

Strategies for Decolonizing the Moroccan University Curriculum: A Qualitative Analysis of Professors' Perspectives

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Abstract

Higher education decolonization has been the subject of ongoing discussion among scholars across various contexts. The case of Morocco is no exception. In fact, the university may be the institution most in need of decolonization. This study aims at identifying key strategies that the Moroccan university professors would suggest for making the process of decolonizing higher education curriculum possible. The data was collected by means of semi-structured interviews conducted with ten university professors representing six different Moroccan institutions, the study, especially, examines their perspectives on how decolonization can be implemented within English departments. Among the key themes that emerged were the need for a context-specific pedagogy, the integration of local knowledge and scholars, and a strong emphasis on comparative studies and critical pedagogy.

Keywords: Curriculum Reform, Decolonization, Critical Pedagogy, Arab-Muslim Intellectual Heritage.

استراتيجيات تحرير المناهج البيداغوجية الجامعية المغربية من مخلفات التعليم الاستعمارية: تحليل كيفي من منظور الأساتذة

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ملخص

يُعدّ تفكيك الاستعمار في التعليم العالي موضوع نقاش مستمر بين الباحثين في سياقات مختلفة. ولا يُستثنى المغرب من ذلك. في الواقع، قد تكون الجامعة المؤسسة الأكثر حاجةً لتفكيك الاستعمار. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحديد الاستراتيجيات الرئيسية التي يقترحها أساتذة الجامعات المغربية لإنجاح عملية تفكيك الاستعمار في مناهج التعليم العالي. جُمعت البيانات من خلال مقابلات شبه منظمة أُجريت مع عشرة أساتذة جامعيين يمثلون ست مؤسسات مغربية مختلفة، وتبحث الدراسة، على وجه الخصوص، في وجهات نظرهم حول كيفية تطبيق تفكيك الاستعمار في أقسام اللغة الإنجليزية. ومن بين المواضيع الرئيسية التي برزت الحاجة إلى منهج تدريسي مُخصص للسياق، ودمج المعرفة المحلية والباحثين، والتركيز القوي على الدراسات المقارنة ومنهج التدريس النقدي.

الكلمات الدالة: إصلاح المناهج، تفكيك الاستعمار، منهج التدريس النقدي، التراث الفكري العربي الإسلامي.

1. Introduction

The role of higher education in shaping cultural identities and intellectual trajectories can hardly be overstated, especially within postcolonial contexts where colonial legacies continue to influence and shape current curriculum. In Morocco, as in many postcolonial societies, traces of the colonial-era remain embedded in university structures, course content, pedagogical frameworks, language of instructions, and even research methodologies (Jamaati et al., 2024; Ennam, 2023). These enduring Eurocentric influences contribute to what Grosfoguel (2013) has termed “epistemicide,” or the systematic removal of indigenous and local knowledge systems. Consequently, Moroccan universities often privilege Western epistemologies, languages, and narratives at the expense of the country’s own diverse linguistic and cultural heritage. Yet, an emerging body of literature advocates for recognizing the rich intellectual legacies of Arab-Muslim, Amazigh, and North-African thinkers as part of the Moroccan legacy and identity has emerged.

Within this growing discourse, a North-Afro centric perspective has gained particular recognition as a lens through which a reform of the Moroccan university curriculum could be seen. While the concept of Afrocentrism has historically emphasized sub-Saharan African contexts, recent scholarship highlights the ways in which North Africa, and Morocco in particular, functions as both African and Arab-Muslim, bridging cultural and intellectual worlds. This dual identity highlights the importance of situating Moroccan higher education within its regional North-African/Arab-Muslim context, rather than preserving an exclusively Eurocentric framework. Influenced by important postcolonial and decolonial theorists such as Paulo Freire (1970), Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o (1986), Edward Said (1978), and Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) this perspective stresses the power of education to reclaim local epistemologies, languages, intellectual heritages, and cultural identities.

In a previous study, Guoddar and Ennam (2024) investigated Moroccan university professors’ perceptions of curriculum colonization through a quantitative survey. The findings revealed a broad consensus among Moroccan university professors that the curriculum remains heavily influenced by colonial legacies, indicating the need for a shift toward North Afrocentric approaches. Professors highlighted the marginalization of local knowledge systems and advocated for reforms that would integrate North African Studies into university curriculum admitting that some of them were already indulged individually in the process. While the quantitative data provided valuable insights into the extent of these perceptions, they left unanswered questions regarding the specific strategies Moroccan professors might suggest for making the shift happen.

Despite increasing calls for such reforms, empirical studies on decolonizing the Moroccan university curriculum—particularly those centered on Moroccan professors’ and students’ experiences—remain limited. Many educators and policymakers continue to impose practical questions: How can local intellectual traditions be integrated meaningfully into existing course structures? What are the challenges and opportunities presented by comparative studies that juxtapose Western and non-Western texts? To what extent can critical pedagogy and discourse analysis help Moroccan students uncover and challenge colonial legacies and mainstream narratives? This article addresses these questions by examining the perceptions and experiences of Moroccan university professors who advocate for shifting from a Eurocentric approach to a North-Afro centric framework. Through

qualitative interviews and an analysis of suggested curriculum reforms, this study explores how the integration of local, Arab-Muslim, and broader African knowledge systems might reshape higher education in Morocco. Building on existing decolonial scholarship, the study aims to contribute both theoretical insights and practical strategies for educators, administrators, and policymakers seeking to encourage a more inclusive and local learning environment.

2. Literature Review

The concept of decolonization has gained significant attention in educational discourse, particularly within postcolonial contexts where the curriculum often reflects enduring colonial legacies. This literature review explores the decolonization of higher education, focusing on the Moroccan university curriculum.

Decolonization in education refers to the process of dismantling colonial influences embedded in curriculum, teaching methods, and institutional structures (Smith, 1999; de Sousa Santos, 2014). Foundational thinkers such as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986) emphasize the role of education in preserving cultural identities and in resisting cultural domination they also argue for the restoration of indigenous languages and knowledge systems. Similarly, Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) advocates for a dialogical approach to education that empowers learners to challenge oppressive structures via exposing them to the alternative narrative as well. The colonial legacy has left behind a wounded curriculum that cannot be recognized by its own people. In fact, over the past two decades, scholars have argued the importance of a decolonial approach to curriculum development by highlighting the need for "epistemic disobedience" (Mignolo, 2009) and the creation of "pluriversities"—educational spaces that accommodate diverse ways of knowing (de Sousa Santos, 2014). In such frameworks, decolonizing education is not simply about adding local content to Western frameworks but involves reshaping fundamental epistemological assumptions that have historically privileged Eurocentric narratives (Magnat, 2014) in favor of a more local approach that showcases the alternative narrative that has long been forgotten. Within postcolonial contexts, decolonization thus seeks to realign educational practices with local histories, cultures, and epistemologies, making education a tool for liberation rather than assimilation (Fanon, 1963; Maldonado-Torres, 2016).

Today, and within higher education milieu, more and more scholars argue that Western-centric curriculum marginalizes local knowledge systems, recognizing Eurocentric narratives as universal and authoritative (Said, 1978). This phenomenon, termed "epistemicide" by Grosfoguel (2013), indicates a serious process of conscious erasure of indigenous knowledge and reinforces colonial hierarchies with the west knowledge systems being on the top. In Moroccan universities, the reliance on Western frameworks, resources, and even pedagogies indicates the dominance of French and Anglo-American thought, spreading a form of intellectual dependency or "expert dependency" as Houssami (2024) names it. The reliance on French educational structures in Morocco is not new but rather rooted in the Protectorate era (1912–1956) and it has persisted through the post-independence period, as policymakers and institutional leaders continued to adopt the French models mostly (Jamaati et al., 2024; Zherlitsina, 2024). This has led to the replication of Western accreditation, assessment, and curriculum norms, effectively marginalizing local languages (Arabic, Darija, and Amazigh) and by

extension knowledges. Critics argue that this ongoing hegemony undermines efforts to create culturally relevant and context-specific Curriculum, reinforcing a form of what de Sousa Santos (2018) names the “cognitive empire” in higher education.

Thus, one of the ways by which decolonization of the curriculum can be achieved is through the integration of local knowledge systems. Studies have highlighted the richness of Arab-Muslim intellectual traditions and their historical contributions to global knowledge, from philosophy and literature to different sciences (Rosenthal, 1975; Makdisi, 1990; Saliba, 2007) produced by both men and women (Guoddar & Ennam, 2025). Thus, the scarcity is not in the contribution itself but rather in its recognition. Moreover, the inclusion of Moroccan, Amazigh, and broader North-African narratives in higher education encourages cultural pride and strengthens students’ connection to their heritage (Said et al., 2023). In Morocco, scholars highlighted the need for incorporating local historical figures, scientific theories and developments from the Islamic intellectual heritage, and regional literary canons to help deconstructing the mainstream narratives (Marcus, 1985). Examples from other contexts, such as the incorporation of indigenous epistemologies in South African education, show the transformative potential of such integration (Le Grange, 2016). Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2014) further argues that recognizing multiple epistemic frameworks, those beyond the Western canon, is essential for producing more unbiased and just forms of knowledge.

On another front, there is a growing body of literature that has been promoting another technique for decolonizing the curriculum and that is comparative studies. Comparative studies provide a powerful means of challenging western hegemonic narratives by comparing and contrasting Western and non-Western texts (Ali et al., 2023). This approach would enable the students to recognize the influences that exist between cultures and the intercultural debates between the two poles. For instance, the making of the Western academic institutions was based on their Arab-Muslim counterparts, a truth often hidden from the public (Makdisi, 1981). The Enlightenment and Romantic literature had a deep and visible engagement with the Arabic and Islamic texts such as the Arabian Nights (Makdisi & Nussbaum, 2008). Highlighting these connections in academia can dismantle and deconstruct the perceived exclusivity of Western intellectual achievements. In Moroccan universities, comparative approaches can be extended to broader domains, including philosophy, history, and the social sciences. For example, exploring parallels between Ibn Khaldun’s sociological theories and the interest that was shown by western theorist illustrates the global circulation of his ideas (Lawrence, 1983). When structured intentionally, comparative pedagogies encourage students to see intercultural dialogues as foundational to the development of knowledge throughout history, encouraging intellectual awareness and cultural pride.

Another prominent technique for decolonizing the curriculum is that of critical pedagogy for it emphasizes the importance of encouraging critical consciousness among learners to question and transform oppressive and dominant structures (Freire, 1970; Shor, 1992). Within the context of decolonization, this involves providing students with analytical tools to deconstruct colonial narratives embedded in texts and the curriculum as a whole. Introducing discourse analysis, critical theory, and postcolonial critique at an early stage can empower students to uncover and challenge biases, encouraging an inclusive and reflective learning environment (Kincheloe, 2008). Moreover, Linda

Tuhiwai Smith (1999) argues that decolonizing methodologies requires educators to be reflexive about their own positionalities and the power dynamics inherent in research and teaching. In Morocco, adopting critical pedagogy necessitates a curriculum shift that centers local intellectual traditions and encourages multilingual competencies (Jamaati et al., 2024). Such pedagogies can cultivate a generation of scholars and professionals who are both globally acquainted and rooted in their own cultural and historical contexts, mitigating the alienation often reported by students educated within Western-centric frameworks (Mignolo, 2009).

Despite its importance, decolonizing higher education faces significant challenges. Some of these challenges that face efforts to decolonize curriculum are institutional unwillingness and systemic reliance on Western frameworks as educational models from former colonial powers continue to shape national policies and accreditation standards (Altbach, 2016). Addressing these issues requires a multilayered approach that includes building institutional capacity, engaging multiple stakeholders in the reform process, and cultivating a national vision that values indigenous and local epistemologies (de Sousa Santos, 2014). While existing literature stresses the importance of decolonizing education, there is a scarcity of qualitative studies capturing educators' perspectives on curriculum reform in Morocco. Moreover, empirical research on integrating Arab-Muslim, Amazigh, and North-African intellectual traditions into higher education remains limited.

This study addresses these gaps by uncovering the voices of Moroccan professors, the real warriors in the terrain, and exploring actionable strategies for decolonizing the university curriculum. This paper argues that curriculum reform requires setting professors as the main agents of change. Therefore, this research offers their insights into how local intellectual heritage, linguistic resources, and comparative pedagogies can be used to encourage more inclusive learning environments.

3. Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore Moroccan university professors' perspectives on strategies for decolonizing the curriculum. Building on a prior quantitative study, which investigated the extent to which Moroccan professors perceive the university curriculum as colonized (Guoddar & Ennam, 2024), this study aimed to delve deeper into the practical reforms they propose.

3.1 Research Design

The qualitative approach was chosen for its ability to provide rich, detailed insights into participants' lived experiences and perspectives. It is highly agreed upon that qualitative methods, such as interviews and narrative analysis, yield detailed accounts of participants' experiences, allowing for a deeper understanding of their perspectives (Chasokela, 2024; Creswell, 2016). Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data, allowing flexibility to explore individual viewpoints while maintaining consistency across key themes. The interview questions were derived from the framework of the first study, ensuring conceptual alignment between the two research phases.

3.2 Participants

The study included ten participants; they are associate professors, assistant professors and even some adjunct professors at different Moroccan public universities. The participants were selected purposively to capture diverse institutional and disciplinary perspectives. This purposive sampling strategy ensured

representation from six distinct higher education institutions affiliated with five Moroccan universities. The professors are all teaching within the English department. Henceforth, the professors will be referred to as P1 to P10 to help the reader identify recurring themes and patterns.

3.3 Data Collection

The data was collected through semi-structured interviews. Some of the interviews were conducted online via Zoom and other different platforms, and some others were conducted face-to-face at the participant's university office. The interviews lasted approximately between 20–45 minutes and were conducted in a conversational style, guided by open-ended questions. Topics included participants' definitions of decolonization, challenges and opportunities in curriculum reform, and practical strategies for integrating local and regional knowledge systems.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

Prior to the interviews, participants were informed about the purpose of the study, their voluntary participation, and their right to withdraw at any time. Informed consent was obtained, and participants were assured of confidentiality. Pseudonyms were used in data analysis and reporting to protect their identities.

3.5 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was employed to identify, analyze, and interpret recurring patterns within the interview data for thematic analysis is designed to uncover recurring themes within qualitative data, allowing researchers to gain a deeper understanding (Sandhiya & Bhuvanewari, 2024). The data were transcribed, coded, and categorized into nine major themes/strategies. The analysis process followed an iterative approach, allowing for the refinement of codes and themes as new insights emerged. Thus, quotations from participants are drawn from semi-structured interviews conducted.

3.6 Limitations

The small sample size, while appropriate for qualitative inquiry, limits the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, as the interviews were conducted in different formats (online and face-to-face), variations in interaction dynamics may have influenced the depth of responses.

This study builds on previous research on decolonizing the Moroccan university curriculum, expanding the discussion by exploring concrete strategies for implementation. While earlier work established the need for decolonization, the present findings focus on how this process can be realized within Moroccan higher education. Participants emphasized that decolonization is not merely about rejecting Western frameworks but about reclaiming intellectual agency, encouraging curriculum self-determination, and ensuring that Moroccan universities reflect the histories, philosophies, and knowledge systems of their own intellectual traditions.

The results reveal several key strategies for achieving this goal, including shifting away from Western-centric models, prioritizing local scholars and resources, integrating Arab-Muslim, Amazigh, and African contributions, enhancing critical thinking through discourse analysis, and encouraging direct engagement with regional authors. **These approaches collectively seek to** redefine the curriculum **so that it is more** historically accurate, culturally relevant, and epistemologically diverse, **allowing students to critically engage with knowledge beyond** Eurocentric paradigms.

3.7 Integrating Local and Arab-Muslim Intellectual Heritage

Both P1 and P7 emphasized the importance of incorporating Moroccan, Arab-Muslim, and African intellectual contributions into the curriculum to provide students with a more comprehensive and culturally rooted education. They stressed that integrating regional texts and critical approaches would highlight the significance of local heritage within global intellectual traditions.

P1 advocated for embedding Arabic and Islamic literary and philosophical traditions into academic Curriculum, stating:

This would be amazing. Even at the level of textual analysis, when we deconstruct texts into their minute components, we recognize recurring characteristics that also appear in other traditions. Extrapolating an Arabic and Islamic curriculum from this would be simply remarkable.

Similarly, P3 highlighted the lack of representation of Arab-Muslim scholars in mainstream education, noting:

We often learn about major Western figures—Newton, Shakespeare, Einstein—but very few students know about Al-Farabi or Ibn al-Haytham. Unless they seek this knowledge on their own, they remain unaware of these foundational thinkers. This is a major issue because what is scheduled in the curriculum matters. We do not learn enough about our own traditions, history, and civilization.

P4 and P6 advocated for this inclusion yet expressed an embedded concern about this inclusiveness of the Arab-Muslim narrative itself for P4 states:

Yes, incorporating Arabic-Islamic components can play a valuable role in decolonizing the Moroccan university curriculum. These components offer rich intellectual traditions that have historically contributed to global knowledge across fields like philosophy, science, literature, and ethics. Including them helps reclaim and affirm Morocco's cultural and scholarly heritage, challenging the dominance of Eurocentric narratives (...) However, this inclusion must be dynamic and critical—not nostalgic or dogmatic—to truly contribute to a decolonial and forward-looking academic environment.

P6 further sustains that:

Yes, incorporating Arabic-Islamic components can play a meaningful role in the decolonization of the Moroccan university curriculum, provided it is done critically and inclusively

P5, P8 and P10 have also added to the already provoked conversation started by P1 and P3 Indicating again that the incorporation of Arab-Muslim Perspectives could be of the greatest value to the decolonization of the Moroccan university Curriculum.

Incorporating Arabic-Islamic components would definitely enable us to use a rich intellectual tradition that has long been marginalized or dismissed in Western-centric curricula. Look at what orientalism has done to not only our culture but also our local knowledge. An occidentalist view would be the answer. We produce; they read.

While P8 says

Yes, integrating Arabic-Islamic perspectives can significantly contribute to decolonization by reclaiming indigenous knowledge and fostering cultural continuity. This could involve revisiting classical Arabic literature, philosophical texts, and historical narratives that reflect Morocco's rich heritage while contextualizing them within modern global discourses.

P10 even admitted that their teaching approach already involves this integration within the English language teaching classroom.

Definitely yes. In most of my classes, I tend to bring about aspects from the Islamic culture to raise students' awareness of their identity/reality while showing them the significant contributions of Islam to global knowledge systems (i.e., intercultural communication). This may include peoples' ideas in philosophy, sociology, political thought, and ethics. This could help students understand that modernity is not an exclusively Western project. Of course, this inclusion should be critical, not dogmatic.

These reflections emphasize the need to restructure educational content to ensure that Arab-Muslim, African, and Amazigh contributions are acknowledged alongside Western intellectual traditions, encouraging a more balanced and historically accurate academic curriculum.

3.8 Emphasizing Comparative Studies

Both P1 and P2 emphasized the importance of comparative studies that position Western texts alongside local and non-Western narratives. They suggested incorporating analyses that highlight the interconnectedness of literary traditions.

P7 reflected on the existing emphasis on Western texts, noting:

We think that we favor Western texts too much; these are the main reference texts. But to do justice to our own literary heritage, we must acknowledge its vastness. It is a significant tradition, and there are many important works, even by contemporary Moroccan writers, which deserve attention.

Similarly, P2 underscored the necessity of recognizing intellectual influences across civilizations:

If you're teaching Shakespeare, you also need to teach other writers or philosophers who influence Western thought. Many Western philosophers were influenced by Muslim thinkers, who in turn were shaped by Chinese or Indian philosophers. Yet, we tend to overlook this

P 4, P6 and P8, when were asked about a syllabus that would replace the one we have, all suggested the inclusion of a comparative approach;

P4 Says: ". Students would explore how literature can both reflect and challenge power structures, using decolonial and indigenous critical frameworks rather than relying solely on Eurocentric theories. Assessment would include comparative essays, "

P6 added;

I would adopt a comparative and inclusive framework that foregrounds diverse voices and critical perspectives. The syllabus would include texts from a range of geographies and traditions—such as

postcolonial African literature, Arabic-Islamic intellectual writings, Amazigh oral narratives, and contemporary Moroccan authors writing in Arabic, French, and Tamazight—alongside Western texts.

P8 further adds: “I would design a syllabus that balances local and global perspectives. For example, an English literature course could include postcolonial Moroccan writers, texts that reflect Arab-Islamic heritage, and comparative studies between Western and local literary traditions”

These perspectives highlight the need for a more balanced literary curriculum that acknowledges the global flow of ideas, ensuring that students develop a broader, more inclusive understanding of literary and philosophical traditions.

3.9 Developing Context-Specific Pedagogies through Consulting Needs Analysis

Strategy that was highlighted by the Moroccan faculty is that of developing pedagogies that align with the students’ context. P9, for instance, emphasized the need for teaching methods tailored to Moroccan classrooms, shaped from the cultural contexts of the learners. They stressed the importance of conducting needs analyses to determine what Moroccan students require and how best to address their educational challenges.

For me, it does not make any sense to take a model designed for people from different contexts and impose it on Moroccans. The effort invested in teaching and ongoing reforms, despite being widely discussed, may fall short of achieving meaningful results if they are not grounded in pedagogies that emerge from our own realities and classrooms. We need studies based on our students’ actual needs, focused on the real educational requirements of Moroccan citizens, rather than adopting a one-size-fits-all approach.

This perspective highlights the importance of localized educational strategies. The pedagogical reforms should be contextually relevant to the learners and responsive to the specific needs of Moroccan students.

3.10 Promoting Awareness of Local History and Identity

Speaking of context brings about speaking of localized knowledge. P3 emphasized the need to raise awareness among students and faculty alike about Morocco’s rich history, cultural, and intellectual legacy. This involves both integrating Moroccan local history within its broad African context alongside Western narratives in the curriculum, this way, one will succeed in encouraging a sense of pride in Moroccan and regional identities through education.

Reflecting on the importance of cultural self-awareness, P3 stated:

It is essential to explore and define our identity, understanding who we are as a people, what differentiates us from others, including Western societies. However, there is still progress to be made in achieving a deeper level of awareness about the richness of our history and culture.

P7 agrees stating that: “A truly decolonized curriculum must center local contexts, voices, and knowledge traditions across disciplines.” While P5 indicates that “A decolonized curriculum would offer

the opportunity to introduce diverse narratives, empower our local scholars...”

This perspective emphasizes the need for curriculum reforms that prioritize local heritage, ensuring that students develop a stronger connection to their historical and cultural identities.

3.11 Shifting Away from Western-Centric Models

By extension, introducing local knowledge would necessitate divorcing western-centric models. Thus, our participants eagerly expressed this notion, P1, for instance, critiqued the systemic dependency on Western educational frameworks and policies, arguing for “the development of a locally grounded curriculum that better reflects Moroccan values and traditions”. P2 emphasized the bias inherent in continuing to teach Western Curriculum, stating: “If we are still teaching the same Western Curriculum, we are essentially reinforcing Western perceptions of ourselves. We need to free ourselves from these perspectives.” P6 also calls for “moving beyond the dominance of Euro-American canons and incorporating scholarship from the Global South, Indigenous thinkers, and local knowledge systems that speak directly to the lived realities of our students”

Expanding on this point, P3 highlighted the need to decolonize higher education, noting:

Changing the narrative extends beyond higher education; it applies to various aspects of life. In academia, decolonization involves reconsidering what we teach—the content of our courses—and evaluating the extent to which it encourages a sense of belonging. For example, the textbooks we use often present narratives that may not be entirely accurate, particularly in relation to Africa.

These reflections emphasize the importance of re-evaluating educational content to ensure that it accurately represents local histories and perspectives, rather than perpetuating external narratives.

3.12 Engaging Local Scholars and Resources

Having agreed upon the idea that the western centric approach should be challenged, our participants filled in the gap that this elimination would leave and that is by means of introducing local scholars and texts. Both P1 and P3 emphasized the importance of utilizing Moroccan scholars and resources to guide curriculum reform, rather than relying on imported frameworks or foreign experts. They stressed the need for a more locally driven approach to educational policymaking.

P3 highlighted the lack of engagement with Moroccan experts in shaping academic and policy decisions, stating: “We do not refer to Moroccan experts. We do not use their work in studies. Most decisions are made through a top-down approach rather than emerging from the realities and needs of the people.” P4 joins the conversation through their view of a utopic syllabus that would “include postcolonial works by authors like Chinua Achebe and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, alongside Moroccan writers such as Driss Chraïbi, Leïla Abouzeid, and Amazigh voices. Classical Arabic texts and Islamic”

These perspectives shed the light on the necessity of incorporating local expertise and research to ensure that educational reforms are contextually relevant and reflective of Moroccan academic contributions.

3.13 Encouraging Direct Interaction with Regional Authors

This engagement with local texts, could also be direct instead of confining the students to what some may consider the relics of the past. P1 introduced an interesting technique coming from their own experience. In fact, P1 emphasized the importance of inviting Moroccan and regional authors to engage directly with students, encouraging a personal connection and a deeper understanding of local texts. They suggested that direct interactions with authors could serve as an effective remedy to the current curriculum, which often prioritizes Western literary figures without providing students with a critical framework to engage with these texts meaningfully.

One way to address this issue is to bring in authors who have produced original works—whether from Morocco or other regions—and have them discuss their writing directly with students. Currently, we often impose a curriculum that features figures like Shakespeare, expecting students to engage with these texts without necessarily identifying with them or knowing how to approach them critically.

They even further reflected on past experiences where students benefited from meeting authors from across Africa, stating:

In the past, we had opportunities to interact with writers from Egypt, Algeria, South Sudan, and South Africa. These exchanges allowed us to hear directly from them about their creative motivations, their books, and their literary production. Such interactions provided invaluable insights and a deeper appreciation of regional literature.

This perspective highlights the educational value of direct engagement with regional writers, ensuring that students develop a stronger connection to their own literary heritage while broadening their understanding of diverse literary traditions.

3.14 Enhancing Critical Thinking and Discourse Analysis

Other professors went beyond challenging the mainstream narrative and introducing local knowledges to taking more solid steps towards the decolonization of the Moroccan university curriculum and this time critical thinking comes at play. P3, P8 and P9 emphasized the importance of introducing discourse analysis and critical theory early in students' academic journey to help them deconstruct colonial narratives embedded in texts and Curriculum. By equipping students with these analytical tools, they can critically engage with dominant narratives and challenge perspectives that shape their understanding of history and identity. P3 argues: "Introducing discourse analysis and critical theory at an early level may help students deconstruct the narratives that, in a way, colonize the mind." While P9 believes that decolonizing the curriculum "can foster intellectual diversity, creativity, and critical thinking while also developing students' critical self-awareness".

P8 further sustains that by claiming "A decolonized curriculum would foster critical thinking, cultural awareness, and a more nuanced understanding of global dynamics (...) Encouraging critical pedagogy, where students actively question and analyze the curriculum, is also crucial"

This perspective points out the necessity of embedding critical thinking frameworks within the curriculum, ensuring that students develop the ability to analyze, question, and reinterpret texts from a more informed and independent standpoint.

3.15 Building Frameworks and Models Over Time

Finally, professors have suggested a more global approach that can only be achieved if stakeholders decide to take part in this decolonization process. Both P3 and P2 acknowledged that developing locally grounded pedagogies and frameworks is a gradual process, requiring sustained effort from all parties to replace the embedded Western models with authentic Moroccan approaches. They emphasized the need for long-term investment in creating educational structures that truly reflect Morocco's cultural and academic realities. P9 highlighted the importance of designing pedagogies that emerge from Moroccan classrooms, stating: "We should start thinking about pedagogies that emerge from the Moroccan class." Similarly, P7 suggests that we should start "using decolonial and indigenous critical frameworks rather than relying solely on Eurocentric theories".

P5 thinks of the development of these models in the context of language learning and teaching by imposing the question "We use the CEFR for learning European languages. Can we use a framework of our own?" P3 critiqued the overreliance on foreign research centers and experts when shaping Moroccan educational reforms:

If we think about changing the university system, the first step decision-makers take is to refer to study and research centers. These centers receive significant funding to conduct studies and provide recommendations. However, the so-called experts they rely on usually come from France, the USA, Spain, or other Western countries. We rarely, if ever, involve local scholars in this process.

These insights emphasize the need for Morocco to invest in its own academic and research institutions, ensuring that policy decisions and educational reforms are driven by local expertise and realities rather than external influences.

The strategies proposed in this study reinforce the urgent need for decolonization as an ongoing and transformative process in Moroccan universities. Participants emphasized that decolonization requires more than cosmetic curriculum changes; it demands structural shifts in how knowledge is produced, valued, and taught. Moroccan universities risk continuing to function within the constraints of Western-imposed epistemologies if intentional efforts to integrate local intellectual traditions and redefine educational priorities are demonstrated.

As a follow-up to the previous study, these findings provide a roadmap for implementation, offering practical steps toward decolonizing the curriculum. Ultimately, decolonization must be pursued as a long-term institutional commitment, ensuring that Moroccan higher education empowers its students with an intellectual framework that is rooted in their history, reflective of their cultural heritage, and engaged with the global exchange of knowledge on equal terms.

4. Discussion

The findings from this study emphasize the urgent need for a reform of the Moroccan university curriculum; a reform based on local knowledge, frameworks and scholars, based on diverse curriculum content, and based on critical pedagogical practices. These suggestions, amongst others, align with the broader decolonial literature, which challenges the persistence of Eurocentric frameworks and calls for

the incorporation of indigenous and African intellectual traditions (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1986; Grosfoguel, 2013; Mignolo, 2009). This section discusses how the participants' recommendations echo or extend existing scholarships on decolonizing higher education.

Participants emphasized the importance of embedding Moroccan, Amazigh, and Arab-Muslim texts and perspectives in university Curriculum. Their views echo calls by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986) to "decolonize the mind" by restoring indigenous languages and literature, as well as Smith's (1999) argument for recognizing multiple knowledge systems. By highlighting Arab-Muslim contributions, participants visualize Curriculum that encourages pride in Morocco's intellectual and cultural legacies while challenging the dominance of Western canons. This approach counters what Grosfoguel (2013) terms "epistemicide," whereby colonial educational structures erase local knowledge, and instead affirms the relevance of regional scholarship in contemporary teaching. Another common thread in participants' narratives is the value of comparative approaches that compare Western to local texts.

Many of our participants advocated for situating canonical Western authors (e.g., Shakespeare, Edgar Allan Poe) alongside Moroccan or broader Arab-Muslim works illuminates the interwoven nature of global intellectual traditions (Makdisi, 1990). This comparative perspective resonates with Freire's (1970) notion of dialogical education, where learners critically examine different knowledge systems and cultural influences. It also challenges the hegemony of Eurocentric narratives by revealing historical exchanges, translations, and influences among Western, Arab-Muslim, and other non-Western traditions. Participants also highlighted the need for pedagogies that reflect the socio-cultural realities of Moroccan students. This call aligns with Freire's (1970) emphasis on developing critical consciousness through dialogical methods that start from learners' lived experiences. In Morocco, context-specific teaching methods may involve integrating local languages (Arabic, Darija, and Amazigh), case studies relevant to regional challenges, and community-based research projects that bridge theory and practice (Magnat, 2014).

As Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) notes, decolonial education demands not only the inclusion of indigenous content but also a transformation of pedagogical methods and power relations in the classroom. The participants' focus on elevating awareness of Moroccan history and identity agrees with the wider decolonial literature, which stresses the social and psychological benefits of reclaiming cultural narratives (Fanon, 1963). When teachers include stories of Morocco's historical figures, scientific achievements, and artistic traditions in their lessons, they help students feel more connected and prouder of who they are and where they belong. This supports de Sousa Santos's (2014) view that decolonizing education means valuing knowledge from outside the Western world—and by doing so, we boost students' confidence, curiosity, and cultural pride.

The participants shared their concerns about how Morocco still relies on Western ways of teaching and running universities. They felt this creates a kind of "Cognitive Empire," as de Sousa Santos (2018) puts it, where local voices are ignored. Instead of copying foreign systems, they believe Morocco universities should build their own educational approach that fits their students' culture and needs. This

matches what Altbach (2016) also noticed in other postcolonial countries—using outside rules that don't really work locally. The participants suggested a new path: one that puts Moroccan values, languages, and history at the center, like Mignolo's (2009) idea of "epistemic disobedience." The participants also mentioned how local universities often depend on foreign experts or ready-made curricula, while overlooking the knowledge of Moroccan scholars (Houssami, 2024). They recommended involving Moroccan academics, historians, writers, and community leaders more directly in shaping what students learn. This would not just make the curriculum richer—it would also create a meaningful approach to education that truly fits the Moroccan context. Most importantly, it shifts the focus from relying on Western ideas to recognizing local scholars as creators of knowledge as well.

The participants' practical strategy of inviting Moroccan and regional authors to speak with students is a way to encourage deeper engagement with local texts. This approach resonates with Fanon's (1963) notion of reclaiming cultural agency, as it situates authors—and, by extension, regional knowledge systems—at the center of academic discourse. Such interactions can demystify the creative and intellectual processes behind local works, bridging the gap between theory and lived cultural experience. It also supports Freire's (1970) pedagogy of dialogue, allowing students to critically and directly interrogate their local literatures. Participants highlighted the importance of equipping university students with critical theory and discourse analysis tools from an early stage. This recommendation aligns with Freire's (1970) call for "conscientization"—the process by which learners become aware of the sociopolitical forces shaping their realities. Thus, by training students to read texts against the mainstream and identify colonial assumptions or biases, educators can present a form of critical pedagogy that promotes cultural awareness (Kincheloe, 2008). As multiple scholars have shown, such an approach is foundational for developing "decolonial thinking" that interrogates and ultimately transforms oppressive structures within and beyond academia (Shor, 1992; Magnat, 2014).

Finally, participants recognized that shifting from established Western-centric systems to authentically Moroccan or regional frameworks is a long-term process, mirroring the experiences of other postcolonial contexts (Le Grange, 2016). Consistent institutional support, sustained advocacy, and collaborative research are needed to ensure that localized models are refined and validated over time. This gradual approach speaks to de Sousa Santos's (2014) notion of constructing "pluriversal" educational spaces that honor multiple epistemologies through an evolving process. By acknowledging the long horizon of decolonial transformation, participants affirm that meaningful curriculum reform must be both strategic and persistent. Taken together, these findings reinforce the broader consensus within decolonial scholarship that higher education should reflect diverse cultural and intellectual heritages (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1986; Smith, 1999; Mignolo, 2009; Guoddar & Ennam, 2024). Overall, the participants' perspectives provide actionable pathways that address the "epistemicide" (Grosfoguel, 2013) afflicting many postcolonial institutions. By centering on Moroccan realities and history while actively engaging global intellectual dialogues, these strategies point to a more inclusive and context-responsive model of higher education—one that has the potential to encourage greater intellectual autonomy, cultural pride, and critical awareness among students.

Conclusion

This study tried to offer a qualitative exploration of the strategies Moroccan professors propose for meaningful curriculum reform. The study reveals a strong consensus on the need to integrate Arab-Muslim, Amazigh, and broader African intellectual traditions in order to be able to move beyond Eurocentric models that have historically dominated Moroccan higher education. The findings also highlight several practical strategies, including embedding local knowledge systems in the curriculum, encouraging comparative studies that compare and contrast Western and regional intellectual traditions, and developing pedagogies that reflect the realities and cultural contexts of Moroccan students. Professors also emphasized the importance of critical thinking and discourse analysis as tools for deconstructing colonial narratives, alongside systemic reforms to reduce reliance on Western-centric frameworks. Together, these strategies offer a roadmap for creating a university curriculum that honors Morocco's rich heritage as an Arab-Muslim North-African country. Thus, this study uniquely positions Morocco as a bridge between Africa and the Arab-Muslim world. Such a perspective recognizes Morocco's dual heritage.

The study also raises important questions for future research. While this work transmits professors' voices, further studies should explore students' perspectives on decolonization and examine the long-term impact of implementing such reforms. Mixed-methods research could also track the effectiveness of integrating local and regional knowledge systems into Curriculum, offering empirical evidence for policymakers and educators committed to decolonial transformation. In conclusion, decolonizing Morocco's university curriculum is both a theoretical and practical endeavor, requiring deliberate efforts to dismantle colonial legacies and create space for diverse, locally grounded epistemologies. This study contributes to this vital discourse by presenting strategies informed by the lived realities and professional insights of Moroccan professors, paving the way for a curriculum that reflects and celebrates Morocco's cultural and intellectual richness. The journey toward decolonization is long and complex, but with sustained commitment and collaborative efforts, it is a vision that is both attainable and necessary for shaping a future that values intellectual pluralism and cultural equity.

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