

Exploring Moroccan EFL Teachers' Engagement in a WhatsApp Professional Development Group: Benefits and Concerns

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Abstract

This study explores the involvement of Moroccan EFL teachers in a WhatsApp group called "Professional Development" and their perceptions of online communities, particularly WhatsApp, concerning their professional development. Through a combination of WhatsApp group observation and semi-structured interviews, 20 EFL teachers from diverse locations across Morocco were engaged. The data collected were analyzed thematically. The findings reveal that WhatsApp serves as a valuable platform for teachers to access teaching materials such as tests, quizzes, PDF books, and official circulars from the Ministry of Education. Additionally, 71.4% of the participants emphasize the significance of virtual communities for their professional development. However, 28.6% of the teachers express concerns about WhatsApp being a waste of time due to the sharing of irrelevant content and chaotic discussions that divert the group from its primary purpose.

1. INTRODUCTION

The shift from Web 1.0, which was static and provided limited opportunities for user participation, to Web 2.0, characterized by its interactive and collaborative nature, has brought about a revolutionary change in how people learn, interact, and communicate. Kamel Boulos and Wheeler (2007) claimed that “Web 2.0 technologies represent a quite revolutionary way of managing and repurposing/remixing online information and knowledge repositories, including clinical and research information, in comparison with the traditional Web 1.0 model.”

(p.2) This has led to a more democratic use of the internet, where users have greater control and influence over the content they create and consume.

The social web, including Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and WhatsApp, is pushing researchers and scholars to reconceptualize fundamental learning theories such as behaviorism, cognitivism, and constructivism. In this context, Siemens (2004) claimed that because of Web 2.0, traditional learning theories are unsatisfactory in explaining how we learn with these web applications. Therefore, it is essential to develop new theories that build on previous ones to illustrate how Web 2.0 can facilitate learning. Vaill (1996) emphasized that “learning must be a way of being – an ongoing set of attitudes and actions by individuals and groups that they employ to try to keep abreast of the surprising, novel, messy, obtrusive, recurring events” (p.42). In other words, learning should be an ongoing, dynamic and flexible process that incorporates both individuals and groups. It should enable people to answer the complexities and uncertainties of life, rather than just accumulating knowledge for its own sake. It's about developing a mindset and taking actions that facilitate growth and adaptation in an ever-evolving global landscape.

Nowadays, numerous studies have unveiled that teachers spend most of their time using their mobile phones to learn different pedagogical tricks informally (Eraut, 2011; Smaller, 2005) so that they can become active and self-directed learners (Merriam, 2001). Undeniably, a plethora of studies have discovered that teachers spend plenty of hours per week informally learning with colleagues about work-related issues (Campana, 2014; de Laat & Schreurs, 2013). Also, teacher professional development through collaboration has positively impacted students' achievement (Moolenaar, Slegers, & Daly, 2012; Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, & Shapley, 2007). Marcia & Garcia (2016) pointed out “ Online networks and communities offer these teachers the opportunity to share knowledge and learn with other peers who are located far away from each other”(p.2).

Within the same context, Haythornthwaite (2009) stated that in the present time, the use of social media and portable devices has led to a paradigm shift, fostering an inclusive and collaborative learning environment. This change is evident through the active engagement of teachers in activities such as blogging, contributing to wikis, sharing curated resource compilations, and actively participating in diverse social networking platforms. Besides, through technological gadgets, teachers can tap into collective intelligence, fostering collaborative knowledge creation and sharing within the teaching community (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009).

Many EFL teachers voluntarily participate in different WhatsApp groups to share information and reflect on their practices, as well as on other practices. Hence, Ghamrawi (2021) argued that “ While some studies have addressed teacher professional growth through communities of practice, the literature on virtual community of practices and teacher professional development is very scarce”(p.5896) In this regard, researchers noted that no satisfactory and comprehensive research probes the types of sharing among Moroccan EFL teachers and investigates the impact of the online community of practice on their professional development. This study attempts to fill this gap by focusing on two fundamental objectives: investigating the types of sharing Moroccan EFL teachers engage in on WhatsApp, specifically in the groups named "Professional Development," and probing the impact of the WhatsApp application as a virtual community of practice on EFL teachers' professional development. Therefore, this paper aims to answer two fundamental research questions:

- 1- What types of data do Moroccan EFL teachers share in “the Professional Development” WhatsApp group?
- 2- To what extent does this WhatsApp group impact Moroccan teachers’ professional development?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. The Community of Practice Framework

Community of Practice (CoP) is a concept initially coined by Wenger and his colleague Lave (1991). The two scholars adopted an anthropological framework to point out that learning is not a matter of transforming information from an expert to a learner, yet learning is “participating in a community of practice” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 49). Wenger (1991) has developed this theory’s usefulness in various domains including business, civic life, and education.

Wenger, et al., (2002) defined CoP as “a group of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis” (p. 4). Lately, Wenger, Trayner, and de Laat (2011) define CoP as a “learning partnership among people who find it useful to learn from and with each other about a particular domain. They use each other’s experience of practice as a learning resource” (p. 9) provide an accurate and concise definition that incorporates the three fundamental principles that underpin this theory: domain, community, and practice.

This domain is the initial step of any CoP. It is the impetus that motivates people to gather and share information. The domain, thus, equips a CoP with an identity that distinguishes it from a network of friends. Community is what makes a group of CoPs passionate about an

idea or a topic so that they would frequently meet and interact to learn from each other. It should be pointed out that Wenger (2006) distinguishes team working from CoP. In the former, it is “a task-driven partnership” (Farnsworth, Kleanthous, & Wenger-Trayner, 2016, p 6). In CoP, there is an ongoing engagement that assists in sharpening the experience and understanding of “the joint enterprise” (Wenger,1998). The last key element in this theory is practice. (Wenger 2012a, p. 2) defined it as “a shared repertoire of resources: experiences, stories, tools, ways of addressing recurring problems—in short a shared practice”. It is the manifestation of shared knowledge.

The three key concepts are interrelated and work together to create a dynamic learning community that adopts continuous development. Domain provides a shared passion that gathers the community members, the community generates mutual confidence and respect, and practice leads to ongoing learning and growth. Nevertheless, this theory has been criticized because of some inadequacies. For example, Jewson (2007) states that CoP practice theory is not appropriate for analyzing structural aspects of group relationships and positions. Instead, he suggests network theory. Besides, Hughes (2007) notes that ‘communities of practice’ can’t be both a theory of what learning is and what it ought to be.

According to Vangrieken et al. (2017), Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) are based on the learning organization theory, which emphasizes collective learning, shared vision, and collaborative problem-solving within an organization. In contrast, CoPs are derived from social and situated learning theory, which emphasizes learning in social contexts and through participation in communities. One of the main differences between these two frameworks is the role of external leadership. In PLCs, external leaders are often hired for their expertise and experience in leading PLCs or a specific area of focus for the PLC.

Vangrieken et al. (2017) argue that despite their theoretical differences, PLCs and CoPs share many similarities in practice, and the two frameworks are often used interchangeably. Both frameworks share similar objectives, strategies, and concepts regarding professional learning, focusing on collaboration and addressing the personal, professional, and social needs of their members. Strategies used by both PLCs and CoPs include sharing stories and experiences related to their profession, working on teachers' professional growth to meet student's needs, and emphasizing collaboration between community members. This overlap in aims and strategies can lead to conceptual confusion, making it difficult to distinguish between the two frameworks. As Vangrieken et al. (2017) state, “It is apparent that even if, by definition, PLCs and CoPs are composed of different elements, in practice, it is difficult to separate them” (p.55).

2.2. Virtual community

Virtual community is highly debated among scholars. Preece (2001) defines a virtual community as a group of people who share commonalities despite being geographically dispersed. However, other scholars such as Kling & Courtright (2003) and Fernback (2007) emphasize the existence of boundaries that differentiate community members from non-members. Despite this, Graham (1999) argues that virtual communities can also have boundaries that incorporate common interests, rules, and voluntary membership. Some scholars prefer the term social network instead of virtual community as they believe that the term community has a strong connotation with kinship and geographical proximity (Barab, 2003). Conversely, Gatton et al (2003) prefer the use of the term social network to refer to any group of people who are connected through digital means. Other researchers recommend reconsidering the concept of community by focusing on social interaction, common interests, and symbolic meaning rather than solely focusing on geographical proximity and face-to-face communication (Fernback 1999; Graham 1999; Hazhar, 2019; Zitouni et al, 2021).

2.3. WhatsApp Group as a Platform for Online Professional Development

Several studies unveil that the online community of practice, which is a group among teachers on WhatsApp ensures teachers' professional development. Cansoy (2017) conducted a study on science teachers' shares in a WhatsApp group to gauge whether they ensure teachers' professional development by using the netnographic research method. It was noted that teachers performed shares in four different themes, field knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, in-school teaching practices, and emotional support, that support teachers' professional development. This study reveals that WhatsApp can be an effective tool to ensure teachers' professional development.

In the same context, Kihwele and Mgata (2022) carried out a similar study that targeted Mathematics teachers in Tanzania. The researchers opted for an open-ended survey distributed to 54 secondary mathematics teachers. The results exhibited that informal WhatsApp group has a great impact on the development of teachers' content and pedagogic knowledge through sharing experiences, and materials and demonstrating teaching practices in video clips and photos.

Unlike the studies mentioned above that targeted science and mathematics teachers, Motteram, Dawson, and Al-Masri (2020) conducted a case study in the Zataari refugee camp on the use of a WhatsApp group as a means for developing language teachers professionally within a socio-cultural perspective. Methodologically, the researchers adopted a thematic analysis of the postings and exchanges from the WhatsApp group. This research finds out that

these virtual groups are used for interpersonal interactions, professional development, and for organizational purposes.

Recently, Ghamrawi (2022) conducted a study examining the role of virtual communities of practice (vCoPs) in the professional development of K-12 teachers in the Arab world during the Covid-19 pandemic. The study employed a mixed-method approach, collecting quantitative data through a questionnaire administered to 696 participants and qualitative data through eight focus group interviews, each involving six participants. The results indicated that participants perceived vCoPs as playing an effective role in the professional development of K-12 teachers, particularly during the COVID-19 outbreak.

The studies adopted in this research have several limitations that need to be addressed. Firstly, the four cited articles have a narrow focus on a specific group of teachers, such as science, Maths, and language teachers, K-12 teachers. Therefore, their findings cannot be generalized to other contexts or teacher groups. Secondly, this study solely focuses on EFL language teachers within the Moroccan context. To enhance the literature, this research aims to focus on a new group in different contexts to evaluate whether WhatsApp groups can aid EFL teachers in their professional development. Furthermore, the studies cited in this research solely rely on either participant self-reports or observation except Ghamrawi's (2022) research which adopted a mixed method design but generally focused on virtual communities of practice (vCoPs). To obtain consistent results, this research will involve observing a WhatsApp group called 'Professional Development' and conducting semi-structured interviews with 20 Moroccan EFL teachers. This approach will provide a deeper understanding of the impact of WhatsApp groups on EFL teacher professional development.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Sample/ Participants

Our study aims to investigate the types of information and knowledge sharing that Moroccan EFL teachers engage in on WhatsApp groups specifically dedicated to professional development and to explore the impact of such social media tools on their professional development. To accomplish this, we recruited 20 EFL Moroccan teachers who work in public schools and teach different levels ranging from elementary to advanced, using convenience sampling due to time and resource constraints. We sent a message to three different WhatsApp groups intended for Moroccan EFL teachers, and 20 teachers agreed to participate in our study. As Creswell (2014) noted that although the use of convenience samples has many drawbacks, this method can be beneficial for exploratory research or studies with restricted resources.' Additionally, as Bernard and Ryan (2010) pointed out convenience sampling can be a practical

and efficient method to recruit participants, especially if the population of interest is small in size or hard to evaluate.

3.2. Instrument

In this qualitative study, we will use two data collection methods. Firstly, we will observe the "Professional Development" WhatsApp group over a period of eight months to analyze teachers' sharing behaviors, as this is relevant to our first research question. Despite the pitfalls of observations including the possibility of the Hawthorne effect, they are valuable research methods that equip researchers with rich data on people's behavior in a natural environment. This data can be utilized to gain a deeper understanding of the participants and their context.

Secondly, we will conduct semi-structured interviews to obtain rich and nuanced data about the impact of social media tools on Moroccan EFL teachers' professional development. The use of semi-structured interviews will allow us to explore the participants' perspectives and beliefs in depth, while also providing them with a comfortable and flexible interview experience. As Creswell (2014) notes, this method allows participants to share their points of view in their own words under the guidance of the interviewer, which can lead to more comprehensive and accurate data collection.

3.3. Data collection procedures

The data collected through the semi-structured interviews will be analyzed using thematic analysis, a widely used qualitative research method for identifying patterns or themes in the data and interpreting their meaning. The analysis process involves several procedures: Firstly, the researcher will read through the interview transcripts to become familiar with the data. Then, relevant segments of the data that align with the research questions will be selected, and codes will be assigned to them. These codes will be organized into themes that will be used to draw conclusions about the impact of using "The Professional Development" WhatsApp group as an informal learning community on Moroccan EFL teachers' professional development. Thematic analysis is a rigorous approach to analyzing qualitative data that allows researchers to obtain comprehensive, valuable, and insightful information.

4. RESULT

Research Question 1: - What types of data do Moroccan EFL teachers share in “the Professional Development” WhatsApp group?

- *Observation of “professional development” WhatsApp groups sharing.*

The "Professional Development" WhatsApp group is managed by six Moroccan EFL teachers, consisting of four male and two female teachers. The group is composed of 600

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participants, including EFL teachers from private and public primary, middle, and high schools. The group also includes three inspectors from different regions of Morocco who actively participate in the discussions. This WhatsApp group is being monitored for six months, starting from November 1st, 2022, until June 20th, 2023. During this period, the teachers have shared various documents, media, and links. The group's description includes the phrase "sharing is caring," which reflects the ultimate goal of this community, which is to share everything that can enhance teachers' instructional competencies.

Subject matter knowledge sharing: Teachers discuss the problems they have encountered in teaching in terms of questions. Teachers attempt to find solutions for such subject matter knowledge by sharing Portable Document Format, (PDF), books, or documents that answer these problems.

1. Teaching materials: lesson plans, PowerPoint lessons along with worksheets
2. Quizzes and tests. This platform is an appropriate landscape for teachers to share their quizzes and tests.
3. Administrative affairs: In this virtual environment, teachers share different circulars that target, for example, teachers' promotions or scholarships offered by the Ministry of Education.
4. An environment where Teachers and researchers share surveys and questionnaires.

The research question was explored through the examination of data obtained from semi-structured interviews with 20 Moroccan EFL teachers. Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the interview data, producing the following results. Hence, Most of the participants in this study believe that teachers' WhatsApp groups support teachers' professional development through engaging in two fundamental types of sharing:

- a) **Instructional practices:** The participants in this research think that this virtual landscape is an appropriate place to share worksheets, e-books, articles, and links that instruct teachers on how to teach English effectively through adopting various techniques and strategies. Interviewee 6 *"This group provides me with plenty of documents that enable me to give efficient classes so most of my contribution in this group is about articles downloaded from a famous website about how to teach English in a way that is communicative and full of fun"*. Another interviewee 2 said *"I do not have any problem in the English language as a subject, but I resort to this group only to pick up all the necessary links, e-books or even videos that I need to teach my students as it should be. The majority of sharing I came across is about how to teach*

English". Interviewee 1 stated that *"most of the time, I share my tests and quizzes with the participants to get as much feedback as possible"*

- b) **Subject Matter Knowledge:** Though it is not widely shared by members of this WhatsApp group comparatively with previous knowledge, some teachers prefer to contribute in this group by sharing various documents and web links that may enhance teachers' subject matter knowledge. Interviewee 11 stated *"I continuously update and expand my subject matter knowledge as it is essential for teachers' professional growth. Staying current with advancements and changes in the field allows teachers to provide accurate and up-to-date information to their students. For this reason, whenever I have the chance to contribute to this educational landscape, I share a book or an article that addresses this issue"*. Another point of view is expressed by interviewee 7 who declared *"I rarely share something in the group but I strongly believe that teachers must have a deep understanding of the subject matter. This enables them to teach challenging concepts in a way that is clear and comprehensible to their students. Without this knowledge, teaching may be less effective, leading to misunderstandings and gaps in student learning"*.

To sum up, the "Professional Development " WhatsApp group is considered a virtual repository where participating teachers share worksheets, e-books, quizzes, tests, videos, audio files, ministerial circulars, and links. This group serves three fundamental types of sharing: subject matter knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and instructional practices. However, it is important to note that participating teachers sometimes deviate from the main objective of this group and start discussing religious or social issues. Additionally, they may switch to using the Arabic language for these discussions. It has also been observed that teachers offer emotional support to each other through thanking, congratulating, or complementing messages. Overall, the " Professional Development " WhatsApp groups provide a valuable platform for Moroccan EFL teachers to exchange subject matter knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and instructional practices, enhancing their instructional competencies.

5. RESULTS

- *Do you use WhatsApp as a tool for professional development?*

71.4% of the participants reported using WhatsApp as a tool for their professional development while 28.6 stated that they do not use this digital platform for this purpose. This research question was addressed using data elicited from semi-structured interviews which are analyzed thematically.

✓ *Developing Instructional Strategies*

Interviewees 12 and 18 stated that “WhatsApp is beneficial for Moroccan EFL teachers since it develops teachers’ instructional strategies through benefiting from fellow teachers’ experience”. Within the same context, interviewees 2, 5, and 9 noted that this platform enables us to develop our teaching techniques as many hard-working teachers share their lesson plans and their worksheets which are usually downloaded from well-known sites, such as One Stop English or Printer. Interviewee 14 pointed out “WhatsApp was the platform I mostly used to keep in contact with my inspector and colleagues mainly during the COVID-19 lockdown”.

✓ *Developing testing strategies*

Interviewee 6 pointed out that “this platform provides me with an appropriate occasion to develop my competencies in designing valid, practical, and reliable tests for my students”. Besides, Interviewees 4 and 17 noted that “most of the time, I downloaded the shared tests and quizzes and made the necessary adjustment that goes hand in hand with my students’ levels. Indeed, designing a quiz and a quiz plan is time-consuming”. Another interviewee 5 stated, “As a novice teacher, it is very challenging to design a robust test so I find a resort in the group to download various tests that simplify my task?”

✓ *Developing EFL teachers’ classroom management techniques*

Most of the participants in this study resort to the WhatsApp group to boost their techniques in classroom management; For example, interviewee 13 indicated “In many cases, I encountered a lot of problems in terms of how to deal with disruptive behavior since I am working in high school many of its students come from a nearby shanty town, so I do not hesitate to ask group members to provide with my practical advice, especially from experienced teachers who work in the same situations. I mean...such groups are very beneficial for Moroccan teachers”. Within the same context, another interviewee expressed his support for such digital platforms by mentioning that, “the WhatsApp group I created with my friends gives practical solutions and recommendations for teachers to conduct effective classes.... I think that such virtual communities are able to supply teachers mainly those who have no experience with effective strategies to have effective and fun classes.

✓ *Teachers’ self-directed learning.*

The emerging theme from the interviews is that the WhatsApp group supports self-directed learning. In other words, it takes into consideration the differentiated learning opportunities for

its members. Interviewee 13 claimed that *“unlike the rare meetings organized by our inspectors (teacher trainers) who often impose on us what we should learn, such virtual communities created in WhatsApp allows us to choose what we want to learn depending on our needs and our students’ needs.... We choose when, what, where, and how we learn.”* Interviewee 4 stated *“With the WhatsApp group, we are no longer slaves of things that are imposed from ministry. We learn and develop in accordance with our pace of learning”. “I have control over my learning. Nobody can push to learn something that most of the time is irrelevant to the environment where I am working.”* Interviewee 7.

✓ *Less time, money, and energy consumption.*

Another theme elicited from the interviews is that WhatsApp group is time, money, and energy-saving. Interviewee 20 stated that *“If I want to attend a meeting organized by the ministry, I must go through a 3-hour trip by taxi or coach and all that is said in this meeting can be found just by a click. WhatsApp groups make know the latest pedagogies from the cafe shops or from your bedroom. Another interviewee 13 expressed her support for the use of WhatsApp group as a tool for professional development by saying “Thanks God to ICT gadgets, before the creation of this application, WhatsApp, we used to spend a great deal of time, energy and money to attend a seminar or workshop. Today, all what you need is a smartphone and connection to keep abreast with the latest innovations.”*

As mentioned above, However, only 28.6% of the participants refuted the use of WhatsApp group as a tool for professional development as it lacks formality, it is not acknowledged as an official platform for professional development. Additionally, they express their resilience to the availability of infrastructure including internet connection and the availability of smart smartphones where the WhatsApp application is stored.

Despite these numerous advantages, three interviewees believe that social technologies including WhatsApp do not support their professional development. Interviewee 1 noted that *“It is helpful When it comes to sending students supplementary materials such as extra exercises, videos or summaries. We sometimes use it to gain time by sending students lessons to be written at home rather than in class. Vis a vis professional development, I haven't ever employed it in this sense. It is not accredited by the ministry”*. Similarly, Interviewees 19 and 11 noted that *I have never used WhatsApp for professional development as it is not practical. I think it is meant for chatting more than teaching. Moreover, it is not official “. Above all, the rural area where I am working has weak internet coverage.* To sum up logistics including the availability of smart gadgets, the internet, and the recognition of WhatsApp groups as an

official application make teachers reluctant to adopt this virtual community to support teachers' professional development.

6. DISCUSSION

Based on the objectives and findings of the research mentioned, it can be concluded that WhatsApp is a suitable platform for Moroccan EFL teachers to engage in their professional development. The study found that teachers use the platform to share various materials and resources related to teaching, including textbooks, teaching materials, circulars, and surveys. This type of sharing is consistent with the findings of other studies conducted by Ezekiel Kihwele & Mgata (2022) and Moodley (2019), indicating that WhatsApp is a fertile ground for teachers to share teaching-related materials and benefit from the experiences of their colleagues.

Furthermore, the categorization of Science teachers' sharing by Cansoy (2017) into four types: “the shares for field knowledge, the shares for pedagogical content knowledge, the shares for teaching practices in school, and the shares for emotional support” indicates that teachers can use WhatsApp as an online community of practice to share knowledge and expertise, as well as to provide emotional support to each other. Therefore, based on the research, it can be inferred that WhatsApp can serve as an effective tool for Moroccan EFL teachers to engage in professional development and improve their instructional practices.

The second objective of this study is to investigate Moroccan EFL teachers' perceptions of the role of the WhatsApp group named “Professional Development” in developing them professionally. The research reveals that 71.4% of the interviewed teachers agree that WhatsApp supports their professional development by enhancing their instructions, testing, and classroom management strategies. Similar results have been found by Rutherford (2010) who discovered that social media positively contributes to teachers' professional development in terms of content and pedagogical knowledge. In the same vein, Marcia and Garcia (2016) and Kihwele and Mgata (2022) found that participating in online communities of practice enables teachers to reconsider educational theories, experience innovative teaching methods, and access new pedagogical resources.

Besides, engaging in such online communities enables teachers to save time, money, and energy. This finding is in parallel with Ghamrawi's (2022) research. She unveiled that “Virtual Community of Practices supports professional development by offering differentiated learning opportunities for its members. In other words, it secures personalized learning options allowing for self-directed learning” (p.5907). As this study found that engaging in professional

development through WhatsApp group saves time, money, and energy, Ghamrawi's (2022) research reached the same result. She pointed out that "training run through the virtual Community of practice (vCoP) saves time that is usually spent on transportation to reach training venues. According to teachers, time is the most important asset for a teacher, and the vCoP helps them save it" (Ghamrawi,2022, p 5908).

7. CONCLUSION

This study aims to achieve two objectives. The first objective is to explore the types of sharing that Moroccan EFL teachers engage in within "the professional development" WhatsApp group. The second objective is to investigate the perceptions of Moroccan EFL teachers regarding the impact of online communities of practice, including WhatsApp, on their professional development. Through the analysis of the content of the WhatsApp group "Professional Development" over eight months and the conduction of semi-structured interviews with 20 Moroccan EFL teachers, the results indicate that Moroccan EFL teachers contribute to their professional growth in various aspects, such as content knowledge, pedagogical skills, and leadership abilities, which are essential for effectively teaching a foreign language. Therefore, the WhatsApp group has had a positive impact on the teachers' professional development and has improved their instructional strategies.

Future Studies

Even though "the Professional Development "WhatsApp group for Moroccan EFL teachers support their professional development, few teachers oppose using this platform as a mean of professional development because of irrelevant content shared or chaotic discussions. Therefore, more studies are needed on the management of such virtual communities so that teachers can fully benefit from these virtual platforms and therefore can conduct efficient classes.

Our study recruits a limited number of participants (N20). To achieve reliability, validity, and practicality, more participants are needed in order to have robust findings. More studies are needed recruiting more participants and different methodologies to extend the literature and evaluate the efficiency of virtual community of practice in different contexts and with different subjects.

A plethora of studies have concluded that informal online communities have a positive impact on teachers' professional development, and this is supported by our research. However, there is a gap in the literature, particularly in the Moroccan context, regarding the impact of professional development on teachers' classroom practices. Analyzing conversations in a WhatsApp group and investigating its impact on teachers' classroom practices is challenging.

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Conducting such longitudinal research is time-consuming and expensive, but it is necessary to analyze and reflect on teachers' dialogues in WhatsApp groups and evaluate their effect on their practices.

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