

Investigating Moroccan EFL Teachers' Attitudes Towards The Effectiveness Of In-Person CPD In The Age Of D.T

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Abstract

Amid the rise of digital technology, people have become more connected than ever. Platforms have emerged as critical learning and training environments for education. This study aimed to investigate Moroccan EFL teachers' attitudes towards the effectiveness of in-person continuous professional development (CPD) in the age of digital technology (D.T.). It examines the shifts from traditional ways of CPD; conferences and workshops to digital technology for professional development (PD). This research study surveyed the attitudes of Moroccan EFL teachers' perceptions and preferences regarding face-to-face CPD and digital technology-based CPD. The research methodology used a quantitative survey design, based on questionnaires and Likert scales to collect data from a representative sample of Moroccan EFL teachers. The findings showed that despite Moroccan EFL teachers' value of in-person CPD for collaboration opportunities and interaction while taking their CPD, at the same time they expressed positive perceptions towards the use of digital technologies for their PD. The study emphasized the need for blended CPD programs that include in-person and digital technology modes to achieve Moroccan EFL teachers' diverse preferences and needs. Aligning with the digital technology advancements and the benefits offered by D.T. in the field of education in terms of accessibility, self-pace, variety, and interaction, it is recommended to design tailored CPD programs that suit the needs of different age groups and educational backgrounds of Moroccan EFL teachers. This study contributes to checking the possibility of integrating digital technology in the process of CPD, and provides insight to the Moroccan policymakers and educational institutions to enhance the strategies of PD.

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I. Introduction

The evolving education landscape necessitates continuous professional development (CPD) for teachers, particularly in the field of English as a foreign language (EFL). In the contemporary era, connectivity presents new models of learning and self-training that acknowledge the big shifts in the field of education. The traditional paradigm of in-person workshops, once the cornerstone of CPD for equipping ELT teachers with updated pedagogical skills, now strives with the expanding influence of digital technologies (D.T) which has introduced alternative avenues for professional development. Moroccan EFL teachers find themselves at a crossroads, either to stick to their traditional way to suit their long-life learning or navigate the complexities of integrating digital tools into their professional development.

In-person workshops have been a cornerstone of CPD for EFL teachers, offering opportunities for focused learning, interaction with colleagues, and exposure to expert presentations (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). Yet, in-person CPD has had some limitations. CPD for teachers has been associated with physical presence in workshops, conferences, and training sessions, constraining them within spatial and temporal boundaries which received a lot of criticism such as costliness and inefficacy in fostering substantial pedagogical enhancements (Elmore, 2002; Garet et al., 2001). These include logistical challenges such as time constraints, travel costs, and limited accessibility for teachers in remote locations (Richards & Farrell, 2005). Since the accessibility and flexibility are offered now by connectivity and DT, questions remain concerning its effectiveness compared to in-person workshops. This study aims to examine Moroccan EFL teachers' attitudes towards the perceived effectiveness of in-person CPD in the era of D.T.

This research employed a survey design to gather data from a representative sample of Moroccan EFL teachers. Questionnaires and the Likert scale were developed to measure Moroccan EFL teachers' attitudes towards the effectiveness of in-person CPD within the context of D.T. Quantitative statistical methods were used to analyze the data. The findings will contribute to a deeper understanding of what Moroccan EFL teachers prefer. Recommendations for the development of more effective and accessible CPD programs that align with the era of D.T. This survey research aims to examine Moroccan EFL teachers' preferences between in-person CPD and D.T. to leverage their pedagogical skills in this critical era.

Research questions

RQ1: Do Moroccan EFL teachers have positive attitudes towards in-person CPD in the age of D.T.?

RQ2. To what extent do Moroccan EFL teachers prefer in-person CPD in the era of D.T.?

II. Review Of Literature

In a networked world, where linguistic and cultural diversity interconnects, the way of teaching and learning are changing because of the integration of technology in the process of learning and teaching; different modes are taking place in contemporary times: online, blended, and face-to-face delivery. The role of teachers extends far beyond providing language skills. It comprises developing a conducive learning environment. This responsibility requires the necessity for CPD for teachers. Srinivasacharlu (2019) underscores the teaching profession in the 21st century is seeing a significant sea change thanks to many factors of different hues and the advent of digital tools. This shift challenges current notions of learning and self-improvement, as EFL teachers grapple with the evolving demands of an interconnected world.

Defining CPD

There are various definitions of CPD expressing multiple aims. The term CPD has been used interchangeably with ongoing professional development, professional learning, in-service training, in-service education, and lifelong learning (Craft, 2000). As to Allen (2009), CPD refers to “the process of tracking and documenting the skills, knowledge, and experience that teachers gain both formally and informally as they work, beyond any initial training. It records what they experience, learn, and then apply.” Thus, CPD is comprehensively defined as one involves ongoing divergent activities (formal, non-formal, and informal) that aim at developing the teacher educator’s intellectual abilities (cognitive domain), self-confidence, attitude, values, and interest (affective domain) and skills and competencies (psychomotor domain) for improving personality and to carry out the responsibilities of the teaching profession properly in accordance with the changing times and needs of the prospective teachers and society. (Srinivasacharlu, A. 2019). The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Task Force for Teacher Education's 2011 report on establishing standards for teachers defined CPD as any professional learning activity beyond initial teacher preparation. It includes a range of learning programs from formal courses leading to additional qualifications to workshops and short courses and informal collaborative activities geared to special purposes. Also is referred to as in-service professional development. (CCTFT, 2011 p.10)

The basic features of professional development, Day (1999) explains:

“Professional development consists of all-natural learning experiences and those conscious and planned activities which are intended to be of direct or indirect benefit to the individual, group or school, which contribute, through these, to the quality of education in the classroom. It is the process by which, alone and with others, teachers review, renew, and extend their commitment as change agents to the moral purpose of teaching; and by which they acquire and develop critically the knowledge, skills, and emotional intelligence essential to good professional thinking, planning and practice with children, young people and colleagues throughout each phase of their teaching lives” (p.4).

These views stress the significance of CPD in the science of education landscape and emphasize the necessity for EFL teachers to engage in CPD for personal and professional gains.

Importance of CPD for EFL teachers

As Education is the cornerstone of nations’ progress, teachers in general play a crucial role in shaping the minds of young learners who will be the leaders of their countries in the future, CPD holds a significant position within the field of EFL. Therefore there is an urgent need for EFL teachers to keep updated with the recent developments.

In the 1990s, PD was considered a matter of voluntary participation; however, this has changed and it has become an indispensable part of professional growth. (Guerra, 2019). One pivotal factor that has emerged as a key contributor to teacher effectiveness, job satisfaction, and longevity in the profession is Continuous Professional Development (CPD). (Rajendran et al., 2023). CPD aims to equip educators with the latest pedagogical approaches, subject knowledge advancements, and instructional technologies, thus enabling them to adapt to the evolving needs of students and the changing landscape of education. (Rajendran et al., 2023). Continuous Professional Development (CPD) has emerged as a critical aspect of the education landscape, with its potential to enhance the skills, knowledge, and effectiveness of teachers. (Rajendran et al, 2023). Richards and Farrell (2005) explain the significance of CPD for language teachers by emphasizing that PD has longer-term goals which can be listed as: “understanding the process of language development, understanding change in teachers' roles according to the kind of learners, understanding the kinds of decision-making during lessons, reviewing one's theories and principles of language teaching, developing an understanding of different styles of teaching, and determining learners' perceptions of classroom activities” (p.4).

In teaching, CPD refers to the enhancement of teaching skills among the teachers that comes from their responsibility (R. Khan, 2008). Among teachers, Professional development mainly focuses on how good teachers explain the content and understand the appropriate way of the students' learning (Bausmith & Barry, 2011). Professional development happens either formally or informally in professional settings where the use of technology, training, adequate resources, and other necessary supports accelerate the process, and it is very hard to find anyone who is against CPD as it is very helpful for the professionals who want to upgrade their professional skills (R. Khan, 2008).

In-person CPD workshops

In-person workshops have been a cornerstone of CPD for EFL teachers, offering opportunities for focused learning, interaction with colleagues, and exposure to expert presentations (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). Studies emphasize the benefits of in-person workshops, including the development of practical teaching skills through hands-on activities and peer observation (Richards & Farrell, 2005). Furthermore, in-person workshops facilitate collaboration and knowledge exchange among teachers, fostering a sense of community and professional support (Day & Sachs, 2010). Nevertheless, limitations associated with in-person workshops have also been identified. These include **logistical challenges** such as time **constraints**, **travel costs**, and **limited accessibility** for teachers **in remote locations** (Richards & Farrell, 2005). Besides, the effectiveness of in-person workshops can depend heavily on the facilitator's expertise and the quality of the program design [4].

D.T.-based CPD programs.

The emergence of digital technologies such as creating online supported communities, attending online webinars, workshops, conferences, and reading academic publications are just some examples of PD activities with technology that have presented novel ways of delivering CPD. Advances in technology may have led to the use of technological tools for teachers' professional growth and created a new field referred to as online professional development (OPD) (Guerra, 2019). Teacher PD is faced with rapid change and demands of today's education system. There is no doubt that professional development needs will continue to expand in parallel with the changes in the world. Therefore, to have effective and up-t.o-date PDs, systematic, needs-based, up-to-date, and practical development tools are needed. (Guerra, 2019). As Lin (2015) stated, the popularization of information and communication technologies and the internet has led to PD programs in online environments. Although teachers might prefer face-to-face and conventional way of PD activities, it seems that online PD programs will continue to increase as time goes by. Based on data gathered from 83 teachers, Lin (2015) reported that:

“...the majority of EALD teachers are in favor of a mixed structure that combines the face-to-face components which involve synchronous interactions between the presenter/lecturer and the attendees and the asynchronous components such as video footage and textual web pages, because a PD program of such a mixed structure would be more adaptive to the context, more supportive to professional networking and more flexible in terms of temporal arrangements.” (Lin, 2015, p.541)

Amid the outbreak of COVID-19 and the lockdown that lasted almost two years, schools were forced to stop face-to-face classes; thus, technology solved many problems in education. The pandemic was a turning point in shifting teachers to explore technology more deeply in education. Webb et al, (2017) state that increasing integration of technology into all forms of teacher professional development has occurred, resulting in challenges in making strict comparisons between face-to-face, online, and blended models. (pp. 621-626). Technology enables local trainers' skills to be complemented by the abilities of experts, thus mitigating a local shortage of high-quality PLs. However, this strategy should not be employed to completely replace face-to-face interactions. Moreover, training programs that tested replacing in-person or hybrid training schemes with exclusively virtual coaching did not have promising results (Cardim, Millán, and Vicente 2021). The Cardim and others research suggests that some element of face-to-face interaction is still required but that the doses of face-to-face interactions may vary in frequency. (Note, 2022)

Montebello (2017) This empirical study as part of this research has shown that digital pedagogies are a complex and ever-changing entity that is necessarily part of the continuous professional development of all educators as new tools and techniques address the entire teaching spectrum.

III. Research On Moroccan EFL Teachers' Experiences With CPD

According to Moussaoui (2021), Moroccan EFL teachers are not fully engaged in online professional and still exhibit a higher preference for traditional forms of professional development even their admission that online professional development provides effective content that is sustainable and access flexible.

Findings from the vast majority of the sample revealed a willingness to adopt MOOCs as an efficient alternative for EFL Moroccan teachers' professional development. In addition, factors such as peer collaboration, novel pedagogical practices, course flexibility, autonomy, and self-direction were key predictors of teachers'

motivations. Findings showed that the adoption of MOOCs as an effective model for teachers' professional development allows for a customizable learning experience. (Masbah, 2023).

IV. Method

Research Design

The research methodology used in this study was a quantitative survey approach to gather data from Moroccan EFL teachers across various Moroccan educational institutions, and the data was collected using a Survey Questionnaire. Likert scale was used to indicate the degree of disagreement and agreement from 1-5; strongly disagree to strongly agree.

Research Sample

The research sample was identified using a random sampling method. The population comprises EFL teachers working in public and private schools across different regions of Morocco. A sample of sixty-three (63) teachers of English language; forty-three males (43) and (20) females.

Data Collection Instruments And Procedures

Respondents were approached through an online questionnaire. The questionnaire comprises 19 questions (17 closed-ended- and 2 open-ended). The items were measured through a five-point Likert scale. The participants were also informed that their privacy would be respected and kept intact. The preparation of this research paper through impartial data collection reinforced the utmost sincerity of the researchers.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were made utilizing the SPSS program, version 19. The mathematical averages were calculated to determine the standard deviation attitudes of EFL teachers in Morocco towards the effectiveness of in-person CPD in the age of D.T. Crnobach Alpha and Spearman Correlation Coefficient for measuring the validity of the instrument's items were also carried out.

V. Results

This study aimed to measure the Moroccan EFL teachers' attitudes towards in-person CPD in the age of D.T. The study participants comprised 63 Moroccan EFL teachers from various backgrounds, including age, gender, academic degree, and teaching experience. These were analyzed as follows:

Demographic Characteristics

Age

The sample consisted of 63 respondents. Their age frequencies were as follows: 5 (3,2%) Under 25, 35 (49,2%) 36, 45 (38,1%) 46,55 (6,3%) 56 and above (3,2%).

Table 1
Frequency distribution of age

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	1 Under 25	2	3.2
	2 25 – 35	31	49.2
	3 36 – 45	24	38.1
	4 46 – 55	4	6.3
	5 56 and above	2	3.2
	Total	63	100,0

Gender

The sample consisted of 43 (68,3%) male and 20 (31,7 %) female respondents (N= 63)

Table 2
Frequency distribution for gender

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	1 male	43	68.3
	2 female	20	31.7
	Total	63	100.0

Educational Background

The sample consisted of 63 (71,4%) BA holders, 46 (27,0%) MA holders and 13 (1,6%) PhD holders.

Table 3
Frequency Distribution for Educational Background

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	1 Bachelor's degree	45	71.4
	2 Master's degree	17	27.0
	3 PhD/ Doctorate	1	1.6
	Total	63	100.0

Years of experience as an EFL teacher

The sample consisted of 63 respondents. Their teaching experience was as follows: 15 (23,8%) Less than 5 years, 23 (36,5%) Between 5 and 10 years, 12 (19,0%) Between 11 and 15 years, and 13 (20,6%) More than 15 years

Table 4
Frequency Distribution for Teaching Experience

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	1 Less than 5 years	15	23.8
	2 5 -10 years	23	36.5
	3 11 - 15 years	12	19.0
	4 Over 15 years	13	20.6
	Total	63	100.0

This study investigated the attitudes of Moroccan teachers of English. Therefore, sixty-three EFL teachers were surveyed about their perceptions towards the effectiveness of in-person CPD in the age of D.T. Upon computing the data in SPSS, the findings below revealed positive attitudes towards the effectiveness of in-person CPD in the age of D.T.

Based on the frequency statistics, we deduce that correspondents still prefer face-to-face CPD. 54% of correspondents believe that in-person professional development is more effective for enhancing active engagement and participation among educators. 10% of correspondents either strongly disagree or disagree that there is a need to shift from in-person to D.T. for CPD. In contrast, 35% disagree that there is a need to shift from in-person to D.T. for CPD. Even in the digital era, 38% of EFL Moroccan teachers still prefer In-person professional development over digital technology-based PD in the digital era. In comparison, only 16% don't prefer In-person professional development over digital technology-based PD in the digital era. 54 % of participants agree or strongly agree that In-person professional development provides significant opportunities for face-to-face interaction and collaboration. At the same time, 55% of correspondents believe that Digital Technology enhances the accessibility of professional development opportunities for educators.

Despite, the correspondents still favor in-person CPD, the statistics exhibited that they are attracted to use D.T. in their CPD for several reasons; They consider D.T. as better complementary to in-person PD; 46% think that Digital Technology reinforces the effectiveness of in-person CPD sessions, 43% believe that D.T. Professional development offers greater flexibility and convenience compared to in-person Sessions. 45% of correspondents believe that MOOCs, webinars, and virtual professional development are not cost compared to in-person workshops, conferences, and seminars while only 6% of correspondents disagree or strongly disagree.

The statistics showed that EFL Moroccan teachers are not engaged enough in using technologies for their professional development although the statistics assure the latter's effectiveness. Second, there is an awareness of the effectiveness among teachers of D.T. in CPD who are not actively engaged or responsible for their training, or self-directed training.

Attitudes towards the effectiveness of in-person CPD in the age of D.T.

Descriptive statistics for attitudes towards the effectiveness of in-person CPD in the age of D.T. revealed an overall mean score of 22.73 (SD= 4.326).

Table 5
Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Attitudes in_person	63	6	29	22.73	4.326
Valid N (listwise)	63				

Table 6

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
In-person professional development provides significant opportunities for face-to-face interaction and collaboration.	63	1	5	3.97	.999
I believe that in-person professional development is more effective for enhancing active engagement and participation among educators.	63	1	5	4.05	.888
In-person professional development facilitates more personalized and tailored learning experiences in comparison to online sessions.	63	1	5	3.90	.928
I find it more challenging to navigate technical issues and platforms during online professional development compared to in-person sessions.	63	1	5	3.19	1.176
In-person professional Development offers good opportunities for building professional relationships and networking with peers.	63	1	5	4.14	.877
I still prefer In-person professional development over digital technology-based PD in the digital era	63	1	5	3.48	1.189
Valid N (listwise)	63			3.78	4.326

This showed a positive in-person CPD. In-person PD offers good opportunities for building professional relationships, and the belief that in-person PD is more effective for enhancing active engagement and participation among educators had the highest mean value, indicating that teachers perceive In-person PD as a valuable asset to their professional development.

Attitudes towards the effectiveness of D.T. as a form of CPD

Descriptive statistics for attitudes towards D.T. reported an overall mean score of 18.8413 (SD= 2.71915). This suggested positive perceptions towards the intention to use D.T. in professional development. The item 'D.T. enhances the accessibility of professional development opportunities for educators had the highest mean value, signifying that teachers plan to use in D.T. in their CPD.

Table 7

<i>Descriptive Statistics</i>					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
attitudes D.T	63	9.00	25.00	18.8413	2.71915
Valid N (listwise)	63				

Table 8

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Digital Technology Professional development offers greater flexibility and convenience compared to in-person Sessions.	63	1	5	3.71	.906
Digital Technology enhances the accessibility of professional development opportunities for educators.	63	2	5	4.10	.689
MOOCs, webinars, and virtual professional development are not cost compared to in-person workshops, conferences, and seminars	63	1	5	3.75	.861
Digital Technology reinforces the effectiveness of in-person CPD sessions	63	2	5	3.83	.814
In a digitalized world, there is a need to shift from in-person to D.T for CPD	63	1	5	3.46	.947
Valid N (listwise)	63			3.77	2.71915

Tables 7 and 8 show that participants perceive D.T. positively for enhancing their professional development accessibility.

Reliability of instruments

A reliability analysis was conducted on the scale comprising six items. The analysis included 63 valid cases, with no cases excluded due to missing data. The scale demonstrated good internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .801, indicating that the items have relatively high internal consistency.

A two-part questionnaire to 63 correspondents.

Group 1: Attitudes towards in-person effectiveness in CPD consisted of 6 items

A reliability analysis was conducted on the scale comprising six items. The analysis included 63 valid cases, with no cases excluded due to missing data. The scale demonstrated good internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .801, indicating that the items have relatively high internal consistency.

Group2: Moroccan EFL teachers' Attitudes towards D.T in CPD consisted of 5 items

Reliability analysis was conducted to assess the internal consistency of the questionnaire items. Initially, Cronbach's alpha for the 6-item questionnaire was $\alpha = 0.64$, indicating moderate internal consistency; To improve the reliability, two items (Item 3 and Item 5) were removed based on item-total correlation analysis. After removing these items, Cronbach's alpha increased to $\alpha = 0.71$, indicating good internal consistency.

Correlational analysis

A Spearman correlation was conducted to assess the relationship between the attitudes towards in-person CPD and the level of education. There was a very weak, negative correlation between the two variables, $(r = -0.070)$, $(p = 0.585)$.

Table 9
Correlation

		Education Background	
Spearman's rho	Education Background	Correlation Coefficient	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.
		N	63
	Attitudes_inperson	Correlation Coefficient	-.070
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.585
		N	63

Table 9 shows that there is no significant relationships between level of education and attitudes towards in-person CPD.

A Spearman correlation was conducted to assess the relationship between attitudes towards in-person CPD and age. The result exhibited that there was a weak, positive correlation between the two variables, $(r = 0.192)$, $(p = 0.131)$.

Table 10
Correlation

		Age	
Spearman's rho	Age	Correlation Coefficient	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.
		N	63
	Attitudes_inperson	Correlation Coefficient	.192
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.131
		N	63

Table 10 indicates that there is a weak positive relationship between attitudes towards in-person CPD and age. The relationship is not statistically significant.

VI. Discussion

This paper investigates Moroccan EFL teachers' attitudes towards the effectiveness of in-person CPD in the age of digital technology (D.T). The study reveals that despite face-to-face workshops and training being a cornerstone of CPD for EFL teachers, the expanding influence of digital technologies offers alternative methods for professional development. The findings indicate that Moroccan EFL teachers still value and prefer in-person interaction and collaboration opportunities provided by in-person CPD. Yet, there is also a positive perception towards adopting virtual learning environments in professional development. The teachers acknowledge the benefits of D.T., such as enhanced accessibility, flexibility, and cost-effectiveness.

The research underscores the significance of continuous professional development (CPD) for ELT teachers in adapting their professional training to the evolving demands of the educational area. It highlights the need for more effective, accessible, and self-paced CPD programs that align with the age of digital technology. The study also sheds light on the attitudes of Moroccan EFL teachers on various modes of CPD delivery, including both in-person workshops and digital technology-based programs.

In the study, the correlation analysis concluded that age and educational background may influence the teachers' perception of both in-person and technology-digital CPD. Older professionals tend to prefer traditional CPD. Also, those with higher educational backgrounds exhibit more positive attitudes towards in-person PD. The study provides critical insights that call for consideration of the preferences and needs of Moroccan EFL teachers to design and implement tailored CPD programs.

VII. Conclusion And Recommendations

Overall, this study has demonstrated the attitudes and reflections of Moroccan EFL teachers towards the effectiveness of in-person CPD in the age of digital technology. The shift to adopt D.T. for CPD in Morocco sounds to be far out of reach since traditional in-person CPD continues to hold value for Moroccan EFL teachers. However, there is a recognition of the effectiveness of D.T. in professional development. The findings emphasize the significance of designing CPD programs that blend between in-person and digital modes of delivery to meet the diverse preferences of Moroccan EFL teachers. Based on the research findings, it is recommended that Moroccan policymakers and educational institutions consider both in-person and technology-based programs. This blended approach to DPD can offer the benefits of in-person interaction and workshops while leveraging the accessibility and flexibility of D.T. Besides, tailored programs to meet the needs of different age groups and educational backgrounds of Moroccan ELF teachers should be given priority to reinforce their professional development.

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