| **RESEARCH ARTICLE**

Teachers' Views on Curriculum, Inclusion, and Critical Pedagogy in Moroccan Secondary Schools

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| **ABSTRACT**

Since its independence, Morocco's centralized educational system has struggled to address cultural diversity, social inequality, and the need for comprehensive pedagogical and curricular reform, as reflected in official narratives such as the National Charter for Education and Training (1999), the Emergency Plan (2009–2012**)**, the Strategic Vision 2015–2030, and the Framework Law 51.17. This study critically examines the perceptions of secondary school teachers regarding the national curriculum, with a focus on inclusivity, cultural relevance, and critical pedagogy. Data were collected from 124 teachers across diverse public schools via an online questionnaire in March and April 2025, which included both Likert-scale and open-ended questions. Thematic analysis revealed widespread dissatisfaction with a curriculum seen as outdated, rigid, and disconnected from students' lived realities. Teachers highlighted the dominance of high-stakes assessments and rote memorization, which undermine creativity, critical thinking, and learner autonomy. The curriculum was also reported to marginalize students with disabilities and neglect Morocco's linguistic and cultural diversity. Professional development in inclusive and critical pedagogies was described as fragmented and disempowering, leaving educators ill-equipped to drive change. Additionally, the curriculum's top-down development process limits meaningful participation from teachers, parents, and communities, perpetuating exclusion and alienation. These findings reveal systemic and ideological barriers such as political interests and bureaucratic inertia that obstruct meaningful reform. The study calls for urgent transformation centered on critical pedagogy, participatory governance, and a culturally responsive curriculum to promote equity and social justice in Moroccan secondary education.

1. Introduction

Education, as both a social institution and humanistic project, has the power to transform and nurture reflective, autonomous, and socially responsible individuals who can critically engage with their world. Globally, there is growing recognition of the need for curricula that are culturally relevant, inclusive, and grounded in critical consciousness as essential elements for addressing the complexities of cultural diversity, structural inequalities, and epistemic debates (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1995). Following Freire's (1970) view of education as a practice of freedom, if pedagogy is to be emancipatory, it must go beyond traditional banking models to promote critical awareness, learner agency, and social justice.

Within the Moroccan educational context, secondary education plays a crucial role in shaping young people's identities and trajectories of social mobility, as it often determines their access to higher education, employment opportunities, and their ability to engage critically with socio-cultural and political realities. However, despite official discourse that advocates reform and inclusivity, the national curriculum remains anchored in hegemonic narratives that marginalize diverse sociocultural realities and

epistemologies (El Amrani, 2022). The persistence of rigid, high-stakes assessment practices that prioritize memorization over critical thinking further exacerbates learner disengagement and inequity (UNESCO, 2021). Moreover, students with disabilities face structural exclusion due to the absence of curricular accommodations and insufficient teacher training in inclusive and critical pedagogies (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011; Sharma, Loreman, & Forlin, 2012). Compounding these challenges is the centralized, bureaucratic management of curriculum development, which restricts significant participation from teachers, parents, and communities, thereby reinforcing top-down power structures that detach education from the real-life experiences of its stakeholders (Apple, 2004; Ball, 1994).

This article critically investigates these systemic tensions by foregrounding the perspectives of Moroccan secondary school teachers. It aims to answer three interrelated questions :

1. How do Moroccan secondary school teachers perceive the cultural relevance and inclusivity of the national curriculum?
2. What are teachers' views on the integration of critical pedagogy and inclusive practices within the curriculum and professional development frameworks?
3. How do structural factors such as centralized governance and assessment policies affect the enactment of equitable and transformative education?

Employing a mixed-methods approach, this study situates teachers' insights within broader debates on curriculum justice and pedagogical equity in the Global South. The findings reveal a curriculum characterized by disconnection from sociocultural realities, entrenched exclusionary practices, and systemic resistance to reform. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive, structural transformation that decentralizes curriculum authority, embeds culturally sustaining and inclusive content, and empowers teachers as co-creators of curriculum and agents of change. Ultimately, this research contributes to reimagining education as a liberatory praxis, one that affirms diversity, nurtures critical agency, and positions teachers and learners collaboratively in the pursuit of social justice and educational equity.

2. Literature review
2.1 Critical Pedagogy and Curriculum Reform
Critical pedagogy, as articulated by Paulo Freire (1970), reimagines education not as a neutral process of information transmission but as a transformative act that enables learners to interrogate and challenge the social, political, and economic forces shaping their realities. Central to this perspective is Freire's critique of the "banking model" of education, in which students are treated as passive recipients of knowledge deposited by teachers. Freire proposed instead a dialogical and participatory model of education, one that cultivates critical consciousness (conscientização) and encourages learners to become reflective agents of social change. Within this framework, curriculum reform is not merely a technical or administrative endeavor but a deeply political and ethical act. It demands a reconsideration of whose knowledge is included, whose voices are heard, and what purposes education ultimately serves.

Building on Freire's foundation, scholars such as Henry Giroux (1983, 2011) have further emphasized the curriculum as a contested space where cultural and ideological struggles unfold. Giroux views curriculum as a vehicle for either reproducing or resisting dominant ideologies and argues for its potential to foster democratic participation, critical literacy, and social justice. In the context of the Global South, where colonial legacies and neoliberal pressures continue to shape educational systems, critical pedagogy offers a powerful lens for rethinking curriculum reform. Scholars like Shor (1992) and McLaren (2015) highlight how critical pedagogical approaches can help dismantle hierarchical knowledge structures and promote more inclusive and equitable educational practices. Thus, reimagining the curriculum through a critical pedagogy lens is not only about altering content or methodology; it is a call to reconfigure the very purpose and power dynamics of education.

2.2 Cultural Relevance and Indigenous Knowledge in Education
The integration of culturally relevant content and indigenous knowledge systems into educational curricula has gained recognition as a cornerstone of meaningful, equitable, and transformative education (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Gay, 2010). Culturally relevant pedagogy not only affirms students' identities but also challenges the implicit Eurocentrism and epistemic exclusion that often permeate national education systems. In the Moroccan context, where Arab-Islamic and Amazigh cultures intersect, the persistent marginalization of the Amazigh language, history, and worldviews within the curriculum reflects broader struggles over cultural recognition and epistemic justice (Baldauf & Kaplan, 2008; Benrabah, 2013). This exclusion risks not only alienating students from their learning environments but also eroding their sense of belonging, dignity, and cultural continuity.

A growing body of research suggests that when local languages, histories, and ways of knowing are actively incorporated into educational content and pedagogy, students experience increased engagement, motivation, and academic success (Cummins, 2000; Dei, 2008). Such inclusion enables learners to connect schooling to their lived experiences and to reimagine education as a

dialogical space where multiple epistemologies are valued. However, implementing culturally sustaining curricula in postcolonial societies like Morocco remains fraught with tension. Policymakers are often caught between the imperatives of fostering national unity through standardized education and the need to honor the country's rich cultural pluralism (Battiste, 2002). Moving toward educational models that embrace indigenous knowledge not only requires curriculum reform but also a fundamental rethinking of whose knowledge counts and how educational legitimacy is defined.

2.3 Inclusive Education and Accessibility

Inclusive education represents a transformative shift from exclusionary practices toward the creation of flexible learning environments that accommodate every learner, regardless of ability, background, or social identity. Recent research reinforces that true inclusivity goes beyond mere integration, requiring systemic reform that rethinks pedagogy, assessment, and school culture (Booth & Ainscow, 2016). It involves actively dismantling barriers, be they physical, curricular, or attitudinal that prevent full participation and achievement. For instance, Lynch and Irvine (2022) argue that inclusive education must engage critically with social justice frameworks, ensuring that marginalized learners are not merely present in classrooms but are fully engaged and valued. This requires embracing Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles, which proactively design curricula that are accessible to all from the outset rather than relying on retroactive accommodations (Meyer, Rose, & Gordon, 2014).

Moreover, the accessibility dimension of inclusive education must address the digital divide, especially in low-resource contexts where technological infrastructure and digital literacy are unevenly distributed. With the growing use of digital platforms in education, inclusive access to technology has become vital. Research by Al-Azawei, Serenelli, and Lundqvist (2016) highlights that digital inclusion is not simply a matter of providing devices but also entails ensuring pedagogical and cognitive accessibility. In multilingual or multicultural contexts such as Morocco, inclusive education must also address linguistic diversity and cultural responsiveness. McKinney and Brown (2009) assert that inclusive pedagogies should recognize and leverage students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds as educational assets rather than deficits. Thus, inclusive education and accessibility are deeply interlinked with broader goals of equity, agency, and democratic participation in education.

2.4 Assessment Practices and Learner Diversity

Standardized assessments, while often intended to provide objective measures of academic achievement, tend to narrow the curriculum and prioritize rote learning over higher-order thinking skills. As Popham (2001) and Klenowski (2009) have argued, such assessments reduce complex learning processes into quantifiable scores, which can distort the purpose of education. This testing culture can marginalize students whose knowledge is not easily captured by traditional formats, particularly those from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Moreover, these assessments often disregard the contextual and emotional dimensions of learning, which are essential for holistic development. As Torrance (2017) points out, the overemphasis on standardized tests may compromise the authenticity of teaching and learning, creating environments where students learn to "perform" rather than to think critically or independently.

To counter these limitations, scholars and practitioners have increasingly advocated for alternative assessment practices that are more inclusive, responsive, and aligned with the principles of formative pedagogy. Performance-based assessments, self-assessment, and portfolios, for example, allow learners to demonstrate their understanding through meaningful, contextually grounded tasks (Brookhart, 2013). These approaches not only accommodate different learning styles and intelligences but also encourage reflective learning and student agency. However, their implementation on a systemic level remains challenging. As Heritage (2010) notes, integrating formative and inclusive assessment into mainstream educational practice requires sustainable teacher professional development, institutional support, and a shift in accountability models. Additionally, assessment reform must be accompanied by a reimagining of educational success for valuing equity, creativity, and critical engagement over mere standardization.

2.5 Community Engagement and Participatory Curriculum Development

Recent scholarship underscores that participatory curriculum development is not only a democratic imperative but also a pedagogical necessity in diverse and dynamic societies. Engaging parents, community members, and local organizations in curricular processes can make education more responsive to learners' lived realities, fostering a sense of collective responsibility and mutual trust (Epstein, 2001; Paris & Alim, 2014). Culturally sustaining pedagogies, which advocate for the preservation and evolution of students' cultural practices within education, thrive when curriculum decisions are grounded in local contexts (Ladson-Billings, 2021). This inclusive approach is particularly vital in postcolonial and multilingual settings, where standardized curricula often marginalize local epistemologies, languages, and histories (Bang & Vossoughi, 2016). By inviting stakeholders into curricular dialogues, schools can counteract cultural alienation and promote educational justice.

Nevertheless, in highly centralized systems, such as those found in many Global South contexts, opportunities for meaningful participation remain limited. Top-down curriculum design frameworks frequently exclude the very voices they purport to serve,

reinforcing systemic inequities and disconnecting schools from the communities they inhabit (Apple, 2004; Ball, 1994). Structural reforms are needed to institutionalize participatory mechanisms, such as school-based curriculum councils, parent-teacher forums, and community-led educational audits (Bray, 2001). Moreover, teacher education programs must prepare educators to engage with families and communities not as passive recipients of knowledge but as co-constructors of curriculum (Gupta, 2015). When properly supported, such partnerships can foster curricula that are not only culturally affirming but also critical, dialogic, and transformative.

2.6 Educational Policy and Resistance to Change

Resistance to educational change, particularly curriculum reform, is often deeply rooted in institutional cultures, political agendas, and longstanding pedagogical traditions. In centralized systems, decision-making is typically top-down, with limited space for teacher agency or grassroots innovation (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). As a result, reforms are frequently met with skepticism or passive resistance by educators who feel excluded from the process or overwhelmed by mandates disconnected from their classroom realities (Cuban, 1998). This phenomenon is not merely a matter of individual reluctance but reflects systemic barriers to change, including rigid bureaucracies, inadequate resources, and policy incoherence (Hargreaves, 1994; Fullan, 2001). Moreover, reform fatigue which results from successive waves of change initiatives imposed without meaningful consultation or sustained support can further exacerbate resistance among educators and school leaders (Sahlberg, 2016).

To address these challenges, educational policy must shift from imposing change to cultivating it collaboratively. This involves repositioning teachers not as passive implementers of policy but as active participants in shaping and enacting reform (Datnow & Park, 2018). Research suggests that successful and sustainable reform is contingent on fostering professional communities, providing ongoing professional development, and creating feedback loops that allow practitioners to reflect and adapt practices (Biesta, 2010; Priestley, Biesta, & Robinson, 2015). Furthermore, engaging with the broader socio-political context, including recognizing local histories, power relations, and community priorities, is essential for designing reforms that are not only technically sound but also culturally and politically responsive. Resistance, in this light, can be seen not as obstruction but as a call for more democratic, inclusive, and context-sensitive policymaking.

3. Methodology
3.1 Research Design

This study employed an exploratory mixed-methods design to examine Moroccan secondary school teachers' perspectives on the relevance, inclusivity, and critical orientation of the national curriculum. By integrating quantitative and qualitative data, the approach allowed for triangulation, capturing both broad trends and deeper insights into teachers' lived experiences (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Data were collected through a structured online questionnaire administered from March to April 2025 and distributed via official educational networks, teacher associations, and social media platforms dedicated to Moroccan educators to ensure diverse regional and disciplinary representation. The core rationale for using a mixed-methods design is that combining both data types offers a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the research problem than either approach alone (Creswell, 2012, p. 22).

3.2 Participants

The sample consisted of 124 secondary school teachers representing public schools in various Moroccan provinces. The participant demographics included 70% males and 30% females. The majority (63%) were aged 40–49, followed by 23% aged 30–39, 10% aged 50–59, and a small fraction (4%) aged 20–29. This age distribution indicates a relatively experienced group, corroborated by the fact that 53% of the participants had over 11 years of teaching experience. Educational qualifications varied, with 40% holding Bachelor's degrees, 37% Master's degrees, and 13% Doctorates. The subjects taught spanned English language, humanities, social sciences, and related disciplines, reflecting a broad pedagogical perspective relevant to the study's aims.

The demographic characteristics of the 124 participating teachers are visually summarized in Figure 1, which includes their age distribution, educational qualifications, and gender.
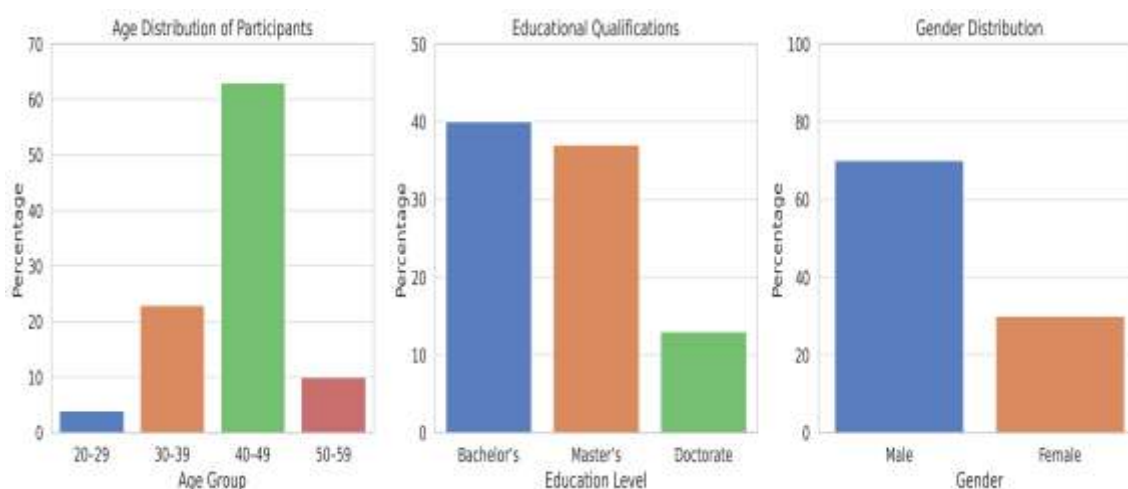
Figure 1: Participant Characteristics by Age, Gender, and Educational Qualification

3.3 Data Collection Instrument

The questionnaire included 25 items, combining both quantitative Likert-scale questions and qualitative open-ended prompts. The Likert-scale questions (five-point scale from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree) focused on teachers' perceptions of curriculum cultural relevance, critical pedagogy integration, assessment practices, and inclusivity measures. Open-ended questions allowed participants to elaborate on their views, share classroom experiences, and discuss systemic barriers and potential reforms. This design helped capture both measurable trends and nuanced personal insights and reflections.

3.4 Data Analysis

Quantitative responses were analyzed descriptively using SPSS version 28. Frequencies and percentages identified predominant attitudes and perceptions among the sample. Qualitative data underwent thematic analysis as articulated by Braun and Clarke (2006), progressing through data familiarization, coding, theme development, refinement, and reporting. Thematic analysis revealed recurring patterns of critique and concern, which were cross-validated with the quantitative data to strengthen the reliability and depth of interpretation.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

Participants were informed of the study's purpose, assured of confidentiality and anonymity, and given the right to withdraw without consequence. Electronic informed consent was obtained prior to participation. The study adhered to ethical norms for research with adult professionals and was exempt from formal institutional review given its non-invasive and anonymous design.

4. Findings

The integration of quantitative and qualitative data revealed seven primary themes that collectively characterize teachers' perceptions of the Moroccan secondary curriculum as structurally limited, culturally disconnected, and resistant to transformative pedagogical principles.

4.1 Outdated and Culturally Detached Curriculum

A striking 77% of participants disagreed or strongly disagreed that the curriculum reflects Morocco's rich cultural diversity. In an inline questionnaire, one teacher responded to the question about cultural relevance by saying, "Honestly, the curriculum feels like it was made for another country. Our Amazigh culture and local traditions are completely ignored." When asked if the curriculum had been updated over time, another participant remarked, "It's still the same syllabus we've had for over ten years, no changes to keep up with how our society and students have changed." These answers reveal a deep sense of stagnation and cultural disconnection that leave students feeling excluded.

Regarding how this affects students' engagement, one educator wrote, "If students don't see themselves or their stories in what they learn, they just switch off and stop caring." Another teacher added, "Because the curriculum doesn't connect to their lives, it fails to inspire or empower them, it feels distant and meaningless." These candid responses from the questionnaire highlight the urgent need to rethink and localize the curriculum to better reflect Morocco's rich cultural diversity and meet students' real needs.

4.2 Absence of Critical Pedagogical Approaches

Seventy percent of respondents criticized the curriculum for avoiding critical issues like social inequality, power relations, and justice. In the inline questionnaire, one teacher pointed out, "The curriculum tells a story that favors the elites. It never challenges students to question or critique their world." When asked about the impact of this approach, another participant explained, "They purposely leave out the hard topics so students don't start asking uncomfortable questions about society." These responses reveal how the curriculum sanitizes content, presenting an overly positive image of Morocco's socio-political realities.

When questioned about how this affects students' learning, one educator wrote, "Students are trained to memorize facts, not to think about why things are the way they are or how to change them." Another respondent added, "This stops them from developing a critical mindset and keeps them passive, just accepting things as they are." These candid answers highlight how the curriculum's avoidance of critical issues limits students' ability to engage critically with their world and undermines the development of transformative thinking.

4.3 Rigid and Non-Differentiated Assessment Practices

Seventy-three percent of teachers indicated that assessments fail to accommodate diverse learner needs, reinforcing a rigid, one-size-fits-all approach focused on rote memorization. In an inline questionnaire, one teacher explained, "Exams are all about repeating what's in the textbook. Creativity or critical thinking has no place." When asked about the impact of this on teaching, another participant shared, "We want to give projects or presentations, but the system pressures us to prepare students for tests only." These responses reveal how assessment practices restrict opportunities for pedagogical innovation and overlook different learning styles.

Further reflections revealed how this rigidity affects students' motivation and learning experiences. One educator noted, "When everything is just memorization, students lose interest and don't engage deeply with the material." Another respondent added, "The assessment system stifles any chance for meaningful learning and student agency, making education feel mechanical." Together, these insights from teachers emphasize the urgent need to rethink assessment methods to better support diverse learners and foster creativity and critical thinking.

4.4 Lack of Support for Students with Disabilities

All respondents (100%) confirmed that there are no curricular accommodations for students with special needs, highlighting a significant gap that undermines efforts toward inclusivity. In the inline questionnaire, one teacher shared, "There are no textbooks or teaching aids for learners with disabilities. They are essentially left behind." When asked about how this affects their teaching, another participant explained, "We have to find our own ways to support these students, but there's no formal guidance or resources from the system." These responses reveal the invisibility of students with disabilities in both policy and practice.

Teachers also expressed concern about the extra challenges this creates. One educator wrote, "Without institutional support, the burden falls entirely on us, making it hard to provide the attention these learners need." Another respondent added, "It's frustrating because the system ignores them, yet we want to help, but we're left to improvise." These candid answers underline the urgent need for curricular reforms and resources to ensure true inclusivity for all students.

4.5 Inadequate Teacher Preparation for Inclusive and Critical Pedagogy

Ninety percent of participants reported lacking formal training in inclusive education or critical pedagogy, highlighting a significant gap in professional development. In the inline questionnaire, one teacher commented, "We attend workshops that talk about inclusion in abstract terms, but no real tools or strategies are given." When asked about how this impacts their teaching practice, another participant explained, "Without practical training, it's hard to apply these concepts in the classroom or meet the diverse needs of our students." These responses point to a disconnect between professional development content and the realities teachers face daily.

Teachers also expressed frustration with the limited support available. One educator wrote, "Theoretical sessions don't prepare us for the challenges we encounter with students who need different approaches." Another respondent added, "This lack of hands-on training restricts our ability to innovate and truly support every learner." Together, these insights underscore the urgent need for practical, context-sensitive professional development to empower teachers in fostering inclusive and critical pedagogies.

4.6 Exclusion of Parents and Local Communities from Curriculum Processes

Ninety-five percent of respondents reported that parents and local communities are excluded from curriculum development and decision-making processes, highlighting a strong top-down approach. In the inline questionnaire, one teacher remarked, "There

is no dialogue with the community. Decisions are made in offices far removed from our schools." When asked about the consequences of this exclusion, another participant explained, "Because communities aren't involved, the curriculum doesn't reflect local values or needs." These responses emphasize how centralized control limits meaningful input from those closest to students.

Teachers also reflected on the missed opportunities this creates for education. One educator wrote, "When parents and communities are left out, we lose valuable perspectives that could improve learning and relevance." Another respondent added, "This disconnect stifles any chance for community-driven change and makes education feel imposed rather than shared." These candid answers highlight the urgent need to involve local voices in curriculum processes to foster more inclusive and context-sensitive education.

4.7 Resistance to Curricular Reform and Innovation
Eighty percent of teachers reported that the curriculum remains rigid and unresponsive to feedback or societal change. In the inline questionnaire, one teacher expressed frustration, saying, "Even when teachers submit suggestions, they go unheard. The system resists any change." When asked about how this affects their motivation, another participant noted, "This resistance makes us feel powerless and discourages us from trying to contribute to curricular improvements." These responses highlight a persistent rigidity that blocks meaningful reform.

Teachers also pointed to the broader consequences of this inflexibility. One educator wrote, "Because the curriculum won't adapt, outdated practices continue, and education fails to meet current needs." Another respondent added, "This lack of openness stifles professional growth and innovation, leaving teachers disengaged." Together, these insights reveal how systemic resistance undermines efforts to modernize the curriculum and actively involve educators in shaping it

5. Discussion of Findings
The findings of this research illuminate a deeply entrenched and systemic misalignment between the Moroccan secondary school curriculum and the sociocultural, pedagogical, and inclusive needs of its learners. This disconnect reflects more than a simple oversight in curriculum design; it reveals a broader ideological architecture that perpetuates cultural homogenization, epistemic exclusion, and pedagogical conservatism. In line with critical scholarship (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Gay, 2010), the absence of culturally sustaining pedagogies and indigenous epistemologies such as those rooted in Amazigh heritage and African philosophies (Benrabah, 2013; Battiste, 2002) highlights the curriculum's failure to engage meaningfully with the historical and cultural complexity of Moroccan society. This erasure is not neutral; it is symptomatic of what Dei (2008) terms epistemological colonization, a process through which dominant forms of knowledge are naturalized, while alternative narratives are silenced.

This curricular detachment from students' lived experiences was evident in the testimonies of students, parents, and teachers, who consistently described the content as irrelevant, alienating, and devoid of resonance with learners' identities. Echoing Cummins' (2000) framework of identity negotiation in education, this misalignment contributes to a process of symbolic violence, whereby students are subtly coerced into abandoning their cultural frames of reference to succeed within a system that privileges Eurocentric norms. Such a dynamic fosters disengagement, weakens the affective dimension of learning, and ultimately reinforces structural inequalities by invalidating the knowledge and lived experiences of marginalized communities.

Further compounding these issues is the curriculum's avoidance of critical pedagogy as a philosophical and practical framework. Instead of fostering dialogic learning and collective meaning-making, the curriculum adheres to what Freire (1970) denounces as the "banking model" of education, one in which knowledge is treated as a commodity to be deposited into passive learners. The participants' observations of sanitized history lessons, decontextualized content, and the absence of socio-political critique point to what McLaren (2015) and Giroux (2011) have characterized as a depoliticized curriculum, a tool of ideological state apparatuses (Althusser, 1971) that legitimizes existing power hierarchies under the guise of neutrality. By foreclosing spaces for dissent and inquiry, the curriculum denies learners the opportunity to develop critical consciousness (Freire, 1970) and to imagine themselves as agents of social transformation.

Assessment practices in Moroccan secondary education mirror this broader ideological orientation. The reliance on rote memorization and standardized examinations reveals an instrumentalist logic that privileges efficiency, control, and compliance over depth, creativity, and critical thought. The findings resonate with critiques by Darling-Hammond (2010) and Klenowski (2009), who argue that such forms of high-stakes testing reduce education to a technocratic exercise in sorting and disciplining rather than an emancipatory project. Alternative and formative assessment methods, which could facilitate differentiated learning and foster higher-order thinking, remain underutilized, largely due to institutional inertia and a lack of professional

development (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Heritage, 2010). The result is a system that rewards conformity while penalizing intellectual risk-taking—a deeply anti-democratic model of education.

The findings also reveal the curriculum's disregard for inclusive education, particularly for students with disabilities. Despite international conventions and policy frameworks advocating inclusive practices (UNESCO, 1994, 2020; Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011), Moroccan educational policy remains largely rhetorical in this regard. Participants noted that no formal accommodations, differentiated materials, or support systems were available for students with special needs, leaving teachers overwhelmed and unsupported. This systemic failure represents what Slee (2011) refers to as exclusion by design, whereby structural barriers are embedded into the educational system itself, rendering equity and inclusion aspirational rather than actionable. The professional development offered to teachers in inclusive pedagogy is often theoretical, decontextualized, and disconnected from classroom realities (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Sharma, Loreman, & Forlin, 2012), leaving educators ill-equipped to address diverse learning needs.

Another significant theme emerging from the data is the exclusion of parents and local communities from curriculum design and educational decision-making. This exclusion reflects a highly centralized, top-down system of governance that privileges technocratic expertise over participatory democracy. As Epstein (2001) and Paris and Alim (2014) argue, meaningful educational reform requires the engagement of families and communities in co-constructing culturally sustaining and socially relevant curricula. However, in the Moroccan context, parental and community voices are often treated as peripheral, if not entirely irrelevant. This reflects not only bureaucratic rigidity but also a deeper mistrust of grassroots agency—a colonial legacy that continues to haunt post-independence educational structures. Apple (2004) and Ball (1994) have noted how such centralized systems function to consolidate control, delegitimize local knowledges, and maintain a politics of silence.

The study also uncovers significant resistance to curricular reform and innovation at the institutional level. Teachers who expressed a desire to challenge prevailing norms and introduce transformative pedagogies often found their efforts thwarted by rigid hierarchies, bureaucratic gatekeeping, and a culture of compliance. This institutional inertia, as described by Fullan (2001) and Cuban (1998), reinforces a status quo in which teachers are reduced to implementers rather than designers of curricula. Despite their critical awareness and professional experience, teachers are rarely afforded spaces for reflexivity, collaboration, or contribution to policy discourse. As Datnow and Park (2018) and Biesta (2010) argue, authentic reform must involve a reconfiguration of power relations that recognizes teachers as intellectuals and co-constructors of knowledge, not merely as technicians tasked with delivering state-sanctioned content.

Taken together, these findings reflect a broader critique of educational systems that prioritize standardization, control, and reproduction over inclusivity, justice, and critical engagement. They align with Giroux's (2011) notion of educated hope, which calls for a pedagogy grounded in the real, lived struggles of marginalized communities and animated by a commitment to transformation. A curriculum that ignores local epistemologies, silences dissent, and marginalizes the most vulnerable cannot serve as a vehicle for social justice. The Moroccan educational system, as currently configured, risks perpetuating alienation, disengagement, and epistemic inequality unless it embraces radical reform grounded in critical pedagogy, inclusive principles, and community engagement.

What is needed, therefore, is not superficial curriculum revision or incremental policy adjustments, but a paradigmatic shift, one that reimagines education as a space of liberation rather than domestication. This entails the decolonization of knowledge, the democratization of decision-making, and the re-humanization of learners and teachers alike. Only then can education fulfill its promise of empowerment and contribute meaningfully to the broader project of social transformation.

6. Conclusion

This study has exposed fundamental tensions within the Moroccan secondary education system, highlighting how entrenched structural, ideological, and pedagogical dynamics constrain the curriculum's capacity to serve as a tool for equity, inclusion, and critical engagement. The persistent dominance of centralized, top-down governance structures, rigid assessment regimes, and curricular content that marginalizes diverse cultural identities, including Amazigh and other subaltern epistemologies, perpetuates educational exclusion and disengagement. Teachers' voices reveal a profound dissonance between reformist rhetoric and classroom realities, underscoring the insufficiency of professional development and the exclusion of key stakeholders such as parents and communities from meaningful curriculum participation.

These findings call for a radical reimagining of Moroccan education—one that moves beyond superficial adjustments to embrace critical pedagogy as a foundational framework. Such a transformation demands decentralizing curriculum authority to foster participatory governance, integrating culturally sustaining and inclusive content, and adopting assessment practices that value

creativity, critical thinking, and learner autonomy. Empowering teachers as co-creators of curriculum and reform is essential to dismantling the prevailing banking model and fostering a genuinely dialogic and emancipatory educational experience.

Ultimately, achieving educational justice in Morocco requires confronting and dismantling the ideological interests and power relations embedded in current curricular and institutional arrangements. By foregrounding the voices of those at the heart of education—teachers, learners, and communities, this study contributes to the urgent project of curriculum democratization and social transformation. It envisions education not as a mechanism of reproduction, but as a praxis of liberation that affirms diversity, nurtures critical consciousness, and equips learners to become active agents in shaping a more just and equitable society

7. Study Limitations and Future Research

One notable limitation of this study lies in its methodological scope. Although the mixed-format online questionnaire allowed for the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data, it lacked the depth that could have been achieved through in-person interviews or classroom observations. The study captures perceptions at a single point in time—March and April 2025—without considering the historical or evolving nature of teachers' experiences with curricular reforms. Furthermore, the sample, while geographically diverse, may not fully represent the wide range of experiences across Morocco's complex educational landscape, particularly in marginalized or peripheral regions where systemic exclusion may manifest differently.

To build on these findings, future research should employ more diverse and participatory methodologies, such as critical ethnography or action research, to explore how teachers, students, and communities experience the curriculum on the ground. Engaging in longitudinal studies could provide insight into how attitudes and practices shift over time, especially in response to reforms or training initiatives. There is also a pressing need for policy-focused research that investigates the disconnect between curriculum design and classroom realities, examining how bureaucratic structures and political agendas shape education reform. Exploring the voices of often-marginalized stakeholders such as students with disabilities and rural parents would further enrich the discourse on inclusive and critical pedagogy in Morocco.

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