Introduction:
The demographic window of opportunity that some developing countries are currently entering offers a unique opportunity for economic growth. For a restricted number of years, the size of the working age population is at its maximum compared with the size of the dependent population and therefore a high productive capacity which goes together with low caring costs for the young and the old.

Despite their efforts, North African countries do not appear to benefit from this opportunity. They certainly educated more and more their young people, but in spite of this there is not enough jobs - especially not at the appropriate level of qualification - these young people have no prospects, which, among other things, led to civil unrest in 2011.

Changing age structures shapes certainly the opportunity of the demographic dividend, but its capitalization is not automatic. It depends rather on the implementation of effective policies. In this respect the example of the North African countries seems edifying. While their age structures have developed positively, they have so far failed to benefit from the demographic dividend because of a lack of jobs.

This paper seeks to describe the situation of North African countries in relation to the demographic dividend process and identify the challenges which preventing the harvest of profits. Particular attention will be paid to the school dividend in order to identify the obstacles and sources of the observed changes.

Need for the study:
In the second half of the last century, Thailand and other countries in East Asia were able to capitalize on changes in the age structures for a boost of economic productivity, a phenomenon called demographic dividend. Nowadays, despite the slow pace of the demographic transition in Africa, academics and politicians remain hopeful that similar changes on the continent can lead to faster development in the coming decades. The North African region which is characterized by a fairly rapid demographic transition over the past five decades should play a pioneering role in the capitalization of the demographic dividend. Unfortunately, the demographic window of opportunity which was opened when most countries in the sub-region had experienced economic and political problems hinder them to take the occasion and have its advantages.

The interest of this study is therefore to examine on basis of the data available, the experience of countries in the sub-region with respect to the demographic dividend process. The analysis results
can be used for other African countries whose window of opportunity has just opened to ensure their chances of emergence.

Objectives:

Nowadays, the "demographic dividend" is a central element in the debate on African Emergence. This work is a contribution to enrich the debate. It is also part of a large study conducted by a group of experts working on the school dividend in Africa.

The work seeks to:

- Experience the estimation technique of the school dividend in an area considered to be the pioneer in demographic transition in Africa.
- Identify some strategic directions that will enable African countries to benefit from the demographic dividend;
- Publicize and promote the theory of the demographic dividend.

Data source:

The data used in this study come from several sources such as:

- Censuses;
- Demographic and health surveys;
- Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS).
- World Population Prospects;
- World Development Indicators (World Bank).
- UNESCO statistics.

Preliminary results:

- The improvement of knowledge and understanding of the concept of demographic dividend;
- The exploitation of the benefits of the demographic dividend;
- Identification of actions and resources needed to enable African countries to benefit from the demographic dividend.

References:

- Tempo, locus, quantum, and “wantum” components in african fertility transitions: implications for the demographic dividend Parfait Eloundou-Enyegue, Habibou Ouedrago, &Sarah Giroux.