

Teaching and teacher-training research gets a boost in Morocco



More than 190 teacher-training professionals from throughout Morocco gathered at Mohammed VI Polytechnic University in Ben Guerir, Morocco on May 19 and 20, 2022, for the “Research and Practice in Primary Teacher Preparation” conference under the USAID-funded, ASU-implemented Higher Education Partnership-Morocco. (Photo by Daniel Lynx Bernard for Arizona State University)

By Daniel Lynx Bernard — June 25, 2022

Research about teaching—and about how best to train teachers—is getting a boost in Morocco thanks to a project funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and implemented by Arizona State University.

The Higher Education Partnership–Morocco (HEP-M) has helped Moroccan educators since 2020 to strengthen their system for training primary-school teachers, which the government of Morocco has identified as a top priority in raising the quality of education. The project also emphasizes the importance of conducting research to assess the factors that affect teaching and the effectiveness of teaching methods.

Funded by USAID under the leadership of Morocco’s Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation and Ministry of National Education, Preschool and Sports and implemented by ASU’s Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College (MLFTC), the HEP-M project in May gathered nearly 200 professors of primary teacher preparation from throughout the North African country for the first in a series of conferences aimed at strengthening research and teacher training.

“This is an opportunity to generate ideas in order to build plans for research projects,” said Lamyaa Fares, a trainer of Arabic teachers in Morocco’s Souss-Massa Region who

presented her research proposal at the conference about the use of the [Universal Design for Learning](#) approach in Moroccan primary schools. “The conference allowed me to consider partnerships with other research facilities to bring my project to fruition.”



Teacher Trainer Lamyaa Fares presents her research proposal at the first Research and Practice in Primary Teacher Preparation conference on May 19, 2022. (Photo by Daniel Lynx Bernard for ASU)

Fares appreciated that the conference connected her with practitioners from other parts of Morocco’s system for training teachers. Some participants, like Fares, provide pre-service vocational training to new graduates at government regional teacher training centers (CRMEFs). The conference brought them together with instructors from other centers as well as education faculty from universities.

In addition to a comprehensive revision of the curricula and instructional materials for the training of future teachers, USAID views research as a critical pillar of this project. Research measures the effectiveness of current practices in teaching and teacher-training, said ASU's Chief of Party for HEP-M, Abdessamad Fatmi. At the same time, it sheds light on areas for improvement.

In recent months the project oriented participants to using a research inquiry plan that helps them clarify research questions, identify appropriate research methods and metrics, choose methods for collecting data, and plan how they will use the resulting findings.

Meanwhile, through an online research collaborative, Moroccan and ASU faculty are forging projects across educational institutions and expanding their research methods. That continued at the Research and Practice in Primary Teacher Preparation conference at Mohammed VI Polytechnic University in Ben Guerir, Morocco. Experts from ASU, USAID, Mohammed VI Polytechnic and Morocco’s education ministries delivered sessions on survey methodology, group design and multivariate analysis. The research collaborations will continue virtually.



Teacher-training professionals participate in a Q&A on gender equality in education on May 19, 2022, during a conference in Ben Guerir, Morocco, organized by ASU's Mary Lou Fulton Teaching College under the Higher Education Partnership–Morocco funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development. (Photo by Daniel Lynx Bernard for ASU)

The conference also enabled participants to present their research projects in progress and receive feedback from peers with the goal of delivering final results at the next annual conference. Per the direction of the Moroccan government, the research projects focus on many of the same approaches that the HEP-M project is using to strengthen teaching such as digital platforms, remote learning, Universal Design for Learning, gender equity, and inclusion of youth and persons with disabilities and those from traditionally underserved populations.

“The conference allowed me to meet researchers, colleagues, managers, and collaborators who share the same concern about the development of primary education in Morocco through educational innovation and research,” said Mohammed Abid, a trainer and researcher in science at the CRMEF in Rabat.

Members of the Research and Development Groups in charge of revising the curricula for teacher training under HEP-M are also conducting many of the research projects. That means the groups are observing teaching practices while they are strengthening instruction of teachers, thus embodying one of the project's objectives: to encourage the use of data for continuous improvement.

“We're enhancing skills for gathering data in your classroom practice and around what's happening in your education space to refine, change, and enhance how things go along,” said Nicole Thompson, vice dean of Teacher Preparation at MLFTC. “In education, we say we're lifelong learners, and in order to do that, you have to understand how to collect data to inform your practice to move forward.”

HEP-M is a five-year project supporting Moroccan faculty in enhancing primary teacher preparation by strengthening programs awarding a bachelor's degree in primary teaching followed by two years of pre-service training. The project's Research and Development Groups are producing curricula based on evidence of effective methods with instructional content emphasizing inclusion and gender equality.