



# Towards the Construction of a Diversity Education Landscape in Moroccan Higher Education Language Curricula

*Hassan Abouabdelkader* 

## I INTRODUCTION

If it needs more than 200 years for our planet to reach Civilisation Type I, which is millions of years behind Civilisation Type II, from which our planet has received some signals, say scientists, it means that our education needs to harness its rhythm and speed to align its progress with the requirements of future generations. This means that educational progress depends on the efficacy of alignment selected for our communities. The argument is that today's power lies in how much we work together to construct a shared future. Though highly debated and contravened (Qin et al., 2014), diversity, equity, and inclusion are considered in this chapter as the tools whereby we can achieve this objective and bridge the existing gaps in language education. If properly attended to in most MENA countries, these ailing conditions are likely to serve as an open window for

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H. Abouabdelkader (✉)

Ecole Nationales Supérieure d'Arts et Métiers, Moulay Ismail University,  
Meknes, Morocco

students' growth and development and a means to overcome the existing inequities and provide new accommodations for all students in the region.

Like in most developing countries, Morocco expends a lot of efforts to promote its educational system and remedy deficiencies, but most of these efforts cannot solve the learning problems crisis. Among the key factors responsible for the misalignment of curricula, the World Bank established four criteria among the causes of the dysfunctioning of education in many countries. Of all these causes identified (World Bank, 2020), the present chapter propels Cause 4, which gives more impetus to citizens—teachers and learners are the determinant factors of accountability for their educational conditions—to the forefront of these priorities. As potential carriers of change, teachers enjoy several auspicious privileges; they benefit from the respect of all social strata. They can carry out research, make observations of what happens in their classes and curricula, supplement solutions, and build up educational projects.

In practice, teachers are the direct partners of learners; they have a large spectrum of activity in the achievement of change. Their work includes a lot of interaction that may harness the powers of learners and promote their development and growth. Reports from the HCI 2020 indicate that the increase of the human capital ratio in Morocco obtained at the level of learning outcomes from data collected in 2010 was 6% more significant due to the improvements achieved, but that “important challenges persist related to the quality of education, equity, and management of the sector” (World Bank, 2020). Despite the efforts pursued in the Education Act in 2019 (2015–2030), the World Bank issued a set of recommendations which urge the country to adopt new approaches and search for new partnerships to overcome the prevailing learning crisis. These critical interventions are reported by researchers and international organisations to rest on the country's continuing efforts to invest in human capital, one of the components of diversity education targets.

This chapter seeks to examine the state of diversity education principles as perceived and practised in English language courses in Moroccan higher education. Its search is oriented towards understanding the mechanisms of diversity education through the philosophies and principles underlying the curricula, the pedagogies, and the assessment practices. The major dimension under examination is how both teachers and students can tweak learning accommodations of the theories, conceptions and practices, as reflected in the content of the English curricula, the pedagogies and activities in use, and finally the assessment types and practices.

The argument is that the achievements done so far do not fit the learners of the current generation. Officially, there is agreement among international institutions that equity between the sexes is in harmony with the claims of the Constitution and the National Charter of Education (NCET, 1999). According to the Education for All National Report (EFA, 2015):

The constitution has set the right to vocational training in article 31 that stipulates that the public authorities work to mobilize all the available means to ease the equitable access of the female and male citizens to the conditions that allow them to benefit from the right to vocational training and physical and artistic education. (p. 92)

Furthermore, the National Education and Training Charter (NCET) states, in the basic principles, the education and training system aim at the materialization of the principle of equality of citizens and the equal chances that are presented to them and the right of all girls and boys to education be it in rural or urban areas according to the Moroccan constitution (NCET, 1999).

Though conceived and shaped by the country's policymakers, these three dimensions of the curriculum are being reviewed and reconsidered on a continuous basis. In fact, the English curricula have gone through several reforms and shifts during the last two decades through a series of educational reforms (Ben Haman, 2021). The inception of the concept of diversity education in the curricula, as it applies to the profile of learners, has evolved hand in hand with societal changes. As can be gleaned from current research and the analyses provided in this chapter, it has brought hopes that all learners will have equal opportunities for learning, but it has also raised worries within the community of researchers and academics as well as among other stakeholders. Consultation of the existing literature on the concept itself abounds in controversies and polemics concerning some of its constituents (Hessick, 2014). Local conceptions of freedom of speech are tied up with national religious and political beliefs that are rooted in turn in the notion of citizenship and belonging. In Moroccan HE language curricula, avoidance strategy is the winner, as such crises might cause threats to national unity. Extremist views of this kind are liable to make the concept of diversity imbued with cultural and political dimensions that are detrimental to the noble enterprise of education.

## 2 DIVERSITY EDUCATION AND LANGUAGE LEARNING

The concept of diversity education is used in this chapter as an approach that combines the principles of equity and inclusion together within a single paradigm. As amply explained by Tomalin (this volume), it refers to the provision of opportunities, incentives and accommodations that leverage learning for all students and makes learning a pleasurable task rather than a burden for students. The question that arises at this stage is: What aspects of diversity education are implemented and how do they impact the existing curricula?

As a pedagogy that strives toward quality education, diversity education prioritises the growth and development of the student and “recognizes the complex interplay between the cognitive and affective dimensions of learning and calls on faculty to address ‘the whole student’” (Eynon and Iuzzini, 2020, p. 2) rather than being limited to the mere delivery of the curricular contents. In this chapter, the establishment of viable language learning contents, pedagogies, and assessments that make the learner at the core of the mediation process of learning is a question of engaging all the stakeholders in bridging the gap between learners, teachers, and their environment. It aims to make them partners who negotiate these contents, pedagogies and assessments to improve them. There is nothing worse than having a partner who does not care for you. It is, therefore, essential to see it as a process that promotes success of diverse and heterogeneous student collaboration and contributes to the learners’ development and growth in compliance with students’ involvement in societal projects and cooperation (Arce-Trigatti & Anderson, 2020; Watkins & Ebersold, 2016).

The descriptive components of a diversity-bound language curriculum are clearly and openly stated in appropriate principles, standards, guidelines and consonant assessment orientations and practices. These constituents are made accessible, serviceable, and amenable to effective learning outcomes (Watkins & Ebersold, 2016). In practice, its efficacy depends on the importance teachers give to the social-psychological aspects of learning that leverage students’ motivation, collaboration, and engagement in learning. Finally and equally important is that diversity education in language learning addresses issues that hamper fair treatment and equitable assessments of learning outcomes by suggesting practical ways of making language learning an enterprise where learners from different cultural backgrounds, different learning disabilities and different gender and race

receive equal accommodations. In these words, diversity education is an educational approach that seeks to create a more inclusive society where students can work together and with mutual respect.

### *2.1 Diversity Education Reforms in Moroccan Higher Education*

The developments and practices of diversity education principles in use in Moroccan Higher Education and their agreement with sustainability and education quality assurance are amply reported in the literature (Morchid, 2020).

Most reforms of higher education in Morocco are a reaction to what is being done in developed countries. Focal issues of most of these reforms has often been on what can improve sustainability issues (Fahim et al., 2021) and promote students' abilities in terms of skills and learning outcome (Ben Ajiba & Zerhouni, 2019; Zepke & Leach, 2010).

Within the National Charter of Education and Training (NCET, 1999), the language policy of Morocco is based on a set of values and principles that address main world changes and theoretical shifts in education. It is closely related to the developments reached and aims at an establishment of harmonious practices that integrate the Moroccan learners within universal objectives. Its concern with the choice of a trending educational paradigm is oriented towards the selection of principles that promote literacy standards among citizens while using updated paradigms and trends. Hence, language education in the resulting curricula seeks to make language learning (1) a means of promoting literacy skills, 2) a communication tool—or instrument—for promoting growth and development and freeing the learners' 'social character' (Rassool, 2007, p. 1) from the disrupted dynamic inherited from colonial habitus (Bourdieu, 1991). These shifts are usually accompanied by buzzwords such as 'sustainability', 'governance', 'employability' and 'accountability', the translation of which is usually done by teachers at the content, pedagogy and assessment of the language curricula.

To overcome these challenges, these objectives of the language curricula encourage the incorporation of diversity issues as a key component that fosters cultural understanding by commending values and principles such as tolerance, equity, and understanding. Based on the existing literature, these goals are, however, confined within the boundaries of citizenship and quality education assurance principles as reported by the Higher

Council for Education, Training, and Scientific Research (CSEFRS) (Morchid, 2020) in several reports (CSEFRS, 2014, 2018, 2019). Due to problems of policy implementation difficulties, conflicting views regarding the details of certain issues persist, and their applicability remains in the hands of teachers and students. For example, the notion of ‘freedom of speech’ among students and faculty is geared towards enabling students to debate issues from their own perspectives, but it is often tied up with the notions mentioned above and governed by national religious and political beliefs. This approach is not detrimental to any group or community. In fact, the concept itself abounds in controversies and polemics concerning some of its constituents (Hessick, 2014). To counterattack these threats to the cultural identity and stability of the country in Moroccan HE language curricula, avoidance strategy of conflicting issues is the winner, as extremist views of this kind are liable to make the concept of diversity imbued with sensitive political dimensions that are detrimental to the noble enterprise of education.

Compared with the state of the curricula of the 1970s till 1990s, nevertheless, recent outcomes of these reforms indicate a clear educational policy and practice regarding the issue of diversity, equity and inclusion. World Bank reports (2020) indicate that the increase of the human capital ratio in Morocco obtained at the level of learning outcomes was significant due to the improvements achieved, but that “important challenges persist related to the quality of education, equity, and management of the sector” (World Bank, 2020), and several efforts were pursued in the Education Act in 2019 (2015–2030) to align curricula with the new exigencies and cross the drivers of quality education. To reduce the inequalities inherent in the curricula, the World Bank issued a set of recommendations which urge the country to adopt new approaches and search for new partnerships to overcome the prevailing learning crisis. These critical interventions are reported by researchers and international organisations to rest on the country’s continuing efforts to invest in human capital and the implementation of inclusive and equitable means of education (Fahim et al., 2021; Morchid, 2020).

The reform series is not then to be interrupted. With the introduction of the LMD system in higher education curriculum evaluation in 2003 (Altihami, 2010), application of these measures has, therefore, been allotted to national commissions that capitalise on system alignment with diversity education principles and literacy standards as potential requirements for module accreditation. From a personal experience in these

commissions, the application of conceptions and practices offered in the curriculum guidelines provided by the Ministry of Higher Education, and their impact on students' growth and their concerns for students' prospective careers are key considerations in these commissions. Though conceived and shaped by the country's policymakers (CSEFRS, 2014), these dimensions of the curriculum have been reviewed and reconsidered on a continuous basis. As a result, English curricula in the last two decades have gone through several shifts in a process that aims at improving quality education for all.

### 3 RESEARCH TRENDS AND DIVERSITY EDUCATION

Analysis of the principles and guidelines of diversity education included in Moroccan education reforms reports the government's support for an efficacious curriculum through the introduction of criteria for equality, relevance and sustainability to leverage students' motivation, collaboration and engagement in learning.

In a synthetic analysis of the reforms between 1999 and 2019, Morchid (2020) states that substantial efforts have been made by Morocco towards achieving the imperatives of quality education and says that "the gender parity indices give evidence of efficient accommodation of equality and equity in education. On the other hand, adult basic literacy is still a goal area in need of repair". (p. 54). Another study using the SWAT-AHP analysis method by Fahim et al. (2021) in which strength (S), weakness (W), opportunity (O), and threat (T) are the four analytical parameters, succinctly investigated a set of social-related factors. Their study acknowledges that big strides towards democratisation and sustainability of education have been made in higher education, but that there is still much to do. It is argued in this chapter that what needs to be done relates to the practical features of social behaviour that usually impact students' empowerment, engagement, and development.

Other researches of the reforms of higher education and their related laws in Morocco from 1999 to 2022 reveal that the improvements introduced are a reaction to what is being done in developed countries. Focal issues of most of these reforms have often been on what can improve sustainability issues and quality education assurance (Fahim et al., 2021) to promote students' abilities in terms of skills and learning outcomes (Ben Ajjiba & Zerhouni, 2019; Zepke & Leach, 2010). Based on that, Moroccan educational policy is, to a large extent, up to date at the theoretical level.

As echoed in the CSEFRS reports (NCET, 1999; CSEFRS, 2014; World Bank, 2020), the laws and updates inherent in these reforms recommend to all the stakeholders to promote awareness of and respect for diversity and inclusion in the construction and implementation of educational curricula and pedagogies.

According to the existing research done by several individual and institutional bodies, the attractiveness of diversity education in the Moroccan context is highlighted by the country's desire to keep up its educational system with the evolving world priorities and challenges. In the same vein, it is harnessed by its surface assets, which attend to the human factor as a crucial component of development and growth in twenty-first-century education. The drive underneath its manifestation in the language curricula is the promotion of at the core of several new approaches to learning in general, such as Universal Design for Learning (Dalton et al., 2019) and learning communities (Otto et al., 2015; Zhao & Kuh, 2004). Most researchers uphold the features of these instructional designs for their consonance with the new theories of learning and with the concerns of the new generations. In the Moroccan context, these features are recommended in the NCET (1999) and approved by the faculty. Nonetheless, some of these aspects are alien to the Moroccan culture due to their susceptibility to disrupt the inclinations of the community.

#### 4 DIVERSITY PRINCIPLES AND SUSTAINABLE EDUCATION

With the rise of globalisation, Moroccan higher education institutions have displayed deep concern with pedagogical decisions that address the issue of sustainability as a key factor of growth. As a result, English language teaching (ELT) curricula have gone through several shifts across many reforms (Elfatihi, 2019; Errihani, 2017). Though improved, in some respects, the inherent traditions in these curricula are still imbued with traditional views of education which grant power and authority to instructors and administration within a limited sphere of action. Students' major function in the curriculum is limited to a passive role of resilience (Kohstall, 2015). To overcome these disparities, Morocco has taken significant strides in advancing inclusive education through its endorsement of international agreements and implementation of legislation and reforms (Watkins & Ebersold, 2016; World Bank 2020).

An instance of this is demonstrated by the country's commitment to the UN Convention, ratified in 2009, which ensures that individuals with



disabilities are given the opportunity to engage in regular education settings and receive the necessary assistance (Aabi & Bracken, 2023). Important matters related to decision-making remain the concern of the ministry, the administration, and ultimately the faculty and their respective superiors, as mere executors. Like in most subjects taught in higher education, the teaching contents of English language curricula, as well as the pedagogies through which they are carried out, are based on official guidelines used by accreditation commissions supervised by faculty members in the evaluation and approval of all the modules proposed for instruction.

The contents of the reforms, however, do not hint at the inclusion or exclusion of any controversial issue, nor do they advertise for or warn against any phenomenon in the language curricula. Instead, they all make amendments that redress the ills of the preceding practices to improve them. In 2008, a seminal report by the World Bank recommends the promotion of teachers to a central role in the promotion of education and qualifies this option as ‘the road not taken’ as a means of involving them in the country’s development and growth. This strategic path in support of the human factor as a carrier of change is also voiced by the (CSEFRS, 2014).

The struggle towards implementing diversity education in HE language curricula is fraught with numerous pragmatic steps to promote learning and encourage the faculty to remain in the race of the new pedagogical advances (CSEFRS, 2019). It must be noted, however, that the state of the art of language assessment in Moroccan higher education is an artefact at a boiling point, and several issues need checking and refurbishing at the level of diversity education, as stipulated by the modern approaches to language instruction. Despite the positive reports of the World Bank related to the state of assessment in Moroccan education, this cumbersome component of language education has several limitations at the level of diversity education principles. It is a burden for the faculty and its reconstruction cannot be dissociated from the introduction of new guidelines and orientations (S. Abouabdelkader, 2018). The analyses reported in this chapter equally suggest that a lot of efforts are being made by the Moroccan government in the field of language assessment (World Bank, 2020), but that more work remains at the level of certain aspects of diversity education.

This study seeks to examine the features of diversity education that affect English language students’ learning outcomes as reflected in the

curricula, pedagogies, and assessments. Three questions are raised to this end:

- (a) What diversity, inclusion, and equity principles and practices are inherent in HE language curricula and pedagogical practices? And how do they impact the learners?
- (b) How are these issues attended to pedagogically?
- (c) What measures are being taken that impact language learning outcomes?

By examining Equity and inclusion issues in both studies, this chapter seeks to draw a landscape of language learning in Moroccan higher education through (1) analysing the extent to which the teaching curricula and teaching materials take into consideration the needs of the learners, their orientations, and concerns. On the other hand, the search aims (2) to diagnose the language learning pedagogic structure in terms of opportunities and accommodations that are offered to students to promote their learning and personal growth.

Questions of interest regarding whether university students receive the same treatment inside the classroom and equal opportunities for learning outside campus are answered in the case study carried out for the purpose of this chapter.

## 5 SUMMARY OF THE CASE STUDY

This case study analyses the current curricula in Moroccan universities, focusing on the diversity, equity and inclusion issues that characterise the ongoing language learning curricula and what needs repairing.

In this study, the points raised in the background review of the state of the art of diversity education in Moroccan university language curricula have been researched from perspectives that match its scope and objectives. First, all the participants are teachers, administrators, and students. Second, all its components relate to the features investigated in the chapter, as shown in the research question addressed in the study:

RQ: How do students and teachers rate the implementation of diversity, equity, and inclusion principles in Moroccan higher education language curricula and pedagogical practices?

### 5.1 *Method: Qualitative*

- Three focus group interviews with university administrators
- Sample: University staff, including the two vice-presidents, three Deans, fifteen teachers from four institutions: ENSAM, Faculty of Letters and Humanities, Ecole Supérieure de Technologie, and Faculty of Science; Moulay Ismail University.
- Three focus group interviews with eight, nine and ten students respectively (twenty-seven students in total).

### 5.2 *Results and Applications*

The findings reported from this study in the higher education institutions investigated reflect stances of two different positions: administration policies and planning and teachers' philosophies and practices, on the one hand, and the way they are perceived by students, on the other.

They indicate that diversity education is positively rated by the first category of respondents in terms of theories, conceptions and general policies, but there persist several issues to be resolved. The results obtained disclose some curricular assets related to the promotion of intercultural communication but also several drawbacks related to dropout and repetition of a large proportion of students. As expected, however, administrative staff have been reported to acclaim the government's decisions and actions achieved regarding the issue of diversity, equity and inclusion policies adopted in their respective universities. Students, on their turn, express satisfaction with certain features of the curricula but have reservations about the disconnections between training and work opportunities in the faculties of arts, among other issues, while teachers have been more reserved and more concerned with pedagogical attributes of diversity education as experienced in their courses.

### 5.3 *Curricular Assets and Drawbacks*

The main gain of the results reported in this section is that they describe the state of diversity education in language learning in Moroccan HE through tangible facts from administrators', teachers' and students' stances. Unsurprisingly, the views reported by administrators panegyricize the state of diversity education in the English programmes as the best elaborated one in the university. They attribute this achievement to the

way the English departments are run and the measures taken to solve the conflicts between the faculty members and with students. These respondents reveal that there is unanimous consensus that language curricula have always been considered as a tool for transmitting issues that carry civic education values and reflect the needs and intentions of the ruling majority and, to some extent, those of the academic community. The nature of these values is reported to be comprehensive of ethical issues related to the appreciation of the student, as a major factor of development.

The administration staff also report that a lot of efforts are made to encourage teachers to provide curricula that reflect the objectives sought in the ministerial guidelines in terms of inclusion and equity. They commend the work done by their 'Communication Departments' for providing updates and news in educational research and scientific meetings. Such initiative has not been highly rated by teachers who believe that these services are redundant and a waste of time and money. Administrative staff's counterargument is that these services are not useless and that their function is to facilitate the trajectories of research and promotion for all teachers and students alike. For instance, they serve to give notice of unfolded funds for colloquia and conference participation based on the principle of information access to all.

The staff respondents also report that English language teaching is highly valued in the national curriculum and that it serves as a tool for the promotion of research and that curricular changes have gone hand in hand with government and trending changes (Henry et al., 2013). They confirm the facts reported earlier: that the faculty are the translators of the ministerial guidelines into tangible contents and practices. Regarding the contribution of the university to diversity education principles, this category of respondents proclaims their efforts to support students' engagement in the development of the country, and that they do their best to establish partnerships that open opportunities of growth for all the stakeholders, by offering equal opportunities to all. This suggests that it is possible to improve higher education quality through investing in less costly programmes in which the human factor is the major agent of change (Gontareva et al., 2019).

The results also reveal that the work done in the English Studies departments all over the country is academic and professional and that the number of students enrolled in these departments nationally outweighs that of all other departments. Among the decisions by the universities to improve language teaching in engineering schools, more English teaching staff

have been recruited in recent years, making the number of teachers double since 2019. These decisions constitute an important step towards offering students better conditions for learning.

More funds have also been pumped into education to sort out the problems incurred by the COVID-19 pandemic, on the one hand, and the exigencies of globalisation, on the other, which enabled universities to improve their technology facilities. These efforts have served Moroccan universities to provide access opportunities for all students in the English curricula. In a succinct study on the effects of promoting e-learning in Moroccan higher education on students' learning, El Firdoussi et al. (2020) report that:

Online learning means education that uses Internet technology [3]. It has changed the concept of traditional education within the last few years, by creating education flexibility without being limited by distance, space, and time. In online learning, the latest technology needs to be used to enhance the learning process and interactions between professors, students, and technicians. It may be identified as a significant factor that can either encourage or hinder student and professor usage of e-learning. Online learning also reduces cost without reducing the quality of learning. For these reasons, professors are expected to be more facilitators, collaborators, mentors, trainers, directors, and study partners and provide choices and greater accountability for students to learn. (p. 12)

Unfortunately, such opportunities have not been proportional due to social inequities and unstructured prevision of students' concerns, as not all students could afford to buy computers to keep up with those who can, and not all of them together were prepared to use the technologies to follow their course both synchronously and asynchronously.

A further proof of this development, as reported by the administration staff, is the establishment of international partnerships to facilitate students' mobility and facilitating opportunities to achieve their academic dreams, supporting the claims made in the related research that globalisation has made us live in a big village (Graddol, 2006). In engineering schools, for instance, English language instruction, usually referred to as English for Specific purposes (ESP) is viewed as a key to employability and inclusion of all learners in and outside the country, and a key to development and growth (Irudayasamy et al., 2020). These factors endorse the earlier arguments that diversity education is entrenched in the educational

decisions implemented in a curriculum for the purpose of providing better opportunities of learning for all students (Ben Haman, 2021).

#### 5.4 *Teachers' Contribution*

The staff and faculty respondents report that English language teaching is highly valued in the national curriculum and that it serves as a tool for the promotion of research and that curricular changes have gone hand in hand with government and trending changes (Henry et al., 2013). Since its inception in the national curriculum, standards-based education has been implemented in Moroccan university curricula as stipulated in the National Charter (1999) as the main driver for development and change. In fact, the teaching curricula in use are imbued with newer approaches, such as collaborative learning, personalised instruction, and often using “what works” approaches in which teachers are considered as coaches and counsellors to learners. As revealed in the case study, teachers’ concern is oriented towards encouraging them to use their expertise and experience in providing contents and pedagogies that favour the learners’ inclinations and the national guidelines, by offering equal opportunities to all learners and improving students’ literacy skills and providing contents and pedagogies that favour the learners’ inclinations and the national guidelines. The teachers involved in the study also report that they fully contribute to the construction and implementation of the English language teaching curricula and pedagogies and that they make every effort to include several elements that contribute to inclusive and equitable opportunities. As stated in a study on the teaching of reading comprehension in Moroccan universities (Abouabdelkader, n.d.), this type of proceeding could be more beneficial to all universities if these contents were handled systematically on a consensual basis among all the faculty based on clear guidelines and checkpoints (Kenen, 2007). The focus group results related to the ups and downs of these language curricula and the way they are implemented in terms of their consideration of diversity education issues have revealed two main paths: one is that the concern of the university staff and faculty is to encourage the development of students’ communication strategies through contents that fit the vocational orientations of students and the provision of pedagogies that are congruous with the needs of the students and that promote their literacy skills. This attitude is also shared by the students. The second is that teachers also support this line of thinking and confirm that they now implement pedagogies that are inclusive of all

students and activities that involve students in collaborative and teamwork projects. For all of them, this objective is carried out by means of materials that are up to date and reflect the concerns of the students, and their focus is always on “what works” which would develop their students’ engagement in real-life situations and would help them reflect, analyse, and understand people and facts from all nations.

Regarding the teaching of literacy skills used in the Moroccan language learning curricula, students report that teachers focus on language skills, including reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Students also report that equity and inclusion issues are made through topical selection and relevance, and its pragmatic realisation is gauged in terms of their social benefits, universal values, and personal growth. These reports indicate that full engagement of both males and females is not achieved, as students from rural areas and poor families are at its earliest stages. Both teachers and students support the relevance of the courses for providing students with knowledge and thinking skills. This new orientation is also supported in the existing research studies (Beniche et al., 2021; Smare & Elfatihi, 2022).

Other issues dealt with in this chapter involve the pedagogical decisions taken by teachers in the teaching of literacy skills. According to the results of the survey, providing access to literacy resources is one of the priorities of all university institutions. The results reveal that language curriculum budgeting policy has had a lot of impact on the improvements achieved. For instance, the budget allotted to HE institutions has more than doubled, especially in providing teaching and learning information technologies to enable students to have easy access to language development resources, such as books, documents and websites. Besides, the recruitment of teaching staff has also been considerable. These accomplishments have been pursued for the purpose of eradicating the disparities between students and providing opportunities for literacy skill attainment for all.

To the question of whether there are differences between students from different social classes or genders in language learning, the participants refute the idea of unequal treatment between students in terms of support and opportunities to develop and improve their literacy skills. Both administrators and teachers, on the one hand, and students, on the other, agree that the university has become more aware of this issue and that they are advancing towards securing better accommodations for all students. “It is important to check the extent to which the teaching and learning materials are comprehensible or difficult for students and developing students’

literacy skills”. In another statement: “63% of our students, declares one of these administrators, come from public schools and all of them enjoy the same learning opportunities”. This statement also applies to students from the ENSAM, Meknes, an internationally highly esteemed engineering school. In engineering schools, there is full consensus between faculty and students on the provision of effective learning accommodations, materials, and services regarding the different types of accommodations offered on equal basis to both girls and boys. It is no wonder, then, that the level of students’ English proficiency is above average, as reported in the study results.

### 5.5 *Assessments in the English Curricula*

Both the results of the study and the existing research report that assessment in language course is still an issue for students, and a thorny business for teachers. These results confirm the statement reported earlier and reported in the literature that the state of language assessment in Moroccan higher education displays several positive measures related to diversity education (Abouabdelkader, 2018; Bouziane, 2017; Larouz & Abouabdelkader, 2020) and that several of its features need fixing.

Examination of students’ reactions to language assessments, as gleaned from the findings of the case study, reveals students’ dissatisfaction with diversity education aspects of assessment. All of them report several deficiencies at the level of the categories investigated. There is considerable discrepancy between teachers’ claims and students’ views. While learning assessments have been reported by the administrative staff and faculty to be satisfactory in terms of their consistent results and relevance, they were expectedly reported by the students to be deficient in terms of fairness, disregard for disparities, and means of expression. These results reveal that 89% of the students interviewed refer to lack of fair assessment and inadequacy of the means and procedures adopted to assess learning outcomes. The warnings raised by these drawbacks might be among the factors that negatively impact students’ learning outcomes and sometimes lead to failure for many students. Discrimination in terms of linguistic disabilities have been reported in students’ claims include: “some test provided at the different levels do not take into consideration students’ level of literacy or the contents of the courses”. Issues related to cultural understanding have also been revealed to be significant factors of assessment dissonance with students’ satisfaction: “some tests do not take into account students’



cultural backgrounds and biased against students with little exposure to the Anglophone culture”.

This state is comprehensible. First, inability to match learning outcomes through standardised tests is costly and not affordable for universities due to the large numbers of students. Second, absence of bodies in charge of designing valid and reliable grading rubrics that are congruent with learning outcomes. Third, neither the Ministry of Education nor the universities, themselves, have well-structured assessment departments. In view of these structural gaps, the faculty are to be commended for their efforts to sustain acceptable norms of equity among students. Finding solutions to the inherent challenges of ‘language assessments’ in content courses and vocational training constitutes a big challenge for Moroccan universities. In art schools (faculties of letters), the challenge is that of establishing common core standards at each of the three years of instruction on a consensual national or regional framework. In the vocational training institutions and faculties of science or medicine, for example, the instauration of standardised tests is still debatable since all of them have diverse vocational contents and develop different skills. Regarding the learning-assessment bond, all of these HE institutions, the curricula adopted are not based on a particular framework.

The discriminatory assessment problems associated with the end-of-term exams are attributed to the wrong choice of students’ linguistic and cognitive abilities. As reported by some students: “Some tests provided at the different levels do not take into consideration students’ level of literacy, instruction, as well as the contents of the courses”. Issues related to cultural understanding have also been revealed to be significant factors of assessment dissonance with students’ satisfaction: “some tests do not take into account students’ cultural backgrounds and biased against students with little exposure to the Anglophone culture”.

## 6 CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter argues that diversity principles are crucial to the promotion of learning among students and that their impact can be decisive in students’ engagement and development. It also argues that consideration of these principles is crucial to the development of students’ cultural understanding and improvement of their learning outcomes.

The different aspects of diversity education attended to in the Moroccan HE English language curricula reported and examined in this chapter

suggest that lots of efforts have been made to improve students' learning outcomes and that these efforts involve both the infrastructure of the universities themselves, by providing access to information technology assistance, learning opportunities, and learning accommodations for all. These results also suggest that there persist several challenges for both administrators and faculty to overcome, especially in establishing teaching and learning, and learning and assessment. The aspects of diversity investigated suggest that there still exist certain teacher behaviours that need to be aligned with the new generations of learners. As argued throughout this chapter:

- The recurrent updating of the curricula through a contingent of reforms has also been reported to have created a dynamic of improvement and a sense of responsibility among the faculty.
- It also illustrates the worries and concerns of the government to improve the different aspects of higher education curricula and improve its standards.
- In their turn, teachers are reported to constructively contribute to the change brought forth by the world economy and policy developments and their impact on new teaching approaches and practices. Finally, the chapter raises the issue of combining language learning objectives and assessment practices to fulfill the objectives of the curriculum as a key feature of diversity education in Moroccan higher education.

These different aspects of diversity education amply describe the state of the art of English language learning and teaching in Moroccan higher education, as described in the work done in the consecutive reforms in Moroccan higher education and expressed in the worries and concerns of researchers and practitioners to improve the different aspects of higher education curricula.

To conclude, the chapter supports the use of diversity principles and checkpoints for attaining higher levels of quality education and establishing strong bonds between teaching, learning, and the different types of assessment.

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