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Comparing the Moroccan Education System and the US Education System

According to Mansouri and Moumine in their journal titled “Outlook on Student Retention in Higher Education University Reforms in Morocco” written in 2017, 64% of students drop out of universities without a degree and many spend up to six years in these universities and still are not able to complete their degree. Additionally, nearly 1.15 million children across Morocco have either never went to school or have dropped out of school (Mansouri & Moumine, *Primary and Secondary Education*). Factors such as gender inequalities, location, and language barriers are huge contributors to the low attendance rate and high dropout rate in Morocco. While in Morocco, I was able to research these three specific factors and their relationship to education.

Gender inequalities stem from the culture and religion in Morocco. Women in Morocco rarely leave the home without their traditional dress, a headscarf and long dress, or by themselves. For instance, when staying in a homestay in Rabat, the mother of the home only left the home with her husband or her 21-year-old daughter, never alone. This is because of Moroccan culture and religion in which it is not normal for a woman to be out by herself. Even the 21-year-old daughter walks with her 22-year-old brother to school each day. Most families are not comfortable sending their young daughters to school not just because they would be alone but also because of safety issues. 73% of students report not feeling safe in their own schools (Mansouri & Moumine, *Primary and Secondary Education*). In the United States, both males and females are given equal

rights to attend school. Women are free to leave their homes as they please and have the freedom of expression.

Location of the school plays a huge factor in the low attendance rate in Morocco. Rural areas of Morocco are very different than urban areas. In rural areas, 15% of boys and 30.7% of girls between the ages 15 and 24 have never entered the school system (Mansouri & Moumine, *Primary and Secondary Education*). It is much harder for students that live in rural areas to go to school. This is because of the distance they would have to walk due to the scarcity of the schools in rural areas. While visiting the Ourika village in Marrakesh, we met three young girls who have to walk over an hour to get to school every day because transportation is not provided for them. With no transportation, attendance rate is significantly decreased in rural areas due to the lengthy distance. In contrast, in the United States, transportation to primary and secondary school is provided for children. Because of this, parents do not have to worry about their children's safety which increases the likelihood of their children attending school. In Morocco, in rural towns and villages, one out of 10 girls continue on to attend secondary school (Ennaji, 2018). The far distance students have to travel to get to school every day poses as a challenge for families and ultimately contributes to the low attendance and high dropout rates.

Both private and public universities are offered in Morocco just like the United States. Morocco has a total of 21 universities, 13 public and 8 private universities. 11 of the 13 public universities are free of cost whereas in the United States, students have to pay for both public and private universities. Additionally, families who report low incomes are entitled to a scholarship (Benahnia, 2015). Moroccan universities teach mostly in French, one of the three main languages in Morocco, the other two being Arabic and the local language called Amazigh. The mix of different languages comes from the French influence in the north and Arabic comes from the

presence of the Arab world in the south. According to Alalou, 54% of Moroccans report French as their MOI (medium of instruction), 20% chose Arabic, and 19% chose both. This mix of languages creates a complication for students as they move to higher education. While most universities in Morocco teach in French, a majority of students only speak Arabic due to the popularity of the original teaching track. This track focuses on Qura'nic teachings by using Arabic as the MOI and the Holy book of Qur'an as the main source of reference (Benahnia, 2015). It has been reported that many students enter universities "barely [knowing how to] speak and write French" which causes trouble and frustration for both the students and teachers (Alalou, 2017). The language difference poses as a barrier for students wanting to continue to higher education and a major reason for the low attendance and high dropout rates. In the United States, English is the most commonly spoken language. Students are also given the opportunity to learn other languages in school such as Spanish, German, French, and more.

While in Morocco, I obtained knowledge of the Moroccan education system from the 21-year-old sister and 22-year-old brother I was staying with. I also asked our tour guide and took notes during lectures. Although it was not impossible to find information about the education system, I did run into a few challenges. One being the amount of time I was given to conduct my research. Although I had time during my homestay, we were only there for a few nights and the brother and sister did not get home until late at night from school. Additionally, the language barrier was a huge contributor to difficulty I had collecting information. Most people we encountered did not speak English. Despite these limitations, I was able to fulfill my research question. I decided to delve into the Moroccan education system because I wanted to find out why their rates of attendance, dropout, and literacy were so different from ours. With this research, we can find ways to reform the Moroccan education system and even modify ours. I think providing

transportation for students, placing bilingual professors and teachers in schools, and emphasizing that students learn French before they enter higher education would provoke major change in the Moroccan education system.

The Moroccan education system can be both compared and contrasted to the education system in the United States. While in Morocco, I researched the differences between education in the United States and education in Morocco. More specifically, I researched why the attendance rate is lower and the dropout rate is higher in Morocco than in the United States. I discovered profound reasons for the differences in attendance and dropout rates such as the gender gap, locations of the schools, and language barriers.

Works Cited

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