Chapter 10
A Multifaceted Perspective on Leadership for Learning: A Case Study on Moroccan Education

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Introduction: The Need for Learning-Oriented Leadership

In Morocco, as it is the case in many other MENA countries, the need for 'leadership for learning' is much stronger now than it has ever been before. The education system consumes over 20% of the nation's annual budget and continues to engage various reforms,[1] yet the sector is currently characterized by an alarming level of underperformance. Among the important indicators of this description are the results of Moroccan school students on international evaluations, especially TIMSS and PIRLS.[2] On the 2003 TIMSS results, the fourth-grade Moroccan students scored no more than 347 in mathematics (compared with the international average of 495) and 304 in science (compared with the international average of 489). On the eighth-grade test, the Moroccan students scored no more than 387 in mathematics (compared with the international average of 467) and 396 in science (compared with the international average of 474). On the reading literacy assessment conducted during the 2006 PIRLS, the Moroccan fourth-grade students scored 323 against the international mean of 500 and about 74% of this student population is reported to lack the skills considered required by PIRLS.[3]

These disappointing results were recently confirmed by the national evaluation conducted in 2008 by the High Educational Council[4] – the Moroccan supreme authority over the education sector. This evaluation, which covered the fourth-, sixth-, eighth- and

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[1] See, for example, Ezzaki (2007).

[2] IEA (2009). The same results are reported in: 'Conseil supérieur de l'enseignement' (2008).

[3] Conseil supérieur de l'enseignement' (2008).

[4] The official name is: 'Le Conseil supérieur de l'enseignement'. The evaluation undertaken by this council is known under the name of PNEA or 'Programme National de l'évaluation des acquis'. The full report.of this evaluation is in: Conseil supérieur de l'enseignement (2008).

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ninth-grade levels, reported that students of all these levels scored below the average of 50% in all the main subjects, namely Arabic, French, mathematics and science (including physics and chemistry for the middle school grade levels).

It is true that this perturbing underperformance is not limited to Morocco; instead, it is applicable, albeit to varying degrees, to the whole MENA region, for all the countries in this part of the world have performed poorly on the IEA international evaluations. For example, on the 2007 TIMSS fourth-grade evaluation, six out of the ten bottom countries are from MENA in both mathematics and science. In eighth-grade evaluation, 8 out of the 10 bottom countries for mathematics and 10 out of 20 for science are from this same region. In both mathematics and science in fourth- and eighth-grades, all of the MENA countries scored below the mean of 500. However, despite this regional trend, it remains true that Morocco's underperformance is most alarming, especially in view of the long history and richness of its educational tradition and the requirements for its national development ambitions.

The results of the national and international evaluations of students' learning, along with other performance indicators such as the rates of school wastage (grade repetition and dropping out), are a source of major concern for the educational authorities. In the face of these problems, the system has initiated a large-scale reform in which the educational leaders are being mobilized not only to intensify their efforts in their usual tasks, but also direct their attention particularly towards the quality of learning. This mobilization around the quality of learning is the essence of what may be termed 'leadership for learning'.

Understanding the Concept of Leadership for Learning

'Leadership for learning' is understood here as provoking or inspiring positive change and taking responsibility for the mobilization of educators around a common goal, a system-wide vision of the needed improvements that can take the form of small- or large-scale reform. This responsibility covers not only the design of the change, but also its implementation procedures which include communication, training and the follow-up activities.

Leadership for learning is also understood here as the set of programs and actions that lead the way to improved student achievement and place quality learning at the centre of the education agenda. Quality is viewed here not only in its *internal* dimension, that is, the performance of the school system on the critical indicators such as students' academic achievement in exams and tests, student retention, grade promotion, completion and gender equity, but also in its *external* dimension, that is, the concern with the practical usefulness of the academic learning as it relates to the real world – the so-called educational relevance. On this basis, the leaders for learning are those who are concerned in their work with one or both dimensions.

An important characteristic of leadership for learning is the element of innovation, based on the taking of initiatives by individuals or groups and directed to the

improvement of students' learning. There can be no true leadership if it does not involve personal or group effort for positive change.

Within a wider view, leadership for learning also covers the initiatives that promote professional development. In this sense, the focus is not on the students, but on the educators themselves as a professional community of learners.

Finally, leadership for learning is not the monopoly of any particular group or individual; instead, it is the shared characteristic of several stakeholders. As such, it has several dimensions or facets that comprise public life, policymaking, pedagogical design, teacher education, teacher supervision, school management, educators' professional development, etc. All these facets may involve the concern with quality learning, innovation, initiative, modelling of behaviour, or the development of community learning. It is this view of leadership for learning that guides the present case study.

The Public Facet: The Social Critics and Specialized Organizations as Leaders in Providing Reform Foundations

Like any social change, educational reform is usually empowered not only by specialists in the field, but also by the community of social critics represented by journalists, writers, politicians, civil society activists and parents. Organized into structured entities (e.g. associations) or acting on their own, the members of this community have, over the years, played an important role in bringing to the attention of the public and the official authorities the inadequacies of the entire educational system, including its pedagogical practices. Through more or less specialized publications, a number of social critics have risen to the level of leaders by contributing to change in Moroccan education and by enriching the local culture about teaching and learning. These contributions are further strengthened by educational material that is published in the press either in the form of occasional articles or as whole specialized weekly pages in certain daily newspapers. This press material is generally authored by non-specialist writers who engage in critiquing the Ministry's policies and common school practices and therefore offer an opportunity for a 'democratic' educational leadership.

Usually, the social critics draw their support and substantial material from another type of leadership which is that of the international specialized agencies, including the World Bank, the UNDP and the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA). The periodic reports that these institutions have issued in the last few years have been an important source of diagnostic information and direction for reform. Examples of these reports include the 2007 MENA Education Flagship Report of the World Bank.[5] Although the

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[5] The World Bank (2007).

major dysfunctions of the education system have been known to the public for a long time, it usually is not until they are highlighted by these agencies that they become truly critical facts for the media and eventually for policymakers. Among these dysfunctions are the degraded quality of students' learning, teacher absentee-ism, lack of public accountability and high rates of school wastage. In some ways, these international agencies are 'distant leaders' of educational change, especially in view of the country's political openness and the attention it gives to its international image.

Aware of the need to have its own national education authority, Morocco has recently instituted the High Educational Council.[6] Composed of eminent national leaders, this institution has undertaken several high-profile activities and published well-respected reports that are sometimes very critical of the education system's performance. In so doing, it has 'stolen the show' from the international agencies and has become a respectable reference even for the harshest social critics. With its national status and widely respected work, this council has lately become not only the 'watchdog' of the system, but also the prime 'institutional leader' in shaping new education policies, the provider of the main foundations for the ministry's current reform.

The Policy Facet: The Reform Makers as the Strategic Learning Leaders

Because of the critical challenges facing the education system, the Government of Morocco – through its Ministry of Education – has engaged, since September 2008, a wide-ranging reform known as the 'Emergency Program'.[7] This reform constitutes an urgent implementation of the less operational 'National Charter on Education and Training' issued and approved at the turn of the century.[8] The program consists of 27 projects many of which are concerned directly with students' learning. The following are some of these projects:

- *Promoting and democratizing preschool education* (Project E1 P1): This project is intended to bridge the gap between the home and school learning, especially for underprivileged rural children for whom schooling is a difficult experience, given the wide cultural and linguistic gap between family socialization and formal education. The initiative comprises not only instituting pre-schooling as an integral part of the school system, but also creating 3,600 preschool classes within the public primary schools and setting up 100 exemplary preschool programs across the country. The aim of all these measures is to introduce children

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[6] See footnote 4.

[7] Ministère de l'éducation nationale, de l'enseignement supérieur, de la formation des cadres et de la recherche scientifique (2008).

[8] Royaume du Maroc (1999).

to the 'language of literacy' and to enrich their background knowledge with new life experiences, which facilitates students' subsequent learning and helps avoid the educational deficit that underprivileged children often accumulate over the years and that eventually leads to school failure.

- *Combating school wastage* (Project E1 P5): This project is intended to address the critical wastage problem that is clearly reflected in the high rates of grade repetition and dropping out, especially among rural children and among females. Measures to achieve this goal include procedures for close student monitoring and putting into place a system of remedial classes (3–4 h per week), with the purpose of improving students' learning and ensuring higher achievement results.

- *Improving the curriculum* (E1 P8): This project aims essentially at: (1) completing the institutionalization of the Competency-Based Approach (CBA), (2) linking innovation and educational research with the real needs of the system and (3) improving the teaching of science and technology. The concrete measures for the project include experimenting and eventually implementing the so-called Integration Pedagogy,[9] putting into place a clearly defined strategy for relevant educational innovation and practical pedagogical research, emphasizing hands-on approach to science learning and promoting excellence in science.

- *Integrating ICT and innovation in students' learning* (Project E1 P10): The implementation of this project comprises not only equipping schools with the necessary hardware, but also the training of teachers and the development of digital learning materials.

- *Improving 'school life'* (Project E1 P12): In addition to strengthening the management of schools, this project seeks to institute officially established clubs and resources for extra-curricular activities that ensure more diversity and enrichment in students' learning.

- *Promoting excellence* (E2 P2): This project seeks to provide for the needs of talented learners at all levels and to set up in all regions excellence-oriented high schools that constitute a reference for overall performance by staff and students alike and, in some selected cases, prepare highly competitive post-secondary students for top higher education institutions in Morocco and overseas (the so-called classes préparatoires).[10]

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[9] 'Integration Pedagogy' is a set of teaching procedures designed to support the implementation of the Competency-Based Approach. The principle of this pedagogy is to include, in the school instructional time, moments in which the newly taught contents are integrated in meaningful real-life situations. For a review on this pedagogy, see, for example: Ministère de l'éducation nationale, de l'enseignement supérieur, de la formation des cadres et de la recherché scientifique – Département de l'enseignement scolaire (2009c) or Roegiers (2003).

[10] The 'classes préparatoires', which belong to the French educational tradition, are special classes that are housed within reputable senior high schools and intended for top-achievers in the baccalaureate (high school exams), especially in math and science subjects. They provide a highly demanding 2-year post-secondary program that prepares students for exams of admission in selective higher education institutions which are typically schools of engineering or business.

- *Strengthening the skills of educational personnel* (E3 P1): The objective in this project is to totally reengineer the pre-service teacher education scheme in such a way as to make the system more unified (less diversified), ensure better student recruitment and strengthen the practical training of teachers. It is also intended to make the in-service training more flexible and more responsive to the real needs of schools.
- *Strengthening the mechanisms of inspection and teacher supervision* (E3 P2): This project is concerned with the improvement of school inspectors' skills and procedures for teacher supervision.
- *Improving the teaching of languages* (E3 P6): The measures under this initiative aim at strengthening the teaching of both the students' mother tongue[11] and foreign languages, so as to improve the students' communicative skills and enhance their learning of the various content subjects.

The above are 9 out of the 27 projects that make up the Emergency Program. They are the ones that are most closely connected with leadership for learning. Some deal specifically with the student learning, such as those on preschool education, curriculum improvement and ICT integration, while others are more related to the 'making' of educational leaders, such those on teacher training and the improvement of supervision.

The leadership of the policymakers in undertaking the current reform is characterized by action on different fronts. Among other things, these leaders have responded to the varied problems of the system and have laid out a comprehensive and multidimensional reform. They have also assumed the difficult tasks of communicating these projects to the public, enriching them with feedback from the stakeholders, determining their implementation strategies and procedures, working out the task distribution among the different institutions or individuals and, most importantly, securing generous funding needed for the implementation of the reform – a rare happening in Moroccan public life. To support all these tasks, the policymakers are mobilizing the entire education community around the program and are keeping the focus on its objectives. For example, the only 'official discourse' among educators in these days is that of the 'Emergency Program' and no effort or budget allocation or international aid project can currently be justified without reference to this program. With this general mobilization, implementation is being sought not only in a top-down manner as was the case in previous reforms, but also through bottom-up procedures, that is, fleshing out the reform with inputs from the provincial authorities and local schools.

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[11]Following the extensive political reforms, TAMAZIGHT (the language of the original populations of Morocco – Amazigh) is being given more recognition in the wider cultural and educational contexts. Arabic is no longer considered by some as the only mother tongue for Moroccan children.

Unfortunately, these leadership roles are meeting with some significant challenges. These include, for example: (1) the difficult negotiations between the Ministry and the teachers' unions which have so far not endorsed the 'Emergency Program' and are not supporting it, (2) the shortage of able reform implementers as a result of the government-initiated early retirement of several hundred educators, (3) the largely inefficient administrative and financial procedures at the different levels of the sector's management and (4) the weaknesses of follow-up, accountability and incentives. These difficulties are bound to weaken the efforts of the policymakers in ensuring the success of the reform.

The Teacher Education Facet: Facilitating the Creation of Future Frontline Educational Leaders

As is the case everywhere, teacher educators hold a very important learning leadership role in that they prepare classroom instructors in initial or in-service training programs. In Morocco, they are affiliated with one of three different types of institutions, each of which is directed to a given cycle: primary, preparatory and high school. They draw their legitimacy for leadership from different sources: teaching experience and seniority (mostly in the case of the trainers for the primary school) or from their academic credentials and educational specialization (mostly in the case of the trainers for the middle- and high-school).

In addition to belonging to the same profession, teacher educators have the common responsibility for providing educational leadership by helping their trainees go beyond the current reality found in the schools, question the current pedagogical practices, introduce innovations in these practices and conduct research on relevant issues. Their leadership is highly institutionalized and widely recognized. For example, much to the dislike of field school inspectors, teacher educators play a major role in recruiting student-teachers, and their work carries significant weight, since the certification that they award to the trainees upon graduation translates into tenure in the teaching profession.

Despite the important leadership roles that it provides, teacher education in Morocco is fraught with persistent problems that largely undermine full functioning and steady career development. Important among these are the institutional difficulties which include, for example, the extreme diversity in the faculty's profiles. Although they belong to the same profession, teacher educators constitute a highly heterogeneous population made up of varied academic backgrounds and administrative ranks in the education system. Depending on their credentials, some are covered by the higher education statutes, while others are affiliated with the pre-college education systems; in fact, some members of the latter category continue to hold the rank of secondary school teachers, in spite of the fact they have been teacher educators for several years. This diversity is a source of many difficulties such as divergence in career interests, lack of common vision about the profession and, of course, conflict in the ways the actual work of teacher education is

to be done. Along with this diversity is the problem of the relatively lower socio-professional status of teacher educators as compared with their colleagues in other tertiary education institutions. This is reflected not only in their low-level representation in the hierarchy of the system, but also in their limited power in decision-making at the ministry level. For example, they are not always consulted on major ministry decisions that involve them directly. They are, instead, often treated as simple implementers of ministry's directives and even threatened with a chain of unexpected and destabilizing changes.

Teacher educators are also faced with persistent pedagogical issues. These revolve around the question of the relevance of the training which is often taxed with being too theoretical and little connected with the reality of the schools, in addition to having little coherence among the different courses and between these and teaching practice. In the same vein, the training methodology is blamed for being lecture based, instead of being directed towards hands-on experience. In order to resolve this relevance issue, a number of new approaches are being intro-duced such as the CBA in teacher education, the modular curriculum organization and the use of ICT; however, these innovations have not significantly improved the actual training practices: (e.g. targeting practical competencies, but with the same lecturing tradition). In some cases, these innovations have added to the confusion of how to best provide training and in so doing have created more problems than they have resolved.

The Teacher Supervision Facet: Leadership for Learning as Maintaining the Balance Between Change and Protecting the Status Quo

While the teacher trainers are the main leaders of learning at the early stage of the classroom teacher's career and a distant source of influence on school children, the school inspectors, in contrast, have a more permanent presence in the teacher's professional life and exert a more durable influence on classroom learning. They play multiple learning-related leadership roles in the entire system by providing supervision and in-service training to teachers. In addition, they participate in con-ceptualizing and implementing educational change in the upper levels of educa-tional management. They are entrusted with a high level of authority and they do use it with both the classroom teachers and the educational administrators. For example, teachers may not easily initiate change in using the textbooks without the inspectors' approval. Similarly, the education authorities, including the ministry, cannot introduce any learning-related change without their input. Their leadership for learning takes two seemingly conflicting forms: on the one hand, they perform the function of 'gatekeepers' of school pedagogy by exercising control over the teaching-learning practices in the classroom, even if it means curbing positive change; on the other hand, they collaborate, above the school level, on the search for innovation and certainly for institutionally validated resolution of problems observed in the classrooms. The authority for this leadership is drawn from their

professional expertise, including their teaching experience, their formal training in education supervision and from the legally grounded status bestowed upon them by the central system.

Although school inspectors hold an important place in the system, they have lately seen their profession gradually undermined, as a result of the emerging doubts about their overall performance in the system. These doubts are best reflected in the recent closing, albeit temporary, of their national training centre, which has led to a severe reduction in their total population – a reduction which has been aggravated by the early retirement of many of them. These complications have inevitably translated into a lower level of teacher supervision in schools. To compensate for this deficit, school principals are finding themselves increasingly involved in pedagogical supervision within their own schools and therefore weakening the inspectors' place in the system. This is indeed a case of conflict over pedagogical leadership, a conflict that may further be exacerbated over time if it is not properly addressed.

The Pedagogical Facet: Learning Leadership Through Curriculum Design and Innovative Instructional Approaches

The curriculum constitutes the core of leadership for learning. It is this constituent that is made up of the essential ingredients of learning leadership, namely instructional innovation, responding to learners' needs and improving learning outcomes. In Morocco, the school curriculum, in its larger sense, has become an area where educators strongly compete for educational leadership. As a result of ending the ministry's monopoly on textbook production and the privatizing of this industry, a number of pedagogical leaders (essentially inspectors, teacher educators and classroom instructors) have developed the practice of constituting themselves into special groups of textbook writers, with business investment from publishing companies. Their work consists mainly in interpreting the terms of reference developed by the Ministry of Education on material development and in developing draft textbooks that are subsequently evaluated by specialized reviewers selected by the ministry from among the distinguished educators of the country. The mission of these reviewers is to ensure that the textbooks comply with the terms of reference and present the features of effective learning materials.

This transfer of textbook production from the monopoly by the Ministry of Education to the private sector constitutes a daring management innovation that carries a lot of important consequences. The most important of these is that it liberates the pedagogical creativity of those who venture into the experience and creates a new generation of national learning leaders who have to compete by producing innovative and attractive materials for teachers and students. Some of the textbook authors have become pedagogical authorities and very popular among school teachers, as a result of the success of their textbooks. In many ways, this management innovation (privatization) has 'democratized' leadership in materials production in that it has liberated textbook production from the hands of the 'officially appointed few' and has made it accessible to all those who wish to compete. The other result

of this privatization is that it generates a wealth of learning materials for teachers and students, since the policy is that there should be a least two officially approved textbooks for each academic discipline in each grade level.

This leadership through textbook production is largely enriched by certain learning-focused international education projects funded by donor countries or international agencies. While these projects are developed on the basis of the national reforms and in full partnership with the Ministry of Education, the leadership roles in design and implementation are taken by Moroccan educationists who find in these projects excellent opportunities to sharpen their expertise by keeping abreast of new educational trends and practices, liberating their own educational creativity and making recognized contributions to the improvement of teacher competence and students' learning. One such initiative directly connected with the quality of school learning is the ALEF[12] project which has developed and implemented a pedagogical package known as Morocco's Relevance Program – a set of training and instructional materials intended to make students' school learning useful and closely related to the needs of practical life.[13] Among the special features of this program is the fact that it has opened new frontiers for students' learning and shown the usefulness of targeting such real-life domains as the world of business, professional activities and the practices of positive citizenship. It is also a program that has been developed in a bottom-up approach, starting from the teachers' innovative instructional activities (after training, of course) and moving to the finalization of instructional modules that have subsequently been integrated in school curricula and teacher education programs. This 'pedagogical creativity' constitutes an opportunity for teachers to use and further develop their leadership not only for their own professional learning, but also for the improvement of the quality of their students' learning, not to speak of the badly needed professional recognition and sense of pride that are derived from this experience.

Although the Moroccan curriculum leaders have contributed several improvements, the system continues to exhibit important dysfunctions in students' learning. A lot of work remains to be done to ensure better results from the privatization of textbook production, to achieve a successful implementation of the CBA and learner-centred pedagogy, to combat the persistent tradition of rote- and content-based learning, to ensure greater relevance of the curriculum content, to improve the practices of students' evaluation and to fully integrate ICT in teaching and learning. Although most of these improvements are being targeted in the current reform (as indicated in the earlier section on the policy facet), their real implementation will be largely dependent on the goodwill and full participation of the curriculum designers and implementers.

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[12]The full name of the project is: Advancing Learning and Employability for a better Future. It is funded by USAID and administered by a consortium of firms led by the Washington-based Academy for Educational Development.

[13]Ministère de l'éducation nationale, de l'enseignement supérieur, de la formation des cadres et de la recherche scientifique – Département de l'enseignement scolaire et Projet ALEF-USAID (2009a).

The School Management Facet: Awakening to the School Principals' Role in Quality Education

For a long time, school principals in Morocco were simple administrators who were given the job as a restful pre-retirement activity. Over the last few years, and with the current reform, it has become evident that the performance of a school is largely dependent on the qualities of its principal, and especially on his/her involvement in student learning. To the dissatisfaction of school inspectors who are traditionally the ones officially responsible for pedagogical matters, school principals are increasingly taking on the role of learning leaders by creating conditions that are conducive to effective student learning and measurable achievement. They are becoming more and more accountable for the achievement of their student population. To enable them to improve their performance, the educational authorities have been offering them a variety of training programs in which student learning is an important focus. An important example of this training is the one that has recently been provided on the new model of the 'School Development Project'[14] in which the quality of student learning and achievement is the central goal.

However, despite their increasing leadership roles in student learning and the efforts made by the education authorities to support their work, school principals are facing enormous professional difficulties. For example, although their role in pedagogical supervision of teachers is legally provided for, it is widely contested not only by the teachers themselves, but also by the school inspectors who are perceived by most as the only educators fully and exclusively qualified to take on this role. This contested legitimacy of pedagogical leadership within the school is further complicated by the limited resources that school principals receive (administrative, logistical and financial) and the wide range of management responsibilities that they have to shoulder vis-à-vis the staff, the community and the regional or provincial authorities, all of which largely distracts their attention away from the focus on students' learning.

The Instructional Facet: Teachers as the Frontline Learning Leaders

In all the education systems, teachers are the learning leaders who exert most direct influence on students. Those who function as true leaders mediate their students' learning not only by implementing the curriculum, but also by taking personal initiatives and introducing innovations in their teaching to ensure education

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[14]Ministère de l'éducation nationale, de l'enseignement supérieur, de la formation des cadres et de la recherché scientifique – Département de l'enseignement scolaire et Projet ALEF-USAID (2009b).

quality. This leadership is facilitated by the training they receive, the status and job security they are granted, the relative instructional freedom they enjoy and the opportunities they have for impacting pedagogical decisions at the local level, including participation in school governance. In order to enhance their leadership, the education authorities offer them different professional development services. In addition to attending regular workshops organized by inspectors, teachers receive full-fledged in-service training programs that are provided at the different levels (regional, provincial or local) and that accompany every kind of official development. More interestingly, the ministry has instituted a prestigious teaching-oriented degree known as the 'aggregation', a high level academic and pedagogical training (borrowed from the French educational tradition) that ensures the strong academic and pedagogic mastery of one of the disciplines taught in secondary schools. The teachers who have graduated from this program are considered distinguished leaders in the teaching of their respective subjects (especially mathematics and science). They are often appointed in the prestigious Moroccan high schools, especially those that provide the so-called Classes Préparatoires.[15] The population of teachers with the title of 'agrégé', though still small, constitutes a highly respected corps of educational leaders in the education system, for they are the ones who ensure adequate preparation of students for top engineering and business schools in Morocco and in francophone Europe.

Despite the initiatives undertaken, teachers' leadership is undermined by several unfavourable factors, especially in the last two decades. The most important of these factors are described as follows:

- *The standardization of the teaching profession*: With the dramatic increase in teacher population – which now exceeds a quarter of a million in pre-college education alone – the education system has developed full-fledged training programs and all possible instructional guides and set methodologies that teachers are called upon to follow more or less closely in their teaching. Over the years, many teachers have found themselves gradually becoming implementers of pre-set guidelines, instead of being totally responsible for their own teaching.
- *The pressure of students' evaluation*: As happens in many educational contexts, teachers find themselves 'teaching to the tests' and therefore deprived of their creativity, as a result of the pressure of local, regional or national school exams.
- *The increasing and various societal demands*: These include, for example, the pressure for better student results (both quantitative and qualitative), the demand to compensate for societal inadequacies and cultural change, the urge to integrate the ever-changing technologies and innovations and the pressure to abandon the traditional teaching methods and to participate in the reshaping of the school curricula. With these challenges, teachers find themselves at a loss as to where they should turn their attention.

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[15]See footnote 10.

- *The unfavourable work conditions such as the large and heterogeneous classes and the scarcity of instructional resources (laboratories, teaching aids, etc.)*: These difficulties are often aggravated by the inadequate living conditions for teachers in rural areas (distance from home, lack of acceptable housing, problem of transportation, etc.). These challenges can significantly limit teachers' efforts for achieving effective student learning and are indeed the source of severe dysfunctions such as teacher absenteeism, students' underachievement and even dropping out.
- *Inadequate teacher education and supervision:* The training and supervision that teachers are offered suffer from several inadequacies. (For discussion of this sub-topic, see the sections on teacher education and teacher supervision).

Moving Beyond Student Learning: Educational Leaders as Leaders of Communities of Learners

As pointed out earlier, leadership for learning is not meant to focus only on students; it is also meant to directly serve and benefit the community of educators. Viewed from this angle, educators do not only facilitate the learning of others, but they also do the same for themselves, often in a collaborative manner. This kind of leadership is about the learning of the leaders for the sake of their own professional and personal development, although ultimately, the students are bound to benefit from it. Typically, the initiators of this learning are the leaders themselves or some other informal or non-official (not ministry-related) party. In Morocco, a number of unofficial and independent initiatives have been taken to develop this type of leadership. Perhaps the most common are the professional associations of teachers created around the special academic disciplines taught in schools (science, English, French, etc.) or professional category (teacher training, school management, career advising, etc.). Organized as 'communities of learners' and legally registered with the authorities, these associations constitute an inexpensive and efficient medium for both personal and professional development. Their main activities revolve around the sharing of expertise through annual conferences, regional workshops and educational publications. Some of them have gained a level of capability that has allowed them to provide certain educational services (e.g. training, communication, etc.) at a respectable level, which has sometimes earned them formal partnerships with the ministry for collaboration or joint activities or projects.

Another community-based pattern of leadership for learning is the gathering of educators around pedagogical or management innovations. This takes the form of workshops that bring together educators of different categories (inspectors, teachers, school principals and community leaders) for sharing 'best practices' implemented in the classrooms and in the larger school environment. An example of this kind of event is what is known in Morocco as the 'Ateliers de partage,

d'approfondissement et de regulation' – APARs[16] (or 'best practices' workshops). After its development and experimentation in a number of regions by the ALEF project,[17] this model has been adopted by several educational authorities and pedagogical groups. It is generally found to be a medium for professional collaboration and for the creation or reinforcement of communities of learners. The autonomy of these communities vis-à-vis the official authorities gives them room for liberating their educational creativity as well developing their professional confidence.

In the same vein, an increasing number of educators have created for themselves electronically based networks. One of these networks is the one provided by the portal 'www.tarbiya.ma' which was developed by a partnership between a group of private entities. It is an independent platform that enjoys total autonomy vis-à-vis the ministry and allows educators to exchange teaching and learning experiences, in addition to accessing electronic self-training modules and other helpful information (official announcements, instructional innovations, etc.). A more informal type of learning network is that of discussion groups or forums that are created at the initiative of one or more educators and that allow special interest groups (e.g. science teachers or teacher educators) from different regions not only to exchange educational views and experiences, but also to consult on critical issues and defend their profession, especially within the context of the current reform.

The above community-centred practices are a fast-growing pattern of leadership for learning. Educators are drawing more and more often on their own resources for their own professional development. This comes as a result of the increasing needs for continuous learning, the difficulty for the official authorities to adequately respond to these needs, the growing culture of self-help and collaborative learning and, of course, the expanding access to technology. However, despite its growing presence on the educational scene, this kind of leadership for learning is still largely limited, especially in view of the potential role it can play in the professional learning of the education community. In order to enable this leadership to develop further, the official authorities may need to strengthen the educationally oriented associations and networks through relevant training, opportunities for distance learning, wider access to technology and allocation of grants, while, at the same time, maintaining, and even reinforcing, their autonomy and unofficial character.

Conclusion: Some Generalizations About Leadership for Learning

From the present case study, we can draw some generalizations about the nature of leadership for learning, especially as it relates to an education system like that of Morocco. The first generalization is that this leadership is not the monopoly of any

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[16]The literal translation: 'Workshops for Sharing, Deepening and Regulation'.

[17]See footnote 12.

given individual or group of individuals; neither is it limited to any aspect of the education sector. It is a characteristic that can be claimed not only by individuals or groups, but also by institutions as such. As seen in the present case study, different professional groups and specialized institutions take initiatives and contribute to student learning, despite the fact that they do so in different ways. On this basis, leadership for learning can be said to be multidimensional and multilateral. However, this diversity in aspect and roles is matched by a common goal which is that of achieving learning, The complexity of the education domain requires a distribution of responsibilities among the different sub-sectors and stakeholders; however, these responsibilities, as different as they may be, complement each other and converge towards the same goal.

The second generalization is that leadership for learning is about quality in both the goal and the process: its target is the quality of learning, regardless of whether the beneficiaries are the students or the professional community. For this learning to be at the highest possible level, the actions to be undertaken must reflect a search of excellence. It must be admitted, though, that quality and excellence are relative concepts conditioned by various contextual factors, and that leadership is a matter of demonstrating effort, attempting to create some form of gain (in relation to a given starting point) and not necessarily achieving this gain or attaining a fixed or an externally defined result. It is, therefore, defined by the effort and the quality of the action and not necessarily by the result. The attainment of the result is dependent on a host of factors and not only on leadership. As shown in the present case study, leadership is demonstrated in different educational domains and by different professionals; yet, the overall performance of the system is still far from being satisfactory. Leadership for learning, on its own (certainly a low or even moderate level of it) is not enough to guarantee high performance in an education system.

The third generalization is that leadership for learning is made up of certain core actions, despite the diversity of the parties involved and their roles. These actions include taking initiative and calculated risks, innovating, modelling, problem-solving, planning, implementing, evaluating, communicating, mobilizing and collaborating. They need, of course, to be supported by certain key values such as the sense of positive change, goal-directedness and perseverance.

The fourth generalization is that leadership for learning is affected by several factors which can promote or discourage leadership. In the context related to the present case study, the most important of these factors (positive or negative) relate to the working conditions, the resources made available by the education system, policy and management, the training received, the status of the profession and of course the professional culture, especially the extent to which initiative and creativity are encouraged.

Because it is affected by all above factors, leadership for learning cannot be assumed to exist as an inherent constituent of all education systems; instead, the extent to which it is present in a given system is largely dependent on how much it is promoted by the different stakeholders. This promotion is (or should be) done in different ways. Among these is the development of a strong system of incentives for initiative taking, innovation and distinction in job performance. This system

may include not only rewards and recognition but also measures of accountability. Educational training can also play an important role in this general effort, by fostering teacher creativity and emphasizing strategies for effective school learning such as critical thinking, independent learning and the use of technology. Quality learning is badly needed in many education systems and this cannot be ensured without the promotion of strong educational leadership.

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