The 2016 Reform on Islamic Education Textbooks in Morocco

The strategy used by the reform to implement a "more tolerant" Islam

Thesis
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Abstract

In 2016, a commission working under the supervision of the Moroccan Ministry of Education completed a revision of the textbooks and curricula for the teaching of Islam in public schools. This change was very controversial among the experts and teachers of Islamic education, which raised a lot of questions concerning the effectiveness and the significance of this reform. In fact, it was made upon the request of the King Mohammad VI, who wanted to promote a "more moderate" Islam. This study, which is based on a careful review of selected textbooks before and after the reform, seeks to underline first, the different issues pointed out in the public debate to better understand the direction taken by the reform. Second, it exposes a comparative study of six textbooks underlining exactly what the changes were to the curriculum, was it on the level of the structure or the content of the textbooks. Finally, it will put into relation the different elements found in the first two parts in order analyze the strategy used by the Ministry of Education, in the reform of 2016, to promote a "more moderate" Islam.

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Introduction

In February 2016, the Moroccan government introduced the latest in a series of reforms to the public school curriculum involving Islamic education. In Morocco, all students between ages six and eighteen are required to take a course on Islamic education. The 2016 changes occurred after an extensive public debate about associations between Islam and terrorism, and were designed to promote a "more tolerant" version of Islam. As can be imagined, there have been some controversies surrounding the 2016 reform. One of its most publicized components was the preparation of the new textbooks. As will be further explained below, this research includes a content analysis of selected primary school textbooks used before and after the reform and describes their differences, to find out what were the elements on which the reform focused in the new textbooks in order to achieve the goal of promoting a "more moderate" representation of Islam.

Islamic education has been part of the public school curriculum since the time of the French Protectorate (1912-1956). Exposing a historical and chronological overview of the reforms that affected its teaching might be useful to better understand the evolution and changes made until the reform of 2016 which constitutes the core of this research.

The education system in Morocco has been modified continuously. In particular Islamic education curriculum has been constantly the center of debate amongst the authorities in place. Morocco being an Islamic country is composed of 99% of Sunni Muslim[1], which gives Islamic education an important role in the education system. Ann Marie Wainscott, assistant professor of political science at St. Louis University and researcher of religion and politics in the Maghreb and West Africa, distinguishes five different phases of fluctuation in Islamic Education[2]: prior to the Protectorate, during the years of the French Protectorate (1912-1956), the post independence phase, the 1970's and finally the 21st century.[3]

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[1] USAID's Bureau for policy and program coordination (2004, April 1). *Strengthening education in the Muslim world country profiles and analysis. P17.* Retrieved April 28, 2017, from http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNACW877.pdf

[2] Wainscott, A.M. (2014). Monarchical autonomy and societal transformation: Twentieth century reforms to Islamic education in Morocco. *Reforms in Islamic education,* pp.35-56. London: Bloomsbery

[3] The historical description of the reforms relies on Wainscott (2014).

Prior to the French Protectorate, there was no specific curriculum of Islamic education. In fact, at around seven years old, boys had to attend a local *msid*[4] or *zawiya*[5]. The goal of the teaching was for students to learn and memorize the *Quran.* The amount of memorization differed according to the age of the children.

During the period of the French Protectorate (1912-1956), changes started in 1930. Two different types of reforms can be distinguished: the first one affected the education system as a whole. In fact, on the 16th of May 1930, the second Berber *dahir* (decree) put the Amazigh community[6] under French rather than Islamic law, which was perceived as a way to divide the Islamic Moroccan society. Consequently to this decree, Franco-Berber schools were created. In these schools all the curriculum was in French except the teaching of Islamic education. As a reaction to this initiative, free schools were installed as an Islamic alternative to French schooling. The primary language of instruction in these schools was Arabic, and its curriculum focused on a mixture between modern and Islamic subjects. The second type of reforms during the Protectorate affected higher education. One of the first initiatives was to include at this level new subjects to the curriculum, like the *Quranic exegesis*[7] or *tafsir* and studies of *Hadith* (record of the sayings of the Prophet). This suggestion found a strong opposition which resulted in the abortion of the attempted reform. Later on, two reforms also affected Islamic teaching at the higher level. It was the case in 1931 at *Qarawiyyin* and in 1939 at *Yusufiya*[8]. The reform took place on three different levels: the reorganization of the mosque-universities, the placement of *Al Majlis al Ilmi* under the authority of a controller who was not appointed by the Sultan and finally the integration of instructions into the French civil service. As a consequence to these reforms, Islamic education at the higher level was weakened.

During the post independence phase (after 1956), the main change was the introduction of French public schooling. This seemed problematic to the teaching of Islamic education because it was the only subject in Arabic, whereas the rest of the curriculum was taught in French. The

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[4] *Msid* is a contraction for *masjid* which means mosque in Arabic (Zeghal, 2008)
[5] A *zawiya* is the meeting space for a Sufi brotherhood where prayers are recited.
[6] Indigenous people of Morocco who constitute more than half of the Moroccan population.
[7] "The basic intention of *Quranic* exegesis is to understand what the text of the *Quran* means."
[8] *Qarawiyyin* and *Yusufiya* are mosque-universities.

Islamic education classes included memorization of scriptures and instructions in Islamic practices such as prayer and *zakat*[9].

The 1970's marked an important change in Islamic education. Under the instruction of the King Hassan II, all children had to attend at least a year of *Quranic* schooling before entering the public school system. Moreover, during this decade, Islamic Education was made mandatory at all levels and its number of hours was increased in schools. Its teaching was not neutral and was perceived as a reflection of the Islamic modernism.

Finally, the last phase is focused around the 21st century's reforms. Describing the evolution of Islamic education during this phase is crucial, because it helps understanding the logic behind the reform of 2016 that is treated in this paper. The Islamic education curriculum was modified more than once for many reasons: in 1996 an article in a French weekly newspaper pointed out that the Islamic education textbooks were teaching violence and hatred[10]. As a reaction to these accusations, the Ministry of Education appointed a committee to review the textbooks in the same year. In 2003, after the Casablanca bombings, the Islamic education textbooks were once more seen as one of the reasons behind extremism which led to a decision by the King Mohammad VI to modify the Islamic Education curriculum, for it to refer to a more tolerant and open Islam. In 2004, another commission was created by the Ministry of Education as a reaction to a complaint from one of the student's parents, who considered the textbooks of being inappropriate because of their representations of women who were most of the time veiled and in domestic situations[11]. The work of the new commission revealed many positive outcomes: the most important is the focus on values and human rights rather than on the strict memorization of religious texts. The *Quran* and the *Hadith* became more as examples or tools rather than focal points.

As mentioned previously, the most recent reform took place in February 2016: its main goal was to revise the Islamic education textbooks in order for them to enhance their conformity to a more

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[9] It is one of the five pillars of Islam. It's "a payment made annually under Islamic law on certain kinds of property and used for charitable and religious purposes." – Oxford dictionaries.

[10] Tourabi, A. (2009). Pourquoi et comment Hassan II a islamisé la société. *Tel Quel,* 379, 48-57.

[11] Bentak, M. (2004, October 28). El Malki confronté au voile. *L'Economiste, 1885.* Retrieved April 28, 2017, from http://www.leconomiste.com/article/manuel-scolaire-el-malki-confronte-au-voile

tolerant Islam. This initiative has been made by the King, in his role of the "Commander of the Faithful", because since the Casablanca terrorist attacks of 2003, terrorism has evolved, and education is believed to be one of the first motives for youth radicalization. As a matter of fact, modifying the content of the Islamic education textbooks can help in preventing the association of radicalization with Islamic education. The adoption of the reform was fast. In fact, at the beginning of the academic year 2016-2017, students were already using the new textbooks. This reform has been the center of controversies since February 2016, and the public debate on the question is still ongoing in the educational system. Remodeling the Islamic education textbooks is a very sensitive task because it affects the perception of religion in children's minds and it touches the core of Religion. This is why, studying the different steps of this reform can help us better understand its impact on religion, education and society.

This study consists on comparing the textbooks before and after the reform trying to answer the following problematic: what is the strategy used by the 2016 reform on Islamic education textbooks of the three first years of primary school, in order to promote a "more moderate Islam"? The hypothesis we are defending is that the new books try to focus more on religion as a core of values and a way of life rather than religion as the accumulation of memorized texts and automatic actions. Moreover, the new version of the textbooks tries to intensify references to human rights in order to promote more tolerance.

It would be useful to mention that the topic of this paper has many limitations: studying the redefinition of Islam is not only about the textbooks but also about the way the content of these textbooks is being taught inside the classroom. In fact, explaining the same idea can differ from one teacher to another, which makes the transmission of the information heterogeneous. Moreover, another dimension affects the reception of the precepts of Islam by a child. In fact, family is where the child spends most of his time. Therefore, it impacts the way Islam is perceived and lived, on a daily basis. However, this study will strictly focus on the strategy used by the reform concerning the modification of the textbooks.

The textbooks that are subject to the comparison in this study are Islamic education textbooks of the three first years of primary school. In other terms, textbooks for students between ages six and nine. The choice of the first three years of Islamic education teaching (out of a total of 13) lies in the importance of studying the reform at its roots. In fact, primary school is the period in

which children have their first contact with Islam in an educational context, which makes the comparison of the textbooks at this level interesting. The study will focus on six textbooks, from which three before and three after the reform of respectively, the first, the second and the third year of primary school:

- For the first year:

التربية الاسلامية – السنة الاولى من التعليم الابتدائي – في رحاب – 2015

التربية الاسلامية – السنة الاولى من التعليم الابتدائي – في رحاب - 2016

- For the second year:

التربية الاسلامية – السنة الثانية من التعليم الابتدائي – في رحاب - 2015

التربية الاسلامية – السنة الثانية من التعليم الابتدائي – في رحاب - 2016

For the third year:

التربية الاسلامية – السنة الثالثة من التعليم الابتدائي – النجاح- 2014

التربية الاسلامية – السنة الثالثة من التعليم الابتدائي – النجاح- 2016

It is important to mention that for each year different versions of the textbooks exist (between three and four versions – each one from a different publisher), but all of them respond to the same criterias dictated by the Ministry of Education. The choice of the editions في رحاب and النجاح made in this study, depended on the availability of the textbooks before the reform, given that during the year 2016-2017, students started using new textbooks (after the reform). Therefore, some of the old versions (before the reform), were out of stock.

In the literature review we can note a lack of publication in this field. In fact, no other academic study related to the comparison of Islamic education textbooks, before and after a reform, has been found. However, two sources treat subjects that are related indirectly to the subject of this research. Each one of them helped us better construct and organize this research. The first one is a book entitled *The Politics of Education Reform in the Middle-East; self and other in Textbooks and curricula* edited by S. Alayan, research fellow in the area of analysis textbook in the Middle

East countries and Israel[12] at the Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook and Research and A. Rohde Researcher who's part of the same institute. The book is the result of the cooperation between many curriculum experts, scholars and representatives of Ministries of Education from different countries representing both the Muslim majority countries of the MENA[13] region and Europe. The focus of the book was to study the representation of the self and other in geography, civics, history and religion textbooks from different countries, namely Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Tunisia, Morocco, Iran and Iraq. One other major focus was the level of critical thinking taught to students through these textbooks. In addition to the broad spectrum of authors, many partners, coming from different regions were involved, which gives this source more neutrality and more credibility: Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO), The Islamic Education Science and Culture Organization (ISESCO), the Swedish Institute in Alexandria and the Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation. Some chapters of the book, like the one studying textbooks in Jordan, reflects the image of women given in them and the way Human rights are presented. Although this book analyses a wide range of textbooks from different countries, its focus is very limited and it does not compare the evolution of the content of these textbooks before and after they have been changed. However, it will be useful in this research because it will give us some guidelines or elements of analysis like the focus on the gender balance and on critical thinking that will be further developed.

The second source is a chapter in the book *Reforms in Islamic education international perspectives.* This chapter entitled "Monarchical autonomy and societal transformation: Twentieth century reforms to Islamic education in Morocco" is specifically related to the case of Morocco. It's written by Ann Wainscott who is particularly interested in this country where she lived and studied Arabic[14]. During her stay in Morocco, she conducted studies about religion and politics. In this chapter, she lists the different reforms that took place in religious education in Morocco since the time of the French protectorate till the few years that followed the terrorist attacks of Casablanca in 2003. This source that has been referenced earlier in this study was useful to understand the historical and chronological evolution of the reforms on Islamic

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[12] https://il.linkedin.com/in/samira-alayan-a0740210
[13] Middle East and North Africa
[14] http://annmariewainscott.com/about/

education in Morocco that took place before the one we are studying in this research. However, this source does not really focus on a comparative study or on the reforms strictly related to the textbooks but more on the reforms in a large sense that affected Islamic education in general. As a support to this source, the presentation of Professor Fouad Chafiqi, actual director of the curricula in the Ministry of Education in Morocco, who gave a conference about the history of education and reforms in Morocco on Tuesday the 18th of April 2017, was used. In fact, similarly to the previous source this one helped us understand the general picture of education and reforms in Morocco since the Protectorate. Moreover, during the conference, Professor Chafiqi answered few questions related to the 2016 reform, which also gave us important elements that will be useful in this study.

In addition to the weak literature review that was only used in part to shape our research, other sources constituted the core of the references in the different chapters.

Newspaper and journal articles were mostly used in the first chapter of the research in order to understand how the public debate was going on the level of the media. In the second chapter, an online version of the *Quran* in French and English was also used during the study whenever the meaning of some words of the Quran in the textbooks was not clear. Finally, the six remaining sources are the textbooks of the three first years of primary school that were used in the comparative study.

The added value of this research lies in the fact that it is very specific and focused on the 2016 reform and it does not analyze textbooks of many subjects but strictly selected Islamic education textbooks. Therefore, it constitutes the first critical study on the strategy used by the reform of 2016. Moreover, the reform being very recent (less than one year ago) makes the research based on an everyday follow-up of the controversial debate related to the reform and eases the contact with actors who were directly implied in the work of the commission. This is why, the methodology that will be used consists of a mix between descriptive and analytical sections based on interviews and comparative studies that will be detailed at the beginning of each chapter.

The research will be divided as follow: the first part will focus on the public debate that is still ongoing since February 2016 (I). It will try first to explain the context of the reform and then to

point out the main controversial issues present in the media. The second part will expose the comparative study of the textbooks by pointing out the main elements that were at the core of the reform (II), and finally the last part will be an analysis of the comparison, in order to understand the strategy used in the reform of 2016 in its role of promoting a more moderate version of Islam (III).

I.   The context of the reform and the public debate

In order to be able to analyze the comparison of the textbooks and to answer the problematic of the research, it is important to understand the context in which textbooks were modified under the reform of 2016 and to list the most important issues or controversies that came up with the decision to revise the Islamic education textbooks. In fact, studying these two elements (the context of the reform and the public debate), will give us guidelines to the comparison and will help us have a clearer image of the different elements that constituted the center of the controversy.

The information presented in this section is the combination of facts gathered from newspaper articles and TV channels (local[15], regional[16] and international[17]) and two interviews conducted respectively with Pr. Fouad Chafiqi[18] and Pr. Hamid Boudar[19].

A. The context of the reform

A.1. Motivations of the reform

The initiative to undertake the reform of the Islamic education textbooks in 2016 was the result of a policy adopted by the King Mohammad VI after the terrorist attack of 2003 in Casablanca[20]. In addition to the education reform, there were three other areas: legal, social and military.

On the legal level, in 2003, as a reaction to the attacks of Casablanca, an anti-terrorism law, 03-03 was adopted[21]. Eight years later, the country was shaken by another major terrorist attack in the touristic city of Marrakech[22]. This event pushed the authorities to rethink their strategy of

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[15] أخر ساعة, النهار المغربية, المساء.
[16] Huffington Post Maghreb
[17] France 24
[18] Curricula Director in the Ministry of Education in Morocco
[19] Member of the commission who worked on the reform of the textbooks
[20] Doublier, S. (2016, November 16). Vaste reforme de l'enseignement islamique au Maroc. *RFI Afrique*
[21] Saadoun, A. (2015). *Combatting "Terrorism" in Contemporary Moroccan Law (2003-2014): A Comparative Analysis*.
[22] Fourth largest city in Morocco.

fighting terrorism which led to the draft law 86.14 that was adopted[23] to complement the previous one.

On the social level, some considered that the attack of Casablanca was a reaction to social inequality in this particular city, because "the eight suicide bombers involved in the attack were youth living in squalid conditions in Casablanca slums"[24]. Moreover, according to Catusse[25], "youth engagement with Islamism was strictly correlated to extreme poverty and social misery." The gap between rich and poor was clear. In consequence, there was an urge to find a solution to the extreme poverty in the Moroccan society. This is why the King launched in 2005 the National Initiative for Human Development (INDH). This project mainly aimed to "assist the government in improving inclusiveness, accountability and transparency of decision making and implementation processes at the local level in order to enhance use of social and economic infrastructure and services by poor and vulnerable groups."[26]

On the military level, the Monarchy took preventive security measures. The first one concerned the security on the borders: on one hand, Morocco tightened its control over its borders with Algeria and the other hand, it reinforced its military presence in the southern borders in the Sahara. In parallel with this border control, the new security of "*Hadar*" was installed: Royal armed forces, Royal gendarmerie, Police and auxiliary forces were deployed all over the territory, was it by a simple physical presence or through checkpoints.

Finally, on the religious level, since 2003, every mosque was it built by the State or not, falls under the supervision of the Ministry of Islamic Affairs which has the exclusive prerogative to appoint Imams and other people who work in them. In this same perspective of fighting terrorism, the King decided to launch in 2004 the *Mohammad VI TV channel* and the *Mohammad VI radio station.* This particular step was a way of promoting a homogenous Islam to the Moroccan nation and to encourage values like tolerance and moderation.

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[23] Saliba, I. (2015). Morocco: Bill to Amend Counterterrorism Law. *Global Legal Monitor*.
[24] Paciello, M., Pepicelli, R. and Pioppi, D. (2016). *Public Action towards Youth in Neo-Liberal Morocco: fostering and controlling the unequal inclusion of the new generation*.
[25] Catusse, M. (2009). Morocco's Political Economy: Ambiguous Privatization and the Emerging social Question. In: L. Guazzone and D. Pioppi, ed., *The Arab State and Neo-Liberal Globalization. The Restructuring of State Power in the Middle-East*, 1st ed. United Kingdom: Ithaca Press, pp.185-216.
[26] http://projects.worldbank.org/P100026/national-initiative-human-development-support-project-indh?lang=en

The Reform of the Islamic education textbooks in 2016, which is studied in this research, is the latest measure decided by the Monarchy. In fact, on the 6th of February 2016, during a council of Ministers in Laayoune[27], the King instructed the revision of the Islamic education programs[28]. This initiative came after a long call for change from teachers who considered the content of the textbooks "technical" and not really adapted to the children's age. On its side, civil society pointed out violence, sexism and discrimination in them.[29] In addition to these claims, Morocco is struggling with the number of Youth joining terrorist groups. In fact, not less than 1 500 Moroccans have joined militant groups in Syria and Iraq[30], and according to Lahsini[31] a large number of them help clandestine groups on the territory. This important threat motivated the decision of the King to undertake the religious educational reform in his authority as "The commander of the Faithful" and the descendant of the Prophet[32], because Islamic education is considered one of the main reasons of the religious extremism according to the former director of the TV channel *Al-Arabiya.*[33].

To make the project of the reform concrete, the Minister of National Education, Rachid Ben Mokhtar formed a commission composed of a large panel of experts: *oulemas*[34], pedagogues, academics and human rights defenders[35]. The revision concerned 29 Islamic education textbooks[36], and had to be submitted to the King before being published.[37]

A.2. Goals of the reform

As mentioned previously, the reform of 2016 came in the context of a long policy undertaken by the King since 2003 to fight terrorism and religious extremism. More specific purposes can be

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[27] "Largest city of the disputed territory of Western Sahara".
[28]Lamlili, N. (2016, July 27). Maroc: Mohammad VI appelle à l'enseignement d'un Islam tolérant. *Jeune Afrique.*
[29]Igrouane, Y. (2017, January 20). Benkirane: Reform of Islamic educational textbooks follows King Mohammed VI's instructions. *Morocco World News.*
[30] France 24 (2016, December 13). Morocco reforms religious education to fight extremism.
[31]Othman, F. (2016, February 10). Reussir la reforme éducative des programmes islamiques.*HuffPost Maroc.*
[32]Doublier, S. (2016, November 16). Vaste reforme de l'enseignement islamique au Maroc. *RFI Afrique*
[33]Lefébure, A. (2016, February 8). Education islamique: Le Maroc veut réviser les programmes scolaires. *HuffPostMaroc*.
[34] "A body of Muslim scholars who are recognized as having specialist knowledge of Islamic sacred law and theology." – Oxford dictionaries.
[35]Lamlili, N. (2016, July 27). Maroc: Mohammad VI appelle à l'enseignement d'un Islam tolérant. *JeuneAfrique.*
[36]Igrouane, Y. (2017, January 20). Benkirane: Reform of Islamic educational textbooks follows King Mohammed VI's instructions. *Morocco World News.*
[37]Idem.

found in different articles. They all converge to the same ideas but are described differently in each newspaper. While reading the articles, we were able to list the goals under three main objectives: fighting extremism, adapting the programs in order to promote critical thinking and respecting human rights and national and international conventions signed by the Moroccan State.

i)   Fighting extremism

As mentioned before, the reform was part of a long chain of changes instructed by the King in order to fight extremism. Focusing on the modification of the textbooks was important to accomplish this goal because they contained many references to violence. Out of 364 textbooks[38], 164[39] had racist, sexist or extremist connotations. One striking example is the presence of an image where the *Fqih[40]* is holding a stick in his hand while teaching, although violence is forbidden in schools[41].

In the media, the goals of the reform were defined through different forms and expressions. In fact, most of the cited articles refer to the reform as a way to move religious education towards a more moderate[42] Islam. Moreover, it is also perceived as an "ending of extremist Islam inspired by Muslim brotherhood since 1980 where Islam was perceived as a supreme religion above all the others, which stated the difference between a good and a bad Muslim"[43]. Other sources describe the reform as a way of teaching values of tolerance, altruism and coexistence with other cultures and civilizations[44]. In the same line of thoughts, Lahsini[45] states that the point of the reform is to "purge references to violence or intolerance" and to "redact any passage that promotes hate speech in favor of advocating tolerance and open mindness". As a result of this, the *Surah[46]* calling for *Jihad* against non-Muslims has been deleted after the reform[47]. In fact,

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[38] This number includes textbooks from various subjects (Islamic education, mathematics etc…)
[39] Lamlili, N. (2016, July 27). Maroc: Mohammad VI appelle à l'enseignement d'un Islam tolérant. *Jeune Afrique.*
[40] "Expert in Islamic law"
[41] Lamlili, N. (2016, July 27). Maroc: Mohammad VI appelle à l'enseignement d'un Islam tolérant. *Jeune Afrique.*
[42] Doublier, S. (2016, November 16). Vaste reforme de l'enseignement islamique au Maroc. *RFI Afrique*
[43] Idem.
[44] Lamlili, N. (2016, July 27). Maroc: Mohammad VI appelle à l'enseignement d'un Islam tolérant. *JeuneAfrique.*
[45] Lahsini, C. (2017, January 4). Moroccan Islamic education: unsuccessful reform?.*Morocco World News.*
[46] "A chapter or a section of the Koran." – Oxford dictionaries
[47] Doublier, S. (2016, November 16). Vaste reforme de l'enseignement islamique au Maroc. *RFI Afrique*

one of the persons implicated in the reform states that "we should stop terrorizing kids with images of fire, hell and Jihad"[48].

These different references to the reform show the deep need and urgency to continue the policy of counter terrorism, in part through the redefinition of Islamic education in the textbooks. In addition to this basic goal of the reform, we can also note a reference to the promotion of human rights in accordance with the national and international conventions signed by Morocco.

ii)   *Promoting human rights and the respect of national and international Conventions.*

The goal of promoting human rights is largely present in the referenced articles. In fact, Lahsini considers that one of the points of the reform is to enrich the new textbooks with concepts advocating respect for human rights. Lamlili states the idea of adapting them as much as possible to the values of the Constitution of 2011 and to the international Conventions. We can find various rights that have been violated in the previous editions of the Islamic education textbooks: one of the most striking examples of discrimination is the representation of a blind person as a beggar or women presented exclusively in domestic situations.[49] In the same line of thoughts, women were in most of the cases illustrated wearing the veil. Another example is the *Surah* of "*Fatiha*" where the expression "*wala al daline*" is used. This latter literally means "those who take the wrong path": the interpretation of this *Surah* can lead us to think that it insinuates the Jews or the Christians, which is definitely discriminatory towards other religions and shows an important intolerance of "the other". It would be interesting to mention here that few days before the decision of the King to reform the textbooks; he hosted a conference in Marrakech where a large number of *Muftis,* ministers of Islamic Affairs, academics and scholars[50] from various Islamic countries met to discuss the rights of religious minorities in predominantly Muslim majority communities. This conference led to the Declaration of Marrakech that promoted the elimination of all references to discrimination against other religions or even against religious minorities[51]. This is why, after noting these various discriminations against different vulnerable groups (disabled people, women and minorities) the Ministry had to put their elimination in the

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[48]Lamlili, N. (2016, July 27). Maroc: Mohammad VI appelle à l'enseignement d'un Islam tolérant. *JeuneAfrique.*
[49]Idem.
[50]http://www.marrakeshdeclaration.org/
[51]Lefébure, A. (2016, February 8). Education islamique: Le Maroc veut réviser les programmes scolaires. *HuffPostMaroc.*

textbooks as a priority. In fact the Ministry of Education stated that all "bad" references to women shall be deleted in the new versions of textbooks[52]. Moreover, during an interview with France 24[53], William Lawrence[54] confirmed that one of the goals of the reform is to empower women.

iii)   Modifying the programs in order to promote critical thinking

In addition to the two previous goals, a third one can also be found in many articles: the modification of the program in a way that would motivate the promotion of critical thinking. This task being very difficult, the Ministry of Education tried to promote it through different techniques. The first one is to reduce the number of lessons. In fact, during an interview with France 24[55], Karim Ben Massoud[56] says that the "book has been cut in half" which gives teachers more time to explain and to discuss each lesson. In the same line of thoughts, another teacher expressed his satisfaction towards the content of the books that became more explicit and more understandable in term of analysis and examples.

In addition to this, one of the main characteristics of the reform was the division of lessons by theme and its adaptation to the age of the students[57]. On this last point, during the interview with Mr. Boudar[58], he explained that there was a small committee responsible for the design of the book. This team received instructions from the commission to adapt more the book (cover page, images and colors) to the age of children. Once done, they presented the propositions to the commission who did few modifications before confirming the final version of the textbooks.

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[52]Lamlili, N. (2016, July 27). Maroc: Mohammad VI appelle à l'enseignement d'un Islam tolérant. *Jeune Afrique.*
[53]http://www.france24.com/en/20161213-focus-morocco-school-reform-religious-education-islam-fight-extremism
[54] Professor at George Washington University, also Director of the Middle-East and North Africa programs at the center for the study of Islam and Democracy.
[55]http://www.france24.com/en/20161213-focus-morocco-school-reform-religious-education-islam-fight-extremism
[56]Islamic education teacher
[57] Doublier, S. (2016, November 16). Vaste reforme de l'enseignement islamique au Maroc. *RFI Afrique*
[58]Interview conducted with Mr. Boudar on Thursday 4th of May 2017.

Finally, the last technique used to promote critical thinking is the "open questions" or "oriented questions"[59]. This type of exercise motivates students to debate about a controversial question and to use their critical thinking to discuss some parts of the *Quran.*

To sum up this first part, we can observe that the goals of the reform presented in the media are various and touch different issues. In fact, they do not exclusively refer to the removal of references to violence and intolerance. They also touch a wider spectrum that includes ideas like the empowerment of women, the conformity of the textbooks to the values of the Constitution of 2011 and to international Conventions, the adaptation to the age of the children and the promotion of critical thinking. Therefore, at first sight, we can already notice that all the goals converge to the same idea: redefining Islam in the textbooks in a way that reflects openness and that diverges from a linear and rigid perception.

B. The public debate: hub of obstacles and controversies

Many obstacles arose with the decision of reforming the textbooks. In fact we can note three main issues that took place in the public debate and that were highly present in the media: the changing of the name from "Islamic education" to "Religious education" or "Religious studies" (1), the argument between conservatives and liberals (2) and finally the issue concerning the representation of philosophy in one particular textbook (3).

B.1.The dichotomy Islamic education/Religious education

Although replacing "Islamic" by "Religious" might seem very simple, the debate around it was not. In fact, changing the name of the course can have various implications because it insinuates the recognition of other religions according to the Marrakech Declaration mentioned above. While "Islamic" refers exclusively to Muslims, "religious" has a wider sense, and refers also to

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[59]Lefébure, A. (2017, January 12). Polémique sur les cours de philo : « Le Ministère de l'Education met de côté le vrai problème. *HuffPost Maroc*

other religions in addition to Islam. This is new in Morocco given that 99% of the population is Muslim, and Islam is the official religion of the State[60].

Abdalla Laâssiri[61] expressed his disagreement with the idea of redefining the class of Islamic education as Religious education. He considers that this modification will reduce the identity of Islamic education teachers as Muslim authority. In fact, he explains that students see in teachers the example and the reference in terms of Islam, and they often ask them question about Daesh[62] or other religions. For him, naming the subject "religious" education will remove completely this idealization seen by students in their Islamic education teachers. On the other side, Boubker Largou[63] explains[64] that in the 1960s, Moroccan students used to attend classes of "religious education" that taught the basics of religion (like prayer and fasting), and common values for all religions. It is only in the 1990's with the rise of *Wahhabism[65]* and political Islam that the name changed to "Islamic Education". He continues saying that the state should decide whether it wants to follow a universal approach or a religious one, which is problematic in Morocco because the King is at the same time the political and religious leader. However, we can note that the textbooks that have been published after the reform still have the same title as the ones before the reform: "Islamic Education".

B.2.The dichotomy liberalism/conservatism

When it comes to religion, it is hard to decide whether it should be oriented in a conservative way or more in a liberal one. In fact, this dichotomy is strongly present in the Monarchy's social policy where we feel that the Moroccan society is at the same time very liberalized but keeps some very conservative laws. We can take as an example the law where not fasting during Ramadan is considered as a crime[66]. The struggle between these two policies becomes even more difficult when it comes to applying it to Islamic education because it affects the children since their youngest age.

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[60]Doublier, S. (2016, November 16). Vaste reforme de l'enseignement islamique au Maroc. *RFI Afrique*
[61] Member of the Association of Islamic Education teachers in Morocco
[62] "A militant Islamic fundamentalist group active particularly in Syria and Iraq." – Oxford dictionaries.
[63] President of "Organisationmarocaine des Droits humains » (OMDH – Moroccan Organization for Human Rights).
[64]Lamlili, N. (2016, July 27). Maroc: Mohammad VI appelle à l'enseignement d'un Islam tolérant. *JeuneAfrique.*
[65] The religious system of the Wahhabi, a Muslim order founded by Muhammad Ibn-Abdul Wahhab, known for its strict observance of the *Quran.*
[66]http://www.slateafrique.com/491045/ramadan-maroc-ne-pas-jeuner-est-crime

One of the representations of this issue is the conflict between the Minister of Education Rachid Ben Mokhtar and the Head of Government Abdelilah Benkirane[67]. As a consequence of the reform of 2016, Ben Mokhtar was blaming Benkirane of refusing to modernize religious education, whereas Benkirane accused Ben Mokhtar of defending the French lobby[68]. In the same line of thoughts, Abdeslem Elhamer from the Moroccan association of Islamic education teachers expresses to France 24[69] his discontent regarding the reform of the textbooks. He says that this decision was very sudden in the sense that Islamic education teachers were not concerted. Moreover, he does not understand the reason behind this reform. In his opinion, there is no need to change the curriculum that has been the same for decades.

These two previous examples reveal the gap between the different stakeholders. While some of them consider the modification of the textbooks a necessity to fight extremism and to adapt to the evolution of society, some others do not see the point in a change, and are in favor of maintaining the old curriculum.

Laâssiri states that because the new version of the textbooks is mostly centered on the individual practice of religion we should be concerned about the gap between the content of the books and the reality. He expresses his worries towards this disconnection between students and the reality of their everyday life. In fact, the content of the textbooks should evolve in parallel with the social representation of Islam. In other terms, promoting a "more liberalized" version of Islam in the new textbooks is not very effective if in the everyday life, laws and policies are still very conservative. This is in fact an idea that M. Charfi, former Minister of Education in Tunisia, head of the Tunisian league of Defense for Human Rights[70] and initiator of many reforms that aimed to secularize Tunisian public education claims in one of his articles[71]. One of the most important ideas that he suggests is the gap between what is being taught and reality: Charfi gives the example of the way women are described: inferior to men and depending on them, whereas nowadays, women are becoming more independent and educated. This gap leads Charfi to insist

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[67]Lamlili, N. (2016, July 27). Maroc: Mohammad VI appelle à l'enseignement d'un Islam tolérant. *Jeune Afrique.*
[68]Idem.
[69] http://www.france24.com/en/20161213-focus-morocco-school-reform-religious-education-islam-fight-extremism
[70] http://www.lemonde.fr/disparitions/article/2008/06/12/mohamed-charfi-ministre-de-l-education-tunisien-de-1989-a-1994_1057212_3382.html
[71] Charfi, M. (2004). La réforme des systèmes éducatifs islamiques : La Tunisie. *Afkar/idées, automne 2004,* pp. 92-93.

on the importance of reforms in the textbooks in order to adapt to changing reality and to keep up with the constant modernization of societies.

Another important element of this issue was the following: because the reform touched the private as well as the public education, it had to be based on the "values of the Moroccan society" and its traditions, mainly the attachment to a unified national identity, the positive interaction and the openness to the science of knowledge[72].

All of these elements reunited can be summarized in the following: the commission who worked on the reform had to balance between liberalism and conservatism on different levels. First, it had to be very careful on the choice of the parts that would be deleted from the programs while taking into consideration their importance in the Islamic education learning. Second, it had to make sure that the content of the new textbooks represents the values on which the Moroccan society is based, because these books represent a reflection of the policy of the State. In other terms, the struggle can be sum up as a balance between religion, politics and social affairs; in other terms Islamic education must be the link between the Monarchy (politics), beliefs (religion) and society (social affairs).

This leads us to the last issue that can be noted in the media and that went viral for a period of time. In December 2016, the controversy in one of the textbooks about the way philosophy was represented.

B.3.The dichotomy Islam/Philosophy

One of the most controversial issues that followed the reform concerned one particular textbook of the first year of baccalaureate from *Al Manar* edition[73]. In this book, the chapter titled "Philosophy and Faith" described philosophy as "a production of human thought contrary to Islam" and the "essence of degeneration"[74]. This mention was found to be inspired by an important figure of the 13th century: *Ibnou As-Salah Ach Chahrazaoui*[75](Ibn al-Salah). Ibn Al-Salah was an Iraqi *Hadith* specialist. He had a strict position towards philosophy that he

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[72]Lefébure, A. (2016, February 8). Education islamique: Le Maroc veut réviser les programmes scolaires. *HuffPostMaroc*.

[73] Manar Al Tarbiya el Islamiya – منار التربية الاسلامية

[74]Lahsini, C. (2017, January 4). Moroccan Islamic education: unsuccessful reform?.*Morocco World News.*

[75]Idem.

considered as a source of "anguish and wandering heresy". For him, philosophy leads to dementia and depravity[76]. As a result of this "defamatory" content in the new textbook (after the reform), philosophy teachers criticized the *wahhabisation* of some textbooks[77].

To express their dissatisfaction, Moroccan teachers of Philosophy took part in protests from December 21st to December 23rd[78] 2016 and many sit-ins took place in different schools to protest against the text of *Ibnou As Salah*[79]. Seeing this reaction, the Head of Government answered by saying that this part was intentionally included in the new program to emphasize on the extremist idea behind it. That way, it would allow teachers to motivate discussion in class and would push students to develop their critical thinking by analyzing. As a matter of fact, students would be engaged in a debate, in opposition to the old method of learning that was mostly about memorizing. He also added that the intention was never to attack philosophy, especially that Morocco is one of the few countries that teach philosophy during the 3 years of college[80]. On his side, the curricula Director stated that "teachers were given firm instructions to openly discuss this part of the course with their students."[81] Finally, Adel Karim Safir, President of the *"Association marocaine des enseignants de philosophie" (*AMEP) stated that the problem of the association does not only concern this textbook in particular, but the three textbooks of high school that reflected a *Wahhabist* ideology[82].

As a solution to this debate, the Ministry of Education engaged in the revision of the textbooks of the *Manar* edition in order to publish for the academic year 2017-2018 a new version in accordance to the demands of the Philosophy Teacher's Association[83].

These different dichotomies exposed in this section, show the complexity of the reform and the difficulty of its application. In fact, having many contradictions shows the intensity of the public

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[76]Idem.

[77]Lefébure, A. (2017, January 1). Education islamique: Bras de fer idéologique entre Benkirane et les profs de philo. *HuffPostMaroc.*

[78]Lahsini, C. (2017, January 4). Moroccan Islamic education: unsuccessful reform?.*Morocco World News.*

[79]Lefébure, A. (2017, January 12). Polémique sur les cours de philo : Le ministère de l'Education met de côté le vrai problème. *HuffPost Maroc.*

[80]Lefébure, A. (2017, January 1). Education islamique: Bras de fer idéologique entre Benkirane et les profs de philo. *HuffPostMaroc.*

[81]Lahsini, C. (2017, January 4). Moroccan Islamic education: unsuccessful reform?.*Morocco World News.*

[82]Lefébure, A. (2017, January 1). Education islamique: Bras de fer idéologique entre Benkirane et les profs de philo. *HuffPostMaroc.*

[83]حصاد يفتح ملف كتب التربية الاسلامية المسيئة للفلسفةز النهار المغربية , العدد 3946, 2017/04/11

debate and in consequence the hard work that the Ministry still has to do in order to balance between the different stakeholders, conceptions, visions and beliefs of the Moroccan society.

C. Prospective vision of the reform

After having exposed the past and the present of the reform, it would be interesting to shed the light on the eventual repercussions of this reform and its impact on a wider scope. In fact, it can be defined under two characteristics: its potential universality and its dependence on other factors in order to be fully effective.

C.1. Potential universality of the reform

The former director of the TV channel *Al Arabiya* explained that this reform can have an impact on the rest of the world[84]. In fact, reforming Islamic education is becoming increasingly important because of the implications it is believed to have on radicalization: although it is not the unique source of extremism it is still one of the main reasons of religious violence and intolerance[85]. In this perspective, in March 2015, the Institute Mohammad VI for the training of Imams from Morocco, Arab countries, Africa and Europe, was created in order to teach a moderate Islam within the policy of fighting extremism[86]. However, this last question is debatable because according to William Lawrence, in an interview with France 24[87], only 1% of the Imams in Morocco have higher Islamic training and PhD level. Moreover, a large number of them come from Mali that has different Islamic traditions. As a consequence, some elements used in Morocco are generalizable and some others are very specific to each country; therefore cannot be transposed in other Islamic countries. The potential universality of the reform is not completely impossible but it definitely needs some adaptations according to the country that's adopting it.

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[84]Lefébure, A. (2016, February 8). Education islamique: Le Maroc veut réviser les programmes scolaires.*HuffPostMaroc***.**
[85]Idem.
[86]Idem.
[87]http://www.france24.com/en/20161213-focus-morocco-school-reform-religious-education-islam-fight-extremism

C.2. Dependence of the reform on other factors

Reforming Islamic education textbooks is definitely a large step towards fighting extremism and violations of Human Rights. However, this reform cannot for itself fulfill all the needed goals if it's not followed by other modifications within the Moroccan system. For example, Abdellah Cherif Ouazzani[88] specialized in Islamic thinking and education, reveals the importance of preparing and training the Islamic education teachers to the new reform[89]. In fact, what happens in the classroom can vary from one teacher to another. Moreover, the ideology of some teachers can be very explicit in their way of teaching which can impact the students' perception of Islam. Therefore, reforming the textbooks without giving any importance to the training of the teachers can lead to unwanted results and can diverge from the basic goals of the reform. This idea can also be found in Charfi's article[90] about Tunisia where he points out the importance of the reforms of the textbooks along with the idea of "recycling" the teachers because both of these elements affect the way religion is received by students.

Another relevant element that should come along with the reform of the textbooks is a reform of the law[91]. In fact when the judicial system infringes the values of Islam through unfair laws, a change must be made. In his article, Othman gives few examples: public fasting in Ramadan, same-sex marriage, drinking alcohol. For him, these laws do not come from the essence of Islam but from the interpretation of Islam by some scholars. He continues on the example of homosexuality and he states that nowhere in the *Quran* or in the *Sunna[92]* do we find the prohibition of homosexuality.

To sum it up, focusing on the reform as an independent element is not as effective as also reforming all the different factors that affect the religious system. In fact, education and law cannot be separated because they are interdependent and both of them affect the Moroccan society: whereas education affects it from the roots, law affects society from "up". This is why both of them should always evolve in parallel.

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[88]Professor and researcher of Islamic education
[89]Nazih, A. (2016, September 20). Education islamique: enfin la réforme !. *L'Economiste, 4859.*
[90] Charfi, M. (2004). La réforme des systèmes éducatifs islamiques : La Tunisie. *Afkar/idées, automne 2004,* pp. 92-93.
[91]Othman, F. (2016, February 10). Réussir la réforme éducative des programmes islamiques. *HuffPostMaroc.*
[92]The term *Sunnah* refers to those actions of the Prophet which the Prophet initiated, performed and promoted among all his followers, as a part of God's religion.

To conclude this section, we can say that the future vision of the reform reveals two major characteristics: the first one is its universality, in the sense that it could influence and serve as an example to other countries. However, this universality is restricted to the common elements between religion in Morocco and other Islamic countries. The second characteristic is the dependence of this reform on other major elements like the training of teachers and Imams and the reform of the law: all of these elements combined are part of a cycle in which they all affect each other. This is why their evolution must always be coordinated in order to give better results.

After having exposed in the first chapter the context of the reform and the different issues that came up in the public debate as a consequence of the changes in the Islamic education textbooks, we have at this stage an idea about the elements or the strategy used by the Ministry of Education in order to modify the Islamic education textbooks in a way that could promote a "more moderate Islam. In the following chapter we will take a closer look to the reform by comparing textbooks before and after the reform to understand how religion was redefined concretely.

II.   Comparative study on selected Islamic education textbooks, before and after the reform of 2016

As mentioned previously, this chapter will be focused on the comparative study of selected textbooks of Islamic education of the first three years of primary school, which constitutes the core of the research. The comparison will be based on two main components: the first one will analyze the form of the textbooks (cover page, pictures and structure), which means all the elements that can be noticed before reading the textbooks, whereas the second one will be more focused on the content (analysis of the *Suar* of the *Quran* and other chapters of the textbooks).

A. Comparison of the religious education textbooks in their form

This part is relevant to the study because it can illustrate how the first contact of the student with the textbooks is. In fact, before even trying to read a book, the first element that can grab a child's attention is the cover page and the pictures in it. We will try to see if there are any elementary differences in the way the textbooks are presented before tackling their content. Three main elements will be discussed: the cover pages, the pictures and the structure. For each of these three elements we will start by comparing horizontally each year, and then we will try to draw some conclusions through a vertical comparison. The horizontal comparison will state the differences between two books of the same year (before and after the reform), whereas the vertical comparison will try to analyze vertically how the evolution has been made from the first to the third year.

A.1. Comparison of the cover pages

i)   Comparison of the cover pages of the textbooks of the first year of primary school

This year is the first one during which students are taught Islamic education. It constitutes then the first real contact of children with religion at the educational level. At first sight, comparing the textbooks from the outside gives us an idea about the direction taken by the reform. In fact,

we can clearly notice a difference in the colors and in the illustrations. The following table gives a clear picture of the various levels of differences in the cover page.

	Before the reform	**After the reform**
Colors	- Light colors - Blue and light purple	- More flashy colors - Pink and blue - Colorful drawing
Background	- No specific pattern	- Traditional Moroccan decoration pattern
Pictures	- 4 photos of a young boy before and during the prayer wearing the traditional clothes.	- Drawing of a young boy and a young girl not wearing traditional clothes helping an old person cross the street - A mosque and nature in the background
Gender	- Only a young boy - On the lower part of the cover page is mentioned: "Book of the student[93]" (masculine form) and between parenthesis "and the student"(feminine form)	- A man, a young boy and a young girl - On the lower part of the cover page is mentioned: "Book of the student" (feminine form) "and the student"[94] (masculine form)
Explicit references to Religion	- The *Quran* - The young boy before and during the prayer	- The mosque

Table 1: Comparison of the cover page of the textbooks of the first year of primary school, before and after the reform of 2016.

The analysis of the cover page of the textbooks of the first year of primary school (six-seven years old) leads us to the following conclusions: first, the colors before the reform are pale and refer more to boys. On the contrary, the dominant color on the cover page of the textbook after the reform is pink. On the revised version, we find more than two colors on the cover page. This difference suggests a new focus on gender balance on one side, and an adaptation of the book to the age of the children on the other side. In fact, a book that is more colorful is definitely more "attractive" to a child. We can also see this in the background: in the old version the background is neutral, whereas the one in the new version is full of stars, which is another element that could grab the student's attention.

Second, illustrations on the cover page also show a tendency to adapt the textbooks to the children's age and to improve gender balance. In fact, before the reform there is only a representation of a young boy on four photos, whereas after the reform, a girl is represented with

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[93] كراسة التلميذ(ة)
[94] كراسة التلميذة و التلميذ

the boy in a drawing. Choosing in the new version to replace photos, which represent real persons, by drawings, is a way to make the textbooks more colorful and to associate them with any other book a child might use.

Third, after the reform, there is a more specific focus on gender balance that can be noticed in the explicit reference to the "student" in its feminine form تلميذة that was not present explicitly in the old version.

Finally, before the reform there was greater attention accorded to the references to religion (picture of the *Quran*, boy praying), whereas the only reference to religion after the reform, is the mosque in the background of the drawing. This can explain the need to show a wider picture of Islam: in fact it is not only about praying but also about values as shown in the picture of the new book.

To sum it up, the cover page of the textbooks shows clear modifications included in the new versions of the textbooks, on three different levels: greater gender balance, decrease in the references to religion and the adaptation of the textbooks to the age of students.

ii)   *Comparison of the cover pages of the textbooks of the second year of primary school*

	Before the reform	**After the reform**
Colors	- Light colors - Pale orange and pale pink	- More flashy colors - Flashy yellow and flashy orange - Colorful drawing
Background	- Traditional Moroccan decoration pattern	- Traditional Moroccan decoration pattern
Pictures	- Photo of the *Kutubiya* Mosque in Marrakech[95]in the center of the page. - Picture of the Quran on the side	- Drawing of a family composed of the parents and a boy and girl, surrounded in the background by nature, animals and a mosque. - Photo of the *Kutubiya* mosque on the side.
Gender	- None	- One man, one boy, one woman and one girl. - On the lower part of the cover page is mentioned: "Book of the student" (feminine form) "and the student"[96]

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[95]Fourth largest city in Morocco

[96]كراسة التلميذة و التلميذ

		(masculine form)
Explicit references to Religion	- The *Quran* - The mosque	- The mosque (in the photo and in the drawing).

Table 2: Comparison of the cover page of the textbooks of the second year of primary school, before and after the Reform of 2016.

The comparison of the textbooks of the second year (seven-eight years old) leads us to the following deductions: on one side, similarly to the textbooks of the first year, we can see a clear adaptation of the textbooks to the age of the child: the colors are more attractive and replacing a photo by a drawing makes the textbook more appealing. On the other side, a reflection of the Moroccan culture can be seen in both textbooks: in fact conserving the traditional Moroccan patterns in the new version of the textbook, and keeping the picture of the *Kutubiya* Mosque shows a clear will to maintain a Moroccan character. This is a way to teach students about their culture and to make them relate to the different elements they see in the book.

Another element that can be deducted from the analysis is the enlargement of the scope of religion: in fact, while in the old version, all we could see was a mosque and the representation of a *Quran,* in the new version we notice a diversification of the illustrations. This shows that religion is not only limited to the times of prayer but is also a lifestyle: it is present in the daily life, was it in the family, nature or animals.

The final element of this comparison is the gender balance mentioned in the previous paragraph. The cover page of the new textbook represents an equal number of male and female characters and an interaction on one hand between the father and the daughter and on the other hand between the mother and the son. Moreover, the gender balance can also be seen in the addition of the word "student" in its feminine form to the new textbook.

iii) Comparison of the cover pages of the textbooks of the third year of primary school

	Before the reform	**After the reform**
Colors	- Light colors - Pale orange	- More flashy colors - Flashy green
Background	- Neutral	- Traditional Moroccan decoration pattern
Pictures	- Representation of planet earth showing the African continent	- Three photos representing a the *Hassan II* mosque a fetus and a galaxy/the

	- The *Quran*	universe.
Gender	- None	- In the middle of the cover page is mentioned: "Book of the student" (feminine form) "and the student"[97] (masculine form)
Explicit references to Religion	- The *Quran*	- The mosque

Table 3: Comparison of the cover page of the textbooks of the third year of primary school, before and after the reform of 2016.

The comparison of the cover pages of the textbooks of the third year (eight/nine years old) goes in the same direction as the textbooks of the first and the second years. However, not all the elements found previously are as emphasized as in the two previous years. For example, we see less obviously the adaptation of the textbooks to the age of the students in the cover pages: the colors are less vivid and attractive as the previous years. Furthermore, the gender balance is reflected only through the implicit mention of the word "student" in its feminine form.

We also note the addition of the Moroccan pattern in the new version of the book, and the *Hassan II* mosque which shows once again the need to mark the Moroccan aspect in the textbooks. However, we should mention that in the old version, an implicit connotation to Morocco is present, through the specific focus on the African continent.

Finally, the enlargement of the scope of religion mentioned in the comparison of the textbooks of the second year is also clear for the third year. While in the old version we could only see a focus on the African continent and the *Quran,* in the new version, the representation of a fetus, a Mosque and a galaxy underlines the fact that Islam is not only limited to prayer, or to Morocco, but it is also about the individual, science and God.

iv)   *Vertical analysis of the cover pages of the books*

Having seen the horizontal comparison of the textbooks of each year, before and after the reform, we can state the following elements of resemblance: as a first approach with the

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[97] كراسة التلميذة و التلميذ

textbooks it is clear that the reform aimed to emphasize the gender balance, maintain the reflection of the Moroccan aspect, adapt the textbooks to the age of the students and enlarge the scope of Islam by extending it to other aspects of life like family, nature and science. However, it would be interesting to point out that the two elements of enhancing gender balance and adapting the textbooks to the age of the children are less obvious in the third year than in the two previous years. As a first impression, the reform seems to be more explicit in the first and the second year. Nevertheless, this deduction taken separately cannot give us a clear answer about the impact of the reform. Therefore, other elements need to be studied in the following paragraphs.

It is important to conclude from this part that the strategy adopted by the reform is polyvalent because the changes in the cover pages affected many different aspects: the gender balance, the adaptation of the textbooks to the age of children and the enlargement of the scope of Islam.

A.2. Comparison of the pictures

i)   Comparison of the pictures in the textbooks of the first year of primary school

Prior to the comparison, it would be useful to mention that in the following paragraph a distinction is made in the analysis between two types of pictures: photos and drawings. A photo is an illustration of reality where persons and objects are real. However, a drawing does not illustrate reality: persons and objects in it are drawn.

	Before the Reform	After the Reform
	Photos: 117 – 108 of them represent boys alone	Photos: 5 - Men praying in a mosque - Photos of the planets - Hassan II Mosque in Casablanca - 5 times of prayer - *Quran*
Pictures	Drawings: 51 – 20 of them represent girls alone, 7 represent boys alone, 8 represent boys and girls together	Drawings: 50 – one of them represents a girl alone, 26 represent boys alone, and 19 represent boys and girls together.

Table 4: Comparison of the pictures of the textbooks of the first year of primary school before and after the reform of 2016.

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The idea of the gender equality and the adaptation of the book to the age of the children mentioned for the comparison of the cover page come back while comparing the pictures. In fact, in the new textbook a larger importance is given to drawings, whereas in the old version, pictures are mostly represented by photos. In the same line of thoughts, before the reform, the first half of the textbook did not contain any pictures, only writings. However, in the new one, the presence of pictures can be noticed from the beginning of the book.

Concerning the gender balance, we can notice that in the old version, only boys were represented in photos while girls were represented through drawings. Moreover, all of the illustrations of habits and practices in Islam, like prayer for example, are represented by boys. This can be perceived as discrimination in the old version of the textbook, because girls cannot really relate to the photos. After the reform, this has changed to a certain extent because the representation of boys and girls together is more present. In fact, in the new version, photos only represent important symbols and basic habits in Islam (mosque, prayer etc…), whereas drawings are mostly reserved to the representation of children. Nevertheless, major Islamic habits (prayer, ablution) are still represented by boys.

An example of a drawing on page 7 (Refer to supporting document 1) of the textbook after the reform summarizes well all these ideas and gives a confirmation of some elements seen in the previous paragraph. In fact, this drawing is a representation of an Imam wearing the traditional Moroccan clothes sitting on the floor holding the *Quran*. In front of him six students are sitting in the same position: threes girls and three boys. This addresses the importance of gender balance. Moreover, a special attention to the way children are dressed can reveal many important elements of analysis: one of the two girls is veiled and two of the three boys are wearing traditional clothes. This can lead us to two conclusions: the first one is that any child using this book can relate to the picture because it represents all types of clothing, and the second one lies in the reflection of the Moroccan society in this drawing. In fact, it reveals the diversity of the Moroccan society and the mix of conservatism and liberalism that is present nowadays in Morocco.

ii) *Comparison of the pictures in the textbooks of the second year of primary school*

	Before the Reform	**After the Reform**
Pictures	Photos: 141 – one of them represent a girl alone and 123 represent boys alone	Photos: 13 -Three represent animals -5 represent the 5 times of prayer -4 represent nature -One represents the Prophet's Mosque in Medina
	Drawings: 62– 5 of them represent girls alone, 27 represent boys alone, 4 represent boys and girls together	Drawings: 161– 34 of them represent girls alone, 85 represent boys alone, and 27 represent boys and girls together.

Table 5: Comparison of the pictures of the textbooks of the second year of primary school before and after the reform of 2016.

At first sight, the numbers present in table 5 show a modification of the type of pictures used in the new version of the textbooks. In fact, the number of photos dropped from 141 to 13 while the number of drawings went from 62 to 161. This change shows the need to illustrate situations like praying in a way that would attract students. In fact, before the reform only few situations were represented through drawings, which is not really appealing to a child's imagination. Moreover, while in the old version the vast majority of the photos represented boys alone, in the new version, photos are only used to represent things like nature and animals. After the reform, human beings are represented by drawings.

In addition to this, concerning the gender balance, there's a greater attention given to the representations of girls alone and of boys and girls together. In fact, in the old version, out of 203 (photos and drawings combined) only one photo and five drawings represented girls alone, and only four represented boys and girls together. It is true that in the new version the representation of boys alone is still prevailing, but we cannot completely ignore the positive modification made. In the same line of thoughts, we can take as an example a big innovation in the textbook after the reform: on pages 80 and 81 we can find 30 drawings (Refer to supporting document 2) in which

a girl is showing the different steps of *Salat Al Maghrib*[98] and *Salat Al Isha*[99]. This is a clear evolution towards gender balance.

	Before the Reform	**After the Reform**
	Photos: 5 – 3 of them represent boys alone	Photos: 15 – one of them represents a boy alone.
Pictures	Drawings: 18 – 13 of them represent boys alone and one of them represent girls alone.	Drawings: 94– 23 of them represent girls alone, 64 represent boys alone, and 14 represent boys and girls together.

Table 6: Comparison of the pictures of the textbooks of the third year of primary school, before and after the reform of 2016

In the textbooks of the third year (before and after the reform), we can underline two major points: first, the pictures (photos and drawings combined) are very small and it is often difficult to distinguish their content. Second, there was no great attention given to the use of photos, was it in the old or in the new version of the textbooks. Moreover, using pictures in general (photos or drawing) is poor in the old version (23 pictures- drawings and photos combined). However, this changed in the new version where photos are mostly used to represent things like a mosque or a planet, whereas drawings serve as a representation of human beings.

Regarding the gender balance, there is an evolution compared to the old version: in the old version, out of all the pictures combined, only one picture represents a girl. However, in the new version 23 represent girls alone and 14 represent boys and girls together. This small improvement in the gender balance can also be seen on pages 18 and 21 (Refer to supporting document 3) of the new version, were several drawings of a girl, show the different stages of

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[98] Sunset prayer in Islam
[99] Early night prayer in Islam

Wudu[100]. Nevertheless, boys are still represented in majority with 65 representations (drawings and photos combined).

iv) *Vertical analysis of the comparison of the pictures*

Analyzing the comparison of the pictures vertically leads us to the following observations: throughout the three years, there is a greater interest given to the representation of girls more frequently and to the inclusion of pictures of boys and girls together. This is for example clear in the illustrations of girls doing the *wudu* and the prayer or in the addition of drawings of a classroom where a balanced gender representation is visible.

However, it is important to mention that in the third year, although there is an improvement in the representation of girls, the new version does not really give a big importance to pictures like the previous years. In fact their relatively small size and their blurriness make it difficult for students to distinguish the pictures' content. As mentioned in the previous paragraphs, the point of using pictures, more specifically drawings is a way to make the textbooks more appealing to the students' imagination, and for them to relate more to the situations presented in the textbooks.

To sum it up, we can say that the improvement related to the number and type of pictures is present after the reform but it is less explicit in the textbook of the third year. This deduction makes us question the homogeneity of the reform. In fact, in the third year of primary school, students are 8 or 9 years old. We estimate that, as it is the case for the first and the second year, the presence of illustrations in the textbooks is also important for students of the third year. Therefore, their small number does not go with the idea of adapting the textbooks to the age of the students.

It is then interesting to analyze the last aspect related to the form of the textbooks to see if we can come up with a conclusion concerning the impact of the reform on the textbooks of the third year of primary school.

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[100] "Ritual washing to be performed in preparation for prayer and worship." – Oxford dictionaries.

A.3. Comparison of the structure of the textbooks

In this section we will be analyzing the structure of the textbooks on three different levels: the number of pages, the organization of the textbooks or the way the lessons are divided and finally the structure of each lesson, or the way a lesson is organized.

i) *Comparison of the structure of the textbooks of the first and second year of primary school*

Because of similarities between the textbooks of the first and second year, and in order to avoid repetition, we will treat their comparison in the same paragraph.

	Textbook before the reform	Textbook after the reform
Number of pages	First year: 112 pages	First year: 80 pages
	Second year: 112 pages	Second year: 96 pages
Organization of the textbook	3 different themes: -*Al Quran Al Karim* -Al Aakida wal Iibadat -Al Adab el Islamiya + exercices	5 different themes: -Al kist -Al iktidaa -Al tazkiya -Al istijaba -Al hikma + exercices
Structure of a lesson	For the *Quran*: -I chant and I memorize -I understand the vocabulary -I practice the chanting -I accomplish -I learn the important ideas Other section: -I take note -I accomplish -I remember -Diverse activities (coloring, singing etc…)	For the *Quran*: -I listen -I understand the vocabulary -I am guided -I memorize -I understand the vocabulary -I am guided *Al Akida:* -I listen and I understand -I accomplish -I am guided - I learn values *Al Iktidaa*: -I listen and I understand -I listen and I get in touch wit -I accomplish -I follow the example *Al Kist*: -I listen and I understand -I notice and I get in contact with

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		-I accomplish -I follow the example -I learn values
		Al Hikma & *Al Istijaba:* -I listen and I understand -I notice and I get in contact with -I accomplish -I learn values/I respond to

Table 7: Comparison of the structure of the textbooks of the first and second year of primary school

The first thing that strikes our attention while comparing the structure of the first year textbooks is the large difference in the number of pages. This difference is also present in the second year textbooks but is not as important. In fact the new version of the books is less condensed, in order to give teachers more time to explain each notion. This is in fact what Pr. Chafiqi and Pr. Boudar confirmed during the interviews conducted with them.

In addition to this remarkable change, we can also note the difference in the division of the textbooks: while the old version is divided into three main parts (*Al Quran Al Karim*, *Al Aakida wal Iibadat* and *Al adab el Islamiya*), the new version is divided into five parts. An explanation[101] of each of these sections is important to better understand the structure of each book:

- *Al Quran Al Karim*: it is mainly the parts of the book in which students learn/memorize the *Suar*[102],
- *Al Aakida wal Iibadat*: this section is focused on the faith in God, the Prophet and the *Quran* on one hand, and on the Islamic practices on the other hand (like praying),
- *Al Adab el Islamiya:* this section aims on implementing good manners in the mind of the child. These manners represent the core of the Islamic religion.
- *Al Tazkiya*: Listening and repeating the *Suar* of the *Quran*, and understanding their general meaning,

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[101] The explanation is taken from the introduction of each textbook
[102] Plural of *Surah*

- *Al Kist*: Learning how to love God and some values like the love to the parents and how we treat people,

- *Al Iktidaa*: Learning from and about the Prophet through concrete stories of his life (his birth etc…),

- *Al Istijaba*: Following the example of the Prophet through his behaviors and practices (prayer, *woudou*),

- *Al Hikma*: Focused on good behaviors like protecting the environment.

After having defined each section of the textbooks, we can now better understand the direction taken by every textbook. In fact, we notice that the new version is more specific, more pragmatic and more illustrative.

First, we notice that contrary to the old version that has a linear and rigid division, the new one is more specific: in fact, although both divisions have approximately the same content, the sections in the new version specify in details the purpose of the lessons. This can be noted on one side by the goals specified at the beginning of each lesson. In fact, in the new version of the textbooks, on the upper left side of each lesson, a small section called *"ahdaf al taalim"*[103] exposes what the main goals of the lesson are. (Cf. Supporting document 4) On the other side, this specificity also shows in the vague vocabulary used in the old version (*Iibadat*, *Adab* etc…) compared to the very specific meaning of the vocabulary used in the new version: *Istijaba*, *Iktidaa*.

This difference can also be noticed on the level of the structure of each lesson: in fact, in the old version, two of the three sections had the same instructions. Moreover, these instructions were very much focused on memorizing and chanting[104]. On the contrary, in the new version, each of the five sections section has specific instructions and the focus is more on the learning and the understanding, than on the memorizing. This point is very important and relevant to the analysis because it shows that one of the goals of the reform is to enhance critical thinking and avoid robotic memorization. Moreover, its application at the very first stage of the learning of Islamic education (in this case in the first three years of primary

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[103] Goals of the lesson

[104] "To sing a religious prayer to a simple tune." – Cambridge dictionary

school) is very important to train children's minds on questioning more than repeating without understanding.

In addition to the criteria of specificity, we can underline that the new version is more pragmatic. As a matter of fact, it teaches values and good manners through practical examples of the Prophet's life. Moreover, the values it promotes are examples of the everyday life (environment for example), whereas examples in the old version are more static.

Finally, we can say that the structure of the new version is more illustrative because it enhances the imagination and the correlation in the student's mind: giving stories of the Prophet's life for example, allows the child to relate to the story, therefore to act upon it.

One final idea can be pointed out in the comparison: in the new version of the textbooks, the section related to the chanting[105] has been removed. This shows the tendency taken by the reform to adapt the textbooks to the age of the children: learning how to chant parts of the *Quran* is not primordial at this stage of the learning of Islamic education.

ii)   Comparison of the structure of the textbooks of the third year of primary school

	Textbook before the reform	Textbook after the reform
Number of pages	80 pages	80 pages
Organization of the textbook	3 different themes: -*Al Quran Al Karim* -Al Aakida wal Iibadat -Al Adab wal *Hadith*[106] + exercices	5 different themes: -Al kist -Al iktidaa -Al tazkiya -Al istijaba -Al hikma + exercices

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[105] "To sing a religious prayer to a simple tune." – Cambridge dictionary
[106] "A collection of traditions containing sayings of the prophet Muhammad that, with accounts of his daily practice (the Sunna), constitute the major source of guidance for Muslims apart from the Koran. » - Wikipedia

Structure of a lesson	For the *Quran*:	For the *Quran*:
	-Listening -Understanding -Exercise -Memorizing and chanting -Conviction and engagement Other section: -I remember -I look and I express -I read -I understand -I take a closer look to the meaning of the text -I evaluate my knowledge -I engage -I complete my knowledge -I continue learning -Exercise	-I listen -I chant -I compete on reading with my friends -I understand -I recite the *Surah* -I evaluate my knowledge -I support my knowledge -I continue learning Other sections: -I understand -I apply -I evaluate -I complete my knowledge -I continue learning

Table 8: Comparison of the structure of the textbooks of the third year of primary school

The first point to underline while comparing the textbooks of the third year of primary school is that the size of the book is still the same (80 pages). As seen for the two previous years, the organization of the textbook after the reform is more specific. In fact, it is divided into five sections, whereas the old version is only divided into three.

However, contrarily to the case of the first and the second year, when it comes to the analysis of the structure of a lesson, we should distinguish between the instructions related to the *Quran* and the instructions for other sections of the textbooks. In fact, the instructions for the learning of the *Suar* in the new version of the textbook are more detailed and seem to guide the student step by

step in order to memorize the *Suar*. On the contrary, for the other sections of the textbooks, we notice that the instructions in the old version were more detailed than in the new version.

iii)   Vertical analysis

The general tendency in the textbooks of the first and the second year of primary school is to reduce the size of the textbooks. However, this is not the case of the textbook of the third year where the size of the book is exactly the same after the reform. The common change that affected the textbooks of the three years is the modification of the general structure of the textbooks on one hand, and of each lesson on the other hand. Dividing the lessons after the reform is done according to five sections: *Al Kist, Al Iktidaa, Al tazkiya, Al Istijaba, Al Hikma,* whereas before the reform it was done in a more general way, according to three sections. However, it is important to mention that, although in the first and the second year, the instructions for all the sections have a tendency to be more detailed and specific in the textbooks after the reform; it is not the case for all the sections of the third year. In fact, this applies only to the section related to the *Quran* but not for the other sections. Moreover, the chanting of the *Suar* has been deleted in the new version of the textbooks of the first and the second year, whereas it remained as a part of the instructions in the third year. These differences between the first and the second year on one hand, and the third year on the other hand, confirm the conclusions found for the two previous sections (comparison of the cover page and comparison of the pictures). In fact, we can note a sort of heterogeneity in the application of the reform: for the first and the second year the changes are very similar in the new versions of the textbooks, whereas the changes are not always applied for the new version of the textbooks of the third year.

To sum up this section we can say that changes are already obvious in the most basic elements of analysis. In fact, was it on the level of the comparison of the cover page, the pictures or the structure, there are many improvements: concerning the gender balance, girls are given more importance and are represented more often despite the pertaining prevalence of the representation of boys. In addition to this we can note a clear evolution regarding the adaptation of the textbooks to the age of the children, mainly with the substitution of photos with drawings that are more likely to grab a child's attention. However, it is important to mention that this point

is not really emphasized in the textbooks of the third year, compared to the previous ones. Moreover, we note a reduction of the size of the textbooks that is present in the textbooks of the first and second year and absent in the one of the third year. However, the structure of the textbook has been modified in the three years. While in the old versions the textbooks were divided according to three sections, in the new version the division is more specific and detailed and is organized according to five major parts. Finally, regarding the structure of each lesson, there is a differentiation to make between the section related to the learning of the *Quran,* and other sections. For the first one, throughout the three years, we can note that the instructions are more specific and detailed. However, for the second one, in the first and the second year, the instructions are also more specific and more detailed, and seem to guide the student step by step in the learning, whereas in the third year, the instructions in the old version are more detailed.

The comparison of the textbooks in their form led us to two observations: the first is about the elements used by the reform in order to modify the textbooks. In fact, in the new version of the textbooks we were able to define six elements: the gender balance, the adaptation of the textbooks to the age of the children, the decrease in the references to religion, the reflection of the Moroccan culture, the enlargement of the scope of Islam, the promotion of critical thinking.

The second observation was made through the vertical analysis in the three sections. In fact, they made us notice that the application of the reform was not uniform for the three years. In the first and the second years, the six elements are generally more emphasized than in the third year.

As a matter of fact, it would be useful to analyze the content of the textbooks in order to see if the observations made on the level of the form apply to the content.

B. Analysis of the content of the textbooks

In this paragraph we will shed the light on the core of the textbooks: in fact we will be analyzing the textbooks on two different levels: first, the *Suar* of the *Quran* and then the remaining lessons mostly related to practices. The methodology adopted will be the same as the previous paragraph: as a first step we will analyze horizontally the content of the textbooks of each year separately, and then we will focus on a vertical analysis that will point out the evolution of this content during the three years. However, in the paragraph related to the other lessons, for practical reasons, and in order to avoid repetition, the vertical and horizontal analysis will be combined using examples from the textbooks of the three years.

B.1. Comparison of the *Suar* of the *Quran* in the textbooks

Before starting the analysis of the verses of the Quran, it is important to mention that the point of this paragraph is not to criticize the content of the Suar or to question their meaning. On the contrary, the goal is to see on one side if they are adapted to the age of the children, and on the other side to underline how a child might receive or misinterpret the content of some of them.

i) Comparison of the Suar in the textbooks of the first year of primary school

		Textbook before the reform	Textbook after the reform
1	Surat Al Fatiha	X	X
2	Surat Al Tin	X	X
3	Surat Kouraich	X	X
4	Surat Al Ikhlas	X	X
5	Surat El Fil	X	X
6	Surat Al Kafiroun	X	X
7	Surat Al Falaq	X	X
8	Surat Al Nas	X	X
9	Surat Al Kadar	X	X
10	Surat Al Douha		X
11	Surat Al Masad	X	
12	Surat al Nasr	X	
13	Surat Al Kawthar	X	
14	Surat Al Maoun	X	
15	Surat Al Houmaza	X	

16	Surat al Aasr	X	
17	Surat Al Takathor	X	
18	Surat Al Kariaa	X	
19	Surat al Aadiyat	X	
20	Surat Al Zalzala	X	
21	Surat Al Bayina	X	
22	Surat Al Aalak	X	
23	Surat Acharh	X	
	Total	22	10

Table 9: Comparison of the Suar in the textbooks of the first year of primary school

As we can see in table 9, 11 *Suar* have been removed in the new version. As mentioned in the previous section, the number of *Suar* has been reduced in order to give more time for other subjects to be treated and to allow teachers to have more time to explain each *Surah*. Only nine *Suar* have been conserved in the new version and one has been added. We will try, in the following paragraph to explain the reason behind the elimination, preservation and addition of the *Suar* by analyzing the ones we find the most relevant for the study.

-Analysis of the *Suar* that have been deleted

While analyzing the *Suar* that were present in the old version but have been deleted in the new one, we can find some common grounds to them: references to discrimination, violence, death or "hell".

If we take the example of *Surat Al Nasr,* we can clearly notice that it contains references to war. In the same line of thoughts, although *Surat el Kawthar* is the shortest *Surah* in the *Quran* it has been removed because of its connotation to hatred and enemies. Moreover, we can find references to the apocalypse like in *Surat Kariaa'* and many references to dichotomies like good/bad, heaven/hell. In fact, according to this *Surah* if a person has faith, and does good things she or he will be saved from hell (*Surat el Asr*). If a person does the smallest good she or he will be rewarded with good consequences, whereas if a person does the smallest bad thing, he or she will suffer from bad consequences.

We can also note many references to hell in most of the *Suar* that have been deleted. It is for example the case of *Surat Al Maooun, Surat Houmaza, Surat el Asr,* and *Surat el Takathor.* In fact, in these *Suar,* we find the words like "*jahim*"[107], "*Al maout*"[108], "*Al chaytan*"[109].Although we are conscious that these words cannot be interpreted separately because they are put in a context that gives them their meaning, we must underline that it could be problematic to teach 6 years old children references to hell, evil and death. In fact, we consider that even if teachers explain during the class the meaning of these *Suar,* at this age some students do not have the capability to really understand the deep meaning of it. This is probably why these *Suar* have been deleted in the new version.

In the same line of thoughts, while reading these *Suar* we noticed that a good number of them referred to the apocalypse and the resurrection of the dead: this is the case of *Surat Al Kariaa* and *Surat Al Zalzala.* All of these very intense references might be traumatizing for children and might motivate the alteration of their thinking towards negative and violent behaviors or thoughts.

In addition to the *Suar* that referred to violence, death and hell, a particular *Surah* caught our attention because of its possible discriminatory interpretation. In fact, in *Surat Al Bayina,* that is the subject of teaching for three consecutive weeks, there is a reference to the People of the Book[110] and to polytheists[111]. It is interesting to analyze this *Surah* because it can give us an idea about how other religions are described in a first year textbook of Islamic education. First of all, we notice the appellation "*kafirin*" associated to them, which means infidels: this creates a clear separation between Muslims and non Muslims. Moreover, in the second part of the *Surah*, it is stated that these infidels, not recognizing the "essence of the truth" (*Al Bayyina)* concerning the Prophet, will stay forever in hell (*Fi nar jouhannam khalidin*) and are considered as the worst kind of creatures (*hom charrou al bariaa'ti).* Having such a description of "the others" for children who have just made their first contact with religion encourages probably the mistreatment of religious minorities in Morocco. In fact, a child who has just read this *Surat* at school might automatically associate other religions with hell. This goes certainly against values

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[107] Hell
[108] Death
[109] Evil
[110]"Jews and Christians as regarded by Muslim" – Oxford Dictionaries
[111] "To believe in many different gods" – Cambridge Dictionary

of tolerance and respect promoted in the Marrakech Declaration of 2016. This explains why in the textbook after the reform this *Surah* has been deleted.

- Analysis of the *Surah* that has been added

In the new version of the textbook one *Surah* has been added; *Surat Al Doha.* This *Surah* conveys a very important message which explains why it has been added to the new version. In fact, God talks in the first part of it to the Prophet telling him that he helped him in his difficult times: when he was an orphan he gave him a shelter, when he was lost he helped him find the right path, and when he was poor he gave him prosperity. Then, God addresses the second part of the *Surah* to people, telling them to follow his example by helping the orphans and the people in need. Adding this *Surah* underlines the intention of the Commission to promote values of humanity.

To sum it up, comparing the *Quranic* content of the textbooks of the first year of primary school shows the direction taken by the reform towards pacification, tolerance and respect. In fact, old verses reflecting violence and intolerance have been replaced by verses of humanity and altruism.

It would be interesting to see if in the following years, these goals are applied in the same way or if some new ones are more emphasized.

ii)   *Comparison of the Suar in the textbooks of the second year of primary school*

		Textbook before the reform	Textbook after the reform
1	Surat Al Fatiha	X'	X
2	Surat Al Tin	X'	
3	Surat Kouraich	X'	X
4	Surat Al Ikhlas	X'	
5	Surat El Fil	X'	X
6	Surat Al Kafiroun	X'	
7	Surat Al Falaq	X'	
8	Surat Al Nas	X'	
9	Surat Al Kadar	X'	
10	Surat Al Masad	X'	

11	Surat al Nasr	X'	X
12	Surat Al Kawthar	X'	
13	Surat Al Maoun	X'	X
14	Surat Al Houmaza	X'	X
15	Surat al Aasr	X'	X
16	Surat Al Takathor	X'	X
17	Surat Al Kariaa	X'	
18	Surat al Aadiyat	X'	
19	Surat Al Zalzala	X'	
20	Surat Al Bayina	X'	
21	Surat Al Aalak	X'	
22	Surat Acharh	X'	X
23	Surat Al A'ala	X	
24	Surat Al Ghachiya	X	X
25	Surat Al Fajr	X	
26	Surat Al Balad	X	X
27	Surat Al Chams	X	
28	Surat Al Layl	X	
29	Surat Al Douha	X	
30	Surat Al Inchikak		X
	Total	29	12

Table 10: Comparison of the Suar in the textbooks of the second year of primary school

Similarly to the first year of primary school, in the second year the number of *Suar* has been reduced: 29 for the old version and 12 for the new one. It is important to mention that the first 22 *Suar* in the old version are a revision of the *Suar* learned in the first year. As we did for the previous year, we find it relevant to analyze on one hand the *Suar* that have been deleted, and on another hand the ones that have been added.

- Analysis of the *Suar* that have been deleted

As observed for the *Suar* of the first year, we also notice that in the second year, most of the verses that have been deleted after the reform have references to violence, hell, hatred and discrimination. In fact, if we take the example of the *Suar* that were introduced for the first time in the second year, and that were deleted in the new version (*A'ala, Fajr, Chams, Layl*), we sense in all of them negative connotations that may lead to misinterpretations or that may have bad impact on children. For example, in *Surat A'ala,* we find a verse talking about death and another

one talking about people burning in the greatest fire. In the same line of thoughts, *Surat Al Fajr* refers to the severe punishment and to hell, whereas in *Surat Al Chams* words like "destruction", "transgression" and "sin" are used. Finally, in *Surat Al Layl* we can find expressions referring to hell, like "burning fire".

This gives us an idea about the reason why these *Suar* have been deleted in the new version: although all of them have deep and relevant messages, teaching them to kids might be problematic because of some parts that might be understood independently from the rest of the *Surah.* In fact, hearing words repeatedly like "hell", "fire", "punishment", might impact students in a negative way.

It is important to mention here that Surat Al Douha hasn't been mentioned in this paragraph as deleted in the new version of the textbook of the second year, because it has been introduced in the new version of the textbook of the first year.

- Analysis of the *Surah* that has been added in the new version

Similarly to the first year, in the second year, one *Surah* has been introduced in the new version of the textbook: *Surat al Inchikak.* In this *Surah* there is a distinction between those who have done good during their lives (the ones who give their record in the right hand) who will be rewarded, and those who have sinned (the ones who hold the record behind their back) and in consequence will be punished and will burn in a Blaze[112]: this is the case of those who do not believe and do not do good deeds.

This *Surah* encourages students to have faith and to believe and worship God, and explains to them that they should always do good around them because it will come a day where they will be judged for their actions. Although the message behind this *Surat* is positive and promotes "good behavior", it is problematic because it does not give any room for non-believers (atheist, agnostic) which goes against the freedom of conscience. However, this freedom is not even present in the Constitution of 2011 of Morocco; and given that Islamic education should reflect the values and beliefs of the Moroccan society this point cannot really be argued.

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[112] https://quran.com/84

iii) Comparison of the Suar in the textbooks of the third year of primary school

		Textbook before the reform	Textbook after the reform
1	Surat Al Fatiha	X'	
2	Surat Al Nas	X'	
3	Surat al Nasr	X'	X
4	Surat Al Kawthar		X
5	Surat Al Maoun	X'	
6	Surat al Aasr		X
7	Surat al Aadiyat		X
8	Surat Al Zalzala	X'	X
9	Surat Al Bayina	X'	
10	Surat Acharh	X'	X
11	Surat Al Aala	X'	X
12	Surat Al Ghachiya	X'	
13	Surat Al Fajr	X'	
14	Surat Al Balad	X'	
15	Surat Al Chams	X'	X
16	Surat Al Layl	X'	
17	Surat Al Douha	X'	
18	Surat Attakwir	X	
19	Surat Al Infitar	X	X
20	Surat Al Moutafifin	X	
21	Surat Al Inchikak	X	
22	Surat Al Bourouj	X	X
23	Surat Al Tarek	X	X
24	Surat Al Insan		X
	Total	20	12

Table 11: Comparison of the Suar in the textbooks of the third year of primary school

As for the two previous years, the number of *Suar* has been reduced in the new version of the textbook (20 *Suar* before the reform and 12 after). In order to better understand the modifications that took place in the new version of the textbook, we will analyze the *Suar* that have been deleted and the one that has been added.

- Analysis of the *Suar* that have been deleted

The analysis will mainly focus on *Surat Attakwir* and *Surat Al Mutafifin,* because these two *Suar* have been introduced for the first time in the third year (they were not part of any of the textbooks of the first or the second year). Analyzing them explains, as for the previous years, why the commission chose to delete them. In *Surat Attakwir* some verses refer to the "wild beasts gathered", "the seas filled with flames", a "girl buried alive" because she committed sins, "hell fire". In the same line of thoughts, in *Surat Al Moutafifin*, people who deny the "Judgment Day" are described as "sinful transgressors" and are bound to "burn in Hellfire"[113]. Moreover, in the same *Surah*, we can find in one verse a description of people who committed crimes and who were found laughing at those who believed.

All these references can be really traumatizing for children if they are not explained in an accurate way. Here comes the role of the teachers who should find the right strategy to convey the message of the *Surah* while avoiding misinterpretation and misuse of the problematic words or expressions mentioned above.

- Analysis of the *Surah* that has been added

Surat Al Insan contains many messages: the first one is that humans are the result of the will of God and have been conceived by a man and a woman. Second, God guided these humans on the right path; therefore they should be grateful. Third, there's a clear distinction between infidels and believers: the former is bound to be dragged to hell while the latter must be rewarded by enjoying Paradise. Believers should help the orphans, the poor and the prisoners without asking anything in return: the only motive of their good action is the Love of God and the will to receive his "reward" (of going to Paradise). In the verses that follow, there's a description of the Paradise that emphasizes on its beauty and perfection. In addition to this, one of the messages of this *Surah* is that believers should preach the messages of the *Quran* and should invoke God in their prayers.

This *Surah* is very rich in meanings. In fact, it encourages student to have faith, to be good to people in need and to worship God by praying. As a consequence to their actions, they will be rewarded by being sent to Paradise.

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[113] https://quran.com/83

After having compared horizontally the *Suar* in each year separately, we will now see how the content related to the *Quran* has evolved through the years.

iv)   Vertical analysis of the Suar

		T1B	T1A	T2B	T2A	T3B	T3A
1	Surat Al Fatiha	X	X	X'	X	X'	
2	Surat Al Tin	X	X	X'			
3	Surat Kouraich	X	X	X'	X		
4	Surat Al Ikhlas	X	X	X'			
5	Surat El Fil	X	X	X'	X		
6	Surat Al Kafiroun	X	X	X'			
7	Surat Al Falaq	X	X	X'			
8	Surat Al Nas	X	X	X'		X'	
9	Surat Al Kadar	X	X	X'			
10	Surat Al Douha		X	X		X'	
11	Surat Al Masad	X		X'			
12	Surat al Nasr	X		X'	X	X'	X
13	Surat Al Kawthar	X		X'			X
14	Surat Al Maoun	X		X'	X	X'	
15	Surat Al Houmaza	X		X'	X		
16	Surat al Aasr	X		X'	X		X
17	Surat Al Takathor	X		X'	X		
18	Surat Al Kariaa	X		X'			
19	Surat al Aadiyat	X		X'			X
20	Surat Al Zalzala	X		X'		X'	X
21	Surat Al Bayina	X		X'		X'	
22	Surat Al Aalak	X		X'			
23	Surat Acharh	X		X'	X	X'	X
24	Surat Al Aala			X		X'	X
25	Surat Al Ghachiya			X	X	X'	
26	Surat Al Fajr			X		X'	
27	Surat Al Balad			X	X	X'	
28	Surat Al Chams			X		X'	X
29	Surat Al Layl			X		X'	
30	Surat Al Inchikak				X	X	
31	Surat Attakwir					X	
32	Surat Al Infitar					X	X
33	Surat Al Moutafafin					X	
34	Surat Al Bourouj					X	X
35	Surat Al Tarek					X	X
36	Surat Al Insan						X
	TOTAL	**22**	**10**	**29**	**12**	**20**	**11**

Table 12: List of the Suar in the textbooks of the three years of primary school, before and after the reform

In the table each textbook is designated by "T" followed by the year (1, 2 or 3) and finally the letter "B" for textbooks before the reform and "A" for textbooks after the reform.

In this paragraph, we will only analyze the elements that we find relevant for our study. In other terms, this table helps us pointing out two major things: the first one is that for the three years, only three *Suar* have been added after the reform. Therefore, it would be interesting to see if these *Suar* have a common vector that could help us better understand one of the purposes of the reform.

In addition to this, the second point concerns the *Suar* that were present in at least one of the old versions of the textbooks but are not present in any of the new versions. This vertical analysis should be made to complete the horizontal ones we did above: in fact, the comparison made before showed us per year which are the *Suar* that have been removed and which ones have been added. However, this does not exclude the fact that if a *Surah* was removed from one year, it might have been added to the year that followed. This is in fact what we will try to figure out in this paragraph.

- Analysis of the three *Suar* that have been added

As we saw previously, in each year one *Surah* has been added. For the first year *Surat Al Douha* for the second year *Surat Al Inchikak* and for the third year *Surat Al Insan.*

Analyzing vertically these three *Suar* gives us the following observations: all of them go in the same direction and promote approximately the same values and ideas: while the first one (*Surat Al Doha)* reveals values of humanity taking the example from the life of the Prophet, the second one (*Surat Al inchikak)* focuses more on faith and the differentiation between people who do good and people who do bad; therefore, the importance of helping others. Finally the last one (*Surat Al Insan)* refers to the *Quran,* the importance of Islamic practices like praying for example, and finally the specific attention that should be given to helping people in need (orphans, poor, prisoners).

These ideas help us understand the direction taken by the reform on two levels: the first one is to ensure a sort of continuity in the teaching of the *Suar:* in fact, we notice that the same ideas come back in different years, and the *Surah* added in the third year sums up, to a certain extent, the ideas of the *Suar* of the first and second year: it puts in relation the notions of faith, humanity, God, *Quran* and Islamic practices. This last point leads us to the second conclusion: the *Suar* that have been added aim to enlarge the scope of the Islamic religion by interrelating many of its elements: in fact Islam is not only about believing or praying, but it also touches the aspects of our daily life. It's not only present while we are praying, but itis also revealed in our actions. In other terms, through these *Suar* Islam is being redefined as a "multi-parties" relation: a relation with God through practices, a relation to others through values of humanity and a relation with ourselves through the strengthening of our beliefs.

- Analysis of the *Suar* that are not present in any of the new textbooks

By opposition to the previous paragraph that helped us draw the main ideas towards which the reform is converging, this one will help us determine the elements that the reform is trying to diverge from. In fact, in the eight *Suar* that have been completely deleted from the textbooks of the three first years of primary school, we can find three tendencies: the first one is the elimination of references to Hell and violence: in fact, in *Surat Al Masad, Surat al Kariaa, Surat Al Fajr, Surat Al Layl, Surat Attakwir and Surat al Mutafifin,* the idea of hell is present under different forms: "fire", "hell", "girl buried alive", "bound to burn in Hellfire", "sinful transgressors", "flames", "severe punishment", "worst kind of creatures".

The second one is the idea of intolerance that is mainly present in *Surat Al Bayina.* In fact, as mentioned previously, this *Surah* talks about the People of the Book and the polytheists who are considered as infidels: if they do not accept the truth of the Prophet, they are bound to burn in hell, being the worst kind of creatures. In the same line of thoughts, in *Surat Al Aalak,* which is the first *Surat* that has been revealed to the Prophet, people who mistreat Islam will be dragged from their forehead to hell. These two *Suar* can be interpreted as a large intolerance against other religions and other beliefs.

The final tendency is the one in which stories of the Prophet are used to convey negative messages: in fact in *Surat Al Masad*, one part of the life of the Prophet was used to tell that the

Prophet's uncle and his wife had to go to Hell because they tried to harm the Prophet. However, these negative connotations have been replaced in the new versions of the textbooks by other *Suar.* For example, we note the use of the Prophet's life in order to promote good and positive messages like Humanity (example of *Surat Al Doha*).

B.2. Comparison of the other elements of Islam presented in the textbooks

In this paragraph we will analyze all the parts of the textbooks other than the ones related to the *Quran*. These are mainly related to God, the Prophet and practices.

	T1B	T1A	T2B	T2A	T3B	T3A
God	X (1)	X (7)	X (3)	X (8)	X (1)	X (7)
The Prophet	X (1)	X (6)	X (1)	X (6)	X (1)	X (6)
5 pillars of Islam	X (1)		X (1)			
Al Wudu	X (2)	X (2)	X (2)	X (2)	X (3)	X (3)
Prayer	X (5)	X (1)	X (6)	X (4)	X (6)	X (3)
Values	X (2) -Parents -People in need	X (6) -Helping -Preserving water -Environment -Being nice to friends -I help my friends -I thank people	X (8) -Parents -Cleanliness -Animals -Plants -Avoiding bad words -Good frequenting -Honesty	X (9) -Hatred and mocking -Helping at home -Wasting food and water -Environment -Helping -I work hard -Health -I repair	X (8) -Good frequenting -Parents -Empathy -Cheating -Bad words -Honesty -Avoiding bad people -Begging	X (11) -Respecting other people's rights -Environment -Taking care of the body -Helping victims and promoting justice -Forgiveness -Helping others
Other	X (6)	X (3)	X (2)	X (1)	X (1)	

Table 13: Comparison of the content of the textbooks (other than the Quran) of the three years of primary school

Comparing the content of the textbooks (other than the *Quran*) underlines two main ideas: the first one shows that the new versions of the textbooks reserve a wider importance to chapters related to God and the Prophet: in fact, while in the old version we had respectively 1, 3 and 1 chapter related to God, in the new versions we have respectively 7, 8 and 7 chapters. Similarly, in the case of the chapters related to the Prophet, while in the old versions of the three years there was only one chapter, after the reform the number increased to six chapters. This important evolution shows two ideas: the first one, related to God, explains why we should worship, love and respect Him, he is the initiator of all the good; life and universe are his creations. In fact, in each chapter there is a specific focus on one of his qualities (loving, creator etc…). However, in the case of the chapters related to the Prophet, their number increased because in the new version, some stories of the Prophet are used to serve as an example for students about how one should act. One of the examples is the importance of helping orphans: in fact this has been taught though the story of the Prophet who was himself an orphan and has been helped by God.

The second observation that we can draw is that the new versions are less technical and more practical. In fact, in table 12 we can clearly notice that on one hand the old textbooks gave a larger importance to practices (like prayer) than the new versions. For example in the first year of primary school five chapters were reserved for the explanation of the five prayers of the day, whereas the new version of this textbook had only one chapter explaining the number of prayers per day, without going into the technical details of how each one is supposed to be done. On the other hand, although all the versions of the textbooks before the reform give a special attention to values (except in the first one), the new versions elaborate it more and give more practical examples. In fact, after the reform, the values comprise the self, the other, the environment, civic values, whereas old versions are more focused on others and the environment. Introducing civic values and self-centered values lead us to the following observations: the importance of the civic engagement, which means that Islam also concerns our actions to improve our society/country. The second observation is related to the importance of self development. These two ideas reveal nowadays the need to educate people on values that would encourage them to build rather than to destruct, to work on themselves and society rather than against it.

To sum it up, the analysis of the content of the textbooks revealed new elements that were not present in the analysis of the textbooks in their form. In fact, these elements can be described as following. In the new version the tendency is to promote values on all levels (self, family, society), and to diverge from references to violence or hell. Moreover, after the reform, the practical side of religion is given a larger importance than its technical side.

One last element can be concluded from this section: by opposition to the previous chapter, we can see that the reform of the content affected in the same way the textbooks of the first, the second and the third year of primary school. This was not the case on the level of the form, where we noted that the impact of the reform was more emphasized in the textbooks of the first two years of primary school.

After having analyzed in details the form and the content of the textbooks before and after the reform, it would be useful to put all the observations made in relation, in order to answer the question of the research.

III. Discussion and conclusion

In the previous chapters, we have seen two different aspects of the reform: the first one treated the reform on the level of society by pointing out the main obstacles present in the public debate, whereas the second one analyzed it more from the roots, on the level of the textbooks. The conclusions drawn in both chapters allow us, in this section, to confront the different elements that we found and to make a link between the previous analyses. This brings us to discuss the difficulties implied by a religious reform was by the simple nature of this reform, by the legitimacy of the State to take this reform, or by the gaps that it encloses. After this discussion we will conclude by answering the main question of the research.

A. Difficulties implied by a religious reform

A system is the accumulation of many elements. Reforming one particular element of a system seems always problematic because it is always connected to the other elements. Therefore, any change to it has repercussions on other parts of the system. This is exactly the case of religious reforms. In fact, as mentioned in chapter one, the policy of King Mohammad VI after the attacks of Casablanca of 2003 affected all aspects of society (the legal level, the social level, the security level and the religious level). These parallel reforms prove that all the elements of a system should evolve together because they are all interrelated. In the case of the reform of 2016 that was part of this policy; many difficulties arose as a consequence of its implementation.

A.1. Nature of the reform

The first one concerns the nature of the reform: in fact religion is always considered a very sensitive subject because it touches the beliefs of a society. In particular, reforming the textbooks of Islamic education means a modification of the way religion is transmitted at its roots. This brings up the confrontation between conservatives and liberals. While the first ones would want a rigid Islamic education focusing on the technical side of religion, like the importance of memorizing the *Quran* and the necessity of praying five times a day, the others would lean more to a less static vision of religion, that would be more open to other aspects of life and that would widen the definition of Islam. In the same line of thoughts, liberals would focus more on the

promotion of human rights like gender balance and the protection of vulnerable groups. Moreover they would be flexible concerning the idea of omitting certain notions in the curriculum in order to respect the pedagogy of teaching. Deciding which side to take (conservative of liberal) is very difficult, especially that the Moroccan society is a mixture of conservatism and liberalism, which makes the decision more difficult. Therefore, any direction taken by the reform will engage controversies and debates. This leads us to the second difficulty: the legitimacy of the decision taken by the regime.

A.2. Legitimacy of the decision of the regime

The dilemma of choosing between a conservative or a liberal direction for the reform, is in the hands of the regime, more specifically the Monarch. In fact, as mentioned previously, the King in his title of "The Commander of the Faithful" has the absolute religious authority. Therefore, religious reforms should obey to his will. In fact, he was the initiator of the reform of 2016 that followed a series of reforms since 2003. However, these facts point out an important question: is the direction taken by the reform on the initiative of the King, legitimate? It is true that the decisions of the commission who was in charge of the reform was the result of the combined work of *oulemas,* pedagogues and Islamic education teachers, which gives it more credibility. However, before being published, the decisions of the commission had to be submitted to the King; which means that the final version of the textbooks had to reflect the King's will. This overlapping between the political and the religious authorities makes inevitably the redefinition of religion a pure reflection of the political regime. This leads to a difficulty in the acceptance of the reforms by some stakeholders.

A.3. Gaps of the reform

One last difficulty lies in the gaps of the educational reform of 2016. In fact, its effectiveness cannot be fully accomplished if the gaps are not resolved.

i)   The gap between the content of the textbooks and the teaching

Education comprises three main components: the curriculum that is concretized by the textbooks, the teachers and the students. The Ministry of Education can "control" two of these elements: the

curriculum and the teachers. However, it cannot really define how students are going to receive the information taught during a class. As a consequence, modifying the curriculum without training the teachers lowers the chances of having a successful reform. In fact, the Ministry faces here two problems: the first one is that with the reform of the curricula the content of Islamic education changes; therefore a new way of teaching imposes itself. If teachers are not prepared and trained to comply with this change, the result is going to diverge from the one expected. The second problem is the subjectivity of some teachers. This is problematic in education in general, and more particularly in Islamic education. In fact, it implies a lot of interpretations and analysis. It is then very easy to juggle with the meaning of verses for example. Moreover, this subjectivity can lead to heterogeneity in the teaching: if each teacher conveys the messages that convene his or her own beliefs, we will have different ways of receiving the same information at the level of the students.

ii)   The gap between religion, education and the legal framework

One of the main gaps of the reform is the one between education, religion and the legal framework. In fact, reforming Islamic education implies changes on the level of education and religion. However, modifying the content of the textbooks should go in parallel with other aspects of the religious and legal system. If the direction taken by the reform is to enlarge the scope of religion, still having in the Constitution some very conservative laws creates a gap between the content of these textbooks and the social reality. Therefore, it is very important to bear in mind, while reforming religious education, the necessity of taking into consideration other aspects that could affect the reform. In fact, to maximize the effectiveness of the religious education reform, all the other aspects must go in the same direction.

B. Conclusion

Despite the numerous difficulties that affect the implementation of a reform, the simple fact of trying to modify Islamic education is a step forward. In fact, it is a sign that the system is putting into question its strategies of teaching. This proves the will to move forward and to diverge from being stuck in a static and rigid system. Moreover, the reform is an improvement compared to the previous situation. In fact, even if it fails to meet its goals, it is always good to try in order to

improve. If we take the example of the reform of 2016 on religious education in Morocco we can note that in spite of the important controversy that took place in the public debate, less than one year after the decision of the King to reform the Islamic education textbooks, students were already using the new textbooks during the academic year 2016-2017. Despite the fact of whether this initiative effectively helps in fighting extremism, its simple implementation constitutes a step forward.

However, in order to be able to move forward and to enhance this reform in the future, it is important to understand what the strategy behind this reform was, in order to promote a more moderate version of Islam. In fact, as exposed in the introduction, the point of this study is to understand how the Ministry of Education tried to promote a "more moderate" Islam through the reform of the textbooks. In other terms, the idea is to point out the elements on which the reform focused to "fight" extremism through education.

When talking about a "more moderate" version of Islam, the tendency would be to think that the reform of the Islamic education textbooks would focus only on removing references to violence and intolerance. This was not the case in the reform of 2016, because the strategy it used to promote a more tolerant Islam was more polyvalent than the simple fact of narrowing down the modifications to these references. In fact, the revision of the textbooks tried to reshape the way Islam is perceived by students since their youngest age.

To make this possible, the strategy had to focus on modifications on two different levels: the form and the content. Each one of these levels has a specific importance. The form of a textbook constitutes the first contact between a student and the subject that is being taught, in this case Islamic education. This is why, as a first step, the reform tried to reshape the way textbooks are presented. First, they became more similar to children's books in their form in order to attract student's attention. This was possible by the modification of colors, and the substitution of photos by drawings.

Second, the textbooks after the reform seem to converge to a more explicit gender balance to let young boys and girls relate equally to them and to feel implicated in the learning of Islam. This was obvious in the multiplication of the representations of women and girls in the textbooks, especially in religious practices like prayers and *wudu.*

Third, we noted that new textbooks maintained the reflection of the Moroccan culture in their form, was it by the representation of people wearing traditional Moroccan clothes, or by including pictures of Mosques in Morocco.

Fourth, we can observe in the form of the new textbooks the tendency to enlarge of the scope of religion. In fact, before even reading the content of the textbooks we see the substitution of some religious references with elements of the everyday life like the environment, science and family. This underlines that Islam is not only present during religious practices but it is more reflected in our daily habits outside religious practices.

Finally, the last element that can be noticed in the form, more particularly in the structure of the textbooks, is the promotion of critical thinking. This was introduced through the reduction of the size of the textbooks on one side, and on the less evident insistence on the memorization and the chanting of the *Suar* of the *Quran,* on the other side. This underlines the will to stop focusing on the robotic memorization and to enhance instead a critical mind.

These observations made previously, show that the strategy of the reform to promote a more moderate version of Islam had to stress on the level of the form, on elements that are not related to violence or intolerance. However, this was not the case on the level of the content where we were able to point out four other elements. The most obvious one was the elimination of the *Suar* that have a violent content referring to wars, Hell or intolerance. This element is the most expected one because extremism is always associated with violence against other religions or other beliefs.

The second element, less obvious than the first one, was the large importance given in the new textbooks to God and the Prophet. This was made possible on one hand by adding chapters that focus on the qualities of God and on the other hand by using stories of the Prophet as positive examples to be followed. These two observations show the will of the reform to focus on the importance of Faith and good behavior.

This element can be complemented by the third one where new textbooks focus more on the practical side of Islam rather than on its technical side. In fact, the idea behind it is to teach children that Islam is not only about religious practices but more about the way we act and we

behave. It is important for example to know that a Muslim should pray five times a day, but the way each prayer is supposed to be done is not primordial in the first year of primary school.

The last element that we were able to observe is the specific attention given in the new textbooks to values. This goes in pair with the element of the enlargement of the scope of Islam, mentioned in the form. In fact, the new versions of the textbooks try to promote the image of Islam as a core of values that is present not only when we practice religion but also in our daily behaviors and relations.

The observations made on the level of the form and on the level of the content of the textbooks gave us a spectrum of the elements that were used in order to promote a more tolerant version of Islam. This can be sum up by saying that the strategy used by the reform is to redefine Islam by redefining the tripartite relation that it encloses: the relation with ourselves, the relation with others and the relation with God. The focus on each one of these relations is important to fight extremism. The "self-centered" image reflected in the new textbooks shows the need to educate children to self-improvement and critical thinking. In fact, training children to work on themselves and to be critical, distances them from narrow-minded thinking usually associated with extremism. In addition to this, the relation with the "other" enhances values like humanity and tolerance and teaches children to feel comfortable with their surroundings. In fact, "the other" can include people like family and friends or things like the environment and the State. Finally the relation with God strengthens Faith and gives children an example to follow.

Radicalization is believed to be caused by a gap in one of these relations, like injustice, social exclusion, radical ideology or personal relationships[114]. Working on strengthening them since the youngest age through education is important in the promotion of a "more moderate" version of Islam.

Although this study cannot constitute a confirmation of the strategy used by the reform for all ages, because it is limited to the first three years of primary school, it gave us at least an idea about the direction taken by the Ministry of Education in the application of the reform, and pointed out how fighting religious extremism has been dealt with on the educational level. It

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[114] https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/researchpapers/Documents/radicalisation-and-violent-extremism-causes-and-/Radicalisation%20eBrief.pdf

confirmed the hypothesis mentioned in the introduction and added new answers to the main question of the research.

To conclude, it is important to mention that fighting extremism through education is a long term strategy. This reform is a step towards fighting extremism and the evaluation of the effectiveness of its strategy cannot be seen on the short term. Therefore, along with the other reforms instructed by the King since 2003, it will help in reshaping the perception of Islam at its roots in the upcoming years in order to continue the promotion of a "more moderate" version of Islam.

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التربية الاسلامية – السنة الثالثة من التعليم الابتدائي – النجاح- 2014

التربية الاسلامية – السنة الثالثة من التعليم الابتدائي – النجاح- 2016

Annexes

1) Supporting document 1

2) Supporting document 2

3) Supporting document 3

4) Supporting document 4

أَهْدَافُ التَّعَلُّمِ

• أَتَعَرَّفُ الْوُضُوءَ عَمَلِيًّا؛
• أُرَتِّبُ غَسْلَ أَعْضَاءِ الْوُضُوءِ.

الْحِصَّةُ الْأُولَى وَالثَّانِيَةُ