



Towards the Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Morocco

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Abstract

The present paper provides a comprehensive overview of the prevailing circumstances concerning the education of children with disabilities within the Moroccan context. It elucidates the existing legislative framework that governs disability and its intersection with education, as well as the concerted actions aimed at enhancing educational access for this demographic. Noteworthy recognition is accorded to the collaborative efforts of international entities and local civil society in bolstering the welfare of children with disabilities. Of paramount significance are the statistical insights furnished by the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Solidarity, and the High Commission of Planning, which serve as crucial instruments for comprehending the academic engagement of children with disabilities and identifying institutions engaged in data aggregation for potential future investigations.

Keywords: Disabilities, inclusion, educational system, special education, mainstreaming, curriculum

1. Introduction

In recent decades, there has been a global recognition of inclusive education, resulting in a rise in the enrollment of children with special educational needs in regular schools. The objective is to provide these children with equal educational opportunities by integrating them into mainstream education systems. The underlying principles of inclusive education are rooted in human rights, social justice, equality, entitlement, and respect for diversity. The aim also is to prevent any form of segregation, marginalization, and denial of access to essential services and rights for students with disabilities.

In Morocco, education is considered the second most important priority, and there is an ongoing effort to reform the educational system to align with the needs of society and the job market. This approach acknowledges that children with disabilities should have the same opportunity to learn alongside their non-disabled peers in schools located near their residences. However, despite the increasing trend of inclusive education, there is a growing concern that many mainstream schools have not made the necessary adjustments and changes to accommodate children with disabilities effectively. This lack of accommodations extends to the school environment, classroom settings, curricula, and teaching methods. As a result, children with varying degrees of disabilities, ranging from mild to profound, are being admitted to mainstream schools without adequate support. However, due to the lack of appropriate reasonable adjustments, these students still face challenges in fully participating in the educational process and accessing the curriculum on an equal basis with their peers.

2. Inclusion in Morocco, the reality

The education system in Morocco consists of six years of primary school, three years of middle school, three years of secondary school, and three years at the tertiary level. Primary education is compulsory until the age of 16, and during this period, students are expected to acquire literacy, numeracy, creativity, and communication skills.

The term “inclusion” in the context of education in Morocco is characterized by ambiguity, defining a transitional state between mainstreaming and full inclusion. Paradoxically, the concept of school integration in Morocco is limited to placing children in regular classrooms with regular teachers, without a systematic record in the official school registry. This unique model, not found elsewhere in the world, represents an earnest attempt to expand the boundaries of the “normal” system to include those who have long been excluded from it. Children with disabilities, being different, are often the reason for their exclusion. Consequently, they are compelled to seek a place within centers operated by parents’ associations, who then find themselves obligated to accept or rectify what the system has neglected.

Moreover, the process of mainstreaming, as it has been practiced since the 1990s, raises concerns. The criteria for acceptance into a public school have typically required that the child has a mild impairment, an acceptable academic level, strong family support, significant residual hearing, proficient reading skills, and functional language. These criteria are determined by a local committee of professionals who have not received specialized training in the specificities of different disability categories. As a result, this public-school system excludes those who do

not meet the established classification. The underlying logic behind these integration criteria is that the child should conform to standard norms, thereby denying access to those who fall outside those norms.

The Moroccan constitution (2011) guarantees unconditional access to free and compulsory primary education for all children, including those with disabilities, children of immigrants, and those in vulnerable conditions (Ruchti, 2012). However, despite these constitutional guarantees, national surveys indicate (HCP, 2014; ENH, 2016; HI, 2015; RTI, 2016) that achieving these goals and ensuring the rights of all children is still a challenge. According to the national disability survey conducted by the Ministry of Solidarity in 2016, approximately 6.8% of the general population in Morocco, representing 2,264,672 people, have some form and degree of disability. Furthermore, the survey reveals that at least one out of every four families in Morocco (24.5% of all households) has at least one member with a disability. These statistics highlight the significant number of individuals with disabilities in the country and the importance of ensuring their access to education and inclusive educational opportunities.

It is evident that there is a need to address the barriers and challenges faced by individuals with disabilities in accessing quality education in Morocco. Efforts should be made to provide inclusive educational environments that cater to the diverse needs of all learners, including those with disabilities. By implementing inclusive policies and practices, Morocco can work towards fulfilling its constitutional mandate of providing equal educational opportunities for all children.

3. The Moroccan mainstreaming experiences

There are three schooling options available for children with disabilities. Firstly, Ordinary Schools; they are the main players in inclusive education, but do not accommodate the majority of children with disabilities. These institutions rarely make any reasonable accommodations and individualized and learner-centered support measures in order to facilitate academic progress and integration. All teachers and educational staff are seldom made aware of and never trained in the reception and schooling of children with disabilities which are often with mild impairments mainly those with physical disability.

Second, Specialized Schools; these are structures exclusively welcoming children with disabilities, and are generally dedicated to a specific type of deficiency. They are collective teaching settings in private non-residential schools under the supervision of parent associations

most often managed by associations. In an inclusive system, these institutions can encourage the transition to mainstream school as soon as possible. In some cases, they can act as a resource center for mainstream schools, by providing them with their expertise or some of their professionals to support schools in welcoming children with the same type of disability in private centers that are completely independent of the Ministry of Education. These special schools get their funding from the Ministry of Solidarity or from charitable donors.

Third, there is a collective schooling approach called “CLIS” (School Integration Classes) where children with the same type of disability, or sometimes with multiple types of disabilities, are grouped together in a separate classroom but in a regular school environment. These Mainstreaming classes are, in principle, separate classes, located within ordinary schools, where children receive lessons from specialist teachers. Ideally, these classes should allow children maximum contact with other children in the school, through common activities and common hours of recreation and play activities. Likewise, these classes are designed as places of passage allowing, ultimately, schooling in an ordinary environment. A public teacher is assigned to teach this class, and depending on the student's needs, students may have opportunities to participate in regular classroom activities as well as receive education alongside other non-disabled peers. This option which is advocated by the public authorities, mainstreaming approach, has the advantage of allowing for specific lessons and necessary adaptations that may be challenging to implement in a regular classroom setting. The child will share the class with peers who have the same type of disability and interact with non-disabled peers during recreational breaks.

Children with disabilities who do not attend school face a dual form of discrimination (ENH, 2016). They are disadvantaged due to their disability, and additionally, they are unable to access formal education. Furthermore, obstacles are intensified by low enrollment rates, lack of accessibility facilities, negative social perceptions, stigmatization, and cultural beliefs. There are significant disparities in terms of residence and gender. However, despite potential changes in attitudes towards greater tolerance and acceptance of others resulting from mainstreaming practices in Morocco, the process remains elitist, relatively arbitrary, and lacking a foundation in individual needs or scientific studies evaluating its effectiveness. Since the 1990s, the Ministry of Education has failed to conduct comprehensive studies evaluating the integration experience and has disregarded the insights and expertise of teachers in the field who have been left unsupported, inexperienced, and lacking in-service training. Only a few training courses

conducted by French and Italian NGOs in the academies of Rabat and Agadir have provided some support. Moreover, the scarcity of equipment and teaching materials has led many teachers to establish associations for educating children, relying on public support from the Ministry of Social Development and local groups. Consequently, the state has relied on charity to educate its own children.

Ironically, the conventional process of mainstreaming children with disabilities, while removing some barriers, has fallen short of its intended goal. It is designed to grant access to educational spaces for those who are typically excluded, regardless of their individuality or differences. However, children with disabilities often find themselves on the periphery of the educational system due to systemic shortcomings that cast them as victims, contradicting the fundamental principle of inclusive education.

While many countries are actively working towards making inclusion a reality in their schools, achieving the same outcome in Moroccan schools appears exceedingly challenging. This emphasizes the unique challenges faced in educating children with disabilities in the country as their number increases, the availability of resources and suitable learning environments for them is diminishing due to national funding constraints. The failure to provide qualified educators and the neglect of these children within the educational system contribute to their marginalization, stigmatization, and suffering. They encounter significant obstacles in accessing school facilities, engaging with the curriculum, and finding a rightful place within the system.

Additionally, while there has been some progress, particularly at the primary education level, the stark reality is that access to education continues to exclude those without adequate means and resources. The educational system remains selective in nature, perpetuating exclusion and limiting access for low-income families. It depends not only on educational factors but also on “social and geographical distribution”.

Notably, the enrollment rates for children with disabilities vary between urban and rural areas. Girls with disabilities face a higher level of exclusion from schooling compared to boys. As demonstrated in figure 1, among children aged 6 to 11, the enrollment rate for those with disabilities is significantly lower than the overall student population. This disparity continues as children grow older, highlighting the ongoing challenges. Reports from both the Ministry of Education and civil society organizations reveal instances where children with different types of disabilities are grouped together in the same class when the ministry is unable to provide

teachers for each specific category. To address these pressing issues, the National Council of Education published a thematic report in 2021, emphasizing that the enrollment rate for children with disabilities does not follow the same trends observed in the general student population aged 6 to 17 years.

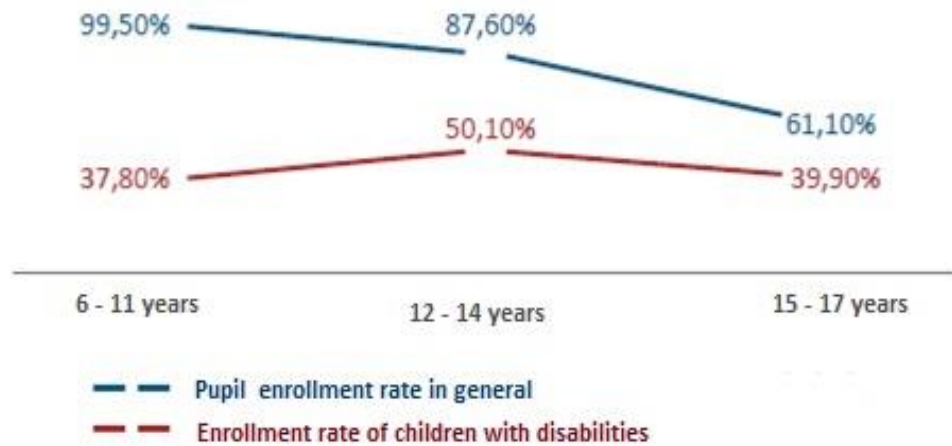


Figure 1. Comparative schooling rates of disabled and non-disabled children. Ministry of Solidarity (2019)

According to the National Disability Survey (NDS) in 2014, a significant percentage of individuals with disabilities in Morocco are uneducated. The survey found that 66.1% of individuals with disabilities, which is approximately 1.476 million people, have not received any formal education. Out of this group, 66.6% are women. The distribution of uneducated individuals by place of residence is nearly equal, with 50.6% living in urban areas and 49.4% in rural areas.

In terms of educational attainment, only 19.6% of individuals with disabilities have received education beyond primary school, 9.5% have reached high school level, and merely 1.8% have access to tertiary education. The survey also highlights that 30.4% of children between the ages of 5 and 14 with disabilities, equivalent to 137,611 children, are not enrolled in any educational institution. Among this group, 64.4% are female. Additionally, 56.6% of people with disabilities have achieved an education ranging from kindergarten to high school. The NDS report reveals that 33.7% of individuals aged 15 to 25 with disabilities have no education, with 71.9% of them being females. Comparatively, the rate of uneducated individuals in the same age group without disabilities is approximately 8.6%, which is four times lower than the rate among people with disabilities. Among individuals with disabilities in the 15 to 25 age range, around 57.4% have completed preschool education, but only 7.5% have reached higher education levels. Moreover, the report shows that 70.9% of individuals with disabilities aged

26 and above are uneducated, and a mere 1.6% have access to tertiary education. The percentage of individuals with disabilities who have attained higher education is 27.10%.

4. Trends in the education of children with disabilities

Special education in Morocco has primarily been led by voluntary and charitable organizations since the country's independence in 1956. Initially, education for students with disabilities was provided only in special schools. However, in the 1990s, there was a shift towards the introduction of units and integrated/mainstream programs in public schools, following the recommendations of the Salamanca Declaration in 1994.

Special units in Morocco refer to classrooms within regular schools that are dedicated to meet the needs of learners with disabilities. The Ministry of Education (MoE) defines a special unit as a class in a regular school that should have a minimum of 15 pupils, although this minimum requirement is not always followed. The operation and structure of these units can vary across different schools. In most cases, all learners with disabilities, regardless of age or level of education, are placed in the same classroom. However, there are exceptions, and deaf learners are often not included in the same classrooms as hearing learners. Students attending special units travel to and from school on a daily basis as these units are attached to day schools.

According to the national disability survey (2016), it was estimated that there were 230,000 school-aged children with disabilities (4-15 years old) in the country. Unfortunately, the data from the same survey revealed that 66.1% of people with disabilities (1,476,000 individuals) were uneducated. Among those who were able to receive education, only 19.6% had completed primary education, 9.5% had completed secondary education, and a mere 1.8% had attained tertiary education. Moreover, 79% of children aged 5-17 years old did not progress beyond primary education. The main reasons cited for not attending school were the children's disabilities (85.7%), exacerbated by negative social perceptions, lack of appropriate facilities, and poverty.

Efforts initiated by the Ministry of Education since the 1990s resulted in the enrollment of around 8,000 children in 700 mainstreaming classes, with over 37% being female. However, the MoE acknowledges that the majority of children with disabilities still do not have access to educational services. In 2019, only 22,000 students were registered in special schools, units, and integrated programs. This number remains limited and insufficient to meet the growing demand, with approximately 50% of these mainstreaming units concentrated in major cities

along the Kenitra-Marrakesh axis. In response to this shortage, parents' associations have played a crucial role in establishing over 157 special schools for children with severe disabilities.

In the 2017-2018 school year, the inclusion ratio of disabled children in regular primary education did not exceed 9% of all institutions. This raises questions about the effectiveness of public policies related to inclusive education over the past three decades. Despite the availability of recommendations from various local and international reports and legal guidelines, which outline strategies for ensuring equal access to quality and relevant education for learners with disabilities, the implementation has been limited. As a result, some disabled learners placed in regular schools find themselves in environments that do not adequately address their specific learning needs, and they have to adapt to a system that denies them equal access to education compared to their peers.

Indeed, figure 1 above shows some improvement in the enrollment of learners with disabilities in schools, although it remains a small percentage compared to the estimated number of children who should be in school. It is important to note that the available statistics may not accurately reflect the actual prevalence, both those in school and those who are out of school. Furthermore, while the government of Morocco emphasizes inclusive education for all, it also recognizes the role of special schools and special units in providing suitable environments for the education of learners with severe special educational needs, such as those with hearing, visual, and intellectual impairments, and serious mobility challenges (MoE, 2019). These specialized settings are considered necessary to address the specific needs of certain individuals.

In fact, there are potential changes in attitudes towards greater tolerance and acceptance of others resulting from mainstreaming practices in Morocco. It is important for the government and relevant stakeholders to address these challenges and invest in the necessary resources, training, and support to ensure that inclusive education becomes a reality for all learners with disabilities in Morocco. By addressing these issues, the education system can become more inclusive and provide equal opportunities for all learners, regardless of their abilities.

5. Special education legislation

Regarding special education legislation, Article 34 of the Moroccan Constitution emphasizes rehabilitating and integrating individuals with disabilities into society. In 2016, Morocco adopted Law 97-13, known as the Framework Law, to address legal issues and obstacles faced

by people with disabilities in the country. The law focuses on non-discrimination, social protection, healthcare access, employment, participation in cultural and sporting activities, civic and political engagement, and accessibility.

Articles 11, 12, and 13 of the law specifically address access to education for individuals with disabilities. Article 11 states that individuals with disabilities have the right to education at all levels and should be provided with appropriate educational methods tailored to their needs. The state is responsible for ensuring reasonable measures are taken for each child. Article 12 encourages the establishment of specialized institutions for the education and training of individuals with disabilities who choose not to or are unable to continue their studies in public schools. These specialized schools are considered part of the national education and training system. Article 13 highlights the role of the regional academies of Education and Training (AREF) in ensuring records, statistics, education, guidance, and reorientation for children with disabilities.

It appears that despite the existence of laws and regulations promoting inclusive education and the right to schooling for all children, including those with disabilities, these measures have not had a significant impact on disabled children in Morocco. The number of children with disabilities enrolled in schools has not seen significant increases, and the overall achievements in this regard have remained limited.

6. Special education and public policies

One of the reasons for this lack of impact is that the laws and regulations were general in nature and did not specifically target the reform of the educational system to accommodate the needs of disabled children. Additionally, there has been a lack of implementation and monitoring systems to ensure the proper implementation of these laws at the grassroots level. As a result, families of disabled children have often struggled to find suitable school settings and placements for their children, leading to a sense of uncertainty and frustration.

The introduction of mainstreaming classes in 1994 aimed to educate children who were considered unable to follow regular streams or labeled as “retarded”. However, to the author’s knowledge, no developmental tests or assessments, such as the Binet-Simon verbal scale, have been conducted in Morocco to classify children based on their intellectual abilities. It seems that special schools, which are medico-educational centers catering to children with severe

disabilities such as hearing, visual, or mental impairments, operate outside the national educational system.

According to the survey mentioned, 76% of schoolchildren attend regular schools, 5% have access to specialized support, 15% attend specialized institutions typically established by associations or private entities, and 4% receive education at home or in traditional preschool settings (figure 2). This suggests a fragmented and diverse landscape of educational options for children with disabilities in Morocco, with a significant proportion attending regular schools without adequate support or accommodations.

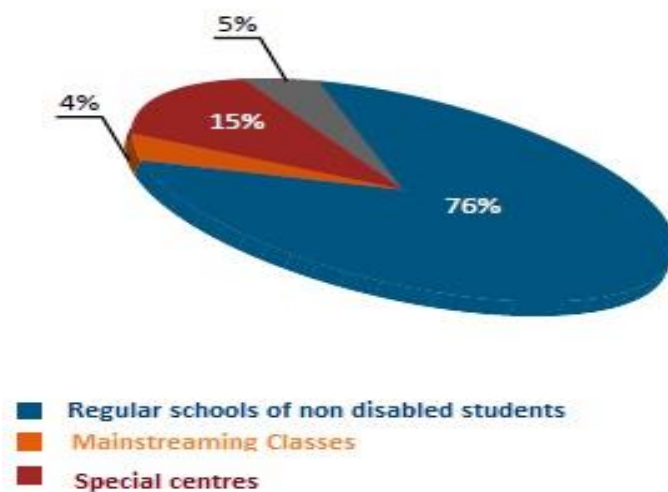


Figure 2. Type of institutions hosting children with disabilities. Ministry of Solidarity (2014)

Access to schooling for children with disabilities in Morocco varies depending on the type of disability, with children whose disabilities affect their cognitive or communication abilities, such as the deaf, facing significant difficulties in accessing education. In response to this issue, school integration classes (CLIS) were created in regional academies to cater to children with disabilities, primarily those with mild mental or psychological disabilities (80.8%) and those with hearing loss (18.3%). A team of teachers, inspectors, and coordinators received training in the field of disability in 2018.

In October 1995, The Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) program was implemented in Morocco by the State Secretariat for Persons with Disabilities. It dates to 1978, following the Declaration of the International Conference on Primary Health Care and the resulting Declaration of Alma-Ata. The World Health Organization (WHO) initiated CBR as a strategy to improve access to rehabilitation services for disabled people in low and middle-income countries, by making greatest use of local resources. CBR has evolved into a multisectoral

strategy to address the broader needs of this category of citizens, ensuring their participation and inclusion in society and enhancing their quality of life.

Besides, this program aims at improving the quality of life for children, youth, adults and their families by facilitating their access to medical services, local opportunities for integrated education, vocational training, and self-employment. Thus, it aims at making society entirely responsible for the integration of people with disabilities. This program has been gradually implemented in the provinces of *Khemisset, Settat, Sale, Marrakech, Tangier, Casablanca* and *Chefchaouen*. Between 2006 and 2008, a teachers' capacity building project was initiated in partnership with the French Walloon Agency for the Integration of Disabled Persons (AWIPH). Several evaluations have been made to improve the program, including an assessment conducted in 2001, with support from WHO, the review of the cooperation project with UNDP in 2004 and the health aspects of it in 2006. The UNESCO (1999) reports on the Moroccan experience:

A distinctive feature of developments in Morocco is the pivotal role of existing Community Based Rehabilitation programs. Based on these elements, a pilot program involved 28 children in each of three communities, 18 teachers in 8 pilot schools, parents of disabled and non-disabled children and key personnel such as head teachers, inspectors, and government officers. The training was provided by Ministry officials, as well as by NGOs with specialist knowledge of specific impairments. Further workshops were held for school inspectors and directors by two UNESCO consultants, as well as practical courses in Braille, sign language and adaptation of equipment and learning materials. Negative attitudes were also encountered at other levels, including some participating NGOs (p.243).

The Ministry of Education introduced a significant change in 1997/1998, shifting from using the term "handicapped" to referring to these children as having "special needs". This change aligned with terminology commonly used in English-speaking countries and had a broader meaning than "handicapped". The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Solidarity also collaborated to review previous Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) and issued a joint memo in 2004 to align documents with the latest developments in mainstream education and clarify the responsibilities of each department.

In 2009, the Ministry of Education launched a 4-year emergency plan (2009-2012) that included projects aimed at reforming the national education system. One project within this plan focused on ensuring equal access to education for children with special needs, including those with disabilities. However, the outcomes of this plan were not as successful as initially anticipated. Despite the goal of establishing 900 mainstreaming classes in regular schools, only 351 classrooms were renovated and upgraded by the end of 2010, and the number of newly enrolled children reached only 2,099 instead of the planned figure.

Access to specialized public institutions was also limited due to the scarcity of available classrooms and teachers. At the time, there were only five specialized centers run by the National Mutual Fund, with a total capacity of 600 children with mental disabilities. Additionally, there was a center for autistic children in Tangiers accommodating 20 children and a center in Rabat for 100 children with multiple disabilities. At the national level, there were 40 institutions run by associations, but they could only accommodate 10,400 children. However, these centers often imposed significant financial burdens on families, with monthly costs reaching approximately 2500 dirhams. Most of these centers focused on preschool and elementary education and provided limited educational support, with some offering counseling, rehabilitation, and charitable services without a structured educational system in place.

In 2015, following the recommendations of the High Council for Education, Training, and Scientific Research, the Ministry of Education issued a strategic vision for education reform called Vision (2015-2030). It is considered a roadmap for the practical reform of the educational system in Morocco. The reform branded 32 projects of urgent priority among which Project 3, seeks to promote the education of children with a disability, i.e., to integrate regular schools and to end any form of exclusion and discrimination. This new educational system reform acknowledged that despite efforts in recent years by successive governments and voluntary bodies to address this issue, the current situation of special education is substandard, inconsistent, and in dire need of broader collaboration between different stakeholders and government sectors and in need of a clear strategy for real school for all. On June 26th, 2019, the Ministry of Education launched a national strategy for inclusive education baptized ‘No child left behind’.

The Moroccan laws guarantee the education of children with a disability. Twenty years ago, only thirty mainstream classes existed compared to the year 2019, where over 699 are operationally totalizing about 8000 students according to the latest figures communicated by

the Ministry of Education in 2019 (figure 3). Thus, although significant advances in special education within primary schools have been recorded, much is still needed to satisfy the demands so as to guarantee full access to education for all children with disabilities. Hence, the latest statistics emanating from the 2016 National Census and the 2016 National Disability Survey show that the populace of children with disabilities of school age (4 to 15 years) in Morocco is estimated at 233,313 children.

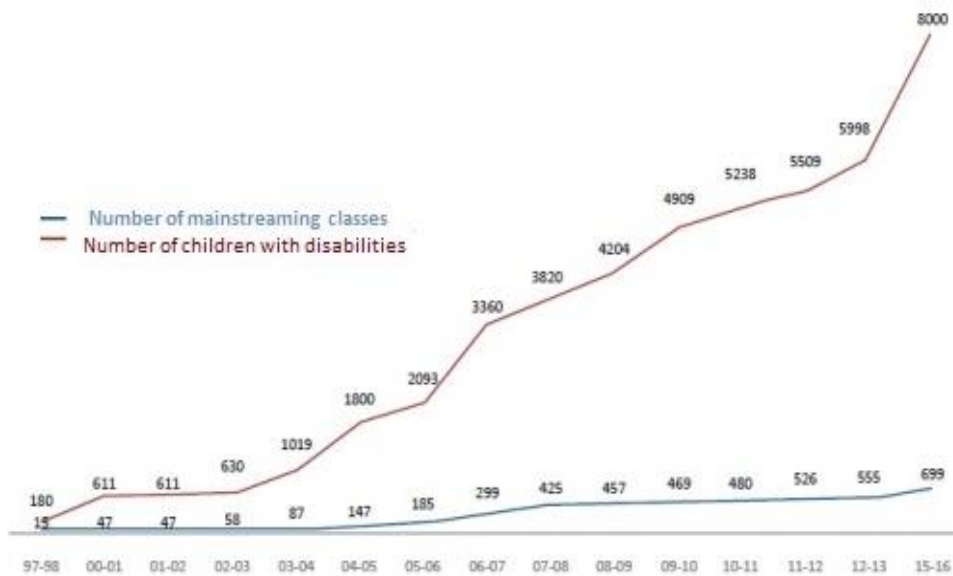


Figure 3. Public School Mainstreaming Classes. Ministry of Education (2019)

The mainstreaming policy implemented by the Ministry of Education in Morocco is aligned with the recommendations of UNESCO's Salamanca Conference in 1990. The goal is to enable children with special educational needs to attend inclusive and barrier-free settings that provide equal opportunities for all students. The Ministry provides teaching materials and equipment for classrooms to support inclusive education. However, there is a lack of sufficient assistive technological devices for specific types of disabilities. Despite the efforts made, the accessibility and enrollment of students with disabilities in schools still face challenges. It is important to note that promoting inclusive education and improving access to education for all students, including those with disabilities, is an ongoing process that requires continuous efforts from governments, educational institutions, stakeholders, and society as a whole.

The statistics from the National Disability Survey (2016) highlight the challenges and disparities in the enrollment of Children With Disabilities (CWDs) in Morocco. The national enrollment rate for CWDs in the age group of 6 to 17 years is only 41.8%, representing approximately 33,600 students. This enrollment rate is significantly lower compared to the

enrollment rate for non-disabled children in the same age group, which stands at 99.5%. The data also reveals variations in enrollment rates among different age groups of CWDs compared to the general school population. For children with disabilities aged 6 to 11 years, the enrollment rate is only 37.8%, whereas it is 99.5% for non-disabled children of the same age range. In the age group of 12 to 14 years, the enrollment rate for CWDs is 50.1%, contrasting with 87.6% for all children. Similarly, for the age group of 15 to 17 years, the enrollment rate for CWDs is 39.9%, while it is 61.1% for all children.

These statistics emphasize the significant disparity in access to education for children with disabilities in Morocco. Moreover, the survey indicates that a large proportion of persons with disabilities (66.1%) are uneducated, amounting to approximately 1.476 million individuals. Among them, 66.6% are women. The distribution of uneducated individuals by place of residence is nearly equal, with 50.6% living in urban areas and 49.4% in rural areas. In terms of educational attainment, only 19.6% of persons with disabilities are enrolled in primary school education, 9.5% have reached secondary education, and a mere 1.8% have attained higher education levels. These figures reflect the significant gaps in educational opportunities and outcomes for individuals with disabilities in Morocco.

It is evident that there is a pressing need to address these disparities and improve access to education for children with disabilities in the country. Efforts must be made to ensure inclusive education policies, adequate support systems, and targeted interventions to promote equal educational opportunities for all individuals, regardless of their disabilities.

The survey highlights that children with disabilities who are not attending schools experience a situation of double discrimination. They encounter difficulties in accessing schools and struggle to follow the school curriculum. Lack of physical accessibility to schools, including communication and architectural accessibility, compounds these barriers. The survey indicates that 85.7% of students with disabilities do not attend school due to their disability, with higher rates observed in urban areas compared to rural areas.

Furthermore, the enrollment rate for children with disabilities is low, with only four out of ten children declaring that they attend school. This translates to approximately 39.4% of children with disabilities attending school, out of a total of 85,428 children of school age. Among those attending school, 75% are reported to attend regular public schools, while only 5% have access to specialized centers.

The low enrollment rate can be attributed to various factors, including a lack of adequate education and training facilities that cater to the specific needs and learning difficulties of children with disabilities. The survey indicates that 79% of children aged 5 to 17 years face challenges in reaching the elementary level, with higher rates observed in cities compared to rural areas. Girls, in particular, experience greater exclusion from education compared to boys. Moreover, only 15% of children of school age have access to special schools, which are often managed by parent associations or require registration fees in private schools. Children with severe mental or behavioral disorders face additional challenges in accessing appropriate educational settings. Additionally, 5% of surveyed students are reported to be studying at home or in traditional preschool structures.

The statistics in figure 4 highlight significant disparities in the schooling of children with disabilities, with variations depending on the type of disability. Children with physical disabilities are relatively more integrated into regular classes, while children with mental or sensory impairments, such as deafness, tend to attend special schools. Figure 4 illustrates one striking component in this issue is that very few children are recorded officially in the official school registry and the electronic platform ‘*Massar*’.

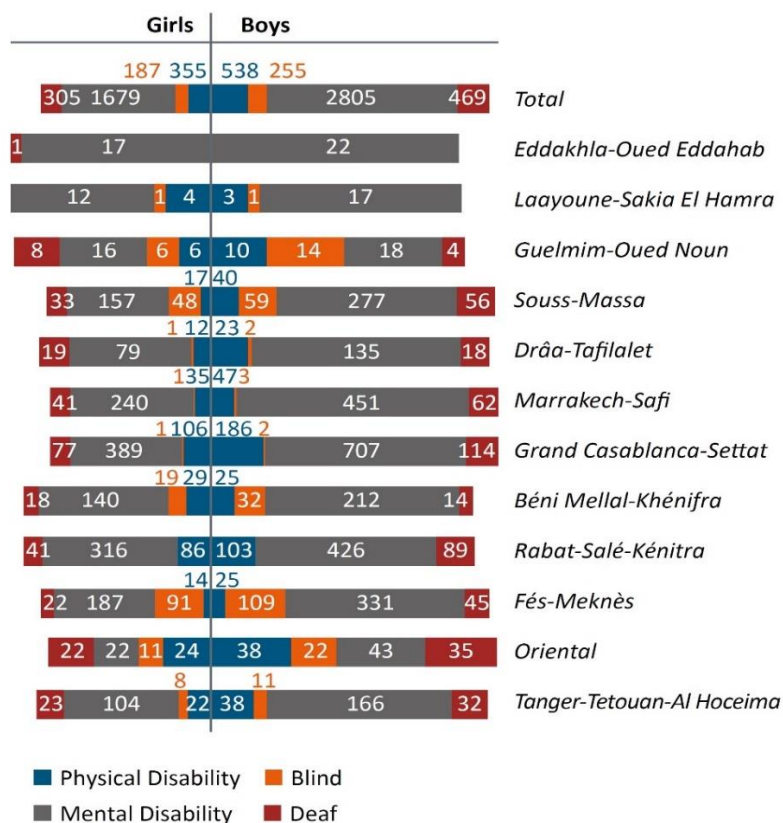


Figure 4. Children recorded in the National Education Portal Massar. Ministry of Education (2019)

It is important to address these disparities and barriers to ensure inclusive education for all children with disabilities in Morocco. This requires comprehensive efforts to improve physical accessibility, provide specialized support and training for teachers, and create an inclusive and supportive learning environment for children with disabilities. Different reports, (HCP, 2014; HI, 2017; UNESCO, 2006; RTI, 2016; ENH, 2016) indicate that environmental barriers and limited opportunities to excel hinder the schooling of children with disabilities. Students themselves identify their health status, inadequate structures, and teaching methods as the primary causes of disruption in their education.

Complicated health reasons, educational maladjustment problems, and hostility or bullying from peers, parents, teachers, or school principals are cited as reasons for leaving school. Lack of physical facilities and financial difficulties also contribute to school instability. Consequently, the statistics (ENH, 2016) reveal that a significant portion of children with disabilities have never attended school or have dropped out at different levels, with 80.3% never having attended school. In response to these findings, the High Council of Education and Training (2019) recommended that the government take full responsibility for ensuring the right to quality education and training for children with disabilities. The council suggests immediate actions, such as establishing a national plan to promote inclusive education, re-evaluating pedagogical guidelines, providing teacher training, adapting curricula and school manuals, and strengthening partnerships with the public health sector and civil society. The council also recommends involving Moroccan universities and establishing multidisciplinary health units to address the incidence of disability among educated and uneducated individuals and provide necessary medical care.

7. Conclusion

This paper provides an insightful overview of the schooling of children with disabilities in Morocco, shedding light on the pertinent legislation governing disability and education. It also examines the various initiatives undertaken to enhance educational access for this segment of the population. The paper duly acknowledges the significant role played by international organizations and local civil society in supporting children with disabilities. The inclusion of statistics from official sources such as the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Solidarity, and the High Commissariat of Planning is invaluable in comprehending the educational landscape for children with disabilities. These statistics help identify schools and centers involved in data collection, which serves as a foundation for subsequent in-depth studies.

While Moroccan laws and the Constitution guarantee the right to education for all individuals, the practical implementation of inclusive policies encounters several challenges in the country. These challenges encompass inadequate infrastructure, teachers lacking the requisite capacity to effectively support students with special needs in regular schools, inappropriate placement of students, and a shortage of suitable and affordable teaching materials.

Students with disabilities face difficulties related to physical access to school facilities, engaging with the curriculum, and finding an equitable place within the educational system. Consequently, the objective is not merely to admit students based on existing standards but also to adapt rules and practices to ensure the full participation of all individuals. Such efforts align with the demands of disability rights organizations and international agreements, aiming to create a more inclusive and equitable educational landscape in Morocco.

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