

NEOLIBERAL COLONIZATION OF EDUCATION AND LANGUAGE POLICIES IN MOROCCO: AN INTERDISCURSIVE ANALYSIS

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Abstract. In the contemporary educational milieu, the conspicuous sway of 'neoliberal reason' is unmistakable. It is undeniable that neoliberalism increasingly shapes global as well as national educational systems. Morocco, driven by legitimate economic aspirations, has not been immune to the infiltration of neoliberal ideologies into its educational discourse. Based on qualitative data, this study posits that neoliberal discourse has effectively 'colonized' Moroccan educational and linguistic policies and has succeeded to a large extent in making them align with dominant neoliberal market principles. Employing corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis (CACDA), the paper examines the interdiscursive relationships between neoliberalism and the official educational and linguistic policies in the Moroccan context. The findings showed that the neoliberal discourse in Morocco commodified education, perpetuated linguistic hierarchies favouring foreign languages, and subtly advanced a covert vocationalization policy as evident in more recent educational reforms. Based on these results, this study draws attention to the profound influence of neoliberalism in reshaping the educational agenda within the Moroccan education system and highlights some of the systemic inequalities resulting therefrom.

Keywords: *neoliberal education policy, language policy, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), interdiscursivity, Morocco*

Introduction

Education is one of the most important social domains where hierarchies are continuously structured, strengthened and reproduced. Education policy in general and language policy in particular are, thus, just one facet of the continuing struggle for power within society. One needs only ask Cooper's question 'who plans what for whom and how?' (Cooper, 1989) to start acknowledging the power struggle immanent in educational and linguistic policy. Hence, education policy is another social terrain in which opposing social actors each has some vested interest and, accordingly, seeks to control how school is defined and the goals it should aspire for. A great part of this politically-driven hegemonic control over what education policy dictates and what it does (McCarty, 2011) to its target population is largely determined through discursive means or, tout court, discourse. Discourse is a very powerful mechanism that can be employed to redefine education and reset its agendas. Also, discourse can be utilized to legitimize and normalize certain hegemonic educational ideologies and, therefore, quells any resistance or counter-discourses that may emerge.

Neoliberalism is one such type of economic discourse that has insidiously infiltrated many facets of modern life. Holborow (2013) posits that 'Neoliberalism, as a social system and an ideology, is said to have invaded discourse; at the same time, discourse is deemed to reproduce and cement neoliberalism'. Following this line of thought, it is then discourse which enables neoliberal ideologies to dominate and practically inhabit the lives of individuals. In another sense, discourse is what is being affected, reshaped

or colonized (Holborow, 2013) by the neoliberal discourse, but at the same time, it is what colonizes the public social domain. Hence, the discursive approach to neoliberalism emerges as one of the most effective approaches that can expose the ideological workings and spread of the neoliberal economic discourse. It is well-known that international organizations such as the World Bank (WB), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Trade Organization (WTO) among others are global agents of neoliberalism that impose neoliberal agendas on developing countries aspiring for prosperity and economic growth (Fairclough, 2013a; 2009; Davies and Bansel, 2007). Morocco 'is in tune with the international neo-liberal agenda' imposed by these organizations and in the Global South it has served as a 'resonance chamber' of neoliberalism or even as a 'laboratory' where neoliberal development programs are put to test (Catusse, 2009). The Moroccan state has always been 'a stellar student' to these organizations (Cohen and Jaidi, 2014) and accepted wholeheartedly their imposed neoliberal structural adjustments since the eighties of the last century, especially those imposed by the World Bank. Now, neoliberal discourse is prevalent in various social domains in the country, in politics (Zemni and Bogaert, 2009), in agriculture (Davis, 2006), in urbanisation (Zemni and Bogaert, 2011), in academia (Cohen, 2014), in cinema (Bahmad, 2016) and of course in education.

In the educational sphere, hegemonic neoliberal discourse is disseminated mainly through official policy documents. An official policy document is understood in this study as any official text authored by the state, the government or a national institution and which intends to inform, regulate or orientate pedagogical and instructional practices in school, including language practices. Using corpus-assisted CDA, this paper considers the diffusion of the neoliberal logic in education and uncovers the interdiscursive connections between the global economic discourse of neoliberalism and official educational discourse in the Moroccan context. Specifically, the paper argues that neoliberal discourse has 'colonized' education and language policies in Morocco and reconfigured school so that it aligns with the logic of the neoliberal market. The study seeks to answer the following research questions: (1) What are the interdiscursive manifestations of neoliberal discourse in Moroccan education policy? (2) How does the neoliberal agenda shape language-in-education policy and influence language hierarchies in Morocco?

Literature review

Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism is now ubiquitous. Its insidious spread in all domains of life is ostensibly unstoppable as it is expected continue to frame people's worldviews and behaviours. In the words of Harvey (2007), neoliberalism 'has pervasive effects on ways of thought to the point where it has become incorporated into the common-sense way many of us interpret, live in, and understand the world'. Thus, neoliberalism is embedded in the very daily fabric of individuals' lives and it has far-reaching effects on thought and behaviour. Many researchers acknowledge the inherent evasiveness of neoliberalism as a concept and, therefore, the challenging task of pinning it down in a precise, lucid and encompassing definition (Barnawi, 2017; Cahill and Konings, 2017; Eagleton-Pierce, 2016; Holborow, 2015). Part of this difficulty in defining neoliberalism is attributed to 'the complexity, elasticity and inconsistency of its meaning' (Barnawi, 2017). However, while some researchers prefer to withhold from

risking a definition of neoliberalism (Eagleton-Pierce, 2016), others try to offer a rather comprehensive or multilayered definition of it. For example, Harvey (2005) holds that neoliberalism is ‘a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade’. In an attempt to catch the multifaceted concept of neoliberalism, Holborow (2013) identifies four possible definitions. She defines neoliberalism simultaneously ‘as an economic theory, as a new form of capitalism, as a ‘discourse’ [...] and finally as an ideology’. Similarly, preferring this view of neoliberalism as a many-sided concept, Steger and Roy (2010) hold that it is best conceptualized as ‘three intertwined manifestations: an ideology; a mode of governance [and] a policy package. This definitional conundrum points to the extreme complexity and evasiveness of neoliberalism as a concept.

For the purposes of this study, we approach neoliberalism from a discursive perspective, believing that the conceptualization of neoliberalism as a discourse is deemed to be fruitful for the interdiscursive analysis presented here. Neoliberal discourse like any other discourse functions primarily through language not only to disseminate but also to dissimulate its market-driven ideologies. It is for this particular reason why Fairclough (2003), commenting on the social changes brought about by ‘neoliberal’ globalization, contends that ‘the language element [...] is] in fact a crucial aspect of the social transformations which are going on- one cannot make sense of them without thinking about language’.

Governmentality

The conceptualization of neoliberalism as a hegemonic discourse is to a large extent informed by a Foucauldian understanding of discourse and, especially his notion of ‘governmentality’. For Foucault (1991), governmentality is a modern ‘art of government’ which generally designates a ‘domain’ of relations of power (Foucault, 2008). Foucault (2007) writes: “by ‘governmentality’ I understand the ensemble formed by institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, calculations, and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific, albeit very complex, power that has the population as its target, political economy as its major form of knowledge, and apparatuses of security as its essential technical instrument”. Principally, governmentality seeks to ‘control’ individuals’ or more precisely to ‘structure the possible field of action of others’ (Foucault, 1982). In other words, governmentality is ‘the way in which one conducts the conduct of men’ (Foucault, 2008). This exercise of power is partly achieved through ‘the development of a series of knowledges (savoirs)’ (Foucault, 2007) of which political economy as a ‘regime of knowledge’ is the fulcrum and discourse is the central mode of dissemination. Neoliberal governmentality, as a particular genre of government, interpellates its subjects mainly through discourse. It promotes an economic rationality which presents the market as the only possible field of action and naturalises power relations within it. Neoliberalism generalises ‘the model of homo economicus to all forms of behaviour representing an extension of economic analysis to domains previously considered to be non-economic and the redefinition of homo economicus as entrepreneur of himself’ (Peters, 2009). Understood this way, neoliberal governmentality is, then, best seen ‘not just as ideological rhetoric or as a political-economic reality, but above all as a political project that endeavours to create a social reality that it suggests already exists’ (Lemke, 2001). Part of neoliberal governmentality

is what is now termed linguistic governmentality. The latter refers to the sum of ‘techniques and forms of expertise that seek to govern, guide, and shape (rather than force) linguistic conduct and subjectivity at the level of the population or the individual’ (Urla, 2019).

Policy as ‘discourse’

Discourse exerts enormous power on its subjects and it can be utilized to maintain a given status quo or constitute new realities. Foucault (1971) famously defines discourse as ‘practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak’. Similarly, when seen as social discursive practices, policies are found to discursively construct not only the meaning of those policies but also how they can be interpreted and enacted on the ground. The conceptualization of policy as discourse seeks primarily to highlight the discursive power of policies in producing ‘truths’ and ‘knowledges’ (Ball, 1993). Approaching education policy as discourse is, thus, deemed to reveal its far-reaching effects. One of these is the construction of ‘positions’ for its subjects and, subsequently, limiting the scope of what can be said, done and even what can be thought (Ball, 1993). Concerning the issue of what can be thought, we believe and try to show in this study that education policy creates what Foucault (1971) calls conceptual formations and in doing so it ‘changes the possibilities [local actors] have for thinking ‘otherwise’’ (Ball, 1993). In other words, educational policy puts in place normative frames (Mortimer, 2016) through which policy provisions are interpreted and appropriated. Also, and maybe most importantly, one of the adverse effects of the discursive power of policy is that it redistributes voice, i.e., only some authoritative voices that matter and are heard (Ball, 1993), while those coming from the bottom of the policy structure are muted. According to Shohamy (2009), the consumers of LP, for instance, do ‘have something to say from the bottom up’ and the success of any policy hinges on the incorporation of their voices. Thus, we think that any language policy analysis remains incomplete if it does not attempt to reveal discourses ‘within and without’ its discursive formulations, especially the ‘existence of ‘dominant’ discourses-like neo-liberalism and management theory’ (Ball, 1993).

Neoliberal language policy

The manifestation of neoliberal ideologies in language policy is not easily discernible. Their embeddedness in the discursive practices of official language policy and their naturalization as common-sense convictions renders them almost invisible to the uncritical mind. That is why some researchers maintain that neoliberal market-driven language policies in education are a covert language policy that should be ‘urgently’ exposed (Piller and Cho, 2013). The need to throw light on neoliberal agendas in language policy is also stressed by other LP researchers such as Ricento (2015) and Tollefson (2016). In this respect, Tollefson (2016) posits that ‘neoliberal language policy’ (NLP) should be a major concern for LP researchers. Fairclough (2003), in his analysis of neoliberal globalization, stressed the centrality of language in the political project of neoliberalism. Languages in NLP, especially hegemonic global languages, are commodified and marketized (Holborow, 2021; Heller, 2010a; 2003) as valuable assets that one must possess to thrive in a highly competitive marketplace. Heller (2010a) suggests that the commodification of languages in late capitalism can be explained by two key transformations. First, languages have acquired a marketable

value as a ‘technical skill’ which can be exchanged for money and, second, languages are today the means through which ‘the circulation of goods’ is achieved in the marketplace. This is reminiscent of Bourdieu’s view of linguistic competence as linguistic capital and language in general as a symbolic capital which can be exchanged for tangible material capital (Bourdieu, 1977).

Language skills, as Holborow (2021) notes, have gained their market value because they have been deemed in NLP as integral to the idea of ‘human capital’. Qualified ‘human capital’, according to the norms of the neoliberal market, necessarily possesses a linguistic capital which can be used to generate more profit. In other words, as Heller (2010b) puts it, the classical ‘workforce’ has been reconstituted as workforce. This drastic transformation in the way languages are conceptualized makes individuals also reconceive their language learning endeavour. Language learners are now ‘linguistic entrepreneurs’ (De Costa et al., 2016). Linguistic entrepreneurship, according to De Costa et al. (2016) is the ‘act of aligning with the moral imperative to strategically exploit language-related resources for enhancing one’s worth in the world’. Thus, an inevitable consequence for languages within the framework of market-driven NLP is that some languages are privileged and legitimized (usually colonial and imperial languages) while others (national and local languages) are stigmatized and marginalized for their low market value.

The Moroccan case

In the Moroccan context, the field of education has always been a site where neoliberal logic sought to root itself as can be easily contested in the numerous and successive reforms. According to Boutieri (2016), both world organizations (e.g., the World Bank) and Moroccan officials diagnose educational problems and develop solutions from a neoliberal stance which instrumentalizes education. Language-in-education policy is one clear aspect of this market-driven instrumentalization of education. Currently, language policy in Morocco is reorientated towards neoliberal agendas. Multilingualism, a salient feature of Moroccan society and school, is being restructured and reconceptualized in line with neoliberal economic demands, especially in recent reforms. A hierarchal neoliberal multilingualism is being legitimized and normalized (Kabel, 2023). This type of ideologized multilingualism maintains the ordering of national and foreign languages and assigns uneven market values to each in the process of their commodification. Chakrani (2017), for instance, shows how Morocco’s adoption of neoliberal language ideologies such as the discourse of language as a source for profit led to the creation of linguistic hegemonies and to stratified language communities (Arabic vs French users). In the same vein, other researchers shed light on a recently emerging official discourse which promotes English as a ‘non-colonial’ language and associates it with accelerated economic growth and development (R’boul, 2022). This neoliberal promotion of English as a ‘neutral tool’ for leveraging the potential rewards of seamless integration in a global economy is rather a ‘naïve’ discourse. It absolves English from its hegemonic and imperialistic connotations and represents it as a legitimate substitute for colonial French. Nonetheless, it seems that policymakers in Morocco are at ease with the neoliberal dichotomization of linguistic resources on the basis of the market value principle.

Materials and Methods

Data collection and the procedure

This paper benefits from the synergy of CDA with CL. Accordingly, a corpus of official education policy texts (N=16) was created (236 423 tokens) to aid the critical discourse analysis conducted in this study. Anthony (2022) AntConc software (v. 4.2.0) was used mainly for concordance and collocate analyses. The body of documents which comprise the corpus analysed is variegated. The main criterion for the selection and inclusion of each document in the corpus was relevance (both direct and indirect) to educational policy in Morocco including LP. Thus, the documents included are of varied genres and disproportionate authoritativeness. The selection ranges from supreme legal documents such as the Constitution to policy documents such as the Strategic Vision (henceforth SV) to intra-institutional communications like memoranda. Although the critical analysis offered places some emphasis on particular documents for their centrality in the official discourse on education and LP, it does take a holistic approach to these documents. Put differently, the documents are approached as both texts dealing with specific educational policies and, in their combined effect, as discourses or ‘orders of discourse’ (Fairclough, 2003; 1992; Foucault, 1971) that regulate the education domain in a top-down fashion.

Data analysis: Interdiscursivity

According to Fairclough (2013b; 2003), interdiscursivity is part of the broad term intertextuality. In fact, the former is one of the constitutive elements of the latter. While intertextuality is more prone to focus on linguistic intersections and borrowings taken from one text and injected into another, interdiscursivity ‘is essentially the result of the discourse practices of one field infiltrating those of another’ (Mulderriig et al., 2019). More precisely, interdiscursivity concerns itself with the hybridization of global discourses, discourse genres and styles (Fairclough, 2003). Revealing the interdiscursive relation that a text makes with other discourses outside of it is believed to expose power relationships that those ‘orders of discourse’ seek to establish and normalize. Fairclough (2013b) puts it succinctly as follows:

‘While intertextuality in its general sense keeps us close to concrete texts and events, interdiscursivity begins to make the connection between them and social structures, including orders of discourse: orders of discourse are particular articulations of discourses, genres and styles which have a measure of stability and longevity, but specific texts also articulate together the same elements in particular ways, i.e., they are interdiscursive’

In this paper, we will attempt to offer an analysis of the recontextualization of the ‘developmental economic language’ (Fairclough, 2001) which has colonized Moroccan official discourse, namely the interdiscursive links between the official educational discourse and neoliberalism.

Results and Discussion

Keywords

Holborow (2013) notes that ‘the distinctive characteristic of keywords in neoliberal ideology is that they extend meanings which originally pertained to economics to other social fields such as education, health, social service provision’. The close examination of the official texts reveals that the neoliberal discourse in education policy in Morocco became more dominant after the publication of the 2014 Analytical Report by the Higher Council for Education Training and Scientific Research (CSEFRS). Although the tightening of the bond between school and the market, which is the main premise of neoliberal education policy, was stated in the Charter, the presence of the neoliberal economy discourse remarkably intensified in the SV (Council, 2015) and in the Framework Law texts. While keywords in neoliberal discourse such as job market, competitiveness, accountability, flexibility, efficiency, knowledge economy, etc., either had a very limited number of occurrences or did not occur at all, they are prevalent in all policy texts published after 2014 (*Table 1*). For instance, a keyword like the lemma *داصتقا* ‘economy’ occurred only (F=34) in the Charter while in the SV it occurred (F=69), ‘*قيس فان*’ competitiveness’ (F=2) and (F=13), respectively. Other keywords in neoliberal discourse such as ‘knowledge economy’ and ‘knowledge society’ did not occur in the Charter. This points to the fact that there was not a shift in the official discourse but rather there was an intensification of the neoliberal discourse in the educational sphere.

Table 1. A sample of neoliberal economy vocabularies extended to the educational sphere.

Type	Frequency	Range	RF
الشغل/Employment	143	11	798.88
سوق/Market	55	8	753.42
المرودية/Productivity	40	8	408.16
الرأسمال/Capital	30	6	833.33
استثمار/Investment	27	10	321.42
قياس/Measurement	27	8	435.48
المنتوج/Product	9	5	600.00
التمهين/Professionalization	6	1	666.66

Thus, we claim that the presence of neoliberal discourse in official education policy in Morocco is not a new trend. However, it has immensely intensified in the last two decades, especially after the adoption of the SV. The Charter marks the first clear manifestations of a neoliberal agenda in Moroccan education policy. This reform document, which is still seen as a framework of reference for educational reforms, re-orientated educational discourse in such a way that it accommodated globalized neoliberal concerns such as the primacy of economic growth. It redefined the goals of the education system to reflect this particular concern. For instance, one of the five ‘immutable fundamentals’ on which the reform rests states that the goal of the education system is ‘to enable the country to possess advanced sciences and technology, and to contribute to their development, thus, enhancing Morocco's competitiveness and its economic, social, and human growth in an era characterized by global openness’. It is clear how the text establishes connections between scientific knowledge and information technology (the tools of the knowledge economy) with economic growth and increased competitiveness and highlights globalization as the main rationale for such a re-orientation.

The rhetoric of globalization

The prevalence of the rhetoric of globalization in the official education policy documents analysed here is so remarkable. In this regard, Fairclough (2003) holds that ‘the neo-liberal discourse of economic change [...] represents ‘globalization’ as a fact which demands ‘adjustments’ and ‘reforms’ to enhance ‘efficiency and adaptability’ in order to compete’. This very argumentation scheme serves as the main rationale behind introducing new educational reform in the Moroccan context; a reform that is characterized as a ‘paradigm shift’ in the educational system (De l'Education, 2014):

‘The system of education [...] has become essential in the era of globalization which has contributed to raising the level of required professional competencies in the job market [...]. A consideration of the new economic models prompts us to rethink the role that education plays within the country's economic model [...] when society invests in education, it expects results in return for its investment.’

The reform requires the education system to adapt (Table 2) to the needs of the market so that it can contribute to the overall development of the nation. However, the development agenda seemingly gives unwarranted primacy to the economic facet, which would potentially create more inequalities rather than bridge the social inequality gap that exists. In all the documents, the rhetoric of neoliberalism constructs globalization positively as a challenge that should be urgently met (De l'Education, 2014). It systematically associates it with the universal discourse of openness and the patriotic discourse of nation-building.

Table 2. Sample concordances showing emphasis on adapting the education system to the needs of the economic market.

File	Right context	Hit	Left context
Analytical_Rep.docx	...with studies regarding the extent of alignment between university education and the requirements of the	Job market	In general, these studies enable the examination...
Strag_Vision.docx	...of medium and long-term planning effectively and efficiently, addressing the needs of the	Job market	In the country, and aligning vocational and university education with it; by involving...
Fwk_Law.docx	...in scientific fields, aiming to ensure continuous alignment with the needs of the	Job market	And the economic and social fabric, as well as the developments in the activities...
Analytical_Rep.docx	...which [open access universities] companies deem unsuitable for the	Job market	And overcrowded due to the increasing number of students, and are seen...
Strag_Vision.docx	...leading to alignment between education and the	Job market	And accelerating the integration of graduates into the economic marketplace.

Covert vocationalization policy

Moroccan education policy texts place the vocationalization of public schooling centre-stage. Basically, vocational training is an important component of the education system in Morocco. However, what is intended here by the process of ‘vocationalization’ is the encroachment of technical training plans on the rest of the pedagogic programs. According to Apple (2006), the claim that it has become necessary to ‘tighten’ the connections between education systems and the economy is often presented as a justification for neoliberal educational reform initiatives. In Lever 3 of the Charter, titled ‘Striving for the utmost alignment between the educational system and the economic environment’, there is a strong emphasis on the necessity for the education system to serve the economic sector. It calls for the strengthening of manual work and practical activities at all levels of education . To achieve this goal and to

tighten the link between schools and businesses, the Charter names two mechanisms, namely what is called ‘apprenticeship contracts’ and ‘alternation training’. These policies, hence, indicate the early beginning of a covert vocationalization policy of education in Morocco, a policy that gained more momentum in recent reforms. The Charter states:

‘During the ten-year plan for education and training, efforts are to be made to gradually increase the percentage of professionally qualified individuals entering the job market annually, which currently stands at around 20%, to at least 50% by the year 2010’

This neoliberal logic is best reflected in the SV text (see levers 5, 16, 20 and 21). Echoing the Charter, the SV redefines the goals of the Moroccan education system and broadens their scope in such a way that they include neoliberal economic agendas (see also articles 3 and 5 of the Framework Law). In other words, the goals of the educational system are ‘recast in narrowly economic terms’ (Apple, 2006). Besides inculcating values and disseminating knowledge, which are the core roles of the school, the SV accentuates the role of technical training in ensuring a successful integration of students into the economic market. The school is no longer seen as an independent institution which has its own unique goals. Instead, it has been reconstrued as a catalyst for economic growth and as a ‘nursery for the production of skilled human capital’ (De l’Education, 2014). In addition to these two very symbolic metaphors of ‘nursery’ and ‘human capital’, the metaphor of building bridges (the term is used metaphorically in more than 80 instances in the corpus) between public schools and businesses/economy is a third transformative metaphor which is employed recursively in official texts. There is a continuous reiteration of the need to marry education with training. Both the Charter and the SV, for example, call for the creation of ‘education and training networks’³ to bolster the bond between public schools and businesses. The ultimate purpose of these networks is to produce knowledge that can be ‘converted into an investable and marketable product’ (Council, 2015), which reflects the neoliberal reconceptualization of knowledge (including languages) as a commodity that can be bought and sold in the knowledge economy market. More interestingly, the SV encourages partnership accords between schools and economic agencies. Also, it went so far as to suggest offering businesses a place in the management councils in school. The unexpected nature of this proposition shows the extent to which the neoliberal economic agenda seeks to take hold of the public school.

The official text, thus, gives the impression that all schooling should be vocational to be able to contribute to the economic development of the nation. The economic concern eclipses the pedagogic and academic facets and places school in a relation of subordination to the market. There is a constant insistence on the primacy of market-oriented training which is presented as the sole mechanism through which acquired knowledge becomes valuable. The integration of learning and training as stated in the SV, ‘necessitates placing a substantial portion of what has been learned, especially in secondary education, at the heart of practical training situations in various fields: administration, economics, engineering, social professions, etc.’ (Council, 2015). This statement, indeed, shows the radical re-orientation and the drastic change that the market-driven reform intends to bring about, a situation where all schooling is purposively reduced to vocational training.

Promotion

‘Promotion’ *ءاقترال* is one of the three pillars of reform and it is a key concept in the neoliberal discourse in the SV, in addition to the concepts of quality, equality, equity and others. As a general remark, the concept is shrouded in ambiguity and seems to serve multiple purposes within the official text. What concerns us here, however, is the re-semanticization (Holborow, 2013) of this concept to cover neoliberal economic goals. In the SV text, it generally means the development of the education system and increasing its performance. However, its meaning is stretched to mean the process by which individuals are seamlessly integrated into the economic market. Put differently, to be promoted as an individual and as a student in the public school reductively means to be trained in a way that is compatible with the market needs. In this sense, ‘compatibility’ (with the market) itself becomes a highly desired quality being the most important prerequisite for post-school success. Ultimately, following this neoliberal redefinition of terms, even academic and professional ‘success’ takes on a new meaning which is that of ‘integration’ into the economic market.

Languages

Languages, namely foreign ones, are reconstrued in the official texts as a marketable asset and linguistic competence is represented as an essential quality of a competitive ‘human capital that the school is obligated now to offer to the economic market. They are, according to the logic of the neoliberal market-driven reform, constructed as tools that facilitate successful integration into the marketplace. In this respect, the SV document states the development of foreign language competency as one of the key measures that should be taken to guarantee the ‘alignment of education and training with the country's needs, future professions, and enabling integration’. The teaching and learning of languages, therefore, is geared towards the demands of the economic market where language has become not only a valuable commodity but also a capital that can be invested to generate more profit. Besides the neoliberal discourses of equality, equity and quality (Laanani and Fathi, 2024), the official discourse about foreign languages foregrounds globalization as the main drive behind the shifting language policy orientations in Morocco. The discourse of globalization is called upon to rationalize the elevation of the status of foreign languages, foregrounding their instrumental value and the opportunities they offer for individuals who master them. Language learning, thus, becomes an activity that is done ‘for the national interest’ (Tollefson and Tsui, 2014) rather than a self-interested choice. For instance, it is stated in the SV that ‘the contribution of the Moroccan school to the challenge of mastering the most commonly used languages in the world could enable our nation to strengthen its active engagement in the knowledge economy and society’ (the terms nation and country euphemistically used to designate elite economic groups). That being the case, the official text represents the choice to foster the teaching of foreign languages as a reaction to global neoliberal impositions rather than a national plan whose social and cultural consequences have been carefully calculated.

In one of its most recent consultations about language policy in Morocco, the CSEFRS recommends that there should be an ‘opening up to foreign languages [...]’, taking into account the aspirations of our country, as well as the cultural, economic, and political strengths of languages. This is aimed at achieving greater involvement of

Morocco in the global context of globalization'. However, this scheme of argumentation shows that the official discourse about languages is self-contradictory. While it admits, as stated in the previous quote, that languages have far-reaching cultural, economic and political effects, it attributes these 'power qualities' exclusively to foreign languages and preserve deficiency for national languages. The rhetoric of globalization, therefore, legitimizes and rationalizes the biased language policy that serves neoliberal globalized agendas at the expense of national languages.

Conclusion

The present study attempted to argue that neoliberal discourse in developing countries such as Morocco colonized educational and linguistic policies and reconfigured education so that it aligns with the logic of the neoliberal market. The paper showed the interdiscursive links between neoliberalism and official education and language policies and highlighted the 'hijacking' of school by the economic market. Aided by CL, the critical discourse analysis showed the diffusion of neoliberal terminologies in official policy texts and the intensification of the market-oriented discourse in the more recent educational reforms. The analysis revealed the existence of some covert neoliberal policies such as the attempt to vocationalize all schooling based on the premise that education should primarily serve the economic market. In this respect, the discursive analysis exposed how globalization is used to rationalize neoliberal policies in the field of education and how it is constructed as a 'challenge' which should be met by modern 'national' school. The interdiscursive account offered here shows the role of neoliberal governmentality in structuring the 'possible field of action' for the clients of national schools and in constructing 'neoliberalized' subjectivities for them. It orients and hegemonically fashions their behaviour as 'entrepreneurs' of the self and, thus, naturalizes the demeaning metaphor of 'human capital'. The hegemony of neoliberalism is also manifest in the way global and colonial languages are constructed as valuable linguistic assets that are integral to the idea of human capital and that is in contrast to national and local varieties which are constructed as deficient. Linguistic governmentality, thus, redistributes power in terms of linguistic capital and creates 'linguistic entrepreneurs' whose activity transcends them as individuals and becomes a patriotic activity done for the sake of the 'Nation'. This fusion and marriage between neoliberalism and nationalism discourses shows the discursive power of neoliberal discourse and demonstrates the ability of market-driven ideologies to insidiously infiltrate and, consequently, inhabit educational discourse in Global Southern nations aspiring for economic growth.

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