

# Morocco

## Children and Teaching in Rural Areas

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Among the confusing, even worrying, questions that educators are raising with regards to the education of girls in rural zones are: Why is there a consistent drop in the level of education? Why is there a deterioration in rural girls' intellectual abilities? We will hereby try to identify the obstacles hindering the education of girls in rural zones, which could shed more light onto the questions raised above.

Before we proceed, and for methodological concerns, we shall indicate the main concepts used in this approach:

"Scholastic obstacles" are those reasons and obstacles responsible for the non-achievement of goals and positive results generally sought in education.

"Rural girl" is meant to represent a girl who belongs to the rural context. Without getting into the complexities of the terminology used, we shall use this concept of "rural girl" to represent her.

### **Scholastic Obstacles**

As a result of our direct interaction and our professional work in the academic educational field, which addresses the rural context, and as a result of our observations and our efforts to comprehend the scholastic obstacles facing rural girls, we have reached the following conclusions:

We found that these obstacles can be grouped into two categories at least: First, the obstacles related to the nature and specificity of the rural economic and socio-cultural background; and second, the obstacles related to the nature of the educational and relational infrastructure in this field.

### **A. Economic and Socio-Cultural Obstacles in Rural Zones**

#### **Economic Obstacles:**

- The decrease in the household's financial level, whereby its only source of income is agriculture, which is most often poor and barely reaching the subsistence level.

Naturally, this affects the girl in the family; as a result of this deprivation, she lacks a healthy moral, physical, social, and residential context that would allow her to integrate her school life in a positive way.

- Given this deprived agricultural life, the girl in the family represents a crucial worker (grazing, planting, watering, etc.). As a result, she cannot do her homework, and arrives at school exhausted.

- Most, if not all, school supplies (books, notebooks, stationery) are unavailable as a result of the household's deprived financial situation, not to mention the excessive supplies needed for one student only. What then for those households that have more than one son or daughter enrolled at school!

#### **Socio-Cultural Obstacles:**

- Rural girls are necessarily socio-psychologically affected by their families' deprived and hard economic and social situations, which hinder their constructive integration into the school realm. As a result of this situation, several negative effects have been noted, namely fear, introversion, insecurity, lack of conversational and self-expression abilities, unrest, violence, etc.

- Widespread illiteracy and ignorance in the rural world, whereby the family members are unable to fulfill their complementary role to the school, namely to assist and monitor their children, as well as to build up their children's emotional attachment to school.

- Housing conditions: Most houses do not provide a healthy environment and lack the adequate conditions for girls to carry out their homework, such as a room especially designed for that purpose with the needed supplies or lighting for instance, especially since these girls can only do their homework at night. Moreover, most houses are overcrowded, which hinders scholastic work.

- Inter marriages: It has been scientifically proven that

such marriages, widespread in rural zones, have an effect on the children born out of them, and especially among girls, such as mental deficiency, congenital deformity, etc.

- Language: The language used in everyday life and at home is the Amazight (tashlahit), as opposed to the language used at school (classical Arabic, French). This serves to build in girls, and all children in general, a conflicting psycholinguistic structure that is contradictory in its assimilation and sounds. As a result, girls find themselves lost between several languages that vary in their references, thus creating a kind of schizophrenia and alienation in their representation of things. That is not to mention the additional efforts and exhaustion in trying to assimilate all these languages.

- The prevailing culture in rural zones being rather simple, girls find themselves carrying out easy but repetitive actions, which solely serve their memory capacity, but in no way foster their intelligent intellectual development. Indeed, according to Piaget, the chief source for building intellectual capacities are actions. Unfortunately, it appears that the educational programs implemented at schools foster this negative intellectual culture based on memorizing, rather than encouraging an intelligent education through well-defined goals and strategies.

- Girls' rural cultural and social referential system contradicts the scholastic referential, which is most often adapted to a privileged urbanized one, whether it is Moroccan or foreign. This helps explain rural girls' negative reaction to most contents in their curricula and their difficulty in assimilating these.

## **B. Educational Infrastructure in Rural Zones**

In this respect, we shall focus mainly on the negative points affecting school-enrolled rural girls:

- School's infrastructure: As mentioned above, the socio-cultural and economic context of rural girls does not help in fostering their development. Likewise, schools fail to offer these girls any compensation for what they are lacking: an attractive and stimulating school environment, libraries, playgrounds, entertainment facilities, cleanliness, financial subsidies, psychological, social, educational and nutritional support (in its real sense).

- Curricula: The school curricula, both as far as quality and quantity, fail to meet rural girls' socio-cultural, economic and intellectual characteristics. This gives rise to negative emotions; they feel estranged and frustrated, they see themselves as failures and nurture distaste for school. Moreover, the educational timeframe is a metaphysical and absolute one, and therefore fails to satisfy the characteristics and variables of the audience it

addresses. There is also a lack of modern educational supplies.

- Relational given: We shall mainly focus on the teacher/student relationship in the rural context. This relationship is most often characterized by violence and carelessness. Indeed, the teachers suffer various forms of frustrations and pressures, which many disregard or ignore, the least of which being: the daily pains related to the nature of the rural and educational context, the ill-equipped – or even total absence of – adequate locations, lack of basic needs such as drinking water, sufficient food, electricity, and the isolation from cities in all that this involves, namely isolation from the family, lack of communications, distance, the austerity of certain regions' residents, etc. We personally suffered from all these factors when we were first appointed in one of the rugged mountainous areas.

- Administration: it is traditional and based on paperwork mainly, the non-scholastic hegemony, strong pressure of working hours, excessive educational material to be taught and levels (joint sections), financial and social pressures, frustration of ambitions regarding teaching (such as pursuing university education).

Therefore, these many forms of frustrations and pressures directly affect the effectiveness and educational productivity; also, the main victim of this situation, after the student, is probably the teacher.

## **Conclusion**

Taking into consideration all these obstacles, in addition to others that were not mentioned, rural school-enrolled girls find themselves psychologically, socially and physically disabled, a fact that affects their productivity at school and leads to their failure, frustration and regression, and hinders their assimilation into school.

In light of this situation, educators must address – besides the basic educational theories – these obstacles as well as the topical nature of the rural school context, so as to construct an educational strategy that adheres to all the specificities of the educational process, in view of succeeding in rural girls' education.

Schools (as well as rural girls) are one element of a whole, and that is society. Indeed, the development and evolution of education in rural zones is dependent on the urbanization of these zones, in their economic, social, cultural, health and informational infrastructure. Also, improving the financial, social, and psychological conditions of rural schools would serve as grounds for any true educational development.

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