



Multilingualism, Interculturality, and Educational Innovation: Paving the Way for Interdisciplinary and Transversal Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the transformative potential of multilingualism and interculturality in driving pedagogical innovation within Moroccan higher education. The core issue examined is how Moroccan universities can effectively incorporate multilingual and intercultural dimensions into their curricula and teaching methodologies to address the challenges of globalization, while simultaneously promoting educational equity and fostering social advancement. The research also explores the interplay between these dimensions and broader concepts such as interdisciplinarity and transversality, analyzing their impact on shaping modern educational practices. By focusing on the strategies adopted by Moroccan universities to integrate diverse linguistic and cultural perspectives, the study aims to demonstrate how such approaches enrich academic programs and prepare students for success in an increasingly interconnected global workforce. Furthermore, it emphasizes the importance of a comprehensive framework that leverages diversity as a catalyst for educational reform and societal progress. Ultimately, the study positions Morocco as a potential model for other MENA countries facing comparable educational and sociocultural challenges.

Keywords: Multilingualism, Interculturality, Pedagogical Innovation, Higher Education, Globalization, Educational Equity, Diversity

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INTRODUCTION

The work of researchers such as Isabelle Léglise, Luk Van Mensel and Christine Helot establishes that multilingual and intercultural skills are now fundamental to modern pedagogy. As global interconnectivity intensifies, the integration of these elements into higher education is becoming a key indicator of the quality of higher education and its influence on wider society. In this context, universities are positioning themselves as key players in significant socio-cultural change.

In Morocco, a renewed pedagogical approach within this multicultural and multilingual framework seems essential. Sandra Fernandes and al. argue that "Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) [...] is a pedagogical approach that promotes global collaboration and cross-cultural learning by connecting students from different parts of the world in online educational experiences" . This seems particularly relevant for Moroccan higher education, characterized by its Arab-Berber heritage and proximity to Europe, positioning it at a crossroads capable of offering an innovative and inclusive pedagogical model. This study aims to explore how the introduction of multilingualism and interculturality, combined with interdisciplinarity and transversality, can reshape educational structures in Morocco. We will discuss the strategies adopted by Moroccan universities to address the challenges of a globalized society while preparing students to succeed in a dynamic and diversely connected professional environment. As suggested by Le Cercle U, "multilingualism and interculturality are both research fields and vital competences in today's globalized world". Other Moroccan projects and official texts, such as the National Charter for Education and Training (1999), the 2011 Constitution, the Strategic Vision for Reform 2015-2030, and the PACTE ESRI 2030, highlight the multiple benefits of successfully integrating interculturality into higher education, particularly in terms of intellectual openness and international competitiveness. By evaluating the impact of such transformations on pedagogical practices in Morocco, this study aims to enrich the local academic debate and offer applicable perspectives for other regional contexts facing similar challenges.

EPISTEMOLOGICAL FOUNDATION OF THE STUDY

In order to build a solid epistemological framework, this analysis begins with a systematic examination of the fundamental concepts. These are then defined in educational discourse and related to their wider applicability. An examination of multilingualism, as defined as the ability of an individual or community to use more than one language, is a fundamental first step. This concept goes beyond mere linguistic knowledge to encompass the ability to navigate between different cultures. It is a growing phenomenon in globalized societies and is often associated with cognitive, social, and economic benefits. As Baker states, "the connections between language and culture should be viewed primarily as fluid, emergent and liminal with no a priori specified target community. ."

The second concept is *interculturality*, which describes the dynamic interactions between cultures, emphasizing intercultural exchange and dialogue rather than the mere coexistence of cultural diversity. This implies the recognition and valorization of cultural differences. As Schmitt explains,

"Plurilingual and pluricultural competence is defined both as a set of distinct skills, valid for each of the languages mastered at different levels and for each of the cultures experienced to varying degrees, and as a plural competence, valid for the ensemble of languages and cultures mastered by the learner/user, without distinction."

Pedagogical innovation refers to the introduction of new teaching methods or practices that enhance student learning and engagement. It may involve the use of technology, new didactic approaches, or curricular modifications to meet contemporary educational needs (Scott, 2015). *Interdisciplinarity* is often approached as a method that integrates knowledge and modes of thinking from two or more academic disciplines to create understanding or solve problems whose solutions transcend the boundaries of a single discipline (Klein, 1990). It aims to develop innovative synergies and is particularly valued for addressing complex issues holistically. Finally, *transversality* in the academic context, as defined by Edgar Morin, refers to the ability to connect knowledge and skills across different disciplines and contexts, fostering an integrative approach to education that develops transferable skills essential for navigating complex professional and social environments.

The Transformative Potential of Multilingual Education and Pedagogical Engineering in Morocco: Towards a More Inclusive and Dynamic Educational Approach

The implementation of a multilingual educational framework in Morocco can be seen as a major educational reform, with the potential to significantly foster the development of intercultural skills. This paradigm, which is part of a broader perspective on the transmission of knowledge, goes beyond the simple acquisition of linguistic skills. It provides a bridge between the cultural and historical worlds inherent in each language. Studying Arabic, Tamazight, French and English, for example, gives students access not only to a wider range of academic knowledge, but also to the distinct cultural epistemologies that these languages embody. These range from the philosophical discourses of the French-speaking world and the English literary canon to the poetic heritage of classical Arabic and the rich oral history of the Amazigh people. Indeed, this promotion of multilingualism facilitates substantial dialogue across cultural boundaries. Indeed, by valuing the diversity of linguistic and cultural identities within an educational environment, this strategy aims to promote mutual understanding and respect. As a result, it helps to strengthen social cohesion and a unified national identity, while preserving the plurality of cultural expressions.

Regarding pedagogical engineering, it would play a crucial role in how knowledge is presented and assimilated, making learning more engaging for Moroccan students. The integration of educational technologies, such as interactive online learning platforms (e.g., *ROSETTA STONE* in Morocco), simulations, and educational games, could transform the learning experience, making it more dynamic and immersive. For instance, augmented reality could be used to explore Moroccan or international historical sites in language classes, allowing students to "visit" these sites while learning the associated language. Additionally, project-based learning, which encourages students to solve real-world problems using their linguistic and cultural skills, would make learning directly relevant and applied. For example, organizing a project where students create a virtual exhibition on Morocco's multicultural history, using different languages for research and presentations, could deeply enrich their understanding and engagement.

These methods, by facilitating cultural immersion through multilingualism and employing innovative pedagogical strategies, would not only stimulate student interest but also prepare a new generation of Moroccan citizens equipped to navigate and thrive in an increasingly globalized and interconnected world.

Strategies to Revitalize Moroccan Higher Education: Towards Enhanced Interdisciplinarity

The recent evolution of the higher education landscape in Morocco revolves around a major transformation, marked by the adoption of interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary methodologies in university curricula. This marks a significant break with traditionally rigid disciplinary structures. Nevertheless, the full potential of these innovative educational paradigms has yet to be realised. It is therefore necessary to further develop them.

The Mohammed VI Polytechnic University (UM6P), which has established itself as a pioneering institution, is a prime example of this transformation. Its educational approach is based on dissolving the conventional boundaries between scientific, technical, social and economic disciplines. This pedagogical approach is meticulously crafted to produce graduates capable of grasping heterogeneous contemporary issues, such as sustainable development and the rise of green technologies. At UM6P, this cross-disciplinary approach is implemented through study programmes that seamlessly integrate engineering sciences with management studies and public policy. This pedagogical approach makes it possible to offer a holistic educational experience. The institution's successful expansion on the international stage, as evidenced by the creation of campuses in Paris and Montreal, is further evidence of the exportability and global competitiveness of this modernised Moroccan educational framework. To extend this dynamic across the sector, several measures could be considered. Moroccan universities could systematically integrate interdisciplinary modules into all curricula. This would involve creating programs where students from disciplines such as life sciences could take courses in environmental law, ethics, or project management. Additionally, platforms could be established where students, teachers, and professionals from different fields collaborate on concrete projects, such as partnerships between engineering and medical faculties to develop innovative technological solutions for public health issues. Strategic partnerships with industry and civil society could also be established, enriching teaching and offering students a practical and contemporary perspective. These partnerships could facilitate interdisciplinary internships, providing valuable experience even before entering the job market. Support for interdisciplinary research could be increased by allocating more funding to projects that transcend disciplinary boundaries, particularly those addressing national and global development issues. A national fund for interdisciplinary research could be created to support this initiative. Finally, continuous training for teachers would be beneficial, with regular sessions on interdisciplinary and transversal pedagogical methods to help them better integrate these approaches into their teaching.

By adopting these measures, Moroccan higher education could not only improve the quality of education offered but also better prepare students to contribute effectively to a modern, complex, and interconnected society. These initiatives require sustained commitment from both educational institutions and the government to continuously reform and adapt teaching structures to the evolving needs of the country and the world.

CONCLUSION

Through the various analyses discussed, it is clear that higher education, particularly in Morocco, is at a crucial crossroads of development. The trends towards interdisciplinarity, transversality, and the adoption of multilingual strategies underscore a necessary evolution to adapt education to the demands of a globalized world. These orientations are not merely pedagogical choices; they constitute a pragmatic response to the imperatives of a knowledge

economy where the ability to integrate diverse skills and navigate between different cultures and disciplines becomes an essential competency.

To open up more timely perspectives, it seems essential to push these initiatives further. It could be wise to consider creating innovation clusters integrating universities, businesses, and start-ups to energize the application of theoretical knowledge in real-world settings. Additionally, the development of enhanced international exchange programs, both virtual and physical, could not only enrich the student experience but also foster a better understanding of global issues. The integration of digital skills at all levels of study would ensure that students are prepared to contribute effectively to the global digital economy. In summary, it would be important not to neglect aspects related to equity and inclusion in the expansion of these new pedagogical directions. Ensuring that every student, regardless of their background, has access to these innovative forms of education is essential to avoid creating an isolated educational elite. Such a vision for higher education, in Morocco or elsewhere, promises not only to train global citizens but also to contribute significantly to sustainable social and economic progress.

Finally, we quote Nelson Mandela, a human rights activist and a profound advocate of education, especially one adapted to contemporary and global demands. He stated, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world". This thought perfectly captures the transformative impact of education and aligns the previous discussions on innovation and adaptation in higher education with a universal and timeless call to action. It encapsulates the essence of an education that prepares for global citizenship and active engagement in an increasingly connected and complex society.

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