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Heading towards a historic compromise? Introduction

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The provision of education in sub-Saharan Africa often tends to be put down to the first educational system introduced by missionaries and thereafter developed by colonial administrations and States at the time of international sovereignty. However, another type of training for children dates back as far as the eleventh century: Arab-Islamic education. Initially introduced by Arab-Berber trans-Saharan traders and then propagated by religious brotherhoods, notably from the nineteenth century onwards (Robinson, 2004; Ware, 2009), Arab-Islamic education has been popularized through a variety of institutions such as Qur'anic schools, Madrassas, Franco-Arabic schools, and the Islamic Institute and University, amongst others.

This instruction is based on the learning of the Qu'ran, the Arabic language and Islamic sciences (Fortier, 2003; Gandolfi, 2003). With this as a foundation, specific methods to organise and convey this knowledge are put together, either in a private setting or under the aegis of the public authorities. Teaching can also vary according to the national context and historical periods. Educational institutions can therefore be solely devoted to the transmission of religious knowledge (for example, Sufi Qu'ranic schools) or integrate 'profane' (Charlier, 2002) or even 'scientific' (Franco-Arab or Arabic schools) disciplines. Teachings are either bilingual, in Arabic and French (Franco-Arabic schools), or exclusively in Arabic; in some cases, the local language is used, particularly for higher levels.

Various dynamics are responsible for the long-term transformations of Arab-Islamic education, most notably in Francophone West Africa.

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Acknowledging the popularity of Islamic schools supported by brotherhood organisations, the colonial administration established Franco-Arab education through Madrassas run by officers inspired by the Algerian experience (Pondopoulo, 2007). In this way, the colonial authorities were able to control recruitment and the training they provided. The Madrassa emerged at the beginning of the 20th century in Senegal, French Sudan (present-day Mali), Mauritania, Dahomey (modern-day Benin) and Chad (Kavas, 2003). The desire to transform public institutions was renewed in the mid-20th century, not by the State or ruling groups, but by elites trained in Arab countries and thereafter returning to their countries of origin.

This special report describes initiatives taken to (re) build and transform Arab-Islamic education in Africa, notably since the turn of the new century. It examines the ability of post-colonial States to design and implement reforms that provide their societies with educational systems based on various practices, all inspired by external dynamics, but which have culminated in deeply rooted systems of local significance. On the one hand, it concerns educational institutions driven by elites inspired by western schools; and, educational models thought out and revealed through different branches of Islam on the other.

Generally speaking, the reforms follow one of two patterns. The first is internal to the world of Arab-Islamic education and involves its various components: either one of them criticizes another and undertakes to make changes (for example, when the Wahhabi movement opposed the Qu'ranic school in the brotherhood organisations); or the same model eventually evolves (the Al-Azhar school network founded in Senegal in 1974 by Serigne Mourtada Mbacké, the youngest son of the founder of the Mouride Brotherhood, being a perfect example). The second route to reform involves policies developed by States to integrate a religious dimension or introduce one or more components of Arab-Islamic education into public curricula. In the event of the latter, the State may be influenced or supported by international organisations and transnational civil society movements, such as non-governmental organisations. Arab-Islamic educational reforms in contemporary Africa refer to an important part of history, which often starts with former students who were educated overseas, particularly in Muslim countries.

Reform in the hands of Muslim entrepreneurs

These African graduates from Arab countries were, for the most part, attached to the 'reformist[1]' movement, which began in the 1950s. They began to open

1. Nowadays, the scientific community commonly uses the term 'reformist'. It does not relate to a homogeneous group. In fact, this movement, composed of various Muslim associations, does not share the same rhetoric, ideas or motives. For more details on the use of classifications of religious groups in Africa, see the article overseen by Samson (2012) in *Cahiers d'études africaines.*

new Muslim denominational schools, opposing the 'classical' Sufi-type Qur'anic schools (Loimeier, 2000). The rapid growth of these new Arab and Franco-Arabic schools opened the way for a market in terms of Muslim education and the democratization of Islamic and Arabic language education, which had mainly only been available in Arabic-speaking countries until this point, notably in the Maghreb and Egypt (Gomez-Perez, 2005; Triaud, Villalón, 2009). The emergence of these new Arab, Franco-Arabic or Islamic institutes[2], launched by private initiatives, led to an explosion of reforms and innovations. These changes were enhanced during the 1980s when the provision of Arab-Islamic education was mainly in the hands of private Muslim entrepreneurs[3], approved and supported by external funding from other countries such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait or Egypt (Brenner, 1993 and 2001).

In light of these developments, African States are questioning this new, rapidly expanding provision of education in predominantly Muslim countries. Faced with a situation of 'discharge' and 'delegation' (Hibou, 1999), private, independent Muslims were the first to develop and strengthen this niche. In a process of mutual negotiation and compromise, Muslim religious actors became involved with State authorities as, in the 1980s, they had become the new, key players in the sector receiving development assistance from countries in the Maghreb and the Gulf (Coulon, 1983, Brenner, 2001, Villalón, 1995). The latter were providing subsidies to countries hit by structural economic and social difficulties, on the condition that recipients spread their concept of Islam through certain religious doctrines: for example, Wahhabism, for those looking for Saudi funds.

Universal education: the use of Arab-Islamic instruction

Despite the commitments of African States and significant progress made over the last few decades, the educational situation remains problematic in terms of access, quality and equity. Severe budgetary, organisational and institutional constraints exist, even though these countries have increasing numbers of school-aged children and diversity in terms of educational demand. The Education for All (EFA) framework for action, signed in Dakar in 2000 by most African States, and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), highlight the need to mobilize non-governmental organisations in a more creative and active manner. The principle is that States must create new forms of partnership with private education entities, i.e. controlled and managed by all non-governmental organisations, including faith-based organisations. If States recognize their responsibility to finance basic education, they also commit to establishing co-operation mechanisms that affirm the co-responsibility of the State, the private sector and civil society to define and achieve fixed educational objectives. The importance of civil society participation in education was included in the Incheon Declaration during the World Education Forum 2015 and the Sustainable Development Goals for 2030 (SDGs).

Thus the achievement of universal primary education objectives, challenges associated with the development of post-primary education, quality and relevance of lessons, the equity of educational available, and the financial sustainability of the education system, could all potentially benefit from a better rapport with the private sector or, on the other hand, could suffer if the non-State education sector is not well integrated (Patrinos, 2009). This international, political and institutional context pushes the inclusion of Arab-Islamic schools into educational public policies that are at the heart of discussions in African States. This special report does not look at reforms made by all the States south of the Sahara, but will focus on case studies taken from various articles and West African Francophone States.

In West Africa, for example, the Islamic Development Bank (IDB), together with other international organisations, such as UNESCO/ISESCO, supported the first tangible steps to reform Arab-Islamic education. During the 2000s, these reforms were initially developed under 'a project to support bilingual education' (French Arabic/English Arabic), and this later became support for the 'modernization' (Senegal), 'renovation' (Niger) or 'integration' (Mali) of Qur'anic schools in national primary education cycles[4].

Chad was the first African country to receive financial support from the IDB for education, as early as 1998. In 2002, the IDB, UNESCO and Chad launched a feasibility study to develop a bilingual education system (Arabic-French), incorporating Qur'anic schools. In 2004, the findings were presented at an international conference, held in N'djamena, on the promotion of teaching in Arabic and French in Chad and Niger. This process gradually spread over several years to include several other West African countries: Senegal, Gambia, Mali and Burkina Faso.

With regard to the educational reforms of Qur'anic schools, the notions of 'integration' for Mali or 'renovation' for Niger and Chad (*Khalwa*) were merely labels given by specific development programmes, conceived and financed on an international level. Alongside national 'State' education, Islamic education has been the subject of attempts at global educational reforms on a national level over the last few years (Anderson-Levitt, 2003; Tan, 2014). These reforms, for the continent as a whole, include educational support and the integration of Islamic schools in national education systems. To achieve this however, Qur'anic schools would be obliged to include 'modern', 'profane' and 'secular' elements of education in their pedagogical model (Charlier, 2002).

2. Designations vary from country to country. In Senegal, for example, the term used is Franco-Arabic or Arabic, whilst in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger the local population will tend to use the notion of Madrassa/Medersa. In Senegal, this word was officially rejected in 1922, with reference to the Madrassa of St. Louis, created in 1908 by the French colonial administration (Bouche, 1975; Ware, 2004). See reference in the typology article on page 106.

3. Graduates of Arab countries or Muslim scholars that invest in the creation of schools supported and inspired on a pedagogical level, for example, by the countries referred to in this paragraph.

4. Between 1999 and 2002, five projects were signed to support bilingual education and literacy. Chad is a bilingual country (Arabic-French) and this is enshrined in the 1996 Constitution, which recognizes both languages as national languages.

Qur'anic and Franco-Arabic schools (public and private) were gradually taken over and integrated into so-called 'formal' education systems. This turning point, during the 2000s, introduces a twofold mechanism that is somewhat paradoxical. On the one hand, the offer of Arab-Islamic education, taken in all its diversity (public and private), contributes to a form of 'secularization of the spirits' (Adelkhah, 2015) or 'religiousness' meaning that the private education on offer is complementary to or synergistic with public education. According to Adelkhah, for the case of Afghanistan but which is also relevant for Africa, «Madrassas increasingly refer to the national arena that constrains them through public policies or ideologies, but which also strengthens them by contributing to the affirmation of a national Islam» (Adelkhah, 2015, pp. 47-48). The narrow debate between the State and Qur'anic schools, or even private Islamic institutes in Africa, contributes to the structure of the educational systems available, integrating this private dimension in a permanent game with State education. This effect of mirroring the dynamism of an African Arabic-speaking elite (Dia, 2015) or 'non-European intellectuals' (Kane, 2003), installed in different arenas of negotiation (media, Islamic NGOs, private companies, associations), has interfered in affairs of the State, concerning the question of the management of Islamic religious education (Cissé, 2013). Furthermore, this process of 'nationalizing Islam' is being guided by another shift: a stronger presence of religion within the central authority, the State. The re-emergence[5] or the second age of an 'Islamic bureaucracy' (Tozy, 2013; Adelkhah, 2015), after the creation of the Muslim Affairs Department in French West Africa in 1906, marked by the creation and strengthening of various centralised administrations in charge of Islamic issues, reveals the fuzzy boundaries between what could be considered public, such as the management of schools as a public entity, and private bodies that integrate religious dimensions. The growth and reinforcement, post-September 11 2001, of counter-terrorism security frameworks can also explain the increased willingness of the State to control all religious activities, including education.

Multiple actors, hybrid models

The 2000s marked a period of crystallization with the appearance of several actors (school administrations, religious brotherhoods, reformist associations, Muslim entrepreneurs, Islamic NGOs and international organisations) taking a greater role in negotiations related to public education policies. Lewandowskie and Niane observed this same trend in Senegal and introduced the notion of policy network as a framework to study the situation of Arab-Islamic education, which, like other educational systems, finds its intelligibility in a multi-stakeholder system. This policy network brings together actors who define themselves as a triptych of the State, donors and civil society[6]. This heterogeneous network of executives, elites and experts are involved in decision-making and the implementation of educational policy: «Marabouts entered politics,

politico-administrative elite connected with brotherhoods or reformist movements, experts from donor agencies, foreigners on mission, Senegalese experts working with government projects and agencies, officials from civil society platforms, etc.» (Lewandowski, Niane, 2013, 508). Within this 'cartel of the political elite', the actors are all fighting for the 'control of this globalized space' (Niane, 2011: 153). With the emergence of the concept of 'modernization' of Qur'anic schools a vast array of actors and objectives have been brought to the negotiating table.

In other words, policies relating to Qur'anic schools and Franco-Arabic or Madrassa schools connect a wide variety of actors, interests and strategies, with each protagonist trying to uphold his own model as to the direction that Arab-Islamic education policy should take in any given country.

Thus the development of a public policy for Arab-Islamic education finds itself up against diverse models of interpretation, in Africa as elsewhere, with the State at the centre of these discussions. With the outside influence of international organisations (BID, UNESCO, ISESCO, USAID, UNICEF), States find themselves forced into putting forward new models that combine both religious elements and the basic educational skills of reading, writing and mathematics. Thus a gradual emergence of 'hybrid' schools (Villalón, Bodian, 2012; Villalón, Idrissa, Bodian, 2012), aimed at bridging the gaps between formal and non-formal Qur'anic schools,[7] can be observed. The 'hybrid' model, designed and created by the reforming State, and upheld by external influence, brings back an age old debate[8], of the 'traditional/classical' (Launay, 2016) model of Qur'anic schools versus the 'modern' French or English public schools and/or Franco-Arabic schools (Ware, 2014).

This modernity or modernization is in line with the process of westernization, or even globalization; this image conjuring up the Western identity perceived as 'dangerous', and viewed as going against traditional Islamic values (Lukens-Bull, 2001). Nevertheless, modernity is also considered to be a dynamic process of change, undertaken in different ways and according to

5. According to J.-L. Triaud: At the end of 1905, Governor General Roume appointed Robert Arnaud as the Head of Muslim Affairs in the Political Bureau of the General Government (Robinson, 2004: 157). He was the first to hold a specialized function in this field. A separate and organised Muslim Affairs Department appeared only in 1912, within the Directorate of Political Affairs. Its first incumbent was Paul Marty. (Triaud, 2010, note 7). This service centralised information and intelligence gathered about Islam in French West Africa: it monitored most of the Muslim religious figures of the time.

6. For transnational actors in the education sector, see the work of Niane (2011) and the works of Charton (2015).

7. Traditional Qur'anic schools are still regarded by most international institutions and Ministries of Education as entities of 'non-formal' education: formal education being that which is provided under an official framework, based on a specific pedagogy, rules of operation, a validation process and a schedule determined by the State.

8. Theories about modernity and the process of modernization are associated with the ideology of progress and development, where the Western model becomes a reference for the newly independent countries of the South. Indeed, this Western model is necessary in school educational systems where the education system is still based on the structural model of a classical school. A 'global school', inspired by the classical model based on the principle of graded classes, was born. Thus it was a unique model of education that emerged at the end of the Second World War based on one type of school that has been globalized over time, with reference to the Western classical model (Anderson-Levitt, 2003).

various social categories. Religious actors can redefine a Muslim modernity that manifests itself through the emergence of new Arab or Franco-Arabic schools and the creation of new programmes within these schools. These learning frameworks reinvent Islamic traditions by proposing institutions where Arabic is the language of choice for the transmission of religious knowledge (Gomez-Perrez, 2005), even if this reinvention involves a structural break with the traditional Qur'anic school: the result is a unique hybrid institution that combines religious instruction with teachings that are more scientific and technical (Lukens-Bull, 2001, page 368).

Table — Fundamental Differences Between a Classical Qur'anic School and a Public School

Qur'anic School	Public School
Students memorize the Qur'an on a wooden board known as a *lawh*	Students write in notebooks with pens
Students sit in a circle around the teacher of the Qur'an	Students sit at desks facing the blackboard and the teacher
The Qur'anic school accommodates students aged between 5 and 18 years. Students are not segregated by age	Classes are organised according to the age and level of the students
Lessons between the student and the Qur'anic teacher are interpersonal	Lessons are given to the whole class at the same time
Older students may assist the Qur'anic teacher	The teacher works alone in front of the class
Evaluations take place once students have memorized the entire Qur'an	Assessments are carried out after each lesson. Students are also evaluated at the end of each school year in order to move up a grade

In fact, despite official announcements and reform attempts, cooperation mechanisms and the development of partnerships with Arab-Islamic educational systems are still rare and little studied in the African context. State financial and human resources for the identification, supervision and support of these educational structures are extremely limited in light of the importance of the phenomenon. The majority of Arab-Islamic education is considered non-formal and thus is neither measured nor integrated in educational strategies. The inclusion of Arab-Islamic education in general and of Qur'anic schools in particular is a fundamental issue for all those responsible for education in Africa.

New research on Arab-Islamic education

The compilation of a new generation of empirical research on Arab-Islamic education in Africa was imperative. This special report provides elements that put into perspective the various debates on reforms undertaken since the beginning of the 2000s in various national contexts, both Anglophone and Francophone. An initial challenge for those States setting themselves the goal of fostering a

new dynamic of partnerships is quantification; insofar as national administrations do not produce reliable figures on the number of children involved in the non-formal sector as it remains, for the most part, outside the sphere of influence of public authorities. As many of the children considered excluded from education are in fact enrolled in Qur'anic schools, a comprehensive census of learners, schools and teachers at these institutions is paramount for the proper control of governance parameters for this sector in most countries. In this special issue Rohen d'Aiglepierre and Arthur Bauer highlight the difficulty of this, disclosing a number of accepted opinions and outlining possible solutions (see page 25).

The remainder of this special issue shows that the State does not have the monopoly on the desire for the reform initiative, but that all those involved in the education sector, whether international, national or local, State or non-governmental, are committed to the idea of change, both in the school system and in components of Arab-Islamic education. Indeed, separating them can paralyze the internal dynamics of each education model.

Anneke Newman demonstrates that some of the Muslim clerics in the middle valley of the Senegal River are not averse to the idea of change in Qur'anic schools under their responsibility (see page 57). They are, however, very much aware of the conditions of change driven by logics external to the local society.

Shifting the gaze, Hannah Hoechner puts the spotlight on the Almajirai, residents of informal Islamic schools in northern Nigeria, and argues that these learners are not seen to be a challenge to the institutional education set up by reformist movements, locally known as '*Islamiyya*' (see page 91). On the contrary, given the success of graduates from these schools, particularly in terms of social prestige based on their use of the Arabic language and knowledge of Islamic law, the Almajirai maintain their desire to acquire religious jurisprudence without giving up the life-skills traditionally handed down by their teachers.

Writing about former Senegalese *Taalibes*, Joanne Carole Chehami claims that if graduates realise they were trained in the *daara yi* school of life, they regret the lack of any connection between the multidimensional training and their dream of professional and social insertion (see page 77).

Starting from observations in Muslim boarding schools for girls and interviews with different stakeholders, Mame Fatou Sène brings to light the students' apprehension to align with certain female representations such as having to conform to the ideas of the perfect wife and mother. She underlines their motivation to break down the quasi-masculine monopoly of Islamic knowledge in the Senegalese context, and ultimately follow a path that would lead women to autonomy both in terms of knowledge and from a material point of view, in particular with regard to their husbands (see page 41).

This special issue also draws attention to a fact that is often overlooked or underrated: Arab-Islamic education is a choice, if not of the children then at least of their families. Qur'anic school, the Franco-Arabic school, the Islamic

institute and even the Arabic school have all acquired audiences and provide a choice that could be described as rational in light of the situation and information available. Enrollment of children in these institutions is voluntary (Dia, 2015; Amo, 2015), without necessarily being exclusive.

In their study, Rohen d'Aiglepierre and Arthur Bauer establish that a large proportion of Muslim households make a simultaneous choice of a formal educational structure and a Qur'anic school (Hugon, 2015; Seck, Kaag, Guèye, Fall, 2015). Households that opt exclusively for Qur'anic school fall into an intermediate social class between the poorest, who cannot afford to send their children to any educational structure (formal or non-formal), and the richest, who choose formal education (exclusively or not). On the other hand, formal Arab-Islamic education concerns households with an income equal to or higher than that of those who choose other formal categories of education. In this case, the parents, who consider the provision of public education to be inadequate, put forward religious concerns. Joanne Carole Chehami points out that in Senegal's urban environment Arab-Islamic education conforms to a multi-faceted demand: economic, social and religious. Recent works have made the same observation (Dia, Diop, Jacquemin, 2016). In the rural setting however, Qur'anic schools attract impoverished families who are not able to pay the required school fees. They serve as an 'educational refuge' that is more socio-affective than cognitive. Hannah Hoechner develops similar arguments in the case of Nigeria where the Almajirai remain confined to one of the oldest Islamic education institutions due to the lack of means to access formal Muslim or secular education.

The consideration of educational choice in the negotiation of new systems is all the more crucial since the popular and classical version of the Qur'anic school remains a major reference for families and powerful Muslim organisations, such as the brotherhoods. Proof of this is can be found in Aiglepierre and Bauer's estimates of the large number of children enrolled exclusively in Qur'anic schools, and who continue to be included in 'out-of-school' statistics and are therefore considered to be in the same boat as those children who are not supported by any educational structure.

However, the desire for educational transformation in Africa, whether undertaken by international agencies, non-governmental organisations, reformist associations or new educational entrepreneurs moving in after economic liberalization, is at a standstill. In the eyes of the main public stakeholders, through its framework, pedagogy, its relationship to the child and its wisdom, it is this desire for an educational transformation that must be reassessed, irrespective of the fact that it is a response to a strong demand for general education.

In this respect, a continuum can be drawn with the colonial period where administrations sought to control, or even subdue, Qur'anic schools when they were subjected to, if not hostility, at least fierce competition from religious movements inspired by donor countries of the Gulf, conveyors of a reformed

provision of Arab-Islamic education (Ndiaye, 1982; Pondopoulo, 2007). As it stands the only reasonable horizon is a historical compromise that would lead to mutual respect and a search for synergies between the various educational propositions. Ongoing reforms are an attempt to respond to this requirement, but they require a better understanding of the causes and effects.

This discussion reverts back to the question of the need to democratize educational supply and the importance of demand. Both the State school system and the Arab-Islamic education sector remain selective, despite increasing numbers in both the public and private sector. Some groups remain marginalized due to a lack of access to socially valued knowledge, whether academic or religious. In the case of girls in Senegal, Mame Fatou Sène illustrates the fact that the development of boarding schools for Muslim girls cannot rule out the fact that the mastery of the Islamic sciences still remains male-oriented. In Nigeria, Hannah Hoechner shows that the Almajirai are well aware of their exclusion from certain methods of learning the Qur'an and of their distance from the country's official, administrative language, which is English. The universalization of access to quality education thus not only refers to the pooling of educational content from the various provisions but also takes into consideration public diversity, which includes children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

This special issue raises questions that are seldom dealt with in the African context and opens up avenues for scientific coverage of the issue of Arab-Islamic education in geopolitical contexts that are heating up, particularly in the Sahel and the French-speaking countries.

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