

Teacher Trainees' Attitudes and Perceptions Toward the Research Methodology Module: A Case Study of The CREMF in The Casablanca–Settat Region, Morocco

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ABSTRACT: This qualitative case study investigates the attitudes and perceptions of 110 teacher trainees at the Centre Régional des Métiers de l'Éducation et de la Formation (CREMF) in the Casablanca–Settat region toward the research methodology module integrated into their training. While trainees generally recognize the critical importance of research literacy for reflective teaching and professional development, many face significant challenges related to conceptual complexity, unfamiliar academic language, and limited prior exposure. These difficulties contribute to research anxiety and undermine the practical application of research skills. Moreover, trainees express ambivalence about the module's immediate relevance to classroom practice, highlighting a pressing need for contextualized, accessible, and linguistically sensitive instruction. Drawing on thematic analysis supported by descriptive statistics, the study offers evidence-based recommendations for redesigning research methodology education to better align with trainee needs and the Moroccan multilingual and reform-oriented educational context. The findings contribute to the broader discourse on enhancing teacher education quality by fostering research competence within diverse sociocultural settings.

KEYWORDS: Teacher Trainees, Research Methodology, Attitudes, Perceptions, Professional Development, Research Literacy, Multilingual Education

1. Introduction

Research methodology has become a cornerstone in contemporary teacher education, equipping future teachers with the skills necessary to critically engage with educational practices and to apply evidence-based approaches in their classrooms. Within teacher training institutions, research methodology modules are often intended to foster reflective thinking, encourage professional inquiry, and strengthen the link between theory and practice. In the Moroccan context, the Centres Régionaux des Métiers de l'Éducation et de la Formation (CREMF) have integrated such modules into their programs in order to enhance the professional competencies of teacher trainees and to prepare them to contribute to the broader educational reform agenda. However, despite the recognized importance of research literacy in teacher education worldwide, the effectiveness and reception of these modules remain subject to variation depending on local contexts and learner experiences.

A growing body of literature highlights that teacher trainees frequently encounter challenges when engaging with research methodology. For many, the module appears abstract, theoretical, or disconnected from their immediate teaching concerns. Previous studies have documented difficulties such as limited prior exposure to research concepts, linguistic barriers when research materials are presented in non-native languages, and a perceived lack of

direct relevance to classroom practice. These factors can lead to negative attitudes, low motivation, and even resistance toward the module, thereby undermining its intended outcomes. In Morocco, anecdotal evidence and informal observations suggest that similar challenges are present within the CREMF, yet little empirical work has been carried out to systematically investigate teacher trainees' attitudes and perceptions in this area.

Against this background, the present study seeks to explore how teacher trainees at the CREMF in the Casablanca–Settat region perceive and respond to the research methodology module. By focusing on their attitudes and lived experiences, the study aims to generate insights into how the module is currently received and how it might be adapted to better align with trainees' needs and expectations. This case study is particularly relevant given the Moroccan government's current emphasis on improving teacher education quality and fostering a culture of professional inquiry.

The research is guided by the following questions:

1. What are the prevailing attitudes of CREMF teacher trainees toward the research methodology module?
2. How do teacher trainees perceive the relevance and applicability of the research methodology module to their future professional practice?

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3. What challenges do trainees encounter in engaging with the research methodology module?
4. What suggestions do trainees offer for improving the design and delivery of the module?

By addressing these questions, the study seeks to contribute to the limited body of research on research methodology education in Moroccan teacher training institutions and to offer practical recommendations for enhancing the effectiveness of such modules in similar contexts.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of teacher trainees’ attitudes and perceptions toward research methodology has attracted considerable attention in educational research, largely because of the key role research literacy plays in shaping teachers’ professional identities. Attitudes are generally understood as predispositions to respond to specific stimuli with cognitive, affective, and behavioral reactions. As Díaz et al. (2022) argue, “Attitudes are predispositions to respond to certain stimuli with specific cognitive, affective, and conative-behavioural responses” (p. 3). This multidimensional framework suggests that teacher trainees’ engagement with research methodology is not only intellectual, but also emotional and practical. In other words, their willingness to apply research in professional practice depends on how they understand it, how they feel about it (affect), and whether they intend to use it.

Nevertheless, the literature consistently points to the complex and sometimes contradictory ways trainees relate to research. Al-Zahrani (2015), in a study of pre-service teachers in a Middle Eastern context, found that “the usefulness of research for a profession and positive attitudes towards research has the highest item means, indicating most of the participants agreed with the statements” (p. 156). Yet, the same study revealed “moderately high levels of research anxiety” (p. 157). This duality is particularly relevant for the Moroccan context, where trainees may value the idea of research but simultaneously experience stress due to abstract concepts, limited linguistic proficiency, or inadequate prior exposure. My interpretation of Al-Zahrani’s findings is that valuing research in principle does not automatically translate into confident practice, a tension that CREMF trainees are also likely to experience.

Empirical evidence further demonstrates that research methodology courses can both empower and frustrate teacher trainees. Suárez et al. (2022) report that “students’ capacities to identify the reliability and authenticity of research grew, increasing their research competencies” after completing a research methods course (p. 8). This highlights the module’s potential to strengthen critical thinking and professional inquiry. However, Suárez et al. also caution that “students have false, incomplete, or mixed views about what research competencies are and what they are suitable for” (p. 5). From my perspective, these

contradictory outcomes suggest that while research methodology has undeniable benefits, its impact is undermined if trainees are not adequately supported in connecting abstract concepts to practical teaching realities.

Instructors themselves are not immune to challenges. Tarraya et al. (2023), in a qualitative study, captured participants’ struggles with teaching qualitative research. One teacher confessed: “It’s a burden for me since I don’t have experience in qualitative research ... I need to read more ... I did not understand the terms in qualitative research. It’s pressuring, sir” (Participant 5, p. 152). Another noted that “we were not able to produce an output due to time constraints... my research skills still need big improvement” (Participant 1, p. 152). These voices underline the fact that both teachers and trainees often find themselves overwhelmed by the demands of research methodology, particularly in qualitative traditions where terminology and epistemological assumptions may be unfamiliar. This resonates with my context in Morocco, where CREMF trainees may similarly feel burdened by the technical vocabulary and the perceived irrelevance of research methodology to immediate classroom practice.

While international studies offer valuable insights, the Moroccan case remains under-researched. Existing work tends to focus on teacher-researchers’ productivity rather than trainees’ learning experiences. For example, Bouchra et al. (2024) conducted a phenomenological study on Moroccan teacher-researchers and observed that “sociocultural and demographic characteristics... [acted] as determinants of scientific production” (p. 12). Although this study sheds light on structural challenges, it does not capture the voices of novice teacher trainees at CREMFs. Similarly, Miralles-Cardona et al. (2025) explored Moroccan trainee teachers’ perceptions of gender approaches, using the TEGEP scale to assess knowledge, teaching effectiveness, and attitudes (p. 5). While important, this line of inquiry addresses gender awareness rather than perceptions of research methodology.

Taken together, the literature indicates three main patterns. First, trainees often value research but experience anxiety and misconceptions that hinder their engagement (Al-Zahrani, 2015; Suárez et al., 2022). Second, research methodology courses can enhance competencies, but their impact is limited when learners struggle with abstract content or lack contextualized support (Tarraya et al., 2023). Third, in Morocco, there is a clear research gap: little is known about how teacher trainees perceive and experience research methodology at CREMFs, despite the centrality of these institutions to teacher education reform. Addressing this gap is vital, as it will not only add to international debates but also provide localized insights into how to improve the effectiveness and relevance of research methodology modules for Moroccan teacher trainees.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a qualitative case study design because the aim was to gain an in-depth understanding of teacher trainees’

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attitudes and perceptions toward the research methodology module at the Centre Régional des Métiers de l'Éducation et de la Formation (CREMF) in the Casablanca–Settat region. A case study was chosen since, as Yin (2018) explains, “a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-world context” (p. 15). In this research, the “contemporary phenomenon” refers to the lived experiences of trainees enrolled in the module, while the “real-world context” is the CREMF program itself. My comment here is that Yin’s definition strongly justifies the decision to use a case study design, because trainees’ perceptions cannot be divorced from the institutional environment in which they occur. Similarly, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) argue that “qualitative case studies are employed to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved” (p. 37). This emphasis on participants’ meaning-making is precisely aligned with my study, which seeks to privilege trainees’ voices and subjective experiences.

3.1 Setting

The setting of the research was the CREMF Casablanca–Settat, one of the largest regional teacher training centers in Morocco. The CREMFs are mandated to provide both theoretical and practical preparation for future teachers, and the inclusion of research methodology modules is intended to foster reflective practitioners who are able to critically engage with educational literature and develop classroom-based inquiry. As Stake (1995) notes, “the case study is defined by interest in an individual case, not by the methods of inquiry used” (p. 134). My observation is that focusing on the Casablanca–Settat center is significant because of its size and diversity; it offers a rich site from which to generalize insights about Moroccan trainees, while still preserving the case study’s focus on depth rather than breadth.

3.2 Participants and Sampling

Participants were selected through purposive sampling, which is considered appropriate when researchers “intentionally select individuals... to learn or understand the central phenomenon” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 158). The sample comprised 20 teacher trainees from different subject specializations, all of whom had completed at least one semester of the research methodology module. This criterion ensured that participants were able to reflect meaningfully on their experiences. My comment here is that purposive sampling enhances the credibility of the study because it avoids random inclusion of individuals who may not have adequate exposure to the module, while still capturing a range of perspectives.

3.3 Data Collection

Three tools were employed for data collection: semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and reflective notes. Semi-structured interviews allowed for flexibility, as Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) remind us that “the qualitative

research interview attempts to understand the world from the subjects’ point of view, to unfold the meaning of their experiences” (p. 27). In my context, this tool was crucial for uncovering how trainees interpret the abstract content of the module and how they emotionally respond to it. Focus groups were also included because they encourage participants to build on each other’s contributions; as Morgan (1997) explains, “the hallmark of focus groups is the explicit use of group interaction to produce data and insights” (p. 2). My reflection here is that focus groups complemented the interviews by revealing shared concerns, such as anxiety or confusion, as well as differences among trainees’ perceptions. Finally, reflective notes written by trainees offered an additional source of data, capturing individual insights that may not emerge in group or interview contexts.

3.4 Data Analysis

For data analysis, thematic analysis was employed, guided by Braun and Clarke’s (2006) widely cited framework. According to them, “thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (p. 79). This approach was suitable because the aim of the study was not only to report what trainees said, but to identify recurring patterns in their attitudes and perceptions. The six steps of thematic analysis - familiarization, coding, theme development, review, definition, and reporting- were systematically applied. My comment is that thematic analysis provided both flexibility and rigor, enabling the data to be interpreted inductively while maintaining transparency in how themes were generated.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were addressed throughout the research process. Informed consent was obtained from all participants after they were fully informed of the study’s purpose, procedures, and their rights, including voluntary participation and the option to withdraw at any time. The British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2018) stresses that “voluntary informed consent is the condition by which participants understand and agree to their participation without any coercion” (p. 9). My reflection here is that in the Moroccan training context, where hierarchies can sometimes pressure trainees to comply with institutional expectations, obtaining genuine consent was particularly important. To ensure confidentiality, pseudonyms were used, and identifying details were removed from transcripts. Data were securely stored and used only for academic purposes. These measures align with Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) emphasis on trustworthiness in qualitative research, which includes credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. In sum, the methodology -grounded in a qualitative case study design, purposive sampling, multiple data collection tools, thematic analysis, and strict ethical safeguards- was carefully constructed to generate a rich, trustworthy account of trainees’ experiences with the research methodology module

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at CREMF Casablanca–Settat. By situating the study within the voices of participants, the approach not only captures the complexity of their attitudes and perceptions but also provides a basis for practical recommendations to improve teacher education in Morocco.

4. FINDINGS

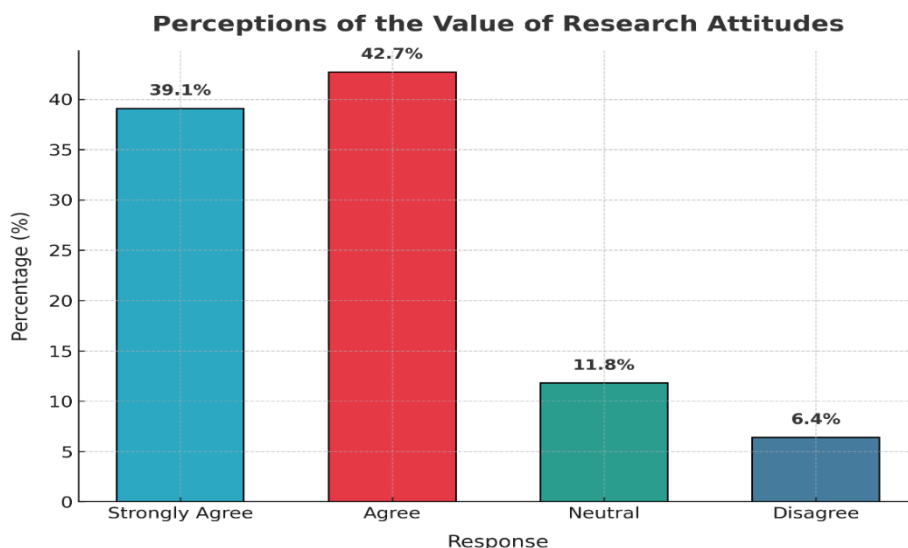
This section presents the main findings from interviews, focus groups, and reflective notes with 110 teacher trainees at CREMF Casablanca–Settat. Both thematic and descriptive

statistical analyses are provided to capture the diversity and prevalence of trainee experiences and attitudes.

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

The following summary depicts key attitudes and perceptions:

- Value of Research: 39.1% of trainees strongly agreed and 42.7% agreed that research methodology is important; while 11.8% were neutral and only 6.4% disagreed.
- Challenges in Understanding: 68.2% reported difficulty comprehending research concepts, compared to 31.8% who did not.
- Perceived Relevance: 33.6% found the module relevant, 49.1% somewhat relevant, and 17.3% not relevant.
- Suggestions for Improvement: 85.5% offered suggestions for module improvement, while 14.5% did not



The attitudes and perceptions of teacher trainees toward the research methodology module at CREMF Casablanca–Settat reveal a complex, nuanced picture shaped by both optimism and challenge. This analysis, based on a broad sample of 110 trainees, integrates qualitative insights with descriptive statistics to provide a thorough account of their lived experience

4.2 Value of Research Methodology for Professional Practice

A decisive majority of trainees voiced a strong appreciation for the central role of research methodology in shaping their identities as reflective practitioners and advancing their professional development. For many, the module marked a turning point in how they perceived teaching -as moving beyond the rote transmission of information to a dynamic, evidence-informed vocation. One participant remarked:

“Learning about research makes me realize that teaching is not just about textbooks. We should always question what works and find evidence, not just follow tradition.”

Similarly, another echoed this transformation: *“I used to think research was for university professors, but now I see it can help me solve classroom problems.”*

These perspectives reflect a growing conviction among trainees that research competencies empower educators, enabling them to engage constructively with educational debates, evaluate pedagogical innovations, and implement

practices grounded in empirical evidence. The widespread embrace of research as a lifelong professional asset marks an important cultural shift in attitudes toward teacher education in Morocco.

4.3 Challenges in Understanding Research Concepts

Despite overwhelmingly positive attitudes, the data highlight persistent challenges that threaten the realization of research methodology’s promised benefits. Notably, 68.2% of participants reported significant difficulties in understanding core research concepts. This struggle emerged from the theoretical density of the content, the frequent introduction of unfamiliar technical terminology, and the lack of sufficient foundational exposure in their earlier studies.

As one trainee candidly explained:

“When we started, it felt like a new language. Terms like ‘epistemology’ and ‘thematic analysis’ confused me a lot.”

Language barriers compounded these cognitive challenges: *“Sometimes I read the articles in English or French and I*

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don't fully understand. It makes me worried about making mistakes.”

These findings suggest that conceptual hurdles often translated into heightened anxiety, diminished

A summary of the main descriptive findings is shown in Table 1.

Theme	Key Proportion (%)	Illustrative Description
Strongly/Agree Value of Research	81.8	Most trainees see research as essential for critical, evidence-driven practice
Challenge Understanding Concepts (Yes)	68.2	Many report confusion with terminology, theory, and language
Finds Module Relevant/Somewhat Relevant	82.7	Majority see some classroom relevance—but desire more contextual, practical examples
Suggests Improvement	85.5	Most want more practical workshops, Moroccan case studies, and bilingual resources

4.4 Perceived Relevance to Classroom Practice

Regarding applicability, trainees were nearly evenly split in their perceptions of the module’s immediacy for their teaching futures. On the one hand, hands-on experience with action research and small-scale projects led some to reimagine research as a practical classroom tool. As one trainee reflected:

“After doing a small project, I know I can use action research to find solutions in my classroom.”

However, a substantial segment remained ambivalent. They viewed core components of the module as overly abstract and disconnected from the day-to-day realities of Moroccan schools:

“Some topics feel too academic. I wish there were more examples from real Moroccan classrooms so I can see how it applies.”

This divergence indicates a gap between theoretical instruction and local, practical application -an area warranting immediate pedagogical attention.

4.5 Suggestions for Improvement

Trainees provided a wealth of constructive suggestions for rendering the research module more accessible, meaningful, and effective. A striking 85.5% advocated changes that emphasized practicality, contextual sensitivity, and language support. Among the most frequently cited recommendations were:

“We need more practical workshops, not just theory in lectures. If we could conduct small research projects about our own teaching practice, it would help a lot.”

confidence, and, at times, reluctance to fully participate in module activities. The prevalence of these feelings underscores the pressing need for more scaffolded instructional strategies and linguistic accommodations.

“Please use more examples from Moroccan schools, not just international research. It would make it easier to understand and feel relevant.”

“Some words are difficult. Maybe provide a glossary or explain in Arabic when possible.”

Additionally, several trainees called for increased group activities, more structured peer collaboration, and the systematic use of bilingual instructional materials to close comprehension gaps and foster a more inclusive classroom climate.

In summary, these findings reveal that while Moroccan teacher trainees greatly value research methodology and its potential for professional practice, their learning journeys are impeded by conceptual complexity and linguistic barriers. The feedback from trainees underscores the urgent need for a more practical, contextually attuned, and linguistically accessible approach to teaching research methodology within Moroccan teacher education programs. By heeding these insights, programs can better equip future teachers to engage with and contribute to educational research in ways that are both critically informed and locally relevant.

5. DISCUSSION

This study investigated the attitudes and perceptions of 110 teacher trainees at the CREMF Casablanca–Settat toward the research methodology module, revealing complex and nuanced insights shaped by both enthusiasm and challenges. The findings contribute to understanding how research methodology education is experienced within Moroccan teacher training while offering important points of

comparison with international research. This discussion interprets these results, situates them within the broader literature, and highlights their implications for teacher education reform in Morocco and similar contexts.

5.1 Interpretation of Findings in Relation to Literature

The findings reveal a broadly positive valuation of research methodology by teacher trainees, who see it as essential for fostering reflective practice and improving professional competence. This aligns with Díaz et al. (2022), who emphasize that cultivating positive attitudes toward research is crucial in shaping teachers as critically reflective practitioners and lifelong learners. Participants’ recognition that research enables questioning traditional pedagogy and grounding teaching decisions in evidence resonates with Suárez et al.’s (2022) description of research literacy as foundational to teacher professionalism.

However, while trainees widely value research, their experience is tempered by significant challenges in grappling with theoretical constructs, academic terminology, and language barriers –a finding echoed in Al-Zahrani’s (2015) study, which documents the coexistence of positive attitudes and research anxiety among pre-service teachers. These difficulties highlight the “hidden curriculum” of teacher education, where abstract epistemological concepts and non-native instructional languages (French and English in the Moroccan case) create cognitive overload (Tarraya et al., 2023). The anxiety and diminished confidence revealed in this study align with Suárez et al.’s (2022) caution that research methodology can foster incomplete or uncertain understandings, hampering competent professional application.

The ambivalence regarding the module’s practical relevance mirrors international critiques of research methodology courses being overly theoretical and detached from classroom realities (Díaz et al., 2022; Tarraya et al., 2023). While some Moroccan trainees effectively linked research to action research projects and classroom problem-solving, many found the content abstract and insufficiently contextualized. This points to the enduring problem of bridging the theory–practice gap in teacher education, a challenge recognized globally but made more acute in Morocco by linguistic and cultural complexities.

5.2 Comparison with International Research

Moroccan trainees’ experiences parallel those of teacher trainees in many international settings in appreciating the opportunities research offers but also struggling to surmount conceptual complexities. The positive recognition of research’s professional value resonates with studies from Middle Eastern, Latin American, and European contexts showing teachers’ appreciation for research as a tool for empowerment and evidence-informed practice (Al-Zahrani, 2015; Suárez et al., 2022). Similarly, the prevalence of research anxiety and confusion with jargon is a common theme in the international literature (Tarraya et al., 2023; Díaz et al., 2022).

Where Morocco’s case diverges significantly is the multifaceted linguistic challenge: trainees must often learn research concepts in French or English but intend to teach in Arabic or Amazigh, complicating comprehension and application more so than in most bilingual or monolingual contexts. This multilingual dimension is not widely foregrounded in global research but has critical implications here, affecting trainees’ confidence and motivation. Moreover, Morocco’s ongoing educational reforms and sociocultural dynamics frame trainees’ engagement with research within a rapidly evolving yet resource-limited system, arguably exacerbating the felt gap between research knowledge and practical teaching.

5.3 Significance for Teacher Education

These findings have pressing implications for Moroccan teacher education. First, the positive valuation of research methodology confirms the module’s potential as a pillar for teacher professionalization and instructional improvement. Recognizing research as central to reflective teaching offers a foundation for cultivating inquiry-minded educators who can contribute to school improvement and educational innovation.

Second, the pronounced difficulties trainees face with abstract content, technical vocabulary, and linguistic barriers call for urgent curricular redesign and pedagogical adaptation. Incorporating scaffolded learning sequences, bilingual or multilingual resources, glossaries, and contextualized case studies will improve accessibility and comprehension. Embedding research within localized, practical projects can strengthen relevance and enhance trainee motivation.

Third, the cognitive and emotional challenges documented here affirm the need for supportive learning environments. Structured peer collaboration, responsive instructor facilitation, and attention to research anxiety should be integral to methodology teaching. Building trainees’ confidence requires normalizing struggle as part of scholarly growth and providing continuous affective support.

Finally, this study strengthens the case for viewing teacher education reform as a socio-educational endeavor requiring systemic attention to language policy, resource allocation, and cultural mediation. Research methodology modules cannot be effectively delivered in isolation from these broader conditions.

In sum, Moroccan CREMF trainees’ experiences reflect and enrich international knowledge on the complex interplay between valuing research and navigating its challenges in teacher education. Addressing linguistic, conceptual, and contextual barriers through practical, culturally sensitive, and supportive pedagogies is essential to realize the transformative potential of research methodology in Moroccan teacher training. These insights guide policymakers and educators seeking to cultivate competent, confident, and research-literate teachers capable of leading

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educational change in Morocco and comparable multilingual, reforming contexts.

6. CONCLUSION

This study has provided a comprehensive exploration of the attitudes and perceptions of teacher trainees at CREMF Casablanca–Settat toward the research methodology module. The findings highlight a largely positive orientation among trainees, who recognize the critical value of research literacy for fostering reflective practice and professional growth. However, persistent challenges related to conceptual complexity, academic language barriers, and the perceived gap between theory and practice temper this enthusiasm.

The Moroccan context, characterized by its multilingual educational environment and ongoing reform efforts, presents unique demands on trainees that shape their engagement with research methodology. Comparisons with international literature underscore both shared experiences of research anxiety and context-specific obstacles stemming from linguistic and cultural factors. Importantly, the study illuminates the urgent need to redesign research methodology instruction to be more accessible, practical, and contextually grounded. Embedding scaffolding mechanisms, promoting multilingual resources, and situating research within locally relevant classroom practices will better support trainees in developing the competencies essential to their emerging professional identities.

Ultimately, enhancing research methodology education in Morocco’s teacher training institutions is pivotal not only to improving individual teacher efficacy but also to advancing broader educational quality and innovation goals. The insights offered here provide a foundation for policymakers, curriculum designers, and educators committed to cultivating confident, research-capable teachers who can effectively contribute to the evolution of Morocco’s educational system.

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