



TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROBLEMS AND POSSIBLE STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE IT

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Abstract:

This paper highlights the main professional development issues faced by teachers in Moroccan schools, and presents a synthesis of challenges encountered as well as possible leadership strategies and opportunities to enhance teacher professional development in the North African country. The current manuscript analyses the matter of teacher professional development in Morocco, considering its educational system's unique opportunities and challenges. However, these issues and strategies could apply to any similar context around the world. The current study aims to provide practical strategies to overcome the identified issues, as well as to organize existing knowledge, through synthesizing and categorizing the central issues and recommended strategies related to teacher professional development into groupings, which helps the readers have a better understanding of teachers' professional development. The analysis of literature work concludes that problems related to teacher professional development can belong to two main classifications: quality and pertinence of teacher professional development programs, on the one hand, and the government's efforts and initiatives, on the other hand. As for the possible strategies, the current study suggests grouping them into four main classifications. First, enhancing the quality of teacher professional development programs, second, developing an online approach, third, considering a participative and needs analysis approach, and finally, adopting a religious and role model approach. This paper first introduces the context of education and teacher professional development in Morocco, and then presents the different problems that teachers are facing in the Moroccan context. Finally, the manuscript emphasizes the major possible strategies aiming to enhance teacher professional development in Morocco. The issues mentioned and suggested strategies can apply to other contexts as well.

Keywords: teacher professional development, problems, strategies, Morocco

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1. Introduction

1.1 The context of education and teachers' professional development in Morocco

The Ministry of National Education of Morocco launched an ambitious program aiming to reform Moroccan schools through creating the National Charter of Education and Training, which aimed to create a healthy environment for learning and teaching. Despite the admirable efforts made, several years after the Charter's establishment, the situation in Moroccan schools is still far from ideal (Belhiah, 2014). Furthermore, the National Charter for Education and Training of Morocco gives professional development for teachers and school leaders the first priority (Sassi & Chaibi, 2016). Continuing professional development programs have been given national priority in Morocco with the goal of raising the quality of education and enhancing teachers' professional skills (Monica Jojo, 2015). The National Charter emphasizes that the supply of basic training, which should be of high standards, effective, and sustained, as well as the provision of appropriate pedagogical instruments, and an accurate evaluation of pedagogical performance, are necessary for the quality and efficacy of teachers' work. Furthermore, every year, teachers should receive thirty hours of professional development, and every three years, they should receive an intensive training (Ouardani, 2020).

International organizations like the Japan International Cooperation Agency, UNICEF, and the United States Agency for International Development collaborate with the Ministry of National Education and Vocational Training of Morocco to assist teachers and school staff in taking regular courses for a better response to the demands of new curricula and intervention plans (Sassi & Chaibi, 2016).

Regarding the Ministry of Education of Morocco, and as part of the decentralization policy, the regional academies take on the duty of developing, providing, following up, and supporting teacher professional development in accordance with the ministry's policy and strategy in the field, taking into account the unique characteristics of the regions as well as the national priorities. For instance, the primary suppliers of teacher professional development are the regional inspectorates under the academies. Supervisors were requested by Circular 1976 to create annual action plans in the form of pedagogical meetings, seminars, and demonstration lessons, and to make sure these plans were effectively carried out (Ouardani, 2020). For instance, inspectors of pedagogy play a crucial role in Morocco's educational system. To enhance teaching and learning within the twelve regional Academies for Education and Training across the nation, pedagogical inspectors supervise instructors and design teacher professional development programs, colloquia, and seminars (Sassi & Chaibi, 2016).

According to the Emergency Program policy of Morocco, the European Union, UNESCO, USAID, and IOF (International Organization of Francophonie) fund the continuing professional development program in Morocco. More particularly, online courses are accessible in the country and are used for teachers' continuing professional development (Monica Jojo, 2015). The author emphasizes that the Ministry of Education had to take many actions in order to implement ambitious and innovative programs like GENIE for the widespread use of ICTs in education. However, Monica Jojo (2015) pointed

out that Morocco was, and is still, lacking regular programs of continuous professional development to renovate the teaching profession. Therefore, the Emergency Program of Morocco, spanning the period from 2009 to 2012, sought to establish a clear and ongoing policy for effective continuing professional development with the following goals. First, to improve the current teaching and administrative personnel, aligning their profiles with the highest requirements for professional training and teaching skills, and second, to maximize the teachers' redeployment by offering them retraining opportunities during requalification sessions (Monica Jojo, 2015).

Finally, Ouardani (2020) pointed out that, studies on teacher professional development are scarce in the Moroccan context. Therefore, the current study aims to address this gap. Furthermore, the author goes on to emphasize that this problem makes it challenging to offer a thorough analysis of this topic in relation to program design, implementation, and evaluation (Ouardani, 2020). The purpose of the current study is to synthesize the major problems regarding teacher professional development in Morocco, as well as the possible strategies to promote the field of teacher professional development in the Moroccan context. This paper can provide an overview and synthesis of the main issues and recommendations regarding teacher professional development in Morocco, and could bring insights to different contexts as well.

2. Literature review

2.1 Teacher professional development problems in the Moroccan context

Several studies pointed out the different concerns that hinder teacher professional development in Morocco. Ouardani (2020) emphasized the existence of numerous obstacles towards an effective implementation of teacher professional development. The author goes on to restate the findings of the study carried out by the Supreme Council for Education in Morocco, which showed that barely more than a half (56%) of the secondary school respondents benefited from teacher professional development, while almost the third (29%) of teachers did not have any teacher professional development training for more than five years. Furthermore, only about a quarter of the respondents (23%) confirmed that the training sessions were helpful. Finally, around a third of teachers (34%) highlighted that the type of training they had was of a limited impact on their classroom instruction. Another study revealed that teachers are reluctant to take part in teacher professional development programs (Biqiche *et al.*, 2019), and by the same logic, the research of Bouaissane *et al.* (2022) pointed out that Moroccan teachers hold negative attitudes towards in-service training and continuous professional development activities they receive.

2.2 Strategies to overcome teacher professional development problems in Morocco

As mentioned earlier, research studies have proved the existence of different issues in the area of teacher professional development. For instance, the state needs to reconsider the prevalent policies and practices of teacher professional development, as well as the evaluation of teacher professional development programs, as stated by Ouardani (2020).

Furthermore, Biqiche *et al.* (2019) highlighted the need for the government to provide better financial support to facilitate their access to fruitful professional development opportunities. Moreover, as emphasized by the research of Chaaban *et al.* (2021), it could be concluded that there is a need to better implement and integrate digital devices, as well as ensure and facilitate the use of online education. Finally, another suggestion could follow the study of Ouardani (2020), which is the claim for reconsideration, clarification and more transparency regarding regulatory texts concerning teacher professional development in general and teacher professional development evaluation programs more specifically.

3. Materials and Methods

A targeted review of the literature was carried out. Articles focusing on the unique educational system of Morocco, and particularly regarding the topic of teachers' professional development, were included in the analysis. The manuscripts were carefully analyzed to extract key themes. Through multiple readings, key issues related to teacher professional development, including problems as well as possible strategies to overcome them, were identified and grouped. Finally, the information from the articles was synthesized by cross-referencing different perspectives. Similar ideas were merged, and differences were noted to create a comprehensive overview of the current state of teacher professional development.

4. Results and Discussion

This section suggests grouping teachers' professional development problems into two main classifications, as well as teachers' professional development strategies into four main categories.

4.1 Teacher professional development problems

Hindrances to effective teacher professional development and the reluctance of teachers to participate in professional development could be explained by several factors, which are suggested by the present study to be classified into two major categories. First, the quality and pertinence of teacher professional development programs, which are mainly in direct relation with teachers, supervisors and continuing professional development providers, and second, the initiatives and efforts taken by the government.

4.1.1 Quality and pertinence of teacher professional development programs

Among the main issues related to quality and pertinence of teacher professional development programs are, first, a lack of regular continuous professional programs to renovate the teacher profession (Monica Jojo, 2015), and limited training and professional development opportunities (Chaaban *et al.*, 2021; Ouardani, 2020). For instance, the findings of Ouardani's (2020) study showed that some teachers reached far less than thirty hours of professional development, as recommended by the national charter.

Second, the existence of noticeable deficiencies in teachers' training and gaps between onsite teachers' training and continuing professional development (Hilali & Moubtassime, 2021). One example emphasizing this problem could be explained by the study of Bouaissane *et al.* (2022), where teachers revealed that continuous professional development providers often design and implement continuous professional development activities without including the instructors in this process. Thus, professional development activities do not respond to their immediate needs and expectations. Third, a lack of quality in continuous professional development programs, where such programs are academically inadequate and superficial (Bouaissane *et al.*, 2022). To describe this issue more in detail, Ouardani (2020) underlined that teacher professional development still uses traditional delivery modes and basic skills-focused content on the one hand, and lacks structured needs analysis strategy, feedback, and follow-up, on the other hand. Therefore, it could be concluded from this first category of issues that supervisors and continuing professional development providers need to work on the quality, frequency, and appropriateness of teacher professional development activities while taking into account teachers' needs to better meet their interest in professional development programs.

4.1.2 Government efforts and initiatives

The second suggested category of issues regarding teachers' professional development is related to the government. For instance, the Moroccan government is making great attempts and taking a number of actions to improve the educational system in general and professional development more specifically. As an illustration, the study of Chaaban *et al.* (2021) highlights the state's initiatives in the field of ICT that aim to improve teaching and learning, particularly after the pandemic. Among these efforts to enhance distance learning, there is the TilmideTICE platform, which provides content across all subjects and grade levels. Furthermore, the ministry provided access to Microsoft Teams to enable teacher-student interactions, and even video-recording lessons to broadcast them on national TV channels. However, the authors concluded through their research studies that teachers were not really prepared for distance education, which was given little attention by the government.

Two main issues can be concluded from the research study. First, the limited training opportunities regarding online education, where teachers had to depend on self-learning to get ready even in difficult situations, and second, lack of technological devices, internet connectivity, and stable electricity, especially in rural areas, which represent major factors hindering teachers from taking action towards student learning (Chaaban *et al.*, 2021). The second type of problems worth mentioning regarding the government's efforts is the state's lack of a strategic vision on ways and means to boost teachers' growth. This also leads to a poor quality of teachers' professional development programs (Ouardani, 2020). The third main issue to highlight is the government's financial support, as stressed by Biqiche *et al.* (2019), where the authors highlighted the reluctance of teachers to take part in teacher professional development programs and demonstrated that financial support strongly correlates with teachers' willingness to

participate in teacher professional development opportunities. Fourth, Ouardani (2020) pointed out the ambiguity of the Ministry's regulatory texts related to teacher professional development. To sum up, though the government is making improvement in the field of education and professional development, it is necessary to offer better opportunities and facilitations for ICT integration, for both teachers' training and students' learning, as well as to provide financial support, insure more transparency regarding teacher professional development regulatory texts, and finally consider a strategic vision to enhance teachers' professional growth.

4.2 Strategies to overcome teacher professional development problems

One way to classify these strategies could be as follows: first, enhancing the quality of teacher professional development training programs, second, considering an online approach and improving digital education, third, integrating a participative and needs analysis approach, and finally, adopting a religious and role model approach.

4.2.1 Enhancing the quality of teacher professional development training programs

There are several approaches to consider, as stated in the literature concerning the Moroccan context, aiming to enhance the quality of training programs related to teacher professional development. For example, Ouardani (2020) suggested increasing the training's frequency and improving delivery modes. The author goes on to say that, there is a need to reconsider teacher-training programs in the country through advocating a developmental approach to teacher training emphasizing self-study and reflection. Biqiche *et al.* (2019) added that there is a need to ensure quality in devised programs. Moreover, awareness among teachers should be raised about new opportunities and innovations in teacher professional development programs. Finally, there is a need to provide teachers with the necessary support to facilitate their professional growth (Biqiche *et al.*, 2019). Ouardani (2020) suggests more focus on school-based activities to better support teachers' individual levels. The author mentions as well that it is important to integrate teaching methodology in program design at the tertiary level. Finally, he stressed the importance of seriously considering the evaluation of teacher professional development programs; otherwise, these programs cannot improve nor be successful. As for Ajrouh and Slamti (2020), they proposed an anticipatory vision to change to better design and implement teacher professional development programs in accordance with current and actual needs. Some scholars also highlight the importance of collaboration to enhance teacher professional development quality; for instance, Ouardani (2020) calls for collaboration and experience sharing among teachers, and Ajrouh and Slamti (2020) suggest collaborating with other universities both within and outside of Morocco. One final but important point concerns teachers' participation in action research as advocated by two research studies.

Ouardani (2020) stated that action research could be an effective professional tool in teachers' change. Amine (2023) explained in more depth and further about the importance of considering action research to enhance teacher professional development. According to the author, action research is a useful professional development activity for

teachers due to its pragmatic appeal, emphasis on fostering practitioner empowerment, and solutions-based orientation. He goes on to explain that teachers who want to design their own action research projects have countless options because of the varied and everyday images seen in the teaching profession. To enhance practice in classrooms, schools, and communities, action research must be a significant part of teacher preparation degree programs. The author continues by stating that teachers should receive the proper support to allow them to continue action research, including group discussions. It is reasonable to advise Moroccan institutional or educational leaders to assist teachers who decide to do action research to advance their professional growth. To satisfy teachers' requirements and concerns about the consistency and timeliness of this approach, it is preferable to incorporate formal action research training or workshops, time made aside for the procedure, and ongoing support (Amine, 2023).

4.2.2 Online approach

Ouardani (2020) pointed out that future programs should better integrate ICT. Regarding the digital use for teacher professional development, Ajrouh and Slamti (2020) recommend improving institutional alignment with the digital world, assessing professional development processes in terms of online learning, and developing an online approach by selecting relevant and reliable programs. As for the research study led by Hilali and Moubtassime (2021), it emphasized the importance of using MOOCs to improve teacher professional development. Since many Moroccan instructors appear to have a positive attitude and more in-depth information about MOOCs for continuous professional development, the authors advise using MOOCs as an alternative to traditional training or as a complement to teachers' training. The authors go on to explain that a MOOC on science education could be extremely helpful in improving initial and ongoing teacher preparation; they might also be employed to promote cooperation between educational institutions and their surroundings. The authors elucidate that this way, teachers could receive instruction from other teachers in various curricular aspects, which may be helpful and innovative, and it can develop into a meeting setting where the exchange of perspectives, experiences, and approaches may occur (Hilali & Moubtassime, 2021).

4.2.3 Participative and needs analysis approach

There is a need for a participatory bottom-up approach to continuing professional development (Bouaissane *et al.*, 2022). Ouardani (2020) also highlights the need for a participatory approach to teacher professional development programs design. To identify the requirements of the teachers under their supervision and create appropriate continuing professional development (CPD) activities that can address those needs, supervisors and CPD providers should conduct a needs analysis. Supervisors are urged to move beyond the one-size-fits-all approach of CPD by involving all of the teachers in the design and implementation of CPD activities. They should diversify the modes of CPD (Bouaissane *et al.*, 2022). By the same logic, Ouardani (2020) calls for differentiating teacher professional development programs, as well as involving teachers and catering

for their needs. Finally, Biqiche *et al.* (2019) also suggest investigating the needs of teachers before engaging in devising any respective program.

4.2.4 Religious and role model approach

In the research carried out by Zheng and Ye (2022), it can be concluded that leadership strategies vary and are specific to each country and its particular culture. The study highlighted the importance of moral leadership and role modeling of teachers in the Chinese context. Likewise, in Morocco, moral leadership is equally important, and can be reached through adopting a religious approach or a role model approach in teaching. Some research articles emphasized the importance of religion, as well as the role model of teachers, in teaching and learning practices generally and in training and professional development opportunities more specifically. For instance, Hassi (2012) stated that religion places a strong emphasis on the application of theoretical insights into behaviors and practices when it comes to training and professional development, as opposed to depending exclusively on theoretical approaches. The author reiterated how an Islamic perspective on human resource management fosters organizational commitment. Organizations that want to give effective and appropriate training methods to their employees might gain from the training and learning techniques within the Islamic culture. Islamic methods of training and development, such as communication and the discursive method, Halaqa, probationary appointment, and apprenticeship, may be used in working contexts to address some contemporary workplace difficulties, such as training young recruits. The author goes on to explain that, when designing employee-training activities, these forms should be considered as they generate a lot of interaction among organizational members. The resurgence of fundamental Islamic training and development principles, with their appeal to both faith and reason as well as their practical wisdom that emphasizes, among other things, taking into account the learners' curricular needs, will increase the relevance and significance of organizations' training programs in Islamic societies (Hassi, 2012). As for the role model of teachers, Asserraji (2019) emphasized in her research article the importance that teachers play as role models, especially in the Moroccan context. She pointed out the relevance of reflective teaching for teachers, students, and the workplace. Moreover, she highlighted the features of reflective practice while considering four major characteristics, particularly within Moroccan schools, which are the constructivist teaching approach, the teachers' love for teaching, artistic problem-solving and caring ethics. Thus, such aspects should be taken into account by teachers to improve their teaching practices and develop professionally (Asserraji, 2019).

5. Recommendations

In addition to initiatives that could be further thought through by the government, other stakeholders can consider several strategies in their educational approaches, mainly teachers, supervisors and continuing professional development providers. Therefore, supervisors and continuing professional development providers can enhance the quality,

frequency, and appropriateness of teacher professional development activities by considering the teachers' needs, to match their interest in professional development programs. To tackle the major issues related to teacher professional development; the government could provide better opportunities and facilitations for ICT integration, for both teachers' training and students' learning, as well as offer financial support, more transparency regarding teacher professional development regulatory texts, and consider a strategic vision to enhance teachers' professional growth. Finally, teachers could engage in action research as well as adopt a role model approach to enhance their professional development.

6. Conclusion

Morocco is a developing country that has made great efforts so far in terms of educational leadership and teacher professional development, particularly concerning policy implementation and prioritization of the field, as well as in terms of budget, support, and infrastructure. However, numerous studies showed that these actions are not appropriately and sufficiently implemented to respond to the needs of the teachers and their expectations, and the area of teacher professional development still needs to level up its quality, efficiency, and adequacy. This paper highlights, among the main problems of teacher professional development in Morocco, first, issues related to the quality and pertinence of teacher professional development programs, such as lack of regularity, relevance, and appropriateness, as well as limited opportunities for teachers' professional development. Second, issues that the government still needs to consider more seriously, including, financial support, more efforts to improve ICT integration, especially in rural areas, as well as the consideration of online education training in professional development programs, and finally providing a strategic vision for teachers' professional growth, in addition to more transparency and clarification of texts regulating teacher professional development. In order to face such hindrances to teacher professional development, the government should take the necessary actions to better support the teachers and facilitate their professional growth. In addition, teachers, supervisors and CPD providers can also take several initiatives to improve the quality of teacher professional development. CPD providers can consider increasing the number of professional development activities, and can better arrange for the evaluation of CPD programs. As for teachers, they can consider action research, collaboration and experience sharing, as well as self-reflection, and the modernization of the delivery mode. Moreover, several approaches could be adopted to enhance teacher professional development, including the implementation of an online approach, a participative and needs analysis approach, and a religious or role model approach.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

About the Author

Bouchra El Oraiby is a PhD candidate in educational leadership and management, at the Faculty of Education, Southwest University, China. Her research focuses on educational leadership, policy, and professional development, with additional exploration of holistic teaching and learning approaches—including student motivation, teacher engagement, joy in learning, and the integration of traditional Chinese and contemporary education. She holds a Master's Degree in Commerce and Business Administration. She has contributed to international academic discourse through presenting at the IAFOR International Conference on Education (Hawaii, 2024). Her related conference paper, "Age Limit for Teachers' Recruitment in Moroccan Public Schools" (Oraiby, 2024) appears in the proceedings. (DOI: 10.22492/issn.2189-1036.2024.43).

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