

Investigating Quality Education in Moroccan Educational Reforms from 1999 to 2019

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Abstract: A reform in education is governed by the same logic that applies to transformation in general, which stipulates an active process of making change. The change factor in an educational reform is decisive because it reorients theory and practice towards priority areas in need of refinement. The intent of this paper is to assess the major educational reforms in Morocco over the 1999-2019 period. In particular, this paper begins with a general perspective of the Moroccan educational discourse. It chronicles the major educational reforms in Morocco since 1999. Then, a framework for conceptualising quality education is used in the estimation of four reform initiatives in Morocco: Morocco's National Education and Training Charter (NETC), the National Emergency Education Plan (NEEP), the Education Action Plan (EAP) and the Strategic Vision for the Moroccan School Reform (SVMSR). The theoretical model used for estimating educational reforms in Morocco combines seven goal areas: the democratisation of primary education, adult basic education, efficiency, effectiveness, equality, relevance and sustainability. The findings of the study substantiate the efforts made by Morocco towards achieving the imperatives of quality education. Access to primary education is fully democratised; also, 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.

Key Word: quality education, reform, Morocco, development, illiteracy

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I. Introduction

The debates on educational reform share a common concern for the promotion of quality education, being a corner stone for sustainable development^{1, 2}. The information base on quality education is constantly evolving, and so are the manifestations of quality education. A viable interpretation of quality education must track the theoretical and practical implications of quality education. In this paper, two frameworks used for conceptualising quality education are customised to ease the assessment of quality education in Morocco's educational reforms. In particular, the contents from the Global Monitoring Report of 2008 and the Edequal Project were optimised to enable the process of estimating educational reforms in Morocco.

II. Education Reforms in Morocco over the 1999-2019 period

Since Morocco's independence in 1956, the Ministry of National Education started the adoption of new measures for the implementation of a new system of education with a Moroccan identity that is free of the colonial sequels³. There was a concern with the autonomy of the Moroccan educational system and its ability to preserve and promote the nation's socio-cultural backgrounds. This was the beginning of a series of reform initiatives targeting a better quality in education. For the purpose of this study, the major educational reforms in Morocco over the 1999-2019 period are reviewed.

The National Education and Training Charter in Morocco (1999-2009):

The NETC was devised to substantiate a number of recommendations for long-term objectives (Marley, 2004). NETC was conceived as a road-map for sustainability in education. Professionals from Morocco's civil society collaborated with partners from the international community to sort out the key prospects for a decade of educational reforms. The key principles in the charter combine two poles. One is devoted to the democratisation of education and the other targets the promotion of quality education.

The National Emergency Education Plan (2009-2012):

The NEEP (2009 -2012) was established as a four-year agenda for the upgrade of the status of education in Morocco (African Development Bank, 2009). This remains one the most rigorous educational reforms the country has ever known. It came in response to the assumed failures of the National Education and Training Charter to impact the Moroccan educational system⁴. The NEEP was meant to be supportive of the NETC's database for educational reform. Substantial resources were mobilised by the Moroccan government

and its allies from the international community, namely the European Union, the World Bank, the European Investment Bank and the African Development Bank.

The NEEP was presented as a road-map towards the elimination of a number of inadequacies specific to a relatively poor system of education⁵. A hierarchy of objectives was devised and made pertinent to the needs of Moroccans in terms of education. The objectives of the programme were meant to lay the foundation of a new vision for socio-economic development in the country. Access to quality education was one prevalent goal area of the NEEP. This particular interest in levelling the quality of education in Moroccan schools was entrusted to a series of actions targeting the infrastructures needed for a better quality of products and services in education. The NEEP was implemented for the purpose of increasing enrolment rates in both secondary and higher education, fostering the availability of schools and universities throughout the national territory, promoting competitiveness in Moroccan schools through the setting up of excellence schools, and preparatory schools that give direct access to the professional schools of higher education, and promoting scientific research. These objectives were estimated against perceptible performance indicators in harmony with the NEEP structures.

Education Action Plan (2013-2016):

The EAP is another four-year educational reform in Morocco which was meant to consolidate gains from prior reform initiatives, namely the NEEP (2009-2012). This plan reaffirmed the nation's willingness to sustain development in its educational system. The reform process in the EAP was oriented towards the empowerment of distinct areas in the Moroccan educational system⁶. A decision was made to reorganise Morocco's educational system by widening the horizons for vocational education and training. The plan targeted an increase in students' enrolment in vocational secondary education. After one year of its execution, the EAP substantiated an increase by 27% in students' enrolment rates in programmes for vocational education⁶. Moroccan schools were linked to institutions from different economic sectors. A good number of graduates were expected to integrate professional settings where varied skill-based experiences were made accessible. Also, enterprises from the labour-market were to take advantage of this new orientation in training. Partnerships with schools were meant to allow the employers in varied professional settings to impact the educational discourse by determining the profiles needed in their would-be employees. In parallel, the EFA updated the curricula and pedagogical guidelines in Moroccan schools. More opportunities for continuous development were made possible for education professionals in a way to revitalise the quality in educational services and planning.

2.2.5 The Strategic Vision for the Moroccan School Reform (2015-2030):

The lifespan of the EAP had not been over and still there was a need for another educational upheaval. The educational discourse in Morocco was once again diagnosed with disabilities which were very much in need of adjustment. This time, the agreed educational reform was planned over a fifteen-year period, exceeding by far the time allocated to all its predecessors. The project in question was presented by the Higher Council of Education, Training, and Scientific Research as the SVMSR⁷. This strategic vision is meant to perpetuate large-scale transformations in Morocco's educational system throughout a multi-level process of reform. The SVMSR is optimised to build on four major constructs: fairness and equality of opportunities, quality of education, the promotion of society and its community members and efficient leadership.

Equity and equality constituted a recurrent construct in the previously implemented reforms in Morocco, namely the NEEP (2009-2012) and the EAP (2013-2015). It should be emphasised that the policies implemented in this vein failed to translate into practical and final solutions to the problem of inequality in Moroccan schools. The span of the NEEP was over and equity and equality remained persisting challenges in the Moroccan educational discourse. The SVMSR is presented with new measures for better accommodation of equity and equality in education⁷. The line of action for the SVMSR targets the democratisation of educational opportunities by watching for the respect of child-rights and making sure the right to education is freed of all kinds of discrimination. The institutionalisation of preschool education for children ageing from four years to six years is maintained as a prerequisite for equality and equity in education for its impact on the educational discourse in the disadvantaged areas throughout the country. Given the poor quality of life in rural areas and all the disabilities that come out of it, this strategic vision for reform manages to implement a policy of positive discrimination targeting the empowerment of students from disadvantaged socio-cultural backgrounds. For this end, a number of partnerships between Moroccan schools and different agencies from the productive sectors are signed to enhance learners' productivity by means of extra-curricular programmes.

The SVMSR continues to emphasise the role of quality education in determining the final outcomes from education. A multi-level strategy is carried out to enhance the quality of education in Moroccan schools⁷. The empowerment of educational professionals is prioritised. The teaching profession is revitalised by means of multi-level support targeting the fulfilment of the personnel's needs for esteem on the one hand and structured platforms for professional development on the other hand. This required an update of the agreed job descriptions

in the educational sector with maximum emphasis placed on the personnel's competency and sense of responsibility. In parallel, a structured transformation in institutionalised schooling is envisaged throughout different stages in the reform's lifespan. This includes compulsory enrolment in pre-schooling, primary schooling and middle schooling for all students. The reform targets the kind of organic unity that would connect all the cycles in the Moroccan educational system and produce functional profiles for the job market. The SVMSR's approach to institutionalised education boasts of high levels of practicality in determining the outcomes needed for quality education.

The SVMSR's conception of education allows it to be an instrument for sustainable development⁷. Education is configured to fulfil its duties towards society by enabling far-reaching models of development. Education is meant to be the catalyst for positive change in society. New missions are assigned to education, allowing it to operate on different levels to reach out for the active participation of the civil society in the making of a knowledge society. The SVMSR is oriented towards the empowerment of human capital. Schooling is optimised to activate the individual's capacity to think critically and open up to world-systems from other cultures without losing track of the constructs of their own cultural identity. The socio-cultural dimension in this reform is further extended to the processes by which democratic citizenship is accomplished. Education is managed to be an instrument for active citizenship, ensuring the cohesion of society and the well-functioning of its community members.

III. Models of Quality Education

The 2008 Global Monitoring Report:

The 2008 Global Monitoring Report (GMR) is a valid framework for conceptualising quality education in developing countries (UNESCO, 2008). The GMR was conceived by UNESCO to be an independent endeavour for the promotion of quality education in the least advantaged parts of the world. The report is the fruit of a lot of collaborative work fuelled by the good will and full support of the international community. The GMR emphasises four goal areas needed for better quality in education: "democratisation of primary education", "adult basic education", "gender parity", and "quality education"⁸. These are the centrepieces of quality education. The 2008 GMR puts a lot of emphasis on the imperatives of equity and equality in education. Schooling has social responsibilities towards students, and the fulfilment of these responsibilities is a prerequisite for the establishment of quality education. The 2008 GMR's conception of quality education is applicable to the Moroccan context where access to quality education is still obstructed by many factors. The upgrade of education in Morocco is entitled to draw on success implementations of quality education, taking into account the unique character of the Moroccan educational context.

The EdQual project:

The EdQual project is a programme intended for the promotion of quality education in the world's least advantaged countries^{2,9}. Funded and carried out by the British Department for International Development over a five-year period from 2005 to 2010, the EdQual programme remains a frame of reference for the actions needed for sustaining quality education. It offers a multi-level framework for understanding and conceptualising quality education in low-income countries. The underlying objective of EdQual is to re-orient the actions needed for success implementations of quality education. It emphasises the role of education in promoting a culture of peace and a welcoming environment for sustainable development². The EdQual's approximation of quality education capitalises on five goal areas: effectiveness, efficiency, equality, relevance and sustainability.

IV. The Study Model Used for Assessing Quality Education

In this paper, the model used for estimating educational reforms in Morocco combines seven goal areas. These are necessary conditions for the reciprocity between an educational system and quality education. As shown in Figure no 1, seven categories of elements load on quality education; also, they inform on the legitimacy of distinct educational reforms. The assessment model in this paper is conceived to emphasise the reciprocity between quality education and the democratisation of primary education, adult basic education, efficiency, effectiveness, equality, relevance and sustainability. Eventually, the following research question is formulated to interrogate the distinct patterns of quality education in the educational reforms under investigation in this study:

- To what extent do Moroccan educational reforms across 1999-2019 achieve the democratisation of primary education, adult basic education, efficiency, effectiveness, equality, relevance and sustainability?

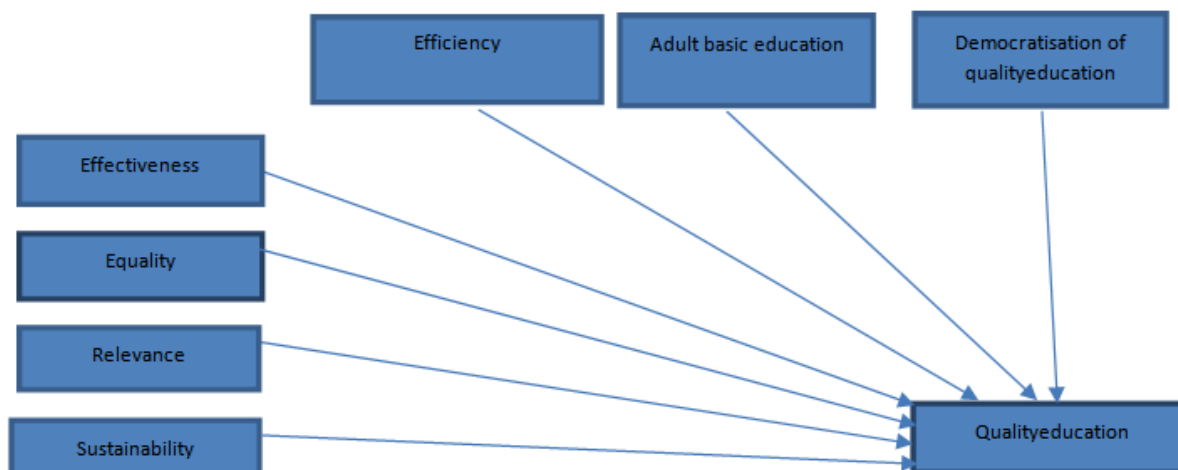


Figure no 1: The model used for assessing quality education

V. Findings and Discussions

In this section, the educational reforms under investigation in this study are researched for empirical evidence of reciprocity with the imperatives of quality education. The analytical part in this research is carried out by estimating the educational reforms in Morocco from 1999 to 2019 against seven goal areas of quality education: the democratisation of primary education, adult basic education, efficiency, effectiveness, equality, relevance and sustainability. These are perspectives of analysis with the ability to inform on the quality of the educational reforms implemented in Morocco.

Democratisation of Primary Education:

Illiteracy is the function of a wide range of inequalities that negatively impact on child right to education. In Morocco, access to primary education is a constitutional right¹⁰. According to Morocco’s Constitution of 2011, p.11, all Moroccan citizens have the right to “a modern, accessible education of quality”¹⁰. Eventually, all educational reforms in Morocco are regularly devised and implemented for the purpose of democratising access to education. The NETC, the NEEP the EAP and the SVMSR were no exception. As for the impact of these on the democratisation of education, it should be noted that the enrolment ratios in primary education steadily increased across 1999-2019. As shown in Figure no 2, the gross enrolment ratio in 2018 almost reached 100 %. This was a logical consequence of the reform initiatives carried out throughout the NETC, the NEEP, the EAP and the SVMSR. As noted in Figure no 3, from 2008-2009 to 2013-2014, the number of primary schools in Morocco increased from 3863838 to 4030142. In addition, the large majority of primary schools built in that period was in rural areas. This gives evidence of Morocco’s willingness to democratise access to primary education.

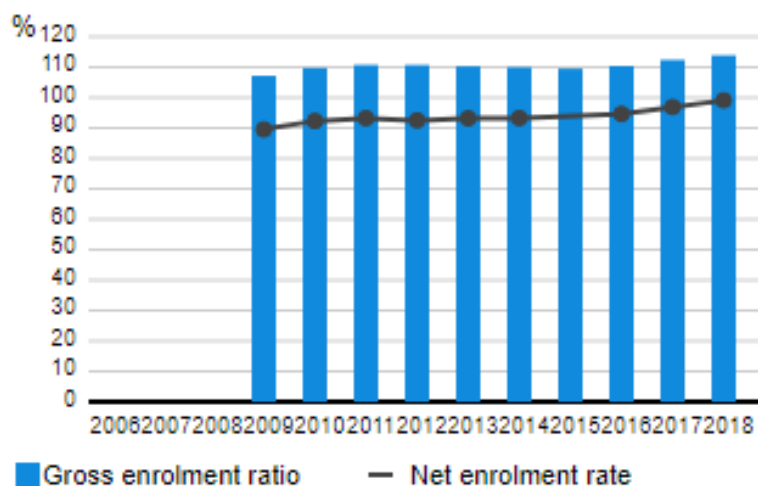


Figure no 2: Gross enrolment ratio in primary education in Morocco¹³

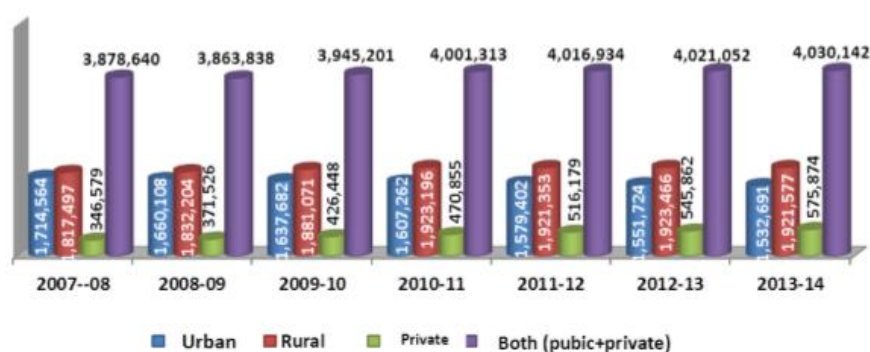


Figure no 3: Student populations in preschool⁶

Adult basic education:

With enrolment ratios in primary education that equal 100%, Morocco is still struggling towards achieving literacy among adults⁶. The sequels of the colonial period and the first years that followed Morocco’s independence still persist and cause Morocco to mobilise a lot of resources to ensure adult literacy. A large part of Morocco’s history with educational reforms was committed to the eradication of adult literacy. Although adult literacy is still hard to disappear, it is worth mentioning that the two-decade period of educational reforms caused the expansion of adult basic literacy. As shown in Figure no 4, the rates of literacy among Moroccans of 15 and more increased from 43, 9 % in 2009 to 73, 8 % in 2018, a growth rate of 45,3%. In a nine-year period, Morocco achieved substantial results in terms of adult basic education and this was the function of the reform initiatives implemented throughout the NETC, the NEEP, the EAP and the SVMSR. Under the EAP, many literacy programmes were implemented for the empowerment of a Moroccan population of 15 year and above. This required the Ministry of National Education to collaborate closely with actors from the public sector and the civil society to customise human development programmes with the ability to foster adult basic literacy.

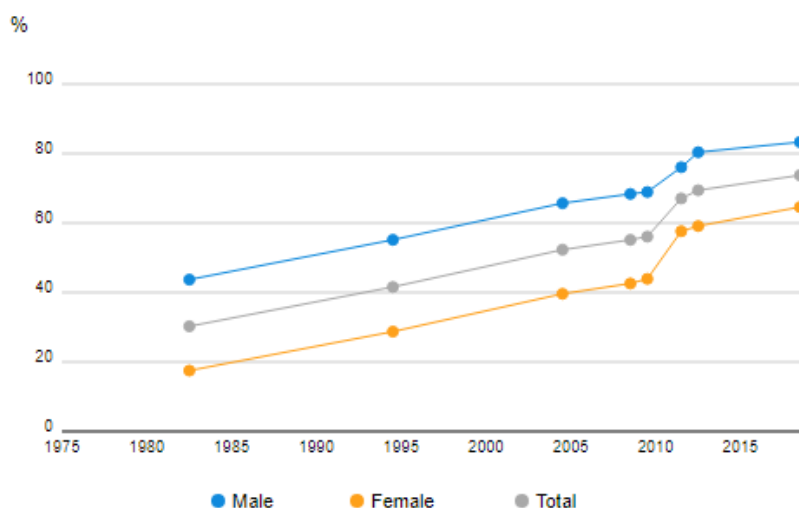


Figure no 4: Literacy rates among the population aged 15 years and older¹³

Efficiency:

Efficiency is an index of quality education. The efficiency of an educational system lays in the applicability of its performance standards, and the ability of these to measure up to students’ needs and expectations⁹. Indeed, education is the vehicle of development. The lack of efficiency in terms of standards and performances causes considerable loss in human capital, which constitutes a clear disadvantage for low-income countries. Education is configured to fulfil its duties towards society by enabling far-reaching models of development. Education is meant to be the catalyst for positive change in society. New missions are assigned to education, allowing it to operate on multiple zones to reach out for the active participation of the civil society in the making of a knowledge society. The educational reforms in Morocco across 1999-2019 are oriented towards the empowerment of human capital^{6, 7}. Schooling is optimised to activate the individual’s capacity to think critically and open up to world-systems from other cultures without losing track of the constructs of their own cultural identity. The socio-cultural dimension in these reforms is further extended to the processes by which

democratic citizenship is accomplished. Education is managed to be an instrument for active citizenship, ensuring the cohesion of society and the well-functioning of its community members.

Effectiveness:

Effectiveness is another core constituent of quality education⁹. Effectiveness in an educational context is critical to the welfare of society. An educational system might be well structured with sound theoretical and pedagogical guidelines; still, it may not benefit students. Education stops being effective when it fails to connect to the realities of its due contexts. In this regard, it should be noted that the imperatives of quality education in terms of effectiveness were chronologically and constantly witnessed in Morocco's history with educational reforms. The two-decade educational reforms under investigation in this study positively impacted employment rates in Morocco. The unemployment rates in Morocco dropped from 13,94 % in 1999 to 9,04 % in 2008¹¹. The Moroccan educational discourse is steadily recovering from the mismatch between the contents of institutionalised education and the socio-cultural realities of the Moroccan context. What was noted on the ineffectiveness of the Moroccan educational system back to 1999 is no longer a reality in 2019.

Equality:

Equality is considered a worthy component of quality education. It informs on the social dimensions of education⁹. The fact is that education is both a right and condition for human rights. The right to education is true to human nature and consistent with all declarations of human rights. Also, education offers insurance against human rights violations. Quality education must be the function of the policies that seek to democratise access to education and stop all forms of discrimination. The reform initiatives implemented across 1999-2019 strived to offer suitable conditions for equality in the Moroccan educational context. The two-decade of educational reform under investigation in this study came at a time when illiteracy rates were gradually decreasing. Also, the number of schools and higher education institutions were steadily increasing in parallel with the enrolment rates in primary and secondary education. Still, the equality issue in Morocco's educational context remained a persisting disability in need of repair. In particular, the concern was with gender parity and the rural-urban gap in terms of human development. As for the impact of the educational reforms under investigation in this study on quality education, it should be noted that the gender parity index increased in parallel with the chronology of educational reforms from 1999 to 2019. The gender parity index in primary education increased from 0.82 in 1999 to 0.96 in 2018¹². Also, gender parity for adult literacy was achieved under the watch of the NEEP (2009-2012) and the EAP (2013-2015). As noted in Table no1, women benefited from literacy programmes four times more than males. The NETC specifies that gender parity is a constitutional right and that girls and boy must have equal chances to attain the highest levels of academic distinction. Also, the NETC emphasises the country's obligation to bridge the gap separating the quality of education in urban areas from that of rural ones. Indeed, the rural-urban dichotomy was a prevailing theme in the educational reforms across 1999-2019. Urban areas were still disadvantaged by higher illiteracy rates and the scarcity of preschool education under the NEEP and the EAP. This is not to deny the progress made in achieving adult literacy and pre-schooling in rural areas, but to pinpoint the persisting challenges that caused the implementation of the SVMSR (2015-2030). The SVMSR brought new measures for better accommodation of equality in education⁷. It targeted the democratisation of educational opportunities by watching for the respect of child-rights and making sure the right to education is freed of all forms of discrimination. The institutionalisation of preschool education for children aging from four years to six years was made a prerequisite for equality and equity in education for its impact on the educational discourse in the disadvantaged areas throughout the country. Given the poor quality of life in rural areas and all the disabilities that come out of it, the SVMSR implemented a policy of positive discrimination targeting the empowerment of students from disadvantaged socio-cultural backgrounds.

Table no 1:School enrolment, primary (gross), gender parity index⁶

Year	Total	Males	Females	Females' share
2008-2009	656 307	105 001	551 306	84,0%
2009-2010	706 394	103 805	602 589	85,3%
2010-2011	702 119	115 031	587 088	83,6%
2011-2012	735 062	96 098	638 964	86,9%
2012-2013	769 402	87 019	682 383	88,7%

Relevance:

Relevance is made a key constituent in the making of quality education⁹. It targets the authentication of learning experiences and the ability of education to synchronise with students' interests and styles of learning. For education to be relevant, it must afford high levels of flexibility. Education needs to incorporate a wide range of experiences that are compatible with students' needs and applicable to the outside world. The relevance

of education in its institutionalised form poses a problem because students' needs are hard to standardise¹. One way to remedy for that would be to maximise the learner-centeredness of learning and teaching approaches. In Morocco, the educational reforms from 1999 to 2019 were accompanied with updated pedagogical guidelines intended to revitalise a wide range of educative processes. This required several transformations in Morocco's curriculum. In 2007, the textbooks used for the teaching of English as a foreign language were revised and made supportive the standards-based approach in education¹². The fact is that the efforts made to authenticate schooling practices were considerate of the cultural plurality in Morocco and the imperatives of quality education. The NETC, the NEEP, the EAP and the SVMSR were all intended to cause multi-level transformations in the Moroccan educational system to foster its reciprocity with the fundamentals of quality education.

Sustainability

The principle of sustainability in quality education accounts for the impact education has on the welfare of society⁹. Quality education is needed for the impact it has on present and future generations belonging to the same society. It activates prospects for development and sustainability. It is common to a country to be assessed against the quality of its educational system. Social and economic development is consistent with the progress made in education. Educational reforms are needed for an educational system to keep up with the fast-evolving character of education. Educational contents and practices are regularly reformed and updated to the meet the challenge for sustainability. The chronology of educational reforms in Morocco from 1999 to 2019 is itself evidence of sustainability. The NETC (1999-2009), the NEEP (2009-2012), the EAP (2012-2015), the SVMSR (2015-2030) were chronologically connected and purposefully oriented towards achieving a wide range of goals that load on the essence of sustainability. As noted earlier in this paper, illiteracy is still a concern in Morocco, and it is probably hard to disappear. Still, this can by no means deny that the educational reforms in Morocco across 1999-2019 achieved important results in relation to literacy. This is the essence of sustainability in education, which is a vision of change that extends beyond the needs of the present to be fully committed to the welfare of future generations. The statistics reveal and corroborate Morocco's willingness to sustain development in the country's educational system. As noted in Figure no 5, the General Budget of the State increased in parallel with the budget allocated to national education. This does not only confirm a national concern for the development of education, but it also corroborates the reciprocity between economic development and quality education.

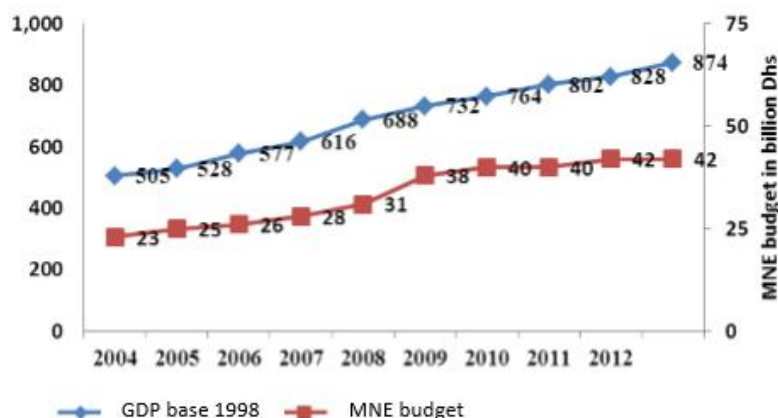


Figure no 5: National education budget to GDP in Morocco⁶

VI. Conclusion

This study was conducted for the purpose of investigating quality education in the educational reforms implemented in Morocco from 1999 to 2019. The NETC, the NEEP, the EFA and the SVMSR were estimated against seven goal areas: the democratisation of primary education, adult basic education, efficiency, effectiveness, equality, relevance and sustainability. The findings from this study substantiate the efforts made towards achieving a better quality of education in Morocco. What has been achieved in terms of educational reform in Morocco since 1999 is substantial, but it does not stamp out a wide range of discrepancies that still cause the educational system in Morocco a lot of harm. Access to primary education was fully democratised in 2018 with gross enrolment ratios in primary schools that reached 100 %. Unemployment rates steadily decreased in parallel with the progress made in terms of educational reforms. The educational reforms under investigation in this paper were chronologically connected with no waiting period. This gives enough evidence of sustainability in Morocco's efforts towards achieving quality education. Still, more efforts are needed for

quality education to be a reality in the Moroccan educational scene. Adult basic literacy still causes Morocco a lot of concern.

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