

## **ACTION RESEARCH AS A FUNDAMENTAL PRACTICE FOR MOROCCAN EFL TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

**Ikram AMINE<sup>1</sup>**

Researcher, Ibn Tofail University Morocco

### **Abstract**

The current study sought to discover how Moroccan EFL teachers used action research (AR) to advance their professionalism and provide more educational opportunities for their students. Four EFL teachers took part in the study as research participants, which employed a qualitative case study methodology. By encouraging them to take part in AR workshops, group meetings, and an AR project, the research participants were given assistance in comprehending the steps of AR. Through group meeting discussions, interviews, observation, and recording, several data sources were gathered. According to the results, all teacher participants gained valuable knowledge regarding their teaching methods and students' academic progress. The results also demonstrated that participating in AR had inspired participants to be more thoughtful and given them the tools to do research in their own classroom. Despite the study's encouraging and positive findings, instructors' personal needs and motivations for doing action research to evaluate their instruction ultimately determine if it is successful. Since this study also emphasises the significance of collegial dialogues in strengthening teachers' practise, appropriate support should be given to instructors to enable them to conduct AR, including group discussion meetings. It is legitimate to suggest that Moroccan educational or institutional leaders provide instructors the freedom to take the initiative and use action research to further their professional development.

**Key words:** Action Research, Collaborative Action Research, Professional Development, Reflective Practice, Collegial Dialogue.

---

 <http://dx.doi.org/10.47832/2717-8293.21.21>

<sup>1</sup>  [karemine20@gmail.com](mailto:karemine20@gmail.com), <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8920-0460>

## **1. Introduction**

Classrooms are very complex social settings. In addition to subject matter competence and developmental understanding, teachers should be familiar with the dynamics of classroom learning (Kitade, K. 2005). They should also be aware that a range of circumstances, such as student dating history and school culture, might impact the success of a course. Due to its complexity, large-scale educational research has a limited number of practical applications. Any generalised approach's implementation is simply influenced by far too many environmental circumstances. This indicates that the bulk of the frequent difficulties encountered in education, top-down policy, and substantial research are either too broad or too simplistic to be useful.

The standard of instruction is not just determined by school policies and facilities ; classroom instruction also plays an essential role (Samson, J. F., & Collins, B. A. 2012). Teachers play a crucial role in school development and educational development as they directly assist students in obtaining learning opportunities, and the form of those opportunities influences the depth and speed of student learning. In other words, a major factor influencing the range of academic achievements of students is the calibre of their professors (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Wenglinsky, 2000). It is essential for educators to continuously improve the standard of their instructional practises because good education encourages students to learn better. Moroccan schools have mostly relied on teachers' voluntary readings, supervisor comments, and solitary sessions led by outside specialists who are detached from the day-to-day reality of teaching to improve teachers' abilities. Typically, these teacher resources don't assist teachers in enhancing their teaching skills (Ingvarson, Meirs & Beavis, 2003). It is necessary to switch to a new approach where instructors play the role of "active learners shaping their professional advancement by reflective involvement in both curricula and practise" (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002, p.984). As a result, in order to meet the demands of the profession of teaching, instructors must adapt their previous practises and knowledge, as well as develop their capacity for self-reflection.

Morocco has undoubtedly established a complete system for teacher preparation, particularly since the establishment of the "Centres Régionaux de Metiers de l'Education et de Formation." However, the craft model of teacher education in Morocco needs to give way to the reflective model, which aims to equip trainees with the ability to reflect on practises in order to develop their own theories. The craft model views teaching languages as merely a craft that can be learned through apprenticeship. Regardless of how effective the training is, every trainee will experience a different teaching context, which is the foundation for this advice. Applying the knowledge from previous lessons alone is insufficient for this. Therefore, teachers should be given the freedom to plan and carry out their own research projects that also enhance students' overall performance (Koshy, V. 2005). In addition, teachers' professional and personal values, such as collegiality, self-efficacy, and self-esteem, are improved by engagement in action research. This argument is supported by the current paper,

which emphasises the importance of encouraging teachers to be engaged in action research as a mandatory tool for new professionalism in ELT in Morocco.

## **2. Review of the literature**

### **2.1. Action research**

Action research is often ascribed to Kurt Lewin as its founder (Lewin & Lewin, 1948). It has been described as a methodology used to enhance circumstances and procedures in practitioner-based contexts, such as administrative, leadership, social, and community settings (Craig, 2009). Action research, also known as pedagogical action research, classroom research (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2009), teacher-led research (Jayraj, 2009), and collegial inquiry (Cunningham, 2011), is a methodical, self-reflective strategy to examine the teacher's own teaching situations (Burns, 2010). Hence, AR is a methodical form of inquiry created to give teachers, students, and other participants in the educational process the tools they need to improve the practises used during the educational experience. Furthermore, recognising the practical needs of educational practitioners for organised reflective inquiry into classroom instruction is its key differentiating feature.

According to McNiff (1995), action research employs a systematic cyclical approach that includes planning, acting, observing, evaluating, and engaging in critical reflection before planning the next cycle. Furthermore, action research is typically carried out in a participatory community with the aim of enhancing the performance of the community or a problematic area (Reason & Bradbury, 2001). It is a method for working together to test new concepts, solve problems that have been identified, and bring about change. It entails active involvement in a dynamic research process while keeping an eye on and evaluating the results of the researcher's actions in order to advance practise. According to Burns, A. (2019), in language education, the action researcher is often a teacher acting in the role of teacher-researcher. The study's AR framework allowed me to act as a researcher to concentrate on the results of my direct practise as an English language instructor, guiding other teacher participants to conduct their action research. Therefore, the participant teachers who were partners in CAR took on the role of "researchers," which involved gathering data throughout the various stages of the research project, in addition to their roles as teachers. These tasks were performed simultaneously.

There is a growing literature on the potential benefits of action research for EL teachers' practise and professionalism. Increasing teachers' critical thinking (Moreira et al., 1999), self-confidence (Burns, 1999), autonomy (Wang & Zhang, 2014), and sensitivity (Thorne & Qiang, 1996) are some of the most cited benefits. In addition, it is argued that because collaborative action research is essentially participatory and can involve various combinations of researchers and teachers working as pairs or groups to investigate a common research problem, it is a particularly effective method of inquiry for "teacher professional development" (Burns, 1999), which is the central focus of the next point.

## **2.2. Teacher professional development**

"Teacher professional development" is known as the process of adjusting a teacher's pedagogical, methodological, and didactical ideas and practises in order to better meet the requirements and preferences of their particular contexts. According to a number of scholars, professional development is an ongoing endeavour that instructors voluntarily undertake (Carlson, S., & Gadio, C. T. 2002; Levin, B. B., & Rock, T. C. 2003 ; Hart, J. E., & Lee, O. 2003). According to Diaz-Maggioli, G. (2004), teachers' needs to participate in professional development are closely related to their need to acquire new skills, information, and attitudes. They also put teachers under pressure to update, adapt, or adjust their teaching methods to their particular circumstances. In fact, this is the study's purpose when we advise instructors to collaborate in order to enhance, evaluate, and contextualise their own teaching strategies.

Additionally, it is argued that teachers take part in professional development programmes after completing their undergraduate degrees and are ready to enhance their teaching practices and recommend changes that allow for qualified instruction. Because of this, PD presents a challenge for educators and teacher researchers who wish to close the "praxis" gap between theory and practise in learning and teaching (Goodnough, 2003). It is important to note that Richards and Farrell (2005) make a distinction between teacher development and teacher training. They believe that "training refers to activities especially focused on a teacher's current duties and is typically directed at short-term and immediate purposes... acquiring basic ideas and principles as a prerequisite for applying them to teaching" (p. 3). "Development" denotes broad advancement as opposed to a focus on a particular activity. It seeks to improve instructors' perception of themselves as teachers and of teaching in general and works toward a long-term goal. They provide a list of goals from the perspective of training and development, with the fundamental contrast being between understanding and using new information.

According to Mann (2005), teachers' reflection is beneficial for professional growth. He maintains that growth in teaching occurs as a result of self-reflection, data gathering, and the use of reflective methods as the cornerstone of evaluation and development. These practises have an influence on how instructors' knowledge and beliefs are formed in a reciprocal manner. Through cooperative and collaborative techniques, individual inquiry and progress may be sustained. The benefit of professional development for teachers is that it gives them the chance to examine their own practises, reflect on their particular circumstances, and move beyond the theories they have learned or the courses they have completed.

According to a study by Mattes (2008), researchers came to the conclusion that action research promotes instructors to examine their teaching methods, get helpful feedback, and make changes to their professional decision-making processes. Pulido (2011) explored how collaborative research affected the training of Taiwanese primary English instructors. The PD programme, according to the findings, improved instructors' professional expertise. Pulido came to the conclusion that performing collaborative action research helped the

trainees evaluate and share their results as well as challenge their assumptions about teaching. Sivadge (2005) assessed the impact of AR on the professional development of three teachers who were involved in an action research project. The teachers improved their ability to manage problems in the classroom and to design and evaluate lessons as a result of AR. Teachers think that taking part in research helps broaden the breadth of their lesson plans, educational objectives, instructional strategies, and subject-matter expertise. Some academics think that participating in research is a worthwhile activity that teachers can always engage in, in contrast to the other professional development categories. On the other hand, some teachers think that reading research papers may enhance their reflective thinking and aid in evaluating the accomplishments of their pupils.

### **2.3. Morocco's need for new professionalism in ELT**

In fact, more research is required to inform policymakers, improve practices, and shed light on ELT-related issues in Morocco. Additionally, research will raise the standard of ELT resources used. In order to address this issue, it is essential to encourage academics and practitioners, in particular, who should assume the role of researchers, to carry out research in all areas connected to ELT in Morocco, such as teaching strategies, assessment, the development of critical thinking skills in ELT, the use of technology, digital content, and teacher training. The results of such research will not only raise the calibre of instruction and content but will also broaden horizons by enabling forward-thinking educators to test out cutting-edge strategies. Making research in ELT a requirement for graduation from teacher training programmes and fostering collaboration between educational institutions are two ways to promote the field. Today, in what experts refer to as the "post-method" era, teachers need more freedom to choose, adopt, and modify the various classroom practises and procedures that will help them accomplish their objectives. One of the most potent methods on which such eclecticism is built is action research.

According to Scheidler (1994), any effort to reform education must involve teachers' change. Professional development is also essential for significant change. Moroccan teachers must adopt a self-reflective approach to their work. They must investigate and test new concepts, techniques, and resources. They must determine the effectiveness of the new approaches, share their findings with other team members, and decide which new approaches to include in the curriculum, instruction, and assessment plans. In Fullan's view (2000), teachers should be active participants in the change process, not spectators on the sidelines.

In terms of teacher development, it is true that the Moroccan Association of English Teachers (MATE) has given in-service training to countless Moroccan teachers since its founding. The majority of the papers in the MATE annual conferences' published proceedings were empirical studies or surveys of the existing literature. However, over the past ten years, the majority of papers have tended to describe the success stories or best practises in ELT. Following the significant event that MATE has gained, it appears that more work needs to be put into enhancing the academic abilities of working teachers, particularly through promoting action research.

Consequently, action research is still a relatively new strand of inquiry in the Moroccan context (Shahu, K. S. 2014). Review studies and theoretical discussions of the capabilities and value of action research can be traced back to the 1990s. However, empirical and systematic studies have mainly emerged in recent years. The literature searches for the present study could not spot systematic studies specifically focusing on the experiences of Moroccan EFL teachers' research engagement. The lack of such studies forms a gap in our understanding, which, in turn, prevents us from making enlightened decisions about establishing initiatives and educational policies to help teachers become more fully engaged in research. Finally, it is clear that AR is not commonly used in Morocco, so this study's additional contribution will be to create new methodologies for this situation. Of the four participating teachers, three had never used AR before. The fourth educator, who is the author of this paper, was acquainted with AR because it was a requirement of a teacher training programme she had previously completed. Aside from that brief instance, she had never used AR while teaching. It is intended that by performing this research inside an AR framework, it would increase its adoption in the Moroccan setting. It also seeks to present an insider's view of the potential and problems associated with undertaking action research. The study especially aims to respond to the following questions :

1. What are the perceptions of Moroccan EFL instructors about the consequences of engaging in classroom action research ?
2. Can CAR support Moroccan language instructors' professional development and role-change?

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1. Research design**

This study's research method used components of a qualitative case study since such a design was appropriate for understanding and interpreting observations of educational issues (Merriam, 1998). The educational phenomenon that was examined in this study was the use of AR by Moroccan instructors and how it helped them enhance their professionalism. A case study is defined as empirical research that analyses a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and environment are not clearly evident (Yin, 2009). A thorough investigation into the use of AR by instructors was conducted. Merriam (1998) added that research with a strong emphasis on discovery, insight, and understanding from the viewpoints of those being researched has the best possibility of making a meaningful improvement in our knowledge of and use of education. As a result, this study employed a qualitative case study methodology with Moroccan instructors who were enhancing their teaching practises through the use of AR.

#### **3.2. Participants**

The action research involved four EFL teachers who had various backgrounds and experiences (among them the author of this paper). They were instructors of English at public

high schools in Kenitra, Morocco. They were three females and one male, with different teaching experiences. One teacher was a novice teacher who had started teaching for 2 years, and the other one had 9 years of teaching experience. On the other hand, the other two teachers were experienced teachers who had been teaching for more than 18 years and were teaching at different public schools. The class used for the AR focus of teaching is the common core grade, which is the first grade in the high school. Their academic qualifications ranged from a BA to a master's degree. To adhere to the ethical standards of conducting qualitative research, the teachers who volunteered to take part in the study were given an informed consent form that clearly laid out the study's goals and data collection strategies. Furthermore, the Ethics Protocol Sheet was signed by the participant teachers, which assured them of confidentiality of the shared data, anonymity of the participants, and voluntary participation.

### **3.3. Instrumentation**

The study employed interviews, observations, group discussions, and documentation as its four data-gathering techniques to answer the research questions. According to Yin (2009), one of the most important sources of case study data is interviews. The participants were subjected to two semi-structured interviews : one after they had taken part in group discussions for two sessions to get information about their AR preparation, and one at the end of the study to get information about how AR was used in their classroom and their opinions of the AR process in relation to their instruction and students' learning. For later documentation, every interview was recorded. Group discussion took place four times during the action research, but only one class observation per participant took place. A description of the teacher's AR, the lesson plan, and the teaching materials were all included in the study's documentation.

### **3.4. Data Collection and Analysis**

This research's data was acquired over a three-month period. The researcher assisted the study participants in understanding AR by inviting them to two workshop meetings. The major objective of the sessions was to give the research participants the information they needed about the AR, providing instructors with the assurance they needed to carry out their own studies in the classrooms. They were able to join in group discussion sessions with other participants thanks to the researcher, which helped them complete their AR. The research participants had the chance to talk about their AR, issues in the classroom, or difficulties doing AR during these meetings. In conclusion, the research approach consists of three steps: teaching action research; becoming familiar with field action research procedures; and helping instructors begin their own action research. The full data gathering process is summarised in the table that follows.

**Table 1 : The Action Research Cycle**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Purposes</b>
Workshop 1	Action research, including its models, features, advantages for use in education, and researchable issues, was the focus of this workshop, which was created to introduce participants to it.
Workshop 2	More examples of AR projects and reports were given to the workshop attendees in order to help them better understand AR.
Meeting 1 for group discussions	By discussing their difficulties with the teaching and learning process with other participants, teachers were able to identify some researchable problems in their classrooms. The subjects for the participants' ARs were then up for selection.
Meeting 2 for group discussions	This conversation centred on how each participant had been ready to participate in AR in the classroom. The participants were encouraged to share opinions or suggestions regarding the AR plans of their fellow participants.
Interview 1	This interview was conducted after the research participants took part in group discussion meetings two times. Its focus was to get information about their preparation for undertaking AR.
Class observation	Class observation was done to observe what transpired in the classroom while a participant was implementing AR. On the basis of each participant's AR, the researcher then provided some recommendations.
Meeting 3 for group discussions	All of the participants' completed ARs were shared during this discussion. This conversation centred on fresh criticism and suggestions for how to improve or revise each participant's AR.
Meeting 4 for group discussions	After the participants completed their AR, the final discussion took place. Participants used it to present their AR and to share a summary of their AR with others.
Interview 2	The purpose of this interview, which was conducted at the conclusion of the study, was to learn more about how AR was used in the classroom and participants' opinions of how the AR process affected their instruction and students' learning.

The researcher employed case analysis to examine the interview data by focusing on each participant's replies (Patton, 1982). Instead of trying to ascertain a universal truth among the respondents, the aim was to comprehend how each participant's ideas changed over time. The data from the observation and the documents were also examined using the



content analysis approach. The participants replies to the two interviews were first thoroughly sorted, coded, and then categorised. The frequency of each code was then noted in order to identify prevailing themes. A cross-case analysis was initiated to look for similarities and differences after these phases of study were completed. As a consequence, themes from the data arose free of any predetermined theoretical assumptions.

#### 4. Findings

The implementation of AR in teachers' classrooms and teachers' perceptions of the AR process in relation to their own teaching and students' learning are divided into two main sections in the findings of this study.

##### 4.1. The Teachers' AR Procedure in the Classroom

As mentioned earlier, three of the four participant teachers had no prior experience conducting action research in their classrooms. By participating in the workshop meetings, they became quite familiar with the principles and phases of action research, and as a result, they developed specific problems to concentrate on, as shown in table 2 below with the teachers' pseudonyms.

**Table 2 : Identified Problems for Action Research**

Teacher's Name	Problems that AR will address
Israe	How can game-like activities help students retain new vocabulary ?
Salma	How can strategy instruction training improve students' reading scores ?
Hanan	How can role-play activity reduce anxiety and overcome shyness while speaking ?
Ilyas	How can accepting feedback, learning from mistakes, and editing peers' writing improve students' writing skills ?

As shown in the table above, all participants' AR themes centred on refining teaching practises and resolving problems in the classroom. To put it another way, they were more interested in things linked to learning than teaching. This supports the claim made by Richards and Lockhart (1994) that AR's purpose is to improve and change the way that people now teach and learn. All of the teachers in this research were interested in improving their pupils' learning. As teacher Israe describes in the excerpt below, they were able to pinpoint a problem with their routine instruction:

The students' ability to retain vocabulary was by far the biggest issue in my class, as I could see. The new vocabulary was difficult for them to memorise. I believe I should concentrate more on how to assist them in developing better vocabulary retention techniques.

Likewise, when asked about the issues in her classroom that needed to be resolved, teacher Salma responded: I found that the overall situation of my class was not really favorable. The students showed reluctance and lacked enthusiasm for the class activity. Additionally, during the reading lesson, a few students got involved in the activity, and others were unable to answer the comprehension questions.

Additionally, as shown in the following excerpt, teacher Hanan brought up the problem of passive students in her class who were shy or anxious :

The level of English proficiency among the students in my class was heterogeneous. In the classroom, some students were very assertive and active, while others were very quiet and passive. I had to figure something out. I believe I must employ the proper teaching strategies in order to motivate the indifferent students to actively engage in the class activities. Only a few students were able to express agreement and disagreement when I taught them the communication lesson. Most students were unactive.

Last but not least, teacher Ilyas provided the following response when asked about the difficulties his class is currently experiencing : My overall impression of the situation in my class was not favorable. The class activity received apprehensive and uninterested participation from the students. Furthermore, I constantly feel like a total failure whenever I teach writing lessons.

All of the research participants selected a topic for their AR before thinking of a strategy for how they intended to solve the problems they faced in their classrooms. As stated in her AR summary, teacher Israe chose to use game-like activities to practise and retain new vocabulary.

As usual, I taught the vocabulary lesson. Some students were able to correctly complete the tasks in the text book during the lesson activities, while others were unable to do so. I later came to the realisation that many students had trouble using the newly learned vocabulary in speaking or writing lessons or remembering it for the next session. My colleagues suggested that I add game-like activities to my vocabulary lesson to address the issues my students were having. On my phone, I would use applications like Kahoot and NearPod. I would instruct the students on how to use these applications in the classroom and ask them to install them as well. I can see an improvement when they believe they are learning while playing.

Teacher Salma, who saw the need to improve her students' reading comprehension skills, chose to use the SQ4R method (Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review, and Reflect). She noted that this method was especially utilised to assist students with reading comprehension exercises in her summary of AR :

We had our first reading lesson, and I wasn't entirely pleased with the students' response. To help them, I believed I needed a new teaching strategy. After participating in the group discussion meetings, I then devised the SQ4R plan of action. I would put together a few

straightforward reading passages to show how to approach a reading text using the SQ4R to comprehend the text and correctly respond to comprehension questions.

Teacher Hanan complained that her class wasn't homogeneous, so she decided to use the role-play activity to foster a cooperative environment so that each student would participate in the class activity and get over their fears of public speaking and shyness. She noted the following in her summary of AR :

To encourage the students who were passive, shy, or anxious to become active, I wanted my students to work together with their friends. I explained that role-play activities in my speaking class might be helpful. They would learn how to express their opinions in English first. I would then prepare cards with specific situations written on them and ask them to act out a role-play based on the situation in the card.

Teacher Ilyas, who recognised the need to enhance his students' writing abilities, made the decision to implement the process writing strategy. This tactic was implemented specifically to help students through the various writing stages, with a focus on the editing stage, where students must accept and internalise feedback from peers or the teacher. In his summary of AR, she stated :

I wasn't particularly pleased with the students' reaction when I first gave them the writing lesson materials. I thought that they would benefit from a different teaching strategy. I then chose a process writing technique after participating in the group discussion sessions. I would prepare a few lessons to show students how to enhance their writing through the use of process writing.

The research participants began putting their AR project into practise after making some plans for it. According to the teacher, Israe :

To assess how successfully language is taught using games in the classroom, we need to know how students' experiences help them learn and what progress they make. The plan called for introducing various games—in particular, the ones they had downloaded to their phones—to our classes in order to see how students would react to this approach to vocabulary learning. In the first class, I used a Near-Pod game to teach kids vocabulary phrases associated with shopping. I told them that we would be playing a word game, so they should have their phones ready beforehand. Exercises from their textbook and the mobile app were both used throughout the teaching phases. The students played a game at the end of the lesson to review the newly learned vocabulary, and I recorded their performance.

The strategy-based instruction was put into place in teacher Salma's reading class. She stated:

They were instructed to look at the page of the reading text we would be dealing with after I had explained the SQ4R and written some brief notes on the board. Every student was instructed to bring their notebooks and write down how they would apply the SQ4R strategy to the text. I invited each student to stand up and speak in front of the class about their approach.

The excerpt below shows how instructor Hanan used the role-play approach in her speaking class to assist students overcome fear and shyness in the communication lesson.

I initially requested the students to look at the communication task in their textbook in order to gain the content about how to ask for opinions, express opinions, agree, and disagree in English. I then provided the students cue cards to use whenever they wished to express opinions. The students grouped together into fours. Each group had one student choose a card, and the group had to role-play the situation described on the card in front of the class. The first student asked his/her friends about their opinions about a pastime activity. The second student expressed his/her opinion, and the others agreed or disagreed, arguing with the adjectives on the cue cards. The other students would use their cue cards in the same manner.

As a form of action research, it is essential to concentrate on writing in the classroom along with other skills. In the writing class with teacher Ilyas, the process-writing method was used, as he declared. Many students think they speak English poorly, but their writing is actually weaker than they think.

Teachers tend to pay more attention to transformation exercises in class than writing skills, although writing skills are extensively scrutinised during exams. The editing process was given significant weight in order to help students write more successfully. In the first class, I went through the concept of process writing with them and emphasised the importance of each phase in creating a paragraph or essay that is both coherent and cohesive. To ensure that the students grasped the writing process, I took my time and insisted on going over each stage in class. The process' key components were coming up with ideas, focusing, organising the data, drafting, analysing, and reviewing. Each student evaluated and reviewed his or her writing, first with his or her peers and then with the teacher.

Participants in the study observed and reflected after putting their AR to use. According to teacher Israe, she needed to complete the second cycle in her AR as stated in the following excerpt:

The children were eager and ready to learn new terms while playing, since the vocabulary session included game-like activities. They tried to win the game by giving the appropriate answers along with the musical elements that went with them. The students' ability to merely memorise and recall new words using the conventional techniques outlined in their textbook was insufficient. Since I began teaching, I have observed my students' excitement for learning via games. I believe that playing games is a fantastic way for students to amuse themselves while learning a new language and unintentionally utilising it. Games are an essential and effective teaching method that should be used in vocabulary sessions, provided that all of the students participate. I started slowly, then sped up the pace for students to give their responses, making sure that every student knew the rules of the game. To keep the kids engaged and make the lesson more enjoyable and diverse, I also introduced

a number of games.

Teacher Salma also stated that she needed to do the second cycle since she wasn't quite satisfied with the results of her AR. She reported:

I was pleased that all of the students engaged in the exercise and did a good job of following the stages of the technique when I asked them to apply the SQ4R strategy to the presented material. Some students, however, were unable to do so; some even lacked the knowledge of what needed to be done initially. I decided that I should give them more time to comprehend the SQ4R strategy. In order to assist them, I guided them step-by-step and asked questions such as, "What do you see on the page?" Describe the images, please (survey). When you describe the text page, what questions spring to mind? (question). I then instructed them to read the passage, try to recall their inquiries, and see whether the text had any responses (read and remember). The text's concept flow was the next thing they needed to consider (review). They could next do the activities outlined in the book and then share their feedback on the concepts presented (reflect). I would instruct them to read a text employing the SQ4R strategy at home, to be discussed and corrected in the following session.

The extract below shows how teacher Hanan, like teachers Israe and Salma, completed the next cycle of her AR project to help students become more adept at asking for opinions, expressing opinions, and agreeing or disagreeing. Teacher Hanan also stated that she needed to complete the second cycle because the results of her AR did not exactly meet her expectations. She stated :

When I invited them to engage in the role-playing exercise and express their opinions on the provided topics as well as whether they agreed or disagreed, they seemed motivated. I didn't think that was enough, though. I thought we still needed to meet for one more session to maximise their learning. I would have more graphically rich scenarios and more interesting topics prepared for them as teens. I would also instruct my students to form groups of four. Each student in the group would ask his/her friend about their opinion on a topic that appealed to them, and then they would express their views, agree or disagree, and give reasons. However, many students struggled with their speech and would frequently stop speaking in the middle of conversations. I suggested that they needed extra time to get ready for their role-play. I would ask them to create their own role-play at home and share their ideas by presenting them to the class at our next meeting.

Finally, teacher Ilyas also mentioned that he needed to finish the second cycle because the results of his AR fell short of what he had anticipated. He claimed :

When I asked the students to work in pairs and do the writing task in their textbook following the steps explained in the process of writing, I was glad to see that some students started the brainstorming stage by bringing ideas related to the topic and did a fantastic job following the steps of the technique. However, some pupils were unable to do so; some even lacked the necessary understanding to start what needed to be done first. I decided to give

them more time so they could fully grasp the process of writing steps. It was crucial to give instructions at each step and write in a style that matched the level and abilities of each student in a heterogeneous class. So, in order to help them, I walked them through the process' essential stages step by step. I began by thinking up ideas and writing them on the board. The next stage was to concentrate on the causes and consequences of air pollution, which was the paragraph's main issue. Then I went on to discuss how the paragraph should be structured by identifying the primary causes of the problem before addressing the best solutions. At this stage, the students had completed the first draft, and to help them with their analysis and evaluation, a check list was provided for both the content and the writing mechanics. The second analysis and review was done by peers and the teacher. I instructed them to write another paragraph about water pollution at home using the same strategies for practise, and I would edit them in the next class.

#### **4.2. Teachers' Perceptions about the AR Process in Relation to Their Teaching and Students' Learning**

The researcher asked the study participants to describe their experiences and general findings once they had completed their action research. All participants agreed that the AR had aided them in critically analysing the learning needs of their pupils. As stated by teacher Israe in the sample below :

My students' retention of new vocabulary significantly improved after I included game-like activities in the vocabulary lesson. They appeared to have greater drive. It was quick to get pupils' attention, kept them engaged, and encouraged competition. In our group games, the majority of the students were enthusiastic to take part and gave it their all to win. Even the most quiet students actively engaged in teamwork during tasks that required cooperation. They praised the enjoyable environment, friendly competition, and inspiration that games provided in the classroom. When I asked the students about their impressions, they said that they are motivated to study since they have the opportunity to "use their imagination and creativity" during classroom activities like games. Additionally, the majority of the students indicated they were happy with the games and wanted to play them more since they were enjoyable and beneficial for their learning. Overall, it was gratifying to see that most of our students had positive attitudes towards learning vocabulary through games.

Similarly, instructor Salma mentioned that her class was lively and the students were more engaged in the reading activity as presented in the following excerpt.

The reading assignment had great participation from my students. After I instructed them to work in pairs, they were eager to debate the SQ4R approach stages before the whole class correction. They offered several insightful suggestions, which prompted other pupils to provide their opinions. Now that I have fresh teaching methods, I am confident that my students are satisfied. Usually, I only do the activities in the textbook. The students were much more eager to engage in the teaching and learning process when I introduced a new class activity. I first considered this AR to be time-consuming and exhausting because I was

so busy preparing the lesson plans. However, when I realised that the AR I had planned had really stimulated my students to participate more, I was inspired to create additional new class activities.

Participants in the study also said that action research gave them more confidence and encouraged them to be more reflective and creative. Teacher Israe, for instance, claimed that AR gave her a better understanding of how to assess if her students were learning or not and whether her teaching technique was effective. Similarly, teacher Hanan stated :

The reflection at the conclusion of my AR project made it evident that every student had taken part in the communication activity when I asked my class to prepare and perform a role-play. To put it another way, I required a classroom activity—possibly a role-playing activity—that enables all students to actively engage in the lesson. The approaches I used in my AR could deal with the problems I looked at. I am now sufficiently sure that I will be able to assist pupils in learning more efficiently by providing more interesting and exciting class activities. Because of this, I'll continue include additional activities that are suitable for my pupils in my next sessions.

Instructor Ilyas shared the three teachers' satisfaction with the attitudes of their students after the reflection on the AR results. He noted that the writing activity was very animated and the students were more involved, as seen in the extract below :

Essentially, writing is a mental process. In addition to aiding in the reconstruction of thought into written form, it can also provide crucial hints for enhancing the text's coherence. It can provide us with a fornicating window into what occurs as we attempt to put meaning into words. In fact, it was a challenging procedure for my students. As a result, it was evident from the reflection at the conclusion of my AR project that every student had participated in the writing activity when I asked my class to plan and carry out a process writing. In other words, I required a teaching strategy that encourages active participation from all students in the teaching and learning process while also helping them to develop their writing abilities. In terms of the issues I looked at, the strategy I used in my AR was extremely successful. I made an attempt to engage my students by asking them to consider how the development of English writing skills has changed through time. Now I can confidently assert that I can help students write more successfully by providing more interesting class activities. I'll keep including more helpful and relevant exercises for my students in my next sessions.

## 5. Discussion

Three out of four research participants were able to do AR for the first time thanks to this study. They engaged in action research activities and gathered crucial information regarding their teaching practises and students' learning, while at times feeling like it was time-consuming and difficult owing to their busy teaching schedules. It was encouraging to witness the pupils' increased attention to the tasks at hand, as well as their increased feelings of commitment and responsibility. The participants stated clearly that the adjustments made

as a result of their AR had an impact on students' attitudes, engagement behaviours, and learning. This is consistent with Guskey's (2000) claim that enhancing student accomplishment and performance, which is the ultimate goal of teacher professional development activities, would boost student learning. For instance, after adding a role-play activity, instructor Hanan noticed that the atmosphere in the classes improved and the students showed a higher level of interest in the lessons. Learning is more fun for students. She then decided to alter her teaching strategies by including a variety of activities to allow all pupils to participate in the teaching and learning process. In other words, after reflection and as part of the transformation process, AR gave instructors the chance to experiment with cutting-edge teaching methods and resources. This corroborates Burn's (1999) and Zeichner's (2003) claims that teachers' (AR) influence results in considerable changes to teachers, their classrooms, and their schools.

The results of this research also showed how utilising AR had encouraged participants to think deeper. They critically reflect on their current practise in order to create new perspectives and knowledge of their instruction. In fact, the word "reflection" appears the most in the recordings of the four participants. It is repeated frequently throughout the study as teachers become more aware of the need to evaluate their own educational practises. This is in line with the claims made by Feldman (2002) and Zeichner and Liston (1987), who stated that reflection on action helps instructors become more aware of their teaching practises, more aware of the effects their practises have on their students' thinking and learning, and more attentive to what they are teaching. All of the participants first questioned why their students were struggling to learn. They then devised a strategy, carried it out, and evaluated it. For instance, Teacher Ilyas claimed that "AR gave me the chance to closely analyse my educational approach and the academic progress of my students. I looked for what worked and what didn't."

All study participants were given the opportunity to select their own research topic and carry it out in their own classrooms thanks to action research. They take control of the management of their own research. As a result, the individuals' self-confidence increased. To provide one example, teacher Israe said :

I was given the assignment to choose a classroom issue and apply a specific strategy to resolve it after enrolling in the workshop. I had never done anything like that before. The process of finishing my AR first baffled me. The group meeting discussions I engaged in with other participants, however, helped me become more comfortable with AR. In my opinion, AR made me feel more assured.

These findings support Kayaoglu's (2015) assertion that teachers who participated in AR assumed the roles of researchers and investigators. When their roles changed from operators to problem-solvers and providers of solutions, they felt more confident about their own classroom processes. In addition, the terms "responsibility," "teamwork," "opportunity," "commitment," and "negotiating" convey the instructors' engagement in the initiatives and



their desire to advance their professional careers. However, working with others will always have its ups and downs, making the terms "collaborative work" and "sharing" interchangeable with the adjectives "challenging" and "rewarding".

Collaborating with peers to accomplish a shared goal is crucial in the teaching profession as students are expected to comprehend the benefits of sharing and negotiating—something that instructors usually do not put into practise. Our first study objective was to examine the effects that CAR-developed collaborative planning, execution, and assessment of classroom projects had on English teachers' professional development. We can observe that such an influence was advantageous for many reasons. Together, we were able to comprehend and put into practise the main concepts—professional growth and CAR—that guided our research. As a result, the discussions on how to design lessons using more effective teaching techniques increased our understanding of the core concepts and theories related to the teaching of foreign languages. Additionally, since we reviewed both the good and bad things that occurred in our classes, the recurrent group meetings offered us an opportunity to take the study process and the perspectives of our team members into consideration. In other words, we used group planning and collaboration instead of having each instructor do a task separately. Each of us had a unique duty to fulfil and a varied level of training in the research project. No matter how much we believed we knew about a particular topic, it was encouraging to discover that we could all learn from one another.

The research we did and our own experiences lead us to believe that professional development should be viewed as an ongoing endeavour that cannot be confined to conferences or infrequent get-togethers with colleagues; it should be a part of our teaching careers. With this approach, this study assisted us in learning the advantages of working, studying, reflecting, and conducting research with colleagues for our professional development. Although it can be challenging at times, this is a process that we aim to stick with since it has made us realise that sharing with others what we have learned and experienced in the classroom is a great way to keep growing personally and professionally.

## **Conclusion**

The researcher in this study took on the dual roles of an action researcher and a facilitator to introduce AR to the study participants by facilitating workshops on the subject, assisting them in participating in group discussions, and providing guidance as they worked on their own AR project. The study's main goals were to explore how they employed AR to enhance students' learning and how they perceived the AR process in relation to their instruction and students' learning. Despite the study's encouraging findings, the success of action research ultimately rests on the desire and motivation of teachers to perform AR to evaluate their instruction. Since this study also emphasises the significance of collegial dialogues in shaping teachers' practise, appropriate support should be given to teachers to enable them to do ongoing action research, including group discussions. It is reasonable to

recommend that Moroccan educational or institutional leaders give teachers support to take the initiative in using action research to further their professional development. This is because teachers are unlikely to develop respect for their own experience and knowledge unless they can find wider support and acknowledgement for the value of their experience and understanding (Loughran & Northfield, 2005). Consequently, the required actions must be conducted. The best-case scenario would have them include formal AR training or workshops; time set aside for the procedure; and continuous support to address teachers' needs and concerns regarding the consistency and timeliness of the method.

According to considerable research, action research is a useful activity for teachers to engage in. It provides educators with a methodical (Frabutt et al., 2009), cooperative (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000), and participative (Holter & Frabutt, 2012) process of inquiry that proactively looks to address or remedy problematic areas. The technical skills and specialised knowledge needed for teachers to effect good change in classrooms, schools, and communities are also provided through action research (Johnson, 2012; Stringer, 2008). In the end, action research's pragmatic appeal, emphasis on promoting practitioner empowerment, and solutions-based orientation make it a valuable professional development activity for teachers. Teachers who want to create "custom" action research projects of their own have limitless options since the subjects for study are as diverse as the everyday vignettes seen in the teaching profession. Action research must be a major component of teacher preparation degree programmes in order to improve practise in classrooms, schools, and communities.

The current study has some limitations. It was initially undertaken at a specific Moroccan school. Four English teachers participated in this small-scale study project as well. Therefore, the results shouldn't be regarded as providing information about how AR is being used in Morocco's secondary education system. However, readers may draw parallels with their own situations and decide if the conclusions and consequences are applicable. Second, this study concentrated on a four-month evaluation of the implementation of AR. As a result, further longitudinal study is needed into how teachers can sustain changes in their teaching practises that result from AR activity.

**REFERENCES**

- Burns, A. (2019). Action research in English language teaching: Contributions and recent developments. *Second handbook of English language teaching*, 991-1005.
- Burns, A. (1999). *Collaborative action research for English language teachers*. Cambridge University Press.
- Burns, A. (2010). *Doing action research in English language teaching: A guide for practitioners*. New York : Routledge.
- Carlson, S., & Gadio, C. T. (2002). Teacher professional development in the use of technology. *Technologies for education*, 118-132.
- Clarke, D. & Hollingsworth, H. (2002). Elaborating a model of teacher professional growth. *Teaching & Teacher Education*, 18(8), 947-967.
- Craig, D. (2009). *Action research essentials*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Cunningham, D. (2011). *Improving teaching with collaborative action research: An ASCD action tool*. Alexandria, Va: ASCD.
- Dana, N. F., & Yendol-Hoppey, D. (2009). *Facilitator's guide: The reflective educator's guide to classroom research: Learning to teach and teaching to learn through practitioner inquiry*. Corwin Press.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2008). Teacher learning that supports student learning. *Teaching for intelligence*, 2(1), 91-100.
- Diaz-Maggioli, G. (2004). *Teacher-centered professional development*. ASCD.
- Feldman, A. (2002). Multiple perspectives for the study of teaching: Knowledge, reason, understanding, and being. *Journal of Research in science Teaching*, 39(10), 1032-1055.
- Fullan, M. (2000). The return of large-scale reform. *Journal of educational Change*, 1(1), 527.
- Frabutt, J. M., Holter, A. C., & Education, C. (2009). ensuring Vital schools through Action Research. *The Community Psychologist*, 42(4), 51-53.
- Goodnough, K. (2003). Facilitating action research in the context of science education: Reflections of a university researcher. *Educational Action Research*, 11(1), 41-64.
- Guskey, T. R. (2000). *Evaluating professional development*. Corwin press.
- Hart, J. E., & Lee, O. (2003). Teacher professional development to improve the science and literacy achievement of English language learners. *Bilingual research journal*, 27(3), 475-501.
- Holter, A. C., & Frabutt, J. M. (2012). Mission Driven and Data Informed Leadership. *Catholic Education: A Journal of Inquiry and Practice*, 15(2), 253-269.
- Ingvarson, L., Meirs, M. & Beavis, A. (2003). Evaluating the quality & impact of professional development programs. In ACER (Australian Council for Educational

- Research)Conference, Building Teacher Quality: What Does the Research Tell us? (pp. 28-34). Melbourne: ACER.
- Jayraj, S. (2009). Developing the speaking & writing skills at technical institutes: A classroom investigation with suggestions. In M. Vyas & Y. Patel (Eds.). *Teaching English as a second language: A new pedagogy for a new century* (pp. 349-362). New Delhi: PHI Learning Private Limited.
- Johnson, A. (2012). *Action research: methods of collecting data. A Short Guide to Action Research* (4th ed). Minnesota State University, Mankato.
- Kayaoglu, M. N. (2015). Teacher researchers in action research in a heavily centralized education system. *Educational action research*, 23(2), 140-161.
- Kemmis, S. & McTaggart, R. (2000). Participatory action research. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln, (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed.) (pp. 567-605.) Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Kitade, K. (2005). *Interactional features of asynchronous computer-mediated communication for language learning: From cognitive and sociocultural perspectives*. University of Hawai'i at Manoa.
- Koshy, V. (2005). *Action research for improving practice: A practical guide*. Sage.
- Levin, B. B., & Rock, T. C. (2003). The effects of collaborative action research on preservice and experienced teacher partners in professional development schools. *Journal of teacher education*, 54(2), 135-149.
- Lewin, K. (1948). *Resolving social conflicts; selected papers on group dynamics*.
- Loughran, J., & Northfield, J. (2005). A framework for the development of self-study practice. In *Reconceptualizing teaching practice* (pp. 22-34). Routledge.
- Mann, S. (2005). The language teacher's development. *Language teaching*, 38(3), 103-118.
- Mattes, B. S. (2008). *Education action research in higher education as faculty professional development*. The Pennsylvania State University.
- McNiff, J. (1995). *Action research for professional development* (pp. 137-151). Bournemouth, UK: Hyde.
- Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education. Revised and Expanded from "Case Study Research in Education"*. Jossey-Bass Publishers, 350 Sansome St, San Francisco, CA 94104.
- Moreira, M., Vieira, F. & Marques, I. (1999). Pre-service teacher development through action research. *The Language Teacher*, 23(12), 15-18.
- Patton, M. Q. (1982). Qualitative methods and approaches: what are they?. *New Directions for Institutional Research*, 1982(34), 3-15.

- Pulido, A. (2011). Implementing professional development for upper elementary teachers of English learners: Facilitating changes in teacher behaviors through an action research project in the context of professional learning communities. Ed.D. Dissertation, Fielding Graduate University.
- Reason, P., & Bradbury, H. (Eds.). (2001). Handbook of action research: Participative inquiry and practice. sage.
- Richards, J. C., Richards, J. C., & Farrell, T. S. (2005). Professional development for language teachers: Strategies for teacher learning. Cambridge University Press.
- Richards, J. C., Richards, J. C. R., & Lockhart, C. (1994). Reflective teaching in second language classrooms. Cambridge university press.
- Samson, J. F., & Collins, B. A. (2012). Preparing all teachers to meet the needs of English language learners: Applying research to policy and practice for teacher effectiveness. Center for American Progress.
- Scheidler, K. P. (1994). Changing teacher thinking in school restructuring: A view from the trenches. *Journal of Education*, 176(2), 45-55.
- Shahu, K. S. (2014). The status of languages in post-independent Morocco: Moroccan national policies and Spanish cultural action. City University of New York.
- Sivadge, L. L. (2005). Teachers' perceived changes in practices and students' learning as a result of implementing teacher action research. Drake University.
- Stringer, E. T. (2008). Action research in education. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall.
- Thorne, C. & Qiang, W. (1996). Action research in language teacher education. *ELT Journal*, 50, 224-262.
- Wang, Q., & Zhang, H. (2014). Promoting teacher autonomy through university-school collaborative action research. *Language Teaching Research*, 18(2), 222-241.
- Wenglinsky, H. (2000). How teaching matters: Bringing the classroom back into discussions of teacher quality.
- Yin, R. K. (2009). Case study research: Design and methods (Vol. 5). sage.
- Zeichner, K., & Liston, D. (1987). Teaching and teacher education (p. 349). New York: Pergamon Press.
- Zeichner, K. M. (2003). Teacher research as professional development for P-12 educators in the USA [1]. *Educational action research*, 11(2), 301-326.