



Research Article

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Rethinking Education Reform in Morocco Beyond the Imperatives of Determinism

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Abstract

The deterministic tradition abides by the principles of intuitionistic logic, in which the current state of all systems is determined by prior versions of what they are. Systemic determinism, where the present simultaneously substantiates pre-existing conditions and predicts imminent realities, has long championed the logic of the natural sciences, providing substance and legitimacy for an infallible cause-effect agency. Advocacy for deterministic agency is well sensed in the organization and administration of education. Many educational reforms are conceived with practices that espouse the logic of linear progression. The intent of this paper is to interrogate the legitimacy of the deterministic approach to educational reform in Morocco against its capacity to predict change. In particular, the outputs from five educational reforms carried out in Morocco over the 1999-2022 period were subjected to content analysis for obtaining data on the statistical distribution of changes in relation to three research dimensions: access to primary education, adult literacy and gender equality. In a later stage, the outputs from the quantitative analysis were optimized to enable inferential modes of analysis. The findings from this study revealed that systemic determinism is incapacitated by the principle of cause-effect agency that hyperbolizes the influences of the past on the imperatives of the present.

Keywords: determinism, education, illiteracy, literacy, Morocco, quality

1. Introduction

Determinism is a philosophical tradition that has evolved so much over time, showing resilience to rival philosophical stands on the nature of the human condition (Von Wright, 1974). The deterministic tradition has its roots in pre-Socratic philosophy. The stoics are amongst the first to abide by the logic of determinism; stoicism feeds from the stoicist thinking without being reciprocal with the deterministic theory. While stoicism concerns itself with the virtues of ethics and the provisions of logic as parts of a coherent whole, determinism yields itself to broader concerns. The deterministic philosophy is presented with multiple affordances that are perceptible in a diverse range of intellectual traditions. It is, therefore, more sensible to think of determinism as a philosophical paradigm that has long served the intent of scientific research, providing context and content for emerging patterns of thought touching upon the nature of the human condition. The educational context is not immune from the influences of the deterministic tradition. Many reforms in education feed from the teachings of causal determinism as they stand dependently of the logic of linear agency, showing advocacy for the automaticity of response associated with past practices.

This paper posits that different education reforms in Morocco have been shaped by the deterministic epistemology. Morchid (2020, p. 54) assumes that “a reform in education is governed by the same logic that applies to transformation in general, which stipulates an active process of making change.” Transformation is an inevitable and a necessary condition for all processes that seek refined versions of preexisting products. As legitimate as it might be, the transformation process in an education reform cannot connect the preexisting causes to their consequences in the present, and even less when it comes to predicting the course of change. An education reform does not necessarily commit itself to the principle of causal agency as manifested in the deterministic tradition. The intent from education reforms belongs beyond and above the obligations the past has towards the present. An education system in any given context, be it the Moroccan context or any other context, is in congruence with the needs of the present. When hyperbolizing the influences from past education reforms and assuming unconditional reciprocity between a present educational reform and its histology, we perjure the act of reforming in its entirety. This paper is set up to interrogate the legitimacy of educational reforms when shaped by the logic of causal determinism.

This paper does not intend to root out potential inaccuracies in the deterministic tradition; neither does it seek advocacy for rival epistemologies. Instead, the emphasis in this paper is on the assumed reciprocity between causal determinism and the frameworks by which educational reforms are shaped and operationalized in Morocco. Two hypotheses are formulated to investigate the correspondence, also referred to in this paper as agency, between educational reforms that are chronologically connected

- Education reforms in Morocco are shaped by the logic of causal determinism.
- The agency in education reforms is not exclusive to the imperatives of causal

determinism.

1.1 Morocco's post-independence educational movement

The first years that followed Morocco's independence in 1956 posed a lot of challenges as the country was confronted to the challenge of setting up and structuring its state institutions (Ennaji, 2005). Quality education was amongst the most pressing needs of the Moroccan population. The building up of a viable system of education was a necessary condition for the rebirth of a self-sustaining nation. Eventually, starting from the year 1956, Morocco launched many policy initiatives to theorize then implement a national system of education that is free of the colonial sequel and suggestive of the Moroccan identity. Back then, the idea was not to reform education in the country more than to set up the imperatives of a self-sustaining education system with a coherent legal and administrative framework. During the two decades that followed Morocco's independence, many resources were mobilized for combating illiteracy among Moroccans. As frightening as it might seem, when 92% of the population is illiterate, there is not much potential to exploit for sustaining development. That was the case of Morocco in the mid-1950. It took Morocco two decade before it could start an education reform in its most legitimate sense. The Arabization movement was presumably the first fully-fledged education reform in Morocco as it clearly sought to cut off ties with the colonial era. The issue with the Arabisation movement was that it could not synchronise with an equally important role played by Moroccans in restructuring their education system according to the premises of the Moroccan identity. While attractive as a token of autonomy, the Arabisation movement remained a premature political decision swayed away by hyperbolized expectations. It is essential to know that the years that marked the Arabisation movement accentuated the divide between the imperatives of identity building and the requirements for quality education. Sequel to the Arabization movement was another education reform intended for updating the national profile of the education system in Morocco. The Moroccanization of education was planned over a five-year period, 1973-1978, during which Morocco managed to democratize access to education in rural areas and decrease its dependency on foreign education professionals. Another landmark that followed Morocco's independence and marked the country's struggle with quality education was the setting up of the Higher Counsel of Education, which has been entrusted with the task of regulating and updating the practice of national education in Morocco.

1.2 The National Charter for Education and Training

Over the period 1956-1999, several reform initiatives were introduced to foster the quality of education in Morocco (Marley, 2004). The year 2009 was a ground-breaking and historic year as Morocco achieved a major break-through in setting up one of the

most consequential education reforms in Morocco's history. Back then, decision-makers at the highest political level in Morocco turned their attention to the immediate stakes of a less deserving system of education. In his Throne Speech of March 03rd, 1999, King Hassan II was explicit about the shortcomings of the Moroccan educational system and all the prejudice it caused to the prospects of quality education nationwide. King Hassan II also mandated and instructed the Special Commission of Education and Training to elaborate plans for a ten-year education reform. The outputs of this commission were shaped as the National Charter for Education and Training. This charter was aimed at rebuilding the social trust in national education by implementing long-term plans for better accommodation of the imperatives of quality education. The priorities of the National Charter for Education and Training went towards producing an updated system of education at the organizational and pedagogical level. On the pedagogical side, many changes were applied from syllabus design to curriculum development guaranteeing more learner-centeredness and student-autonomy. The charter was also aimed at reorganizing the practice of national education as a means of mass orientation by fostering the prospects of academic and professional growth for future generations. The decentralization of education was the distinguishing feature of the organizational process by means of which Morocco managed to devolve decision making to lower-level administrations and adopt a participatory approach to the overall management of education.

1.3 The National Emergency Education Plan

Sequel to Morocco's decade of education reform, the Moroccan educational scene was again diagnosed with many discrepancies with the capacity to jeopardize the effective practice and management of education nationwide (African Development Bank, 2009). Back then, the most logical reaction to a disoriented system of education was to launch another reform initiative with the capacity to capitalize on what had been achieved from prior education reforms. The education reform was presented as the National Emergency Education Plan, which was considered as a necessary last resort plan to avoid further collapse of the educational system of Morocco. New momentum had to be injected to the process of education in Morocco with a budget of 373 MAD, approximately 3.5 billion \$. The budget Morocco allotted to its education emergency plan was huge and unprecedented and so were the overall expectations. Through the National Emergency Education Plan, Morocco targeted the consolidation of its education infrastructure. Hundreds of primary schools, secondary schools and boarding schools had to be built in rural areas to democratize access to education. There was also a particular interest in diversifying the career paths for vocational education. Throughout the National Emergency Education plan, Morocco managed to adopt a more complete approach to education reform by seeking out the cohesion of quantity and quality into a coherent whole. Solid education infrastructure was made the precondition

for consistent quality in performance.

1.4 The Education Action Plan

Over the four-year period of its rule over the Moroccan educational scene, the National Emergency Education Plan threw in the towel and just left before showing the strength of its soul. Again, the Moroccan educational system was diagnosed with many incoherencies that would cause quality education a lot of prejudice. Back then, to respond to the critical situation of the education system of the country, Morocco did what it does best and a new reform was shaped to get national education on track. The Education Action Plan saw the light in 2013 and, like its predecessor, was planned over a four-year period (UNESCO, 2015). Driven by the same vision of a more equitable system of education, the Education Action Plan managed to target goal areas featuring the imperatives of quality education. Most specifically, this latest reform was after better accommodation of equity and equality in education, the democratization of access to education and the reduction of adult basic literacy. These were the predominant themes of the Education Action Plan, which were not new to the Moroccan educational context but extensions to existing models of development.

1.5 The Strategic Vision for the Moroccan School Reform

History keeps repeating itself when it comes to reforming education in Morocco. The fact is that Morocco has been planning and implementing education reforms one after the other with no waiting time. The life cycle of the Education Action Plan was not fully staged, and still there was a call for a more ambitious approach to the practice of education reform in Morocco. This is how the Strategic Vision for the Moroccan School Reform emerged in an educational context that was still struggling with many unresolved incoherencies from past reform initiatives (Kingdom of Morocco, 2015). Planned over a fifteen-year period, the new vision of reform came to manage an education crisis that had existed for far too long. The goal areas of this new reform were not new; the reformers were still after the same platitudes of quality education in terms of education equity, educational efficiency, gender parity, child literacy and adult literacy. The distinguishing feature of the Strategic Vision for the Moroccan School Reform, besides its fifteen-year life span period, is that it adopts a holistic approach to the process of education reform. Educational reform and social reform were merged into a coherent whole and made the precondition for quality education, which is itself a sine qua non for sustainable development. Most specifically, the reformers managed to rebuild the Moroccan school by renewing the source codes for its organisational, pedagogical and institutional structures. Sustainability in education was accommodated through the diversification of streams in higher education institutions and the creation of new schools for vocational training and technical education.

2. Methodology

In the current study, descriptive content analysis was deployed in the estimation of five Moroccan education reforms: Morocco's post-independence educational movement, The National Charter for Education and Training, The National Emergency Education Plan, The Education Action Plan and The Strategic Vision for the Moroccan School Reform. It should be noted that the primary data for this study comprised national and international evaluation reports of education in Morocco, carried out by the Moroccan High Council of Education, Training and Scientific Research, UNESCO, World Bank, and African Development Bank from 1956 to 2022. After careful inspection of the dataset, the relevant aspects of the data were singled out and formulated as research dimensions for the hypothesised connections in this study. Most specifically, the dataset was content analysed for the following dimensions:

- Access to primary education
- Adult basic literacy
- Gender parity

The abovementioned dimensions are not exclusive to the architecture of quality education in the Moroccan educational context. The imperatives of quality education vary in scope and focus. As noted earlier in this paper, the aim of the study is not to probe the determinants of quality in the Moroccan educational system but to estimate the deterministic tradition in education against its capacity to predict change. The constructs under investigation in this study, also referred to as research dimensions, lend themselves to the quantitative tradition in research by means of which the agency in the deterministic tradition could be estimated.

Content analysis is an established research method with the capacity to reconcile competing traditions in research (Neuendorf, 2017). The fact is that content analysis is found compatible with both quantitative and qualitative research designs because it offers the means for textual and visual analysis by means of statistical and interpretive modes of scrutiny. Unlike conventional content analysis under quantitative and qualitative paradigms, the current study deploys statistical content analysis as research design rather than an instrument of data analysis. For this same reason, coding was not considered for data collection. The process of research in this study did not call for themes or categories unknown to the researcher prior to the act of research. The research dimensions in the current study are cluster concepts that were operationalized to track the hypothesised connections in this study.

2.1 *Adult basic literacy*

Adult basic literacy is a research dimension in the current study and an important facet of quality education. Adult basic literacy designates the capacity of fifteen-year-olds and more to decode and make sense of printed and written content along with the capacity

to interpret numeric figures (Keefe & Copeland, 2011). It is not a secret that within every plan for sustainable development, adult basic literacy plays a central part. This is so because human capital is an enabling factor in the context of national development planning. The achievement of adult basic literacy in Morocco has been a goal area for all education reforms starting from 1956. The background assumption in the current study is that the achievement of adult basic literacy associates with the deterministic tradition in that it commits itself to the principle of causal agency. Whilst, in fact, causal agency on its own cannot predict change independently of contextual factors that are simultaneously qualitative and quantitative. As highlighted in table 1, the first endeavours to fight illiteracy date back to the first years that followed Morocco's independence when illiteracy rates were as high as 87% in 1960. Back then, policy initiatives were geared towards quantitative design components targeting steady increases in literacy rates. In the broadest sense of it, the idea is to control all the variables in a given experiment and compute all causal and correlational relations. Then, the odds for predicting change and transformation will be quasi-flawless, and this is the essence of causal determinism. The issue with determinism is that it does not reciprocate with the essence of education reform, which is qualitative in nature. Evidence of that is the discrepancy in the projections about literacy eradication among adults. The annual change rate moved from 12% in 1971 to -1.84 in 2018. This finding defeats the logic in causal agency under the premise of quantitative design, and calls for a broader perspective on the imperatives of adult basic literacy that are fast evolving and not necessarily predetermined.

Table 1: Adult literacy rates in Morocco, based on data by ANLCA (2022)

Year	Literacy rate	Annual change
2018	73.75%	-1.84
2014	75.59%	6.16
2012	69.43%	2.34
2011	67.08%	11.00
2009	56.08%	0.94
2008	55.15%	2.84
2004	52.31%	10.71
1994	41.59%	11.34
1982	30.26	11.34
1971	25%	12%
1960	13%	---

2.2 Access to primary education

Besides being an important research dimension in the current study, access to primary education is an instigator of positive change and a catalyst for long-term development (UNESCO, 2015). In Morocco, access to primary education has always been considered an issue of public order and national security. Sequel to Morocco's independence in

1956, the country was confronted to the challenge of empowering an already vulnerable multicultural population that was still struggling with the sequels of colonisation. Back then, the Moroccan population was quasi-illiterate and the percentages of enrolment in Primary schools were nothing but warning flags that simultaneously emphasise the vulnerability of the existing social structures in Morocco, and announce a long journey of reform towards growth and prosperity. The deterministic tradition with regard to access to primary education was captured from the lens of gross enrolment ration rather net enrolment ratio. It should be noted that the former differs from the latter in that it captures the over all accessibility of education to children of all ages (Hill & King, 1995). For this same reason, the gross enrolment ratio can go beyond 100% because it comprises cases of students who are older than the target population for the distinct educational level or levels under scrutiny. Gross enrolment ratio is also widely used amongst education organisations, among which United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, because it is data centred and inclusive of all variables with the capacity to inform on distinct research programmes. The use of gross enrolment ratio is also justified by the absence of data respective and exclusive to enrolment rates for a distinct population of an age group.

The deterministic tradition in fostering access to primary education requires a quantitative approach centred on causal agencies that connect the preconditions of change to their imminent realisations in a given context of linear progression. Designed to cater for the requirements for full access to primary education, all Moroccan education reforms over seven decades managed to quantify and benchmark the education infrastructures and resources needed for stirring the desired change in the Moroccan educational system. Statistical evidence from Morocco' s gross enrolment ratio concerning primary school demonstrates how the current state of access to primary education after every education reform would fail the projections made about the annual changes. The realities surrounding accessibility to primary education are not necessarily contained in the preordained factors of change and their respective numeric values. As highlighted in in figure 1, gross enrolment rates could not match the projections as they dropped from 87.44 in 1983 to 63.93 in 1991. The annual changes in gross enrolment ratio dropped by 23,51 over 8 years. This finding defeats the purpose from causal agency and signals the discrepancies in systemic determinism. There are always intervening factors of a qualitative nature that obstruct the deterministic tradition when confronted to constructs of a social and cultural order.



Figure 1: School enrolment ration for primary school in Morocco (The World Bank, 2022)

2.3 Gender Equality

Gender parity is not only an enabling factor of quality education, but it is also an important thematic of the human condition. The right to education is an obligation of all world governments to their respective communities. This same right is based on consensus of opinion and articulated by uncompromised devotion to equality between males and females in all aspects of their lives. Though centered on the provisions of the Moroccan educational system and its capacity to offer women and men the same educational opportunities, the gender parity dimension in this study attracts meanings from without that are historically, socially and culturally constructed. When referring to the barriers that keep females and males from having equal opportunities for educational development, we need to distinguish between factors that are qualitative in nature and factors that are quantitative. The qualitative factors are deeply rooted in the functional and organizational structures of society as they shape and model the public taste for ethics and compliance. The quantitative factors, on the other hand, are in symbiosis with measurable data about the manifested characteristics of people. They easily lend themselves to statistical analyses where they can be single-handedly analyzed. All endeavors for substantiating gender equality the world over target quantitative goal areas and qualitative goal areas. The estimation of quantitative goal areas requires instruments of evaluation that are inherently structural. The gender parity index is typical of the quantitative tradition in appraising current states of the gender construct in education reform. Most specifically, the gender parity index is a means to statistically contrast males' access to education to females' access to education. A gender parity index that equals 0% designates absolute disparity between males and females; a gender parity index of 1% is suggestive of perfect parity between the two genders, a gender parity index above 1% disparity is in favor of females (Schwab *et al.*, 2017). As for the qualitative part in the estimation of gender equality, statistical indices of estimation are not an option because the focus is on the quality dimension in

gender equality and this particular dimension requires interpretive modes of enquiry.

As noted earlier in this paper, the current study attempts to estimate the deterministic tradition in Moroccan education reforms against its capacity to predict and yield positive change. Interpretive modes of estimation were discarded because they go counter the essence of determinism which is axed around causal agency of numerical nature. The gender parity index was used to track causal agencies in the values of gender parity. As shown in table 2, the linear progression in the values corresponding to gender parity are not flawed by instances of regression, which gave evidence of the capacity of determinism to predict and ensure sustainability in achieving gender parity in education.

Table 2: Gender parity Index in Morocco

Year	Parity Index
2020	0.97
2019	0.97
2018	0.96
2017	0.96
2016	0.95
2015	0.95
2014	0.96
2013	0.96
2012	0.95
2011	0.95
2010	0.94
2009	0.93
2008	0.92
2007	0.91
2006	0.91
2005	0.91
2004	0.91
2003	0.91
2002	0.90
2001	0.88
2000	0.85
1999	0.82
1998	0.79
1997	0.77
1996	0.75

3. Conclusion

The current study was aimed at estimating the agency between the deterministic worldview and the logic by which education reforms are shaped in Morocco. The evaluation process was axed around three dimensions: access to primary education, adult basic literacy and gender equality. There was evidence of the incapacity of adult basic literacy to predict sustainable positive change in the rates of illiteracy amongst the

adult population in Morocco. In this regard, the deterministic tradition is not only incapacitated by statistical discrepancies but by the omission of contextual factors of a qualitative order. The literacy construct needs to be constantly operationalized so that it can be inclusive of emerging literacies that are equally consequential in the Moroccan educational scene. In addition, adult literacy cannot be single-handedly assessed, independently of other factors that are in direct correlation with the affordances of literacy amongst adults. Population growth, for instance, is an important variable that exerts a lot of influence on literacy rates. As for the second research dimension in this study, it should be noted that access to primary education is not ubiquitously the function of the numbers that associate with infrastructure and human resource. There exist a whole range of variables that interfere with the normative authority of numbers in this regard. Cultural issues of a qualitative character need to be considered in all endeavors targeting the democratization of access to primary education. Gender equality is the third research dimension in this study and there was evidence of its susceptibility to positively react to the deterministic tradition. Still the reciprocity between gender equality and determinism is only valid when approached from a quantitative perspective, whilst there more to gender equality than the provisions of the gender parity index. Gender equality is a multidimensional construct that is logically defiant of the authority of numbers and necessarily qualitative in its essence.

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