Appraising Oral Admission Tests Used in Moroccan Management Schools (CNAEM)

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In Morocco, many first-rate institutions of higher education use face-to-face interviews to select new coming students. These oral assessments are viewed as the appropriate tools to safeguard academic standards and equity of admissions. Their results are usually accepted as clear-cut, unambiguous, reliable and fair.

Nevertheless, the institutional background, the variety and complexity of the assessments' choices and practices involved at the decision-making level (e.g. policies, planning mechanisms, committees, coordination, etc.), the academic staff's underlying pedagogical attitudes, theories and beliefs, the degree of awareness of these factors, and the slippery nature of the assessment activity may prove challenging and rightly raise issues of fairness, validity and reliability.

The paper will proceed in two stages. First, it will present a review of the literature related to the different challenges of oral admission assessments; notably, policies and decision making, definition of objectives, reliability and validity of the assessment procedure, and site-based management and test security. Second, in light of the mentioned literature, the paper will undertake a detailed examination of the face-to-face interview held within the framework of the Moroccan national admission examination to Management schools («Concours National d'Accès aux Ecoles de Management, CNAEM»). General conclusions will be drawn.

1. Issues of Oral Admission Assessments

1.1. Decision- Making and Policies

The effectiveness and fairness of admission assessments are usually thought to derive from rigorous pedagogical decisions. But some crucial decisions are not pedagogical in nature.

The first of these is the implementation of the principles of transparency, accountability and ownership which form the basis of «sound practice» and fairness in admission assessments. Sound practice, in turn, implicates setting explicit and clear criteria for procedures, structures, and appointment of administrative and academic staff involved in the admissions' assessment. Responsibilities and roles are distinctly determined and resources are openly allocated (The UK Quality Code for Higher Education, 2011).

Intertwined with the distribution of responsibilities is accountability. To achieve this, some conditions have to be met. First, the appointed staff should present the required qualities and competencies to undertake their responsibilities professionally and ethically. Second, they should be provided with the adequate training and support (The UK Quality Code for Higher Education, 2011). And third, they have to be involved in the various activities in a collegial rather than a controlling/controlled manner. Accountability will be then accepted as a natural part of achieving goals and of being efficient (Normore, 2004).

To increase accountability and avoid malpractice, the public at large should have the right to ready and unobstructed access to accurate information. In their book about corruption in education, Hallak and Poisson (2007) point out that:

«Traditionally, the education sector maintains a bureaucratic relationship with its users, as opposed to a culture of openness and transparency. The scarcity of information and its inaccessibility to the general public produce opportunities for corruption, as they prevent any social control» (p.66).

Accountability can also be enhanced through ownership; i.e. employing a bottom-up approach to control and implement public management processes. This means, in our case, that all stakeholders (officials, academic staff, parents, students' associations, unions, etc.) should be involved in the design and policies of the assessment process. Monopolies within the educational sector can pave the way to corruption and fraud (Hallak and Poisson, 2007).

The second decision is related to the degree of involvement of the varied actors in decision-making, relocation of authority and decentralization of the assessment. Depending on the context, some view centralization as a means to facilitate the implementation of fairness in admissions' procedures, especially in countries prone to corruption (Heyneman, 2004; Hallak & Poisson, 2007), whereas others find it a limitation to the autonomy of individual institutions to apply their own criteria and select the applicants most suitable to their special needs (Ahola & Kokko, 2001).

Decisions about centralization, in turn, can determine the degree of availability of the required logistics and resources, and even the assessments' design. Decisions concerning the nature of the test depend on the size of the assessment population and the subsequent costs of the required selectors and logistics. For example, a standardized multiple-choice test can be judged more equitable to an outsized population and cheaper than an oral exam:

«Educators sometimes argue that certain kinds of selection test techniques are 'better' than others. For instance, some might argue that essay questions or oral examinations are better than multiple-choice questions. This kind of discussion, when divorced from context, is spurious**»** (Heyneman, 2004, p.639).

1.2. Definition of Objectives

Equally important is the definition of objectives. A review of the literature shows a myriad of objectives, beliefs and perspectives about what constitutes **«merit»**, or the candidates' abilities and potential which allow selectors to predict the best suitable applicant for a given place on a course of studies.

Thus, the first concern is whether to define objectives in terms of the candidates' prior educational attainment or to introduce other characteristics liable to predict future performance.

School grade point averages have been demonstrated to be powerful predictors of future academic achievement (Geiser, 2008; Yang & Lu, 2001). Moreover, selecting applicants on the assumption of a predicted performance rather than real examination results has raised doubts about relevance and fairness of the procedure (Admissions to Higher Education Steering Group, 2004).

Conversely, a vast body of research has set forth a variety of factors as decisive in academic success. Psychological factors like motivation, intentions, attitudes and norms, degree of aspirations, self- concepts, perception of difficulties and persistence are crucial in students' academic achievement. No less significant are the students' socioeconomic backgrounds, friendships, integration and interaction with faculty and with the institution's administration, management, structures and services offered (Andres & Carpenter, 1997; Béchet, 2008; Reumer and Van Der Wende, 2010).

Likewise, cognitive factors and critical thinking abilities, such as, understanding, remembering, and problem-solving, acquiring knowledge and skills, management and organizational competence, evaluating and innovating are considered essential assets in higher education (Black & Ellis, 2010; Abdallaoui, 2011; Lloyd & Bahr, 2010). They can consequently be goals of admissions' assessment (Epstein, 2007).

Ethical behavior, know-how, knowledge and effective utilization of modern E-Learning resources, cultural literacy, and communicative abilities are other criteria which can predict the applicants' future academic behavior (Epstein, 2007; Chaterjee et al 2011). The use of contextual data (i.e. «the applicant's educational attainment in the circumstances in which it has been achieved») is also recommended to identify the applicant with the most potential and to safeguard fairness in selection and social mobility (Bridger et al, 2012).

The variety of factors described above then demands setting clear-cut definitions and interpretation of goals to avoid a mismatch in understanding and ensure coherence in the admission assessment process, transparency and fairness in selection. Diversity and lack of coordination among the academic staff on one side and decision-makers on the other side, as will be shown in the Moroccan case in the second section, can be a real setback to the whole procedure.

1.3. Validity and Reliability

Ensuring fairness and equality of access to educational opportunities through an admissions oral assessment can be challenging.

In fact, face-to-face interviews seem to present advantages over other forms of assessment. Their real time occurrence and their uncontrolled and interactive nature may allow the assessor to obtain

in-depth information about the student's knowledge, abilities and potential while countering rote learning, cheating and plagiarism. They can also grant students the opportunity to understand the audience, present themselves and defend their viewpoints (Morreale, 2007; Joughin, 2010; Memon et al, 2010).

The other side of the coin, however, is the plethora of interacting factors which affect the successful proceeding of this form of assessment. Bias can easily arise from the test itself or from the examiners' and their interaction with the respondents' characteristics. Interviewers may, for example, seek answers which confirm their preconceived notions or favor candidates who look most like themselves or share with them similar attitudes and opinions (Zimdars, 2010). In fact, many studies have reported that color, religion, gender and social class can influence assessors' judgments and selection outcomes (Soares, 2007; Edwards, 2008). Discrimination can occur in a subtle, hidden manner which even interviewers themselves may not perceive. Oral examinations do not only assess the candidates' professional abilities and knowledge but also their capacity to utilize different discourses (professional, institutional, personal discourses or a hybrid of all three) and to shift from one to another successfully. Candidates may be then faced with communication or interaction difficulties with the examiner. They may not know how direct or indirect to be, personal or impersonal, how literally to interpret a question, etc. Differences in dialect, pronunciation and cultural norms about communication are additional dimensions which may create misunderstanding and reinforce prejudice and stereotyping (Roberts et al, 2000; Morreale et al, 2007).

Validity and reliability are commonly acknowledged to be procedures to help reduce the chances of bias in oral assessments (Morreale, 2007; Epstein, R.M., 2007; Joughin, 2010; The UK Quality Code for Higher Education, 2011).

Validity refers to the extent the testing instrument measures the skills and knowledge it is supposed to measure (content validity). Content of an admission assessment is closely related to the objectives previously defined and agreed on by policy makers and assessors. Thus, if the objective is getting information about the applicants' linguistic skills, the test should measure linguistic skills, not other abilities like mathematical or managerial knowledge. Predictive validity is also determined when the instrument accurately predicts a certain future behavior. For example, the assessor tests reading fluency and vocabulary knowledge on the assumption that they predict future reading comprehension ability. Concurrent validity is ensured when the measurement correlates with a different type of measurement which is supposed to measure the same ability. Here, for example, we could see whether reading fluency correlates with comprehension questions. Validity is also derived from construct validity, i.e. when the instrument's development is based on an adequate theoretical basis (Morreale et al, 2007; Wilson et al, 2012).

Reliability is present when the assessment's results are consistent and accurate. Test-retest allows verifying whether the scores obtained are stable over time (Morreale, 2007). Inter-rater reliability determines whether various examiners agree about the assigned scores. This can be achieved through the examiners' use of the same test's criteria and through having more than one assessor in a panel of an oral interview. Here again assessors' training and coordination among different panels is necessary. Another procedure to reach reliability is Intra-rater reliability. It occurs when the same assessor assigns the same score after some time has passed. This suggests that raters keep some form of records of the examinees' answers for future verifications. Reliability is also attained through realizing consistency across the test items, i.e. internal consistency. To achieve

this, adequate sampling of questions and standardization of items and processes are recommended (Memon et al, 2010).

As can be deduced, validity and reliability are not stable and uniform concepts by themselves. They depend first on the conscious willingness of policy makers and academic staff to find ways to minimize the bias which can be caused by the test, the interviewer, the respondent or the context of the assessment. Second, test planning, explicit criteria and predetermined rating scales are central (Morreale, 2007; Joughin, 2010). Likewise, the academic staff professionalism and their pedagogical awareness of their own beliefs and approaches shape their assessment's practices (Postareff and Lindblom-Ylänne, 2007). Third, achieving principles of fairness requires the implementation of academic integrity and rigor, transparency, ownership and accountability (as described in section «Policies and Procedures» above).

1.4. Site-Based Management and Examination Security

Though critical in safeguarding the security and fairness of the whole assessment process, there is little literature regarding the management of the procedures and activities taking place before and after administering the oral test at the site of the assessment. These activities may vary from practical day- to- day activities like answering enquiries, receiving applications, recording applicants' data, preparing material and spatial facilities, verifying candidates' identity, to setting committees responsible for academic coordination, organizing testing and recording results, networking and collaborating with other government officials external to the site-based institution. At each level of these activities, concern is with the process clarification, facilitation, and security. Again here, transparency, accountability, information and widespread participation of the stakeholders are

paramount in efficient and fair admission assessment. The UK Quality Code for Higher Education (2011) recommends that:

> «*Institutions conduct their admissions processes efficiently, effectively and courteously according to fully documented operational procedures that are readily accessible to all those involved in the admissions process, both within and without the institution, applicants and their advisers*»(p.8).

In fact, in default of briefing clear rules and responsibilities at all levels, of maintaining proper written records of all activities, of providing information and access to these records, of conducting effective supervision and making arrangements for detecting warnings and enquiring into complaints and possible breaches of regulations, several malpractices could take place. These may include: impersonation (a non- candidate takes the test instead of a registered candidate), candidates obtaining external assistance (use of mobile phones), smuggling non- authorized materials, collusion among students, intimidation of academic or administrative staff by candidates, parents or politicians, intimidation of candidates by administrative or academic staff, improper assignment of candidates to testing panels (or centers), falsification of scores or data files by administrative staff, nepotism and favoritism by academic or administrative staff (Hallak and Poisson, 2007).

Fairness of the face-to-face admissions' interview, then, seems complex and daunting. It depends on the educational system's embracing the principles of good governance, notably, transparency, accountability, information and ownership. It equally depends on careful test's design, organization and implementation. Academic professionalism, integrity and rigor and the individual willingness of the varied participants to apply the rules of law and meritocracy are also crucial.

2. Face-to-Face Interviews as Tools of Students' Selection to Admission in Moroccan Management Schools

2.1. Background

When completing secondary school studies and passing the final examination (Baccalauréat), students in Morocco attend different kinds of institutions of tertiary education: universities, public higher education (HE) institutions not related to universities, technical colleges, and private HE institutions. In 2011, the number of newly enrolled students reached 117 687 in the public sector and 35 646 in the private sector. In the public sector, nearly 35% of the baccalauréat holders chose economic, political and law studies, 31% opted for humanities studies, and about 21% chose scientific disciplines[1] .

Public universities, which form the core of higher education in Morocco, admit most Baccalauréat holders without further admission tests, and follow the LMD system-Licence (bachelor degree), Master degree and Doctorate.

Other institutions, with better standing and a more limited admission capacity (e.g. business institutes of the group of ISCAE or the faculties of medicine and of dental studies which enrolled only 1,8% of the new students in 2011), follow highly selective procedures based both on the students' grades and ranking in the Baccalauréat examinations and on admission tests.

Likewise, public Engineering Schools, which roughly replicate the model of the French «Grandes Ecoles», have a very reduced access

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1- See Appendices A & B below. *For more details see the website of the Ministry of Higher Education : Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur, de la Recherche Scientifique, et de la Formation des Cadres*: http://www.enssup.gov.ma/

capacity (only 1.2% of the new students were admitted in these schools in 2011) and are fiercely competitive. In fact, students are required to both attend preparatory classes and sit for entry exams. To have access to «Preparatory Classes» (special post-secondary classes), students have to meet the selection criteria of high standards of achievement in secondary school studies, and of good grades and ranking in the Baccalauréat examination. In the Preparatory Classes, students then follow a two-year programme of their specialties (Mathematics/ Physics, Physics/Chemistry, Biology/Chemistry, etc.) before they sit for national written admission tests. At the outcome of the written tests, a board of examiners decides on the list of students to sit for the oral interview and of the list of students to be exempted (the best ranked students, «Grands Admis», and those exempted from the oral interview «Admis par Dispense de l'Oral»). After the oral assessment's results, the final score is calculated. The written examination counts for 50% and the face-to-face interview counts for the other 50%. Finally, the candidates enrol in the schools of their choice within the limits of the places available and on the basis of their ranking. In other words, the candidates having the best ranking have more choice than those at the bottom of the list (Centre National des Innovations Pédagogiques et d'Expérimentation, 2010).

Public Management schools (other than ISCAE group) have followed the track of Engineering schools by selecting their students from Preparatory classes, and by having recourse to a face-to-face interview for the first time in 2012. In 2013, 500 places were provided for candidates from Business and Management preparatory classes.

Henceforth, the paper will shed light on the oral interview used to select candidates to enter Moroccan public Management schools.

2.2. Face-to-Face Interview for Admission to Public Moroccan Management Schools

This section will be organized in two parts. The first part will describe the face-to- face interview's processes and criteria as they appear in the guidelines provided by the Ministry of Higher Education (i.e. Notice du Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur, 2012). The second part will examine the different aspects of this assessment in light of the literature presented in the first section of the article.

2.2.1. Criteria and Processes: Lack of transparency, Accountability & Ownership

The Higher Education Ministry guidelines are presented in the form of a small brochure which describes in a very succinct manner the test and the procedures.

Thus, the face-to-face interview consists of three tests: «an individual interview», «a theme test» and «an English test». Unlike the written assessment, these tests do not measure the students' performance in subjects they have studied during two years in the Preparatory Classes, but are more open-ended.

The «individual interview» is carried out by panels of two or three interviewers selected from the academic staff of the Management schools or the Preparatory Classes, or the directorate staff. Some people «representative of the economic world» or alumni of the Management schools can be part of those panels.

The test is carried out in two phases: the preparation phase and the interview. Candidates are first given some guidelines in the form of a questionnaire for preparation. Then, they individually meet the interviewers, present and defend their professional projects in about twenty minutes. The interviewers are supposed to «discover the

candidates' personality», «pay particular attention» to the people who are open, curious, imaginative and able to communicate about their interests and their projects" (Notice du Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur (MESRSFC), 2012, p.17)[2]. The interview is to be carried out in French.

The «theme test» also involves two periods; a twenty minutes preparation of a theme proposed to the candidate and an interview period of ten to fifteen minutes. The interviewers should assess the candidate's ability to communicate, understand and define the theme, set an outline, develop a coherent argument, display logical thinking and draw conclusions.

For the English test, the guidelines stipulate the use of an audio recording of a newspaper or magazine article which the candidates «get to know»[3] during the preparation time (the audio recording, however, was replaced by a written short text in the 2012 session). During the interview, candidates have to present a brief summary of the document, make structured comments, and situate it in its «political, economic, sociological and cultural» contexts. The subsequent discussion with the examiners could involve any aspect related to the document or its subject.

The guidelines provided, however, leave many questions unanswered and raise doubts about whether the oral assessment under examination can predict in a fair and accurate manner the students who present most potential and abilities to follow and successfully complete courses.

2- «*L'épreuve d'entretien doit permettre au jury de découvrir la personnalité du candidat. Le jury est particulièrement attentif aux personnes ouvertes, curieuses, imaginatives et capables de communiquer autour de leurs centres d'intérêts et de leurs projets*» (Notice du MESRSFC, 2012, p.17).

3- «*Le candidat prend conscience d'un enregistrement audio d'un article de journal ou de magazine*» (Notice du MESRSFC, 2012, p.18).

In the section Decision–Making and Policies above, the case is made for transparency, accountability, public information and ownership as prerequisite principles to achieve fairness and efficacy. These are acutely lacking in the admissions' assessment under focus. In fact, no information is available about the criteria underlying the selection of decision-makers, committees, boards of examiners, academic and administrative staff. The criteria forming the basis of decisions and policies regarding centralization or decentralization, resource allocation, procedures, and tests' design are equally unsaid. The assessment operation is carried out in a top-down manner with strings in the hands of a few officials. Even the assessors, most of whom are faculty members of the Management schools of concern, are not involved in decision-making regarding the different policies, whether administrative or pedagogic, e.g. objectives, organization of the tests, the nature, format and length of the props to be utilized for the interviews, weighting of the different tests of the interview, etc. Only a few members are appointed by the administration directorate to participate in some committees. The responsibility of the majority of the academic staff is limited to carrying out the interview and assigning grades. They are not even associated in the handling, verification and security of the grades they have assigned, nor in the discussion of the results and of the different issues that could arise/or have arisen during the interview. In fact, no mechanisms are provided to involve the different stakeholders in the process. The outcome could be lack of credibility and lack of individual commitment of the diverse actors involved in the process (see sections Decision- Making and Policies and Site-Based Management and Examination Security).

2.2.2. Pedagogical Dimensions: Elusive Objectives, Lack of Professionalism, Deficient Coordination and Doubtful Validity & Reliability

The second concern is related to the pedagogical dimensions of

the face-to-face interview. These are presented in the guidelines as a vague enumeration of objectives and mere definition of the language of the interviews. No reference is made about the tests' designs, reliability and validity, fairness, rating scales, training and coordination among selectors.

The Individual Test

In fact, the objectives may seem well defined and coherent in the three components of the assessment. Yet, at a closer look, a different picture emerges. In the «individual test», selectors are requested to «identify the personality» of the candidate and «pay attention» to «openness», «imagination» and «communication». These concepts can be interpreted and put into practice in as many ways as the number of the selectors participating in the interview. In fact, not only are the concepts vast, but also most interviewers have had no training in Psychology. They come from varied educational backgrounds and fields (e.g. Management, Computer Science, Communication, Information Science, literature, etc.) and belong to different institutions across Morocco. Moreover, coordination that may allow some minimal validity and reliability of the test as described above (see section 3.1) is absent. Thus, some assessors would use direct questions, whereas others may rely on problem solving, or on the observation of the candidates' attitudes and use of language. No evidence of the validity of the test is available; i.e. the test, based on definite theoretical constructs, measures aspects of the candidate's personality rather than checking his/her religious or cultural beliefs, regional / family background, or the degree of conformity with the assessor's expectations. Likewise, the interpretation and rating of the results are carried out with no means to determine the test's reliability, i.e. it can be consistent across raters and over time. Accordingly, it might be relevant to wonder whether the tests can meet the objectives of «uncovering» the candidates «personality»

and relevant «traits» or simply provide the assessors' subjective opinions. Put differently, the implementation of the principles of validity and reliability (as defined in section 1.3.) seems doubtful in a context characterized by amateurship and improvisation rather than professionalism.

An additional controversy is the use of French in the interview. In fact, there is a general recognition in Morocco that the numerous but hasty and inconsistent linguistic policies have failed and have led to students' low linguistic abilities, especially French. Making matters worse, there is a mismatch between the language (Arabic) used in primary and secondary schools and the language (French) used in scientific/engineering and economic/business disciplines in higher education. This has turned language teaching, especially French, into a commodity which the private sector and the international foreign schools sell to the customers who can afford it. Proficiency in French, a key of success in higher education, is the privilege of a small number of urban Moroccan students (Abdallaoui, 2011).

While there are some grounds for French to be adopted as the language of the assessment, equal opportunities, fairness and social mobility may be the casualty. In other words, using French in the interview is an additional curb to access prestigious public Management schools for students coming from rural areas or disadvantaged backgrounds. They already find it increasingly hard to compete with their age-peer students who come from higher income families and have studied in the best private schools. Other alternatives which guarantee both fairness and educational quality, and avoid discarding possible potential should be considered.

The Theme Test

In a similar way to those of the first test, the objectives of the

second test («Theme»); i.e. identifying candidates' critical thinking and communicative abilities, are both elusive and problematic. As a matter of fact, critical thinking and communication have been revealed to be essential in Management students' learning and career choices, and the usefulness of assessing such competencies is undeniable. Nonetheless, the slippery nature of the concepts and the complexities of their assessments are not to be overlooked. For example, «purpose», «analysis», «inference», «interpretation», «synthesis», «clarity» are but a few concepts or «sub-skills» encompassed by critical thinking. Likewise, oral communication includes a broad range of abilities and skills: e.g. listening, (recognition of speaker' words, interpretation, analysis, etc.), message delivery (enunciation, confidence, nature of responses, etc.), linguistic proficiency (fluency, vocabulary extensiveness, expressions' diversity, appropriateness and shifts in discourse and registers, adequate strategy use, etc.). Besides, it is still controversial whether critical thinking and communication can be assessed as sets of disconnected sub-skills (as suggested in the objectives under focus) or as unitary entities, whether the processes can be dissociated from their contents, and whether a single test can disclose the real nature of one's reasoning or one's communicative abilities (Abdallaoui, 2011; Morreale, 2007; Gray, 2010). In other words, critical thinking and communication are «umbrella» concepts of wide dimensions. The context, the nature of the interaction (between candidates and interviewers), candidates' emotional states, and cultural norms about communication, are some of the factors which determine the candidates' performance. The challenge is to strike the balance between the anomalous situation of the interview and the authenticity of the performance. In addition, defining a rating scale and a level of required attainment could be highly arduous. As is the case for the «Individual Test», in the absence of any particular coordination or preparation of the

assessors, without any consideration of the parameters discussed and without any test design, safeguarding validity and reliability could be a tough endeavor.

The English Test

The third test appears more straightforward. It requires assessing the candidates' English proficiency; notably, understanding, summarizing, presenting and discussing a document and related subjects. Again, the main flaw of these objectives is their complexity and extensiveness. Every single objective can cover a myriad of skills and abilities which interact with the content, context and levels of proficiency. As is the case with the other assessment tests, the interpretation, definition and implementation of the objectives depend largely on the assessors' educational backgrounds, attitudes and pedagogical beliefs. The English teaching staff members are no different in this respect from their counterparts from other fields of study. Assessment practices are demonstrated to depend on the teaching staff's deep rooted views of what language ability is, regardless of the theories' developments or the syllabuses they adhere to; in other words, there is a gap between the theory the staff say they follow and the reality of their practices (Oscarson and Apelgren, 2011). These views may vary from the belief of ability as the mastery of phonics, isolated grammatical items, structures, lexical items, and fluency to adequate cognitive and metacognitive abilities and strategy use, to competence in register and discourse use, and knowledge of sociolinguistic and sociocultural dimensions of the target language (Abdallaoui, 2007; Oscarson and Apelgren, 2011). Thus, for example, some assessors would focus on the candidate's knowledge of vocabulary or on tenses' use, prepositions or some other discrete grammatical items. Others would rely on open discussion, strategy and «authentic» use of the language. The

two tests rely on different theoretical constructs, measure different aspects of linguistic knowledge, use different formats and require different rating scales. Using them to assess and rank candidates can be misleading and unfair.

The preceding analysis, therefore, highlights the slippery nature of the abilities which the face-to-face interview is expected to uncover, and the deceptive belief that they can be uncovered in a single occasion test. It also highlights the essential requirement of implementing the rules of reliability and validity discussed in the first section. These, however, depend both on the assessors' professionalism and close collegial coordination, especially with respect to the concepts' definition, tests' design and procedures to be followed.

In general, however, the broader picture which emerges reflects a deep issue of contradictions and incoherence at the conceptual level of the face-to-face interview under examination. Policy makers seem reluctant to share the assessment policies with the academic staff. At the same time they devise objectives inducing broad and unstructured tests which only the assessors can control individually, or at best with another staff member. In the absence of both full implication of and coordination among the academic staff and of carefully designed and well-structured tests, candidates will be placed on unequal footing and opportunities of inequity and malpractice can arise.

Conclusion

In the case of a national admissions' assessment where one grade can make the difference in a candidate's life choices and careers, the challenges are too great to be assumed by a face-to face interview without appropriate orientations, and sound design and procedures.

It is generally acknowledged that a face-to-face interview may

check for rote learning, plagiarism or any other form of cheating and provide a broad picture of a candidate's holistic competence, like communication or oral language proficiency. It is also believed that (as is the case of the interview under examination) using several tests in the interview or combine it with other written tests may balance out its deficiencies. Still, eliciting the scope of a holistic competence, measuring it accurately and establishing fair comparisons among competitors in a twenty minute- single session may be problematic and certainly not cost-effective, especially when used with a large number of candidates at a national level. Some may suggest that research on the correlation between the predictions of such tests and the students' achievements in their future studies could provide tangible data on the efficacy of the procedure. Still, could such research account for the discarded students with high potential?

Transparency, accountability, public information, ownership, professionalism and integrity are some of the required conditions for the success of a face-to-face interview assessment. In developing countries like Morocco, the process can be long and arduous and, therefore, other alternatives of admissions assessment have to be explored.

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Appendix A

Répartition en % des établissements d'enseignement supérieur universitaire par domaine d'étude 2010-2011
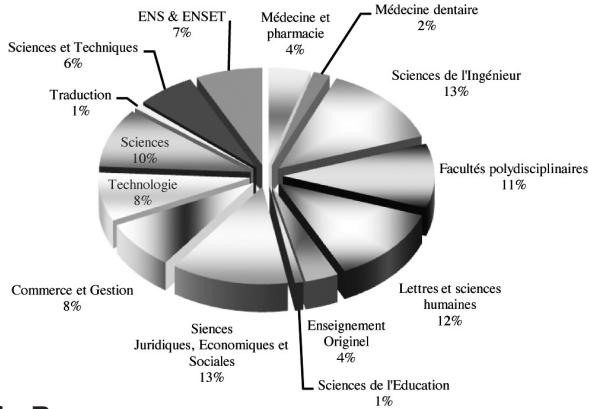
Appendix B

Effectifs des étudiants par domaine d'études

Domaine d'études	2009-10	2010-2011							Var en % (2) - (1) / (1)
		Total tous Cycles	Dont						
	(1)	(2)	N.I. en cycle normale	Cycle normale	Cycle Master	Cycle Doctorat	Féminins	Étrangers	
Enseignement Originel	5 237	6 042	2 360	5 701	197	144	1 813	103	15,37
Sc Jur. Eco et Sociales	113 894	124 348	41 011	109 506	8 724	6 118	60 631	3 072	9,18
Lettres et Sc. Humaines	90 042	107 257	36 425	97 535	4 679	5 043	51 808	1 141	19,12
Sciences	54 908	68 463	24 484	56 061	5 956	6 446	29 311	1 773	24,69
Sciences et Techniques	11 086	13 448	3 907	10 322	1 915	1 211	6 678	519	21,31
Médecine et Pharmacie	11 005	11 844	1 906	10 047	48	1 749	6 893	802	7,62
Médecine Dentaire	1 067	1 117	254	1 004	19	94	820	97	4,69
Sciences de l'ingénieur	8 826	10 339	1 389	9 158	274	907	4 089	213	17,14
Commerce et Gestion	4 830	6 553	1 679	6 139	278	136	4 155	288	35,67
Technologie	5 993	7 382	4 181	7 382			3 925	95	23,18
Sciences de l'Education	796	905	91	317	240	348	525	19	13,69
Traduction	321	223		191	32		90	1	-30,53
ENS & ENSET		2 747		2 625	122		886	4	
Total	308 005	360 668	117 687	315 988	22 484	22 196	171 624	8 127,00	17,10