Issues in Teachers' Professional Development (TPD) for EFL Teachers in Morocco

Mohamed Ouardani
Hassan II High School. Beni-Mellal. Morocco

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Abstract
Today teachers’ professional development (TPD) has become a major concern in education. Big efforts and substantial budgets are devoted to sustain and increase both the teachers’ and the school’s performances. However, providing quality TPD poses serious challenges to program designers. Professionals in the field hold that unless teachers’ professional and individual needs are attended to in the trainings and later sustained through varied on-site activities, there is little chance that these will have any significant impact on teachers’ change (Day, 1999; Craft, 2000; Guskey, 2002; Diaz- Diaz-Maggioli, 2004; Kennedy, 2005). The present article reports and discusses findings on the prevalent issues in TPD for EFL teachers in Morocco. It also unveils and how these issues affect the quality of the professional training programs that are provided every academic year. Implications and recommendations on how to improve the future TPD experiences
are hence drawn. The study was based on the analysis of related official documents, data obtained from questionnaires addressed to both teachers of English (244 teachers) and supervisors (15 supervisor) from various academies of education in Morocco, as well as two case studies representing typical professional training days. The results revealed that there are numerous stumbling blocks towards an effective implementation of TPD. The state’s lack of a strategic vision on ways and means to boost teachers’ growth resulted in a poor offer in quality TPD programs. The study recommends a participatory approach to the TPD programs design with more focus on school-based activities, which provide better support to individual teachers.

**Keywords:** Differentiated TPD- participatory approach- school-based activities – support- teachers’ change

0. Introduction

Over the last decades, teachers’ professional development (TPD) has become a major concern of the educational systems throughout the world. Raising the educational standards and setting higher benchmarks for learners’ achievements are the core trends of the educational reforms. For the state to implement the required reforms and, in order to ensure that the educational policies and goals are attained, big efforts are devoted to sustain and increase both the teachers' and the school’s performances. Teachers are seen as major stakeholders in the process of change and the schools’ greatest assets (Day, 1999), and, accordingly, an increasing importance is attached to their professional and developmental needs.

TPD is channeled in the form of structured activities which are formally provided by the educational authorities with pre-defined agendas such as the in-service education and training (INSET). It also encompasses unstructured activities which are usually taken up informally following teachers’ own initiatives and self-commitment to one’s own individual and professional growth. Communities of practice (CoPs) and school-based activities like action research and peer-coaching are, among others, frequently encountered models of teachers’ informal trainings.

TPD is meant to bring about desired outcomes on various aspects. First and foremost, the goal is to help practitioners change and grow at the
levels of their awareness, knowledge, attitudes and skill. However, recently, the bottom line in TPD programs has become the students’ achievements (Guskey, 2000; craft, 2000). Guskey (2002) holds that TPD programs constitute the most convenient avenues available for teachers to reach professional growth and fulfillment.

However, the literature related to the field of professional training outlined a number of issues connected to TPD in terms of planning, implementation and evaluation (Guskey, 2000; Day, 1999; Craft, 2000 Diaz-Maggioli, 2004). Pervasive contradictions between teachers’ needs and TPD programs, particularly those hierarchically designed are outlined. Most of such programs are reported not to have any effect on teachers change and growth (Guskey, 2002; Craft, 2000; Kennedy 2005; Diaz-Diaz-Maggioli, 2004). In the Moroccan context, the paucity of studies on TPD makes it difficult to provide a comprehensive view on this topic in connection with program design, implementation and evaluation. The library and online searches uncovered some studies and papers presented in various seminars which deal with TPD in the Moroccan ELT1. In addition, there are some anecdotal and fragmentary data embedded in some online publications in Arabic or French and which remain unverifiable. One of the official documents targeting the evaluation of TPD is a study carried out by the Supreme Council for Education in 20082 which aimed at evaluating teachers’ satisfaction with the professional trainings they were involved in and the perceived impact on their development. The study targeted primary, middle school and high school teachers and was basically limited to reported data.

Based on field research, the present article reports some findings on the major issues in TPD for High school teachers of English in Morocco and, by the same token, uncovers how these affect the organization and implementation of the activities targeting to improve teachers’ class instruction. Additionally, the article makes a few recommendations

1 Namely, MATE 9th Teacher Education Seminar(2017) which was held in Rabat under the theme: Reforming Teacher Education and Training in Times of Change, and the 2nd International Conference on professional development organized by Moulay Smail University in Meknes under the theme:Professional Development and reflective Teaching.

advanced by the main stakeholders, namely teachers and supervisors, on ways to promote future TPD experiences.

The paper includes four sections. First, the background section provides a context of the study and the aims behind conducting it. The statement of the research questions and a description of the research tools are presented in the methodology part, while the findings are unveiled in the subsequent section. Part four is devoted to a discussion of the findings and the related recommendations.

1. Background

Relevant literature underlines a few central issues to TPD. Guskey (2002:29) holds that the choice and appropriateness of any given TPD model should be considered in terms of “the goals, the content and the context for the implementation”. A “thoughtful” mix-up model might unravel better impact on the professional growth and improvement of individual teachers as well as on the whole organization. Craft (2000), on the other hand, highlights the various angles through which TPD can be envisioned, namely purpose (to fulfill system/ individual needs), location (on sight/off-site), length (one shot/ongoing), and methods (one-size-fits all/learner focused).

A further issue raised in TPD is the effectiveness of the programs in bringing about the desired change in teachers. The process of teachers' development is a complex one, considering the various factors coming into play which either favor or disfavor teachers' growth. Relevant literature (c.f. Broad and Evans, 2006) highlights the value of TPD effectiveness and provides approaches in this sense. Training programs need to get teachers engaged in the learning opportunities that are provided for them through designing meaningful learning experiences which tap into both the personal and the professional needs of teachers. Reviewing the literature related to professional development and modes of delivery, Broad and Evans (2006:3) summarize the findings on TPD effectiveness:

- Effective professional development strongly links teachers and students learning and is guided by data
- Effective professional development must be personalized and responsive to the complex and unique needs and context of the learner.
Effective professional development needs to be sustained, ongoing, in-depth, requiring active engagement by the professional. Short term, “one-shot”, “pull-out” programs are seen to be ineffective in changing and developing practice.

A wide range of practices are seen to be effective in various settings. These practices include: collaborative learning, peer-assisted learning, teacher research, teacher-as-student, independent learning and integrated approaches.

The last major issue is the evaluation of the impact of the provided training programs. Researchers acknowledge the importance of evaluating TPD as a means to boost more the effectiveness of programs (Broad and Evans, 2006, p.25). According to Kutner & al. (1997), evaluation plays at least two roles: First it promotes professional program development and, second, it ensures program accountability. Similarly, Guskey (2000) assumes that TPD evaluations, if properly carried out, are “valuable learning tools” to inform different stakeholders on the extent to which the provided TPD was effective.

As it was mentioned earlier, grounded studies which target the evaluation of TPD in the Moroccan context are not abundant. One official study which was carried out by the Supreme council for Education revealed the outcomes of an opinion survey targeting primary school teachers, middle school and high school teachers in areas of (1) Initial training, (2) the professional career path and (3) teachers’ professional development. It also compared the TPD experiences between the targeted teachers in terms of their attitudes and perceived impact. The results related to secondary teachers, shows that more than half (56%) of the respondents benefited from TPD, while 29% of teachers did not have any TPD training for more than 5 years. Only 23% of the respondents revealed that the training sessions were helpful and 34% pointed out that the type of training they had was of a limited impact on their classroom instruction. The study raised critical questions on the TPD program design and implementation, namely needs analysis, training providers, periods of provision, and evaluation of the program effectiveness and impact. Related research in the Moroccan ELT also stresses the limitations of TPD offer and recommends various alternatives to boost teachers’ development. Dahbi (2017) for example, argues for the need to reconsider English teacher training programs in Morocco through advocating a developmental approach to teacher training which
“celebrates self-study and reflection”. For him action research can be an effective professional tool in teachers’ change. In a study of TPD needs at the tertiary level, Erguig (2017) underlines “the strong similarity between TPD needs in secondary and post-secondary education” and stresses the importance of integrating teaching methodology in program design for ELT instructors at the level of the university. He further highlights the self-directed types of professional development and calls for collaboration and experience-sharing among all ELT practitioners. In a similar vein Bensoukas (2017) holds that the absence of well structured TPD at the university level he urges that future programs should integrate ICT as a “major tool for the improvement of Moroccan university pedagogy” (p.13)

2. Methodology

The aim of the study was to evaluate TPD in the ELT context, based on how it is perceived in the formal ministerial documents, mainly the National Charter for Education and other related official documents. The focus is made on how the TPD programs are designed and implemented by the main providers represented in the regional academies and supervisors. In other words, the study sought to investigate the extent to which the ministry’s vision of TPD is actually translated in the prevalent trainings which benefit High School teachers of English. For this purpose, the study adopted a blended qualitative and quantitative approach. To gain in-depth understanding of the issue, data obtained was triangulated through the use of a variety of research tools, namely (a) an analysis of the related official documents issued by the ministry of education, (b) surveys administered to teachers and supervisors, and (c) two case studies which focused on observing samples of the training for EFL teachers in Morocco during each academic year. The research tools, i.e. the two questionnaires and a case study were piloted at an earlier stage. All the pertinent remarks and recommendations were taken into consideration, and the necessary modifications were accordingly made before the execution of the project. The collected data was processed before being subjected to analysis.

2.1 The official documents

The main aim of the official document analysis was to study how professional development is officially conceived of in terms of regulations, organization, implementation and evaluation. The analysis
covered the texts which regulate the organization and the implementation of teachers’ trainings, namely the various decrees, circulars and official bulletins issued by the Ministry of Education related to TPD. These are: the National Charter for Education and Training (October 1999), the ministerial decree of December 2nd, 2005\(^3\), the ministerial decree of July 7th, 2009\(^4\), Circular NO 173 , September 10th, 1976,Circular NO 12XC 36 , February 2012, and, finally, the 2008 Analytical Reported issued by the Supreme Council for Education.

### 2.2 The surveys

#### 2.2.1 The teachers’ survey and participants

The teachers’ survey was designed to collect reported data on how the TPD, particularly the INSETs which are provided by the supervisors, are implemented and how they are perceived by teachers and supervisors. Copies of the questionnaires were administered on a convenience basis to teachers working in the secondary school in different regional academies. The survey fell in three main sections. Section I was designed to collect background information on the respondents, such as gender, age, qualifications and teaching experience. Section II sought to find out about the participants experiences of TPD in terms of frequency of involvement and their motives behind taking it, while section III focused on INSET activities which are provided by supervisors. This particular section covered aspects related to INSETs’ frequency, length, content, implementation, and the participants’ perceptions about such activities. At the end of the questionnaire a space was provided for respondents to state their personal recommendations to improve the TPD experiences in their own context or give any additional comments in relation to the topic under investigation. The participants in the teachers’ survey were 244 EFL teachers from various academies in Morocco. 56.49% of them were males and 43.51% females. The majority (90.41%) belong to the 25-54 age group. 34.33% of the respondents’ experience in teaching did not exceed 5 years, 18.88% had 6-10 years’ teaching experience while the rest had been in teaching for more than 11 years. 16.02% of participants had no pre-service training while the rest graduated from the École


Normal Supérieure (ENS) (27.71%), the Faculté des Sciences de l’Education (FSE) (3.03%), the Centre Régional des Métiers de l’Enseignement et de la Formation (CRMEF) (43.20%) and the Centre Pédagogique Regional (CPR)(19.05%).

2.2.2 The supervisors’ survey and participants

Similarly, the supervisors’ survey was designed in three sections. The aim was to collect data about aspects of the TPD in connection with its organization and implementation as viewed from the perspective of supervisors, considering the essential role they have in organizing and providing training for teachers. Further, the various sections probed their attitudes and their suggestions on ways to improve the upcoming professional trainings. Thirteen supervisors took part in the survey. 46% of the respondents were 55+, while the rest were in the 35-54 age groups. Half of them had between 6 to10 years’ experience in supervision, a fourth had between 11-15 years, while 16.7% had more than 16 years’ experience. Only 8.3% were relatively new to the position. 47% graduated from the “Centre de Formation des Inspecteurs” (CFI) in Rabat.

2.3 The case studies

The aim of the case studies was to closely observe and analyze samples of the training sessions which are provided by the supervisors during the academic year to benefit teachers in their respective districts. In this research, each case study included a post training survey which was administered to the participating teachers to gauge their reactions and attitudes towards the provided professional development activities. A further section in the post survey was added to collect the participants’ remarks and recommendations. Case study 1 was whole day training held in Abdelah Guenoun High School, in Boujaad on March 16th 2017. The training was organized jointly by Khouribga Directorate (English Inspectorate) and the local branches of Moroccan Association of Teachers of English (MATE) for teachers of English working in Khouribga Directorate. Around fifty (50) teachers attended the training. Case study 2, on the other hand, was a half-day training organized by the English Inspectorate in Beni-Mellal on April 21st, 2017 for the benefit of teachers of English (30 in sum) working in that Directorate.
3. Findings

The study unveiled a number of deficiencies which are common to the purely top/down types of professional development activities that are prevalent in most traditional educational systems. What's more, the absence of a clear and strategic vision from the educational authorities in this respect exacerbates TPD provision and renders all sorts of endeavors unproductive. The following are the major impediments which were revealed by the research.

3.1 Ambiguity of the Ministry's regulatory texts related to the TPD provision

To start with, all the official documents issued by the ministry of education in Morocco underscore the importance of professional development for its staff, particularly teachers. The National Charter for Education and Training (October 1999) and the analytical report provided by the Supreme Council for Education (2014), both highlight the value of quality initial training for teacher trainees and continuing professional development for its human resources in terms of motivations, training and work conditions. The National Charter in question holds that the quality and effectiveness of teachers work depend on (1) the provision of basic training and INSETs which should be of high standards, effective, and sustained, (2) the provision of appropriate pedagogical tools and (3) an accurate evaluation of pedagogical performance. The same document highlights the fact that teachers need to benefit from 30 hours of professional development every year and an in-depth training every three years. The ministerial decrees namely of December 2nd, 2005 and the subsequent ministerial decision of July 7th, 2009 were issued to constitute the regulatory texts for the implementation of professional development programs. On the organizational level, the decree urges the different ministerial sectors to work on a professional development plan taking into consideration the Ministry’s TPD strategy.

For the Ministry of Education, and within the policy of decentralization, the regional academies assume the responsibility of TPD elaboration, provision, follow-up and support in line with the ministry’s policy and strategy in the domain, taking into consideration the regions’ specificities and the national priorities. The regional inspectorates under the academies are the main providers of the TPD. Circular NO 173 of September 10th, 1976 urges supervisors to set yearly action plans in the
form of pedagogic meetings, seminars and demo lessons and ensure that these plans are implemented.

However, the reality of implementation is where the rubber meets the road. The ministry’s issued documents in relation to TPD seem to be ambivalent. The National Chart underlies the importance of teachers’ professional development for the entire staff. However, the subsequent ministerial circulars reveal an opposite view. The February 2012 Circular (NO 12XC 36 -2012) urged to stop all sorts of teachers’ trainings till a general evaluation of the previous ones is made. The Circular, nonetheless, made an exception to the trainings which are viewed of great urgency. To our best knowledge no evaluation has been carried out, or, if it were, it was not publicized. Later the ministry issued the July 3rd, 2015 decree, reiterating the right to TPD for the entire ministry’s staff but prioritizing the new recruits who joined the job without any pre-service training. Further, the decree specifies the periods of these trainings, essentially during the one-week long holidays given to students between the official school holidays. This decree, too, delegates the organization and implementation of the TPD activities to the academies.

The contradictions existing in the different circulars issued by the ministry which regulate the TPD provision reflect that the state lacks a clear policy with regard the staff development in the educational sector. This fact has resulted in serious fallout on teachers' growth in specific and the schools' productivity in general. Further the repercussions are discussed later in this article.

3.2 Scarcity of professional development opportunities

The first limitation relates to the frequency of professional trainings, obtained from the questionnaire showed that teachers complained about the paucity of TPD opportunities be they formal or informal. Chart 1 &2 below show the results on the frequency and length of the training sessions which the respondents had during the past three years:
The majority of the respondents claimed they benefited from 1 to 2 professional development activities (usually 2 to 3 hours long) every academic year. This implies that in the best cases, teachers have access to 6 hours of professional development every year, which remains far less than the 30 hours recommended by the National Charter for education. Reviewing the studies addressing the impact of PD on student achievement, Yoon et al (2007: IV) noted that “studies that had more than 14 hours of professional development showed a positive and significant effect on student achievement from professional development”. Drawing on Yoon’s remark, the lack of professional trainings opportunities in the case of EFL teachers in the context of Morocco constitutes a setback which would seriously hinder teachers' professional development.

3.3 **TPD programs lack quality**

3.3.1 **Traditional delivery modes**

Question 1 in section 2 of the survey aimed to find about the teachers’ participation in the different TPD types (13 types in sum). Against a five-
point Likert scale ranging from “usually” to “never”, the respondents were asked to decide on the types of the TPD activities they were involved in as well as the frequency of their involvement in such activities. The analysis of the data obtained shows that the most prevalent and the most frequent types of TPD activities which are made available for teachers are the half day trainings, workshops and presentations. These are the ones which formally provided within the In-service trainings (INSETs), See Table 2 below.

Additionally, the types of activities recorded in both case studies used in this research corroborate these findings in the sense that in each of the training events which took place, the facilitators provided presentations, workshops followed by discussions. It also noted that the least common TPD modes are the informal school-based activities like coaching, mentoring and peer observation.
In section III of the teachers’ questionnaire, the respondents were invited to react to question connected to the content of the INSETs they had been provided with so far. A five-point likert scale was designed for that purpose. Data gathered from both surveys demonstrate that the most dominating themes of the training sessions are the teaching skills and methodologies. Very few respondents claim they “rarely” or “never” attended trainings which focus on methodology (2.6% and 0.9% respectively). See table 1 below.

Figure 3. TPD types and their frequencies

3.3.2 Basic skills-focused content

In section III of the teachers’ questionnaire, the respondents were invited to react to question connected to the content of the INSETs they had been provided with so far. A five-point likert scale was designed for that purpose. Data gathered from both surveys demonstrate that the most dominating themes of the training sessions are the teaching skills and methodologies. Very few respondents claim they “rarely” or “never” attended trainings which focus on methodology (2.6% and 0.9% respectively). See table 1 below.
Table 1

The INSETs: content and frequency as reported by participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Usually (%)</th>
<th>Often (%)</th>
<th>Sometimes (%)</th>
<th>Rarely (%)</th>
<th>Never (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. teaching methodology and skills</td>
<td>41.7</td>
<td>39.6</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. testing and assessment</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>42.2</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. classroom management</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>39.6</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. ICT</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>13.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. curriculum evaluation and analysis</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>22.1</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>29.2</td>
<td>15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. dissemination of new reforms related to ELT</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>24.2</td>
<td>16.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. dissemination of amendments related to the curriculum</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>29.5</td>
<td>29.5</td>
<td>19.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As for topics like testing and assessment, classroom management, and ICT they have comparatively of medium frequency. 42.2% said they “sometimes” benefited from trainings on testing, 39.6% on classroom management and 25.7% on the integration of ICT in teaching. The case study findings also confirm this idea of the prevalence of skills and methodologies in teachers’ trainings. All the presentations and workshops provided either in the study day or during the half day training focused on teaching skills and methods. According to the supervisors, the dominance of teaching methodology and skills in most PD trainings is dictated by the informal needs analysis carried out by the supervisors, through informal encounters with teachers.

3.3.3 Lack of a structured needs analysis strategy, feedback, and follow-up

To see if the INSET providers – the supervisors- follow a needs analysis process before deciding on the content of their scheduled trainings, a question was designed for that specific purpose: How often have involved teachers in deciding on the content of the training sessions?
Table 2

*The supervisors’ reactions to needs analysis targeting teachers*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How often have you involved teachers in deciding on the content of the training sessions? (n=13)</th>
<th>Usually</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>53.8%</td>
<td>38.5%</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results as depicted in the table above show the all the respondents claim that they consult teachers on their needs before planning trainings, though with varying degrees. More than half of the respondents (almost 54%) said they usually ask their supervisees on their needs, while the rest said they “often” (38.5%) or “sometimes” (7.7%) do. that the decision on the content of the training sessions is made mainly by supervisors following a needs analysis process.

However, and according to the supervisors’ reactions on the methods used in needs analysis, data revealed that the processes followed in this respect are rather informal and unstructured; Needs-analysis is mainly carried through informal encounters with teachers following class visits or during the training sessions.

On the reverse side, and in connection with the same point, data from the teachers’ survey reveal quite an opposite view and show that the professional development programs seem to be rather dictated by the educational authorities represented by the supervisors. Asked about the extent to which they were involved in deciding on the content of the training sessions they had, the majority of the respondents stated they were “rarely” or “never” asked about their needs (19.0% and 58.4% respectively). See table below:
Table 3

The findings on teachers’ involvement in the INSETs design and implementation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Have you ever been…</th>
<th>Usually</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1… involved in deciding on the content of the training sessions?</td>
<td>(n=226)</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>19.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2… asked to facilitate a training session?</td>
<td>(n=229)</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3… asked to provide feedback on the training session you had?</td>
<td>(n=231)</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>34.2</td>
<td>19.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4… provided with follow-up and support after the training sessions?</td>
<td>(n=231)</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>27.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additionally and based on the results shown in the table above, a similar remark can be made with regard the opportunities for teachers to facilitate the training. More than 2/3rd of the participants stated they had rarely or never been asked to facilitate INSET activities for peers, (21.4%; 49.8% respectively). As for providing feedback on the training sessions, 34.2 % of the respondents reported they were “sometimes” asked to give feedback on the trainings they had, while only 15.2% said that they were “usually” asked to do so. Concerning the follow-up and support, which in theory need to be provided to teachers after the training events, almost 60% said they “rarely or never” benefited from the supervisors’ support, while 26% claim they “sometimes” had some support.

4. Discussion and Implications

Effective professional development, as Broad and Evans (2006) claim, needs to be sustained, ongoing, in-depth, and requires active engagement by the professionals. The short term, or the “one-shot” programs are seen to be less effective in bringing about the expected change to the teaching practices. This is not the only risk, but other professionals warned about teachers’ burnout which may result from the lack of appropriate professional development activities and a sustained support for teachers at their workplaces (Hopkins and Spillane, 2014; Darling-Hammond et
The findings in this study outlined a number of barriers which stand against the provision of quality TPD. These have implications for the future professional training.

4.1 Reconsidering the prevalent policy and practices of TPD

The participants’ reactions and suggestions in the study highlighted the value of quality TPD (see appendix 1 for the respondents’ comments “Teachers’ comments”). One of the respondents for example comments that: “TPD is of paramount importance in improving both teachers and students’ competencies, that’s why it should be given priority, support, and attractiveness”, (Respondent 77). “Priority” might imply that the educational authorities and planners need to reconsider their visions of TPD. It should no longer be conceived of merely as single events which have to be carried yearly to fulfill an administrative agenda imposed by the academy. The same point was reiterated by another participants who stated that the TPD in its actual form is meant, "... just to fill in the administrative papers and records" (respondent 49) regardless of the quality of the implementation. The conception of PD trainings within such a particular framework is detrimental to teachers' motivations to get engaged in the provided professional development activities. “Support”, too, is sine qua non to sustained TPD. Teachers need to be continuously encouraged and supported to integrate the new knowledge and skills which they learn during the trainings within their own instruction by providing them with the appropriate pedagogical means and material as well as on-site guidance.

The notion of “attractiveness”, as mentioned by respondent (77) cited above unfolds concerns about the expectations of teachers from the training activities and their motivations behind undertaking TPD in general. Allusion is probably made to both the type and quality of the training programs which teachers have access to. Professionals in the field of teachers development claim that successful and effective PD programs are those which need to combine individual needs, professional needs as well as the organization (school) goals (Jones & Fear, 1994; Guskey, 1995; Fullan, 1995; Flores, 2005) Day (1999) argues that the concerns of individual participants in professional development programs need to be attended and that their learning experiences should be linked to their own work conditions, otherwise the impact of those programs
will be of limited scope, both on the teachers’ skills development and on the students learning.

4.2 Differentiating TPD programs

The findings of the study, in connection with TPD types in Morocco, show that the prevalent ones are still traditional practices in the form of short trainings, usually composed of presentations, workshops and discussions. It is true that the participants in this research revealed their appreciation of the workshops, given their practical side and the benefits they have on their up-skilling; nonetheless, the majority expressed inclinations to experience new practices, particularly those which might be initiated on-site or online. Such suggestions are made by the participating supervisors. Thus, one of the supervisors (respondent 10) for example calls for “Involvement in real productive projects (learning projects)/ Sharing experiences on social media/social internet groups” while respondent (11) suggests the provision of “more opportunities for online communities of learning to cope with the constraints imposed by the geography”. The creation of such online platforms and the related online professional development programs is mainly part of the Ministry’s responsibility.

A further condition is that the provided programs need to take into consideration teachers’ immediate needs and the specificities of the context where they work. We find this same idea reflected in one of the participants’ statements:” Most of the time, any training that we have is helpful and effective, but it does not take into consideration the exact circumstances in which we teach” (participant 240). The one-size-fits-all trainings seem to overlook the specificities of the teaching environment relative to teachers and schools. Experienced teachers’ needs for example, cannot be identical to the newly-appointed ones and therefore differentiating TPD trainings becomes a necessity. Additionally, trainings should be conceived of as a right for every teacher to be accessed to in the most convenient way. Differentiation can be very helpful in this respect. Additionally, the notion of sustainability and support can well be attained through encouraging on-site professional development programs where teachers of the same school can collectively access various types of activities which take into account their immediate needs. For experts in the field, the follow-up and support of teachers need to be both school-embedded and system-based (Guskey, 1995; Fullan, 1995; Flores, 2005).
School-embedded professional activities refer to the informal models of TPD, such as peer coaching, peer observation, demo-lesson, collaborative action research, which can be organized in a collaborative manner among teachers in their own workplace to cater for their individual needs. Practices like these are considered crucial to initiate and nurture the spirit of collegiality inside the workplace which is an essential requisite to spread a healthy learning environment among teachers. Many scholars view the informal school practices as far more impacting than the formal ones. In her discussion of professional learning communities, Lieberman (2000:222) highlights the idea of support and collaboration among teachers and holds that “supportive professional communities inside schools provided teachers with the kind of organizational setting that made continuous learning possible”. She also holds that building collaborative bonds among teachers leads to building trust within the group. In the analysis of the participants’ reactions, frequent references are made to the need for collaboration and sharing among teachers within the same school, and accordingly the educational authorities have to reconsider the traditional paradigm of teachers’ training and work towards building new and more grounded structures for TPD which would result in better impact on teachers’ instructional skills.

4.3 Involving teachers and catering for their needs

The claim to get teachers involved in designing the TPD programs has been repeatedly mentioned, overtly or covertly, by different participants, either in the survey or in the post evaluation phase of the case studies. Some participants for instance, called for a “Bottom-up approach (involving teachers)” (respondent 2-survey), to “involve teachers on deciding on the content” (respondent 53), and to “make teachers participate in their [TPD activities] conception” (respondent 77). The calls echo their need to have some ownership on the programs destined for their own development. Diaz-Maggioli (2004) criticized the traditional practices of TPD where everything is imposed from above, and which view trainees like empty buckets that need to be filled. Some respondents in the study made the same point when they stated that: “Teachers should know beforehand what the TPD session is about and should be given material to work on to actively participate. Teachers shouldn't be seen as mere recipients,” (respondent 141). Another commented that “it would be more fruitful if teachers are given more importance in designing and organizing events”, (respondent 94). These
two testimonials among others reflect the necessity for a participatory approach to the TPD planning.

The issue of communication between the various stakeholders is inherent in TPD organization. The lack of communication at the various stages of the planning and the implementation of the programs usually end up in poor outcomes and affects teachers' motivations for and expectations form the future training. Reactions of the participants in the case studies underline the need for a sustained communication between the organizers of the training activities and the teachers who are supposed to benefit from these trainings. They wish to see their participations in the professional development meetings as an added-value. Their requests to have the content of the training communicated to them in advance derive from an inner motivation to contribute actively in the various tasks which are planned for the training session. The participants expressly articulate their discomfort with a passive role in a sit-and-get learning context. Respondent (8) for example suggests that the TPD providers should “discuss earlier [with them] about the needs of teachers” before asking them to attend the activities planned for them.

4.4 Increasing trainings frequency and improving delivery modes

Professionals in the field (Porter et al., 2003; Quick et al, 2009) claim that for the TPD to reach the intended prescribed goals, it should be on-going, that is, involving contact hours over time spread over lengthy periods, not just on the form of single, limited events. The outcomes of this research in connection with this point show that the trainings provided for teachers of English take the form of small and fragmentary sessions revolving around topics mostly decided on by the supervisors. Worse, many teachers are prevented from attending INSET activities when these coincide with their work time, under the excuse of saving the students’ learning time. One of the participants complained: “I think the ministry of education should find solutions for how (to) keep on the TPD for us. Most of the time the ministry prevents us from this process due to what they call” dropping out school time”5. (Respondent 62)

Calls for more training are pervasive in the teachers’ survey. The implication is that the participants feel they are facing challenges within

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5 Highlight is mine. The respondent most probably means “wasting students’ learning time”
their workplace due to their convictions that there are still professional needs which remain unfulfilled. Some of the participants suggested to have meeting «each month» (respondent 62), or «on a continuous basis» (respondent 20). Some others wish to have «Systematic in-service training/intensive training sessions (a week or two non-stop)» (respondent 10).

Another element connected to PD programs design resides in the quality of content and delivery. It is common that most teachers come to trainings with the expectations to learn practical teaching tips which can be directly transferable to their own classes. Excessive focus on theory is not practically helpful and can even have deleterious effect on the participants’ motivation to attend future events. The participants’ insistence on more hands-on activities during the trainings reflects a particular concern about the technicalities of classroom teaching which they perceive as more insightful.

The participants’ suggestions also stress certain requirements which would increase their motivation for training activities, namely the need for professional facilitators to monitor the trainings. It is true that their evaluation of the supervisors’ facilitation was generally positive. However, some of the respondents propose “experts to be involved in TPD” (respondent 60), or invite foreign ELT trainers (respondents 213 and 238). Therefore, variety is solicited not only at the level of the content and modes of delivery but also at the level of the program facilitators.

4.5 Evaluating the TPD programs

Professionals agree that the evaluation of the training activities is a major missing part in most TPD programs. Related research stress this limitation due to the challenges connected to the processes involved in a comprehensive and effective evaluation (Kutner et al, 1997; Joyce &Showers, 2002; Guskey, 2003; Muijs et al. 2004). Despite the related challenges, most professionals insist that this step should be taken. Broad and Evans (2006) hold that the effectiveness of any professional development program is determined by how strong it links teachers learning with the students’ achievement. Therefore, rigorous and evidence-driven assessment of teachers’ training should be carried out, targeting every level and stage of implementation.
The practice of TPD in Morocco should not be an exception. The evaluation of the TPD programs in terms of their impact on the teachers’ class instruction and the students’ learning achievements is manifestly overlooked and if it is done, it remains anecdotal and superficial, usually targeting the teachers’ satisfaction with the presented activities. Related official data show that within the Emergency Plan (2009-2012), the state allocated 43.1 billion DH for the educational reforms which included a massive implementation of teachers’ professional development training programs, mainly on the integration of ICTs in teaching. Later the ministry was constrained to stop all sorts of trainings for unrevealed reasons. The only declared motive was its intention to launch an evaluation of the whole program. Nevertheless, it did not specify at which level. According to our best knowledge, no formal evaluation has been carried out targeting the assessment of the programs designed for teachers’ professional development in terms of their impact on the teachers’ knowledge and skills or on the learners’ achievements. Evaluation is considered a key factor to improve TPD programs. It informs planners and providers about the successful practices that ought to be consolidated as well as about the potential flaws which need to be addressed and eventually avoided while designing future programs.

5. Conclusion

The article presented some major issues connected to teachers’ professional development for teachers of English in Morocco based on a large scale research which attempted to study the related practices of the TPD in the Moroccan context. The main findings of the study confirmed the limitations of teachers’ training programs in terms of quality and frequency. The study of the related documents showed that although the state acknowledges the importance of professional development, it lacks a clear and strategic vision on programs design and implementation. The questionnaires and the case studies revealed that the prevalent TPD practices come mostly in the form of INSETs designed and delivered by the supervisors in a commonly traditional process, mainly to fulfill the administrative requirement of the regional academies. The conception of the TPD within such a narrow framework exacerbates the conditions and quality of TPD delivery. Additionally, the content of the training activities as well as their frequency are decided on by the supervisors. While the supervisors claim that the teachers’ needs are taken into consideration in program design, the majority of the participating...
teachers said they are not consulted on their needs. Additionally, most of teachers’ comments highlighted the necessity for structured, more frequent and more varied activities which takes into consideration both the professional and personal wants. Encouraging school-based activities which allow for more sustained support to individual teachers would positively impact their growth. The implication is for the state to revisit the TPD implemention policy to allow for more scope to the main stakeholders’ views (teachers, supervisors and school leaders) in TPD programs design.

References


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**Seminar Presentations**

