhi, the Director of Traditional Education at the Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs (MERA), there are a total of 499 traditional Islamic schools in Morocco. Out of these,

68.47% are located in rural areas, as stated by an official from the Ministry of Statistics for the 2010-2011 school year. Among these, he stated that just five were fully sponsored and administered by the ministry, while the ministry granted funds and remuneration to students and teachers (respectively) from the remaining 156 schools. Additional educational institutions receive financial support from community benefactors. These schools bear resemblance to Catholic schools in the United States or Europe, for instance. Similar to such schools, the majority of traditional schools in Morocco are privately funded and administered. Regarding their geographical placement, 67% of these educational institutions are situated adjacent to mosques, while several classrooms suffer from inadequate access to water, basic sanitation, and electricity. The majority of individuals, over 80%, have access to a telephone line, and a smaller portion, 13%, possess Internet connectivity. According to Boyle and Boukamhi (2018), there are almost 30,000 pupils in total attending these 499 schools, with around 13% of them being girls.

In response to the devastating terrorist attack that caused the collapse of the World Trade Center twin buildings on September 9, 2001 in the United States, as well as the suicide bombing in Casablanca in 2003, the Moroccan government implemented stricter regulations on religious educational institutions. In 2002, a legislation was enacted to govern the administration of Islamic education. Since 2006, MEIA has endeavored to advance the national agenda. An executive council was established to reorganize the traditional education system in order to enhance its role in promoting and preserving the Arabic language, as well as strengthening the principles of the Maliki school of thought and Ash'ari dogma in Morocco. The primary objectives of the Council are as follows: (a) ensuring the administration of various conventional educational establishments nationwide; (b) developing novel educational methodologies for traditional educational levels; (c) ensuring compliance with traditional education laws and regulations; (d) granting operational permits to traditional educational institutions; (e) overseeing the management of traditional educational institutions to facilitate their adaptation to the country's social and economic progress while preserving the distinctiveness of such education; (f) establishing literacy programs in mosques; and (g) organizing training sessions for traditional education frameworks (Nyamsambu, 2020).

The Moroccan government's policy in 2009, concerning the National Education Emergency Support Program and Morocco's strategic vision (2015-2030), demonstrates Morocco's strong commitment to enhancing the education sector. This commitment aims to address internal challenges and enable Morocco to effectively compete on the global stage. However, schools affiliated with the Islamic religion or madrassas are primarily administered by darmawans or the commercial sector. The government's collaboration

with these schools is crucial in formulating programs to promote Islamic education. An effective approach involves the incorporation of scientific principles. Scientific studies necessitate reliance on theory. Hence, Islamic education methods must fulfill the following criteria: (a) The theory should establish a correlation between facts and existing phenomena; (b) The theory should construct a framework of classification and conceptual structure; (c) Theories should be interpreted as factual information; and (d) The theory should be capable of predicting facts and events (Nurdin, 2020). By employing this approach, Islamic education in Morocco will effectively fulfill the requirements of the professional world.

### **Conclusion**

Presently, the education policy in Morocco primarily emphasizes science education in order to fulfill the requirements of the government. Hence, the government formulated a strategic blueprint for Morocco (2015-2030) with the aim of enhancing the well-being of its citizens. Nevertheless, Islamic schools or madrasas have faced challenges in terms of competitiveness due to their predominantly rural locations and independent or private management. The government plays a crucial role in promoting these schools to ensure their ability to effectively compete with public schools, particularly in the realm of science.

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### **Ethical Considerations**

The sources of this research—articles, books, research papers, and scientific forum proceedings—are all free of copyright violations.

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