The responses of the Maghreb region to the changing international market of higher education

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Internationalisation of higher education:  
Global reforms  

1998 is a milestone:

- The World Trade Organisation wants to develop free exchange in higher education and private educational services

- In Europe: implementation of a common higher education system *LMD*
There are three times more foreign students than 20 years ago.

Mobility flows are mainly from South to North.

Increase in the educational level in the South.
Decrease in transportation costs.

Increased mobility flows in the Mediterranean basin.
Looking at student mobility from the Maghreb in order to understand:

1- the control of the traditional host countries in the countries of origin

2- the political reply provided by North African governments as regards the globalized demand of university transformation in a context of political crisis.

3 – South-South student mobility in Africa and the Arab world
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Mobility of North African graduates to France
France welcomes 67% of students from this region.

In France: 50% of foreign students come from Africa
30% come from the Maghreb
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Source: Documentation française, 2012
The French policy as regards the reception of foreign students in 4 stages:

1- In the aftermath of these countries’ independence: France encourages the opening of borders.

2- In the 1970’s:
   end of the reception policy

3- 1998 to 2003: new opening stage

4- Currently: selective and temporary policy for the reception of new migrants.
    Targeting the best students and selecting them in their native country.
In this context of greater selection of students from the South, of crisis within the university system (increasing number of students, less scholarships, unemployment among graduates) and of European and global university reforms, what is the position of the Maghreb?

Do such global reforms benefit the Southern countries and if so, to what extent?
Universities in the Maghreb are facing tremendous challenges:

- opening to every layer of society
- sending graduates into the job market
- focusing on the necessary pedagogical renewal in line with the economic stakeholders
- producing a « national elite » in an increasingly competitive global higher education market
The North African States try to tackle the crisis faced by their higher education sector:

through the adoption of the LMD reform in North Africa: facilitating students exchange and diploma equivalence

through transnational education: double degrees

through the creation of short vocational courses in the public and private higher education sectors.
New international private courses in North Africa:
What role do they play?
Do they replace study abroad programs?
Are they a choice by default?
Such private courses in North Africa take several forms:

- *E-learning* (Virtual universities)
- Cross-border education with foreign teachers invited from renowned foreign universities
- Establishment of national private universities since 2000 in Tunisia and Morocco
- Establishment of foreign universities in North Africa
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J'ai eu mon bac avec mention, mais j'ai voulu rester en Tunisie avec ma famille.

Je voudrais que mes études en Tunisie me garantissent un job à l'international.

Je veux faire ma licence en Tunisie et mon master en France.

L'avenir appartient aux meilleurs.
Optez pour le meilleur diplôme.
Rabat’s international private university in a public/private institutional network
The Maghreb countries count many universities hosting students from all the Maghreb region.

**A local university offer within the Maghreb region and skills transfer in Africa**
South-North student mobility remains the prevailing flow.

Two types of South-South mobility in Africa:

- intra-Maghreb flow
- intra-African South-North flow following the international South-North model of skills transfer

Private universities in Tunisia and Morocco already see the benefits of the market emerging from the increase of social demand among Sub-Saharan students.
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The foreign African students guarantee that a certain number of places are filled, which at present would not be the case were they to rely solely on the enrolment of local students.
Young Sub-Saharan baccalaureate holders in North Africa are:

- from a well-off background, their parents are top executives or from the upper middle class
- they enrol in short private courses in North Africa and then return to their home country
To conclude…

The Maghreb countries have brought their own responses for over ten years and continue doing so by encouraging the creation of a heterogeneous private sector.

There are three types of private higher education institutions:

1) institutions that are formed on market principles of overall profitability in the short term, and which are demanding greater operational freedom,
2) “activist” institutions whose commercial niche derives from the public sphere
3) prestigious foreign public universities that in the Maghreb region have become privatized
The main challenge for such private universities remains to provide a credible and qualitative option in view of the public offer and the global competition.

The other challenge for private institutions willing to establish centers of excellence in situ – within a context of political crisis in Tunisia - is to convince the native elite, concerned about the difficult social climate, to let their children (in particular their daughters) continue their education in their home country.
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