

2020-2021 Fulbright Distinguished Awards in Teaching Research Program for U.S. Teachers (Fulbright DA)

Morocco Country Profile

Partner organization: Moroccan-American Commission for Educational & Cultural Exchange (MACECE)

Eligible program dates: Any time between September through April.

Language requirement: Some knowledge in French or Arabic might be of help to the fellow. Spanish could also be of help if the fellow is to be placed in northern Morocco.

Host institution: If participants want to be placed in a specific institution or have preferences for a certain Moroccan city, then MACECE works on placing them in their preferred institution/city. Otherwise, we place participants in institutions where we have a network or know there is someone or some people who will be of help to the grantees.

Dependent Information: An allowance of \$2,000 per eligible dependent will be provided as part of the Fulbright DA grant. Participants travelling with kids who need schooling can either put them in a Moroccan private school, a French school, an American school, or a Spanish school.

- The American school in Rabat (<https://www.ras.ma/>) is very expensive and tuition fees are around \$15,000 and \$17,000 per year.
- French schools are around \$350 and \$400 per month.
- Spanish schools' tuition fees are about \$300 per month.
- Moroccan private schools' monthly tuition fees are around \$150 and \$200.

Country Overview

Morocco, officially the Kingdom of Morocco, is in the northwest corner of Africa, the land of the farthest west. It has a population of about 35 million and an area of 710,850 km², meaning that Morocco is slightly larger than Texas. Morocco has a coast on the Atlantic Ocean that reaches north to Tangier, where, beyond the Strait of Gibraltar, Morocco becomes a Mediterranean country. It is bordered by Spain to the north by a maritime boundary across the nine-kilometer width of the Strait of Gibraltar and by land boundaries with three small Spanish enclaves on the African continent. Algeria lies to the east and Mauritania to the south.



Morocco is a constitutional monarchy with an elected parliament. A new constitution was ratified by plebiscite in July 2011. While the constitution widened public participation, Mohamed VI, the King of Morocco, holds strong powers, including the right to dissolve parliament. Collectively, the King and the administration of Morocco are known simply as the *makhzen*. Legislative power is vested in the two chambers of parliament, the Assembly of Representatives and the Assembly of Councilors. The political capital is Rabat and the largest city (by far) is Casablanca. Other large cities includes Fez, Salé, Agadir, Marrakech, Tangier, Meknes, Oujda, and Tetouan.

Educational System Overview

Morocco has enormous tasks ahead as it continues to move toward a broadly-based system of free public education for all and in all of its regions.

Prior to the 1990s, public education was largely restricted to cities and towns. Large swaths of Morocco's vast rural areas and mountain regions had little more than primary schools in which the basics of reading and writing were taught in the traditional religious style. As the colonial period began to take hold, rural students with parents with the will and the means sent their middle school and high school children to public boarding schools in the cities. By the 1950s, in the cities, many but not most children were in school, with those who did go to school largely in the primary grades only. Of the remaining few, the percentage of those attending high school sharply diminished in the last two years of school, the years of preparation for the baccalaureate, or 'Bac' exam, an all-encompassing, extremely rigorous national exam. With Independence in 1956, the push to broaden the base of the educated citizenry began in slow and incremental steps. Until the 1980s, the Bac had a low passing rate but those who did pass it were educated at levels that would have equaled the first two years of college in the USA. Of about 400,000 students who took the baccalaureate in the academic year 2017-18, 57.36% passed the exam.

All this began to change in stages from the 1970s to 1987. In 1987, a second wave of post-Independence Arabization abruptly replaced the French language for high school science and all humanities courses. Teaching and learning in Arabic became widespread as the demographic base of Moroccan public education began to broaden rapidly. French was maintained but only as a foreign language. At the same time, the issue of the role of the Berber language (or better known today as *Amazigh*) – largely unwritten and divided among three main dialects – began to play a role in Moroccan political life. Furthermore, the wide disparity between colloquial Arabic in Morocco (*darija*) and standard Arabic has also become more of an issue in education and literacy in Morocco. The result of all this has been the rather precipitous shift of the urban elite toward the ever-more sought-after network of schools run by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the rapid growth of private K-12 schools that educate more in French than in Arabic. In fact, in the summer of 2019, lawmakers in Morocco passed a draft law which sought to bolster French in Moroccan schools, particularly as a language for the sciences and technical subjects.

Moroccan illiteracy rates for the general public ranged at more than 50% until the 1980s, declined to the low 40s% by the 2000s, and today continue to decrease so that they are somewhere in the



30s%. Most Moroccans, however, decry the quality of young Moroccans' reading and writing abilities in either standard Arabic or French. Amazigh, spoken by an estimated 35% of the population and found mostly in rural areas, has slowly been introduced as a written language into public schools, and while the language hasn't made much of an impact, yet, a standardized version of Amazigh is emerging under government auspices.

Morocco's public finance problems are immense. Education occupies a very large place in public expenditures and represents 25% of the state budget. However, Morocco is playing catch-up after many years of neglect. Many schools are in poor physical shape and lack basic resources. Sanitary conditions in some schools are poor. Recreation space is nearly non-existent. Education in music and the arts are rare in a country rich with traditional and ethnic music. On the other hand, since 2010, many new schools have been built, and many of them are of excellent design. The need for new teachers is great, as age 60 is the mandatory retirement age for all public employees, including teachers. Morocco is estimated to need 10,000 new teachers of English alone by 2020.

Teachers work in a school atmosphere in which much is dictated by the school director. Teachers also work within the web of administrative control of the regional districts of the Ministry of National Education. These are called "academies," twelve of which cover the nation.

Cheating, especially on the Bac, is a major issue in Moroccan schools. Cheating via every imaginable means – cell phones, tiny photocopies, bribery of invigilating teachers – has become endemic. The government of the Islamic-based ruling party (the Party of Justice and Development, or PJD), and the Ministry of National Education have focused on reducing cheating, and their efforts have been widely publicized and have had a salutary effect.

In a speech in July 2018, King Mohamed VI highlighted the need for urgent initiative concerning education. He said, "We need to give impetus to school enrollment programs and combat school drop-out as of the next school year." These include the "Tayseer Program" on school enrollment support, early childhood education, school transportation, school canteens and boarding schools. The above measures are designed to ease the burden on families and to provide them with support to make sure their children continue to attend school and training programs.

As of 2019, about 95% of school aged children are enrolled in primary school, but only 53% of middle school students continue to high school and less than 15% of first grade students will likely graduate from high school (USAID, 2019).

Possible topics of interest to U.S. educators:

What are the educational topics pertinent to Morocco?

One of the recent issues that has been problematic in the last three to four years is recruiting a great number of language teachers with limited pre-service training (initially called "contracted



teachers,” which is the most popular naming, but later officially called “teachers recruited by regional academies”). These teachers need training on basic teaching competencies such as: lesson planning, teaching the four skills, teaching grammar and vocabulary, classroom management, assessment and giving feedback, and effectively using teaching materials (including the blackboard, the textbook, visual aids, ICT materials).

Are there any educational techniques our Moroccan teachers need to learn more about?

In general, Moroccan teachers might be interested in some up-to-date techniques like active learning, extra-curricular activities, using drama in the classroom, developing reading through literature circles, using ICT in the classroom, learner-centered activities, games in the classroom, using video materials, formative assessment, performance-based activities (giving presentations, Spelling Bee competitions, singing, acting, etc.), and flipped classrooms. Enhancement activities (organizing outings, active citizenship campaigns, etc.) as practiced in USA might be interesting to Moroccan teachers. Project-based learning is a much-needed area for teachers.

Are there any "hot topics" that are likely to be of interest to both U.S. and Moroccan teachers on which they can collaborate?

Virtual exchange programs between teachers as well as students might be of interest to both sides. Global issues such as global warming, peace, empowering women, active citizenship, cultural diversity, etc. can be a good basis for collaboration. Teaching materials development can also be worked on collaboratively. Standards-based approaches to teaching English in Morocco might also be an interesting area as this is borrowed from U.S. education.

Are there topics that may be of interest to U.S. educators seeking to develop materials and resources to globalize their classrooms (by deepening their understanding of Moroccan history, literature, culture, environment etc.)?

Culture is an important component of language education in Morocco. Creating opportunities for American and Moroccan teachers to develop materials and virtual exchange programs on cultural issues/comparisons might be interesting to teachers and students on both sides. Language diversity in Morocco is a useful area where U.S. educators might be interested in exploring further. American writer—like Paul Bowles, Tennessee Williams, and Edith Wardo—who have settled in Morocco and have written about it can be interesting. Cinema is another area of interest, as there are so many great American films that were filmed in Morocco. Moroccan landscape diversity and its influence on socio-cultural diversity can interest our American friends.

Are there any topics in Moroccan education from which American educators can learn new educational practices?

Within the current educational reform, Morocco has started some high school classes (though limited in number) where scientific subjects are taught in English. This might be interesting for





American and Moroccan teachers, especially scientific subjects teachers. Related to this is how foreign languages are taught in Morocco.

You can find more on Moroccan education system in these articles:

Llorent-Bedmar, V. (2014). Educational reforms in Morocco: Evaluation and current status. *International Education Studies*. 7(12): 95-105. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1071171.pdf>

UNESCO. <http://uis.unesco.org/en/country/ma>.

World Bank (2018). Expectations and aspirations: A new framework for education in the Middle East and North Africa: Overview.

<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/527931542039352771/Overview>

European Union (2017). Overview of the higher education system: Morocco.

https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/sites/eacea-site/files/countryfiches_morocco_2017.pdf

