

Views of Non-Formal Education in Morocco

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Students viewing an eclipse in Morocco; credit Universe Awareness



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Overview

Few Roughly half of Moroccans are dissatisfied with their country's formal educational system, but, relatively speaking, Moroccans are more satisfied with the state of the formal education system than they are with other government-provided services such as health care. Nevertheless, findings from the Arab Barometer public opinion survey reveal there is significant concern about the effectiveness of the government's efforts to address educational needs. Moreover, they also show that most Moroccans worry about the ability to provide children with a quality education. Given these sentiments, supplementary programs outside the formal system could play a role in improving educational outcomes in Morocco.

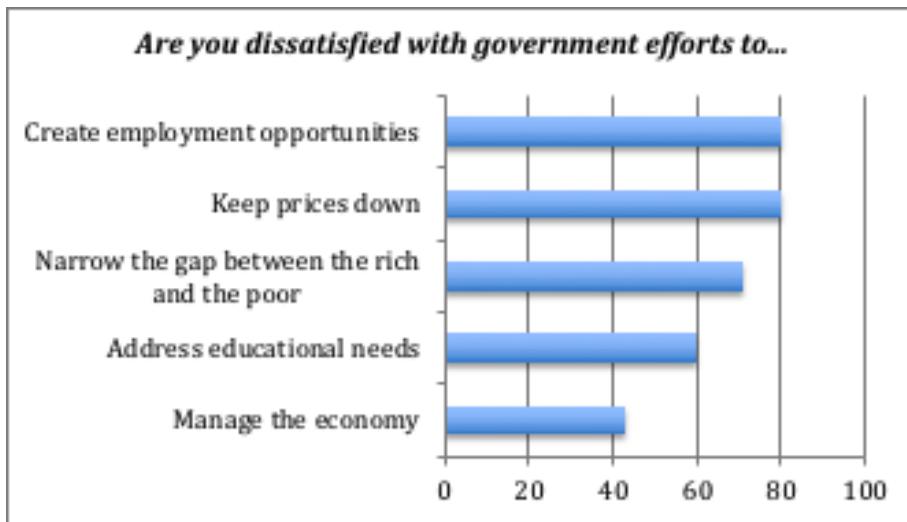
At present, very few Moroccans participate in youth non-formal education (NFE) programs. However, among those who live in a household that includes a participant in such a program, levels of satisfaction are very high. Meanwhile, among households without a participant, a sizable minority hold a negative perception of these programs. Thus, it appears that participation and the perception of such programs are linked. Likely, if more Moroccan youth took part in such programs, views of NFE programs would improve in the Kingdom. Overall, the most salient barrier to participation is cost, meaning any efforts to increase participation must address the affordability of non-formal education programs.

The types of NFE programs that are most preferred by Moroccans are those that provide youth with practical and tangible skills related to career development. However, citizens also appear open to programs that promote skills in critical thinking. For example, survey results show that Moroccans across all demographic backgrounds prefer an educational system that stresses critical thinking over one emphasizing rote memorization. While there remain a number of important barriers to consider in designing non-formal education programs focused on teaching these skills, such programs have potential to successfully address many of the needs of Moroccan youth.

Views on Government and the Education System

Moroccans are divided in their views on the formal education system. Although more than half (56 percent) are dissatisfied, a sizable minority is satisfied or very satisfied (43 percent). Moreover, Moroccans rate the quality of education more highly than some other government services such as health care (28 percent satisfied). Interestingly, while those with a household income of more than MAD3500 (the approximate median income) are more satisfied with the educational system than those with lower family incomes (44 percent vs. 38 percent), this trend does not hold when disaggregated by education level. Those who have a higher level of education, meaning a secondary or above, are less likely

to be satisfied than Moroccans with less than a secondary education (31 percent vs. 51 percent).



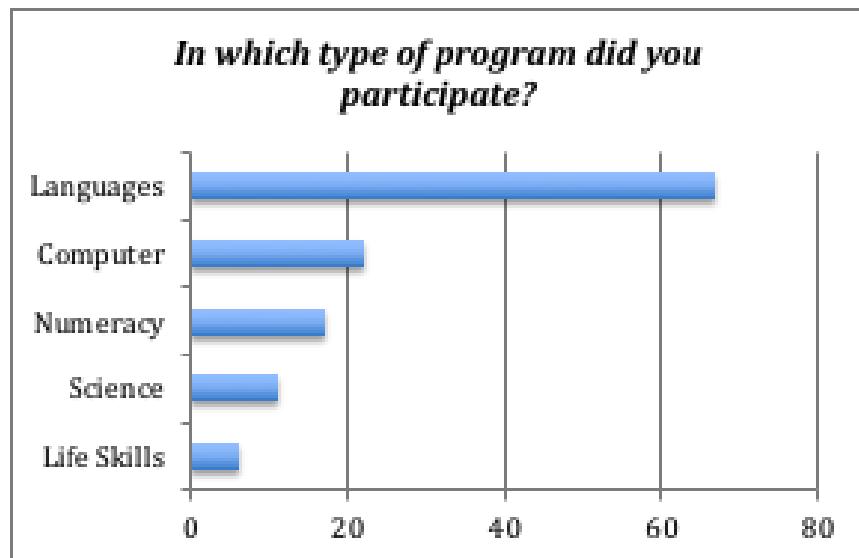
In terms of government efforts to address educational needs, a third of Moroccans say the government is doing a good job (34 percent). By means of comparison, Moroccans are more satisfied with how the government is managing the economy; 42 percent say the government is doing a good job on this issue. However, the same does not hold true for other areas of economic policy. For example, Moroccans are far less satisfied with government efforts to keep prices down, create employment opportunities, or narrow the gap between the rich and the poor (9 percent, 17 percent, 58 percent, respectively) than they are with the state of education.

Although more than four-in-ten Moroccans are satisfied with the educational system, an overwhelming majority of respondents are worried or very worried about the ability to provide their children with a good education (88 percent). In part because the vast majority of citizens have this fear, it holds across demographic categories with no differences in response patterns by income, education level or gender.

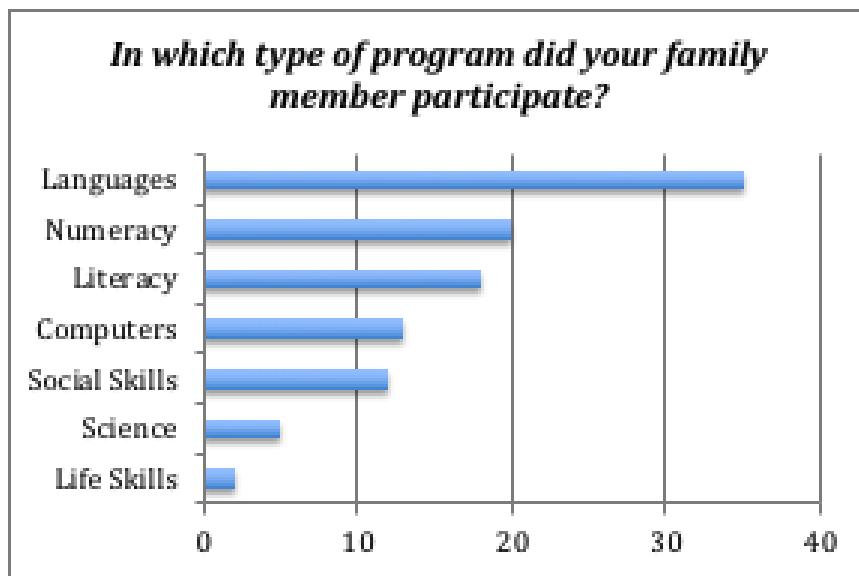
Attitudes toward Non-Formal Education and Reasons for Attending

Very few Moroccans participate in youth non-formal education programs (7 percent), but participation rates vary across demographics. Of urban households, 9 percent had members who participated in NFE programs, compared to 5 percent of rural households. Additionally, respondents with a secondary level of education or above are more likely to come from households with a participant in a youth NFE program compared with respondents with a basic education level or less (65 percent vs. 35 percent). This pattern, coupled with the concern of many Moroccans about the quality of the educational system,

might indicate that some well-educated households are turning to such programs to meet their educational needs.¹



A third of the non-formal youth education programs in which respondents or their family members have participated are organized by agencies, NGOs or other organizations, while three-fifths (61 percent) are organized by private institutions. The most popular types of NFE programs among respondents who participated themselves are those teaching languages (67 percent), followed at much lower rates by those focused on computer skills (22 percent), numeracy (17 percent), science (11 percent), and life skills (6 percent).²

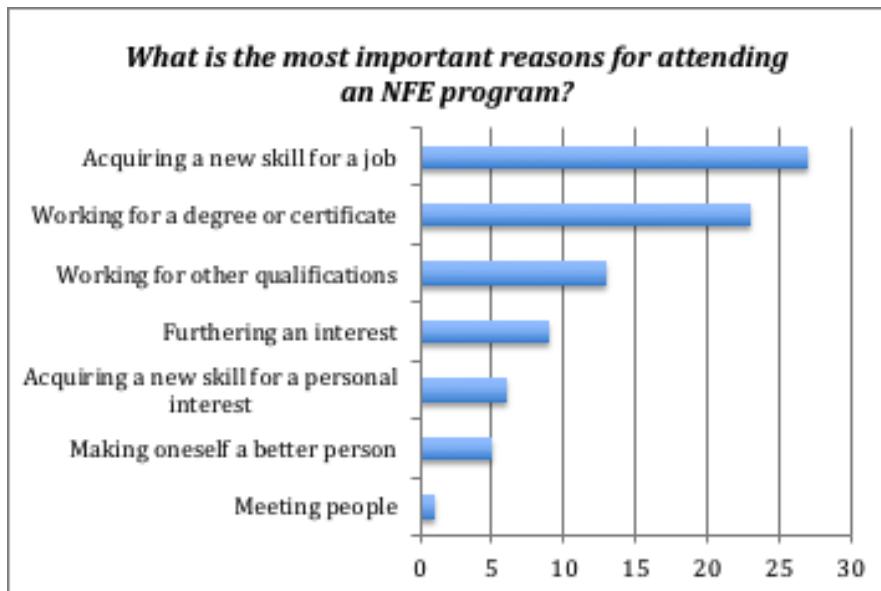


¹ Percentages in the charts may exceed 100% given that respondents could select more than one choice for the type of program in which they or a family member had participated.

² It is important to note that the number of respondents who participated in NFE programs themselves is small ($n = 18$), meaning some caution should be used in interpreting the results.

Among those who have a family member who participated, the most common types of programs are languages (35 percent), numeracy (20 percent), literacy (18 percent), or computers (13 percent). These are followed by enrollment at much lower rates in programs teaching social skills, science or life skills (12 percent, 5 percent, 2 percent, respectively).

When asked what are the most important skills they hope to gain out of participation in non-formal education, the most common responses relate to career development and advancement. For instance, 27 percent of respondents cite acquiring a new skill for a job as the most important reason, followed by working for a degree or certificate (23 percent). Less common reasons include working for other qualifications (13 percent), furthering an interest (9 percent), acquiring a new skill for a personal interest (6 percent), making oneself a better person (5 percent), and meeting people (1 percent).



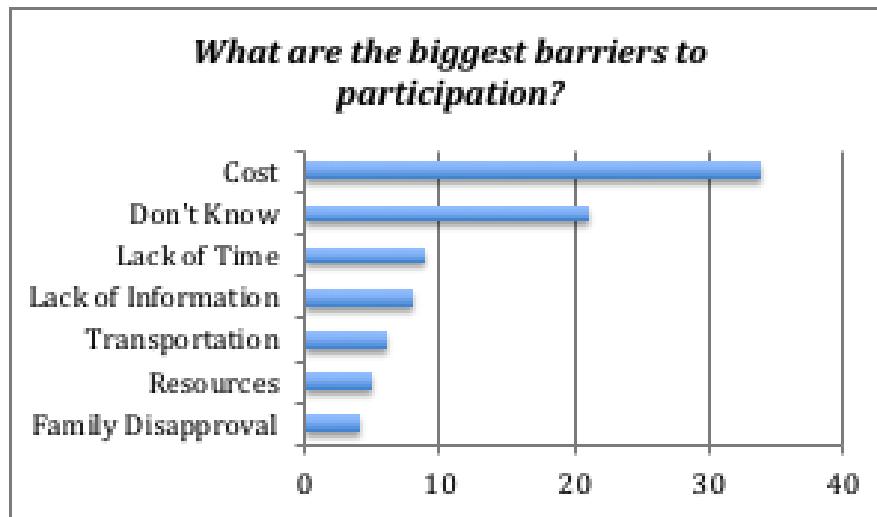
When asked about the second most important reason for participating, the emphasis remains career-related. Again, acquiring a new skill for a job and working for a degree or certificate are the two most popularly cited reasons (29 percent, 16 percent, respectively). Other responses include working for other qualifications (14 percent), furthering an interest (11 percent), making oneself a better person (9 percent), acquiring a new skill for a personal interest (6 percent), or meeting new people (2 percent).

Fewer Moroccans have a positive view of non-formal education programs than in many other countries in the Middle East and North Africa. Although 40 percent view them positively, 17 percent perceive them negatively, while a plurality (43 percent) either decline to answer or say they do not know. However, among those who either participated in a program themselves or had a family member who did, youth NFE programs enjoy a very positive reputation. The vast majority are satisfied with the programs they attended (85

percent) and fewer than one-in-ten (8 percent) is dissatisfied. This result indicates that most respondents who are directly familiar with such programs have a positive view of them.

Barriers to Attending Non-Formal Education Programs

Given that private institutions organize 61 percent of the NFE programs in which Moroccans participate, it is not surprising that cost is the most commonly cited barrier to participation (34 percent). Interestingly, nearly a quarter of respondents said they did not know the biggest barrier to participation (21 percent), suggesting a general lack of familiarity with such programs. Relatively few Moroccans cite barriers such as lack of time or lack of information (9 percent and 8 percent, respectively), transportation (6 percent), resources (5 percent) or family disapproval (4 percent). Of note, different demographics emphasize different barriers. For instance, Moroccans living in rural areas are significantly more likely to cite transportation as a barrier compared with those living in urban areas (13 percent vs. 1 percent). Additionally, those from a household with an income less than 3500 MAD cite cost at slightly higher rates than do those earning above this level (38 percent vs. 32 percent).



In terms of second biggest barriers to participation, Moroccans again cite cost at a higher rate than other barriers (15 percent). Other barriers include time (13 percent), lack of resources (13 percent), lack of information (9 percent), transportation (8 percent), family disapproval (6 percent), and access (5 percent). Notably, 15 percent of respondents say they have no further reply beyond the first barrier they listed.

Cultural barriers, particularly related to gender, could also be factors that limit participation. When asked if male and female students attending class together is acceptable for Islam, the vast majority say it is (85 percent). However, there is a slight difference in response depending on religiosity. While the vast majority (95 percent) of



those who self-identify as not religious agree that co-education is allowed in Islam, those who identify as religious are somewhat less likely to think so (82 percent). This trend is again seen when asked whether university education is more important for males than it is for females. Overall, only 12 percent agree with this statement, but among those who self-identify as not religious, agreement with this statement is even lower (5 percent) than among those identifying as religious (15 percent). In general, however, most Moroccans, whether religious or non-religious, are accepting of mixed gender classes and they place a similar emphasis on the importance of university education for women as they do for men. Thus, it appears that most Moroccans would be accepting of both boys and girls attending youth NFE programs.

Views of Education

When asked about the kind of education system they envision, Moroccans strongly prefer a curriculum emphasizing critical thinking. For example, a clear majority say it is better for an educational system to prioritize learning to think about how to answer the question rather than simply giving the correct answer to a question (67 percent vs. 27 percent). Similarly, most Moroccans say that a good education system is one that encourages students to think for themselves, even when it goes against what the teacher is saying (71 percent). They prefer this to a system that encourages students to accept the answer offered by the teacher without a need for alternatives (21 percent). Moreover, the vast majority of respondents also favor examinations that allow students to demonstrate how well they have made their own sense of what has been taught in class as opposed to tests that allow students to demonstrate how well they have memorized what has been taught (75 percent vs. 17 percent).

However, there are differences between men and women with regards to preferences for a curriculum that stresses critical thinking over rote memorization. On average, men prefer the former to a greater extent than do women. While 72 percent of Moroccan men say that students must learn to think about how to answer the question, only 63 percent of Moroccan women say the same. Men are also more likely than women to say that a good education system is one that encourages students to think for themselves even when it goes against what the teacher is saying (76 percent vs. 66 percent). Again, the same trend is found regarding preferences for examinations. Men are more likely than women to prefer exams that test learning by allowing students to demonstrate how well they have made their own sense of what has been taught in class (80 percent vs. 71 percent).

In terms of preferences for an education system that emphasizes only scientific skills versus one that also includes a focus on emotional intelligence, Moroccans tend to prefer the latter, albeit by a relatively small margin. For example, Moroccans have a preference that courses teach students how to recognize their emotions and respond to others'



		Prefer
1	Statement 1: The education system should focus primarily on developing the scientific skills of pupils and students	41%
	Statement 2: Just as there are courses to teach scientific skills there must be courses to teach students how to recognize and express their own emotions and respond to others' emotions	52%
2	Statement 1: Giving the correct answer to a question remains the most important goal for pupils and students	27%
	Statement 2: It is not important for pupils and students to always reach the correct answer. What is most important is that they learn to think about how to answer the question	67%
3	Statement 1: A good education system is one that encourages the student to accept the answer offered by the teacher because it is the best answer, there is no need for alternatives.	21%
	Statement 2: A good education system is one that encourages students to think for themselves even when it goes against what the teacher is saying.	71%
4	Statement 1: Examinations that allow students to demonstrate how well they have memorized what has been taught in class are the best test of learning.	17%
	Statement 2: Examinations that allow students to demonstrate how well they have made their own sense of what has been taught in class are the best test of learning.	75%
5	Statement 1: The education system should place primary importance on academic achievement and certificates recognizing completion.	36%
	Statement 2: The education system should place primary importance on learning social skills such as the ability to understand the perspectives and feelings of others.	55%



emotions, in addition to scientific skills (52 percent) over a program focused only on developing the scientific skills of pupils and students (41 percent). Moroccans also favor an education system that places a greater importance on learning social skills such as the ability to understand the perspectives and feelings of other compared with a system that emphasizes academic achievement (55 percent vs. 36 percent).

Notably, there are also differences by gender in preference for curricula that teach emotional intelligence, although the differences are less stark. For instance, while 58 percent of men favor a system that places primary importance on learning social skills, only 52 percent of women say the same. However, there is no significant difference by gender in attitudes toward a curriculum that focuses primarily on developing the scientific skills of students; roughly the same percentage of men and women prefer a curriculum that includes courses to teach students how to recognize and express their own emotions (52 percent vs. 50 percent).

Overall, the Arab Barometer results make clear that there is a broad acceptance among Moroccans, including both men and women, for programs that promote skills in critical in education. However, there is somewhat less support for teaching skills in emotional intelligence.

Conclusion

Although Moroccans express dissatisfaction with the public education system, very few have turned to educational program outside the formal curriculum as an alternative. However, the near universal concern about providing children a good education and dissatisfaction with government efforts to address educational shortcomings both suggest that NFE programs, if more carefully tailored to the needs and preferences of ordinary citizens, could represent a viable solution to improve the skills of many Moroccan youth.

There is also a clear preference among Moroccans for programs that promote critical thinking and analytical skills, as well as tangible skills that would improve the likelihood of securing employment. If youth non-formal education programs were targeted to these goals and made affordable, they would be well placed to meet the needs of Moroccan youth.