



## Transforming Moroccan Public Schools: Innovative Teaching Practices for Students' Well-Being and Teachers' Professional Growth

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**Abstract**

The COVID-19 pandemic and the AI-driven digital transformation have significantly disrupted conventional teaching methods, leading to the most severe educational crisis to date (United Nations, 2020; UNESCO, 2020a, 2020b, 2023). While these disruptions presented major challenges for educators (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2020), they also created opportunities to redefine education, moving beyond traditional curricula and practices. In this volatile and evolving landscape, fostering inclusive learning environments and prioritizing teachers' innovative approaches is crucial for effective educational transformation. Understanding these shifts will help identify the necessary support systems, skills, and strategies teachers and students need to adapt (Schleicher, 2020; OECD, 2025). This study aims to investigate the implementation of innovative teaching practices to enhance teachers' professional development, improve student well-being, and restore trust in Moroccan public schools. It examines how student-centered and engaging pedagogies contribute to creativity, resilience, and academic engagement, while also supporting teacher professional growth. Using action research methodology, this study integrates quantitative and qualitative methods. The findings indicate that innovative practices significantly enhance students' creativity, resilience, and engagement, while also contributing to teachers' professional development. The study emphasizes the importance of fostering effective, engaging, and student-centered learning environments, providing insights into how education can be reconceptualized and transformed to address future challenges.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

This study explores how innovative teaching practices enhance the quality and equity of public education in Morocco, particularly in the wake of COVID-19 disruptions. It examines how these approaches amplify teacher and student voices, foster creativity and resilience among

students, and support teachers' professional growth and satisfaction. The pandemic exposed deep educational inequalities, affecting over 90% of children worldwide and reinforcing the urgency of rethinking pedagogical approaches to support student well-being and learning recovery (United Nations, 2020; UNESCO, 2020a, 2020b; Enseignement au Temps de Covid au Maroc, 2021; UNICEF, 2020). While the crisis posed significant challenges, it also created opportunities to reshape education beyond traditional norms (Dhawan, 2020; Neuwirth et al., 2021). By investigating student-centered and innovative teaching methods, this study contributes to ongoing discussions on educational reform, ensuring that Morocco's commitment to quality education translates into meaningful classroom transformation.

Recognizing the need for transformative efforts, Morocco has adopted proactive strategies to promote equity, quality, and innovation in education (High Council for Education, Training, and Scientific Research, 2015). The Roadmap Reform (2022) was introduced to restore public trust in schools and advance student-centered teaching practices. The effectiveness of these reforms depends on empowering educators with strategies that emphasize active learning, student engagement, and well-being (Roadmap, 2022). Research underscores that teacher agency and student participation are pivotal in shaping school transformation and improving learning experiences (Hargreaves, 1996; Harper, 2003; Robinson & Taylor, 2007; Holquist et al., 2023).

Despite the increasing relevance of innovative education, limited research explores how these practices are implemented and impact student creativity, resilience, and teacher development. Questions remain about teachers' evolving attitudes toward their professional growth and how their instructional approaches shape student engagement and learning outcomes (Burns, 1999; Kitchen & Stevens, 2008). Utilizing an action research (AR) approach, this study does not evaluate outcomes through traditional assessments but instead engages teachers and students in an iterative process of inquiry, reflection, and improvement (Kemmis, 2009; Zeichner & Noffke, 2001). AR is contextual, participatory, and transformative, allowing educators to co-develop solutions that address professional challenges and student needs (Lewin, 1951; Wisker, 2008; Mills, 2000).

In this context, the study examines the creative pedagogical model, aligning with Morocco's national reform agenda and global perspectives. By systematically integrating innovative practices into collaborative research, this study offers practical insights for policymakers, educators, and researchers. It provides actionable recommendations for

curriculum reimagination and community-driven educational reform, ensuring that Morocco's commitment to quality and equitable education leads to sustainable classroom transformation.

### **1.1. Problem Diagnosis**

This AR is driven by a commitment to enhancing educational quality and equity in Morocco, particularly in light of recent disruptions. Among the primary concerns is the impact of shadow education (Bray, 2009), wherein unequal access to private tutoring exacerbates educational disparities, disproportionately affecting lower-achieving and economically disadvantaged students, thereby widening the equity gap. Furthermore, the global disruption of learning underscores the urgent need for innovative pedagogical practices that foster student engagement, resilience, and creativity (UNICEF, 2020). As Morocco implements its Roadmap Reform (2022-2026) to transform public schooling, AR emerges as a potent tool to bridge policy and practice, ensuring that reforms are contextually relevant, teacher-driven, and student-centered. This study aims to empower educators and students, shaping an inclusive and innovative learning environment. Consequently, we seek to foster a sustainable educational model that strengthens collaboration, creativity, critical thinking, and resilience. The integration of innovative practices offers actionable insights for curriculum redesign and community-driven reform, ensuring that Morocco's commitment to quality education translates into meaningful classroom transformation.

## **2. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES**

This study's theoretical framework is built upon action research, teachers' professional development, situated learning, and innovative teaching practices, which will be explored in the following sections.

### **2.1. Action Research as a Catalyst for Educational Change**

Action research (AR) is a powerful tool for educational transformation, fostering collaborative problem-solving and improved learning outcomes (Lewin, 1951; Mills, 2000). It encourages educators to take an active role in research, ensuring meaningful and sustainable changes (Wisker, 2008). Wisker (2008) describes AR as “an opportunity to capture and develop experiences with participants over time, particularly when those involved in decision-making are committed to implementing the developments and suggestions that arise from it” (p. 229). Similarly, Clark et al. (2020) highlight its significance in helping educators navigate policy shifts, institutional demands, and professional challenges. Rooted in Lewin's (1946) cyclical model of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting, AR has evolved through key contributions from Corey (1949), Stenhouse (1975, 1980), and Carr & Kemmis (1986). It fosters critical reflection and pedagogical transformation, challenging traditional educational paradigms (Kemmis, 2009; Zeichner & Noffke, 2001). However, concerns persist regarding the credibility and methodological rigor of teacher-led research (Roulston et al., 2005; Norton, 2009). Burns (1999, 2005) defines AR as context-specific and localized, allowing educators to diagnose and address issues within their own settings. Despite critiques, AR remains a catalyst for sustainable educational reform, enhancing teaching effectiveness and professional growth (Stringer, 2004, 2007).

### **2.2. Action Research as a Catalyst for Professional Development**

AR fosters continuous professional development, enabling educators to reflect on and improve their teaching (McNiff, 2013). It encourages teachers to examine their practice, enhancing self-efficacy and problem-solving skills (Korthagen & Nuijten, 2022; Rumiantsev et al., 2023). By bridging theory and practice, AR ensures that professional development remains relevant and impactful (Kitchen & Stevens, 2008). Beyond individual growth, it promotes collaborative learning, integrating educators into professional learning communities (Chou, 2011; Bleicher, 2013). It also supports inclusive and intercultural education, fostering school-community engagement and challenging existing pedagogical perspectives (Sales et al., 2011). By strengthening professional identity, reflection, and agency, AR facilitates long-term improvements in teaching practices (Dikilitaş & Yaylı, 2018; Francisco et al., 2024). A major advantage of AR is its role in knowledge development, allowing teachers to expand their technological, empirical, and ideological expertise (Ponte et al., 2004). Unlike traditional top-down professional development models, AR enables educators to own their learning, ensuring that interventions are context-specific and sustainable (Keahey, 2021). By fostering teacher agency and empowerment, AR positions educators as key drivers of educational reform, reinforcing long-term improvements in pedagogy and student outcomes (McNiff & Whitehead, 2010; Hargreaves, 1994).

### **2.3. Action Research as a Catalyst for Situated Learning and Teacher Innovation**

Situated learning theory (Lave & Wenger, 1994) asserts that knowledge is most effectively acquired through authentic, real-world contexts. This perspective challenges traditional models of passive knowledge transmission, instead viewing learning as a social process shaped by activity, culture, and collaboration (Lave, 2019). Central to situated learning is the concept of communities of practice, where learning is deeply connected to action and engagement (Abma, 2007). This approach closely aligns with AR, as iterative cycles of reflection and practice empower teachers to develop innovative, student-centered pedagogies (Young, 1993).

Teachers play a crucial role in classroom innovation and educational reform, yet their involvement in policy-making remains limited (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 2011; Guskey, 2002). Effective reform requires bridging the gap between policy and practice by incorporating teachers' perspectives into curriculum development (Hargreaves, 1996; Kirk & MacDonald, 2001). Teacher education reform, as Wang et al. (2010) emphasize, is essential for sustaining broader educational transformation. AR facilitates evidence-based innovation, ensuring that reforms remain contextually relevant and teacher-driven (Sadker & Sadker, 1991).

Through collaborative inquiry and reflective practice, AR bridges theory and practice, equipping educators with sustainable, student-centered teaching methodologies (Korthagen & Nuijten, 2022; Rumiantsev et al., 2023). It fosters continuous professional development, collaboration, and knowledge-sharing, reinforcing a culture of innovation (McNiff, 1995). By integrating creative and innovative leadership principles, AR enhances accountability and responsiveness, contributing to inclusive and equitable learning environments (Kitchen & Stevens, 2008; Soemartono, 2014)

## **2.4. Purpose of the Study**

This study positions AR, professional development, and innovative teaching as key drivers of educational transformation. AR fosters critical reflection, collaboration, and iterative improvement, bridging theory and practice to enhance teaching effectiveness while strengthening teacher agency and professional identity for sustainable, context-driven reforms (Lewin, 1951; McNiff, 1995; Kemmis, 2009; Francisco et al., 2024). Despite the importance of innovative teaching, teachers' involvement in educational reform remains limited (Harris & Jones, 2019; Wang et al., 2010). AR empowers educators to refine strategies, align pedagogy with student needs, and lead meaningful change (Kaplan, 1998; McPherson & Nunes, 2004). This study highlights AR as a transformative tool, equipping teachers to drive innovation, foster collaboration, and sustain reform (Kitchen & Stevens, 2008; Soemartono, 2014). By examining student-centered interventions, particularly English Club activities, this research explores how innovative practices enhance engagement, well-being, and professional growth. Beyond evaluation, it seeks to develop scalable strategies for future educational reforms, integrating teachers' and students' lived experiences to extend learning beyond traditional classrooms and drive evidence-based transformation

## **2.5. Research Questions**

To ensure that this action research remains practitioner-focused and reflective, the study is structured around the following key questions:

1. How do we implement and evaluate interventions that enhance students' well-being and foster innovative teaching practices?
2. How do students experience and respond to these interventions in their learning process?
3. How can the insights gained from this action research inform and improve future educational innovations and professional learning opportunities for teachers?

## **3. METHODS**

This action research employs a multi-methodological approach. This section of the study delineates the research context, participants, materials, data collection procedures, and ethical considerations. Conducted between 2021 and 2023 in Moroccan secondary schools, the investigation examines teachers' interventions during disrupted learning and explores their effects on students' well-being and teachers' professional development. This research is firmly grounded in action research principles to incorporate practitioners' knowledge, observations, and reflections into the research process (Richards and Farrell, 2005). The study adopts a collaborative approach, involving teachers and students in exploring and evaluating novel educational strategies, ensuring validity, and enhancing the relevance of research to teaching and student needs (Creswell, 2001). This study aligns with McNiff and Whitehead's (2010) conceptualization of action research as a sequence of action-reflection cycles.

### **3.1. Study Population and Justification**

The research participants comprise secondary school students engaged in English Club activities, teachers, and parents who provided insights into their children's engagement and well-being. The primary research site is Al-Khawarizmi Public Secondary School, with additional contributions

from multiple institutions during the second intervention phase. This study intentionally includes students from diverse academic and socioeconomic backgrounds to ensure a comprehensive understanding of their experiences. Given the study's focus on real-world educational challenges, including COVID-19 disruptions and the transition to digital learning, the inclusion of teachers and parents provides a holistic perspective on the impact and effectiveness of these interventions.

### **3.2. Interventions' Plan**

This study consists of a two-cycle intervention. The first cycle, "Healing Before Schooling," focused on emotionally and cognitively re-engaging students. The second cycle, "Fostering Innovation: Professional Development Amid Uncertainty," aimed to expand the intervention to other schools while fostering teachers' adaptability and professional development in response to emerging challenges. Figure 1 provides a detailed overview of each cycle's objectives and implementation.

#### **3.2.1. First cycle: Healing Before Schooling**

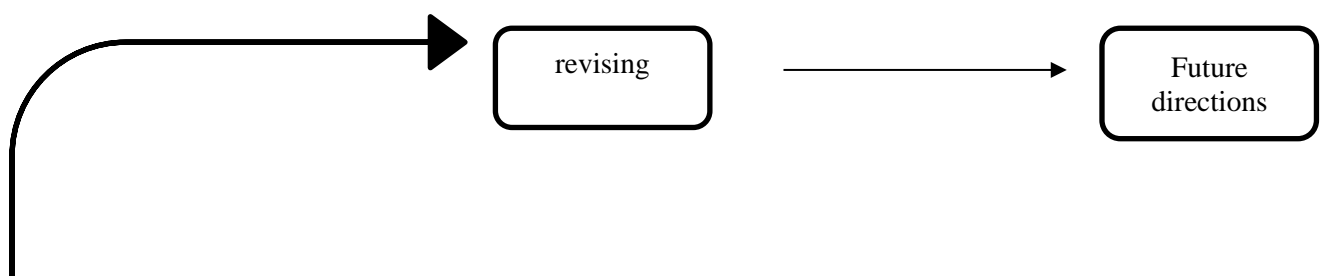
The initial intervention aimed to re-engage students both emotionally and cognitively through English Club activities, employing a play-based approach that integrated storytelling, drama, and role-playing to enhance creativity and self-expression. Furthermore, collaborative learning was encouraged through teamwork, peer mentoring, and student-led discussions, fostering a sense of community and active participation. This intervention sought to create a supportive and inclusive learning environment, allowing students to freely express themselves while bridging the gap between emotional well-being and academic achievement.

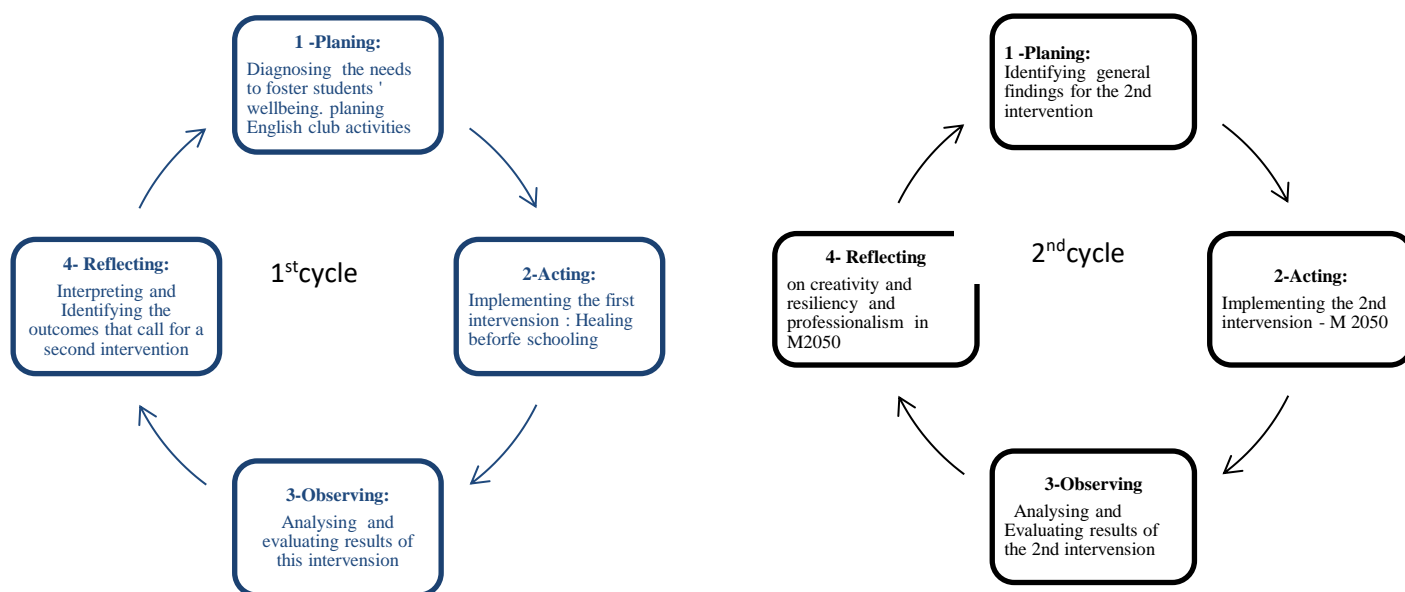
#### **3.2.2. Second Cycle: Fostering Innovation: Professional Development Amid Uncertainty**

Building upon the findings of the first intervention, a second phase was introduced under the Morocco 2050 (M 2050) initiative, involving five academic institutions and 100 students, along with six participating teachers. Activities focused on critical thinking, problem-solving, and student autonomy, following the same play-based approach. To provide a feedback loop and assess the long-term impact of these methods, multiple instruments were utilized.

**Figure1**

*The Action Research Process*





### 3.3. Instrumentation

Action research employs multiple data collection methods to ensure a comprehensive and reflective understanding of educational interventions (McNiff & Whitehead, 2010; Stringer, 2013). The study integrates both qualitative and quantitative approaches, aligning with the cyclical nature of action research (Lewin, 1946), where observation, reflection, and evaluation guide iterative improvements. The following instruments were employed: (1) Classroom Observations: Collected through teacher's notes, video recordings, and audio documentation, these observations provided real-time insights into student engagement and instructional practices (Burns, 2009). Observations served as a foundation for ongoing reflection and intervention adjustments. (2) Surveys: Administered before the interventions to parents and teachers, these surveys explored the perceived need for innovative teaching approaches. Pre-intervention surveys are critical in action research as they help identify educational gaps and stakeholder expectations (Mertler, 2017). (3) Student Evaluation Checklist: A post-intervention tool to assess students' engagement, learning outcomes, and well-being following the first cycle. Such reflective instruments help measure the effectiveness of interventions. (4) Document Analysis: The study analyzed course materials and instructional documents to evaluate how innovative interventions influenced teachers' instructional strategies and professional development. Document analysis is widely used in action research to track curriculum changes and pedagogical shifts over time (Cohen et al., 2018). (5) Group Interviews with Teachers: Conducted during the second cycle, these interviews captured teachers' perceptions, professional growth, and experiences with intervention. Group interviews, particularly in action research, foster collaborative reflection and provide rich qualitative data on professional learning (Brits & Du Plessis, 2006; Morgan, 1997).

### 3.4. Research Procedure

Data collection was conducted in three key phases to align with the action research cycle. Pre-intervention observations established a baseline for student engagement and teaching practices. During the intervention, observations focused on behavioral changes, classroom dynamics, and student

participation. Finally, post-intervention assessments were conducted to evaluate the long-term impact of the interventions and identify areas for improvement. The analysis combined quantitative data, processed using SPSS for descriptive statistical analysis, and qualitative data, which was thematically analyzed to identify emerging patterns in students' and teachers' experiences.

#### **3.4.1. Researcher's Role**

The teacher-researcher adopted a participant-observer role, actively engaging in intervention activities while systematically documenting observations (Mills, 2000; Elliott, 1991). This immersive approach facilitated a more comprehensive, firsthand understanding of how the interventions were received and experienced, providing rich qualitative insights into their effectiveness.

#### **3.5. Data Collection**

The data collection process commenced with two preliminary surveys targeting parents and teachers to obtain insights into their experiences with remote teaching and learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. The parent survey focused on parents' perspectives on distance learning (PDL) and the Learning Outcomes and Wellbeing (LOW) of their children. A total of 40 parents participated in this survey. Concurrently, the teacher survey, disseminated through social media platforms, garnered 34 responses from educators. This survey examined teachers' demographics, Teachers' perception of innovative and ecological education (TPIEE), and the visibility of innovative and ecological education (VIEE). After the first intervention, post-intervention evaluation checklists were utilized to collect students' reflections on their experiences in English Club activities. These checklists assessed students' emotional engagement, comprehension of subject matter, personal achievements, and challenges encountered during the activities. The combination of observations, surveys, and evaluation checklists provided a comprehensive foundation for analyzing the influence of innovative practices. Building upon the findings from the first intervention, the second phase expanded the research scope through the Morocco 2050 (M 2050) initiative, which encompassed five academic institutions, 100 students, and six teachers. This intervention further investigated teachers' perspectives on professional growth and the long-term impact of innovative practices on student well-being and learning outcomes. Additional group interviews were conducted virtually with teachers, yielding valuable insights into how these approaches influenced teaching strategies during the disrupted learning period. The study systematically analyzed all collected data to assess the effectiveness, sustainability, and broader applicability of these interventions and teachers' professional development.

#### **3.6. Ethical Considerations**

Informed consent was obtained from students, teachers, and parents, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the study's aims and objectives. For minors, parental consent was procured for participation in English Club activities, photography, and video recording. Ethical safeguards, including anonymity, confidentiality, and voluntary participation, were rigorously maintained, allowing participants to withdraw without repercussions. Data protection measures ensured secure storage and exclusive research utilization. As the researcher also functioned as a participant observer, the potential for subjective bias exists despite efforts to maintain objectivity. Herein, the ethical research necessitates continuous vigilance and thoughtful decision-making, ensuring that all choices, whether planned or



spontaneous, align with ethical codes and moral principles (Heigham & Croker, 2009). This study adheres to these principles throughout the research cycle, ensuring integrity in data collection and analysis while contributing to a deeper understanding of innovative teaching practices and fostering engaging, student-centered learning environments.

#### **4. Findings and Reflections**

Amid educational disruptions, opportunities have emerged to reimagine and transform education by moving beyond traditional curricula toward innovative, student-centered learning. Integrating informal learning with instructional goals enhances both teaching and engagement. As findings unfold, they not only address the research question but also foster deeper reflection and discussion on future educational innovation.

##### **4.1. First action research cycle**

###### **4.1.1. The participant observer**

The observations conducted during this period of disruption revealed significant challenges that informed the rationale for this action research, including the necessity for human connection during social distancing, the complexities of school reopening, and disparities in technological access. The COVID-19 pandemic emphasized the essential nature of connection—while physically separated, individuals remained emotionally dependent on maintaining contact, albeit virtually. As educational institutions resumed operations, learning was frequently interrupted by new COVID-19 cases, resulting in educators struggling to evaluate student well-being, readiness to learn, and engagement while navigating an uncertain educational landscape. Hybrid learning further exacerbated educational inequalities, as numerous students lacked access to technology, thereby limiting their participation in online learning. With persistent apprehension and stringent health protocols in place, educators faced substantial challenges in adapting to and leading in this novel reality. At this critical juncture, educators were compelled to choose between adhering to traditional methodologies or designing innovative activities to sustain the future of education. There was an urgent requirement to establish environments conducive to joy, creativity, and resilience, where students and educators could engage in meaningful, play-based learning experiences, fostering both personal development and academic achievement. As reflective practitioners, it is posited that innovation in education must be driven by action research, which bridges theory and practice, ensuring that interventions are both practical and transformative. Action research (AR) serves as the guiding framework, empowering educators to integrate classroom observations into research and generate insights on effective, innovative practices. This study emerged from the pressing need for equity-focused education in the aftermath of COVID-19 disruptions and digital learning challenges. Declining student engagement, emotional disconnection, and limited collaboration necessitated a transformative approach that restores belonging, creativity, and resilience in the classroom. Traditional education often neglects cultural storytelling, play-based learning, and collaborative pedagogies, which are vital for community learning and emotional connection. By

integrating heritage-based educational strategies, this research aims to create interactive, meaningful learning experiences that nurture both academic achievement and personal development. To effectively implement the first cycle of AR, a clear rationale for action was established alongside a comprehensive understanding of the educational landscape. This required insights not only from researchers but also from educators and parents. To gain a comprehensive perspective, surveys were conducted to explore their attitudes, experiences, and perceptions during this period, shaping a more inclusive and informed approach to educational transformation.

**4.1.2. The Parent Surveys**  
*Parents’ perspectives on distance learning (PDL)*

The findings in the first cycle provide insight into how children continued their education during the lockdown, the methods they used for studying at home, and parental perspectives on remote learning (Table 1). Regarding the continuity of education (PDLQ1: Did your children study at home during the lockdown?), the majority of respondents confirmed that their children studied at home, with a mean response of 1.85 and a standard deviation of 0.366, indicating minimal variation among participants. The study further explored the methods employed by children for home-based learning (PDLQ2: What tools did your children use to study at home?)

**Table 1**

*Descriptive Statistics OF parents’ perspectives on distance learning (PDL)*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
PDLQ1	40	1	2	1.85	.366
PDLQ2	40	1	4	2.70	.923
PDLQ3	40	0	4	1.10	1.071
PDLQ4	40	1	1	1.00	.000
PDLQ5	40	1	1	1.00	.000

The responses revealed diverse approaches, including remote learning platforms, TV educational channels, textbooks, and family support. Responses ranged from 1 to 4, with a mean of 2.70 and a standard deviation of 0.923, suggesting moderate variability in study methods. This variety highlights the adaptability of families in supporting their children’s education, albeit in the absence of standardized learning platforms. Additionally, the study examined the resources provided by schools for remote learning (PDLQ3: What technological means were used by the school during the lockdown?). Responses ranged from 0 to 4, with a

**Transforming Moroccan Public Schools: Innovative Teaching Practices for Students' Well-Being and Teachers' Professional Growth**

mean of 1.10, indicating limited institutional support. The findings suggest a predominant reliance on social media and messaging apps such as WhatsApp and Facebook for instructional delivery. The standard deviation of 1.071 reflects variability in the tools used,

further emphasizing the lack of a structured and uniform approach to remote learning. Parental satisfaction with remote learning (PDLQ4: Were you satisfied with remote learning?) was overwhelmingly negative, with 36 out of 40 respondents expressing dissatisfaction. All responses were recorded as 1, resulting in a mean of 1.00 and a standard deviation of 0.000, indicating unanimous discontent with the remote learning experience. Finally, when asked about their preferred mode of education (PDLQ5: Which type of learning do you prefer?), all respondents unanimously favored in-person learning. The responses, again recorded as 1, resulted in a mean of 1.00 and a standard deviation of 0.000, reinforcing a strong preference for traditional classroom settings.

These findings highlight the challenges of remote learning, the improvisation required by families, and the clear inclination toward in-person education. The results underscore the need for more structured, accessible, and standardized remote learning strategies to ensure effective educational continuity in future crises.

***Learning outcomes and students' well-being***

The findings provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and limitations of remote learning during the lockdown, focusing on learning difficulties, well-being activities, academic performance, and readiness to return to school (Table 2). The study examined the challenges faced by children during remote learning (LOW1: What challenges did your children encounter?), with responses ranging from 1 to 5 and a mean of 2.75, indicating a broad range of difficulties. A standard deviation of 1.070 highlights significant variation in the nature and severity of these challenges. Common issues included difficulties in understanding and receiving lessons, psychological stress, and unreliable network connections, illustrating the multifaceted barriers to effective remote learning.

In addition to academic instruction, the study explored whether schools provided activities aimed at students' well-being (LOW2: Were there any innovative practices that concerned students' well-being?). Responses ranged from 1 to 2, with a mean of 1.35 and a standard deviation of 0.489, indicating that while some students (31.57) had access to activities such as art, music, and drama, the majority (68.42%) found these opportunities were not generally available. The moderate variation suggests disparities in access, possibly influenced by school resources or parental support. The impact of remote learning on academic performance was assessed through (LOW3: Were your children's study results good or bad?). Responses ranged from 2 to 3, with a mean of 2.10, indicating that academic outcomes were perceived as falling between "good" and "average/bad," though leaning slightly toward positive. A low standard deviation of 0.308 suggests minimal variability, implying that most students

had similar academic experiences. However, given the challenges reported, these results may not accurately reflect true learning progress.

Finally, the study assessed students' psychological and academic readiness to return to in-person learning (LOW4: Were your children psychologically and academically ready to return to school?). Responses ranged from 1 to 2, with a mean of 1.30 and a standard deviation of 0.470, indicating that while some parents believed their children were somewhat ready, concerns remained about the transition back to traditional schooling. The variation in responses suggests differing experiences, possibly influenced by students' learning environments during the lockdown.

**Table2**

*Descriptive Statistics Learning Outcomes and Student Well-Being*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
LOW1	40	1	5	2.75	1.070
LOW2	40	1	2	1.35	.489
LOW3	40	2	3	2.10	.308
LOW4	40	1	2	1.30	.470

Overall, these findings highlight the significant concerns parents had about the effectiveness of remote learning, the challenges their children faced, and the limitations in curriculum coverage and well-being support. While some students were able to maintain their academic progress, many struggled with comprehension, psychological stress, and a lack of access to structured learning tools. The preference for in-person learning was strong, underscoring the perceived inadequacies of remote education and the need for more structured, accessible, and inclusive learning strategies in future crises. Further results will be gained from the teachers' survey.

**4.1.3. Teachers Survey**  
*Innovative and ecological education*

The survey data provides valuable insights into teaching practices in English language instruction, particularly regarding ecological education and innovative pedagogical approaches. With 34 respondents, the findings reveal key trends in structured teaching, creative methodologies, and active learning strategies. A descriptive analysis of Teachers' perception of innovative and ecological education (table 3) reveals the following: A significant majority of teachers (70.6%) reported aligning their instruction strictly with the linguistic levels outlined in the coursebook (TPIEE1), indicating a preference for structured teaching methods. However, many educators also expressed openness to incorporating innovative strategies, with 61.8% agreeing and 20.6% strongly agreeing that they integrate language instruction with ecological awareness (TPIEE2). The use of creative techniques such as songs, drawings, drama, and storytelling (TPIEE3) were supported by 47.1% of respondents, though a notable 17.6% disagreed, highlighting a gap in the adoption of these methods.

**Table3**

*Teachers' perception of innovative and ecological education*

***Transforming Moroccan Public Schools: Innovative Teaching Practices for Students' Well-Being and Teachers' Professional Growth***

Items	SD (%)	D (%)	N%	A (%)	SA (%)
<b>TPIEE1</b>	2.9	2.9	2.9	70.6	23.5
<b>TPIEE2</b>	0.0	5.9	11.8	61.8	20.6
<b>TPIEE3</b>	0.0	17.6	14.7	47.1	20.6
<b>TPIEE4</b>	0.0	14.7	14.7	55.9	14.7
<b>TPIEE5</b>	0.0	5.9	5.9	50.0	38.2
<b>TPIEE6</b>	2.9	0.0	5.9	55.9	35.3
<b>TPIEE7</b>	0.0	0.0	2.9	61.8	35.3

**SD**=Strongly Disagree; **D**=Disagree; **A**=Agree; **SA**=Strongly Agree.

In terms of ecological engagement, 55.9% of respondents reported using school magazines or video-making projects to work on environmental issues (TPIEE4), while an overwhelming 88.2% supported the importance of incorporating ecological education and global concerns into their teaching (TPIEE5). This strong commitment reflects an increasing awareness of sustainability in education. Similarly, 91.2% of teachers supported active learning through real-life themed activities like arts and presentations (TPIEE6), reinforcing the importance of experiential learning. Finally, nearly all respondents (97.1%) agreed that reimagining teaching through innovative practices is crucial for developing both academic performance and life skills (TPIEE7), emphasizing the widespread recognition of modernized teaching approaches.

These findings suggest a balance between structured curriculum adherence and the integration of progressive teaching methods. However, there is room for growth in encouraging creative pedagogies and expanding ecological projects. To enhance teaching effectiveness, professional development initiatives should focus on training educators in creative methodologies, promoting ecology-focused projects, and strengthening active learning strategies. This study underscores the potential for innovative and ecologically integrated teaching to enrich linguistic competence and global awareness in English language education.

***The visibility of innovative and ecological education***

The survey data reveals critical gaps in teaching practices during and after the lockdown, particularly in play-based learning, student well-being support, and professional development participation (Table 4). Among the 34 respondents, only 29% reported using a play-based learning approach (VIEE1), with a standard deviation of 0.462, indicating variability in its adoption. Similarly, when asked "During the lockdown, did you use any innovative practices to ensure students' well-being?" (VIEE2), only 6% of teachers responded

positively, with a low standard deviation (0.239), reflecting a widespread lack of well-being initiatives. Additionally, participation in professional development activities was minimal, with only 12% of teachers engaging in such opportunities (VIEE3), as reflected by a standard deviation of 0.327, indicating some variation but an overall trend of low engagement.

**Table 4***Descriptive statistics of the visibility of innovative and ecological education*

		VIEE1	VIEE2	VIEE 3
<b>N</b>	<b>Valid</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>34</b>
	<b>Missing</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Mean</b>		<b>.29</b>	<b>.06</b>	<b>.12</b>
<b>Std. Deviation</b>		<b>.462</b>	<b>.239</b>	<b>.327</b>

These findings highlight an urgent need for targeted interventions to enhance teaching practices, support student well-being, and promote professional development. The lack of play-based learning and innovative teaching strategies suggests the necessity of a structured approach to improving classroom engagement and instructional methods. In response to these challenges, the first cycle of this action research was designed to implement and evaluate interventions that foster interactive, student-centered learning while integrating well-being initiatives and professional growth opportunities for teachers. By systematically addressing these areas, this cycle aimed to refine instructional strategies, assess their impact, and establish a foundation for sustainable improvements in education.

Building on the findings from classroom observations, parent surveys, and teacher surveys, the teacher-researcher, in collaboration with the school principal, designed an intervention to enhance student engagement, promote innovative teaching practices, and strengthen professional development. To provide students with a meaningful space for enjoyment and critical engagement, the English Club activities were introduced on Friday afternoons, a dedicated free period for interactive and experiential learning. The selected theme, ocean plastic pollution, was not only intended to develop students' language skills through creative and research-based activities but also to foster environmental awareness and collective responsibility. This intervention explored the impact of student-centered practices on learning outcomes and examined how such initiatives contribute to teachers' professional growth. More importantly, the intervention served as an outlet for students to process the

disruptions caused by COVID-19, while also promoting ecological consciousness and working toward a more sustainable school ecosystem. Through this action research cycle, the teacher-researcher, acting as a participant-observer, closely monitored the implementation of hands-on, engaging activities within the English Club to assess their impact on both student learning experiences and teaching methodologies. Evaluation checklists of student work were used to evaluate progress and effectiveness, raising a key question: What specific activities were used to facilitate this intervention?

#### **4.1.4. Document Analysis: Evaluating the English Club Green Course implementations**

The description of the English Club activities in this action research provides a foundation for assessing their role in enhancing student well-being. Conceptualized as an engaging, collaborative environment, the intervention integrated play-based ecological education, fostering creativity, critical thinking, and environmental awareness. Students actively participated in discussions, problem-solving exercises, and artistic expression, addressing real-world ecological concerns through interactive learning. Utilizing ocean plastic pollution as a central theme, the project encouraged environmental responsibility and solution-driven thinking. One significant session involved students listening to whale vocalizations, interpreting them creatively, and expressing their understanding through drawings and creative storytelling. Other students focused on AI-driven prototyping and call for action, designing innovative solutions to combat plastic pollution and promote marine life sustainability (see Appendix 1).

The art and painting group visually represented the impact of anthropogenic activity on nature, creating artwork that transitioned from environmental degradation to restoration, symbolizing a collective vision for sustainability. Two student-created paintings exemplify the eco-conscious and collaborative learning approach. The first, constructed from plastic waste, reflects their ability to repurpose materials creatively, reinforcing the project's environmental theme (see Appendix 1). The second, a collaborative coloring activity, required students to work on different sections of the same image, resulting in a cohesive final piece. This exercise strengthened compassionate collaboration, active listening, and shared responsibility, emphasizing teamwork and ecological consciousness (see Appendix 1). Rooted in Freire's (1970) educational philosophy, which values student agency and engagement, the English Club prioritized resilience, problem-solving, and social-emotional learning, particularly in response to COVID-19 disruptions. The initiative fostered community bonds and essential life skills for an evolving future by uniting students from diverse backgrounds. A post-evaluation checklist

assessed engagement, learning outcomes, and attitudes toward ecological education, offering insights into how such initiatives make learning meaningful, interactive, and socially relevant (see results, Appendix 2).

#### **4.1.5. Analysis of the Evaluation Checklist Results**

The evaluation checklist assessed the effectiveness of English Club activities based on student reflections, focusing on four key areas: Context, Quality of Relationships, Quality of the Learning Process, and Outcomes. The results indicated the program's positive impact on student engagement, teamwork, and cognitive development. Regarding context, student participation was predominantly positive. Participants described the activities as enjoyable, engaging, and intellectually stimulating. These responses suggest that the club fostered an environment conducive to both enjoyment and learning. The quality of relationships within the club was notably strong. Students reported active engagement, satisfaction in collaborative work, and a sense of trust and empowerment. Both teacher-student and peer-to-peer relationships were characterized as positive, demonstrating the club's role in creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment. Further analysis of student reflections revealed two main themes: Enjoyment, Collaboration, Ecological Awareness, and Personal Growth and Cognitive Development. Numerous students found the activities engaging and creative, emphasizing how they encouraged teamwork and environmental consciousness. The program integrated ecological education into language learning, with students developing an increased awareness of ocean pollution.

Beyond enjoyment, the activities contributed to personal growth by enhancing students' confidence, problem-solving abilities, and teamwork skills. The experience empowered many participants, recognizing the importance of determination and perseverance. Additionally, invention-based tasks encouraged creativity and innovation, further reinforcing the real-world applications of their learning. In conclusion, the findings support the assertion that the English Club activities were educational, engaging, and transformative. The program successfully integrated innovation, ecological awareness, and student empowerment, underscoring the value of interactive and student-centered learning approaches. Expanding such initiatives to other subjects could potentially enhance student learning, confidence, and resilience.

#### **4.2. Second cycle: Fostering Innovation: Professional Development Amid Uncertainty**

The initial intervention demonstrated that the English Club's activities yielded satisfactory outcomes in promoting engagement, creativity, collaboration, and ecological awareness. Students reported positive experiences, enhanced confidence, and cognitive enrichment, corroborating the efficacy of experiential, play-based learning methodologies. However, reflections from the first cycle



### **Transforming Moroccan Public Schools: Innovative Teaching Practices for Students' Well-Being and Teachers' Professional Growth**

also elucidated areas for further development, particularly in expanding ecological education, intensifying cognitive challenges, and refining reflective practices to enhance teachers' professional development. To build upon these insights, the second cycle of this action research aimed to scale and enhance the impact of innovative teaching practices while exploring their role in teachers' professional growth. Key objectives included disseminating best practices among educators, incorporating structured reflection sessions, and extending the program to other educational institutions. Additionally, there was a need to intensify ecological education efforts, ensuring that sustainability themes were as integral as other learning outcomes. By refining and expanding these interventions, the second cycle sought to create a more comprehensive, intellectually stimulating, and transformative educational experience for students and teachers. Consequently, a key research question emerged: How can the insights gained from the first action research cycle inform and improve future educational innovations and professional learning opportunities for teachers?

#### **4.2.1. Implementation of the Second Cycle: The Morocco 2050 Initiative**

To initiate this new phase, an inaugural workshop was conducted to share insights from the first intervention and reflect on the action plan for the second cycle. Based on these discussions, the course was revised: rather than designing prototypes focused solely on sustaining marine ecology, students were challenged to design prototypes of sustainable, by-sea cities that provided solutions tailored to their specific regional contexts. This expanded vision led to the development of the "Morocco 2050" initiative. This initiative served as a platform where students and teachers conceptualized urban environments for the year 2050. The second intervention was implemented across six schools in five regional academies in Morocco, benefiting approximately 100 learners. The teachers' group interview was conducted to examine teachers' perceptions of innovative practices in M2050 and professional growth.

#### **4.2.2. Findings from the Teachers' group interview**

The findings from the teachers' group interview highlight three key themes: collaborative learning, joyful and effective learning through innovation, and opportunities for professional growth.

##### ***Joyful and Effective Learning Through Innovation***

Educators emphasized the transformative impact of play-based and experiential learning, particularly within the Morocco 2050 initiative, where students engaged in interactive games, music, artistic expression, and prototype design for sustainable cities. These activities enhanced engagement, creativity, and critical thinking, demonstrating the real-world applicability of innovative teaching methods. As T1 stated, "*Bringing real-world activities into the classroom creates life in class, bringing relevance and interest.*" Similarly, T2 noted, "*The project's activities were futuristic in their ability to capture students' interest and promote active participation.*" Teachers further emphasized that bridging theory with practice prepared students for future careers, as T3 explained, "*Innovative teaching helps students prepare for the job market by creating an outlet for considering relevant topics.*"

### *Collaborative Learning*

The role of playful and engaging learning environments emerged as a central theme, with educators noting that these activities transformed school spaces into dynamic, joyful settings. T4 reflected, *"Innovative activities created happy spaces in our school, combining playful learning with meaningful ecological considerations."* Teachers also stressed the connection between innovative teaching and sustainability, highlighting how students designed environmental solutions while developing creativity and responsibility. As T6 explained, *"Innovative teaching enables students to design prototypes to protect the environment, fostering a sense of responsibility and creativity managed playfully"*. However, teachers acknowledged that long-term sustainability remains a challenge, requiring curriculum integration and institutional support. T4 noted, *"This initiative is full of new perspectives, but it needs more time and support to grow and sustain."* Additionally, teacher-student partnerships played a crucial role in fostering communication, empathy, and teamwork. T1 emphasized, *"This approach promotes the ownership of designing curricula, building a culture of collaboration, mutual respect, and shared responsibility, creating a more inclusive and supportive educational environment."*

### *Opportunities for Professional Growth*

Beyond student learning, the initiative significantly contributed to professional growth, revitalizing educators' teaching approaches and boosting confidence in technology integration and creative pedagogies. T1 stated, *"This initiative transformed my teaching approach. I learned to integrate creative methods like play-based learning, which not only engaged my students but also reignited my passion for teaching."* The project also fostered collaborative networking and inter-school exchanges, enriching professional development. T2 observed, *"Through this project, I discovered the power of collaborative learning. Working with other schools and sharing best practices helped me grow professionally and brought fresh perspectives to my classroom"*. Additionally, workshops helped teachers navigate diverse classrooms and adapt to emerging educational challenges. T5 remarked, *"The teacher workshops provided the tools to create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment, and I now feel better equipped to handle diverse classroom dynamics."*

In conclusion, these findings highlight the transformative role of innovation, collaboration, and experiential learning in shaping student engagement and teacher development. The next section will explore the implications of these insights, their alignment with existing research, challenges in implementation, and the potential for scaling such practices in future educational reforms

## **5. REFLECTIONS ON RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This study examined the impact of innovative teaching practices in Moroccan public schools, particularly through student-centered, play-based approaches implemented in the English Club and Morocco 2050 initiatives. The findings revealed that these interventions significantly enhanced student engagement, creativity, well-being, and ecological awareness while fostering teacher professional growth. Teachers acquired increased confidence in integrating innovative methodologies, collaborative practices, and technology. This aligns with the principles of situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1994), which emphasize learning as a social process that occurs within authentic, real-world contexts. These

### **Transforming Moroccan Public Schools: Innovative Teaching Practices for Students' Well-Being and Teachers' Professional Growth**

results support existing literature on action research as a cyclical, reflective approach that bridges theory and practice (Lewin, 1946; McNiff and Whitehead, 2010), allowing educators to experiment with and refine pedagogical strategies in real-world settings (Kaplan, 1998; McPherson & Nunes, 2004). The study reinforces previous research on collaborative learning (Hargreaves, 1996) and professional learning communities, demonstrating how teacher-driven innovation contributes to sustained educational reform (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 2011; Guskey, 2002). However, while theory advocates teaching agencies shaping curricula and policies, this study highlights the persistent need for institutional support and policy alignment to sustain such initiatives (Norton, 2009). The findings also extend the literature by demonstrating that play-based, collaborative learning enhances student engagement and fosters teachers' professional identity and confidence in addressing real-world challenges through innovation (Korthagen & Nuijten, 2022; Rumiantsev et al., 2023). Despite aligning with theoretical frameworks, the study identified gaps in the adoption of play-based and ecological education, with only 29% of teachers implementing play-based learning and 6% incorporating well-being initiatives during the pandemic, underscoring the need for greater professional development and systemic support. The study's practical implications highlight the necessity of integrating experiential learning, ecological education, and collaborative professional development into school curricula. Addressing resource constraints and institutional resistance will be essential for ensuring sustainability. Ultimately, this study underscores the transformative potential of action research in driving meaningful educational change, providing valuable insights for policymakers and educators committed to fostering equitable, resilient, and student-centered learning environments.

## **6. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE INITIATIVES**

This action research study investigated the implementation of innovative teaching practices to enhance student engagement, well-being, and teacher professional development in Moroccan public schools. The study emerged in response to educational disruptions that exposed systemic inequalities and underscored the urgent need for student-centered learning approaches. The shift to online education during the pandemic posed significant challenges, as many students struggled with limited access to technology, insufficient educator support, and declining motivation, resulting in widespread learning loss. To compensate, families increasingly relied on private tutoring, further expanding shadow education—a costly alternative that, while beneficial for some, exacerbates educational inequalities and lacks the peer interaction and engagement necessary for holistic development. In contrast, English Club activities, as implemented in this study, provided a structured yet informal learning space that fostered interactive, student-centered experiences. Unlike traditional, teacher-led instruction, these clubs emphasized learner autonomy, encouraging self-expression, collaboration, and confidence-building through creative writing, drama, and art workshops. By offering consistent, flexible practice, English Clubs complemented formal education, addressing diverse learning needs and mitigating pandemic-related learning gaps. Using a cyclical action research methodology, this study sought to bridge the gap between theory and practice, fostering creativity, resilience, and educational equity. The findings

demonstrated that play-based, situated learning and collaborative teaching methods significantly enhanced student creativity, confidence, and ecological awareness, while also supporting teacher professional growth through technology integration, reflective practice, and professional networking. The initiative facilitated engaging and meaningful learning experiences, emphasizing real-world relevance by connecting classroom activities to global challenges such as environmental sustainability. Teachers reported that the initiative enabled them to experiment with new pedagogical strategies, reinforcing the role of action research as a tool for educational transformation by enabling teachers to reflect on and refine their practices. These findings suggest that integrating student-centered learning models, collaborative professional development, and long-term instructional support can foster sustainable educational reform. However, the study's context-specific focus, small sample size, and short-term implementation limit the generalizability of the findings; the experiences of a specific group of participants may not fully represent the broader educational landscape in Morocco. Additionally, the short duration of the study restricts the ability to assess long-term outcomes of the interventions. Another key limitation is potential researcher bias, as the study was conducted through participant observation, which may have influenced both data collection and interpretation. Future research should explore long-term impacts, investigate scalability across different educational settings, and involve broader stakeholder engagement to ensure systemic and inclusive educational innovation. Ultimately, this study highlights the transformative potential of innovative teaching practices in creating engaging, inclusive, and effective learning environments. By prioritizing teacher and student perspectives, fostering collaboration, and addressing real-world challenges, education can become a powerful tool for equity, resilience, and sustainability. The findings underscore the importance of action research as a catalyst for meaningful educational change, offering actionable insights for educators and policymakers committed to reimagining education in the 21st century.

### **Conflict of interest**

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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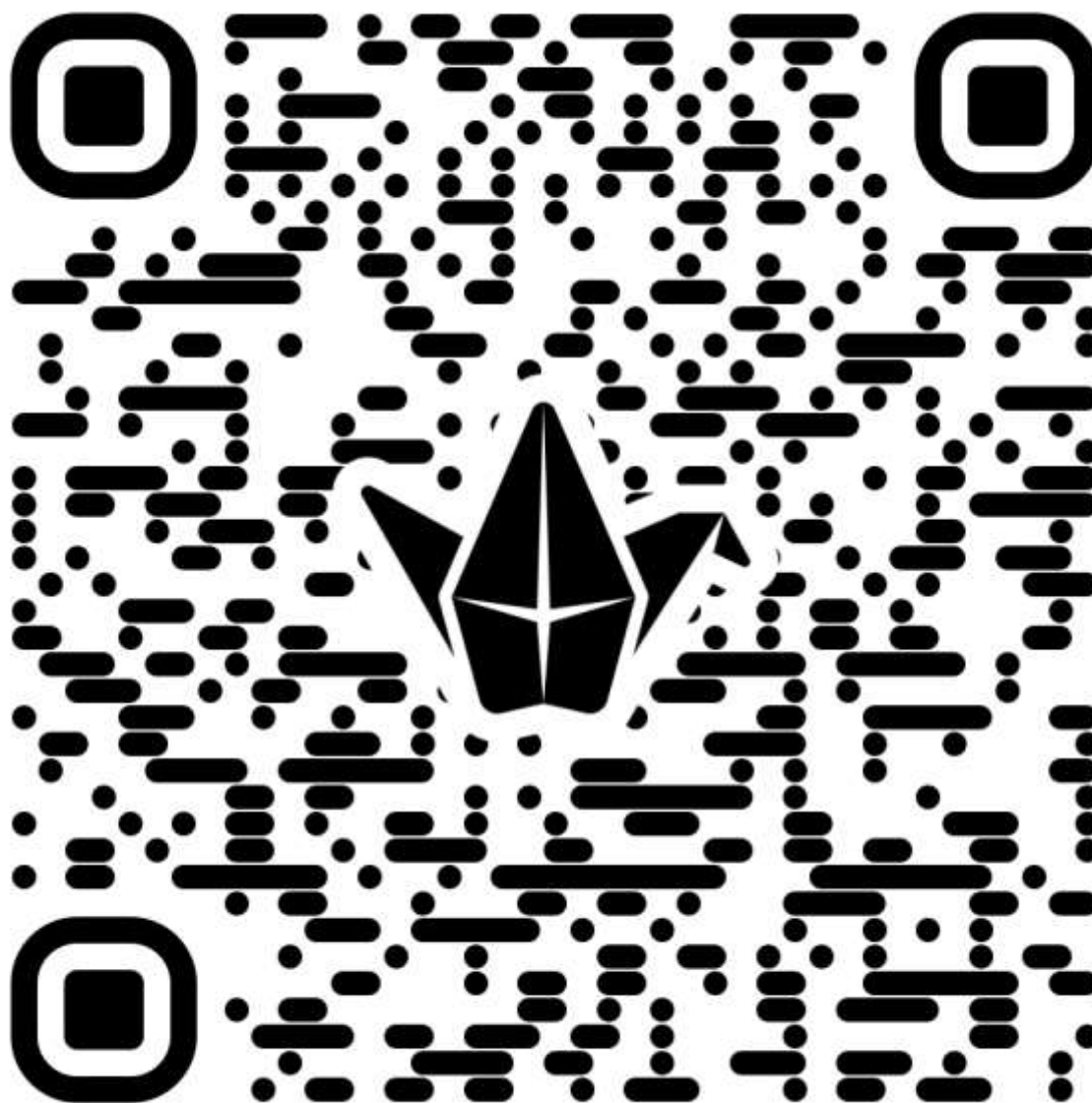
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Appendix 1

The interventions activities

<https://padlet.com/elboufatimaezzahramorocco/students-voices-and-spaces-of-joy-ci8u3ps6silkk64e>



Appendix 2

## **Post-Evaluation Checklist: Assessing Student Participation and Perceptions of the Action Research Intervention in English Club Activities**

This checklist is designed to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of the "English Club Activities" experience based on student reflections. It is an inspiration, framework, and adapted to the context of educational innovation and student engagement. The checklist is divided into four key factors: **Context, Quality of Relationships, Quality of the Learning Process, and Outcomes**. Each factor includes specific questions to guide the evaluation.

### **Participant: Demographic**

Name: Anonymous
Institution: a public secondary school Alkhawarismi
Position/role: students
English CLUB ACTIVITIES :
Sex: Male _____ 8 _____ Female _____ 12 _____ Age Range: All students are between 14 and 16 years old.

### **1- Context**

<b>How do you feel about your participation in the English Club activities?</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> Cognitively enriching <b>21.4%</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> Enjoyable <b>50%</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> Interesting <b>28.6%</b>

### **2. Quality of Relationship**

Were you actively engaged in the activities?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes 100% <input type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Do you like collaborating and working in teams?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes 100% <input type="checkbox"/> No
Do you feel a sense of trust and empowerment during the experience?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes 100% <input type="checkbox"/> No
How would you describe your interactions in the English Club?	<input type="checkbox"/> Positive teacher-student interactions <input type="checkbox"/> Positive peer-to-peer interactions <input type="checkbox"/> Both 100%

### 3. Quality of the Learning Process

Did you enjoy studying through games, music, drawing, inventing prototypes, or experimenting?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes100% <input type="checkbox"/> No
What is the most important thing that you learned from your participation in these activities?	I learned new things I felt Self-confidence I improved my English language I learned with determination, dreams can be achieved I learned Cooperation The experience increased my awareness I became concerned about protecting the oceans I learned how to be creative I benefited a lot I benefited a lot. Self-confidence Improved my Language I feel Confidence I learned how to be creative I benefited a lot Self-confidence Improved my Language I feel happy I liked the activities I learned a lot