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THE LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE
RESPONDING TO RAPID CHANGE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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Education in North Africa

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*A review submitted
to the
Hammamet Conference
November 2014*

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Martin Rose

Prefatory Note

This report, presented to the Hammamet Conference in November 2014, is in what might be called its 'beta-version.' The assembly of reliable statistics is not without its problems; reporting and interpretation are seldom entirely systematic. Country offices of the British Council have been helpful in supporting the writing of the report, but they and others will wish – as I wish them – to comment before the report is re-edited, finalised and published early in 2015. So I submit this document with some diffidence, and look forward to constructive engagement in the next stage of the process.

A word too, about the statistics themselves. I have used a great many, and constructed a comparative table (appendix), all in good faith. But these cannot be read without a health warning: statistics from some countries are more reliable (and more available) than others. In some cases secondary sources, often institutions of high international repute, cite figures from very different dates as comparable, and figures from a decade ago are sometimes cited without comment as though current. The bases for constructing measures vary too, and are not infrequently opaque, leading in some cases to what look like irreconcilable contradictions. I have done my best to handle the figures with care, but in the knowledge that the results are far from perfect. Figures that I cite are not always identical to those in the tables, but I have tried always to cite sources for both.

Martin Rose

30th October 2014

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Introduction

Six years ago the World Bank produced a report that is fundamental to any thinking about the whole question of education reform in the Arab World. Called *The Road Not Travelled*, it explores judiciously and carefully what had been achieved, what had yet to be achieved, and how what must still be achieved could best be.¹ At the end of the report, its authors write:

The modern history of education reform in MENA is a tale of brazen ambition, struggle against internal and external odds, unintended consequence, tactical error and success, accomplishment and unfinished business. It is also the story of the interaction of competing visions of the purpose and ends of education, pitching global trends in education strategy and content against age-old education traditions. Along this tumultuous path the region should be proud of its accomplishments. However ...²

In the years since that ‘however ...’ was penned, much has changed in North Africa. The ‘Arab Spring’ has upset the apparently static certainties of 2008,^a and released a great deal of energy, most of it from the young – the people whose education, employment and economic activity, or lack of all three, are the heart of the report. Their deep frustrations over education and unemployment – with such overwhelming impact on social betterment, personal prosperity, life-chances, marriage and happiness – are one of the main themes running through the uprisings of 2011. Their continued frustration in many places continues to shape events. If the education/employment nexus seemed important to governments in 2008, we may be sure that the social and political impact of failure to address that nexus is even better understood today.

A poignantly clear illustration of the fundamental place of education and employment in the politics of North Africa, comes from Samya Bouazizi, sister of Mohamed whose self-immolation triggered the Tunisian revolution. She told *Al-Jazeera* that “My sister was the one in university and he would pay for her, and I am still a student and he would spend

money on me.” Another sister, Basma, said “His dream was to see his sisters go to university.” The jobless vegetable-seller who had dropped out of secondary school without graduating and, in his mother’s words “didn’t expect to graduate because we didn’t have the money,” was supporting two sisters in education: *he* saw the future for his family in education, and *he* clearly thought it just as important to educate girls, as boys.³ Mohamed Bouazizi is a very potent icon of North African youth, representing many things, but perhaps above all the crushing weight of unemployment and the bright hope of education: whenever we are tempted to think in brute numbers, as macro-economists or education policymakers, it behoves us to remember Mohamed Bouazizi and his sisters.

It is of course too easy to assume geographical and cultural continuities along an axis that runs 2,280 miles from Casablanca to Cairo. There are real variants of income level (two Upper Middle Income countries and three Lower Middle Income countries by World Bank classification⁴), of political culture and of colonial history. But the shape of the challenges posed by education and the approach to solutions do have many common features, and it is useful to talk, with caution, about a closely related set of problems and achievements running from Morocco to Egypt. The UNDP’s *Arab Human Development Report*, a profoundly important series of documents, felt able to generalize over a wider spectrum than just these five countries, commenting in its 2003 volume, *Building a Knowledge Society*, that “The most serious problem facing Arab education today is its deteriorating quality;” that “curricula taught in Arab countries seem to encourage submission, obedience, subordination and compliance, rather than free critical thought;” and that there is an underlying concept of “education as an industrial process, where curricula and their content serve as moulds into which fresh minds are supposed to be poured.”⁵ Much has changed in a decade, but the stress on improving “the quality of education, a long-neglected priority in Arab societies” remains central. This is the next frontier.

Starting at Independence from a low base of literacy, education system development and the graduation of educated young men and women,

^a “North Africa is notable for the remarkable stability of its political systems despite the increasingly hostile social and economic environment in which they operate,” as George Joffé wrote in 2009 (*International Affairs* vol.85, p931)

the post-colonial governments of North Africa have been strenuous in building the education systems they felt they needed. The focus at first was of course on quantity – on getting more children into school and keeping them there, more children through post-compulsory education, more students into Higher Education, more recorded literacy. It was a very statist approach, a top-down, centralized drive that owed much to ideas of central planning, to the Nasserist Egyptian model and also, in the old French possessions, to the highly centralised education system of metropolitan France. In tune with the development ideas of the time, there was also a deliberate incentive provided, in the form of the promise of public sector employment, to pull young people into education. It was what the World Bank describes as an ‘engineering’ approach, driven and enforced from above, judging success by inputs as much as outputs; and it was quite appropriate for that first phase of reform.

In many ways, the results have been excellent. Literacy, school enrolment, gender differentials, rural education and most other measures have improved very significantly. But there is a strong sense, which forms the central argument of *The Road Not Travelled*, that this first stage of education reform has exhausted its potential, and that a new approach is needed for the next stage, a stage demanding a workforce suitable to create and support a higher-skilled, globally competitive knowledge-economy. Writing in her foreword to the report, Daniela Gressani, World Bank Vice-President for MENA, said: “Notwithstanding these successes – and the considerable resources invested in education – reforms have not fully delivered on their promises. In particular, the relationship between education and economic growth has remained weak, the divide between education and employment has not been bridged, and the quality of education continues to be disappointing.” And lest it be objected that she was writing half a decade ago, voices continue to be raised: King Mohamed VI of Morocco said, in an August 2013 speech to the nation, “I am indeed sad to note that the state of education is worse now than it was twenty years ago. ... We still have a long, arduous journey ahead of us if we are to enable this sector to actually play its

role as an engine for the achievement of economic and social advancement.”⁶ The same could be said across much of North Africa, with different emphases and different provisos, but with equal force.

Such problems are of course not unique to North Africa, and it is important to remember that Western countries are facing many analogous problems, albeit on a different scale and with different resources to tackle them. This is particularly so at the tertiary level, where the rapid growth of Higher Education – which in French is called *massification* – has made necessary major structural change to the whole system of education, and radical changes to its financing, in many Western countries. In Great Britain university education has been extended from under 10% to over 45% of the age-group in little more than a generation, with huge and still controversial consequences. The same arguments about the purpose and utility of education, to the state and to the individual, are being worked out at all levels. It isn’t always comfortable, and there are unhappy champions of liberal education for its own sake in Great Britain as in North Africa, who are deeply uncomfortable with the utilitarian and employment-focused approach that the World Bank carries so effectively forward. But as David Willetts, until recently Secretary of State and a stout champion of education reform, wrote in a newspaper article recently, they are not mutually exclusive, and utility is, in truth, seldom far from any student’s mind:

Going to university is worthwhile in its own right. It deepens our understanding and broadens the mind. But for some people going to university is mainly a transaction to get a well-paid job. The great Robbins report of 1963 put it like this: “Confucius said in the Analects that it was not easy to find a man who had studied for three years without aiming at pay. We deceive ourselves if we claim that more than a small fraction of students in institutions of higher education would be where they are if there were no significance for their future careers in what they hear and read; and it is a mistake to suppose that there is anything discreditable in this.” So caring about employability is not new and not the betrayal of some previous golden age of innocence.⁷

This is as relevant to the prosperity of nations as of individuals, because development requires a

well-educated, innovative and flexible workforce. Mohamed Bouazizi's concern for his sisters' education was for their futures: the state's concern for the same girls' education must also be for its own.

Education reform

The countries of North Africa have a combined population of well over 170 million, with an exceptionally large 'youth bulge,' the demographic expansion that has come later to MENA than to many other developing regions of the world. The proportion of the North African population under the age of 14 varies by country, from 23% in Tunisia to 31% in Egypt; and its 'youth population,' those between 15 and 24, ranges from 27% in Libya and Tunisia to 31% in Egypt. Nowhere, in other words, is the proportion of the population younger than 24 years old less than 50%, and at the high end, in Egypt, it reaches 62%. The relatively good news is that the rate of growth is easing, and that only Libya and Egypt can expect to see continued growth of their youth population between now and 2050 (by 4% and 10% respectively), while Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia should see drops of 16%, 13% and 20%.⁸ The bulge will, however, continue up through the education system, peaking much earlier in Tunisia and Algeria than in Morocco and Libya, where primary demand will peak only in 2020-30.⁹

The challenge of educating this enormous slice of population is a very great one, and the particular challenge is to cope with the bulge as it moves up through the system, at different speeds in different countries. Greater still is the closely related challenge of finding the educated young suitable employment at the end of their education, and bringing the excluded, uneducated or defectively educated, young into a structure of skilled employment. North Africa has the highest rate of youth unemployment of any region in the world, at 24%, and a youth labour force participation rate of 38%,^b the lowest in the world apart from that for MENA as a whole (36%).¹⁰

^b The ETF puts it even lower, at 33.2% (Ummahum Bradak, *Labour Market and Education*, IEMed Mediterranean Yearbook 2014)

The governments of North Africa have certainly not ignored this problem. Spending on education by the five countries of North Africa has been some of the highest in the world both as a proportion of their GDP and as a proportion of their government budgets. Broadly speaking they have spent 5% of GDP and 20% of government budget on education over the past 40 years, which compares astonishingly well – in headline terms - with the United Kingdom's figures (2012) of 6.2% and 13.3%. There is a clear understanding that education is fundamental to economic development, and that it is also both a non-negotiable pillar of identity-building in a newly fledged - or re-fledged - state, and a basic right to be enjoyed by all citizens. In all five countries the right to an education is guaranteed in the constitution; and in all five that education is effectively free to the user.

Not surprisingly, therefore, the main measures of success are quantitative. Having inherited education systems that were geared in the Maghreb to the children of European *colons*, and in Egypt to the Egyptian elite, the independent states judged performance by expanded coverage. So, as Spencer Segalla writes of Morocco, "only 13 percent of children of primary school age attended school in 1956, and only 2.25 percent of secondary school age – and Morocco's population explosion had barely begun."¹¹ Pierre Vermeren reports that at Independence Morocco counted 640 native graduates, and Tunisia, 1300.¹² In Algeria, "less than one-third of school-age Muslim children were enrolled in schools at the primary level. At the secondary and university levels, only 30 percent and 10 percent of the students, respectively, were Algerians."¹³ As for Egypt, the situation was a little better: "At the time of the 1952 Revolution, fewer than 50 percent of all primary-school-age children attended school, and the majority of the children who were enrolled were boys. Nearly 75 percent of the population over ten years of age was illiterate."¹⁴

Extension of education was the order of the day, and its measures are the three component measures of the second Millennium Development Goal (MDG2), that is of achieving universal primary education for boys and girls alike by 2015. These are the *Net*

Enrolment Ratio at primary level, the *Retention Ratio* (from first to last year of primary) and the *Youth (15-24) Literacy Rate*.

In the first, North Africa has made great progress and is very close to achieving the goal of 100%. From 80% net enrolment in 1990, the region reached 90% in 2000, and 99% in 2010. Retention was well over 90%.¹⁵ As for youth literacy (which reached 94.69% in MENA in 2011) progress has also been impressive in North Africa, with reported youth literacy rates in 2011 ranging from 81.51% in Morocco to 99.92% in Libya. Within these figures, all countries had a maximum gap of 5% between boys and girls, except for Egypt (with a gender gap of 8.3%) and Morocco (14.8%).¹⁶ And perhaps most spectacular of all, the entirely unschooled, those who never touch the education system at all, in the wider MENA region have dropped by 40-50% between 1975 and 2005.¹⁷

As for gender equity, there has been much progress. There remain gender differentials in enrolment and attendance at primary, and there are significant distances still between countries, but the trend in all cases is towards this gap's closing further. The 2012 Gender Parity Index in education (though the data are frustratingly incomplete) shows figures ranging from 0.94 (Algeria) to 0.98 (Tunisia). At secondary, the gap opens up a little between three countries (Algeria, Libya and Tunisia) seeing female enrolment exceed male, with scores of 1.04-1.18; and Egypt (0.98) and Morocco (0.86). At tertiary the gap opens further: Algeria (1.48), Libya (1.1) and Tunisia (1.59) are over par: Egypt (0.96) and Morocco (0.89) slightly below.¹⁸

However, the story can be fleshed out further in at least two ways. First, by looking at unemployment: here the differentials between young (15-24) male and female unemployment are very marked. In all countries where statistics are available, female unemployment in the 15-24 bracket is higher than male, in some case enormously so: Algeria has female youth unemployment of 39.7% (against 24.8%) for youth overall); Egypt 53% (against 29.7%); and Tunisia 45.4% (against 42.3%). Only in Morocco is the female youth unemployment rate, at 18.1%, lower than that for youth generally. Of

Libya it can only be said, without the capacity to drill down, that youth unemployment stands at 48.7%.¹⁹

Graduates fare significantly worse than the norm, and in one analysis of Algeria show *differences* in unemployment between male and female graduates of different faculties of 29.7% (social sciences), 25.8% (science) and 30.3% (engineering).²⁰

Finally, it is perhaps worth noting here that the UNDP's Gender Inequality Index places Libya 55th in the world, Tunisia 90th, Algeria 93rd, Egypt 125th and Morocco 129th – placings which drop significantly in the newer and more unsparring (because it is a purely arithmetical comparison of HDI scores for the two sexes) Gender Development Index, to 93rd, 116th, 129th, 125th and 132nd.

At the basic level, albeit with some of the reservations outlined above, much has been achieved, and we can go further and look at the enrolment rates for secondary and tertiary, the number of students graduating from Higher Education Institutions, and gender ratios at different levels, and find similar progress. Although there is real concern that enrolment successes are being diluted by high drop-out and repetition rates, there is much to be satisfied with, as long as progress continues in the countries lower on the scale: these five countries started half a century ago from a very low inherited base and have put in place, at considerable cost, the infrastructure for universal education and the creation, so far only in part, of an educated workforce. It is no mean achievement.

Next problems: quality, employment and economic growth

And yet all in the garden is not quite as rosy as it seems. Daniela Gressani, quoted above, highlighted three underlying problems: quality, employment and economic growth. *The Road Not Travelled* identifies the first two as the prime targets of the next, vital, stage of education reform, and is very clear that the tools that have been effective in the first stage – top-down engineering of inputs and allocation of resources, backed by enforcement of

compliance - will not be sufficient to drive the next. To understand why, it is necessary to look at each in turn to see where the first 40 years of education reform have reached their high water mark.

Quality

The quality of education is a huge challenge. One of the dangers of a wholly state-driven system, by its nature largely cut off from any competitive market in education, is that measurements are, or become, internally referenced. In the most extreme example of this, Tunisia's schools examination system has no external component until the baccalaureate exam at the end of secondary school – and even this has an input of 25% from the examinee's own school. In many, perhaps most, of the countries being considered, a largely closed internal circulation of educational goods has been established in which quality can easily become a secondary consideration. Teachers are deeply involved in private tutoring in Morocco, Egypt and Tunisia, so that the education that is a child's by right risks being broken down into free and commercialized segments, the latter indispensable for passing exams.

With a rigidly exam-based system that relies heavily on rote-memorisation, and largely exam-based promotion from level to level of education, this has the unhealthy result of making each qualification an end (sometimes effectively tradable) in itself. The ultimate valuation of the mere fact of a certificate over its content and real value has been called the 'sheepskin effect,' and tends to the devaluation of the whole educational system. The OECD commissioned a very interesting 'integrity audit' of the Tunisian educational system in 2013, which highlighted this unhealthy informal market, noting that 70% of all Tunisian secondary finalists had, at one time or another, taken private lessons – and that an astonishing 54% of secondary students took private lessons from the same teacher who taught them in class.²¹ Tunisia is not unique in facing this conundrum – but it is unique in courageously exposing itself to this very uncomfortable external analysis. According to CAPMAS (Egypt's central statistics agency), over 60% of

all education investment in Egypt goes into private tutoring.²²

This represents a nest of very difficult problems. Pedagogical traditions play a great part in the very teacher-centred, memorisation-based and exam-focused system that is found across the region. These traditions are both from the Islamic educational history of all five countries, where memorisation and recital (of the Qur'an and other texts) has been a central core for many centuries; and from the colonial French (and British) legacies which continue to cast a shadow over teaching methods long after Europe has moved on to much more pupil-centred methods and more open systems of assessment.

There are moves however towards external measurement, and while the results themselves are often troubling, the impact of international comparison is very important. Tunisia took part in PISA 2009, the only country in this group to do so.²³ Morocco has participated in all TIMSS and PIRLS exercises since 1999; Tunisia has done the same for TIMSS since 1999, and Egypt joined TIMSS briefly in 2003 and 2007. This participation, the more so if (as in Morocco's and Tunisia's cases) it is consistent, is highly creditable. It has to be said, though, that the recorded results serve to underline the gap between system-engineering for quantitative impact and the focus on quality that is now so badly needed. Taking only the most recent, 2011, TIMSS and PIRLS exercises (which confines the focus to Tunisia and Morocco) shows the scale of the still-remaining challenge in two countries that have traditionally been viewed as one of the foremost and one of the more challenged, of the five under consideration.²⁴

In TIMSS, applied at Grade 4 to test maths, Morocco and Tunisia both ranked in the lowest three of the 45 participating countries, with only 26% and 35% respectively of children tested passing the 'Low International Benchmark,' beside an International Median of 90%. (The LIB is the lowest of the four levels measured: below it, in Morocco, well over 25% of students had results too low to be reliably scored at all; in Tunisia this unmeasurable band stood at 15-

25%.^c) At Grade 8, the situation improved a bit, with 61% of Tunisian students and 36% of Moroccans reaching the LIB (with an International Median, at this higher level, of 75%). At neither level did either country record any statistically significant achievement at the top level, the Advanced International Benchmark (AIB). What is particularly striking is that the only comparisons possible, for Tunisia, show a slight improvement over the years at Grade 4, but a significant *decline* at Grade 8 since a peak in 1999. Only at the HIB has Tunisia reached its 1999 Grade 8 score again in 2014: at the Intermediate International Benchmark (IIB) the 2011 score is 25%, against 34% in 1999; and at the LIB, 61% against 78% in 1999. Egypt also showed a significant decline in achievement between its two participations, and in 2007 53% of Egyptian students didn't reach the LIB in maths; 45% fell below it in science.

PIRLS, which tests literacy, and runs alongside TIMSS, tells a not dissimilar story, though Morocco is alone in participating. Applied in Grade 4 (2011), it shows 21% of Moroccan students reaching the LIB (with an International Median of 95%), 7% the IIB (International Median 80%) and 1% the HIB (44%). Morocco also entered Grade 6 students for the Grade 4 test, naturally with better results: 61% reached the LIB, 30% the IIB and 7% the HIB: but in neither case did any statistically significant number of students reach the AIB, and again, "more than 25%" of students scored too low to be marked at all.

In taking Morocco and Tunisia as examples, it needs iterating that both countries have exposed themselves courageously to international comparison in the belief that this will help them to improve quality as, if used well, it will. But it also illustrates the limitations of the quantitative approach to education reform. Expansion can go only so far – the next, real, challenge is deepening. Literacy is a very good example of this dilemma. On the one hand, literacy figures

^c The four benchmarks are, in ascending order, the Low International Benchmark (LIB), the Intermediate International Benchmark (IIB), the High International Benchmark (HIB) and the Advanced International Benchmark (AIB). The 'unmeasurable' band comprises those whose scores do not pass the level of random answer-selection.

as scored for the MDGs and 'Education for All' are bounding ahead reassuringly: Morocco's youth literacy rate is 82%, Tunisia's 97%.²⁵ These figures date from 2011, the same year as the PIRLS scores cited above, and it is hard to reconcile Morocco's 82% youth literacy with the fact that only 21% of Moroccan Grade 4 students reached even the lowest threshold of the PIRLS literacy assessment, and "more than 25%" scored too low to be meaningfully assessed. The gap between the two figures is richly symbolic of the present challenge.

There are of course many more indicators of quality, and it is certainly true that several of the countries under consideration have made significant changes to their inspection and Quality Assurance regimes, though particularly at the tertiary level. Tunisia, Egypt and Libya have Quality Assurance agencies; Morocco and Algeria are *en route* to doing so. But the figures still speak, thus far, for themselves.

Employment

Dr Gressani's second major area of concern was the labour market. The essential question is how to translate education into economic growth, and this involves bridging the currently yawning gap between the region's education systems and its employment markets. This problem needs to be approached from two ends: that of the adaptation of education to the needs of increasingly sophisticated labour market demands and the employment opportunities the market makes available; and that of the market's present inability to absorb the steady outflow of young people from schools, colleges and HEIs who need productive employment. The main focus here is on the educational – supply - end of the equation, but the demand side is also crucial, not least because of the huge and suffocating presence of the public sector as an employer-of-choice and dominant presence right across the region, with its startling power to deform the education system.

North Africa has very high rates of youth unemployment, and the disturbing phenomenon of a labour market in which education seems, in many cases, to *retard* the individual's future, and to diminish chances of employment (though of

course always relative to the opportunities that job-seekers deem appropriate and acceptable). In Egypt those with secondary education make up 42% of the population and 80% of the unemployed; in Algeria those figures are 20% and 40%; and in Morocco 16% and 30%.²⁶ In other words educated unemployment runs at about double the national unemployment rate in each country.

Graduate unemployment in particular – *le chômage diplômé* – is a particular scourge in all five countries. In Tunisia, where the problem is arguably a little less ineluctably structural, the 33.2% graduate unemployment figure is below the general rate of 37.6%, but still progressive in a very negative sense: Master's degree holders, a mere 15% of the Tunisian student population, make up 55% of the graduate unemployed.²⁷ In Algeria, 20.3% of graduates are unemployed, against a global unemployment figures of 9.8% (though 24.3% of 15-24 year olds are unemployed); in Morocco 22.7%, against 8.9% globally (and 17.6% for 15-24 year olds); Egypt sees 19% graduate unemployment as against a global 12% (and a youth figure of 17%).²⁸ Libya is more difficult to call, but “World Bank estimates show that youth unemployment has remained at about 50%, *with the majority of unemployed holding university degrees* (my italics).”²⁹ This is a perverse and soul-destroying environment for the young, their efforts often unrewarded, their aspirations crushed. “It seems,” as one UNDP report drily puts it, writing of Egypt, “true that an educated person is at no advantage when it comes to finding his/her way in the job market. In fact the opposite seems to be true.”³⁰

However, it needs to be stressed that, heart-breaking as graduate unemployment certainly is, it is in a rather grim sense a luxury available to those who can afford to be unemployed. Many are prepared to suffer hardship, and if available to rely on family support, rather than take work that they feel unsuitable – or forego the prospect of public employment. Often this means that, as one analyst comments, “those who can afford to spend time queuing for public sector jobs, with the expectation of relatively high pay for low productivity,” do so. The same analyst points out that there is a greater unemployment problem hidden in the statistics

– that of the NEEETs^d who fall outside the statistics altogether. When the figures for youth employment, unemployment and education are added together, they total only about 60-70% of the youth cohort. This means that 30-40% of the 15-24 bracket are invisible: effectively uneducated, excluded and without any stable employment, the NEEETs. Egypt has some 35.9% of the 15-24 group (and 40,5% of 15-29s) in this condition; Tunisia 25.4% (and 32.2% of 15-29s). Young women are hugely overrepresented amongst NEEETs: Egypt's 40.5% breaks down into 9.3% of young men and 49.5% of young women; Tunisia's 32.2% into 22.4% of men, 42.2% of women. Bringing as many as possible of these young people back into education through second chances and adult education schemes is a vital need in all countries, and not highly enough prioritised.³¹

Employability

The figures indicate that something is very wrong, and understanding it goes a long way towards unravelling the puzzle of education reform in North Africa. The fundamental challenge is of course the changing global economy. A globalised knowledge-based economy demands “a well-educated, technically skilled workforce producing high-value-added, knowledge-intensive goods and services ... in enterprises that have the managerial capacity to find, adapt and adopt modern up-to-date technology and sell sophisticated goods and services in local and global markets.”³² A low-educated and inflexible workforce is no longer the answer to any country's development needs, and the education systems of North Africa are not yet producing anything like enough graduates at each level equipped with the transversal skills, the ‘expert thinking’ and the ‘complex communication’ capacity that the world now demands, and which their countries need if they are to build really competitive international economies. And the modern knowledge economy is not optional: the traditional post-Independence low-skill-labour economies have not produced the growth needed to absorb the region's young productively. There is no going back.

^d ‘Not in Employment, Education or Training.’

The problems that the education systems of the region either creates or fails to solve are in many ways the outcomes of the quantitative period of education reform. Low levels of effective – as opposed to headline – literacy militate against the creation of a skilled workforce right from the start; the disjointed language policy visible particularly, but not exclusively, in Morocco and Tunisia, disrupts education progress all the way through the process. ‘Teaching to the test,’ emphasizes the ability to memorize and repeat factual information, not the ability to think critically.

On top of this there are a number of serious, structural problems which are found across the region. The first is the whole area of vocational education (TVET), and its failure to produce a significant class of skilled technicians, adapted to the modern economy. The second is that of the magnetic attraction of the Public Sector as employer of first choice. And the third is the difficulty that all countries have had adapting academic courses and their graduates to the needs of the market. These three problems are closely interrelated. The public sector has traditionally offered jobs to graduates in the humanities and social sciences, and a shrinking public sector has left many of these graduates stranded, with skills that are not useful elsewhere. The academic route through the baccalaureate to university has been so overwhelmingly more prestigious in all countries than the TVET route, that the latter has much more often been seen as a sign of failure than as a route to specialized employment. And none of the countries has created the conditions for a lightly regulated private sector, confident in its security and its financing, able easily to hire and invest in staff and create wealth.

Public Sector preference

The dominance of the Public Sector in employment is a phenomenon that is shared by all North African, and most Arab, countries, though it has now begun to be seriously addressed in several. It is the result of early post-Independence development needs for administrative staff (including teachers, who are civil servants throughout the region); and it has also been the lure – the reward – for

commitment by young men and women to extending their education. It took the form of a guarantee, formal or tacit, of employment for graduates in the public service. It was in that sense a social elevator, and quickly became a very important part of each country’s employment landscape (perhaps at its most acute in Egypt and Morocco).

Its attractions, compared to a private sector that was small and in many cases marginalized for ideological reasons, and to a large, often chaotic and generally insecure informal sector, were clear: security, prestige and relatively high reward, generally including pension rights. As higher education expanded, so did the public sector workforce, “responding to the demand for guaranteed, secure jobs by the middle and upper classes.”³³ It would be wrong to imagine that public sector employees accepted lower salaries than they might have earned in the private sector (had it had the capacity to absorb them) in return for these advantages. Rewards were generally good. By the first decade of this century, the 22% of Tunisians in the public sector were absorbing 63% of the government’s total budget; the 10% of Moroccans were carrying away 51% of the budget; the 29% of Algerians, 31%, and the 29% of Egyptian workers in the public sector earned 29% of the government budget. Of Libya, where comparable figures are not available, it perhaps needs only to be said that 66% of the entire workforce was on the public payroll in 2000.³⁴ These figures are declining with retrenchment, but the expectations created by public sector recruitment, and the inability of the private sector to take up the slack, are powerful motors of youth discontent. Unemployment is corrosive.

Figures for preference are interesting. Of the five countries, the preference for public over private employment expressed by youths in the 15-34 age bracket was highest in Egypt, at about 60% of those polled in 2010. Tunisia runs second, with ca. 55%, followed by Algeria at ca. 44%, Morocco at ca. 38% and Libya at ca. 14%.³⁵ (The Libyan figure may mean something a little different to the others – in an economy where 66% of employment was in the public sector anyway, frustrations and ambitions may have been imaginatively different, at least in

2010.) The UK, in comparison, saw a high public sector employment preference amongst students of 29% (2011), even as major public sector cuts began to have their impact.

Re-engineering of public sector employment practices has proceeded (as it has in the UK), notably in Morocco, but the intense resistance there from unemployed graduates who see “non-competitive and unconditional absorption” into the *fonction publique* as theirs by right, shows little sign of abating, and the issue is a regular political football.

Among the various identifiable results (which include unsustainable public pension bills), are an ingrained risk-aversion amongst students: the combination of security, prestige and high reward are irresistible and make the public service a preferred destination for many, and in some cases most, students. Since public sector hiring has been largely based on the simple fact of having a degree rather than on an identifiable set of skills or aptitudes, it has been a damper on change in education. As one commentator puts it: “the public sector not only regulates the educational and training system – with very little involvement of employers – but also is its main client;” and “as a result, the education system has created signals for public sector hiring rather than equipping graduates with the employability capital needed to succeed in the wider labour market.”³⁶ There are even cases (as in Morocco) where disadvantageous changes to the trade-in value of different higher degrees in public service recruitment have resulted in significant abandonment of higher studies, suggesting that the purpose of such study is, in some cases at least, largely ‘sheepskin.’

Since in terms of public sector recruitment, ‘a degree is a degree is a degree,’ large-scale public sector hiring tends to cluster students in the low-cost, open access faculties – the humanities and social sciences (H&SS). Once again this is part of a vicious circle, whereby a demand for ‘sheepskin’ promotes its production. The scaling-back of public sector recruitment leaves large numbers of H&SS graduates beached, with skill-sets generally unsuitable for work anywhere else: “to increase the chances of receiving a public sector job, young people chose higher education degrees that are not relevant to the

private sector.”³⁷ In Algeria, students in H&SS (including education) represent 54.6% of the total student body; in Egypt 76.2%; in Morocco 75.4%; in Libya 48.6%; and in Tunisia 49%.³⁸ Where it is possible to attribute unemployment by subjects studied, the results are predictable: one analyst of Algeria notes that 27.3% of humanities graduates and 28.7% of social science graduates are unemployed, against 18.1% for science graduates and 14.8% of engineers (with a huge weighting against women, whose unemployment rates are 19.7% higher than men’s in the humanities and 29.7% higher in the social sciences).³⁹

Of Morocco, Driss Guerraoui, the country’s leading expert on graduate unemployment writes: “Unemployment affects principally those educated in Arabic Literature, Islamic Studies, biology, chemistry and physics, who in 2010 made up more than 80% of the graduate unemployed recorded in the database of the Prime Minister’s Department.”⁴⁰ (Why the sciences? Because they are studied for entry into the public sector as teachers, rather than for industrial research, their graduates are all too often one-trick ponies: if unsuccessful in competition for teacher-recruitment, they are not well equipped for other employment.)

Reform here is under way, more advanced in some countries than others. Tunisia, for example, has begun tentatively to reallocate students to ‘applied’ courses with better employment prospects. Somewhat hamstrung by the traditional use of public sector employment as a safety-valve for wider unemployment, governments across the region are nonetheless managing to scale it back. Egypt has done so with some success: while 20% of men and 50% of women born in 1978 could expect their first job to be in the public sector, those figures are now down to 5% and 20%.⁴¹

However, aspirations may be harder to shift than realities, and, and the consequences of the widespread public sector preference will resonate in education for years to come, by condoning the acquisition of certificates rather than a portfolio of skills, by encouraging the over-subscription of university courses with low employment value in the private sector, and by

turning a significant proportion of students against the idea of private sector employment.

Vocational and Technical Education

Technical and Vocational Education (TVET) should be creating a by-pass around this academic blockage by producing skilled workers ready for a changing employment market. Unfortunately, on the whole, it is not.

After Independence or (in Egypt's case) revolution, countries that had had a large European population filling skilled jobs faced the immediate challenge of training technicians to replace those departing. Each of the five North African countries moved to build a system for training young people in trades and skills at all levels, and each of the systems was designed and operated with excellent intentions.

But each of them found that with the best will in the world it is hard to maintain 'parity of esteem,' and all too easy for the TVET route to become seen as a second-class education. This is of course particularly clear in societies where the academic degree is a prized status-symbol, and where the most prestigious and desirable career-path – the public sector – depends on academic certification. Generalizing about the region, the World Bank noted in 2013 that education needs to be made “more inclusive, more directed towards learning, and less directed towards selecting and exclusively rewarding the academically able while leaving the rest behind.”⁴²

In addition, because TVET is generally cheaper on a per capita basis than its academic equivalent at all levels it has often been used as a pressure-valve to take the strain off secondary schools and universities when swelling enrolment has begun to overstrain education budgets.⁴³ In the only cases for which World Bank data is available, Algeria and Libya spent 7.5% and 14% of their education budgets on TVET at the most recent report (2007 and 2008 respectively): for up to a third of the age-cohort this does not seem lavish.

In all countries there are different routes into TVET, at different levels. The first is generally straight from basic education into a technical

stream or college for secondary education: this forking of paths takes up to a third of all students out of the academic stream, and although there is generally no option of returning, some at least will proceed to technical colleges at tertiary. Others will leave the general secondary stream without completing and find their way into TVET at tertiary: but unforced transfer in this direction appears very rare. So suspicious are many families of the quality of education offered that in Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia secondary technical colleges are regularly undersubscribed.⁴⁴ “The share of VET at upper secondary is extremely small,” as the ETF's Labour Market Specialist puts it, “in all Arab Mediterranean Countries with the exception of Egypt.”⁴⁵

There has in fact been a decline in TVET enrolment globally, but the biggest drop between 1999 and 2009 was in the Arab states, where TVET declined from around 35% to just over 20% of total secondary enrolments. In Egypt this is mirrored with a drop from around 30% to just over 20%, though Tunisia actually saw growth (from ca. 10% to ca. 14%).

An Egyptian employer is quoted by the World Bank as expressing a preference for hiring those who have *not* gone through the system;⁴⁶ and two Enterprise Surveys in 2007 and 2008 which questioned employers, exploring the barriers to recruitment, saw 50% of Egyptian employers citing labour skill levels as a major barrier to business creation, followed by 37% of Algerians and 31% of Moroccans.⁴⁷

Clearly there is much that needs doing in this sector, whether by governments directly or, as the World Bank recommends, by private and NGO suppliers. It is interesting to note the comment, again by the World Bank, that the Don Bosco Institute, a highly reputed TVET college in Egypt run by Italian Salesian brothers, “offers three and five year diplomas that provide a path to employment, decent pay and career progression – the very elements lacking in most public TVET institutions.” And that is quite a comprehensive lack.

TVET is a major focus of EC bilateral aid work; and the European Training Foundation's GEMM project is attacking this problem with its

partners in all five countries. It focuses on three important objectives. The first is aligning TVET 'supply' with Labour Market 'demand,' and refining labour market information systems, in a bid to make the system more attractive to students. The second is to support development of integrated TVET governance systems. And the third is to support the development of common QA systems. It is notable that Algeria, Libya and Egypt are signed up to projects under strand one (alignment); Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco and Egypt to projects under strand two (governance and structure); but only Tunisia to strand three on quality assurance.⁴⁸

Labour markets

A very short word about labour markets is worth adding, as the last piece in this jigsaw puzzle. Not perhaps normally part of a consideration of education systems, it is nonetheless vital to note that the nature and workings of the labour markets in all five countries militate against easy absorption of educated youth, and easy adaptability of the skills portfolios that they bring with them to those markets.

As observed at length above, the Public Sector looms large in any thinking about flexible labour markets, and its slow retrenchment is a necessary prerequisite of real change. A large part of its place – and of that of the informal economy, which understandably does not tempt many graduates – must be taken by private enterprises which can use the region's human capital to create wealth. So labour market inflexibilities, the very high costs of hiring and firing (particularly in Morocco and Tunisia), the complex regulatory framework in which firms must operate, and in several of the countries we are considering, high levels of perceived corruption, all inhibit the growth of a formal private sector.

It is illuminating to look at the rankings in the WEF's *Global Competitiveness Survey 2014-15*: on the pillar of 'Labour Market Efficiency,' Morocco stands 122nd out of 177 ranked globally, Libya 137th, Egypt 142nd and Algeria 144th (Tunisia is not ranked). The WEF's assessment of overall 'Quality of Education' in

the context of competitiveness is also sobering: Morocco again leads at 105th, followed by Algeria at 131st, Egypt 139th and Libya 142nd.⁴⁹

Only a thriving private sector can realistically create the businesses that will hire graduates in sufficient numbers to influence the content of the education they receive, and the WEF, at least, still harbours reservations on the score not only of the crucial labour markets, but also of the underlying quality of education. Both are indispensable in creating an environment conducive to local business expansion and deeper FDI.

Prescriptions

The problems are fairly clear – and so are the achievements, the “tremendous gains in education” that the World Bank acknowledges and their clear social benefits. The question is how to get from *here* to where the region needs to arrive. *The Road Not Travelled* argues that in an environment where regional educational budgets are probably at maximum stretch, amongst the highest in the world as a proportion of GDP and government spending, further progress needs to be smart and cost-effective, using resources better, creating efficiencies and drawing on external sources of income.

The Bank argues further that the potential of the top-down approach, which it refers to as 'engineering,' is more or less exhausted. Engineering has been the dominant methodology of the period of expansion, but it is not nearly as suitable for the next phase, the deepening, quality-focussed campaign to make education serve the needs of job-hungry individuals, skills-hungry employers and development-hungry governments. This can only be done with different tools, and these the Bank identifies primarily as *incentivisation* and *public accountability*.

Incentives need to replace the compliance regime of inspectorates largely devoted to procedural enforcement, and public accountability to replace the limited accountability that is essentially internal to the educational bureaucracy and largely bypasses both students and their families. This is usefully described in terms of the 'principal-agent

dilemma,' a term taken from industrial organization: the puzzle of how to align systems so that the people you need to do things for you are positioned in such a way that they become *self*-motivated to do what you want them to do. Instead of agents – teachers, schools, inspectors, local education authorities – who are able to deliver quantitative targets and mandatory change because they are chased to do so and know how to operate (and sometimes to manipulate) the system, with no incentive to excel, the next phase of education reform and development demands agents whose rewards are geared to the qualitative progress that they make, the qualitative results they deliver. This demands a much more 'intelligent' education system, one in which not only does incentivisation drive teachers and administrators to exceed such targets; but in which the best institutions can thrive without undue bureaucratic impediment. Much greater transparency, accessible performance data, increased autonomy and an element of choice are powerful parts of the prescription.

Choice is of course an interesting concept in what are largely state education systems, though we have noted the tendency to express choice in one dimension by moving out of TVET in at least three countries. At school level the formal private education sector – another dimension of choice - in all five countries is fairly small. Algeria has 0.5% of its pupils at both primary and secondary in private institutions; Tunisia 2.4% and 0.5%; Egypt 7.8% and 5.5%; and Morocco 12.9% and 4.8%.⁵⁰ But in several of these cases it is growing fast – and in any case, the urge to vote by choosing is expressed very often through buying educational top-up services, rather than by opting out of state provision entirely – in Egypt, as noted above, some 60% of all educational investment goes into private tutoring, a very clear statement to which any thinking government must respond.

Choice, though, is vital. The Bank's analysis of success factors sums up (and I oversimplify vastly) by highlighting two: the first is the creative *mixture* of old-fashioned, centralised 'system-engineering' with incentivisation and public accountability in very different national cocktails; the second is the increased role of the private sector. This last is limited, but given

careful regulation and monitoring can be a very powerful stimulus to quality of delivery. The management of a mixed education sector, one where the public predominates but the private is a vital stimulus, comparator and sometimes too, a reproach, is an art that must be learned. The World Bank and the British Council ran a joint mission to Malaysia for North African university presidents in 2013 to look at exactly this question of how a mixed sector can be managed by the state in order to stimulate standards and healthy competition.

The success of this prescription at any level "requires a strong regulatory regime and a special attention to issues of equity. It should also be recognized that the role of the private sector in education is likely to remain limited into the foreseeable future. Thus, no country can afford to slack in its effort at reforming public schools." This means reforms to pedagogy, autonomy, transparency and the restructuring of rewards and careers to promote qualitative success.⁵¹

Incentivisation and choice are in their infancy. There is no case in the region where results-linked payment to teachers has been successfully tried out, largely because the profession is shaped as part of the civil service, with payment and promotion by seniority and reward that is not linked in any direct way to success. Opacity is still more common than transparency in many cases, and the teaching profession is often not keen to see more of the latter, as the Moroccan Ministry of Education discovered in 2014 when it rolled out an excellently conceived, system-wide information management tool called *Massar*. There was vociferous resistance from the teaching unions, pupils and parents, to the whole concept of transparency, which seemed to threaten all sorts of private arrangements, absences, second jobs and quiet obscurities by recording teacher and pupil attendance, marks, test results and many other details on a national database.

It is also worth noting here that there are other dimensions of choice which tend to create parallel tracks of education, and sometimes of employment. In several countries there remain quasi-traditional education systems in informal Islamic pre-schools, *msids*, which articulate with

the national systems in different ways. Often simply used as a pre-school option, Islamic education in Egypt and Morocco also shapes an entire parallel track, from infancy to graduation, run by Cairo's al-Azhar, and Fes's Qairouyyine respectively. Supervised by the state, these institutions bear a considerable load (particularly in Egypt where the Al-Azhar system covers 10.3% of all children in education) and occupy a slightly uneasy middle ground where quality and employability are not easy to judge. There are also what one might describe as 'extra-territorial' options in the form of foreign schools, of which the most remarkable are Morocco's *lycées de mission*, schools owned and run by the French government, which train Morocco's francophone elite. Graduates of these lycées are heavily represented among the 30,000 Moroccan students in France and the 500 or so who qualify annually for the Grandes Ecoles; and amongst those who are recruited directly into the private sector labour market through job fairs run in Paris by Moroccan companies.

Finding the balance between 'engineering' management and next generation smart management is a tricky series of choices. Private education will yield benefits if it is on offer predominantly at post-compulsory levels (and coupled with state support to poorer students), while the state provides a universal high quality primary offer. But this has to be engineered through regulation, because the 'easy money' is at private primary provision. And where competitive advantage for their children is permitted to be offered in this way, parents who can afford it will take it. In fact the figures cited above reveal that the bulk of private schooling is being offered and taken up not at post-compulsory, but at primary level, with results that will tend to reinforce, not reduce, inequalities. This unintended consequence mirrors an imbalance of investment whereby Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia spend 1.52, 2.56 and 1.53 times as much per capita on public secondary as on public primary education (and Tunisia and Morocco spend 1.88 and 2.66 times as much, respectively, on each tertiary student as on each secondary pupil.⁵²

With enrolment and attendance rising, and set to rise much further at the higher levels of the education systems, this gearing of costs will

place huge additional pressures on education budgets: "The region has steadily reallocated resources from primary to secondary and tertiary education, but not enough to offset the increased enrolment at higher levels of instruction."⁵³ With education spending already at very high levels, it is a zero-sum game, and results in the under-resourcing of basic education, with two results – under-educating those whose education consists only of the basic level; and building shaky foundations for those who go on to secondary and tertiary in greater and greater numbers. Inclusivity would seem to demand a re-ordering of priorities here, one which would be of huge benefit in tackling the underperformance revealed in TIMSS and PIRLS scores, applying as they do to the whole school population of each country.

A similar need for intervention is very clear in the distribution of undergraduate courses, where Tunisia has led the way in pushing students towards courses that will tend to increase their employment prospects. The preponderance of H&SS graduates across the region is partly, as noted, a question of public sector recruitment processes; but it is also a reflection of financial pressures. Put crudely, the unit cost of an H&SS student is low compared to that of a science or engineering student, and since there is no full employment of the latter in any North African country (though their unemployment is certainly lower), it is cheaper to produce unemployed Arabic literature graduates than unemployed engineering graduates.

Reallocation of students to more appropriate courses is vital, but without changes to the way the labour market works, and an acceleration of job-creation, it will certainly not be enough in itself to solve any problems.

Conclusions

North Africa is at a point in its development that could not have been foreseen ten years ago. Revolutions have taken place (in some cases more than once) in three countries since the publication of the World Bank's flagship report, and significant, less abrupt, change has come to a fourth. The heady youth-driven energy of 2011 has been diluted by post-revolutionary politics,

and the world recession has bitten North Africa, as everywhere else. Elsewhere in the region there is widespread war, generally imagined in religious terms, part of what has become a long-term cycle of sectarian competition and violent reaction to it. Much effort on the part of North African governments goes into remaining apart from the currents that have disturbed and rocked nations in the Mashreq and the Sahel.

Continuing assiduously and imaginatively with educational reform is a part of those efforts. Quite apart from the fundamental rights of their populations to education, governments see clearly that the satisfaction of legitimate demands for schooling, higher education and jobs – and the life-chances that come with them – is central to building national futures and to averting a growing frustration and anger amongst young people that could have devastating consequences.

The prescriptions remain the same, and in writing this report I have shamelessly followed the analysis of the World Bank on both education and employment. But there are other questions too that need consideration and which have lain on the edge of, or outside, the Bank's ambit: to these I shall draw attention briefly.

The World Bank's prescription remains axiomatic: the next period of education reform requires a subtle approach, characterised less by central planning, system-engineering and enforcement and more by persuasion and co-option, by making willing allies in quality improvement of the people and individuals who deliver education, and by tackling some of the key labour market deformations. The extraordinary achievements of the post-colonial period, of enrolment, retention, gender equality and literacy need to be completed and consolidated. But there is no time to be lost in serious improvements to the *quality* of education and the utility of outcomes. This means asking hard questions about which bits of the education system (whether we speak of institutions or subjects, languages, careers advice services or teacher training, TVET colleges or pre-schools) actually *work*, and which do not, and to base decisions on the evidence assembled. There is a need for a certain ruthlessness in making choices now, a phase of

engineering designed to leave a more autonomous, more internally competitive, more child and student-focused system of education, able to stand on its own feet, trusted to deliver results.

Clearly there is a top-level test of success, in the rate of absorption of young people across the region into employment, their engagement in the production of wealth and the economic development of their countries. But there are other tests too. It is too easy (for example) when looking at faculties and employment rates to say that the social sciences do not yield useful employment, that the country's priorities must be the training of engineers and doctors, scientists and technicians. But a nation that cannot reflect on itself as a society, cannot analyse its own mentalities and the processes of social heredity and social change, is losing something very precious, and very important to its future. There is a need for discriminating care in the necessary utilitarian reform – an understanding that there are more values in play than the purely material. The health of the humanities and social sciences is crucial to any society. Slimmed down they certainly must be, but like a rose-bush, pruned that they may grow stronger, smaller and *better*.

Other questions that strike me as important, and worth adding to this paper as footnotes, are those of language and culture. While the language question has different shapes in each of the five countries, it is fundamental in all of them, in two forms: firstly because of its absolute importance to literacy acquisition, and secondly because of the long-running, but growing question of foreign languages in education.

Literacy, as the discrepancy between headline indicators for the MDGs and the results of international comparisons like PIRLS makes clear, remains highly problematic (and much more problematic than is generally admitted) in much of the region. In French two concepts usefully define this discrepancy: the societies of North Africa are no longer *analphabète* – technically illiterate in an absolute sense – but they remain to different extents *illettré* – non-reading cultures. Many authorities believe that a large part of the problem lies in the language of

instruction at primary school. Where the language of literacy is Modern Standard Arabic, but the mother tongue of the children is something else (whether it is colloquial Arabic, or one of the many Tamazight dialects) there is a high risk of in-building diglossia, a two-language mental world which damages the ability to learn to read and to practice reading, and in all probability creates the puzzled discouragement that leads to high drop-out rates and high rates of repetition.

If this were the only language problem (and it affects countries more severely the further west they are, with higher proportions of non-Arabic speakers and Arabic dialects that are further from MSA) it would be severe enough. But the readily understandable urge to decolonize the mind by Arabizing the education system^e has in some countries done great damage too, because of haste, because of not being completed systematically (or even well), and because in a world of globalized knowledge and economic activity, those cut off from international communication and international languages are seriously handicapped.

The King of Morocco, in his 2013 speech cited elsewhere, went on to say, “another reason [for the problems in Moroccan education] has to do with the disruptions caused by changing the language of instruction from Arabic, at the primary and secondary levels, to some foreign languages, for the teaching of scientific and technical subjects in higher education.” This switching of languages in the scientific subjects is common to Morocco and Tunisia, and to some extent Algeria, and it is lethal: not only does it inhibit learning by filtering it through a language that is generally ill-understood at an academic level; but it also greatly privileges the entry of those educated in French – privately, outside the state system – into the most prestigious subjects, institutions and opportunities for study abroad.

Serious and evidence-based thought about language policy in education is needed, in

circumstances where both questions – that of the language of literacy and that of the language of scientific, and indeed all higher, instruction – are highly political and deeply rooted in the identity of North Africans as Arabs (a contested category) and Muslims.

And finally, into the arena of language debate comes the question of English. All five education systems are addressing vigorously the need for more English as a prerequisite for success. Several are experimenting with large-scale extension of teaching of, and in, English at school (Egypt with experimental language schools, Morocco with foreign language baccalaureate options being developed in French, English and Spanish, of which English is the new and very vigorous entrant). It is increasingly clear that English – or *Globish*, as it is perhaps better to call it in resolutely non-nationalist terms - is, and will for some time yet continue to be, the predominant international language of research, entertainment, commerce and social media.

But above all, that offer is one that looks for commonalities and shared experience. The situation in each country of North Africa is unique, but nonetheless has much in common with its neighbours. What is clear, looking at Great Britain and its own educational reforms of recent decades, is that we too have much in common with North Africa – more, perhaps than we realize, disguised by differences of history, development and wealth. The *massification* of Higher Education, the relentless quest for quality with limited means, the development of sophisticated techniques for orientating students to careers and the job market, life-long learning, the teaching of reading skills, the design of innovative inspection regimes, the teaching of English to non-native speakers – all these are potential overlaps.

We do not believe that we know all the answers: but we believe that we understand the questions.

^e Made more complex by the fact that there are many – Amazigh for the most part - in the Maghreb who would regard, or affect to regard, Arabic itself as a language of colonization.

Footnotes to the main report

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⁴⁴ *The Road Not Travelled*, p46

⁴⁵ Ummahun Bardak, *Labour Market and Education*

⁴⁶ *Jobs for Shared Prosperity*, World Bank 2012, p186

⁴⁷ www.enterprisesurveys.org, data cited in *Breaking Even or Breaking Through*, 2011, p5

⁴⁸ EFT GEMM CB Needs Assessment Report 2014

⁴⁹ Global Competitiveness Survey 2014-15, World Economic Forum 2014,

http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Africa_Competitiveness_Report_2013.pdf - accessed 23.10.2014

⁵⁰ Global Competitiveness Survey 2014-15

http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Africa_Competitiveness_Report_2013.pdf - accessed 23.10.2014

⁵¹ *The Road Not Travelled*, chapter 6

⁵² *The Road Not Travelled*, p12

⁵³ *The Road Not Travelled*, p108

Country Profile: Algeria

Background

Statistics on Algeria are thin – not to the extent of statistics on Libya, but many of the international series are sparsely populated for Algeria; and often the most recent figures available are often several years old.

The education system of Algeria is based on the twin foundations of the settler-focused French colonial system and a determined expansion, reform and Arabization of what little remained after independence. The inheritance in 1962 was dire, with fewer than a third of Algerian Muslims in primary school. Only 30% of students at secondary and 10% at university were native Algerians.¹ The result is structurally similar to that of Morocco, which underwent a broadly similar (though shorter and less deeply damaging) colonial experience; and to Egypt, which provided much of the expertise that went into creating, and Arabizing, the new system. Education was seen as being right at the heart of rebuilding the nation, training a skilled workforce, creating a shared national consciousness and opening opportunity to all Algerians. As a result, early expenditure was high, at 29.7% of the national budget in 1990. Today education accounts for 20.27% of government expenditure.

Algerians are guaranteed access to free education at all levels if they qualify by passing the previous cycle. The first two cycles (9 years from age 6 to 14) are compulsory and have very high attendance; secondary education is compulsory too, but in practice sees serious drop-off. Progression from primary to middle school, from middle school to secondary and from secondary to tertiary are all controlled by assessments or exams, with significant numbers falling by the wayside at each stage and repeating years. Pedagogy is traditional, fact-based and involves much rote-learning. The foundational education ordinance of 1976 makes education a state monopoly, and although this was relaxed in

2004 and again in 2008 to allow some private education, the private sector is not yet significant (0.5% of children are in private institutions, and there are not yet any private universities, though there are some private non-university institutions).²

Education promises much but delivers rather less. Literacy figures are respectable: the 2006 figures show 72.6% of the population as a whole (83.3% of males and 63.9% of females) as being literate; while the youth figure for the same year is 91.8%.³ But it is in the employment market that the real scale of failure is to be seen. Algeria's state economy, with state-owned hydrocarbons dominating external trade (95% of foreign exchange revenue) and a weak, though growing, private sector, has consistently failed to provide jobs for the young. While unemployment as a whole is on a strong downward trend (from 30% in 2000 to 10% in 2010), youth unemployment remains obstinately high at 21.5% for the 15-24 age bracket. And Algeria suffers from the same inverted pyramid phenomenon as its neighbours, whereby each additional stage of education *increases* unemployment: those without any formal education see a rate of 1.9% unemployment; those who leave school at the end of the third cycle, 10.7%; and those with degrees, 20.3% (with strong gender differentiation of 10.4% for men and 33.3% for women). It is clear that the education system suffers from a major mismatch with the skills demands of the hiring market. This market shows private sector growth and public sector shrinkage (the public sector accounted for only 40% of employees by 2011 and this figure may have fallen to 32% today⁴), though the majority of secure long-term employment remains in the public sector, and it is a much preferred destination.⁵ In 2010 Gallup found 44% of Algerian 15-34 years olds expressing preference for employment in the public sector.⁶

Education spending as a percentage of GDP is also falling, from 7.2% in 1979 to 6.6% in 1981, and 4.3% in 2008. To some extent this reflects changing demographics. Fertility has dropped

dramatically since 1985 – from 5.8% to 2.4% in 2007,⁷ with concomitant drop in population growth from 3.1% to 1.5% per annum.⁸ Against this background the continuing problem of graduate unemployment is particularly striking.

Having said this, there have been highly creditable achievements in terms of raising school enrolment (to 117% gross at primary, with 96.8% attendance for boys and 96.2% for girls; and to 57.4% of boys and 64.5% of girls at secondary⁹). By 2012 only 25,300 children were still wholly outside the school system (down from 86,200 in 2009 and 590,000 in 1980),¹⁰ the big drop since 2009 perhaps owed to a 2010 law imposing fines on parents who fail to enforce on their children attendance during the 9-year basic cycle. Drop-out rates however are very high.

It is to be noted, though, that Algeria's scores and rankings in the WEF Africa Competitiveness Report are disquieting. While its positions on secondary (52nd /144) and tertiary (74th/144) enrolment are very good against the other countries of the region, the same cannot be said of its quality measures. On 'Quality of the Education System' it ranks 131st/144, ahead only of Egypt (139th) and Libya (142nd), and behind Tunisia (68th) and Morocco (105th). On 'Quality of Science and Maths Education,' it stands 129th, on its management school, 131st, and on the extent of staff training, last of the five countries at 142nd/144.¹¹

The school system

The Algerian school system consists of three stages, or cycles, which have been redesigned over the last decade from a 6-3-3 (Primary/Middle School/Secondary) architecture, to the current 5-4-3 which was instituted in 2003. This reform has over succeeding years touched many of the fundamentals of school education, and recognizes unsatisfactory outcomes in the previous system in terms of class size, high drop-out and repetition rates, shortage of qualified teachers and unsatisfactory teaching programmes and pedagogies. The drop-out rates

in particular were alarming, with 500,000 students a year quitting education without any qualification, and 10-16% of students repeating whole years.¹²

Student numbers given by UNESCO's UIS are 2,989,000 (primary), 3,363,000 (middle) and 1,203,000 (secondary) – a total of 7,555,000 in the system.¹³ In 2009 there were 24,600 schools at all levels, and 370 thousand teachers; and the Ministry intended the addition of 3,000 primary, 1,000 middle, 850 secondary and 2,000 boarding schools (crucial for the education of children from remote rural communities) over the present 5-year plan period.¹⁴

Promotion from Primary into Middle School is by assessment, and many fail at the first attempt: the pass-rate in 2010 was 66.4%. *Redoublement* – the repeating of whole years – is common (arguably another French cultural legacy), and accounts for the high gross enrolment figures. At the end of the second cycle, grade 9, the *brevet d'enseignement fondamentale* is issued, permitting progression to Secondary School to those who succeed – 66.4% of pupils in 2010.

Secondary school begins with a foundation year, known as the *tronc commun*, which is divided into three sections, *general*, *science* and *technical*, each supporting a further two years of study leading to the baccalaureate in that speciality. In 2001/2 the bac pass rate on the first sitting was 43%, but had risen to 61.2% by 2010.

The reform initiative begun in 2003 has not been entirely successful. It has “failed” – according to a report issued by the CLA (the Council for Secondary Schools in Algiers), an independent teachers' union, in March 2013; or it “wasn't fully implemented,” according to SNAPEST, the CLA's official counterpart. CLA's grievances include the assertion that “pupils don't master the three academic elements (reading, writing and arithmetic)” and the report that 70% of maths teachers report pupil levels as “low.” Their demands are for smaller classes, the extirpation of ideology in the classroom, reform of the curriculum, opening schools up to “universal knowledge,”

encouraging children's self-expression and – interestingly – “a return to technical education.”¹⁵ In early 2014 widespread teachers' strikes over professional and salary demands paralyzed education for over a month, as they had in 2009 and 2010, with a claimed 65% participation (9.3% according to the Ministry of Education). As noted above, the WEF's assessment of the overall system quality, and its contribution to national competitiveness, is still not high.¹⁶

Since 2008 the British Council has been involved with the Ministry of Education in work on the teaching of English. In 2014 this was embodied in the very ambitious SEEDS programme, a comprehensive strategy for blended learning/training at all levels of the schools education system.

The university system

The tertiary system, which is free to qualified students, is large and growing fast. It currently consists of 84 establishments, of which 36 are universities, 15 university centres, as well as 21 Ecoles Normales Supérieures, and 10 Ecoles Préparatoires on the traditional French model. Since Independence the French model has dominated higher education, and only in the decade since 2004 has there been serious reform, with the progressive adoption of the LMD system under the Bologna Process, to which international comparability and outcome-defined learning are central.

From 2,809 students at Independence in 1962, Algerian Higher Education has grown to 19,213 (1970); 79,351 (1980), 258,995 (1989), and 423,000 (1999). The current figure is around 1.1 million (also reported as 1.34 million), and the current planning period sees forecast additions of 600k, with a total of 2 million students by 2017 also noted.¹⁷ Universities are large: the University of Algiers had 106,000 students in 2007, Constantine 63,000. Algeria's first business school, the Ecole Supérieure d'Affaires, was founded in 2005.

There are about 52 thousand academic staff in the system, only 28% of them holding doctorates, and the qualitative improvement of this teaching body through reform at home and government-funded study abroad is a priority: programmes for several hundred Algerian doctoral students to join foreign universities, many in the UK, are currently being negotiated; and the British Council is working with the Ministry on a large-scale postgraduate study-abroad programme which will help underpin the reform of the system.

Problems remain. *Massification* without adequate per capita resourcing is a constant threat to quality, and teachers are under-qualified, under-paid and over-stretched. There is a dangerously high drop-out rate, frequent changes of course by individual students (and as a result, extensions of the length of education). The last two phenomena are both results in part at least of the very difficult graduate employment situation: pessimism and despair lead on the one hand to abandonment, and on the other to prolonging access to the small financial support, and (however attenuated) sense of purpose that university study gives.

Most important is the failure of the system to produce graduates with skills appropriate to the Algerian job market. As explored below, graduate unemployment at 20.3% is double the national average and significantly higher than the rate of unemployment for the holders of any lesser level (or none) of educational qualification. This failure, and the concentration of students in the faculties offering the lowest rates of employment (54.6% of Algerian students are in the humanities and social sciences¹⁸), suggest a system that is stuck, or as one writer puts it, characterised by “the dominance of theory over practice and the virtual non-existence of internships and *stages* in professional working environments, despite the existence of an enabling legal framework for them.”¹⁹

Private sector

The private sector is small: the 1976 Ordinance made education a state monopoly, and although this has been relaxed, there has not been very significant growth. In 2004 some private schools were allowed, and in 2008, private universities. There are now 136 private schools in Algeria, but their impact is limited by high fees and the fact that more than half of them are located in Algiers. Only 0.5% of primary and secondary pupils receive private school education. Other private institutions have been permitted – only – to offer the state's *Brevet de Technicien Supérieure* (BTS), but have to some extent circumvented this limitation by offering, in partnership, the diplomas of foreign institutions. Only one serious project for a private university is in the tightly controlled pipeline. However, it is clear that this sector will grow, and should have a positive effect on Higher Education in Algeria as it does so.²⁰

Vocational Education

Algerian TVET is founded in the need to create a skilled workforce after the departure of the French in 1962. Thus although there is certainly something of the same stigma that colours TVET in neighbouring countries as a second class educational option, it is perhaps less marked: the 743 TVET colleges in Algeria are seeing rising applications, mainly because their record at preparing students for the employment market is better than universities (though secondary TVET institutes are regularly undersubscribed). Partnerships with industry allow them to tailor their offerings in a way that universities cannot – or at any rate, do not. It is notable that the litany of complaints by the CLA teachers' union in March 2013 included a demand for revalidating and increasing the provision of technical education. And indeed the current Five Year Plan foresees 30 new specialized and 80 general TVET institutions catering for 54,000 students; and at a lower level, 130 new vocational training centres, with a capacity for 130,000 trainees.²¹ But there are very high drop-out rates: in 2005 the system lost

69,000 students, 90% of them simply abandoning their studies. And at secondary level TVET students are dropping in number, and colleges undersubscribed.²²

Engagement and progression

In 1990 80% of primary schoolchildren completed (87% male, 74% female), though only 33% achieved the BEF, the *Brevet d'enseignement fondamentale*. By 2011, 93% completed, with more girls (94.6%) than boys (91.1%). 1999 figures show that only 55% of the cohort actually then progressed to secondary education. But by 2011 this figure had reached 97.7% (100% of boys and 95.3% of girls).²³ Progression from Secondary School to university is also by highly selective baccalaureate exam: in 2012 only 35% of students reached the pass-mark on the first sitting, with another 9% passing on the resit at the end of the summer. The attrition rate of pupils at all levels is a major concern, with at least half a million students leaving the system unqualified each year.

Algeria has not taken part in TIMSS, PIRLS or PISA exercises making quality comparisons difficult.

Employability

Employment, and employability, are very serious issues in Algeria, where the public sector, although no longer the largest employer, is the primary source of secure long-term jobs. The typical post-independence compact, by which all graduates were absorbed into public sector employment, has long gone. Although Algeria has managed to reduce overall unemployment to around 9.8% in 2013 from an all-time high of 29.5% in 2000), these reductions have had virtually no positive impact on graduate or female unemployment which remain very much higher than the national level. Youth unemployment figures show 24.8% in 2013, down from 27.5% in 2012, despite dropping fertility and slowing labour force growth.²⁴

Breaking down these figures shows the impact on women: 37.4% of females in the 16-24 age bracket are unemployed, against 18.6% of males. But the really extraordinary distribution is of unemployment by level of education: as noted above, unemployment increases significantly with each level of education completed: starting at only 1.9% for those with no education, it advances to 7.6% for primary completers, 8.9% for secondary completers, and 20.3% for graduates. Even this doesn't tell the whole story: although the figures for women are higher than those for men at each level, the discrepancy grows significantly, to 10.3 percentage points for secondary completers (17.2% for females, against 7% for males) and 19.9% for graduates (33.3% against 10.4% for males).²⁵

Davide Furceri, writing for the IMF, suggests three reasons beyond simple labour market inflexibility and the structural preference for hiring 'insiders.' These are the skills mismatch on the labour market, between graduate offer and private sector employer demand; the failure of Algeria's political and business elite to create high-skilled jobs for graduates; and the self-destructive choice of field of study at university. He analyzes the 21.4% graduate unemployment across faculties, and highlights the Humanities and Social Sciences as leading the unemployment list with 27.3% and 28.7% respectively, as against 18.1% for science and 14.8% for engineers. Dramatic as this is, it still leaves the most employable of all Algerian graduates, engineers, well above the national unemployment rate.

But there is final caution. Male/female distribution of unemployment between graduates of different faculties is also heavily weighted in favour of male graduates. In the Humanities the percentage point difference between male and female graduates is 19.7%; in the Social Sciences, 29.7%. And in engineering and science, where employment is least inaccessible, it remains a male preserve: 39.7% of female engineering graduates are unemployed (9.4% of males) and 28.6% of science graduates

(9.8% of males).²⁶

Differentials of Gender and Economic Background

Algeria is an upper middle income country where 23% of the population is below the poverty line. Its achievements in making health, empowerment and economic activity available to women are fairly respectable: UNDP places it 81st/144 globally in the Gender Inequality Index (GII), ahead of Morocco (92nd) and Egypt (130th) but behind Libya (40th) and Tunisia (48th). However, on the newer Gender Development Index (GDI) it is placed much lower, at 129th, behind all North African countries except Morocco. This reflects difficulties of equal access: the GDI is simply a comparator of male and female HDI scores.

Girls dominate educational enrolment at all levels above primary (99.5%:95.7% Gross Enrolment at Secondary; 37.7%:25.4% at tertiary²⁷). Education is clearly seen as an instrument of empowerment, a route to personal betterment in a society that is still fairly traditional in many aspects. Dropping-out of education is a predominantly male phenomenon. But this is regionally different: in the rural south, where drop-out rates are anyway higher than on the coast, girls are a higher proportion, withdrawn by their families for domestic and agricultural duties.

And despite higher female participation rates, the imbalance of employment outcomes in favour of men is remarkable. The figures for women are higher than those for men at each level, the discrepancy grows significantly, to 10.3 percentage points for secondary completers (17.2% for females, against 7% for males) and 19.9% for graduates (33.3% against 10.4% for males).²⁸ Furthermore, the unemployment rate for women with university degrees is 20-30% higher than that for men in all disciplines.²⁹

¹ Helen Chapan Metz, ed. *Algeria: A Country Study*. Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1994

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- <http://countrystudies.us/algeria/> - accessed 17.10.2014
- ² WEF Human Capital Report 2013
- ³ CIA World Factbook Algeria, citing IMF figures
- ⁴ IndexMundi www.indexmundi.com/algeria/ accessed 2.10.2014
- ⁵ Davide Furceri, IMF Working Paper WP/12/99, *Unemployment and Labour Market Issues in Algeria*
- ⁶ Gallup World Poll Survey 2010, cited in *Jobs for Shared Prosperity*, World Bank 2012, p8
- ⁷ UNDP International Human Development indicators
- ⁸ Davide Furceri, IMF Working Paper WP/12/99,
- ⁹ World Bank <http://data.worldbank.org/country/Algeria/> accessed 30.9.2014, and UNESCO, World Data on Education – Algeria, 2013
- ¹⁰ UIS Algeria Country Profile – <http://www.uis.unesco.org/DataCentre/Pages/country-profile.aspx?code=DZA®ioncode=40525> – accessed 29.10.2014
- ¹¹ WEF *African Competitiveness Survey*, 2013
- ¹² Imène Benharkat, *Le Système éducatif algérien* (citation necessary)
- ¹³ www.epdc.org/country/Algeria
- ¹⁴ *The Report: Algeria 2011*, The Oxford Business Group
- ¹⁵ *Algeria Reviews School Reform*, Fidet Mansour www.magharebia.com/en_GB/articles/awi/features/2013/04/11/feature-03 accessed 1.10.2014
- ¹⁶ WEF *African Competitiveness Survey*, 2013
- ¹⁷ *The Report: Algeria 2011*
- ¹⁸ World Bank, *The Road Not Travelled*, 2009
- ¹⁹ Imène Benharkat, *Le Système éducatif algérien* (citation necessary)
- ²⁰ *The Report: Algeria 2011*
- ²¹ *The Report: Algeria 2011*
- ²² *The Road Not Travelled*, p46
- ²³ UIS Algeria Country Profile
- ²⁴ www.tradingeconomics.com/algeria/unemployment-rate accessed 30.9.2014
- ²⁵ Davide Furceri, IMF Working Paper WP/12/99,
- ²⁶ Davide Furceri, IMF Working Paper WP/12/99,
- ²⁷ UIS Algeria Country Profile
- ²⁸ Davide Furceri, IMF Working Paper WP/12/99,
- ²⁹ Davide Furceri, IMF Working Paper WP/12/99,

Country Profile: Egypt

Background

The Egyptian education system, with all its virtues and its defects, has been something of a model for post-independence education systems in North Africa. This is largely due to its longstanding quality and the iconic status of Nasser's Egypt in the 1950s and 60s, along with Nasser's populist principles of free access to education and more-or-less guaranteed public employment for graduates. Its assumptions and methodologies were also spread wide by Egyptian teachers working across the region to service education systems growing much faster than teacher-supply; and to support the process of Arabization, particularly in the Maghreb where education in the colonial period had been in French and where trained teachers of, and in, Arabic were scarce.

Education in Egypt's public system today is a constitutionally guaranteed right, effectively free to the user at all levels. Like so much of the educational rhetoric across the region, this statement masks a truth which is subversively different: some 60% of all educational investment in Egypt is actually in private tuition, though only 7.2% of Egyptian pupils are in private institutions.¹ Characteristic of Egypt, as of some of its North African neighbours, is a highly aspirational promise coupled with an inadequate delivery and a system that is terribly deformed by the urgent need of Egyptian parents to buy a better education than the state can provide for their children. Egypt's economy in recent decades has not been able easily to provide for investment at the level demanded by population increase, and until the first years of the 21st century, the political will seems also to have been lacking. It spends on education, at 3.8%, the lowest, though still not inconsiderable, proportion of GDP in North Africa.²

Egypt's population, currently recorded as 86.8 million, grew by 41% between 1990 and 2008, and is growing at a rate of 1.6-1.8% a year. 30%

of Egyptians are under 15, 49.9% under 25.³ Egypt is one of the two North African countries with predicted youth population growth (of a further 10%) to 2050.⁴ Demand for education is therefore clearly very large, and growing fast, and there are estimates of up to 140 million Egyptians by 2050. The result is a huge, inflexible behemoth of an education system, struggling bravely to reform itself but mired in the sheer scale of the challenge and the escalating disparity between need and resource. A system premised upon open and free access and dependent on relatively inflexible funding prospers when take-up is low: success combined with population growth creates huge challenges of quality, training, funding, governance and pedagogy – and from all of these, Egypt suffers.

Like all the countries of North Africa, Egypt exhibits the inverted pyramid of employability that sees employment fall – and unemployment rise – with the level of educational qualification. Graduate unemployment runs at just under 40%, while unemployment for those with secondary certificates is about 25%, and those with primary education or less, 22%.⁵ The average Egyptian university graduate takes five years to find stable employment.⁶

Having said this, there have been very significant achievements in terms of raising primary school enrolment (to 97.8%⁷) that are highly creditable; and the headline literacy rate of 73.9%,⁸ for all the reservations that need to be applied to concepts of literacy, is high. Many challenges remain, and there are ambitious projects of change in hand. A new Quality Assurance Agency has been established (2006), a Professional Academy of Teachers (2007) and decentralization of schools administration has been piloted since 2007/8 under a major reform programme initiated in 2000 and re-launched in 2004. The Ministry of Education promotes “the transformation of schools into learning organizations.”

The school system

The state school education system, which serves 82.5% of children in education) is fairly standard for the region: six years of primary, three of preparatory and three of secondary, before the transition to university. Technical and Vocational Education creates slight wrinkles in this symmetry, with longer and shorter options, particularly at secondary. And alongside the state system there is a second, religious, schools system run under state supervision by Al-Azhar which feeds through all levels of education into Al-Azhar University, and serves 10.3% of children in education). Whether state or Al-Azhar, the system is characterized by a very traditional pedagogy, with much emphasis on rote-learning and either public or private exams at the end of every school year. Promotion from level to level depends on success at key transitions – the Basic Education Completion Certificate, taken at the end of year 9; and the General Certificate of Secondary Education, at the end of year 12. Equivalent are the Al-Azhar Secondary School Certificate and the Secondary School Technical Diploma (the latter awarded after 5 years).

The sheer scale of the sector is astonishing. In 2008/9 there were 43,000 government schools, 1.6 million personal and 16 million schoolchildren.⁹ By 2012 the total of schoolchildren had reached 18.6 million (with another 3.4 million in pre-primary education, and 7.7 million in tertiary.¹⁰ To put this in perspective, if Egypt's school system were a country, it would rank ninth in population amongst Arab states, with a population double that of Tunisia. If we include tertiary students, the total is 29.7 million, making it larger than Syria and around 90% of the size of Morocco.

The university system

The university system is also generally free of access to students who have passed their secondary school leaving exam. Despite attempts to de-link university admission from the exam in favour of broader selection criteria, choice of faculty remains largely dependent on

the marks achieved, making these exams highly competitive, and some form of paid tuition for them (from extra courses of private lessons, often with the child's own teacher, to private schooling) as universal as parental means allow.

The format is a standard 4-year bachelor's degree, with some variations for specialist courses like medicine, engineering and vet. There is an equivalent 4-year diploma at Higher Institutes. University study is very much skewed to the Humanities and Social Sciences, with 64%^a of all students on HSS courses (against 17.6% on STEM courses). Graduate unemployment rates mirror this preference with the highest (34.7%) in commerce graduates, followed by 15.3% in the arts and archaeology – and the lowest (3.8%) in engineering.¹¹

There are 25 state universities, of which 11 have been founded since 2000, as well as 51 state non-university institutions focused on technical education; and there are 105 private HE institutions, 16 of which have university status. Public institutions are very large indeed, creating their own problems of governance (and public order): Cairo University has 190,000 students; Alexandra University 175,000; and Ain Shams (also in Cairo), 171,000. Pupil-teacher ratios are very strained, and the quality of teaching suffers. As the World Bank puts it: "While accessibility to Higher Education was one of the main principles guiding the expansion of public universities in the post-revolutionary period, the policy of free public education has in many ways compromised the quality of education."¹²

Private Sector

Egypt has a flourishing private sector in education, with a full spectrum of quality from the excellent to the barely adequate, and beyond. 7.2% of Egyptian schoolchildren are in private schools (7.8% of primary enrolments and 5.5% of secondary).¹³ Despite this small proportion,

^a This figure is also found as 76.2%, in the World Bank's *The Road Not Travelled*, 2009. The difference may be partly accounted for by the inclusion of students of education.

spending on private education exceeds public education expenditure, and is seriously corrosive of quality in the public system. Apart from the private institutions themselves, low-paid government teachers moonlight in private schools and give private lessons to their public pupils, focusing their efforts on remunerated work at the expense of their public duties. Parents scrimp to give their children relative advantage in crucial 'high stake' public exams, either with additional coaching or by putting them into private schools. The total investment in private education, including tutoring, is reckoned to be an extraordinary 60% of the country's total educational expenditure.¹⁴

Private universities, of which there are 16 (as well as 89 non-university institutions) are regulated by Supreme Council of Private Universities. Clearly the private sector has an important part to play, and there are instances of high quality; but as the World Bank puts it baldly, at present private HEIs "do not contribute to the improvement of the quality of graduates that are demanded by the labour market."¹⁵ They need to.

Vocational Education

TVET is delivered in technical secondary schools (of which there are 1,801, teaching 1.3 million students) and vocational institutes. It suffers from a perceived low status that is common across the region, and the result of a historical role as a safety-net for children who do not make it through the more selective exam-based academic school and university progression, who may opt for vocational school, making it a clear second-best in terms of esteem. Secondary TVET institutes are regularly undersubscribed, and the proportion of students in the TVET system fell from 30% to just over 20% between 1999 and 2009. The vast majority of the 20% or so of all students it attracts have not scored high enough in the secondary school exam to reach university. The children of poorer, and rural, homes are greatly over-represented in TVET both at secondary and tertiary levels, and investment is relatively low.

This status deficit is very damaging: Egyptian employers record by far the highest scores in North Africa in identifying lack of available skills as barriers to growth (50%).¹⁶ Commenting on the Don Bosco Institute, a private TVET institute run by Italian Salesian Brothers, the World Bank remarks that it "offers three and five year diplomas that provide a path to employment, decent pay, and career progression – the very elements lacking in most public TVET institutions."¹⁷

Engagement and progression^b

Nine years of education have been compulsory since 1999, and it is the government's intention in due course to extend this. Median education expectations are 13.5 years (13.8 male; 13.3 female).¹⁸ However, there is a real shortfall: 8.1% of all Egyptians – about 1.8 million – have never registered at school at all, or dropped out during the basic stage, and the majority of these are female and poor: there has though been a very real achievement here, since the corresponding figure for the 18-29 age-group is 27%.¹⁹

Gross enrolment in primary is 111.1% for girls and 115.7% for boys. Of these starters, 96.1% (95.6% of boys and 96.6% of girls) survive to the last grade of primary (grade 6). And 93.6% make the transition to secondary, according to UNESCO looking at 2012, 2009 and 2003 respectively.²⁰ Progress is graphically illustrated by the Egypt Human Development Report (2010), looking at the 18-22 generation: of this cohort 27% had not completed basic education (10 % never having enrolled and 17% dropping out).²¹ Tertiary, with a gross enrolment ratio of

^b All figures in this and the following paragraph from UNESCO except for those identified as coming from HDR. I remain puzzled as to how, with 10% of children not enrolling at school at all, and 17% not completing basic education, the primary GER can be 113.4%, the primary survival rate to last grade 96.1% and the primary to secondary transition rate 93.6%. Similarly dramatic discrepancies exist between UNESCO figures from different sources over the number of out of school children and adolescents.

30.1% in 2012, thus sees under a third of the total age-group.

Outputs and measures

It is difficult to measure educational outputs directly. The headline literacy rate is one measure, at 72.2% (80.3% male, 63.5% female), and is reassuring when compared with the youth literacy figures of 92.3% male, and 86.1% female, suggesting steady progress over the generations (however exaggerated the notion of literacy involved).²² The EEP study conducted between 1997 and 2001 identified “few improvements,” according to the World Bank. And Egypt’s engagement with TIMSS in 2003 and 2007 actually recorded an across-the-board decline over the period, measured both by sex and by subject: in 2007 53% of students tested did not reach the Low International Benchmark in maths; and 45% didn’t reach it in science. On the other hand, students at the government’s experimental language schools scored “above international averages,” suggesting that a solution in this area, as in other areas, is at least conceptually within the government’s grasp.

Employability

Arguably a better measure of output is employability, and here the story is not yet a good one either, though there are interesting initiatives in play. Against a national unemployment rate given as (but not always accepted as) 12%, youth (18-29) unemployment stands at about 17% (12% male, 33% female), and graduate unemployment at 19%.²³ Looked at from the other end of the telescope, 24.8% of unemployed adults in Egypt hold a tertiary degree, against their 6.7% representation in the population as a whole.²⁴ It seems true that, as one writer comments, “An educated young person is at no advantage when it comes to finding his/her way in the job market. In fact the opposite seems to be true.”²⁵

The mechanics of this are clear enough. With huge numbers of graduates entering the

employment market each year, their preferred destination – the public service – is unable to absorb them. Polled in 2010, 60% of the 24-34 age-bracket preferred the idea of public to private sector employment.²⁶ Whereas in Nasser’s day there was a guarantee of employment in the public sector to all graduates, that is now a distant memory. Of Egyptians aged 20-35, who make up 48% of the population, only 18% are in the public service at any level;²⁷ and while 20% of men and 50% of women born in 1978 could expect to find their first job in the public sector, those figures are now only 5% and 25%.²⁸ The private sector should be taking up the slack, but isn’t: and the perceived skills deficit in young graduates is the highest in the region, with 50% of firms surveyed citing inadequate workforce skills as a major constraint on growth.²⁹

Differentials of Gender and Economic Background

Effective education should be a leveller of opportunity, bringing opportunities to women, the poor and the rural. But at every level major differentiations between men and women are observable. The proportions of woman to men in literacy is 80.5%. 82% of the 1.8 million children who do not attend primary school are female (16% of all Egyptian girls have not attended school³⁰). The mismatch in primary enrolment is 94.3%, in secondary enrolment 96.2%.³¹ At university the proportions switch, with 53% of students female, but it seems that young women make up a higher proportion of the lower-cost, lower-status and higher-unemployment Humanities and Social Science courses. Of young people (18-29) ‘out of the labour force’ for whatever reason, women make up 83%.

As for socio-economic background, it is a strong determinant of educational outcomes. The poorest 20% of Egyptians provide 5.3% of ‘high achievers’ (those scoring over 90%) at primary, 3% at preparatory school, and 0.5% at the General Certificate. Only 4.3% of students come from this group, whereas 73.6% are from the

richest 40%.

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- ¹ WEF Human Capital Report 2013
- ² World Bank, *Breaking Even or Breaking Through*, 2011, p16
- ³ http://www.indexmundi.com/egypt/demographics_profile.html, citing CIA World Factbook
- ⁴ *Youth Population and Unemployment in the Middle East and North Africa*, PRB, Farzanah Roudi 2011
- ⁵ World Bank, *Jobs for Shared Prosperity*, 2013, p3
- ⁶ Loveluck, Louise, *Education in Egypt: key challenges*, Chatham House 2012, p3
- ⁷ UNESCO, World Data on Education – Egypt, 2013
- ⁸ UNESCO, World Data on Education – Egypt, 2013
- ⁹ *Egypt Human Development Report 2010* (UNDP), p
- ¹⁰ UIS Egypt Country Profile – <http://www.uis.unesco.org/DataCentre/Pages/country-profile.aspx?code=EGY®ioncode=40525> – accessed 29.10.2014
- ¹¹ *Egypt Human Development Report 2010* (UNDP), p
- ¹² *Egypt Human Development Report 2010* (UNDP), p46
- ¹³ WEF Human Capital Report 2013
- ¹⁴ Louisa Loveluck, *Education in Egypt: key challenges*, a Chatham House background paper, March 2012, citing Tarek Osman, *Egypt on the Brink*, New Haven and London (Yale UP) 2011.
- ¹⁵ *Egypt Human Development Report 2010* (UNDP), p49
- ¹⁶ World Bank, *Breaking Even or Breaking Through*, 2011, p5
- ¹⁷ World Bank, *Jobs for Shared Prosperity*, 2013, p260
- ¹⁸ UIS Egypt Country Profile
- ¹⁹ UNESCO, World Data on Education – Egypt, 2013
- ²⁰ UIS Egypt Country Profile
- ²¹ *Egypt Human Development Report 2010* (UNDP)
- ²² UNESCO, World Data on Education – Egypt, 2013
- ²³ World Bank, *Benchmarking Governance*, 2013, p6
- ²⁴ World Bank, *Breaking Even or Breaking Through*, 2011, p3
- ²⁵ *Egypt Human Development Report 2010* (UNDP), p50
- ²⁶ Gallup World Poll Survey 2010, cited in *Jobs for Shared Prosperity*, World Bank 2012,
- ²⁷ Egyptian Central Authority for Organisation and Administration, 2009
- ²⁸ Egypt Labour Panel Survey (Economic Research Forum and CAPMAS), 2006
- ²⁹ World Bank, *Breaking Even or Breaking Through*, 2011, p5
- ³⁰ *Egypt Human Development Report 2010* (UNDP),
- ³¹ UNESCO, World Data on Education – Egypt, 2013

Country Profile: Libya

Background

Libya does not have available the data to write an education profile comparable to those of other North African countries. Data-collection has been at best spasmodic both during and after the Gaddafi era - and more often non-existent (“No figures found for government expenditure on education,” as one commentator writes drily); and it has at times been misleading. Most international NGO tables of comparison show blank or almost blank columns for Libya. Spending levels on education are said to have been very high under Gaddafi (one set of UN figures is reported as suggesting 7-10% of GDP) and although levels may have been relatively high during the 1970s, it appears that much of the data since then is suspect: 3-4% seems more probable for the period 2002-8. “The validity and quality of such educational claims have been severely doubted,” states one researcher.¹

However, in some areas (and these are areas in which figures *are* happily provided) Libya has achieved remarkable results. Literacy, at 89.5% is very high indeed, and the identical male and female youth literacy figures of 99.9% are very impressive. By the same token, its secondary school gross enrolment ratio of 110.3% would place it 11th in the world, and its tertiary enrolment of 54.4% would put it in 46th place globally. These achievements contribute to Libya’s presence amongst the highest-placed countries in the world Human Development Index (55th in 2014, 50th in 2012). However, that these figures, even if correct, are to be taken with some qualification, is suggested by the fact that the WEF *African Competitiveness Survey 2013* places Libya’s education system as a whole, for quality, 142nd out of 144 countries ranked globally,² and as Dr M Taghavi comments, “Years of under-resourcing and poor management have now left the Libyan education sector in a dire position. Coupled with corruption and injustice, the overall quality of

education provision is now severely questioned.”³

This is not surprising. Education was highly politicized under Gaddafi becoming, as it expanded from its relatively undeveloped (though vigorous) pre-1969 state, a vehicle for ideological indoctrination. Assertive, if whimsical, actions were taken to distance the country’s system from the West: there was for example a ban on the use of international symbols for weights and measures, and after the bombing of Tripoli in 1986, English and French were banned from the syllabus for a decade, before being re-introduced as relations with the West thawed. In other words the Libyan education system was largely cut off from western influence, and the country’s massive oil wealth was applied at best capriciously to education investment. Real fixed capital formation in education is estimated at 1% per annum against a MENA average of 2.5%; and the expenditure per employee in education, at LYD 6,800 per annum, is less than half the public sector average of LYD 14,600 – despite the fact that education, with about 485,000 women and men on the payroll, is by far Libya’s largest public sector employer (though perhaps half these ‘teachers’ don’t actually teach at all).⁴

Since the fall of Gaddafi in 2011, there has been a purge of the ideologized curriculum, with the beginnings of a complete re-writing. Ubiquitous Green Book Studies have been unceremoniously dumped. International reference – symbols again – has been reinstated. History-teaching has been entirely suspended pending a new curriculum, and while the government syllabus has not explicitly been Islamicised, a subject called Islamic Consciousness has been introduced.

Even figures for the number of students in the system are plastic. Figures compiled for the Library of Congress in 2000 indicate some 767,000 children in primary, 717,000 in secondary and 287,000 students in tertiary education. This total of 1.77 million is still widely quoted as current, though cited growth rates of 2.5% per annum overall, and 3% at tertiary are puzzling in this context.⁵ But the

mere fact that much of the most data still available dates from before the fall of Gaddafi in 2011 makes statistical work unreliable.

The school system

The Libyan school system is very similar in its architecture to the Egyptian, with a 9 year basic stage, followed by a 3-year secondary, all of which are entirely state-funded. Promotion is determined by exams. English is taught from Grade 5. After the preparatory phase (the last three years of Basic education), pupils proceed either (70%) to general secondary school, or (30%) into Institutes of Vocational Education. The academic stream leads to university or Higher Institute; the vocational to Higher Institute or employment in the craft or trade in which the student has been trained.

At secondary school the division of specialities was (in 2008/9) 29% in language (of whom 71% chose English), 62% in science, and 9% in the Humanities and Social Sciences. Gross enrolment, as noted, is very high at 110.3% (secondary) and 54.4% (tertiary)

Ranked by WEF 142nd in the world (out of 144) for general quality of its education system, Libya also scores low in maths and science education (135th out of 144), staff training (144th) and – perhaps most remarkably (and presumably a matter of political control) given the oil-wealth available for equipment procurement, 134th for internet access in schools.⁶

The university system

Libya has 12 public universities (10 general, two of ‘special nature’) and five private. Currently quoted, but undocumented figures for student population are ca. 300,000 students in the country’s universities, and a further ca. 71,000 at 91 technical institutes. A recent EC report gives a total for the system as a whole in 2010-11 of 341,841 students, 90% of them in public universities and 59% of them female.⁷ Most are studying for 4-year degrees, and are paid for by

the government (tertiary education is free, and postgraduate education subsidised by up to 75%). The Libyan Open University was set up in Tripoli in 1996, and now has 16 branch campuses. Research, though officially integral to the university system, is not prominent, and the WEF ranking of 143rd out of 144 countries for the availability of research and training services, though not of course referring to university research per se, is illustrative.⁸

Studying abroad

The main route to achieving quick results in Higher Education reform is seen as sending students abroad. This is not new, having begun in 2007 with a programme under the Libyan Committee for Higher Education: UNESCO notes 7,009 Libyans studying abroad in 2010, and WENR suggests that there were some 12,500 even before the 2013 initiative kicked in. In May 2013 funds were allocated to send 31,000 students for tertiary education abroad, commencing with intensive language study to compensate for the 10-year ban on language-teaching, and the generally poor quality of language-teaching available since the end of the ban. The UK is the leading destination (the same UNESCO figures record 2,827 – 40% - of Libyans studying abroad as being in the UK, followed by Malaysia (21%). Expectations are of rapid growth. However, this is not uncontroversial: the same WENR report notes that “the state of Higher Education in Libya has received such harsh criticism since the revolution thanks to overcrowding and poor faculty standards that the decision to send students abroad hasn’t been well accepted by everyone. Many see it as a lost opportunity to invest in building local colleges and institutes.”⁹

Language

The 10-year hiatus in foreign language teaching after 1986 was very damaging to Libyan language (and language-teaching) competence and created significant barriers between Libyans and international contacts and opportunities.

English teaching resumed in the mid-1990s, and led to a new secondary English curriculum in 2000. In English. The LETUP (Libyan English Teaching in Universities Project) was a landmark co-operation between the British Council and the Ministry of Higher Education, founded in 2006. It led to a network of ten university-based collaborative language centres which trained, over the 2006-11 lifespan of the original project, more than 8,000 Libyans for postgraduate study abroad, and ultimately at home too. It also, and vitally, trained Libyan Teaching Assistants through remote and face-to-face study, to form the nucleus of the new English-teaching profession. Although the programme was forced to retrench by the revolution on 2011, it restarted in 2012 and the centres were handed over to their host universities in 2013. Further British Council work has taken place in researching language competence in the TVET and university systems.

Vocational Education

The TVET system has suffered historically from low prestige, as a second-class education for academic ‘failures.’ This reflects the fact that most of the work that trainees from this sector would do, in another country, is actually performed in Libya by foreign labourers. It has not succeed materially in upgrading the quality of the workforce, which has in terms of competitiveness has historically mattered little, since 80% (this figure is also found as 66%) of all Libyans in work are employed by the state. In 2013 an agreement was signed between TVET UK and the National Board for Technical and Vocational Education, under which TVET UK and British TVET providers will work to upgrade the Libyan system. Under a second, national scheme, \$2.6 billion was allocated in 2013 for scholarships to enable Libyans to study abroad; about a quarter of the beneficiaries (10,000 out of 41,000) will be studying technical subjects; and state employers like the National Oil Company are also allocating funds for this purpose. At about the same time the EC signed a €6.5m agreement with the British Council and

the Libyan TVE and Employment Programme for major work on the TVET system.

Outputs and measures

Libya’s literacy is the highest in North Africa, at 89.5% (with youth literacy for both sexes at 99.9%). Libya has never engaged with TIMMS or PIRLS. It appears that the efficacy of its education system has been exaggerated, but exact measurement will probably remain challenging for some years to come.

Employability

Official figures show falling unemployment, with a downward trend from 20.7% in January 2010 to 19.5% in January 2012 and 15% in September 2013. The World Bank is highly sceptical of these, noting that real figures are believed to be around 30%, with youth figures much higher: “World Bank estimates show that youth unemployment has remained at about 50 percent with the majority of unemployed holding university degrees.”¹⁰ It is to be noted that 80% (or 66%) of those in employment are in the public sector, with expectations of high wages. But by the same token – and this is particularly relevant to education – there is significant over-employment: it is reckoned that half of all teachers have no actual teaching duties but are nonetheless paid to stand idle. This is not positive for morale, though it is no doubt excellent for unemployment figures.

Differentials of Gender and Economic Background

In 2001 16% of women had a degree and 48% a secondary school certificate. Youth literacy for young women (as for young men) is 99.9%. Women currently take up 59% of places in further education, and make up 80% of school teachers. Data is so thin that Libya is not scored at all in the UNICEF Gender Gap Index for 2010, and most key indicators are blank. Estimates are however given for workforce participation: 19% at age 15-24 (male 53%) and 25% at 15+ (male 79%). There are indications

of Libya's performance in broader gender issues in the newly introduced Gender-related Development Index which for the first time in 2014 formed part of the UNDP Human Development Index (and is simply a comparison of the HDI figures for male and female): here Libya ranked 93rd, well below its 55th place in the composite HDI, but well above Tunisia (116th), Algeria (129rd), Egypt (125th) and Morocco (132nd).¹¹ On the other hand in the GII, the Gender Inequality Index (a more complex assessment of women's position in society based on reproductive health, empowerment – including education and political participation – and economic activity), Libya ranks 40th, against Tunisia (48th), Algeria (81st), Morocco (92nd) and Egypt (130th).¹²

¹ Dr M Taghavi, *A Critical Analysis of Higher Education in Libya*, 2013,

http://works.bepress.com/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1045&context=mr_farzanegan accessed 29.9.2014

² WEF *African Competitiveness Survey*, 2013.

³ Dr M Taghavi, *A Critical Analysis of Higher Education in Libya*, 2013

⁴ Dr M Taghavi, *A Critical Analysis of Higher Education in Libya*, 2013

⁵ Both figures quoted by Dr Taghavi, op. cit.

⁶ WEF *African Competitiveness Survey*, 2013

⁷ European Commission, *Higher Education in Libya*, accessed 29.9.2014

http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/tempus/participating_countries/overview/libya_overview_of_hes_final.pdf

⁸ WEF *African Competitiveness Survey*, 2013.

⁹ World Education News and Review, July 1st 2013,

<http://wenr.wes.org/2013/07/education-in-a-transitional-libya/> accessed 29.9.2014

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<http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/MNA/QEBissue2January2014FINAL.pdf> accessed 29.9.2014

¹¹ <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/table-5-gender-related-development-index-gdi> accessed 30.9.2014

¹² <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/table-4-gender-inequality-index> accessed 30.9.2014

Country Profile: Morocco

Background

At Independence in 1956 Morocco inherited a public education system designed largely for the children of Europeans. A total of some 640 Moroccan Muslims had graduated from university,¹ and the great majority of the population was unschooled and illiterate. Education became the great social escalator, opening opportunity to Moroccans from all backgrounds and holding out the promise of jobs in the public administration to the small but growing number of graduates. Like other post-colonial governments, Morocco's pushed forward the Arabization of the school system, a process largely completed by the end of the 1980s, the last stage of which in particular, was handled in a way seen by many as damaging the quality of education; and the commitment to expanding access flagged. Since then, results have diverged: the best of the public and private schools and the lycées of the French *Mission* have produced excellent students who fill French universities. There are over 32,000 Moroccan students in France – the largest single group of foreign students there, and 66.5% of all Moroccans studying abroad; and this figure includes 4,335 at the Grandes Ecoles. Of those at university 41% study sciences; of those at the Grandes Ecoles, 68% attend the Ecoles d'Ingénieurs.² These are the Moroccan elite, and many of them work abroad, or find jobs in Morocco through family connections and job fairs held in Paris. The public system on the other hand has generally declined in quality to the point where King Mohammed VI said in 2013, after a three-year emergency plan for education that had cost \$4.1 billion, "I am indeed sad to note that the state of education is worse than it was twenty years ago."³

Quality, though, is only part of the story. Despite considerable progress, Morocco's three-cycle school system followed by university, professional training or Grande Ecole, has lagged in regional comparisons, with low literacy and attainment rates. But the last 15 years have seen concerted efforts, strongly encouraged by the King, to correct the fundamentals, through

three successive campaigns – the National Charter of 1999-2009, the *Plan d'Urgence* of 2009-12 and now the Action Plan of 2013-16. The results have been on the whole positive, if not spectacular, with progress towards the Millennium Development Goals in this area, and UNESCO Education for All (EPT) targets.

Government expenditure on education is high, both as a proportion of GDP and of total government spending, around 6% and 25% respectively during the *Plan d'Urgence* period, which also saw non-salary investment in education rise from 16.6% of the government's total investment budget (2008) to 31.9% (2011).⁴ Morocco spends more, on both counts, than its North African neighbours. The challenge has been to translate this spending into results, through administrative devolution and reform of a very traditional, rote-learning based pedagogy, to become responsive, innovative and child-centred. One of the big drags on progress is the very high cost of teaching staff, 2.7 times the average for a comparable group of nations at primary, and 3.2 times at secondary.⁵

Success has been notable at primary in particular, where enrolment rates have risen from 84.6% to 97.5% in the decade 2000-10, with retention of 90% to completion (2012/13).⁶ This has been helped by the levelling off of demographic growth (the grade 1 cohort was 4.02 million in 2004/5 and 4.01 million in 2011/12). At middle and secondary, completion has grown significantly, to 62.5% and 33.9% respectively. There are, however, still some 1.2 million children outside secondary education. Gender parity is good and closing ("gender differences are not very significant in Moroccan school enrolment," notes the African Development Bank), though girls have pushed ahead of boys in both secondary cycles. There remain however, obstinate problems in the enrolment of girls in rural areas.

Although success at *scolarisation*, getting children into school, has been notable, and literacy has risen to reasonable, but not exceptional, levels (77% in the 15-24 bracket in 2008, as against 58% in 1994), educational outcomes have not met expectations. Morocco has bravely participated in TIMSS and PIRLS exercises, with less than happy results: 45th/45 in literacy

(PIRLS 2011) and 49th/50 (TIMSS 2011). The country's own PNEA assessment in 2008, one of the main stimuli to the reform programme, shows maths scores peaking in grade 6 (at 43% for boys and 45% for girls) before declining throughout middle school to a disappointing 29% and 28% at grade 9. In Arabic the story is only slightly better, with no average scores over 50% for either sex, but peaking at grade 9 with 40% and 46%.⁷

However, the expansion of school education is having a dramatic effect, combined with rising pass rates in the bac, on numbers in the country's Higher Education system. Total student numbers grew slowly in the first decade of the century, from 261,000 in 2000 to 308,000 in 2010, but since then have rocketed. In 2013 the total reached 585,000 (i.e. from 10.4% to 14.3% of the age cohort⁸), and in September 2014 the Minister reported growth of 47% in student numbers 2011-14.

This is placing great strains on the whole education system, but particular at tertiary, where costs are highest. Quality ranges from good to much less good, and although Morocco was one of the first takers-up outside the EU of the Bologna LMD framework (2004-8), there is only limited continuity of quality between Moroccan and European undergraduate education. As the number of students increases, fast, the problem of structural graduate unemployment worsens, and the mismatch between university courses and the labour market becomes more painfully clear. This creates social and political risk, as all North African governments well understand.

Morocco's problems are smaller than those of its neighbours. Despite the rapid growth, there is time left, albeit not very much, to address some of the major problems before the worst of the 'youth bulge' reaches the universities: Morocco's student body represents a gross tertiary enrolment rate of 13%, compared to Egypt's 28% or Algeria's 31%. It is growing very fast – but the race is clearly on.⁹ The last couple of years have seen moves to internationalize the HE system, to consolidate institutions into hubs, to reform language demands and offerings, and to collaborate with employers in designing relevant courses. Real autonomy though,

remains some way away, despite frequent assertions that it already exists.

Language

Morocco faces, in more acute form, a language 'question' that it shares with Algeria. French traditionally is the elite language of culture, power and international trade; Arabic that of religion, the courts and public administration. But neither is the mother tongue of most Moroccans who grow up speaking either *Darija* (a dialectal Arabic that is some distance from the classical language) or one of the Amazigh dialects often referred to synecdochically as Tamazight. This lies at the root, many believe, of Morocco's problems with literacy, by institutionalising a diglossia that seriously impairs the acquisition of reading skills in primary school. It may also contribute significantly to the difficulty of retaining children at that level.

The education system was never completely Arabized: tertiary study in science and maths remains in French with the absurd and damaging consequence that students of these elite subjects must switch languages, from the Arabic in which all *public* school education is taught, to French on entering university. This is much less problematic for those educated privately in French, than for those emerging from the public system, often with skills in both French and Arabic that are not at a sufficient level for use in university study. This socially divisive discontinuity problem was highlighted by the King in his 2013 speech on education, as was the need to expand, fast, Moroccans' foreign language skills. In the last year, foreign language versions of the Moroccan baccalaureate have begun to be designed and trialled; and the Minister of Higher Education has made very clear in a series of policy statements that he intends English to become a requirement for higher study in the sciences. "A Moroccan student," he said in 2013, "who does not speak English, must consider himself illiterate." The new 2011 Constitution made 'formalized' Tamazight (an artificial synthesis of various Berber dialects) an official language which is now also taught in many schools,

completing a complicated and difficult linguistic landscape.

Meanwhile the question of which language, Arabic or *Darija*, should be the language of instruction in primary education is a long-running, divisive debate, which is in truth political and religious to a far greater extent than it is educational.

The school system

Moroccan schools are organized on a three cycle, 6-3-3, model culminating in the baccalaureate exam which is the gateway to university. Primary enrolment is now high, at 117% for boys and 110.3% for girls (Gross Enrolment) and 96.8%/95.6% (Net Attendance).¹⁰ The drop-out rate at primary has fallen from 6.1% in 2004 to 3.1% in 2009.¹¹ There are 4 million children in primary, of whom 11.8% are in private institutions.

Middle, or *collège*, education (grades 7-9), has a slightly smaller population, of 1.46 million (1.44 million in 2007) of whom 6.6% are in private institutions, and an enrolment rate that is rising fast, from 60.3% (2000) to 79.1% (2010). There are marked differences in the rates for rural and urban schools: In 2010 urban *collèges* showed a rate of 97.4%, rural ones 59.1%.

Secondary education, much smaller at 871 thousand (7.7% private) has advanced from 37.2% enrolment (2000) to 52.8% (2010), again with a very marked 80:22 bias towards urban schools, and a growing bias towards girls.

The baccalaureate pass-rate has risen from 42.5% in 2009 to 57.3% in 2012 (with a slight dip to 51.5% in 2011). In 2000-8 an annual average of 95 thousand passed: in 2009-13 that figure rose to an annual average of 164 thousand, peaking at 210 thousand in 2010. In 2013 a French-language baccalaureate option was introduced (which has proved unpopular in many quarters); and this will be followed by bac options in Spanish and English. The English bac in particular, given the rapid moves towards making English competence an admission requirement for all science and engineering faculties, seems likely to be transformative.

Administration of the public schools system has been largely devolved to the AREFs, or local education authorities, since 1999. Despite valiant attempts at pupil-centred curriculum reform, the pedagogy remains resolutely exam-focused and based on rote-learning. Regular changes of approach by different governments have been notable, and the damage caused by constant changes of policy was another of the major criticisms in the King's 2013 speech. The appointment of an experienced and non-ideological Minister of Education in 2013, as well as the revival of the Conseil Supérieur de l'Enseignement to advise the Palace on educational matters, may prove to be the beginning of a new surge forwards.

The university system

Success in enrolment and retention at school, and a rising bac pass-rate, have led to rapidly increasing student numbers. In the public universities this number has risen from 293,600 in 2009 to 543,400 today (an 85% increase), and across the HE system as a whole from 364,400 to 610,700 (67%).¹² The Minister of Higher Education recently cited a 47% growth in student numbers 2010-14.¹³ The proportion of students in private HEIs was 7.8% in 2010 and is rising, with a target of 15%.

Morocco has 16 public universities, of which one (Al-Akhawayn) is run on a unique public-private basis and teaches entirely in English: in the autumn of 2014 two major university mergers, in Rabat and Casablanca, are taking place, and there are moves towards the creation of inter-university hubs. At the same time, the newest public institution, the Université Polytechnique Mohamed VI at Beni Guerir, founded in partnership with the Office Chérifien des Phosphates, is preparing to open its doors. There are 61 specialized schools for the training of every profession from airline pilots to judges, architects, senior civil servants and teachers. And there are 196 private institutions, from universities like Mundiapolis at Casablanca, Universiapolis at Agadir and UIR at Rabat, to smaller and more specialized institutions. More than half of these are concentrated in Rabat and Casablanca.

Morocco was the one of the first countries outside the EU to adopt the Bologna Process LMD reforms, albeit not yet perfectly (Algeria and Tunisia have done the same). This is part of a determined attempt to internationalise the country's university sector which has involved much groundwork in relationship-building and the attraction of foreign institutions to Morocco. (The University of London, for example, has recently signed an agreement to open an office in the University of Rabat.) Morocco is active in TEMPUS and Erasmus Mundus programmes, and is a significant exporter of students: the main destination has traditionally been France (66.5% of a total of almost 43 thousand¹⁴), followed at some distance by Spain, but there is fast-growing appetite for English education, with the UK as a growing choice. At the same time Morocco is the second largest destination in Africa (after South Africa) for transnational student movements.

It is worth noting that the place of English in Higher Education, in addition to the strong public statements by the Minister, is underwritten by the establishment of English-language competence as a criterion for recruiting university teachers in science and technology, economics, management and health sciences.¹⁵

Research is a high priority for Morocco, but presents difficulties. Only one Moroccan university (Cadi Ayyad in Marrakech) appears in the world's top 400 rankings (at 301st in the *Times Higher*),¹⁶ though significant research is going on elsewhere in universities and more broadly under the auspices on the CNRST. With a low number of researchers by international standards (647 per million of population in 2006 as against 4,269 for the UK or 3,496 for France) Morocco nonetheless leads Egypt (617), Algeria (170) and Libya (60), while lagging significantly behind Tunisia (1,588).¹⁷ These figures do not translate easily into the number of patents filed: Morocco claimed only 3 in 2009 (but 46 in 2005), while Tunisia's much larger research community filed only four, and Egypt, with slightly fewer researchers, filed 65.¹⁸ Citations of published articles also lag behind Egypt and Tunisia, while leading Algeria (Morocco recorded 1.5 citations per 100 thousand inhabitants in 2010, to Tunisia's 5.7, Egypt's 2.1 and Algeria's 1.1).¹⁹ There are problems about

the legal status of researchers in Moroccan universities – and very serious pressures from heavy teaching-loads in an expanding system. But language is also a hurdle, with non-English speaking francophone researchers increasingly confined, where they publish and work internationally at all, to a francophone research community that is itself recognizing the inevitability of English. Education reforms at the school level increasingly recognize the vital importance of English, and there are urgent, though controversial, moves to make English a condition of admittance to science faculties, ostensibly with effect from 2015.²⁰

Private Sector

Morocco has not one but three education systems, of unequal size but comparable importance: a public system, run by the government and paid for by the Moroccan taxpayer; the archipelago of French *lycées de mission*, run by the French government; and a growing pool of very variable private institutions teaching, for the most part, in French. To a greater extent than any other North African country, the elite is educated differently from the mass of citizens; and this has consequences both for quality and perhaps also for policy decisions taken at various points in Morocco's post-Independence (1956) history. A sense of the function of the *lycées de mission* is given by the fact that 45% of Moroccan graduates from the lycées since 1956 have come from 500 families; and 15% from 20 families.²¹ Clearly the elite *lycées de mission* are beyond the reach of the vast majority of Moroccans, but a system of private schools at all levels has grown up to serve the aspirations of middle class families. Of very variable quality, these schools teach in French, and the better of them give students a serious advantage in the bac, and in the fraught transition to science and maths at university – the high prestige subjects still taught entirely in French.

The private sector is by far the dominant provider at pre-school level (91.6% of the 740 thousand children enrolled) and accounts for 11.8% at primary, 6.6% at middle school and 7.7% at secondary. This figure remains steady into Higher Education, at 7.8%.²²

Vocational Education

As in most countries of North Africa (and elsewhere) TVET is often seen as a second-best form of education, with lower entry thresholds and lower outcomes. It is however extremely important as a means of equipping a segment of the country's young with workplace-orientated skills and enhanced employment prospects. The *Office de la formation professionnelle et de la promotion du travail* (1974) supervises TVET, and is directly responsible for implementation of policy, as well as for the majority of the students in 237 colleges and institutions in the public sector. Divided into four levels, the training offered takes in at the top of the scale those who have graduated from secondary school, and at the bottom, those who completed primary school. The system has been growing at 9.5% a year since 2003, and by 2010 had 290,000 students.²³ However, take-up at secondary has been declining for some time, in line with a decline across the region.

Its efficacy remains in some doubt. By 2011 the differentiated unemployment rate for graduates of TVET institutions according to the World Bank was 19.7%, and of short training programmes 25.2% - against the national average of 8.9%. TVET graduates are therefore slightly better placed than graduates of 'open enrolment' public universities (22.3%) and secondary school leavers (21.7%), but not by much.²⁴ However much more negative figures are given by the ADB for unemployment rates 3 years after graduation, with overall unemployment rate of 31.9%.²⁵

Engagement and progression

Enrolment and retention at primary have been Morocco's great successes in the past decade. Enrolment is now over 100% gross (GER) and in the high 90s net (NAR). In addition, retention is good, with 90.3% of children reaching the final year of the primary cycle (up from 59.6% in 2000); 62.5% reaching the final year of middle school (35.1% in 2000); 33.9% completing secondary (15.7% in 2000). Ambitious targets (88% for middle school and 55.1% for secondary) are in place for 2019/22.²⁶

Employability

The general rate of unemployment in Morocco has fallen from 13% (2000) to 8.9% (2011); but Morocco suffers from the same problems of transition to employment that all its neighbours share. In the 15-24 age-band the figure is 17.6%, and it is higher still for graduates, who make up 20% of the unemployed in this band: graduates of 'open-access' universities (i.e. the public universities, with the exception of faculties operating a *numerus clausus* and selective entry) see 22.3% unemployment, against a 21.7% for secondary leavers and 19.7% for TVET graduates. Allegedly 80% of all graduate unemployed come from five degree courses: Arabic Literature, Islamic Studies, Chemistry, Physics and Biology.²⁷

Several universities are running schemes to facilitate the work transition and tracking employment outcomes meticulously; and a National Observatory has been set up with African Development Bank support. But the essence of the problem is structural. The African Development Bank cites some very telling statistics on the overproduction of graduates qualified for management jobs: it reckons that in the 45-59 age-band, 95.9% of graduates became managers (of whom 39% senior managers), whereas by the 25-34 age-band those figures are 34.4% and 10.3%. In other words supply is outstripping demand, and the problem will grow worse until ways of absorbing the graduate unemployed are devised. It needs to be noted too that the continuing overhang means that each new generation of graduates is competing for jobs not just with its own peers, but with several previous generations, all still looking for jobs too.

There is also a very understandable risk-aversion: 38% of Moroccans aged 15-34 polled (and for graduates the figure would be much higher) said that their preferred employment destination was the public sector, with its job security and good salary and pension terms. It is hard for graduates to accept that the traditional compact whereby all or most graduates were once hired into the public sector is long dead, and with graduate numbers rocketing is fast becoming an impossible dream. But the melancholy drama of the *chômeurs diplômés* is played out week-in, week-out in demonstrations

outside the Rabat parliament demanding non-specific absorption into the public administration.

Differentials of gender and economic background

As noted above, the overall gap between men and women in Moroccan education is closing: survival to the end of primary is now equal at 99%. Essentially, in the earlier years of education boys still do better than girls, though by a reducing margin (boy: girl ratio down from 1.07 to 1.04 between 2000 and 2010); while at the higher levels, girls are progressively outstripping boys (boy: girl ratio down from 0.97 to 0.87 over the same period).

Similar ratios for adult literacy (female: male 75.8%) and youth literacy (female: male 88.8%) show the progress that is being made; but there remain notable discrepancies between the two extremes of young urban males and young rural females in many measures.

The Human Development Index places Morocco 129th in the world on the Gender Inequality scale, behind all its North African neighbours (though not very far behind Egypt at 125th), and 132nd on the Gender-related Development Index on which all North African countries drop significantly, and Algeria (129th), Egypt (125th) and Tunisia (116th) keep Morocco company at the low end.

¹ Spencer D Segalla, *The Moroccan Soul: French Education, Colonial Ethnology and Muslim Resistance 1912-1956*, Lincoln, Nebraska, 2009, p248.

²

http://ressources.campusfrance.org/publi_institu/etude_prospect/stats_pays/fr/maroc_fr.pdf – accessed 27.10.2014

³ <http://www.map.ma/en/activites-royales/hm-king-delivers-speech-nation-occasion-60th-anniversary-revolution-king-and-peopl> accessed 3.7.2014

⁴ World Bank, *Programme Document for a Proposed Loan*, http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2013/05/09/000333037_20130509100436/Rendered/INDEX/767190PGD0P120010Box377288B00OUO090.txt accessed 3.10.2014

⁵ Banque Africaine de Développement, *Analyse du système d'éducation et de formation: Maroc*, 2013

⁶ UNESCO EFA/EPA Report 2011, <http://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/upload/Morocco/>

[Morocco Rapport EPT 2011.pdf](#) accessed 3.10.2014

⁷ World Bank, *Programme Document for a Proposed Loan*

⁸ UNESCO EFA/EPA Report 2011

⁹ UNESCO EFA/EPA Report 2011

¹⁰ UNICEF Statistics at a Glance

http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/morocco_statistics.html accessed 6.10.2014

¹¹ UNESCO EFA/EPA Report 2011

¹² UNESCO EFA/EPA Report 2011

¹³ University World News #337, 6.10.2014

¹⁴

http://ressources.campusfrance.org/publi_institu/etude_prospect/stats_pays/fr/maroc_fr.pdf – accessed 27.10.2014

¹⁵

http://www.enssup.gov.ma/doc_site/documents/Notes/Circulaire%20PESA_Critere_Anglaise.pdf – accessed 27.10.2014

¹⁶ http://www.uca.ma/site/alaune.php?id=93&art=L-UCA-au-TOP-400-Mondial#.VE4_3_nkd8M – accessed 27.10.2014

¹⁷ Number of Researchers per million inhabitants by country, UNESCO Institute for Statistics http://www.uis.unesco.org/ev.php?URL_ID=3755&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201 accessed 3.10.2014

¹⁸ WIPO World Intellectual Property Indicators, <http://www.wips.int/ipstats/en/statistics/patents> accessed 6.10.2014

¹⁹ World Bank, *Breaking Even or Breaking Through*, 2011

²⁰ University World News #337, 6.10.2014

<http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20140929164205679> accessed 6.10.2014

²¹ Moha U'Hrou Hajar, *La mission Française au Maroc vs La mission de l'école marocaine*, 2008 (no pub. data)

²² 2010 figures from Banque Africaine de Développement, *Analyse du système d'éducation et de formation: Maroc, 2013*: WEF gives slightly more recent percentages of 12.9% at primary and 7.2% middle school.

²³ A Hassi, G Storti, *Vocational Education in Morocco*, <http://library.iated.org/view/HASSI2012VOC> accessed 7.10.2014

²⁴ World Bank, *Programme Document for a Proposed Loan*

²⁵ Banque Africaine de Développement, *Analyse du système d'éducation et de formation: Maroc*, 2013

²⁶ Banque Africaine de Développement, *Analyse du système d'éducation et de formation: Maroc*, 2013

²⁷ Driss Guerraoui, 'Le chômage des jeunes et l'expérience de recrutement dans la fonction publique', *L'Observateur du Maroc*, no. 235, 1-7 November 2013 – my translation

Country Profile: Tunisia

Background

Tunisia is a country of two very contrasting narratives. On the one hand, the World Economic Forum rated Tunisia's education system 12th in the world in 2007,¹ and the high proportion of GDP spent on education (6.3%, constituting 22.7% of government expenditure in 2008²) was widely considered exemplary. On the other, outcomes were, and remain, poor, with some of the widest use of private lessons in the world (70% of all 15-year olds), massive *redoublement* (43% of all students report having repeated a year at some point in their education), low PISA scores (significantly below the international average in all subjects) and fast-rising graduate unemployment (42.5% of Tunisia's unemployed were graduates in 2008³). The reality is perhaps somewhere between the two: Tunisia has certainly well understood the vital role of education in development, and has invested heavily in it with some impressive results; but the effectiveness of reform, and the transformative potential of education have been undermined by lack of transparency, antiquated pedagogy, teacher demoralisation, over-centralisation and the failure to institute external scrutiny through effective inspection and objective examination. Perhaps most important of all, education has paid much too little attention to the requirements of the labour market.

At the level of the Millennium Development Goals, much has certainly been achieved in primary enrolment (111.8% and 107.8% Gross Enrolment by sex; 98% Net Attendance, in 2013), in literacy (youth literacy is 98.2%/96.1%) and in gender equity, (with 101.6 girls reaching the last year of school for every 100 boys):⁴ but Tunisian education suffers from the complex malaise of all North African countries and produces outcomes much inferior to the expectations generated by its high investment.

At Independence in 1956 Tunisia inherited an education system not unlike those of Algeria and Morocco, which was fairly small, and focussed

to a very great extent on the needs of European children. The priorities in the next years were expansion, Arabization and the training of a class of skilled workers to replace the Europeans. The education system developed on a French model (and is very similar in structure to those of Algeria and Morocco, though slightly longer), a 6-3-4 structure of basic, middle and upper secondary school culminating in the baccalaureate exam, with a pass-rate of around 50%, which governs entrance to university. The language of education in the public system is Arabic, though some science and maths subjects are taught in French at secondary school.

One striking characteristic of Tunisian education is the very high level of private tuition noted above. The OECD (INTES) integrity audit of the system in 2013 highlighted this as a serious integrity problem, noting that, especially at the secondary level, the majority of private tuition is provided by the same teachers who are also providing classroom tuition, and who are responsible for all annual pupil assessments up to the bac (to which they also contribute 25% of the marks). It is combined with a slightly lower level than found in Egypt and Morocco of education in private institutions.⁵

Expenditure on education, at nearly 25% of the national budget,⁶ is high (almost double the OECD average). But the majority of the expenditure is on teachers' salaries, and these (as in Morocco, though not to quite the same extent) are high, at 1.7 times per capita GDP, which is higher than the OECD average, while Tunisian teachers work, at 493 hours per year over 30 weeks, notably less than Egyptians (614 hours, or the OECD average of 577 hours over 38 weeks).⁷ This suggests that productivity is low, as well as there being significant leakage from public to private sector.

It seems certain that full primary enrolment will be achieved for 2015: the latest UNESCO figures show well over 100% Gross Enrolment for both sexes and 98% Net Attendance. 95-97% of pupils reach the last year of primary; and Net Attendance at secondary school is a very impressive 77% for girls and 69% for boys. Girls do very well with higher rates of survival to the end of primary (101.6x boys); and higher enrolment at secondary (101.6x).⁸ A caution

though, in that Tunisia, despite its impressive record on women's reproductive health, employment and empowerment shown in its being placed 48th out of 144 countries in UNDP's Gender Inequality Index,⁹ scores much lower in the UNDP's newer Gender Development Index (GDI), which is a simpler disaggregation and comparison of male and female scores in the Human Development Index. Here Tunisia is placed 116th, only a fraction head of Egypt (125th), Algeria (129th) and Morocco (132nd).¹⁰

Test results – and Tunisia has been courageous enough to participate in PISA, TIMSS and PIRLS – are not as good as one might have hoped. In PISA 2009 more than 50% of all Tunisian students were below the PISA baseline on reading proficiency (and maths and science scores were 359 and 346 respectively at grade 4; and 425 and 439 at grade 8 – against international averages of 500).

Finally, unemployment is a scourge in Tunisia as elsewhere in North Africa. Rapid growth of the education system has outstripped the ability, or the will, of Tunisian governments to create employment for its products. As noted above, 42.5% of the unemployed are graduates, often from faculties and courses that simply do not impart the skills and aptitudes needed by the job market. Serious attempts are taking place to rebalance the distribution of students between courses in favour of employability, stressing applied subjects and de-emphasizing the courses with poor employment outcomes. As so often though in expanding systems, the economic imperatives push back, since the low-outcome courses in the humanities and social sciences tend to be much cheaper per student than the high-outcome schools of science, engineering and medicine.

The school system

Tunisia's French-based school system architecture consists of pre-school, followed by six years of basic education, and three of lower secondary (or middle school), leading to four years at upper secondary. The latter is made up of a year of common curriculum followed by three years of specialisation. Education is

compulsory from 6-16, and is in Arabic except for some science and technical subjects at upper secondary. French has been the main second language since Independence, but English is rapidly becoming more important (and is now a mandatory part of all degree courses as well as being taught in secondary schools). A slackening of demographic pressure is taking some of the burden off schools (the secondary-age population fell 3.2% between 2008 and 2013¹¹).

Enrolment in pre-school is increasing fast (from 7% in 1990 to 14% in 2000;¹² and to 22.4% in 2003¹³). Most (86% in 2003) pre-school provision is private. At primary, where enrolment and attendance are over and very close to 100% respectively, survival to the last grade is also very high, at 95/75% (depending on sources¹⁴). In 2009 the Minister of Education asserted that 99% of 6 year olds, 98% of 6-11s and 80% of 12-18s were in school.¹⁵ This very high level of *scolarisation* is not without its dangers: after 15 years of rapid growth between Independence and 1971, and over 6% of GDP already spent on education, the government was obliged to scale back the rate of progression into secondary from 40% to 25%, to meet budgetary constraints. The threshold remained low until 1980, when the government felt it necessary to relax the pressure again, and growth resumed.

Net Attendance figures at secondary show a distinct advantage to girls, at 77%, over boys, at 69%, in a total of 527.9 thousand (2011). The pass-rate for the bac, which governs entry to Higher Education, is about 50%.

Negative features of the Tunisian school system, noted already, include the massive prevalence of private lessons (70% of 15-year olds take them). These are more often than not taken from the child's own classroom teacher (54% of all secondary students, most of them from the richest quarter of Tunisian society are taught privately by their own public school teachers¹⁶). This leads at least to diversion of effort from the classroom, and in many cases to the use of private lessons as a vehicle for improper reward and achievement, a situation made more acute by the fact that all school exams are set and assessed in-school except for the bac itself, and even the bac sees 25% of its marks allocated by

the school. Added to this, the schools inspection regime is weak, and teachers relatively unproductive. The OECD integrity report concludes that “the effectiveness of classroom teaching seems to be very low,” and the WEF has demoted the effectiveness of the Tunisian education system as a whole from 12th to 68th out of the 144 countries ranked, between 2007 and 2013.

The university system

The first university in Tunisia, the University of Tunis, was established in 1960 by bringing together a number of non-university institutions. In 1988 it was split in three, forming the Universities of Tunis I, II and III; and since then the system has expanded to comprise 198 public Higher Education Institutions (13 of which are universities), 46 private university level HEIs, 24 Higher Institutes of Technical Studies and 6 Higher Institutes for Teacher Training. The 17 thousand students of 1975 were 345 thousand by 2007, 380 thousand in 2011, and almost half a million today. The Gross Enrolment Rate at tertiary rose from 2.6% in 1974 to 30.1% in 2007 and 35.2% in 2013, placing Tunisia 73rd of the countries surveyed by the WEF.¹⁷ The Bologna Process LMD structure was fully in place by 2012.

The Higher Education system takes in 6.1% of the state budget and processes a third of young Tunisians as undergraduates, graduating 78.6 thousand in 2010. However, there is a marked mismatch between labour market needs and the products of the universities, resulting in burgeoning graduate unemployment. Apart from a small number of the best, students entering the system after the bac do not get a free choice of course, rather being assigned to courses. The result of this is, on the one hand, an over-concentration of students in the lower per-capita-cost courses (humanities and social sciences) which are arguably the least private-sector-friendly; and on the other hand in a focus by students on the degree as a certificate of achievement/survival rather than the content of the degree course. This has been called by various commentators, the ‘sheepskin syndrome,’ the prizing of a degree on parchment over an education. Although there are now

serious moves to encourage students into ‘applied’ subjects, the cost imperatives often run counter this, and careers advice is not yet a strong suit in Tunisia.

The impulse to address some of these issues is also clear in legislation to allow decentralisation of control. HE institutions can since 2008 opt in some circumstances to become EPSTs (*Etablissement Public à Caractère Scientifique et Technologique*), operating on contract to the Ministry of Higher Education, with their own budgets and significant policy control. Overseen by a new government Quality Assurance Agency (PAQ); and in 2014 the whole question of sector reform and governance was addressed through the creation of a Direction Générale de la Rénovation Universitaire, charged with overseeing reform.

It should be noted that a significant number of Tunisian students – about 19.5 thousand in 2012-13 – study abroad. Almost 12,000 (59%) of them went to France, 1,654 to the Grandes Ecoles. For those at French university there is a more significant take-up of the Humanities and Social Sciences (26%) than for other North African countries, though the sciences (34%) top the list of preferences.

Research

Tunisia has by far the largest number of researchers of any of the five North African countries (1,588 per million of population). This compares to Morocco’s 647 and Egypt’s 617.¹⁸ In terms of ranking by patents filed, however, Tunisia ranks much lower than Egypt, which filed 65 patents in 2009: Tunisia filed 4, and Morocco 3. The numbers of researchers is better reflected in citation figures: in 2010 Tunisia recorded 5.7 citations per 100 thousand inhabitants, well ahead of Egypt (2.1), Morocco (1.5) and Algeria (1.1).

Private sector

Tunisia has a growing private sector in education, though it is not a large as that of Egypt or Morocco. 2.4% of primary and 4.8% of secondary students are educated in private schools. The level of secondary private

education is similar to neighbours (Egypt 5.5%, Morocco 4.8% - though Algeria has negligible private education at 0.5%); but significantly fewer children are privately educated at primary (2.4% as against 7.8% in Egypt and 12.9% in Morocco). This may reflect a greater confidence in public primary than in public secondary education – but it seems likely also to reflect the creeping ‘privatisation,’ through private tuition, of the state secondary system, which perhaps allows money to buy outcomes to an extent that offsets the need to pay for private education. At tertiary there are 46 private university level HEIs.

Vocational education

Like the other countries in the region, Tunisia has a TVET system that suffers from low esteem relative to the academic stream of education through university, though unlike the others, the Tunisian system has seen some overall growth, from 10% to 14% of eligible students in the decade to 2009. (It should be noted, though, that the starting figure of 10% is very low compared to an Egyptian starting figure of 30% and a figure for the Arab states of around 35%. Tunisia’s 2009 figure of 14% is still very modest even compared to Egypt’s - and to the Arab states’ much reduced figure of 20% after a decade of decline.) The World Bank notes that secondary technical colleges in Tunisia (as in Algeria and Morocco) are regularly undersubscribed.¹⁹

There are various routes into vocational training: The first moment of enrolment is at 16, after finishing basic education. More two-year TVET courses start after the first (*tronc commun*) year of secondary, leading to the *Certificat d’aptitude professionnel*, and these in turn can lead on to qualifications called the *Brevet de technician professionnelle* (two further years) and the *Brevet de technician supérieure* (four further years).

Engagement and progression

As noted, Tunisian children have a very high rate of progression between cycles, with over 30% of the age-group reaching tertiary education. But this is not reflected in the kind of results which high levels of school attendance

and massive government investment in education would seem to promise. Although headline literacy rates are high – youth literacy stands at 96.8% (98.2% for males and 96.1% for females)²⁰ - the results of internationally comparative testing are not entirely reassuring. PISA 2009 showed results in literacy that are very different in their implications, with 50% of all students below literacy baseline, and 5% in the lowest band. The same story holds good in science and maths: TIMSS 2011 places Tunisia close to the bottom of the scale in both (scores of 425 and 346 respectively against an average of 500), and places 21% and 25% of students assessed as having scores “too low for estimation” (i.e. not significantly different from the scores that would be achieved by random guesswork).²¹

Employability

Graduate unemployment in Tunisia has soared from 1.5% in 1989 to 33.2% in 2012. This is slightly lower than the overall 15-14 unemployment rate of 37.6% (Q3 2013) but is very high indeed by international standards. A Master’s degree seems to confer little advantage – those with Master’s degrees make up about 55% of the total graduate unemployed, despite being under 15% of the total number of students. On top of this, the unemployment rates are gender-biased, with 43.5% of women with degrees unemployed, as against 20.9% of men with degrees.²² “Youth unemployment in Tunisia is the result of structural issues in its education system and its labour market, as well as an ingrained understanding of “employment” based on decades of social and political development,” says CIPE.²³

The mismatch between over-theoretical degrees and the needs of the employment market is an important factor, beginning now to be addressed. So too is a preference for public sector employment, common across North Africa, for its security and benefits, which saps enthusiasm for entrepreneurship. CIPE also notes labour market inflexibility as crucial, with high hiring and severance costs and high levels of job security depressing graduate employment.

Differentials of gender and economic background

Differentials of gender are, as always, complicated. In most comparators females do well against males: although they are slightly underrepresented in primary school Gross enrolment (female: male 96.4), their survival rate to the last year of primary is higher (101.6) and by secondary school girls outnumber boys (103.3). This trend continues into tertiary education, where 61% of students are female.

What is very clear, though, is that girls seem to outperform boys at primary in the science and maths, to see that initial advantage narrowed and eliminated later; and to hold a clear reading advantage as late as upper secondary. However, it is also clear from the World Inequality Database on Education that wealth and rural/urban discrepancies weight heavier.²⁴

When looking at development indices, as noted above, there is a gap between structure and performance: the UNDP's Gender Inequality Index places Tunisia high a 48th, reflecting the *access* to economic opportunity, reproductive health, political empowerment and education; but in the Gender Development Index, which simply disaggregates and compares male and female components in the Human Development Index, Tunisia scores much lower at 116th.²⁵

⁷ OECD Integrity Scan of Tunisian Education System, 2013

⁸ UNICEF country information, www.unicef.org/infobycountry/tunisia_statistics.html accessed 9.10.2014

⁹ <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/gender-inequality-index-gii> accessed 10.10.14

¹⁰ <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/gender-development-index-gdi> accessed 10.10.2014

¹¹ <https://www.quandl.com/c/tunisia/tunisia-education-data> accessed 10.10.2014, data from UIS

¹² OECD Integrity Scan of Tunisian Education System, 2013

¹³ http://www.childinfo.org/files/MENA_Tunisia.pdf accessed 10.10.2014

¹⁴ Both figures cited by UNICEF Infobycountry (accessed 10.10.2014), the higher figures from survey data, the lower from 'administrative figures'

¹⁵ Oxford Business Group, Tunisia, *The Report*, 2009

¹⁶ PISA 2009, cited by OECD Integrity Scan of Tunisian Education System, 2013

¹⁷ **WEF African Competitiveness Survey 2013 ?**

¹⁸ <http://chartsbin.com/view/1124> accessed 13.10.2014

¹⁹ *The Road Not Travelled* p46

²⁰ <http://www.uis.unesco.org/literacy/Pages/adult-youth-literacy-data-viz.aspx> accessed 13.10.2014

²¹ <http://timssandpirls.bc.edu/> accessed 13.10.14

²² <http://www.thetunistimes.com/2014/05/tunisia-high-rate-unemployment-youth-women-5551/> accessed 13.10.2014

²³ <http://www.cipe.org/blog/2013/11/18/the-youth-unemployment-crisis-in-tunisia/#.VDu-4fldXuJ> accessed 13.10.2014

²⁴ <http://www.education-inequalities.org/countries/tunisia#?dimension=sex&group=all&year=latest> accessed 13.10.2014

²⁵ <http://hdr.undp.org/en/> accessed 13.10.2014

¹ WEF Human Capital Report 2013

² OECD Integrity Scan of Tunisian Education System, 2013

³ Oxford Business Group, Tunisia, *The Report*, 2009

⁴ UNICEF country information, www.unicef.org/infobycountry/tunisia_statistics.html accessed 9.10.2014

⁵ OECD Integrity Scan of Tunisian Education System, 2013

⁶ World Bank figures for 2008 show 22.7% for Tunisia as against 25.7% for Morocco – though the order is reversed in terms of percentage of GDP, with Tunisia spending 6.3% and Morocco 5.4%.

North Africa and UK Education Statistics

v = dates within the range, often only one country significantly older

UK stats variously sourced and not individually attributed

See disclaimer at start of report

Measure	Egypt	Libya	Tunisia	Algeria	Morocco	UK	Source	Year
Basic Country Data								
Population	82.1m	6.2m	10.9m	39.2m	33.0m	62.8m	World Bank	2013
Population under 14	25.3m	1,8m	2.5m	10.6m	9.0m	11.1m	UNESCO	2012
% population under 18	36,90%	34,70%	28%	32,80%	33,50%		UNESCO	2013
% population under 20	41,10%	na	32,60%	37,10%	38,30%	23,90%	WEF HCR 13	
Life expectancy	71	75	75	71	70	81	UNESCO	2012
Median age	24	na	29	26	26	39,9	World Bank	2010
GDP per capita	\$6,614	\$17,534	\$9,636	\$8,447	\$5,220	\$37,456	UNESCO	2012
Fertility (births per female)	3	na	2,1	2,7	2,4	2	WEF HCR 13	
% of population using internet	44,10%	19,90%	41,40%	15,20%	55%	89,90%	UNESCO	2013
Literacy								
Overall adult literacy rate	73,90%	89,50%	79,10%	72,60%	67,10%	99%	UNESCO	2013
Female literacy as % of male	80,50%	87,00%	81,40%	78,60%	75,80%		UNESCO	2013
Youth literacy rate (15-24)	91,10%	100%	98,30%	95,60%	83,10%		UIS f/c	2015
Youth literacy rate male	92,30%	99,90%	98,20%	94,40%	88,80%		UNESCO	2013
Youth literacy rate female	86,10%	99,90%	96,10%	89,10%	74%		UNESCO	2013
Employment								
Youth unemployment								
% unemployed adults with tertiary degree	24,80%	na	21,90%	na	17,80%		World Bank	2010
% tertiary graduates unemployed	19,00%	na	22,90%	na	18,10%	7,30%	World Bank	2010

% firms citing skill level as constraint	50,00%	na	37,00%	na	31,00%		World Bank	2007-8 v
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Education

Percentage of GDP on education	3,80%	na	6,20%	4,30%	5,40%	6,20%	UNESCO	2008-12 v
Percentage of govt budget on education	9,90%	na	17,30%	11,40%	17,30%	13,30%	UNESCO	2008-12 v
Spending per student on tertiary public education	\$1,167	na	\$1,999	\$3,178	\$3,204	\$8,932	World Bank	2010
Primary school GER	113,40%	114,40%	109,70%	117,40%	116,10%	108,50%	UNESCO	2012
Primary school NER	na	na	98,90%	97,30%	96,90%	99,80%	UNESCO	2012
Female primary enrolment as % of male	94,30%	na	94,40%	94,30%	94,30%		UNESCO	2012
Secondary school GER	86,30%	104,30%	91,10%	97,60%	68,90%	95,40%	UNESCO	2011-12 v
Secondary school NER	82,50%	na	na	na	na	94,60%	UNESCO	2006-12 v
Female secondary enrolment as % of male	96,20%	na	103,30%	104,30%	85,80%		UNESCO	2012
Tertiary education GER	30,10%	60,90%	35,20%	31,50%	16,20%	61,90%	UNESCO	2003-12 v
% females at tertiary education	46,50%	51,40%	60,40%	59,00%	47,20%	57,10%	UNDATA	
School life expectancy	13.5 yrs	16.1 yrs	14.6 yrs	14.2 yrs	11.6 yrs	16,20%	UNESCO	2003-12 v
Survival to end primary	96,10%	na	94,60%	92,80%	91,60%	na	UNESCO	2009-12 v
Primary to secondary transition	93,60%	na	99,10%	97,70%	90,40%	na	UNESCO	2003-12
% children in private schools primary	7,80%	na	2,40%	0,50%	12,90%	6,50%	WEF HCR 13	
% children in private schools secondary	5,50%	na	4,80%	0,50%	4,80%		WEF HCR 13	
% population over 25 with tertiary degree	6,70%	na	6,20%	5,40%	6%	29,70%		

Research

Research citations per 100k inhabitants	2,1	na	5,7	1,1	1,5		World Bank	2010
R&D spend as % of GDP	0,23%	na	1%	na	0,65%	1,70%	World Bank	2010

Gender and Development

HDI ranking - world	110	55	90	93	129	14	UNDP HDR	2014
GII ranking -world	130	40	48	81	92	35	UNDP HDR	2014
GDI ranking -world	125	93	116	129	132	35	UNDP HDR	2014

