

IS PRIVATIZATION OF EDUCATION BENEFICIAL FOR MOROCCO?
Evaluation of Morocco's privatization policy on the basis of a cross-sectional study of
quality of education in public and private schools in Casablanca

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Master's Thesis

Political Sciences

**Department of Social Sciences
and Philosophy**

University of Jyväskylä

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SUMMARY

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The aim of this thesis was to evaluate Morocco's privatization policy based on the opinions of final-year high-school students ($n = 103$) that were studying in either public or private schools. This was examined using a cross-sectional study design in which a structured, Likert scale questionnaire was administered at a night school in Casablanca, Morocco, where high-school students can take extra classes in preparation for their final year exam. The results were analyzed quantitatively by comparing the group means with an independent samples t-test, using an alpha level of 0.05.

The results of the study indicated that socioeconomic status was significantly higher for students studying in private schools. There were some significant differences in items related to school environment, policy environment and effectiveness of teaching with one item favoring private schools and two items favoring public schools. However, there were no significant differences between public and private schools in items regarding equality, home and community environment and cultural contexts.

Considering the significant results were slightly in favor of public schools and that three-quarters of the averages were higher for public school students, it appears that the quality of education may be similar for both public and private schools in Morocco. However, due to this study having been conducted in just one school in Casablanca and the fact that student satisfaction was the only measure of quality of education, the results should be interpreted cautiously. However, this raises the concern that more information is needed to draw reliable conclusions about whether Morocco should continue with the current aggressive privatization policy of education. For now, the policy of increasing privatization in Morocco and other low-income countries should be reconsidered until more is known about its impact on quality and equality of education.

Key words: education, public, private, privatization, Morocco, policy

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1 INTRODUCTION

The education system in Morocco is facing considerable difficulties. In 2013, king Mohammed VI of Morocco stated that the education system is currently worse than it was 20 years ago (Agence Marocaine de Presse 2013). Indeed, illiteracy rate in Morocco is 33% (Unicef 2013) and there appears to be considerable inequality in education. In 2011, there was a very large difference in reaching minimum learning standard in reading between the rural poor (36%) and the urban rich (78%) populations (UNESCO 2015).

The privatization of schooling in Morocco has gradually increased although its impact on the education system is yet unknown. Privatization has been promoted with tax incentives, private funds and laws that give more freedom to private institutions, and it has been targeted particularly at the primary school level (GI-ESCR 2013, Aubry et al. 2013). In fact, private enrollment has more than tripled between 1999 and 2012, from 4 to 13% at the primary school level (Fig. 1). At this rate of development, it has been estimated that more than 50% of primary school students could be enrolled in private schools in 2030 (GI-ESCR 2014). For instance, the government set a goal of training 20% of pupils in private primary and secondary schools by 2010 (Aubry et al. 2013). This appears to be in contrast with the fact that Morocco has ratified the convention on the right of the child in 1993 that recognizes the equal right to education to all children (articles 28 and 29) (United Nations 1989). The former UN Special Rapporteur on the right to Education stated in the country report on Morocco in 2006 that “The state party has a two speed education system with a striking difference in level between public and private education which denies equal opportunities to low income sectors of society” (GI-ESCR 2013). This is in agreement with the results of a study done by the Moroccan coalition on Education for All and the Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (GI-ESCR) which indicated that privatization increases inequality between the rich and the poor. In fact, privatization targets rich urban households and is therefore likely to benefit mainly the elite but not those with low socioeconomic status (Aubry et al. 2013). It appears that the government of Morocco has not taken these issues into consideration in their privatization policy.

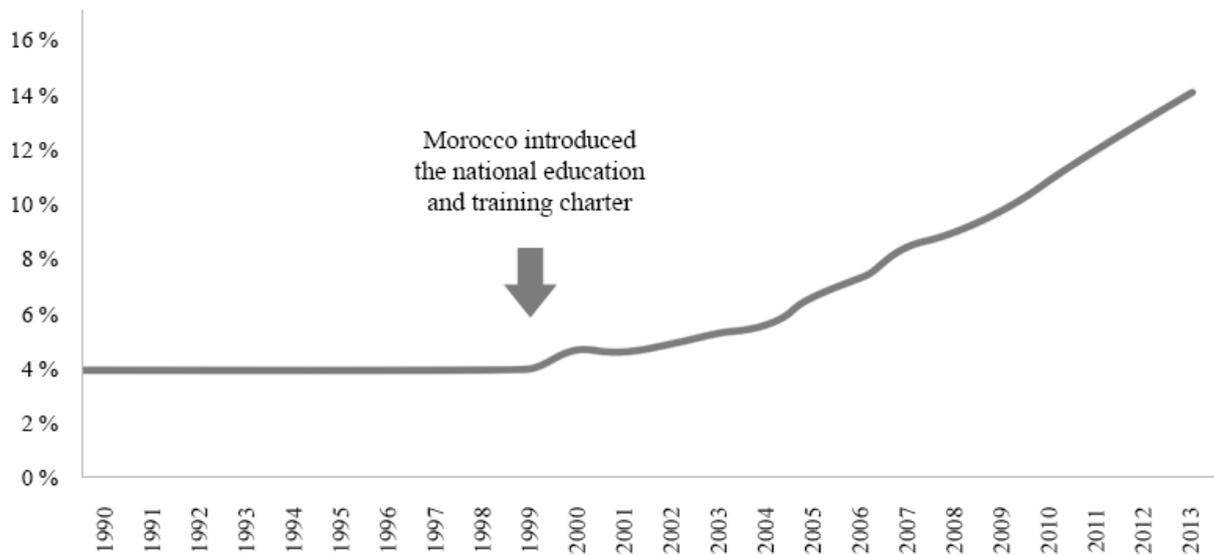


Figure 1. Proportion of private primary schools in Morocco between 1999 and 2012.

In Morocco, private schooling is generally considered to provide higher quality education compared to public schools (Touahri 2006; Khouya 2012). This is often used as an argument to encourage privatization of education, however, there is no research to support this claim. This research aims to address this gap by exploring the experiences of students about the quality of education in public and private schools. Therefore, the objective of the study is to answer the research question “is the quality of education different between public and private schools in Morocco, according to students who have studied either in public or private schools?” To answer the research question, high school students, from both public and private school backgrounds were asked on how they view the quality of education in their school. The data were collected using a questionnaire and the difference between groups was analyzed quantitatively. It was hypothesized that the students with a private school background would rate the quality of education higher. This study was used to provide one of the missing pieces of information when assessing the feasibility of the privatization policy of Morocco. The implications of the findings on the current policy are also discussed.

I chose this topic for the master’s thesis out of interest in reducing inequality worldwide. It appears that privatization is being promoted in all developing countries which may be partly due to it being a condition for loans from the World Bank. However, people should have an equal right to education and therefore, from an ethical perspective, education should remain free for everyone. Approximately 15% of the population of Morocco, that is,

five million people, live below the poverty line (Central Intelligence Agency 2007). In addition, approximately one-third of the population, some ten million people, are illiterate (Central Intelligence Agency 2015). To put this in perspective, this is more than the population of Finland. All this adds to the already significant amount of inequality in Morocco, and privatization is likely to make it worse. By encouraging privatization of education the state appears to be letting go of one its major responsibilities, that is, to provide a good quality education equally to every Moroccan child.

The schooling system, privatization of education and the political debate about privatization in Morocco are introduced in the background chapter. This is followed by introduction to how quality of education can be studied and what models have been developed so far in order to understand better which aspects of education need to be considered when studying the quality of education. The methodology used for this study is outlined in the methods chapter, followed by the results of this study and discussion and implications of the results.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Privatization of Education

Education is a fundamental human right and in most countries, an obligation. In the universal declaration of human rights, it states that education should be compulsory and free for everyone at least in the fundamental stages and professional education should be equally accessible for everyone, based on the student's previous schooling performance (UN General Assembly 1948). This right for free and equal education has been challenged by private education that is neither free nor equally available. As education has a great impact on the future of the students since school is the only institution that all members of a society must attend, private educational institutions and the policies that aim to increase privatization of education have a great potential of increasing inequality in the world (Robertson & Dales 2013). Moreover, as one of the greatest benefits of privatization is savings in government's funds, privatization is the most lucrative to developing countries - countries that are already facing the largest problems in inequality.

2.1.1 What is Privatization

Privatization is a policy tool that in the field of education refers to educational programs and policies that aim to transfer schooling from governments to private institutions. It is often hidden purposely from the public by using other terms than privatization. Moreover, the consequences of privatization are not known well which is why these policies are not debated publicly in many countries (Ball & Youdell 2008).

All areas of education may be privatized, such as organization, financing, management, creating educational material and teaching. That is, privatization does not necessarily require full private control of schooling but the responsibilities may be shared with the government (Cuéllar-Marchelli 2003; Belfield & Levin 2002; Ball & Youdell 2008). In fact, in Netherlands and Denmark, for instance, the governments have strictly specified the curriculum and study materials that private schools need to use, in order to ensure a certain level of quality in their education (Belfield & Levin 2002). Privatization can also be classified into two categories: endogenous and exogenous privatization. The widespread, endogenous privatization involves taking ideas, techniques and practices from the private

sector to public sector, in order to make the public services act more like businesses with commercial interests. The newer but quickly growing, exogenous privatization, on the other hand, refers to making it possible for private institutions to provide some or all of the aspects of public education, such as designing, managing or delivering the education, in order to create business-type competition in the field. However, these forms are usually not clearly separated from each other and often the exogenous form follow endogenous privatization. However, there is no research to show whether endogenous or exogenous privatization results in better outcomes for students (Ball & Youdell 2008).

Often when speaking about privatization of education, the term social justice is frequently mentioned. Social justice in education refers to how equally the education services are distributed, how similar the service type and quality is in different areas and how equally the services affect the society over time. Social justice ties in with education governance, i.e. who govern the field of education, how they carry out the governance and how it could be improved. Better social justice is expected to be achieved through better mutual responsibility between all actors in the field of education, such as private and public educational institutions (Robertson & Dale 2013).

According to the late American economist Milton Friedman, privatization could radically reconstruct the education system and thereby solve the deterioration of schooling by decentralizing the current system, in which the power has been transferred from the local community to the federal government (Friedman 1997). Others also believe that public services are unable to answer the demands of education because the services are based on excessively large and rigid organizations that are too costly and unclear on how they spend their public funds (Cuéllar-Marchelli 2003). Recently, privatization has gained popularity all around the world and the education system has been under an especially large amount of pressure to be privatized due to its extremely high expenditures (Belfield & Levin 2002; Geo-Jaja 2004).

2.1.2 Privatization and neoliberalism

Neo-liberalism started in the 1980s from the “small state alongside a free market” approaches to public services and is now the dominant approach to education around the world (Ball & Youdell 2008). Privatization is based on neoliberalism, i.e. the idea of

shifting goods and services from public sector to the private sector and deregulating how private service providers can operate. Neoliberalism targets all functions of the public sector, such as health, education and social welfare and promotes free market competition in all of these endeavours. The philosophy behind neoliberalism is that the government has too much power over the individual and the society and the power should be decentralized to increase people's freedom and the efficiency of producing goods and services (Hursh 2007; Robertson & Dales 2013). Neoliberals believe this approach will result in better education for all (Hursh 2007). The goal of neoliberals is to turn the educational system into markets and privatize the services in the field of education (Johnson & Salle 2004). The proponents of neoliberalism believe that private institutions must deliver high quality, effective and efficient education as the institutions would not otherwise survive in the free market (Robertson & Dales 2013).

One of the most notable supporters of neoliberalism in education, the World Bank, has pressured countries like Chile and Mexico to increase privatization in order to facilitate payback of their debts. The World Bank also sponsored the 1980s Washington Consensus for middle and low-income countries which aimed to decrease the role of the state and increase the role of private institutions (Lakes & Carter 2011).

However, neoliberal policies have been criticized for placing little emphasis on equal opportunities and treatment of individuals as well as adequate social welfare. Those who oppose neoliberalism have said it reproduces social-class disparities and maintains hegemonic power (Hursh 2007). In educational reforms in Chile, Mexico and United States, neoliberal educational policies appear to have caused increased segregation based on the student's' social class and race as well as reduced emphasis on local cultural issues (Lakes & Carter 2011). Many also believe that private education is not only about the quality education but social status as a consequence of being able to attend a privileged institution (Connell 2013, p. 3).

2.1.3 The World Bank and the privatization of education

The World Bank is the largest international provider of development finance and consequently, one of the most powerful influencers of education development in low-income countries. This is surprising for an institution that initially had no involvement in

the field of education. The involvement of the World Bank in education and in supporting its privatization began in the 1980's when lending to low-income countries was becoming hard to justify as these countries were accumulating debts but not paying them off at a sufficient rate. As advised by the government of the United States and the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank started supporting the restructuring of national economies and governments of low-income countries to reduce their expenditures. One of their primary methods was reducing public spending by privatizing public utilities. As education is one of the largest expenditures of the public sector, it became one of the World Bank's main concerns (Mundy & Verger 2015).

The World Bank hired the economist George Psacharopoulos, who, for the first time in the field of education, had developed a technique to estimate the cost to benefit ratio of education. Consequently, as privatization was estimated to be more cost-efficient than public schooling in primary schools and higher education, the World Bank started encouraging privatization to low-income countries by giving advice about loan schemes, tax cuts and restructuring the education sector. The restructuring was also enforced by the education liberalization agenda (Edlib) which consisted of having education policy conditionalities with the loans. These included, for instance, reducing financial aid to tertiary level education and introducing student fees as well as hiring contract teachers in primary and high schools. Moreover, the World Bank reduced investments on secondary vocational schools and adult education and started favoring less formal vocational training instead. The countries that borrowed for the World Bank were not able to oppose these conditions as they desperately needed the loans. As a response, the UN organizations pressured the World Bank to implement a more humane approach. The World Bank responded by stating that they are going to focus on services, primary education, that benefit primarily the poor. They also gained further legitimacy by hosting the World Conference on Education for All in 1990, with UNICEF and UNESCO. However, this had little impact on their policy to reduce the size of the public sector and make it more efficient but helped to avoid the use of the word privatization or terms related to financial gain (Mundy & Verger 2015).

The World Bank's policies remained unchanged until 2001 when they were pressured by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the United States to change their policies on parental financial contributions to primary schooling and user fees. The NGOs started

international campaigns to stop user fees in education and health which made the US congress to pass a bill requiring the US treasury to demand the CEO of the World Bank to remove user fees from education and health. Consequently, the World Bank removed the user fees and started to promote this in low-income countries in cooperation with UNICEF (Mundy & Verger 2015).

Regardless of the international pressure from NGOs and the countries that borrow from the World Bank, privatization policies are still present and the most strongly implemented in the newest education projects funded by the World Bank or international aid (Ball & Youdell 2008). In 2006, 18 out of 20 countries that had borrowed from the World Bank and the IMF had had privatization as a condition for the loan (Emmett 2006 p. 11).

2.1.4 Advantages of privatization

The reasons privatization has gained popularity have been hypothesized to be mainly related to government's' financial interests as well as children's' parents' views about the quality of education in private schools (Dash 2009). Moreover, it is generally thought that in a private school, the teachers are accountable to their superiors and the parents of the children. Therefore, the teachers are expected to be more motivated to teach well as they might be expected to be fired in case the parents are unhappy with the education. In the public sector, the situation is the contrary as the teachers have permanent jobs and they are not judged based on their performance (Dixon & Tooley 2006). This problem is accentuated in developing countries. Public schools are considered to be completely unresponsive, especially when the children's' parents are poor (Watkins, 2004, p. 10).

Education is a tremendous investment as most governments provide it for all of their citizens. To make matters more challenging, there is no or little direct financial return on this investment. To illustrate the expense, education has been estimated to cost approximately two trillion dollars per year, globally. However, this burden is alleviated by private spending that in developing countries accounts for approximately 25% of the total expenditure in education. Therefore, it is easy to see why governments might be interested in privatizing the education system. With privatization; the quality of education is expected to increase while the expenditures are expected to decrease, in part because of the reduced portion of public education and in part because of more efficient spending. As developing countries have the greatest need to expand their education systems and minimize

government expenditure, it is not surprising that they already offer approximately twice as much private education than developed countries and are interested in increasing this proportion. The market for private education is also open to foreign institutions which are already operating in many developing countries (Patrinos 2000).

2.1.5 Criticism of Privatization

Privatization is not without concerns. It has been criticized for having the potential to cause inequality by not providing equal opportunities for the poor or otherwise disadvantaged populations. On the other hand, it has been proposed that public schooling would be able to reduce inequality and give more opportunities for the poor (Burnett 1996, p. 217; Geo-Jaja, 2004).

Low-income families appear to be less aware of the differences in quality of education than middle and high-class families (Patrinos 2000). On the other hand, those who realize the value of high quality education may have too low income to fund their children's studies. That is, while governments can reduce their spending on education, parents need to increase it. Low-income families often lack the finances to cover the costs of the education that, as at the government level, does not return anything on the investment in a long time (Geo-Jaja, 2004). Low-income families often solve this challenge by providing education only for one of the children, usually a boy, or cease the studies when finances do not allow it anymore. It has been hypothesized that privatization may not even improve the performance of the education in North Africa. While in public education system there are few schools, in the private system there would be more schools but few children to attend them, due to financial challenges (Akkari 2004). To overcome this issue, private schools are offering high tuition fee schools for the upper class and low tuition fee schools for the disadvantaged. This has been criticized for carrying some of the same concerns as current public education regarding equity, accountability and the poor not having the same opportunities as the rich (Geo-Jaja 2004).

Some have criticized privatization for having a potentially negative impact on the values of educational institutions. Instead of education being a shared resource that the state is responsible for delivering to its citizens, it is seen as transforming into a product that is sold to citizens that want to do well in life. There is also a concern that private institutions

may be used by corporations as vessels for marketing commercial products. While this has been argued to not be possible if government regulates the private institutions properly, making comprehensive, legally binding contracts has proven to be difficult (Ball & Youdell 2008). Financial motives are expected to complicate decision-making regarding education also in matters that the government cannot control.

Also the quality of education in private institutions has received criticism. The quality may be compromised since the main motivation of the institutions is profit. There is some empirical evidence to support this concern, as for-profit charter schools were found to reduce services to challenging students to minimize costs (Robertson & Dale 2013). Although charter schools are funded with tax money and run by teachers and parents, they do not have to comply with the rules of the state.

2.1.6 Impact of privatization

There is little information about the impact of privatization of education in low-income countries. Most of the information is based on theoretical situations and large, high-quality studies have not been conducted. Therefore, currently the impact of privatization may only be hypothesized.

Bearing in mind that the goal of privatization is to increase competition between educational institutions and thereby increase their efficiency and quality, there needs to be a sufficient amount of competition and therefore, a chance for a school to go bankrupt if they do not provide a good enough quality service. However, in the field of education, all schools are not in a competition with each other as they are located in vastly different geographical locations and in low-income countries, there may often only be one choice of school for a student. In such a situation, a private school could cut down the expenses to minimum in order to maximize profit and thereby potentially negatively affect the quality of education (Ball & Youdell 2008). This type of situations might be prevented by the government with legislation and random checks.

Another impact of privatization and its free market ideology could be schools intentionally selecting the type of students that are likely to perform well. This way the schools could give a false impression of a higher education quality when using standardized test score

statistics to evaluate education quality. This would not only distort competition but also potentially increase inequality by giving less opportunities for students from certain areas, ethnicities or socio economic statuses as schools often target certain types of student profiles. These schools would be likely to become the most financially successful as a result of having a good reputation while others could receive less students and consequently less funds to run the school. This in turn could result in these schools not having enough resources to provide sufficient quality education while the quality of schooling would be increased for those who already better off (Ball & Youdell 2008). This type of opportunistic behavior might be prevented by standardizing the eligibility criteria of students for every school and discourage the use of standardized scores as a measure of education quality.

Endogenous privatization has the potential to change the teaching methods to have a greater emphasis on succeeding in tests. This can be positive but it also has the potential to reduce the student's ability to apply the information in other situations. This type of methods often employ pre-scripted curriculum plans and materials that are followed strictly (Ball & Youdell 2008). It could be argued that if the tests were to not only measure the information that the student has but also their ability to apply the information, this could have a positive impact on several aspects of education. Pre-scripted classes and thoroughly planned study materials could ensure a more even quality between different schools. This could be made possible by legislation that mandates the curricula, materials and tests that all schools in the country should have.

2.2 Quality of Education

2.2.1 What is quality of education

Quality of education has been defined in several ways (Table I). Quality of education refers to how successful the education is in preparing the student for future in regard to knowledge and skills. This includes general knowledge, professional knowledge and skills as well as ability to interact with other people. In addition to this, many authors that have defined quality of education have also emphasized the impact on the quality of the individual's life and the role of good quality education in reducing injustice and inequality (World Education Forum 2000, Oswald & Moriarty 2009, Ladd & Loeb 2013). Since

quality of education is such a multifaceted concept, several frameworks have been created to help understand what quality of education consists of. These frameworks are presented in a later chapter called “conceptualizations of quality of education”.

Table 1. Definitions of quality of education

Author (year)	Definition
Chapman & Adams (2004)	“Examined within context, education quality apparently may refer to inputs (numbers of teachers, amount of teacher training, number of textbooks), processes (amount of direct instructional time, extent of active learning), outputs (test scores, graduation rates), and outcomes (performance in subsequent employment).”
World Education Forum (2000)	“A quality education is one that satisfies basic learning needs, and enriches the lives of learners and their overall experience of living.”
UNESCO (1996)	“In essence, a quality education is one that empowers each person to make his or her own way in life, to think critically, to care about others and the environment, to make informed decisions and to act responsibly. It is the task of the school to lay the foundations that enable all children to continue to learn throughout their lives: learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together and learning to be.”
Oswald & Moriarty (2009)	“Quality education should be understood as that which helps to reduce injustice, marginalisation and disempowerment, and helps fulfil children’s rights. Quality education should contribute to the significant changes needed in the lives of children who suffer marginalisation and disempowerment.”
Ladd & Loeb (2013)	“In its simplest form education quality can be conceptualized as the investment and consumption value of the education. The investment portion captures benefits in the form of higher earnings, better health, contributions to the arts, effective participation in the democratic process, and other outcomes that education enhances.

The consumption portion of education quality captures the benefits to children and their families of having safe, supportive, and happy environments. Taken from the perspective of the community, the quality of an education system refers not only to the sum of the investment and consumption benefits, but also to how they are distributed across individuals. The value of any particular pattern is likely to differ across societies.”

2.2.2 Why is quality of education important?

The primary interest of governments and international organizations in education has traditionally been on school enrollment rate and other descriptive statistics. Even though there still are great challenges in school enrollment, such as a hundred million children not having an access to school and almost a billion people being illiterate, the quality of the provided education has received considerably less attention. International organizations, for instance, have rarely addressed the issue of quality of education. Neither the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 (that affirmed the right to education for everyone), or the United Nation’s Millennium Declaration in 2000 (that emphasized the importance for boys and girls to complete primary school) addressed the issue of quality (UNESCO 2005). Nonetheless, it does not indicate complete lack of interest in the topic. The use of the term in the literature has increased since the 1950’s and has remained elevated since reaching approximately the current level in 1970’s (Fig. 2) (Michel et al. 2010).

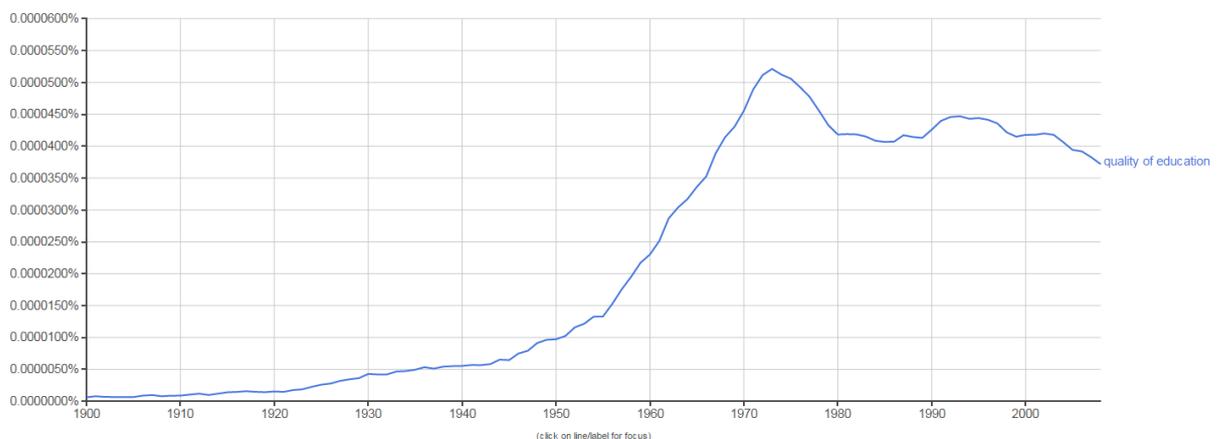


Figure 2. The use of the term “quality of education” in books between 1900 and 2008 (Michel et al. 2010).

In order to reach the goal of education for all, both the enrollment rate and quality of education need to be sufficient. Merely spending time in a school does not guarantee learning and preparing the students for the future. Currently, most education systems appear to be performing below the expected standards, especially in the developing countries and the competencies at graduation are considered to meet only the minimum requirements. Moreover, the curricula do not seem to match the future needs of the students and there is little information about the quality of the teaching material (World Education Forum, 2000). Therefore, it appears that the global state of education would likely benefit not only from increasing availability of schooling but equally importantly from increasing the quality of education.

2.3 Education and the debate on privatization and quality of education in Morocco

2.3.1 The schooling system in Morocco

The schooling system in Morocco is similar to most systems in developed countries (Fig. 3). It consists of 2 years of preschool and 6 years of primary school. It is followed by 3 years of collegial education after this the students can decide whether to attend high school or a vocational school for 3 years. Those who complete high school can choose to continue to higher education by completing a bachelor's degree, followed by a master's degree and a doctorate degree (Llorent-Bedmar 2014, Royaume du Maroc 1999).

In the last year of collegial education, the students take a nation-wide standardized test. Upon completion of the collegial education, students are awarded with a certificate called Brevet d'Enseignement Collégial (BEC). Based on the students' school performance and the standardized test during the last year of the collegial education, the students are eligible to apply to schools that provide qualifying secondary education. At this level students can also choose to enter the workforce. In case they do, they are always able to resume their studies as long as they fulfill the criteria to be admitted to the qualifying secondary education. In the qualifying secondary education level, the students can choose between three different programs: general, technical and vocational. The qualifying secondary education lasts 3 years. It starts with a common core cycle that lasts for a year followed by a baccalaureate cycle of 2 years. Upon completion, students who chose the vocational track receive a DQP (Diplôme de Qualification Professionnelle) meanwhile the ones who

complete the general or technical track are awarded with a Baccalaureate certificate. The Baccalaureate certificate is awarded to students who passed two national level exam at the end of each year in the baccalaureate cycle and who successfully completed their secondary education (Llorent-Bedmar 2014, Royaume du Maroc 1999).

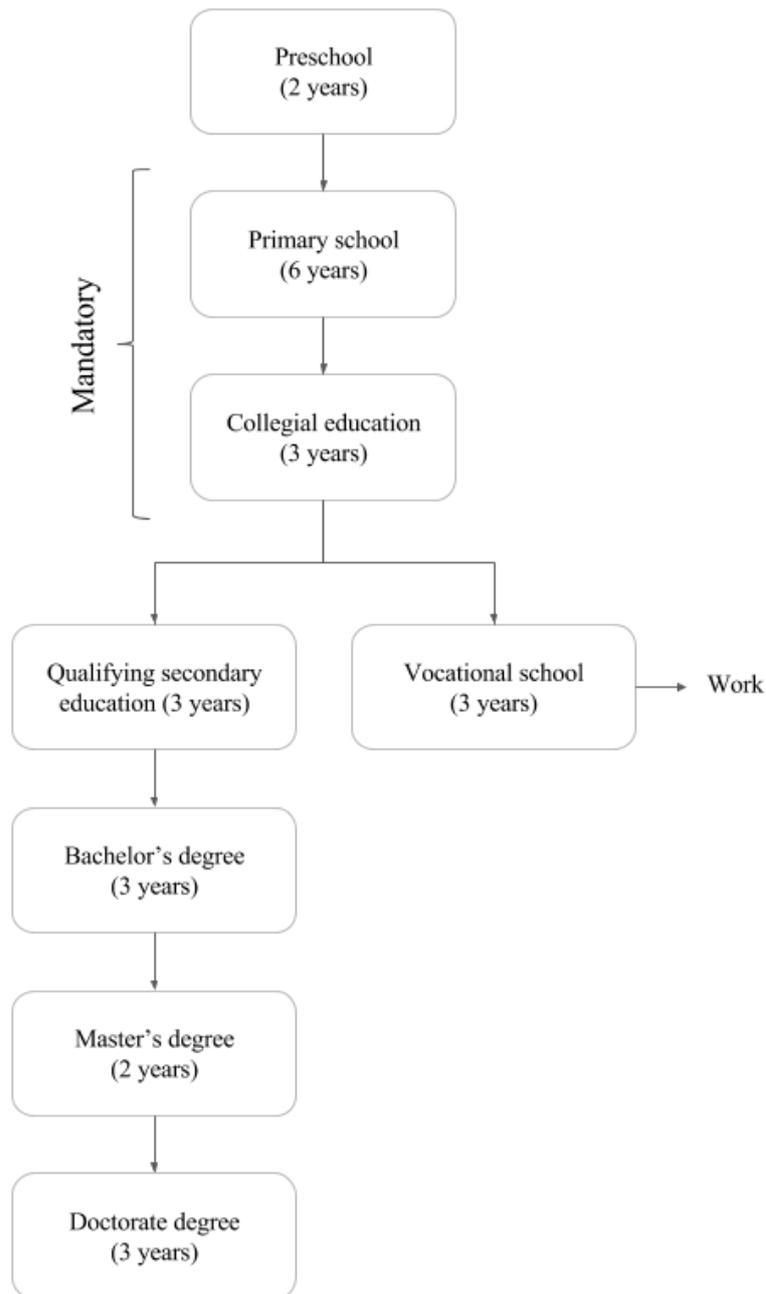


Figure 3. Overview of the the schooling system in Morocco

2.3.2 Privatization in Morocco

Morocco is facing the same challenges as other developing countries: the population is large and a considerable proportion of the population is living in the rural areas where the number of schools is low. In fact, some students are said to have to walk to school for several hours. Although the lack of schools has been compensated for by having teachers work in double or even triple shifts, even this has proven challenging as the number of competent teachers is also limited in these areas. Therefore, the already most disadvantaged families have the poorest opportunities to help their children get out of poverty. These challenges have led to an extremely high rate of children out of school: approximately 9 million children between 6 and 15 years old in the Middle East and North Africa were out of school in 1995. In 2004, this figure was estimated to increase by 40% in the following 10 years (Akkari 2004). Also, the dropout rates are very high in Morocco. Approximately 4% of primary school students and 10% of college students drop out of school. This can have a large impact on the individual's social connections and the development of their social skills (UNICEF 2013). The reasons for the high dropout rate are likely the too low number of schools, low quality of education in elementary and secondary schools, long distances from home to school and financial challenges of families forcing the children to work instead of going to school (Akkari 2004).

According to the data collection of education statistics in 2014, approximately 28% of the primary, collegial and high schools in Morocco were private (a total of 10,364 public schools and 3,941 private schools) (Royaume du Maroc 2014). However, this does not include institutions that belong to foreign missions, which means the figure is, in reality, slightly higher.

Most of the public and private schools in Morocco follow the Moroccan curriculum. However, there are educational institutions that are run by different missions and foreign embassies. For instance, French schools in Morocco follow the French curriculum (Akkari 2004). Foreign missions have about 50 institutions in Morocco among them 31 that follow the French curriculum and five the American one. The rest follow Spanish, Italian, Belgian and British curriculum (“Enseignement: Mission à tout prix” 2010). However, updated information regarding the exact number of institutions belonging to every foreign mission

and the number of students attending these institutions do not appear to be publicly available.

2.3.3 Political debate regarding privatization of education in Morocco

In 2014, the prime minister of Morocco declared that “it’s time for the state to withdraw from certain sectors such as health and education. The role of the state should be limited to assist private operators who want to engage in these sectors.” (“Phrase choc: Benkirane” 2014).

Sylvain Aubry, a researcher who worked also on the study on privatization of education, conducted by the Moroccan Coalition on Education for All (CMEPT) and the Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (GI-ESCR), stated that “in a report, the African Bank of Development and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) requested the African countries to reduce the regulations of their system of education to facilitate the arrival of investors so that they get good return on investments. These organizations also requested governments to provide assets, such as land, loans, equipment and so on, to investors in the private sector. The authors of the report made propositions in the name of improving quality of education but they did not refer to studies to justify these demands although numerous studies, including the one that we are conducting in eight countries show that the development of private education create inequality, just like in Morocco, Ghana or Uganda, and does not improve the quality as it was shown in Chile” (Ouazry 2014). Aubry has also stated that certain individuals in elite positions in Morocco, such as senior civil servants and members of the government, have personal interests in privatization. According to Aubry, they have close relations with investors in the field of education and some even own private schools (Ouazry 2014).

The Moroccan national charter for education and training considers private educational institutions partners of the state in promoting the system of education and training, the widening of its scope, and the continuous improvement of its quality. Consequently, the Moroccan government has aimed to increase the number of pupils schooled in private institutions for about 10 years and stated that “all interventions, strategies, programs and action plans for to support children give priority to achieving equity as a goal, by reducing

disparities between children from urban and rural areas, children from rich and those from disadvantaged backgrounds, and between boys and girls” (GI-ESCR 2014).

However, the Moroccan Coalition on Education for All (CMEPT), which consists of over 40 organizations in the field of education in Morocco and other individual organizations such as the Moroccan National Federation of Parents’ Associations (FNAPEM), and the Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (GI-ESCR) have expressed their concerns about the unknown impact of privatization on the education system. To elucidate the impact of privatization, the CMEPT and GI-ESCR conducted a one-year empirical research project on primary schooling in 2012.

The results of the research project were used in parallel to conduct advocacy with the committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) which is reviewing the implementation of the UN convention on the rights of the child by Morocco. The GI-ESCR created a report that contained a list of potential problems related to privatization of education. As a result of this the Committee on the Rights of the Child issued a report containing a list of issues that the government of Morocco had to answer to. The Moroccan government responded but the GI-ESCR considered the response vague and unsatisfying and published a report of the issues that the government failed to respond to (GI-ESCR 2014). They stated that “we regret that these good intentions [by the government] are not verified in practice”. The GI-ESCR raised the concern of inequality and discrimination caused by hidden fees, lack of schools, lack of support for teachers, school violence and poor quality of teaching as well as school dropouts caused by inadequate funding - regardless of the fact that the education budget is above average. The GI-ESCR criticized the lack of regulation of growth of private education, which can cause structural inequalities. The government said in its response that the portion of private schools in Morocco is negligible. However, while the GI-ESCR agreed that the proportion of students in private schools was reasonable now, it considered the rate of growth “alarming” - potentially increasing the rate of privately schooled primary students to over 50%. In summary, GI-ESCR stated that “we maintain that the Government has a policy to encourage the development of private education and does not provide for effective regulation of private schools, which goes against the ‘equity principles’ that the Government set for itself in its responses, and constitutes a violation of the obligations of Morocco on the right to education as guaranteed by Articles 28 and 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.” Additionally, they stated that “we regret that

the Moroccan Government, despite the research efforts we have undertaken and the specific issues raised by the CRC does not provide a substantive response to the worrying phenomenon of the privatisation in education and the dangers it poses to the realisation of the right to education for all without discrimination” (GI-ESCR 2014). These concerns are yet to be resolved by the government.

2.3.4 Quality of education in Morocco

There is very little information about the quality of education in Morocco. The few reports and newspaper articles that talk about the issue seem to have focused on the loans given to Morocco to improve the education quality but none of them refer to data about the quality of education (African Development Bank 2000; World Bank 2013). Other articles about the quality of education in Morocco speak about it in terms of the performance of Morocco in international tests, transparency of public resources in the education sector, absenteeism of teachers or the increase in the number of school attendance (GPSA 2014). As an example, one article stressed the importance of the quality of teaching and learning as the most important pillar of a school system. The article mentions that despite the effort made by Morocco in order to upgrade the teaching curriculums and implement regional trainings centre it didn't improve the level of education quality. The article also talked about the problem of youth not well enough equipped by the education system to meet the criteria set by a demanding job market (World Bank 2013).

There are several issues that add to the bad impression of quality of education in public schools. Teachers working in the public sector often go on strikes, giving the impression that there are issues with the public schooling system. Moreover, the fact that there are often too many students, as much as 70 in each class, has had a negative impact on how the quality of public education is perceived. As many secondary education teachers in the public sector also teach in private schools, they have been claimed to put more effort on teaching at private schools than in public schools. Although the law forces secondary education teachers employed in the public sector to not work for more than 6 hours per week in private schools, it seems that this law is not applied in practice. Teachers have been claimed to provide bogus medical certificates to their supervisors, in order to invest that time in working at private schools rather than public schools. . Therefore, the increase in private schooling appears to have a negative impact on the quality of education in public

schools (Berca-Berrada 2015). However, no research has been conducted to verify the perceived differences in quality of education between public and private schools.

Therefore, this study aims to provide more reliable information about the quality of education in public and private schools so that the debate about privatization would not only be based on hearsay. In order to do study quality of education, several aspects need to be taken into consideration. In the following chapter, the conceptualizations of quality of education will be introduced to help understand the complex issue of quality of education.

3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Framework for understanding quality of education

While there is no question about the importance of quality of education, there are several views about what quality of education is (Chapman & Adams 2004; Pigozzi 2006, 41-42). In fact, some even consider quality as just a contemporary political buzzword (Wittek & Kvernbekk 2011, 672). One of the main problems in defining quality in the field of education is the diversity of the field. The education system consists of several elements that contribute to quality of education, such as students, teachers, educational materials and infrastructures and different individuals and organizations seem to emphasize different aspects of the field depending on their interests (Table 1). However, focusing on single factors can create an incomplete and biased understanding of the quality of education which is why it is imperative to ensure that a balanced approach is used (Kellaghan & Greaney, 2001).

Several organizations, such as UNESCO and UNICEF, have created frameworks to help understand, analyze and enhance the education quality. These frameworks have been classified into three categories: the learner-centered approach, the inputs-process-outputs approach and the multidimensional social interaction approach (Tawil, Akkari & Macedo 2011). The most influential approaches in each category are presented below.

3.1.1 UNICEF framework: a learner-centered approach

The UNICEF framework is based on the Child Friendly School (CFS) framework that UNICEF had created earlier which is why there is considerable overlap between these frameworks. The CFS was created to ensure that the issues covered in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) would be transferred to school management and classroom practices. Based on the UNICEF framework, quality of learning is not just effective teaching and learning but also equal rights for children and genders, motivated and supported teachers, curricula with real life relevance, safe studying environments and involving the community. According to this framework, quality of education consists of four main areas: (1) inclusiveness and equality, (2) effective and relevant teaching, (3) safe,

healthy and protective learning environments and (4) gender equality, (5) participation in school management and (6) systems and policies (Fig. 4) (Tawil, Akkari & Macedo 2011).

The distinguishing feature of this framework is its emphasis on human rights rather than learning outcomes. Its main purpose is to ensure the right of all children to high quality basic education. Therefore, it assumes a proactively inclusive approach in which all children, regardless of their background, are sought out and enabling actions are taken to ensure their participation in schooling. This includes, for instance, homelessness, lack of birth registration, fear of violence on the way or in the school and disabilities. It considers schooling as a valuable experience that should not be overridden by maximal learning efficiency. However, the framework also considers effective learning as an essential part of quality education which requires motivated teachers, relevant curriculum, learner-accessible materials, education policy frameworks and child social services. According to the framework, effective learning also requires a healthy and protective environment emotionally, psychologically and physically. This can be ensured with health policies that promote provision of clean water, clean environment, health education, healthy nutrition and gender sensitivity. The gender sensitivity refers to girls and boys given tasks and roles based on the situation, not based on the gender. Finally, the framework considers active involvement with the community and the families of the students essential for quality education as the issues covered at the CRC can not be improved by the government alone (Tawil, Akkari & Macedo 2011).



Figure 4. The UNICEF Child Friendly School framework (2005). Constructed by the author on the basis of UNICEF (2005)

3.1.2 UNESCO framework: an input-process-output approach

The UNESCO Global Monitoring Report identified five different factors that contribute to quality of education: (1) learner characteristics, (2) context, (3) inputs, (4) teaching and learning and (5) outcomes (Fig. 5).

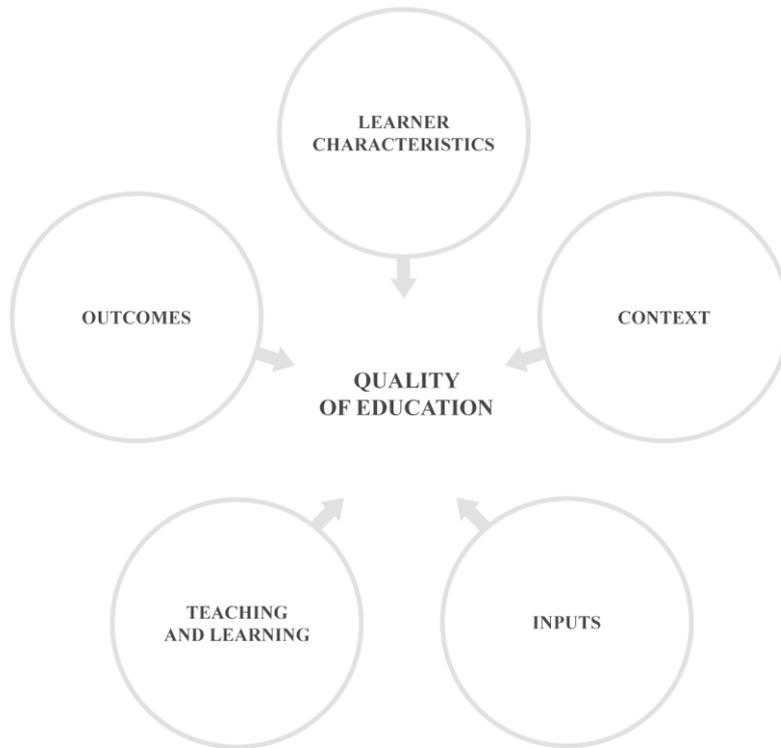


Figure 5. The UNESCO framework 2005 for understanding education quality. Constructed by the author on the basis of UNESCO (2005).

According to the UNESCO framework, it is important to recognize that while students may appear similar inside the classroom, they may have widely varying backgrounds. The learner characteristics that contribute to quality of education do not only refer to the cognitive ableness of the students, such as the degree of perseverance. The learner characteristics includes a large range of the learner’s individual background characteristics, such as gender, socioeconomic status, the level of knowledge prior to entering the school and possible barriers to learning, such as disabilities. In the second factor, the context, the framework recognizes that the local labor requirements for the future graduate, competition among teachers for teaching jobs, infrastructures, national policies and religious beliefs all have an impact on education quality. The third factor, inputs, consist of the teaching materials, school facilities and human resources. The inputs have traditionally been the most common way to indicate the quality of education by assessing student-to-teacher ratios or how much of the country’s gross domestic product the government is spending on education. The fourth factor, teaching and learning may be the most familiar factor for students as it consists of the pedagogical processes in daily school life, such as the teaching

methods and student assessment. Teaching and learning also covers the aspects that enable these activities, such as school safety and class size. The fifth factor, outcomes, addresses the immediate benefits of education, such as literacy and numeracy as well as longer term benefits, such as life skills and economic gains. This has also been one of the most commonly measured aspects of quality of education (UNESCO 2005).

3.1.3 Tikly Model of Good Quality Education: multidimensional social interaction model

The multidimensional social interaction model, introduced by university researchers Leon Tikly and Angeline Barrett in 2010, looks at education as public good and emphasizes the role of all of the stakeholders in education (Fig. 6). The framework focuses on three areas: (1) enabling policy environment, (2) enabling school environment and (3) enabling home and community environment. In contrast to the UNICEF model which focuses on the student, the Tikly model focuses on the local stakeholders such as parents, teachers and policymakers and recognizes their varying values and interests. While this framework also considers the local historical and cultural contexts, in contrast to the UNESCO and UNICEF frameworks, it puts little emphasis on effective learning and its output (Tawil, Akkari & Macedo 2011). This could be argued to be one of its weaknesses, although it is likely that the teachers, students and their parents all consider effective learning to be of a high priority and it would therefore receive due attention.

A good quality education arises from the correct mix of enabling inputs and processes in three interrelated environments” (Tikly & Barrett 2010). According to the Tikly model, to ensure a good quality there has to be a synergy between policy, school, home and community environments, so that inputs and processes are able to close the gaps that could exist between these three environments. Examples of important quality inputs according to the model are experienced and motivated teachers, appropriate learning materials, school infrastructure and early childhood education. National assessment, monitoring and evaluation systems, and a relevant and inclusive curriculum and pedagogy are, on the other hand, examples of quality processes. The model mentions three types of gaps that can exist between these environments which are ‘the implementation gap’, ‘the expectation gap’ and ‘the learning gap’. In order to avoid ‘an implementation gap’ between the national policy and school level practice, it is advised to make sure that the teacher education and

professional development are in agreement. The ‘expectations gap’ can exist between the outcomes of education and the expectations that parents and communities have about what education has to offer. In order to close this gap, it was suggested to focus on the importance of the curriculum, stakeholders’ opinion in national debates and developing accountability and transparency. A ‘learning gap’ can also exist between learning in schools and home or community environment. To avoid the creation of such a gap, it is recommended to concentrate on the health and nutrition of learners and collaborate with parents to secure a home environment to support learning (Tikly & Barrett 2010)

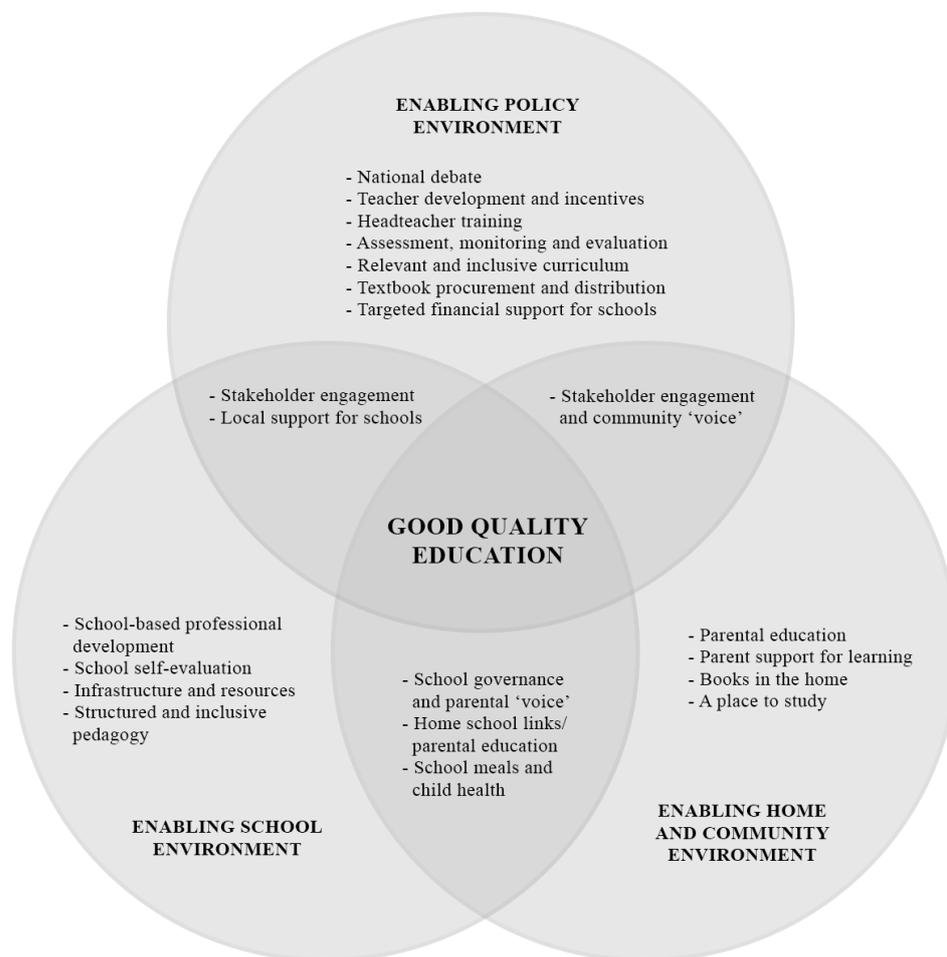


Figure 6. The Tikly Model of Good Quality Education 2010. Constructed by the author on the basis of Tikly (2010).

3.2 Summary of the frameworks

All of the frameworks consider effective teaching, enabling school environment and the context of education essential for quality of education (Table 2). It reflects the commonly held view that the main goal of education is teaching the students' knowledge and skills that they will need in their cultural and geographical context. While all frameworks mention many of the same issues, surprisingly, the UNICEF framework is the only one specifically emphasizing matters of equality, such as gender equality and equal opportunities for all children to education. It clearly distinguishes itself from the UNESCO and the Tikly model by promoting actively seeking out children to help them attend school. The UNICEF framework also takes into consideration the enabling home and community environment, enabling policy environment and learner characteristics, making it the most thorough framework. Some of the details about the UNICEF framework, such as the learner characteristics and historical and cultural context are covered in the CFS framework.

As the UNICEF framework covers the topic of quality of education the most thoroughly, it was selected to be used as the basis for the questionnaire used in this study. A framework that covers only a certain area well (such as the effective teaching in UNESCO framework), might give a biased overall picture of the quality of education. However, it is important to keep in mind that all of these areas cannot be reliably evaluated using a questionnaire, so the results need to be interpreted with slight caution.

Table 2. Summary of the issues that the frameworks for quality of education emphasize.

	UNICEF	UNESCO	Tikly Model
Equality	Yes		
Effective teaching	Yes	Yes	Yes
Enabling school environment	Yes	Yes	Yes
Enabling home and community environment	Yes		Yes
Enabling policy environment	Yes		Yes
Learner characteristics	Yes (in CFS)	Yes	
Cultural context	Yes (in CFS)	Yes	Yes

3.3 Measuring quality of education

3.3.1 Statistical indicators

Quality of education is commonly measured by using statistical indicators, such as student-to-teacher ratio or proportion of gross domestic product. However, statistics, such as the number of students or teachers in the country, are not indicators by themselves. The statistics become indicators when they are made useful for policy making (Kaagan & Smith 1985). If applied properly, specific numerical statistics can be useful as objective indicators of quality of education. However, the high precision of these statistics may often be interpreted as a sign of a reliability of the indicator which may cause problems if the context is not carefully considered (Huff 1954, 41-42). For instance, the quality of education might be expected to increase if the government increases spending on education by 20%. However, the financial resources might be spent on higher administrative costs and not contribute to the quality of education at all. On the other hand, even if the indicators were valid (i.e. they truly measure quality of education) the interpretation may not be straightforward. Issues could arise, for instance, from using indicators that only reflect a narrow aspect of quality of education, such as inputs. The improvements in indicators should be considered in the context of the entire system of education. Even a great improvement in the input indicators may offer a limited improvement for the quality of the entire education system as there are several other factors that contribute to the quality as well (Fig. 4). Therefore, statistics can be a useful tool in evaluating quality of education but due to their double-edged sword nature, should be used and interpreted with great care. European Union added to the issue by having Education Ministries of 26 countries work on a set of quality indicators in “Report of May 2000 on the Quality of School Education: Sixteen Quality Indicators.” The sixteen indicators that were chosen were ability to read, mathematics test results, scientific subjects test results, the degree of information and communication technology used, proficiency in foreign languages, ability to learn to learn, understanding of civil culture (democracy, equality etc.), school dropout rates, completion of upper secondary education, participation in higher education, evaluation and steering of school education, parental participation, education and training of teachers, participation in pre-primary education, number of students per computer in a school and educational expenditure (European Union 2000). However, this data does not appear to be available for Morocco and many other developing countries. Therefore, in this

study, a questionnaire was used to ensure data availability for all of the areas of quality of education stated in the UNICEF framework.

3.3.2 Limitations of measuring quality of education

As quality of education is most commonly measured using quantitative data, such as average teacher salaries, class sizes and standardized test results the data is often available only for a narrow area when compared to the areas covered in the quality of education frameworks. Making conclusions of the education quality based on only the available data might result in a false understanding of the quality of education. For instance an increase in the proportion of the gross domestic product spent on education could indicate higher quality of education but it would still be unclear how that money was used. In case the money was used to cover higher administrative costs, it is unlikely that the quality of education would have increased substantially. On the other hand, if the money was spent on studying materials, there could be high level of inequality between students and low-income students might have severe barriers to learning outside of school. The reliability of the publicly available data may also be questionable, for instance, if it has been reported to the government by the schools themselves (Tawil, Akkari & Macedo 2011).

3.3.3 Student satisfaction as a measure of quality of education

Student satisfaction has been used commonly to measure quality of education as it is expected to measure quality of education and correlate with other measures of quality (Borah et al. 2014; Mărcuș et al. 2009; Uka 2014). Moreover, since it directly reflects the experiences of the most important stakeholders in education, the students, it may be considered to be one of the most direct ways to assess quality of education. However, despite its wide use, its validity has not been confirmed. While it is likely to reflect the quality of several aspects of education, it can not be used to reliably measure school spending, teachers' labor market conditions and other issues. On the other hand, while students could technically be asked to report their student-to-teacher ratios and results of their standardized tests, this would contain a high risk of incorrect results as the students might not know the exact sizes of the classes and on the other hand, might over or underestimate their exam performance. Therefore, student satisfaction may be considered an indirect measure of quality of education but the results should be interpreted with

caution as its validity is not known. Moreover, the results should be supported with other types of information, such as statistics related to school spending.

The student satisfaction was used to measure the quality of education in this study for several reasons but most importantly, first hand data about all aspects of quality of education could not be gathered using other methods with the resources available for a master's thesis. If second hand data, such as data from the government, had been used, the reliability of that data could be questioned, considering the claimed conflicts of interest of those in elite positions in the country.

4 METHODS

4.1 Study design and setting

In order to answer the research question “is the quality of education different between public and private schools in Morocco, according to students who have studied either in public or private schools?” A cross-sectional trial design was used. Study participants were recruited from a private night school in Casablanca, Morocco. The “Ecole Subrini” night school has been offering night courses for students in the secondary school and high school since 1986. The students in the night school are from both, public and private institutions. The purpose of the school is to prepare the students for important exams, such as the national baccalaureate exam and important tests at school. The classes are offered from 6:30 to 8:30 pm from Monday until Saturday and from 9:00 to 11:00 and 11:00 until 1:00 pm on Sunday. The majority of the the courses are about mathematics, physics, biology and philosophy.

4.2 Advantages and limitations of a cross-sectional study design

In contrast to longitudinal study designs, a cross-sectional study design is used to evaluate different populations at one point in time and find differences between these populations. Therefore, this study design is limited in evaluating change over time (Halperin & Oliver 2012, 170-171). Any differences between the evaluated groups should be interpreted with caution as they only represent current differences between the groups and not necessarily how the groups became that way (Ishiyama & Breuning 2010, 498-499). In the context of quality of education, it means that even if one type of school had better performing students in standardized tests, it may not be due to superiority education in that school. It could be due to several other reasons, such as prestigious schools being able to select only the brightest students or the less academically successful students having dropped out of the school (Check & Schutt 2011, 121-122). This is why it is important to control for all such confounding factors. However, even after adjusting for age, gender, socioeconomic status and other confounding factors, there will be uncertainty if any important confounding factors were not accounted for. Therefore, the results of a cross-sectional study should be interpreted with caution and if possible, should be verified with longitudinal studies. However, it is important to note conducting a longitudinal study is not

as simple as repeating a measurement, for instance, in six months in the same school. This type of a repeated-measures cross-sectional study could be used to identify a trend over time but not necessarily a change over time because the students in the school may have changed. Therefore, some of the change over time may be attributed to academically skilled students having entered the class during that time or less skilled students having dropped out of the class. Therefore, a longitudinal study would require the follow-up measurement to be carried out with the exact same students (Check & Schutt 2011, 122-123). However, in education, conducting a longitudinal study is highly challenging as it would require assigning certain children to certain schools or classes for the entire duration of primary or high school - all because of taking part in a study. This would be further complicated by study drop-outs due to students moving to different locations or other issues. Therefore, a cross-sectional design has some considerable advantages over longitudinal studies, such as low cost and quick administration. Nevertheless, there are also some considerable disadvantages, such as uncertainty of the reasons for the differences between groups, that need to be resolved with more robust research designs.

4.3 Participant eligibility criteria

In order to be eligible, the students had to be completing their final year in high-school and taking lessons that are designed to prepare them for the final baccalaureate exam. Final-year students were selected to ensure that they had maximal amount of experience in the schools. First-year students, for instance, might not have enough experience to reliably evaluate their experience at the school and might change their view after two more years of studying. Participants that had studied in both public and private high-schools were excluded due to possible recall bias. That is, the participants might not be able to correctly recall and clearly separate between exposures, i.e. their experiences in private and public schools. As recall bias cannot be controlled in this context, these students will be excluded (Szklo & Nieto 2012, 117-118).

4.4 Generalizability of the results

Generalizability of the results in research is divided into internal and external generalizability. Internal generalizability refers to how well the sample represents the population that was being studied. A small sample may end up being selective regardless

of efforts to avoid it and cause bias in the results. For instance, selecting a random classroom in a random school could, by chance, result in selecting a class that has the most successful students in the country. Therefore, generalizing the results to the entire population would be severely misleading. On the other hand, external generalizability refers to the degree that the results can be generalized outside of the setting or types of individuals, for instance, to primary school students in a different country (Maxwell 2012, 137). The results of this study should be moderately well internally generalizable, i.e. the results are likely applicable to students in public and private high schools that take extra classes in a night school in Casablanca, Morocco. In other words, if the study was repeated in a night school in Casablanca in two years, the results would be expected to be similar. However, due to considerable regional variation in wealth and level of education in Morocco, the results are likely not externally generalizable far from the studied population. In other words, if the study was repeated in a rural area, the results would be expected to be different to some degree.

4.5 Data collection

The data collection was carried out at the beginning of a night school lesson in February 2015. The director of the night school agreed to administer the questionnaire before the beginning of classes, at 6:15pm on Wednesday, 4th of February. The school director recommended three classes that had a high number of students (ranging between 30 and 50 students) in which the students were studying for their baccalaureate exam. Two of the classes had students from the experimental science branch and the other class had students from mathematical science branch. Before handing the questionnaires to the students, I introduced myself, talked about the purpose of the questionnaire and gave instructions on filling in the questionnaire. In case a student arrived late in the class, I repeated the instructions. In each class, there were one to two teacher's aides who worked at the night school to maintain discipline in the class and make sure that students were focused on the teaching. They distributed the questionnaires in the class once I had finished giving the instructions and moved on to the next classroom to give the instructions. In case some of the students were unable to finish the questionnaire before the beginning of the class, they were asked to return the questionnaire to the teacher.

4.6 Validity and reliability

Validity and reliability are key concepts in evaluating how well the questionnaire used in this study answers the research question. In this context, validity answers the question, “does the questionnaire really measure quality of education?” Reliability, on the other hand, answers the question, “if the questionnaire was administered again for the same population, would it produce the same results?” In order for any measurement tool to produce truthful results, it must be both valid and reliable. In many cases, the degree of validity and reliability can be quantified using statistical methods (McNabb 2004, 82).

Validity is classified into three main categories: content validity, construct validity and criterion validity (Sullivan 2009, p. 533). Content validity refers to how well the measurement tool measures the entire subject it was intended to measure. In order to ensure content validity, the subject that is being measured should be specified comprehensively. Moreover, the measurement tool needs to be able to truly evaluate this aspect. In this study, this relates to how well the questionnaire truly evaluates the quality of education and not, for instance, the mood of the respondent or their attitude against their teachers. Also, when evaluating quality of education, it is important to measure all aspects of quality of education, as defined by the UNESCO framework, and avoid focusing on single indicators that measure only a small area of quality (Johnson & Vogt 2011). In regard to implementing this in a questionnaire, in political sciences it is considered preferable to include rather too many indicators than too few as the concepts that are being measured, such as quality of education, are complex phenomena and difficult to accurately define (Bertrand et al. 2011, 1514). However, the impact of the number of questions in a questionnaire has not been studied (Larossi 2006, 78-80). For this study the number of questions was kept to minimum as it was known that the students would have little time to answer the questionnaire. Having fewer questions answered thoughtfully was considered to be more important than high number of questions with less attention. The second type, criterion validity, refers to how well the measurement instrument (the questionnaire) measures what was intended to be measured. The degree of criterion validity can be quantified if other similar indicators exist. Therefore, questions in the questionnaire that measure inputs in quality of education may be compared with other input indicators, such as the student-to-teacher ratio by using correlation statistics. However, the interpretation of low correlation may be challenging as it may signify that one of the indicators or neither of

the indicators measure the intended matter. Therefore, it is important that the reference indicator (criterion) has been shown to be valid. In this study, each item in the questionnaire could be compared to a relevant statistic, although statistics for all of the items most likely do not exist. This was, however, not done as it would have exceeded the resources allocated for the study. In case valid reference indicators do not exist, the measurements may be compared with theories on the subject. The correlation between the results and what related theories would have predicted is called construct validity. When evaluating construct validity, it is important to ensure that the assumptions of the theory match with the conditions in the study. Otherwise, the theory may not predict similar results and this could be falsely interpreted as the results of the study being invalid (Johnson & Vogt 2011). Construct validity was also not evaluated in this study as it would have required excessive use of time. However, the current literature review suggests that such developed theories have not been developed. Instead, there appear to only be tentative models of quality of education that have not been verified through empirical studies.

Reliability measures the consistency of the results if the measurement is repeated under the same conditions. For a questionnaire to be valid, it must also be reliable. The best method for testing reliability would be to administer the same questionnaire twice using the same sample and see how consistent each participant's answer were. However, since this would require considerably more work for both the researcher as well as the participants, reliability is often assessed using indirect methods. One of the most common statistical tools for evaluating reliability of a questionnaire is Cronbach's alpha. The method is based on splitting the questionnaire in two halves and assessing the similarity of the results between them. However, with simple halving it is possible to get an uneven distribution of different types of questions in the different halves, i.e. the results in the other half might be very positive and in the other half very negative. Cronbach's alpha overcomes this limitation by splitting the questionnaire using all possible combinations and comparing all of them with each other (Badie 2011, 1519-1520). Cronbach's alpha is a correlation coefficient that is interpreted as the measurement tool having good reliability if the coefficient is equal or greater than 0.70 (Lavrakas 2008, 169).

4.7 Advantages and limitations of questionnaires

The main advantage of using a questionnaire is practicality. An interview, for instance, could generate more information about the same issue while allowing the interviewer to assess how well the interviewee has understood the questions, how honest they appear to be in their answers and how much thought they put in responding the question. However, when the time resources of the researcher or the participants are low or the trouble for the participant is not justified, a questionnaire is a more feasible method of gathering data. Additionally, as a questionnaire can be administered without the presence of the researcher and analyzed quantitatively, the results are less dependent on the researcher as with an interview. While the researcher can have an impact on the outcome of the study through the questionnaire design, this same source of bias concerns interviews. Finally, with questionnaires, using quantitative scales makes it possible to measure change over time and compare the results with other studies. However, a questionnaire may not be suitable for complex phenomena that are not understood well as the depth of information can be very limited, especially in questions with quantitative scales (Cargan 2007, 116-117).

4.8 Description of the questionnaire used in this study

A questionnaire was used to collect data as it can be administered to a large number of people without excessive use of time. This was considered necessary as having a large sample size is needed to generalize the results of the study. Moreover, recruiting students for a long one-on-one interview could have been challenging as the students were preparing for their final exams and most students use all of their time on studies. Interviews would have given more in-depth information about the reasons for each answer and could be used in a follow-up study. Another option for gathering data could have been freely available statistics. However, initial searches revealed that such statistics may only be available for some aspects of quality of education. This could have resulted in only a partial understanding of the situation or a biased understanding, due to large emphasis on indicators measuring school success. Also, this would not have taken into consideration the the student's perceptions of the quality of education.

A structured questionnaire based on the High School Satisfaction Questionnaire made by Arkansas Department of Higher Education was used (see Appendix 1) (Arkansas

Department of Higher Education 2015). This was selected as the basis for the questionnaire as very few questionnaires exist for this specific purpose. A previously used questionnaire was used to increase validity and reliability of the questionnaire as the time allocated for a master's thesis did not allow for the questionnaire to be pilot tested. The questionnaire was modified to reduce the time required to answer the questionnaire by reducing the number of items in the questionnaire to 24. Many of the items that were removed were duplicate items. Although it is recommended to have duplicate items with different wordings to assess the reliability of the questionnaire, in this case, it might have made the school reject the request to administer the questionnaire in the beginning of the class. Moreover, five items were added to include items that assess learner characteristics. The type of high school the student was attending and the student's family income, father's education level and mother's education level were used to evaluate the correlation between socioeconomic status and the type of school the students are attending. Moreover, the reason for choosing the high-school was inquired to evaluate whether the decision was based on the assumed quality of education or something else, such as proximity or financial reasons. The questionnaire assessed all of the aspects of quality of education as defined by the UNICEF framework: equality, effectiveness of teaching, school environment, home and community environment, policy environment, learner characteristics, cultural context (Table 3). The answers were rated on a Likert scale from 1 to 5, using labels (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) no opinion, (4) agree (5) strongly agree. In addition to this an option 'non applicable' was added, so that students could choose it in case the question referred to a service that wasn't offered by the school. To control for response bias, some of the questions were presented with reverse wording.

Table 3. Items used in the questionnaire classified according to UNICEF framework

Aspect	Items in the questionnaire
Equality	<p>The rules of conduct at my school are not applied fairly</p> <p>Some students get away with everything</p> <p>Some students are targeted by teachers and administrators</p> <p>My school didn't exposed me to cultural and ethnic diversity</p>
Effectiveness of teaching	<p>My teachers are prepared to teach their subjects</p> <p>Tests focus on material assigned or covered</p> <p>My tests accurately assess my learning</p> <p>My tests don't allow me to demonstrate my competences</p>
School environment	<p>My teachers are not interested in helping me learn</p> <p>My school facilities are well maintained</p> <p>Counselors at my school are helpful in academic matters</p> <p>Counselors at my school are helpful in personal matters</p> <p>My school doesn't provide academic assistance to the students needing it</p> <p>Information on careers and training is easily accessible at my school</p> <p>Students at my school value learning</p>
Home and community environment	<p>The library at my school has the educational resources to meet my needs</p> <p>School labs have sufficient supplies to complete assignments</p>
Policy environment	<p>The grading policies at my school don't make sense</p> <p>Grading practices are consistent in all my classes (all teachers grade my work consistently) regardless of who grades it</p> <p>Grades are helpful in pointing out areas needing improvement</p>
Learner characteristics	<p>Public or private high school</p> <p>Reason for choosing the high school</p> <p>Family income</p> <p>Father's education level</p> <p>Mother's education level</p>
Cultural context	<p>By the time I graduate, my school will have prepared me for college and work</p> <p>My school helped me learn how to interact with others in productive ways</p>

4.9 Sample size

The minimum sample size was determined a priori by calculating statistical power (with $\alpha = 0.05$, $\beta = 0.95$ and $SD = 0.8$). As a similar previously conducted studies were not available, the standard deviation was estimated. In order to detect a difference of ≥ 1.0 points between the group means, the total sample size was determined to have to be at least 22 participants. However, the number of students was not purposely limited to 22 as a larger sample size is likely to be more representative of the population and the trouble of answering the questionnaire for the students was considered low.

4.10 Statistical methods

To compare the group means, an independent samples t-test (two-sided with $\alpha = 0.05$) was used (de Winter & Dodou 2010). The internal consistency of the questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. All statistical analyses were performed using SPSS 22.0 for Windows (SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL, USA).

4.11 Reporting

The completeness of reporting of this study was ensured by using STROBE Statement for cross-sectional studies (von Elm et al. 2008). The STROBE Statement is a checklist that lists all of the aspects of a study that should be reported in each section. For the "methods" section, for instance, the statement contains items such as "present key elements of study design early in the paper" and "describe any efforts to address potential sources of bias". A report that contains all of the items is considered completely reported. A reporting guideline, such as the Strobe statement, should not be mixed with other tools, such as quality appraisal checklists or guidelines for statistical analysis. They only ensure that the reader has all of the most important data available and that the report focuses on these essential items to maximize readability. The statistical results were reported using American Psychological Association (APA) style, which includes phrases for each statistical test. For t-test for independent groups, for instance, the phrase is "over a two-day period, participants drank significantly fewer drinks in the experimental group ($M = 0.667$, $SD = 1.15$) than did those in the wait-list control group ($M = 8.00$, $SD = 2.00$), $t(4) =$

-5.51, $p=.005$.” The author then needs to adapt this sentence structure to their own results (University of Washington 2010).

5 RESULTS

One hundred and three students completed the questionnaire. However, despite the verbal and written instructions, some students had marked more than a single answer or had not answered some questions at all. These answers were not included in the analysis. The internal reliability of the questionnaire was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha and was found to be high (21 items; $\alpha = 0.78$). However, only 24 students out of 103 fulfilled the criteria for Cronbach's alpha test, i.e. they had answered all questions, they had marked only one answer for each question and had not marked any of the questions "not applicable".

The majority (63%) of students that answered the questionnaire were from public schools. The remaining 32% of students were from private schools while 5% didn't specify their type of school. The results may indicate that students from public schools require more assistance with their studies and therefore, have a lower quality of education. However, due to the cross-sectional study design, this may also be a result of other factors. Therefore, the results of this question should be interpreted cautiously.

The most common reason for having picked their high school, as reported by the students, was quality of education (28.2%). Proximity, reputation, success rate and financial reasons were marked as the most important by 17.5%, 12.6%, 11.7% and 6.8%, respectively. Twenty-four students did not answer this question. The importance of quality of education appears to be highly appreciated by high school students and in this study it was clearly more important than the other factors, such as proximity to school or the school's reputation. Surprisingly, financial reasons were not considered important by many students. However, this may reflect the small role of children in financial decisions and this question might be answered differently by the students' parents.

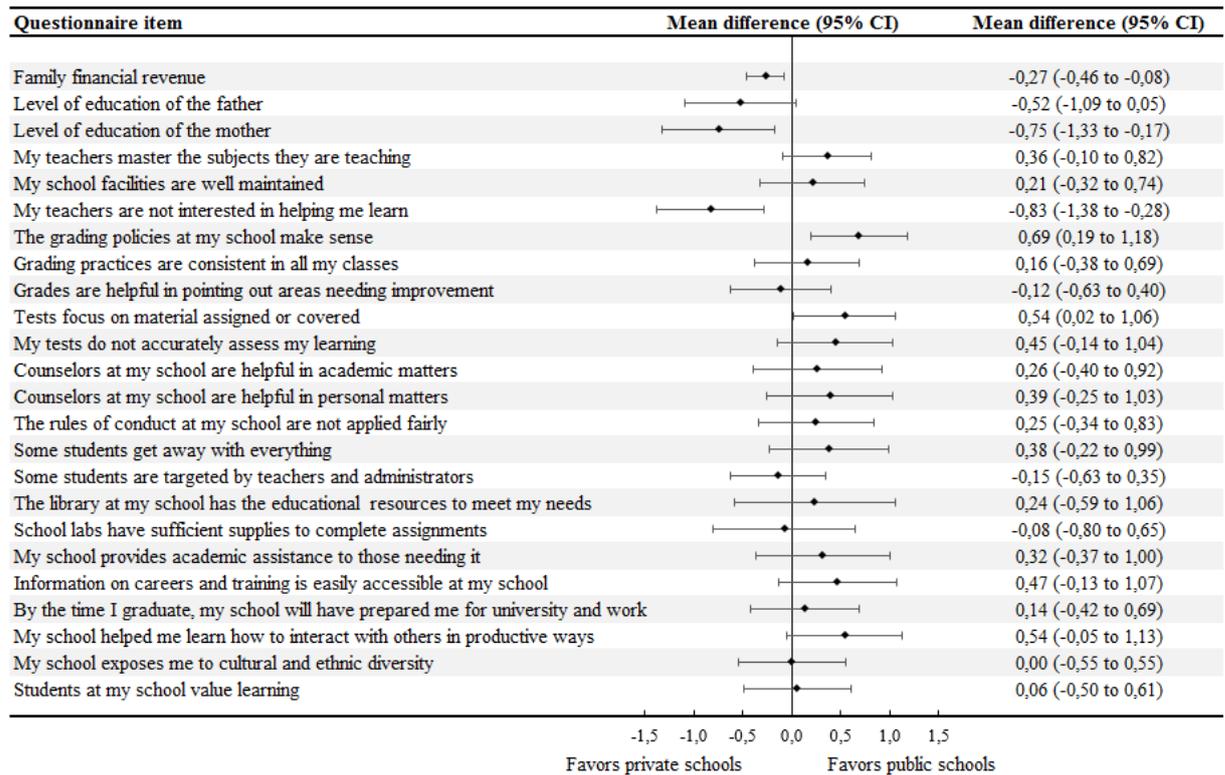


Figure 7. Mean differences between public and private school students' answers.

The filled circles indicate mean difference and the whiskers indicate the 95% confidence interval. As the questions have been reversed for the analysis, results on the left side indicate higher satisfaction among private school students and results on the right side indicate higher satisfaction among public school students.

Learner characteristics were significantly different between public and private schools. Family financial revenue of students was significantly higher in private schools ($M = 2.27$, $SD = 0.450$) compared to students from public schools ($M = 2$, $SD = 0.365$), $t(48.39) = -2.82$, $p = 0.007$ (Fig. 7). Another indicator of socioeconomic status, mother's level of education, was also significantly higher for students studying in private schools ($M = 4.03$, $SD = 1.12$) compared to students from public school ($M = 3.28$, $SD = 1.45$), $t(94) = -2.56$, $p = 0.012$. As the father's level of education was also close to being significantly higher in private school students, it seems that on average, private school students have a higher economic status in this population.

There were no significant differences between public and private schools in items regarding equality, home and community environment and cultural contexts. There were,

however, significant differences in some items in school environment, policy environment and effectiveness of teaching. Teachers' interest in helping students learn was significantly higher in private schools ($M = 4.07$, $SD = 1.107$) compared to public schools ($M = 3.25$, $SD = 1.337$), $t(59.66) = -3.03$, $p = 0.004$. On the other hand, student satisfaction for grading policies was significantly higher in public schools ($M = 2.90$, $SD = 1.258$) compared to private schools ($M = 2.21$, $SD = 0.995$), $t(65.62) = 2.76$, $p = 0.007$. Satisfaction was also higher in public schools in regard to tests focusing on materials assigned or covered ($M = 2.57$, $SD = 1.175$ compared to students in private schools ($M = 2.03$, $SD = 1.085$), $t(81) = 2.704$, $p = 0.044$. As the results of the questions that were presented negatively were reversed for the analysis, higher averages indicate higher satisfaction for all items. There were no significant differences between private and public schools for the remaining questions although interestingly, 76.2% of the averages were higher for public school. This may be interpreted cautiously as evidence against the generally spread assumption that private schools are clearly better than public schools.

6 DISCUSSION

6.1 Key results

The majority of students that answered the questionnaire were from public schools. While this may be due to random variation, it may also suggest a greater need for assistance for students studying in public schools as the study was conducted at a night school that offered additional help for students preparing for their final exam. The higher proportion of students from public schools may indicate that the students have less supportive learning environments in the public school that they attend or at home. However, this hypothesis should be interpreted with caution as it was not observed directly.

In general, families with higher socioeconomic status have their children studying in private schools more often than families with lower socioeconomic status (OECD 2011). This was also observed in this study as socioeconomic status was higher for the families of students studying in private schools. This indicates inequality in education opportunities for children from different socioeconomic backgrounds. This finding substantiates claims made by several educational and human rights organizations that the privatization policy in Morocco may be unlikely to reduce inequality unlike the government claims. The Moroccan government has stated that “all interventions, strategies, programs and action plans for to support children give priority to achieving equity as a goal, by reducing disparities between children from urban and rural areas, children from rich and those from disadvantaged backgrounds, and between boys and girls” (GI-ESCR 2014). However, privatization policy for education is not known for giving priority to equality but improving the financial situation of the state by reducing public spending. This is why privatization has been supported by the World Bank and why increasing privatization has often been a condition for lending money to low-income countries, such as Morocco. Unless privatization is shown to not add to inequality by conducting a high-quality independent study, it is reasonable to assume that privatization of education may increase inequality and its growth should not be promoted as uncontrollably as it is now being promoted.

The students that answered the questionnaire chose quality of education most commonly as the reason for selecting their high school. These results may indicate that students place

great value on quality of education. Regardless, it is possible that the selection of school may often be done based on proximity instead of choosing the highest ranked school in the region. In a study conducted at the University of Bristol found that travel distance is one of the main factors in choosing a school, in addition to academic attainment and socioeconomic composition (Burgess et al. 2014). The results of this study agree with their findings as the students reported proximity to school as the second most important reason for choosing the school. Interestingly, on average, the students reported that financial reasons were the least important reason for choosing the school.

Student satisfaction in general was higher for public school students in this study. There were small differences, however, such as private school students being more satisfied with the teachers' interest in helping students and public school students being more satisfied with grading policies and tests. Considering that the statistically significant results were slightly in favor of public schools and that three-quarters of the averages were higher for public school students, it appears the superiority of private schools may not be as clear as generally thought (OECD 2014).

6.2 Strengths and limitations

The greatest strength of this study was the original data (i.e. data was not collected by the government or other organization with potential bias) from a relatively large sample that was representative of the population that the policy will impact. Having used currently publicly available data would have raised the concern of whether the data is reliable. Also, drawing conclusions from the currently available statistics, such as spending on education or student enrollment ratio would have given a partial, and therefore potentially biased understanding of the issue. By using a questionnaire, all areas of quality of education could be touched upon, at least to some extent.

On the other hand, due to the limited resources, these results could not be contrasted against other data such as publicly available statistics. Finding and analyzing these data could have taken several weeks or even months. However, it would have been interesting to see if the statistical indicators would have been in agreement with the findings of this study. Another limitation that was due to limited time resources was that the questionnaire could not be pilot tested before it was administered. It is not possible to estimate the impact

of pilot testing on the outcome of this study but it may be hypothesized that as the questions were presented in a relatively simple way and the Likert scale is relatively simple, it may not have had a large impact on the results.

The academic achievement (e.g. how well do you generally perform in exams?) was not directly inquired in the questionnaire as the answers may be expected to be biased. Academic achievement could have been evaluated relatively validly and reliably by inquiring the results from the teachers. However, this was outside the scope of this work.

An important limitation, that likely did not affect the results, but reduced the amount of information that could be extracted from the study was not inquiring the participant's gender in the questionnaire. The gender was left out of the questionnaire by mistake as sufficient care was not taken to check the contents of the questionnaire sheet before administering it. Whereas interpreting the effect of gender on the quality of education would have been challenging just based on the knowledge of gender, it would have been an important aspect to include regardless. In Morocco's context, the interpretation is complicated by the fact that some of the students may be attending a mixed gender school and some single gender school. This may have been possible to inquire in the questionnaire and see if there are differences between genders as well as quality of education in mixed and single gender schools.

6.3 Implications of the results to privatization policy in Morocco

The privatization policy does not appear to be based on facts as very little research has been conducted on the impact of privatization in Morocco and developing countries in general. The results of this study as well as the results from the one-year empirical research project on primary schooling by the CMEPT and GI-ESCR have shed some light on this issue. Based on the current knowledge, it appears that the policy of privatization is not motivated purely by better quality and equality of education, contrary to what the government has stated. Moreover, given that one of the most important reasons for privatizing education is usually reduction of the country's debt, it appears as a more likely reason for this policy. While this is also an important goal, Morocco should ensure that the potentially harmful impact of privatization on quality and equality of education does not outweigh the benefits of paying back the debts. For now, Morocco should consider

postponing their deadlines for privatization goals and research the impact of the currently functioning private institutions on quality and equality of education in Morocco. Based on the results of the studies, the government should reconsider whether to continue with the policy as it currently stands or with modifications based on the better knowledge. Although unlikely, not encouraging privatization in the future might also be an option.

6.4 Generalizability

The results of this study may be generalized to some extent to students in public and private high schools that take extra classes in a night school in Casablanca, Morocco. In other words, if this study was repeated in a different night school in Casablanca, the results may be expected to be similar. However, as there is likely to be considerable variation in socioeconomic and cultural aspects as well as availability and quality of education in different areas in Morocco, these results may not be generalizable to other populations such as primary school students living in rural areas.

7 CONCLUSION

The results of this preliminary study do not support the common belief that the quality of education is better in private schools in Morocco but it appears that it may be similar for both public and private schools. However, due to this study having been conducted in just one school and the fact that student satisfaction was the only measure of quality of education, the results should be interpreted cautiously.

There is a need to review all of the available statistics on education quality and compare them between private and public schools to draw more reliable conclusions about whether Morocco should continue with the current aggressive privatization policy of education or not. Additionally, studies are needed to determine if privatization increases inequality in low-income countries, such as Morocco. If inequality appears to increase, ways to ensure equal opportunities for students in different areas with different socioeconomic statuses should be developed. In case these concerns were found to be unsubstantiated, privatization might be a viable option to reduce debt of low-income countries. For now, the policy of increasing privatization in Morocco and other low-income countries should be reconsidered until more is known about its impact on quality and equality of education.

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APPENDIX 1

Questionnaire

The purpose of this questionnaire is to know how students assess their educational experience in public or private high schools. The survey is anonymous. The answers will be compiled and used for a research study related to a master's thesis. If you used to be in a public high school and moved to a private one or the opposite please do not complete this questionnaire. Please make sure to select one answer. Thank you for your time.

My high school is public private

Reason for choosing the high school financial quality of education proximity success rate reputation

Family income low medium high

Father's education level primary school high school vocational school college/university

Mother's education level primary school high school vocational school college/university

