A Thesis Presented to

The Faculty of Alfred University

From the Boondocks to the Banlieues: Examining Issues Within the Education Systems of
France and Morocco

by

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In Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for
The Alfred University Honors Program

May 2018

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Introduction

Education is a basic human right that far too many in our world are denied. Throughout

my time at Alfred University, I have become incredibly passionate about educational justice,

which ensures the passing of knowledge that allows for a level playing field in the competition

for life's resources and rewards (Cerone). This global issue, and its significance, was first

brought to my attention during my sophomore year, when I was a member of the Women's

Leadership Academy. For our Capstone, we were tasked with undertaking a project that would in

some way add to the Alfred community, and was particularly important to our own personal

values. Knowing I wanted to focus on education, I garnered support from a few fellow Academy

members and created a group of like-minded individuals. Our goal was to take the winter break

and brainstorm about education, women, feminism, and social justice, and to return for the spring

semester with some more concrete ideas in mind.

Fast forward to three weeks later on New Year's Eve, when an unfortunate stomach bug

left me ringing in the holiday by browsing Netflix for something to watch other than *The Office*

for the seventh time, and sipping ginger ale out of a champagne flute. I scrolled through the

"New Releases" section when *Girl Rising* caught my eye. The description read: "a

groundbreaking film, directed by Academy Award® nominee Richard Robbins, which tells the

stories of 9 extraordinary girls from 9 countries, written by 9 celebrated writers and narrated by 9

renowned actresses. *Girl Rising* showcases the strength of the human spirit and the power of

education to change the world" (*Girl Rising*). I immediately knew this piece would be right up

my alley. While watching this film, I found myself more inspired than ever before. Personal

twists and emotions provided through authentic stories, powerful facts regarding the importance

of education in the lives of girls and women, with narrations by famous figures such as Liam Neeson and Meryl Streep sprinkled throughout— what more could I ask for? By the time the credits rolled, I knew that I wanted my Capstone to focus on the information presented by *Girl Rising* and its campaign. My partners watched the movie themselves, and all felt equally empowered to take action.

This project culminated in a three-day series of events entitled *EDGE: Education Global Equality.* On the first day, we held a screening of the *Girl Rising* film in order to build a foundation for community members, and to help them understand why we chose to focus on a topic that, for many, seemed so disconnected from Alfred. The second day consisted of a "Walk Around the World," where we had different stations set up that displayed information about various countries' education systems, with correlating activities such as coffee grinding and creating sand mandalas. We also displayed feminist art from students, giving these artists an opportunity to discuss how their Alfred University education has empowered them. Our last day was organized to reflect the style of *TED Talks*, and featured various faculty speakers presenting on professional dress for women in the workplace, the differences between work settings in Spain and the United States, and salary negotiation. We all felt this experience, while taxing, was incredibly rewarding. However, the issue of educational injustices throughout the world is not one that can be covered in a single event. While education is not a magical tool that will lead to solutions for all of our world's problems, it is a powerful stepping stone that can incite a number of improvements.

After a semester abroad in France where I was able to serve as an English Teaching Assistant, I decided I wanted to pursue graduate studies and a later career in International

Education. With this in mind, I began thinking of possibilities for my Honors Thesis and knew I

wanted to focus in on at least some of my major passions— languages, education, leadership,

and France, to name a few. I toyed with a handful of different ideas, such as the current "return

of illiteracy" in France caused by the large number of North African immigrants who oftentimes

speak French fluently but are taught to read and write in another language, or the impact of dying

languages on their regions and speakers. A recurring thought, however, is that very few would

really care about the subjects I was planning to write on. My Thesis Committee, Academic

Advisor, and mom would read my work with excitement and care, but more likely than not, no

one else could say the same. As a senior who has been motivated by these subjects for such an

important period of my academic career, the idea of this work falling on deaf ears did not sit well

with me. That's when I remembered *EDGE*, and when things started to really come together.

I heard that Kelsey Oliveira was also planning on writing about education for her Honors

Thesis, specifically focusing on the injustices that minority groups face in education. Having

worked together on our Capstone project, I reached out to see if she may be interested in

collaborating for a sort of *EDGE 2.0:* the same premise, but more advanced and reflective of the

progress we have made as both students and as thinkers. We agreed that a typical, essay-based

thesis would not be far-reaching enough for a subject that we feel is so crucial when it comes to

global awareness and understanding of worldwide issues. With differing research interests,

Europe and Africa for myself and Asia and Latin America for Kelsey, we started making a plan

to write about our specific topics in a paper format and to put on a conference as the main event.

This conference, reusing the now familiar title of *EDGE,* would allow us to share our theses with

the Alfred community in a more accessible and engaging way. Our hope was that students would

find this platform more interesting than flipping through page after page of bland, albeit well-researched, statistics and history, and actually walk away from the experience with gained knowledge and a furthered understanding of the issues.

At this point you may be asking yourself, what exactly are the issues? To summarize the answer, which consists of many multi-faceted, pervasive, and even difficult to grasp concepts, I'll provide a few basic pieces of information. These, pulled from *Girl Rising,* are the initial bits that grabbed my attention and ignited my interest in pursuing *EDGE,* and later *EDGE 2.0: "*A child born to a literate mother is 50% more likely to survive past the age of 5" (*Education Counts: Toward the Millennium Development Goals*). "Girls with 8 years of education are 4 times less likely to be married as children" (Mensch, Barbara S., et al.). "If India enrolled 1% more girls in secondary school, their GDP would rise by $5.5 billion" (*Make It Right: Ending the Crisis in Girls' Education*). "Educated mothers are more than twice as likely to send their children to school" (*Millennium Development Goals*). "A girl with an extra year of education can earn 20% more as an adult" (Chaaban). These striking realities, researched and fact-checked by the Pearson Foundation on behalf of *Girl Rising,* serve as a great way to put things into perspective. They, however, are also not entirely representative of the breadth of issues. Focusing on girls and women, these facts disregard many of the institutional issues in education that negatively affect minority groups beyond gender, as well as students and teachers as a whole. Therefore, another goal for this thesis event was to push the boundaries a bit more and to discuss the broader situation on hand.

Together with our Committee, we sought out several speakers from Alfred University's faculty and the broader community who would be able to present on topics relating to education.

The largest portion of work for Kelsey and me, however, was creating the interactive component. Again, wanting to put an emphasis on audience participation as a means to transmit ideas and information, we worked to create an activity that was fun, educational, and that spoke to the significance of our topic. Ultimately deciding on four presenters from various backgrounds and an original board game, our conference was met with success. We felt that it accomplished the task of synthesizing a great deal of thoughts and information in a manner that was comprehensible and enjoyable, even for one who is not inherently interested in education or global issues. Perhaps the most gratifying aspect of all, is that we believe this event could be carried out again in the future, even once we leave Alfred University. Various on-campus professors and departments have expressed an interest in utilizing our conference materials in courses and workshops. This speaks volumes to the importance of education, of raising awareness of the issues that fall within its scope, and to the impact that our event had on audience members.

The following written component, *From the Boondocks to the Banlieues: Examining Issues Within the Education Systems of France and Morocco,* will focus on the three major aspects of my Honors Thesis. First, the conference itself will be highlighted, providing more in-depth details as well as feedback on the event. Next, I will present an exploration of France's education system. This portion will discuss the history of education in France and its connection to some long-standing, engrained issues within schools and the teaching philosophies often found within the nation. These topics tie into the "Banlieues" aspect of my title, which refers to many suburbs of large cities in France that are often made up of low-income populations and immigrant groups. Finally, cruising past the Strait of Gibraltar and popping into Africa, it will

conclude with a look at education in Morocco. The problems within the system here, while equally impactful and concerning, often differ from those of France. Referencing the title's "Boondocks" piece, the issues in Morocco that this work will focus on are often based on regions, where the remote and rural areas often experience the most extreme disadvantages. This piece, overall, will provide a brief yet interesting view of just a few of the many types of issues that students face globally. It is important to note before diving in, however, that the issues covered in this paper are not necessarily the most "important," nor is this piece meant to be a comparison of the two nations and their educational systems— rather, it is more so representative of the issues I found myself personally intrigued by and compelled to research further.

The Conference: EDGE, Education Global Equality

EDGE: Education Global Equality took place on Saturday, April 7th, 2018. This morning

conference featured faculty and guest speakers, a brief presentation of research, and a fun

interactive activity in the form of an original board game. Focusing on the injustices that

minority groups often face in education throughout the world, as well as some major problems

within education as a whole, this was an exciting endeavor to plan and execute. We had the

hopes of covering a wide variety of issues by providing attendees with some concrete

information, as well as giving them the tools to open up meaningful dialogue on the subject in

the future. The results of this event were positive, and I am pleased to say that it seems we

accomplished our goals in presenting our subject in a conference format rather than an essay.

With a reasonably good turn out and incredibly thoughtful audience participation, I am confident

that we reached more individuals than we would have had we followed the typical thesis

guidelines.

Our morning began by jumping into a demonstration of predetermined privilege with our

door prize giveaway. At check-in, each attendee received a folder stuffed with conference

materials such as evaluations, schedules, and note paper. Also included were small flags from

different countries. The winner of our door prize was not chosen at random, rather the prize was

awarded to the individual whose flag represented a country with a renowned education system in

terms of forward thinking, strong test scores, and positive results— Finland, in this case.

Following an introduction as well as a rundown of the day, Kelsey and I each spoke about a

small portion of our research as well as our motivations in pursuing this project. We opened the

floor for questions, and were pleased that even within the first fifteen minutes of the day, our audience was eager to learn and ask thought-provoking questions.

We then moved on to the presentations, with our first session being "Education ≠ The Great Equalizer" with Alfred University's Diversity Fellow Shakima Clency. Shakima is an alumna of the school and has returned for the academic year while working towards her PhD in Educational Leadership and Cultural Foundations from The University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Her talk provided a brief overview of the history and function of higher education to examine instances of systemic injustices which continue to permeate higher education today. Armed with new knowledge and a critical eye, attendees worked together to identify strategies to achieve personal success while intentionally challenging the status quo. Shakima's session covered a variety of areas from the establishment of higher education in the United States and its development, to how Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) are viewed, to how students of different backgrounds are able to reach the world of higher education. The most interesting aspect of her talk, according to the evaluation comments, revolved around sports. She discussed the shift in college athletics from a method in which higher education was made more attainable for many underprivileged students thanks to natural talent and hard work, to yet another platform for middle or upper-middle class students to receive admission and scholarships to some top universities due to the investment made by their families in childhood sports camps, trainings, and recreation leagues. Shakima's presentation was a fantastic way to get our attendees' minds working by starting off with a familiar topic before diving into those focusing on different cultures or more advanced concepts.

Next in the lineup was Angélica Gomez, the current Spanish Fulbright Teaching Assistant hailing from Venezuela. With over ten years of experience teaching English and advanced degrees in both Education and Literature, she was able to draw from personal knowledge and a unique perspective for our conference. When we first approached Angélica to see if she might be interested in participating in our event, she excitedly listed several possibilities for topics such as the impact of inflation on college attendance and the role of the Miss Venezuela contests on young girls' school experience. Finally, following the recent death of Venezuelan icon Jose Antonio Abreu, she became inspired to focus on his impact on her country's education system and large population of disadvantaged youth. Best known for having created The National System of Youth and Children's Orchestra, "El Sistema," in 1975, Abreu presented an alternative to help underprivileged children by teaching them how to play instruments and how to succeed in life. This presentation discussed the advantages and disadvantages of such a program as a method to substitute or complement the actual educational system in a Venezuela where the crisis is currently jeopardizing the future of the country. A number of success stories were presented, with graduates of this program going on to become conductors for programs such as the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra and professors of music at top colleges throughout the world. Unfortunately, due to the death of its founder, the state of the program is up in the air until a suitable replacement can be found. This portion of our conference served as a strong example of another nation's education system and the problems its students face, as well as how individuals in positions of power are attempting to move the country towards a more positive place while dealing with the problems posed by the loss of a charismatic leader.

Samara, a Brazilian native who recently relocated to Hornell, NY, due to her husband's new position with Alstom Transport, followed with a discussion of education in her homeland. Samara herself received a college degree in Education Sciences and has quite a bit of knowledge of the education process. Pulling information from sources such as PISA and the OECD, she started with a comparison of education in Brazil, the United States, and Finland. In a variety of areas, Brazil consistently ranked the lowest of the three countries when it came to subjects such as test scores, years spent in school, and accessibility of education in rural areas. Having grown up on a farm far away from any large cities, it was helpful to learn from Samara's personal experience and thus her unique perspective on some of the major issues in Brazilian education. Most notable for many, was her discussion of private versus public institutions throughout the different levels of schooling. At the university level, the public colleges are in fact free, and offer the highest and most prestigious level of education. Attending expensive private colleges is much more common for students, as the acceptance rates are not as low. In order for students to reach the public universities, however, she discussed the necessity of attending expensive, private "college prep" type middle and high schools as a gateway. For those students unable to attend these elite schools during the K-12 years, ending up at a highly regarded public university is near impossible. Social mobility through education, while not necessarily all that common in many countries, simply does not exist in Brazil according to Samara. This first person narrative allowed attendees to see both similarities and differences between the Brazilian system and the American one that we are familiar with.

Our conference then shifted back to the United States with a session given by Associate Professor of Political Science, Dr. Robert Stein. Entitled "Educating Employees or Learning

Liberty," this presentation focused on the fact that we celebrate freedom in our country, but our education system focuses less on fostering independent thinkers than it does on creating employable graduates. According to Dr. Stein and many experts in the field, this may not lead to the most equitable kind of education system. Diving into a brief but solid definition of liberal democracy as a foundation, he discussed what exactly plays a role in the forming of our nation's education system. To many, it seems as though education has focused less on actual learning and more on helping students gain necessary skills in order to become successful and efficient workers in the future. While this is understandable in a capitalist system that relies on work and workers, it leaves much to be desired in terms of the knowledge American students walk away with. Resulting in the most questions and comments from the audience, Dr. Stein and attendees with various personal experiences and anecdotes then delved into the different kinds of education that may break the mold. From Montessori schools to "unschooling" or "free-range" homeschool methods, there are many systems and programs making waves in the news and in the education world all the same. This presentation left the audience feeling enlightened and empowered to be more observant when it comes to the education they, and those around them, are receiving.

Finally, the event concluded with our interactive board game. In a Candy Land format, players start at the globe and end at education, symbolized with a school house, diploma, and graduation cap. Players choose a colored pawn that correlates to a stack of cards—blue, red, and yellow. Unbeknownst to those in the game at first, each color is representative of a different level of privilege indicating disadvantaged, neutral, or privileged status. Those pulling from the disadvantaged deck continually receive cards such as, "Your school does not have electricity, running water, or sufficient, suitable supplies such as desks or books. Move zero spaces." These

players remain at the starting point for the entire game, as their lack of privilege prevents them from taking any major steps towards completing a successful education. Neutral players have a variation of cards that allow them to move forward, but also require them to move back at times. Some positive cards include, "The local community college provides a free education to all high school graduates of your county, and you qualify. Move forward one space." Other cards, however, state, "You do not have access to a computer or the internet at home, and you are often unable to complete your homework. Move back one space." The final, privileged deck, enables players to move forward with cards such as, "You have won the lottery allowing you to pay off your student debts and continue living a privileged life. Move forward ten spaces." Players quickly come to the realization that it is impossible to win the game unless they are lucky enough to have chosen one of the privileged pawns. Perhaps a bit extreme, but this provides some important social commentary on how difficult it is for individuals from low socioeconomic backgrounds to succeed in education when they are dealing with more pressing and immediate issues such as violent discrimination and a lack of food.

Scattered across the game board are squares with pencils on them. If a player lands on one of these spaces, they must pull a card from a separate deck that contains facts about education similar to those presented in *Girl Rising.* Likewise, there are squares with small students on them. This group's correlating deck allows players to read the authentic stories of the 9 *Girl Rising* characters. As players make their journey across the board, the realities of education and the inequalities many often face while trying to obtain it come to the forefront. Each attendee was provided with a "to-go" version of the game, complete with a small board, all game pieces and cards, a manual laying out the rules, and a "Learn About Your Privilege" sheet.

While the winners were excited, many felt compelled to discuss the guilt and sadness they also felt while watching their fellow players struggle to make any progress whatsoever. Our target audience, widely professors and fellow students at Alfred University, likely fall in the "privileged" category. Because of this, we were so glad to see these raw and essential discussions form at the end of the game, indicating that players did take the time to recognize their own privilege in both the game and in real life.

Some of the most positive feedback we received came from one of our presenters, Dr. Stein. He requested extra copies of our conference folders which included the board game, as he has hopes of using it as a class exercise in his State and Local Politics course. Additionally, he expressed that he would love to show our project to other students in the Honors Program as an example of some non-traditional, yet effective ways to go about the thesis process. Other feedback, drawing from the evaluation sheets, indicated that attendees felt the presentations were insightful and inspiring. The game was also a hit with our audience, who found it to be enlightening yet fun— exactly what we were going for. With Alfred University's recent creation of the Social Justice Studies Minor, we hope to share our work with other professors in the division so they can continue raising awareness of the injustices within education for years to come.

Overall, this thesis has provided me with a great deal of personal growth and development. Researching a topic that is so meaningful to me was an eye-opening experience, especially considering that I thought I already knew quite a bit about the subject. The reality, however, was much more in-depth than I ever imagined, even in a country such as France that I am relatively familiar with. Furthermore, organizing the conference itself allowed me to gain

quite a few transferrable skills that I will be able to apply in my future studies and employments

such as organization and communication skills, as well as the importance of being detail-oriented

and timely. The hours and effort that Kelsey and I invested into this project have certainly paid

off, and I am glad to say that I have further developed the recognition of and gratitude for my

own personal privilege in terms of life and education along the way.

<u>France: Educating the Elite and Industrializing Instruction</u>

Having spent a semester attending school in France at the Université Grenoble Alpes, I jumped into this research already aware of some major differences between the French education system, and that of the United States. The aspect that I personally found the most striking was the varying level of professionalism between students and professors. At a small, American liberal arts school like Alfred University, it is not unusual for classes to be based on discussion and open for student opinions, comments, and dialogue. Many instructors recognize that personal interest and engagement with a subject allows students to thrive. Furthermore, professors tend to know about their pupils' interests outside of the classroom, and support them by attending their dance performances, conferences, and presentations. In other words, American teachers can form personal relationships with their students while maintaining a professional boundary. In France, however, this is far less common. I recognized this difference within my first week of classes, when students waited for professors to arrive before entering the classroom and when every lesson was comprised entirely of lectures and nothing else. University, according to my French friends, is not the same "coming of age" experience that many view it as in the United States—full of freedom, independence, and growth. Rather, it is where one must go to learn and obtain a degree in order to get a job.

It is crucial to remember that in terms of education, nothing is "one size fits all." A method that works for one country may be ineffective in another, and results and impacts will vary across the globe. To many critics, however, France is considered to have a failing education system. According to statistics, one in four pupils do not successfully complete their secondary education. Additionally, the social inequalities within the system have increased to the point

where the performance of children from well-off families and poor families is now one of the most drastic in the developed world. While not much commentary is available on this situation within France, the similar American case is attributed to factors such as rising income inequality, increased segregation by income, and changes in the relationships among family income, family socioeconomic characteristics, and children's achievement (Reardon). With these surprising facts in mind, more drastic differences and interesting facets of the French education system began to reveal themselves as I refocused my research towards the K-12 level as opposed to higher education. This shift brought with it an understanding of the two major problems in France's method of schooling that this portion will focus on. These issues find their origins in the French Revolution and Napoleon Bonaparte's reign, speaking to France's complex history and culture and its longstanding influence on daily life (Ten Ways France Must Fix Its 'Failing' School System).

During the pre-French Revolution Ancien Régime, the third estate, made up of workers and peasants, often focused on the most pressing, basic issues such as not having enough food or access to work. Not known for being a period of stability in terms of society, policy, or government, it is a surprise to many that education was dealt with at all during this time. The clergy and nobles, however, with their higher socioeconomic statuses, often called for improvements on education in the nation. Looking at the problems within the system from the perspectives of "the duties and prerogatives of the state, the rights of parents, the potential benefits of higher education, the economic needs of the nation, the necessity for training teachers, and the suitable status of the teaching profession in a republic" (Stewart), a considerable deal of thought was put into this topic. While not mentioned in the 1789

Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, education was included in the first

constitution and in the constitutions that would follow. Then, in 1793, the National Convention

established the Committee of Public Instruction, and gave it the task of reordering education in

France. As with many other facets of French society at the time, the education system that stood

had to go, simply because it had existed before the Revolution (Markham).

One of the first major changes to France after the Revolution revolved around religion.

Many famous figures and ideologies of the Revolution's mission can be seen as a rejection of the

old order, and with it, the prominent role that the church played in national affairs.

Revolutionaries took to destroying the symbolic statues at Notre Dame, of course, but they were

simultaneously destroying any trace of influence by the church found in the educational system.

This stands today through what is known as *laïcité* in the nation, a separation of the church and

state. Therefore, all public schools in France must not promote the teaching of any specific

religion, nor can students portray religious affiliations in their dress or work. Laïcité, however, is

not the issue and is in fact viewed as a positive by many experts who agree that removing

religion from public education allows for a higher level of comfort and success among students

of various backgrounds. The issues began to arise after the execution of Robespierre in 1794,

when a level of normalcy was reestablished in the state and the attention could be focused on

subjects such as educational reform. This new found normalcy brought with it a decree that

teacher training should become the top priority in education, and that curriculum for students

should include "republican morality and the public and private virtues, as well as the techniques

of teaching reading, writing, arithmetic, practical geometry, French history and grammar." All

materials used in both teacher training and in lessons were to be provided by the National

Convention, and a provision required that any individual seeking a position within the government must present evidence that he attended one of the Republic's schools in an attempt to override private efforts (Bernard). With this historical foundation in mind, cue major problem number one: France's commitment to centralization.

Several recent American scholars refer to public education in France as Common Core on a national scale. In a perfect world, this French system could be a model for others. Anchored at the heart of French education are two notions respectable in ideology: the importance of setting high educational standards through a state-wide curriculum and the enforcement of those standards through rigorous testing. Unfortunately, however, this system tends to be more dysfunctional than not. The Ministry of Education determines a lesson plan, and all public schools throughout the country are expected to follow it— i.e. at any given time, all French 6th graders attending a public school are theoretically learning the same material. Furthermore, pedagogy in France still relies on 19th century industrial methods— teachers are like factory line workers rather than being trusted to use their training and intelligence. According to one expert, teachers are:

> "…the grunts in the trenches who carry out orders, rather than respected professionals who are able to use their discretion and judgment. The curriculum, the timetable, the school hours, the allocation of finance and other resources and the decisions about which teachers should work in which schools are all decided by bureaucrats from the central authority, with the Minister of Education at its head." (*Ten Ways France Must Fix Its 'Failing' School System*)

Many believe that if more accountability were applied to teachers and schools by scaling management down to a regional level, more success would come to students. Instructors could be employed based on their ability to teach the subject matter in a manner that is comprehensible

and engaging to a large population of students, rather than based on their expertise in the field. Additionally, this would encourage hiring decisions to be made with qualifications in mind instead of holding seniority as the main priority. The current system does not allow for creativity or personal expression in the classroom on either end, which many believe helps promote success among students and teachers alike. Along with the general problem of centralization, another main issue of the French system is that there is rarely a sense of belonging for students. In the American system, for example, a number of students participate in after school clubs and activities such as theater and athletics. Pep rallies, prom, and yearbooks signings are often listed as some of the most memorable experiences for high schoolers, yet these opportunities widely fail to exist for their French counterparts. If students wish to participate in athletics or take music lessons, for example, they typically must seek out these experiences via outside organizations that are not affiliated with the school. There is very little that binds students to their schools and allows them to feel as though they are playing an active role in their school environment (*France Scores An F in Education*).

Moving past the Revolution, France finds itself in the age of Napoleon, which is the basis for another one of France's dominant issues in education. As the newly appointed Emperor of the French, Bonaparte was seen as both a great military power and a great administrator. Setting out to make France the greatest nation of Europe, he established a list of priorities to be dealt with and improved, including education. Continuing to work towards creating a system that claimed to promote more equity and accessibility, education during this time was widely used for political and nationalistic ends. Napoleon's main intention with these improvements was to establish an educated elite that could help run the country and the military. Additionally, bettered

education was designed to provide for an increased middle class that would have higher chances of reaching success, and would thus be non-revolutionary in the future (Bernard).

Napoleon went on to further establish education throughout the country. During his reign, for example, many girls received an education that was previously unavailable to them. Under his suggestion, however, they were mostly taught assorted domestic skills deemed necessary for the attraction of husbands. Also during this era, educational resources began to make their way into the rural areas of France, working to close the gap between these individuals and their metropolitan neighbors. In reality, however, Bonaparte's plans never actually intended to create this fair and available education for all. There are many pieces of history that work towards disproving his claims, such as his focus on education for boys over the age of 12. At this level, students were separated between those who were destined for a civil career, and those destined for a career in the military, guaranteeing jobs for all graduates. Additionally, Bonaparte established a number of scholarships where over a third of the funds went to the sons of those working in the military and the government. Stressing various military-esque aspects in his schools such as uniforms and discipline, patriotism and loyalty to the state played a major role in the purpose of these institutions (*Correspondence*). All of this background speaks to the second major issue within the French system of education: an institutional elitism.

In France, as with a number of nations, schools produce a limited bunch of extraordinarily bright students, but fail to cater to the much larger number of average or below-average students. School, according to many, is meant to be a great equalizer that allows students to succeed through hard work regardless of their background. Especially in a nation reared on the concept of *égalité,* it is sad to see that education oftentimes has a hand in perpetuating these

social differences. Unsurprisingly, the performance of students varies greatly depending on their socioeconomic status, as evidenced with the ZEP system. These "education priority zones" are determined by the French government and can often be found in lower class suburbs of large cities such as Paris, Marseille, and Lille. Policy makers have many concerns about the increasing failure and drop-out rates of pupils from these "poor" areas, and thus allocate extra financial resources to be used for improving their education. In many cases, however, this is where the help stops. With the Ministry of Education's Human Resources system, the least experienced teachers typically end up in these difficult schools. Working with limited know-how and expertise, the additional funds can only do so much to heighten the level of education provided (*France Scores An F in Education*).

Furthermore, critics cite that students with learning disorders are among the largest population of those disadvantaged by the French school system. French teachers are not trained to identify these difficulties, ranging from ADHD to dyslexia and beyond. Even if these issues are recognized and noted, the corresponding accommodations are not like those in states with highly successful educational systems such as Finland. Where a Finnish student dealing with dyslexia may receive extra time to complete exams, or be provided a separate room without distractions allowing them to concentrate, these special considerations are far less common in France. Even those who do not struggle with learning disorders, and simply are experiencing difficulties grasping a certain subject or concept, often do not receive adequate support. Tutoring sessions, teachers remaining available via email to answer questions and clear up confusion, and opportunities for revision and extra credit are few and far between in the country. Students are

often expected to study on their own and put in the necessary hours to achieve success (*France Scores an F in Education*).

In order for France to encourage and facilitate higher levels of success for their students, there are several areas that require great strides towards progress. First, a more decentralized method could be employed in order to help schools focus on the areas they feel their students could most benefit from. While maintaining an emphasis on the need for high standards of curriculum and ways in which to measure progress, this would allow for students to feel as though what they are learning is personally relevant, and will spark a higher level of engagement in the classroom setting. Additionally, the age old sentiment of, "all work and no play makes Jack (or, in this case, Jacques,) a dull boy" is incredibly applicable to children and adolescents. The creation of more after school programs based on the arts, athletics, and other interests, would encourage students to become more involved in their school community, and thus thrive. Furthermore, it is crucial for the education department to recognize that individuals from all backgrounds and walks of life attend school. Therefore, the system must be flexible enough to cater to all its students, including those who may have a more difficult time in understanding the material. Although some refer to the French system as one that is gravely struggling, we can remain optimistic that there is hope for a turnaround in reform.

Morocco: Roots, Regions, and Resources

In trying to decide on an African nation to dive into for my research, the "Maghreb" region was the first that came to mind. Due to the long and often dark history of imperialism in the area, the area's educational systems have gone through many periods of drastic change. I then narrowed my focus to Morocco because of my personal interest in the nation's historical links with France that date back to colonial rule. In many cases, France's strong influence in a number of systems can still be found today, even over 50 years after Morocco gained back its independence. While many successive governments have attempted to tackle the issue of education in the country and bring about positive reform, a number of profound and important problems remain. Additionally, several renowned international organizations such as UNICEF, The World Bank and USAID, have stepped in to further aid the nation in reaching a level more conducive to promoting wider rates of success among its population (Khaila).

Some of the most predominant issues within Morocco's education system date back to the years of French rule, which lasted into the middle of the 20th century. Beginning in 1912 with the Treaty of Fez, colonial education brought with it the "French Berber Policy." The French administration at the time wanted to implement anti-assimilationist educational policies that kept Moroccans rooted in their traditional culture. This policy, however, was challenged by many Moroccan elites who hoped to minimize French influence over the traditional institutions of Moroccan society while maximizing their own access to French higher education, professional opportunities, and administration. This speaks to a struggle that has sustained itself for years in Morocco: trying to strike the balance between maintaining its tradition, and recognizing the vast European influence (Segalla). After Morocco achieved independence with the removal of the

French Protectorate in 1956, a number of issues came into play such as wide wealth gaps, concerns with healthcare, and illiteracy to name just a few. It was now up to an administration who had been unable to rule over its own people for decades to not only establish a stable and productive government, but to deal with all of society's issues, including education.

Shortly after, in 1963, education was made compulsory for all Moroccans aged six through thirteen. While the relatively and, for many, shockingly small amount of required schooling does not go unnoticed, the first main issue of Morocco's education system to be discussed in this portion is that of language. In the early years post independence, all academic subjects were Arabized in the first and second grades, and French was maintained as the language of instruction for math and science in both primary and secondary levels. This may have functioned well at the time, as many individuals were forced into multilingualism during French rule, but today the two official languages of Morocco are Modern Standard Arabic, and Amazigh Standard Berber. By 1989, Arabization of all subjects in both primary and secondary education was accomplished which was widely viewed as beneficial to the nation's Arabic speaking majority. This, however, does not speak to the problematic situation presented in tertiary education (Kwon).

Morocco's colonial heritage is still present in higher education, which presents a number of issues for underprivileged students who were unable to attend elite, private schools at the K-12 level which teach in all of the country's languages. Despite the aforementioned effort towards the Arabization of teaching, a strong French presence remains at the university level due to the claim that there is a shortage of qualified, Arabic-speaking professors. Even for bright students who enter university to study subjects such as math and science, the jump is difficult to

make because Moroccan public schools continue to teach solely in Arabic. This issue is dismissed by Lahcen Daoudi, the Minister of Higher Education, who states, "In Morocco, more than 1,600 hours of French is offered [through high school] so students should be good in French… That is not a problem of hours of language learning, it is a problem of quality of work that is put in." However, according to a 2014 study released by the *Journal of Research and Method in Education*, 85% of the students at the University of Hassan II Mohammedia feel they are not fluent enough in French to succeed in their studies. Critics believe that the incredibly low number of students who obtain undergraduate degrees in Morocco, at just under 6%, can be attributed to the language issues present throughout schooling (Kwon).

Another main issue in Morocco's education system pertains to region. At about the size of California, Morocco is an expansive nation that contains urban areas, suburban towns, and incredibly rural, desolate spaces all the same. The accessibility of education greatly differs based on where in the country a prospective student is located, as does the quality. Unfortunately, it is the rural populations that suffer the most where, according to the UN's most recent data, the majority of all out-of-school students live (Sepeda-Miller). In the High Atlas mountains, for example, illiteracy rates for the population can reach as high as 90%. Particularly affected are the girls and women of this area. According to the World Bank, only 26% of girls in rural areas enroll in secondary education while in other regions such as Casablanca, girls are expected to attend school for as long as their male counterparts. Additionally, rural areas tend to be home to the most traditional Berber, who are the indigenous people of Morocco and serve as one of its largest minority groups. If Berber students are able to attend school at all, their lessons are taught in Arabic as opposed to Tamazight, an Afroasiatic language characterized by a series of emphatic

consonants, uvulars and pharyngeals. This language serves as the native tongue for the majority

of Berber individuals in these rural areas (Slawson). While great progress has been made in

recent years, rural Morocco remains a "forgotten world" faced with unique educational

challenges.

The final, and least surprising, issue of Moroccan education to be discussed is that of the

lack of resources. Schools are often poorly equipped with washrooms and sanitary facilities,

transportation in many areas is unreliable and difficult to come by and many classrooms face

problems with overcrowding. Low teacher-student ratios and average class sizes of 30+ handicap

the ability of students to communicate with each other via small group work and individual

presentations, which help to develop valuable competencies. Unlike many schools in the

developed world, technology is not often used in the classroom, as many areas of the nation still

do not feature reliable or accessible internet or electricity services. While the Moroccan

government spends nearly a quarter of its budget on education, standards are far from where the

country would like them to be. Teachers, compared to other professions, receive low wages and

must often search for additional sources of income via supplementary jobs which can negatively

impact their performance in the classroom setting. Amina Hnida, a director for the National

Union of Work, even recognizes a lack of resources as a main producer of problems when it

comes to employing qualified instructors in all areas, questioning, "When you take a teacher

from a big city and send him to an isolated area with no internet access, phone service or ability

to communicate with people, what do you expect?" (Sepeda-Miller).

As stated, a number of organizations are partnering with Morocco to improve the

education system and school environments throughout the nation. Morocco, in combination with

USAID, has begun an ambitious reform program to increase access to education and improve the performance of the education system. Major undertakings include measuring learner performance in early-grade reading, strengthening the skills of teachers and school administrators, and distributing teaching materials such as books and print outs on a widespread scale (*Education | Morocco*). Through multiple and sustained efforts, the system in Morocco has achieved that important progress in terms of increasing access to education, but it still has a long way to go before reaching a better, acceptable quality. With higher school enrollment and graduation rates than ever before, it seems as though positive change is on the horizon and this momentum must be maintained. Providing individuals with an education can serve to break the cycle of poverty, and is thus a crucial problem to solve— education is a long-term investment, but its payoff is substantial.

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