

Can face-to-face interviews be fair tools of students' selection to admission in Moroccan Management schools?

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Moroccan higher education falls short in providing enough places to keep up with the ever increasing numbers of students requiring a tertiary course. A fierce competition over high quality institutions has grown and consolidated in parallel with this development. Management schools are among these first-rate institutions. To have access to these schools, secondary school leavers are first selected to do two years preparatory classes on the basis of their grades in the Baccalaureate examinations, i.e. the national final examinations taken in the last form of secondary schools. Then, at the end of the preparatory classes, applicants sit again for a written exam and then a face-to face interview at the national level. These examinations have far reaching consequences on students' careers, institutions and the quality of a whole educational system.

Admission assessments are supposed to select students who present the most academic abilities, knowledge and potential. Their results are usually accepted as clear-cut, "unambiguous, fair and reliable". The reality, however, can be far from this idyllic image and rightly raises the issue of the examinations cost-effectiveness and the allocation of resources to other educational enterprises instead.

Measuring the level of competence of an individual can, in its own right, present several pitfalls at different

levels. Thus, for example, objectives of the assessment could focus on the students' previous academic knowledge or on their attitudes, values and potential for learning. They can be related to facts, to individual characteristics, or to all these at the same time. In addition, the students' responses represent only a sample of their competence and by no means their real knowledge.

Various contexts and various assessment tasks may alter the students' responses. Likewise, defining standards for students' proficiency can be challenging in terms of both contents and degree of performance. Scoring too can prove thorny, especially in holistic assessments. Design, reliability and validity of methods used, ethical conduct, credibility and qualifications of responsible committees and assessors, are other no least significant factors that may strongly influence the results of an assessment activity. Face-to face interviews, though praised for granting applicants the opportunity to understand the audience, present themselves and defend their viewpoints, are as complex, if not more, than other forms of assessment and require serious safeguards against bias and faulty judgements.

The paper will first present a review of the literature related to the different challenges and requirements of admission assessments. Second, in the 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"). The major drawbacks will be analysed, notably the admission policies, the formation of the organizing committee, objectives, design, diversity of assessors, criteria of scoring, transparency, accountability, etc... Recommendations to improve the assessment procedure will be presented too.