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**| RESEARCH ARTICLE**

## **An Investigation of The Impact of Moroccan Educational Orientation Services on University Students' Achievement: Undergraduate English Studies' Students of FLLA Ibn Tofail as a Case Study**

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**| ABSTRACT**

After secondary school, students are required to choose where they are willing to pursue their academic and professional careers. The choice of a particular institution and field where to carry on studies is merely dependent on students' background knowledge of that special field and on the guidance that students are normally exposed to in primary and secondary school. In this regard, educational guidance is meant to help, advise, and counsel students for them to choose the right path where they will succeed both academically and professionally. This paper seeks to answer the question of whether students get any kind of educational orientation. How can it serve students' needs? The significance of the study lies in the fact that it will give us an idea about the vision and importance of educational orientation services. It will also emphasize the urgent need for developing school/career guidance that certainly works in helping students to have a clear vision of what the right path to their future is.

**| KEYWORDS**

Orientation, guidance, counseling, students' needs.

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### **1. Introduction**

It is widely known that students at a certain step in their studies are asked to choose where to carry on their academic and professional careers. Their choice is merely dependent on students' background knowledge in that special field and on the guidance they are normally exposed to in primary and secondary school. In this regard, educational guidance is provided to help students choose the right path where they will succeed both academically and professionally.

Institutions allocate many resources to advising and counselling programs whose intent is to help guide individuals toward goal clarification. This is because the utilization of orientation and counseling services during the student's career underlines the fact that not all students enter university with clearly held goals.

In 21st-century education, students are no longer passive recipients of the information offered by the teacher. There is a significant shift from dependence on the teacher to an era of independence and autonomy in learning. Therefore, students need assistance in pursuing their desired careers. Likewise, students urgently need advising and effective counseling that would help them confidentially promote personal and professional development. Progress in both professional and personal areas mainly depends on the guidance and orientation students receive from educational experts and teachers, who possess the tools and pedagogies appropriate for each student's situation.

In the Moroccan educational system, students are supposed to choose what to study between the available majors starting from the lower secondary level. This means to specialize in either the literary stream or the scientific one. In any educational system, students need to be equipped with the necessary knowledge to choose the suitable path to follow. It is a lifelong effect choice because the stream chosen will direct students' academic as well as career trends and directions. This is why the Ministry of Education has established an essential pillar that is based on educational and professional orientation. Despite the efforts made by the Ministry of Education, students still face huge problems in dealing with the possible choices at hand. In other words, not all students benefit from educational orientation services, and the way students are introduced to the concept of orientation and guidance is misleading. Therefore, the confusion here is why students are still disoriented even though educational orientation and counseling services are provided.

## 2, Literature Review

### 2.1 Navigating college life

Pursuing collegiate studies is considered a right for any Moroccan citizen. Likewise, it is not compulsory. According to UNESCO, in 2019, the gross enrolment ratio only reached 38.5%.



Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) -World Bank Website

This can merely be attributed to many factors. To begin with, students may lack the feeling of belonging to the new environment, which gives them the impression that university is not the right choice. Thereby, students need to be fully equipped to take part in the new community. For this reason and others, effective and intensive educational orientation and guidance services are crucial and called upon. In this regard, an earlier study carried out by Khamadi, Bowen, and Oladipo (2011) noted that low career maturity levels among students were signaled by a lack of preparedness for career decision making. Students selected courses and careers preferred by parents and close associations rather than from their knowledge of self, occupations, and their confidence to integrate the two. In this regard, it is noted among undergraduate students a gap between what they believe they want to pursue and what they are engaged in.

In every aspect of human nature, people tend to collect information about things they want to do, try, or experience. This is why students need to be prepared for the higher secondary level, as it encompasses a truly new experience that is full of discoveries. In the same line of thought, Oigo (2016) notes that educational orientation services in higher education are limited in scale, quality, and are not well equipped to handle the challenges brought about by increased access to tertiary education. Therefore, the challenge for students at university is that they may have never been exposed to what a university is. This is why some students may fail their first year, while others may make wrong choices. Hence, an introductory course to collegial life is crucial and mandatory. It is essential at this point to emphasize the fact that several universities all over the world work on preparing suitable activities and introductory sessions to engage students in the world of the university for successful professional and personal careers. For instance, some universities started launching a new course that has the purpose of introducing students to university life. This would mainly contribute to assisting new students in making a good transition from the high school level to college, both professionally and personally. Hence, the course is launched to assist new students in building relationships, engaging in curricular and co-curricular activities, and so on. It also aims at promoting critical thinking skills, autonomy, and independence in learning (Ibid). This initiative needs to be integrated within educational systems all over the globe to achieve the best possible results in education. Educational orientation has had a positive impact on students, particularly when the orientation services are comprehensive (Folsom, Reardon & Lee, 2005). That is to confirm that, as being exposed to guidance on

college life and what university is all about, students develop a basic knowledge and gain an understanding of how they are going to handle their situation at university.

On the other hand, Moroccan public universities still face serious problems in terms of students' engagement in college life. This is merely a result of poor orientation services at the university level. That is to say, students only come to university with their prior knowledge, from which they have already built a picture in their mind. The issue of poor orientation services is visible in students' lack of readiness to make career choices, along with frequent course and program changes, retention problems, and increased dropout rates of university students (Kunnen, 2013). In this regard, a gap is noted among undergraduate students between what they believe they want to pursue and what they are engaged in. Meanwhile, according to Lachkar -a member of Morocco's National Syndicate for Higher Education and Scientific Research (MNSHESR), a preparatory year has been put in place in the new system in an attempt to bridge the gaps created by the school educational system that does not sufficiently qualify students for university study (as cited in EL-Tohamy, 2020).

## **2.2 The Moroccan Educational System: A Glimpse**

After gaining Independence, Morocco fixed the basic principle of post-independence Moroccan education. The basic aim was the Arabization of the curriculum and faculty, access to education for all at all levels, and the unification of disparate educational systems. The basic education in Morocco takes nine years to complete, followed by three years of secondary education. The language of teaching is Classical Arabic; however, the Ministry of Education is currently making French a language of instruction for teaching scientific subjects (Bedmar, 2014). English is regarded as a foreign language; private schools supply education in the English medium. The constitution of Morocco makes basic education a fundamental right for all people (Ibid). Secondary Education is open to those young people who have obtained their certificate in primary studies. It aims at pursuing the general objectives of previous cycles in greater depth, developing the formal intelligence of the pupil by formulating and solving problems, mathematical exercises and case simulations; introducing them to the basic concepts and laws of the natural sciences, physical sciences and the environment; and providing a grounding in geography, history and culture. It also aims at building a knowledge of basic human rights and the rights and duties of Moroccan citizens, making students acquire basic technical, vocational, artistic, and sporting skills. Likewise, preparing the pupil to continue his studies or to enter the world of work directly and, as far as possible, to train the pupil in a particular trade (Bedmar, 2014).

The Royal Speech, delivered on July 8<sup>th</sup>, 1984, by Hassan II, began the process of reforming vocational training in Morocco. Its three basic pillars were to reappraise human resources and socioeconomic advancement, to improve the quality of education delivered, and to ensure a better fit between training and employment. Second, to ensure greater autonomy for schools. In addition to developing the private sector, along with improving the prestige of these studies (Ibid). Higher Education studies arise in response to the dysfunctions of today's higher education and research system, and represent a radical change in both its spirit and the way it is run. The reorganization of higher education is the response to four basic objectives. First, administrative and pedagogical management should be more rational, coherent, and effective. Second, the university has to take full responsibility for its role as an educator and researcher, in transmitting knowledge and contributing to the economic and social development of the country. Third, to implement a system based on competition, specialization, diversification, and regulation. Once the DEUF (The Diploma in Basic University Education) is obtained, it is possible to enrol in a Master's course, which corresponds to the second university cycle. The qualification is awarded after four semesters of study. The Doctorate is the third and final university cycle, and the qualification is obtained after successfully defending a doctoral thesis that is estimated to take three or four years to complete (Ennaji, 2005). From all these reforms, the head of the Department of Public Law at the Faculty of Law at the University of Mohammed V in Rabat, Abdelhafid Adminou, claims that students are not developing in terms of their cultural and intellectual potential. The reason is that the new system focuses on the demands of the market and qualifies students with skills that suit these needs (as cited in El-Tohamy, 2020). He added, "The new system turns the university into a 'technical institute' that makes the university lose its role in creating an intellectual elite". In other terms, despite the new reforms in the system of higher education that are aimed at developing students' autonomy in education and equipping them with the necessary skills to match their needs and interests with the current industry demands, the university is almost no longer a place of spreading knowledge for the sake of intellectuality. Therefore, the government does not consider the sector of education as a major one. More than that, it does not give great importance to ensuring human resources and financial aid (Garmah, 2016). Garmah (2016) adds that if any government plans to step forward, it needs to start by developing its education system. The government has to provide support in terms of human resources as well as financial aid. However, in Morocco, the government does not provide the necessary abutments to support the education system. Additionally, Aourraz (2017) claims that a certain degree of pessimism hangs over the Moroccan education system. In the eyes of average citizens, as well as members of the elite, Moroccan schools are viewed as underperforming and indeed incapable of reform. Aourraz (2017) discusses a study released by the Supreme Council for Education and Training, thirteen years after the establishment of the National Charter for Training and Development, titled Implementing the National Charter for Education and Training, 2000-2013: Achievements, Obstacles, and Challenges (p. 03). He adds, "externally, the study concluded that graduates of Moroccan universities struggle to integrate

economically, socially, and culturally into society as Moroccan schools tend to be isolated from the larger national and global contexts and have not evolved or adopted new technologies" (p. 04). As mentioned earlier, the mismatch between the education system and the job market constitutes a big problem for graduate students who seek integration after getting a degree.

### **2.3 Unlocking potential in college**

Destiny is not a matter of chance; it is a matter of choice. It is not a thing to be waited for; it is a thing to be achieved." (William Jennings Bryan, politician and orator)

After succeeding in high school (the higher secondary level), students have to decide on the pathway to follow. They either go for institutions with limited polarization that require students to meet certain criteria to study at, or a university with open access. This widely depends on the students' vision of what to study and/or their grades. Students normally build their vision of what to do, where, and how by being exposed to educational counselling and orientation services. Starting at an early age, from the lower secondary level, the direction of movement has been to give secondary school students information on the courses offered in tertiary institutions, with little support on how to match their skills, interests, and values to the courses and a specific career path. Otherwise, they go to university without a clear career development plan (Oigo, 2016). One can reasonably assume that people all over the world have had a real need for assistance of one kind or another to enable them to get over difficulties that prevent them from functioning effectively (Mporananayo & Andala, 2018). Kasomo (2007) identifies these difficulties as part of the individual's relationship with him/herself or from his/her interaction with the wider environment (as cited in Mporananayo & Andala, 2018). Mutie (2011) claims that guidance and orientation if needed for students to develop appropriate learning skills as well as prepare and gain enough confidence to get integrated in the new world of university (as cited in Mporananayo & Andala, 2018). He also states that guided consultation also has to be supplied at difficult moments, for instance, if a student has difficulty concentration or consistently gets poor grades (Ibid). Consequently, when it comes to academic matters, students stand in a relation of subjection to college faculties and administrators (Becker, Geer & Hughes, 2003). Those authorities decide what courses would be taught, what courses students have to take, and what work they have to do in them, how their work in those courses would be assessed, and what the consequences of that assessment would be. Students have no voice in any of that. In such conditions, they act like other subject populations (Ibid). In this way, government policy and legislation need to be developed to allow for the improvement of educational orientation services as an essential part that contributes to ensuring human resources (Bernes, Bardick & Orr, 2006), as is being done elsewhere (Pillay, Toit & Mayer, 2014). Mwangi (2014) states that a successful transition from secondary schooling into tertiary education and the workforce is a government priority (as cited in Mporananayo & Andala, 2018). In Morocco, the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training has a renewed focus on lifelong learning and developing strong connections with the community they serve (Mporananayo & Andala, 2018). Many countries globally agree on the necessity of educational orientation services despite limitations in these services in higher education (Lairio & Penttinen, 2006; Leung, 2008; Watts & Sultana, 2004). After helping students to decide upon the desired career they want to pursue, educational guidance services have to introduce students to college life. Irrespective of the nature of the course that students are taking, this is the most essential aspect of the orientation services at any university. As can be noted in Moroccan universities, the educational orientation services remain a missing piece. This can be observed in the number of students who fail their first year, and the confusion among students who are engaged in a department with no clear objectives on why they are part of that specific department and not another one. In this regard, Grubb (2002) claims that in many respects, the choices about schooling, work, and careers are not choices in the same sense that we think of the choices among shirts or fruit, or financial services. They are much more difficult issues of identity, involving deeper issues of what a person is, what their values are, how they position themselves concerning others and social groups, what they think of as a worthy life – the many different elements defining who they are (p.11). Consequently, students need to be made aware of the social environment of their university/college. This environment most definitely includes the extracurricular activities, workshops, and other special training programs available in the college courses. The educational orientation services can increase the efficiency of education programs by identifying learning needs, helping students identify appropriate courses, expanding their career choices, and challenging them to break personal limits (ILO, 2006). This would encourage students to socially integrate into the college culture. In this regard, guidance services at the college are meant to bridge the gap between students' experiences at school and their new experiences at the college level, which is very distinctive. Otherwise, students will not be successful in their professional as well as personal careers. In Morocco, since both the infrastructure and resources are rare, orientation services are infrequently offered under varying contexts. Hence, compared to other countries, a noticeable development is reached by the educational orientation services in Morocco (Watts & Sultana, 2004). It is important to recognize that educational guidance and orientation need to be adapted to the cultural context in which it is set (Sultana and Watts, 2007). Cultural issues include the significance of family influences and patronage, and attitudes relating to directiveness and fatalism (Ibid). It cannot be denied that the situation of Moroccan students within their familial context is, to some extent, complicated. That is to say, students do not have extreme power and authority over their personal as well as professional lives. Almost all families interfere in their children's lives. Therefore, the choice is usually collective. For this reason, not only do students need educational orientation, but also their

parents. This means parents need to be made aware of the importance of meeting their siblings' needs and interests while deciding on their careers, because students need to study and achieve what they dream of, and not what the environment thinks is more appropriate for them. On the other hand, the weakness in educational guidance policies and structure for implementing educational orientation programs in Morocco still constitutes a big question. Nevertheless, the Moroccan higher education system does not succeed in ensuring students' degree completion. According to the latest study of the Higher Council for Education, Training and Scientific Research, a report announces, "64 per cent (64%) of students drop out of university without a degree. 25.2 per cent (25.2%) of these occurred in the first year. 40.2 per cent (40.2%) 14 after two years of studies, and 21.9 per cent (21.9%) after three years in university. Among the students who persist, many spend up to six years at university without completing their degree" (CSEFRS, 2014, p.103). This can merely be a result of the existing inadequacies and huge gaps between the higher secondary level and university, and the lack of sufficient counselling and guidance. Educational Orientation services generally direct students to get a total overview of what a university has to offer. This orientation represents one of the building blocks to get students familiar with the collegiate community. What makes the university a new environment for students is its structure and diversity in terms of courses, along with the large number of students enrolled. It is considered a space for diversity and the exchange of knowledge and experiences. Students at this level tend to assume full responsibility for their learning and their entire lifestyle. For this reason, students need to be fully equipped to effectively take part in that community and be a productive member of it instead of just consuming others' ideologies. The first semester at university is considered the most important time, and it can be the most challenging. This means, that if students are well oriented before and after being enrolled in the college community, it is likely that they will have a good experience and are likely to pursue their studies in the same department, taking the same course. Whereas, if students do not get enough orientation and counselling, they are likely to fail or drop out of university.

#### **2.4 University student success: key influencing factors**

Kuh et al. (2006) provide a general definition of student success as academic achievement, engagement in educational activities, acquisition of desired knowledge, skills, and competencies, attainment of educational objectives, and post-college performance. Carrote (1999) claims that students' learning and performance are the aims of education as a whole, and educators specifically. For instance, Terenzini and Pascarella (1980) found that students achieve a certain degree of intellectual and cultural growth while interacting with university life. That is to say, along with university contributions in developing students' intellect, the university also develops students' personalities. Thus, assessing the quality of the education system necessitates considering students' performance at university and beyond (Kirmani, 2008). The quality of citizens greatly depends on their education. In the same line of thought, the quality of education is merely a result of academic achievement and performance, which can easily be noticed in the student's attitudes and habits (Abid, 2006). That is to say, students' habits and attitudes are built and developed through counselling and guidance. Thus, along the pathway to success in education, students automatically need to assume responsibility for their learning and progress, especially at the college level. The collegiate nature is widely different from that secondary school. This might equally have consequences on students' academic as well as personal achievement. In this regard, students need to be well-equipped to get integrated into the new community.

#### **2.5 The rationale behind educational orientation /counselling**

Educational supervision is widely viewed as a public good as well as a private good. In other words, its benefits potentially accrue not only to the individual recipient of the services but also to the wider society (Watts, 2014).

##### **2.5.1 At the individual level**

Orientation and guidance services are included in the teaching and learning processes to assist individuals in successfully functioning in both their personal and professional lives. That is, if university students choose a major that matches their needs and interests, they are more likely to succeed in that field and attain the greatest potential outcomes. Similarly, students would have a better chance of getting into and succeeding in the job market if they are active in activities that they enjoy. They will not be able to dive deep into that subject or get great outcomes if they do not do so. Educational advisory services may help disadvantaged people increase their ambitions and get access to possibilities that would otherwise be unavailable to them (Watts, 2014). This means that educational orientation does promote students' achievement and facilitates the likelihood of easily getting into the job market. It is reasonable to believe that individuals all around the world have had a genuine need for aid of some sort to overcome obstacles that have prevented them from operating properly (Kasomo, 2007). This is why educational orientation is very much needed indeed.

##### **2.5.2 At the social level**

Educational counselling and supervision are two of the most critical responsibilities that must be fulfilled to run a successful educational system (Jahanian & Ebrahimi, 2013). Educational orientation supports the education system, which in turn increases the productivity of the entire society. Its major objective is to significantly alter and improve educational standing to a large extent (Ibid). Nowadays, educational leaders cooperate with teachers and help them with education to modify educational

status, aiming at the promotion of the quality of teachers' performance and removal of their problems through professional cooperation (Ibid). In other words, educational orientation helps not only students, but also educators as they follow up with students in their school counselling. The primary responsibility of educational counsellors, regardless of their titles or positions, is to provide the highest level of professional assistance to teachers and to assist them in achieving more desirable development. As a result, teaching and learning processes will be modified, and they will function more efficiently, yielding more desirable results. More desired teacher growth will lead to more students' development and the effectiveness of educational monitoring and direction, resulting in overall school satisfaction (Soltani, 2004). Educational orientation advantages begin at the individual level and spread across society, including instructors, educators, and parents, as well as the educational system as a whole construct. Educational supervision is one of the educational activities that leads to students' growth and development, as well as professional and personal progress (Jahanian & Ebrahimi, 2013).

### **3 Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research Questions and Hypotheses**

**Question 1:** To what extent do students benefit from the educational orientation/counselling afforded throughout their schooling lives?

**Question 2:** How can educational guidance be oriented to serve students' needs and interests?

**Hypothesis 1:** Students do not benefit from the educational guidance they are provided with because it is not pragmatic.

**Hypothesis 2:** The failure of the educational orientation services is attributed to the mismatch between the guidance services afforded and students' needs and interests.

#### **3.2 Research Design**

The research design used in the current study is the triangulation design (a design classified under the mixed methods approach). The aim behind using this design is to validate and expand quantitative results with qualitative data. That is to say, the mixture of both quantitative and qualitative results is intended to better understand the topic under study. The researcher attempts to merge the two data sets, typically by bringing the separate results together in the interpretation or by transforming data to facilitate integrating the two data types during the analysis (Creswell, 2003).

#### **3.3 Research Approach**

In this study, a mixed methods approach is utilized. The quantitative approach is used in the form of questionnaires to measure and quantify the percentage of students who would opt for specific choices and options as a way to answer some questions. The qualitative approach, on the other hand, is used to explore the kind of answers that students would provide (e.g., when students are asked to provide their opinions and elaborations on specific issues). The qualitative approach is also used to elicit and examine the justifications with which students would back up their answers.

#### **3.4 Participants**

The population targeted is composed of undergraduate students in the department of English at the Faculty of Languages, Letters, and Arts at Ibn Tofail University. Eighty-two respondents have participated in this study.

#### **3.5 Data Analysis Procedures**

The data collected through the questionnaire sent online has, through the use of Google Forms, been processed and coded. Different data have been counted and organized in the form of frequencies and percentages. As charts could not directly be copied from Google Forms and pasted into Word documents (possibly because of technical problems or the researcher's lack of knowledge concerning this technological strategy), the researcher has opted for Microsoft Office Excel 2016 to form charts identical to the ones in Google Forms. Still, the researcher, using Microsoft Office Excel 2016, has kept the same data; the same organization of the elicited data; the same percentages and the same frequencies being counted through Google Forms.

#### **3.6 Ethical Consideration**

The participants of the study were all informed of the purpose of the research and the purpose for which the elicited data would be used. These participants were assured that the data they provided would only be used for research purposes. The participants were also assured that their privacy would be protected and that their identity would be kept anonymous. After these procedures, each participant was left the choice of participating or not in the study.

## **4 Findings and Discussions**

### **4.1 Students' Experiences with Educational Orientation Services at High School**

In exploring students' experiences with educational orientation services at high school, the researcher is first testing whether students have been exposed to any sort of educational orientation services, and the extent to which they have benefited from those services. The participants answered the question that is concerned with the existence of any educational consultation and guidance at high school. The majority of the participants (59.6%) answered no. This means that the majority of high schools do not have educational orientation and guidance services. The importance of those services is manifested in students' need for consultation and guidance to be fully equipped to choose the right path for their future professional careers. On the other hand, the lack of educational orientation services causes immense problems and difficulties for students in their educational choice. Among the participants, 40.4% answered yes. This means that they have been exposed to some sort of orientation and consultation. For more specific knowledge, the researcher asked the participants if they already had a specialist in educational orientation services who helped them. The majority again (75%) answered no. While only 25% of the participants answered yes. This shows that even though there is some sort of consultation and orientation, there is a lack of human resources to direct the orientation services. Despite all the inadequacies and inconsistencies with the educational orientation services in the Moroccan high school, students appreciate and recognize the importance and significance of the educational orientation and guidance services. This was mainly proved in their answers to a statement about the importance of educational orientation services. Students who had some experience with the services of educational orientation answered a question about the extent to which these experiences were satisfactory. The majority of the answers were that the experience was not beneficial. Because the question was open, students had the chance to freely express their ideas and elaborate more on them. Some argued that they have not been provided with the necessary knowledge; they claimed that superficial knowledge is everywhere on the internet. What students need is a deep understanding of what they want to study at university. They all need to be provided with concrete experiences from specialists in their domains. In this way, students would appreciate and benefit from the consultation, and the assistance would be fruitful. Some students also expressed their grief and sadness for not having any kind of educational guidance or consultation. They used to ask their teachers about the major or field they wanted to pursue. They claimed that teachers were their only source of consultation and guidance. Therefore, they argue that no educational orientation was provided.

### **4.2 Educational Orientation Services at the University**

To determine whether educational orientation exists at universities or not, the participants in this study were asked to specify exactly the period when they were exposed to educational orientation and counselling, if there was any. In this section, all the participants who supported the existence of educational orientation specified that it was only at high school, and that they had never encountered any counselling at university. Students at university, apart from feeling fully responsible for their decisions, even if they feel lost and misoriented, receive no assistance. The left solution in these cases is to give up and change the field of study, with no counselling on how to handle the situation. Students are in urgent need of educational guidance and orientation even at university. Counselling never stops at high school. Students remain in need of guidance until they finish their studies. Students need educational orientation and counselling at university, especially in the first year. The first year at university is the main challenging one because students enter a new environment that is different from the high school environment. Students at that level need to integrate into and belong to the new community to effectively function within that special context. In the questionnaire, students had the opportunity to express their attitudes towards the lack of these essential services in the Moroccan university.

### **4.3 Educational Orientation and Students' performance at university**

In this section, the researcher tended to test the correlation between students' performance at university and educational orientation services. Students who are well-oriented towards their interests and goals perform well at university because they are majoring in what they like and they belong to the environment. Yet, students who are not exposed to educational orientation and have no assistance throughout their years of schooling tend to go through serious difficulties related to both their studies and their integration into the environment at university. Therefore, students claimed a great correlation between success and educational orientation services. Being fully equipped with the necessary knowledge about the field of study a student is going to pursue gives confidence to perform well. It also promotes self-efficacy and belonging to the new community. Whereas, students with no prior assistance of knowledge feel hesitant towards engaging in the university's world. The participants in the study confirmed that they got integrated into the world of the university by doing research and making efforts on their own, as they received no assistance at the university. While some participants said that they were isolated at university. This greatly affected their performance and psychology. Hence, some failed their first year, while others changed their major or faculty. Additionally, it cannot be denied that a minority do not agree with the claim that students' performance is related to educational orientation and guidance. 3.8 per cent (3.8%) is the percentage of participants who did not agree. They see that students' performance can be related to things other than educational orientation. Their performance might be related to social, economic, and psychological factors.

Using the Likert Scale, the participants were asked to express the extent to which they agree with a statement claiming that students' low performance at university is a result of poor educational orientation. 46.2 per cent (46.2%) agreed to a great extent, while the same percentage of participants (46.2%) only agreed to a medium extent. Yet, 7.7 per cent (7.7%) agreed to a small extent. Therefore, it is still evident that poor or the lack of educational orientation services affect students' achievement at university.

In the following section, the participants in the study were asked to express the degree of agreement with some statements. The first statement claims that educational orientation is important for students before finishing their studies in high school. It entails that students get the necessary guidance and assistance before they join university studies. The majority of the participants, mainly 94 per cent (94%), agreed with the statement. This shows how educational orientation is necessary for students in high school. It works on guiding students along with providing the substantial and requisite knowledge and information so as for students to be fully aware and equipped to confidently join the world of the university. On the other hand, 6 per cent (6%) of the participants remained neutral about the statement. The second statement concerns the need for specialists in educational orientation at every high school. A total of 92 per cent (92%) of participants agreed with the statement. While 8 per cent (8%) remained neutral. The majority appreciates the need for specialists in the domain of educational orientation to rightfully manage and direct the services of consultation. Normally, students are not familiar with the notion of having specialists in the field of guidance and assistance because they get those services from their teachers at high school. With the lack of orientation services, teachers find themselves confronted with students' questions and inquiries about higher institutions and majors that students can choose for their higher studies. The problem here is that teachers are not well-trained in the domain of guidance and orientation. Therefore, the Ministry of Education takes the responsibility to train and appoint specialists in orientation and counselling (counsellors, advisors). It can merely be claimed that there are specialists in orientation at some high schools. However, the system with which they are working is outdated. In the 21st-century education, counsellors need to be closer to students. Today's generations do not need pieces of information about institutions of higher education, because knowledge is everywhere on the internet. Students need accompaniment throughout their years of schooling, particularly in high school. A single high school needs more than one counsellor, because the composition of an advisory committee nowadays is different. Specifically, a counsellor has to at least accompany the student from the first year of high school. The counsellor needs to know more details about the student's personality, interests, needs, and learning goals. In this regard, the counsellors would help each student in the way they need help. He/she knows students' stumbling moments and where they find difficulties, and so forth. The third statement claims that students' choice of major at university is influenced by the counselling they get at high school. 54 per cent (54%) of the participants agreed with the statement. They see that the orientation that students get affects their choice of major in high school. In the same line of thought, students seek assistance at high school while they ask about particular domains or majors at university. In this way, they are asking for encouragement to promote their decision, and at the same time, they get impacted if they get negative or positive instructions on what they are asking about. 35 per cent (35%) of the participants remained neutral, while 11 per cent (11%) did not agree with the statement. This might mean that students' choice of major at high school can be a result of personal research on the field the student is willing to study, or sometimes the family intervenes to help or direct their children's choice, and so on. As for the following statement, it claims that students' failure at university can be attributed to the lack of educational orientation. 60 per cent (60%) of students agreed with the statement. As mentioned earlier, students who have prior knowledge of what the university is all about are more likely to succeed and integrate into the world of university, unlike others who do not have a clear vision of the new system of education at university and have no idea about the university's environment. Students with no idea about the new community may fail, particularly in the first year. Therefore, it might be assumed that students' failure at university is attributed to the lack of educational orientation services. The following statement is concerned with the change of major. It claims that students tend to change their major at university because of the lack of educational consultation. 73 per cent (73%) of students agreed with the statement. This merely indicates that, at university, students may not make the right choice for their professional careers. They may choose a major based on external factors that have nothing to do with the students' needs, interests, or goals. Students may opt for a major because their friends have opted for it. Others may follow their family's suggestions. It all depends on how the student perceives his/her future career, and how much he/she takes it seriously. Here comes the role of educational orientation services. One of its roles is to train students on how to value and appreciate their future professional careers. When students appreciate their professional careers and work on promoting their potential, it becomes easier to handle any confusing situation. In this regard, the Ministry of Education has to develop educational orientation services at high schools first. The last statement is concerned with educational orientation at the university. It claims that universities need to incorporate educational orientation services, particularly for first-year students. 85 per cent (85%) of participants agreed with the statement. Throughout the whole questionnaire, while the participants in the study claimed that there had been some kind of educational guidance and counselling, they also assumed that they had never encountered any orientation services or assistance at university. Students in all cases do encounter some difficulties at university in one way or another; however, the education system does not provide any support or help for students at university. In this case, students either struggle with their situation to find solutions, or they drop



out of university to look for a better alternative. It is worth mentioning again at this point the speech of the Minister of Education, Said Amzazi, who confessed in a public interview that college dropout is a result of the lack of educational orientation at Moroccan universities. The Moroccan education system has indeed improved over the last 20 years. It goes without denying the fact that, generation after generation, development is noticed and appreciated, particularly in the era of the CORONA virus (Covid-19). The Ministry of Education worked on developing the infrastructure to integrate Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in the education system. Moreover, the 21st-century education system promotes autonomy and independence in learning. Therefore, students are developing in terms of research and e-learning. Nevertheless, students should be the center of the teaching and learning process. This can be achieved through effective educational orientation and counselling. Orientation in education leads to promoting good citizenship, independence, and leadership in education. In the same context, the role of the counsellor is highly emphasized. The educational orientation domain should be led and directed by competent and well-trained advisors and counsellors to put the necessary pedagogies and strategies of guidance and counselling into practice. At this level, teachers are also part of this operation. They play a fundamental role in helping students to get well-oriented towards their goals and interests. Therefore, teachers and counsellors need to cooperate to make the educational orientation operation a success.

## 5 Limitations of the Study

The study has two limitations. First, though the study targets students at Ibn Tofail University in Kénitra, the researcher does not have a lot of acquaintances to share the questionnaire with. This is why the researcher believes the questionnaire could have reached a lot of people if this issue had been solved. Second, the questionnaire has only been administered online. Administering the questionnaire in the form of hard copies would have offered the researcher an opportunity to convince more students to participate in the study (since there tends to be a face-to-face meeting) and to ensure a more representative sample.

## 6 Recommendations

As the study intends to shed light on a very important topic, which normally concerns not only students, but also parents, educators as well and administrators. All these parties have to cooperate and work hand in hand to achieve the intended goals and improvements. At this level, it is highly recommended that the Ministry of Education set certain criteria to conduct the domain of educational orientation. Counsellors need to be carefully appointed to take the responsibility of guiding and orienting students towards their dreams and interests. It goes without saying that students need to be equipped to link their dreams with the real world, or both higher education as well as the job market. The success of this operation necessitates investing in the education system and searching for finances to promote the development of the Moroccan education system, which mainly leads to the development of the country as a whole.

## 7 Conclusions

In this study, the researcher sought to investigate the extent to which students benefit from the educational orientation and guidance at both high school and university. It also aimed at exploring the way educational orientation services serve students' interests and needs. It is worth mentioning that this study allows a deep shedding light on the mismatch between the Moroccan education system in terms of human resources and development and students' capacities and requisites. It also sheds light on the major challenges that students face in making the transition from high school to university.

An implication that can be drawn from this study is that universities should double their efforts to incorporate educational orientation services to achieve high-quality education. The quality of education at a university is indicated by the services it offers to students. When students feel they are engaged within the university community and their needs are catered to, they effectively function.

Overall, orientation is a much-needed program that greatly benefits all participants, including new students, parents, professors, administration staff, and current students, if it is well designed. Orientation intends to offer answers to issues before they are asked and to solve problems before they arise. Orientation should alleviate problems and prepare incoming students by adequately preparing and utilizing all resources to serve and meet students' needs and goals.

Further research needs to be conducted about the implementation of effective educational orientation services and programmes, particularly at universities. This is, of course, by the extension and improvement of these services at the high school first. In the same regard, a listening cell needs to be integrated at high schools and universities to know what students need, what they lack, and their expectations from the educational orientation services.

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