Soft Skills Integration in English Department Curricula: A Mixed-Methods Evaluation and Experiential Coursebook Development

Abstract

In today's competitive world, possessing a degree or diploma alone is no longer sufficient. Graduates need to develop additional skills to succeed in the expansive job market. Soft skills are essential qualities that greatly enhance the likelihood of securing one's ideal job. Recently, Morocco has acknowledged their importance and begun integrating them into the education system. This study examines the curricula of English departments at four Moroccan universities, focusing on the effectiveness of a dedicated soft skills module and the pedagogical methods employed to teach these skills. A convergent parallel mixed-methods approach was adopted, collecting both quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative component involved pre- and post-course assessments of students' self-perceived skills, which were analyzed using descriptive statistics, paired-sample t-tests, and repeated-measures ANOVA to identify significant changes. The qualitative component included a questionnaire for instructors to explore their teaching strategies, challenges, and views on embedding soft skills. Results showed that most instructors mainly used lectures and presentations to teach soft skills, despite these skills being best developed through real-world experiences. To address this gap, an experiential coursebook was developed, featuring real-life tasks, problem-solving projects, group activities, and simulated professional scenarios designed to promote active skill development. Combining the data from both methods revealed notable

improvements in student skills, with teacher feedback highlighting the need for more hands-on, experiential learning. This research provides empirical evidence, practical resources, and a model for integrating soft skills into English curricula, with broader implications for curriculum design, faculty development, and experiential learning in higher education.

Background of the Study

Over the last twenty years, higher education worldwide has undergone substantial transformation due to rapid technological progress, changing job market demands, and increasing complexity in professional environments. Universities are now required to do more than teach disciplinary knowledge; they must foster adaptable, communicative, and collaborative individuals who can succeed in dynamic and uncertain settings. These skills, often referred to as soft skills, transversal competencies, or non-cognitive skills, include communication, teamwork, proactivity, self-regulation, adaptability, creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, and other essential life skills. International frameworks recognize these competencies as crucial for navigating today's social and economic landscapes. For example, the 2012 National Research Council emphasizes the importance of cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal skills for success in the 21st century, while employer surveys consistently highlight problem-solving, proactivity, communication, and teamwork as key hiring factors. Recent global job market research confirms this trend, noting rapid shifts in occupational skills and identifying analytical thinking, resilience, and socio-emotional maturity as emerging priorities (World Economic Forum, 2023).

Educational research consistently shows that soft skills are best developed through experiential, practice-oriented learning rather than passive listening. Project-based learning, in particular, leads to notable gains in problem-solving, communication, and teamwork, primarily when students work on open-ended projects with real-world outcomes (Kokotsaki, Menzies, & Wiggins, 2016). Techniques such as team-based learning and collaborative inquiry enhance student engagement and performance in higher education by fostering interactive, student-centered environments (Haidet, Kubitz, & McCormack, 2014; Swanson et

al., 2019). Similarly, work-integrated learning (WIL), such as internships, fieldwork, and supervised practice, connects academic knowledge with professional contexts, enhancing graduates' work readiness when accompanied by structured reflection and feedback (Jackson, 2015; Smith, Ferns, & Russell, 2016). The overall pattern is clear: soft skills are not effectively developed through lectures alone; they demand practice, feedback, collaboration, and reflection.

International policy discussions reflect these findings. UNESCO's Futures of Education report advocates for teaching methods that enable learners to succeed in uncertain futures through collaboration, creativity, and responsibility (UNESCO, 2021). Similarly, the OECD's Skills Outlook highlights that social-emotional and motivational skills are key to lifelong learning and adaptability in changing economic environments (OECD, 2021). Together, global employer signals, educational research, and policy documents all agree that soft skills are vital for academic and career success, and that developing them requires deliberate, hands-on approaches.

Within this global context, Morocco has made significant progress in reforming its education system to meet the needs of 21st-century skills. The Strategic Vision for Reform 2015–2030, created by the Higher Council for Education, Training, and Scientific Research, explicitly calls for a shift from rote learning to active, competency-based education. Although the document does not consistently use the term "soft skills," it emphasizes competencies closely related to this concept, communication, self-expression, initiative, critical thinking, teamwork, innovation, problem-solving, and research abilities (HCETSR, 2015). The Vision encourages universities to provide learning environments that promote autonomy, collaboration, creativity, and practical engagement, insisting that students should "regularly link theoretical knowledge to practical experience" and be "ready to engage in activities of openness and innovation" (HCETSR, 2015). These priorities are supported by subsequent policy tools, including Loi-Cadre 51.17, which highlights transversal competencies as vital for employability, civic participation, and national development.

Despite this strong policy focus, the implementation of soft skills in Moroccan higher education remains inconsistent. Studies and national reviews often highlight a gap between policy goals and classroom practice. University teaching still relies heavily on lectures, overcrowded classrooms, and limited chances for structured practice or hands-on learning.

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Soft skills, though widely recognized in policy discussions, are often secondary to curricula, inconsistently taught, and seldom measured with strong, practice-oriented methods.

This gap is especially evident in English Studies departments, which traditionally focus on linguistic, literary, and cultural knowledge. As Moroccan universities increasingly expect these departments to develop transferable skills, questions emerge about the actual teaching methods used. Do instructors mainly depend on lectures and student presentations, or do they incorporate experiential, interactive methods that foster soft skills development? How are soft skills integrated into English Studies courses today? Do existing soft skills modules lead to measurable student growth, and how are these improvements assessed through quantitative and qualitative indicators? What specific barriers, such as resource limitations, curriculum constraints, or institutional policies, prevent instructors from implementing more interactive pedagogies that develop soft skills?

Very little empirical research has explored these questions in the Moroccan context, and almost none has assessed the development of soft skills using both quantitative measures of student progress and qualitative studies of instructors' practices. Consequently, there is limited evidence to inform universities, instructors, or policymakers in developing effective soft-skills curricula for English departments.

Statement of the Problem

Although Moroccan higher education has adopted a competency-based approach, as outlined in the Strategic Vision for Reform 2015–2030 and reinforced in Loi-Cadre 51.17, the practical incorporation of soft skills into university curricula remains limited and inconsistent. Policy documents highlight communication, initiative, teamwork, critical thinking, problem-solving, and innovation as key graduate attributes; yet, classroom teaching across Moroccan universities continues to rely heavily on lecture-based instruction and oral presentations. These traditional methods provide few structured, intentional opportunities for experiential learning, the very pedagogical conditions that international and national research identify as necessary for cultivating soft skills.

Emerging research from Moroccan universities highlights this gap. While instructors recognize the importance of soft skills for employability and academic achievement, they

often lack practical guidance, institutional backing, or training to teach and assess these skills. Consequently, instruction in soft skills remains largely implicit, theoretical, or uneven across departments. Specifically, in English Studies programs, soft skills are intended to support linguistic and literary learning. However, there is limited understanding of how instructors define, teach, and assess these skills in practice.

Adding to this pedagogical challenge is a notable empirical gap. Very few studies in Morocco systematically measure students' development of soft skills, and almost none use rigorous quantitative or mixed-methods designs to monitor progress over time. Similarly, research on instructors' teaching practices, particularly in English departments, remains limited, offering little insight into the barriers and enabling conditions that shape pedagogical choices. As a result, universities lack evidence-based guidelines for designing or enhancing soft-skills modules, and instructors lack practical, context-appropriate instructional materials coherent with experiential learning principles.

Furthermore, although many institutions have introduced soft skills modules, most have not been empirically evaluated, and few offer students structured experiential activities such as role-plays, simulations, collaborative projects, and reflective practice. This lack of validated, activity-based resources makes it challenging to translate policy expectations into practice or to ensure consistent, high-quality implementation across universities.

Taken together, these issues highlight a clear problem. There is an ongoing gap between Morocco's national educational vision for soft-skills development and the actual pedagogical practices, empirical evidence, and instructional resources available in English Studies departments.

Therefore, the central problem this study addresses is that Moroccan English departments lack empirically tested pedagogical models and experiential course materials for teaching soft skills, resulting in a mismatch between national reform goals and classroom practice.

The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this convergent parallel mixed-methods study is to assess the effectiveness of a targeted soft-skills intervention within a Moroccan English Studies program and to explore

the pedagogical practices of instructors responsible for teaching soft skills across four universities. Quantitatively, the study aims to measure changes in students' communication, teamwork, adaptability, problem-solving, and self-regulation over a semester-long soft-skills module through repeated assessments. Qualitatively, it seeks to understand how English department instructors conceptualize, teach, and assess soft skills, as well as the challenges and contextual factors influencing their pedagogical decisions.

The primary goal of combining these two parts is to generate empirical evidence that directly informs the development of a new experiential soft-skills course book tailored to the Moroccan higher-education context. By integrating student outcome data with instructors lived experiences and classroom realities, the study aims to develop a pedagogically grounded, practice-oriented instructional resource that reflects the national reform goals and addresses the gap between policy expectations and current teaching practices.

Significance of the Study

This study is important on multiple levels, conceptual, pedagogical, institutional, and national, because it addresses a persistent gap between Morocco's educational reform agenda and classroom realities in higher education. While policy documents such as the Strategic Vision for Reform 2015–2030 and Loi-Cadre 51.17 highlight active, competency-based learning, there is limited empirical evidence on how soft skills are taught and developed within Moroccan universities, especially in English Studies departments. By systematically examining student development and instructor practices, this study provides evidence that has been largely missing from national and regional scholarship.

Theoretically, the study employs a convergent parallel mixed-methods approach in a context rarely explored in empirical research. Combining quantitative results with qualitative insights provides a more detailed understanding of soft-skills development than studies that rely on a single method. This clarifies the evolution of soft skills in multilingual, resource-limited, lecture-focused higher education environments.

Pedagogically, this study analyses how instructors currently teach soft skills and the barriers they face, such as large class sizes, limited training, and institutional constraints. It highlights actionable pathways to improve instructional design. The development of an experiential

coursebook directly responds to these pedagogical needs by offering structured, activity-based materials that instructors can implement regardless of their experience with soft-skills pedagogy.

At the institutional level, the findings provide universities with a clearer understanding of how soft-skills modules operate in practice and how they can be improved. Evidence gathered through repeated student assessments can inform departments on curriculum reform, quality assurance, and module redesign. Specifically, for English Studies programs, the study demonstrates how transferable skills can be integrated with linguistic and literary content, thereby making the program more relevant to current academic and professional needs.

At the policy level, the study corresponds to national priorities and supports the implementation of Morocco's educational reform vision. By providing empirical data on both student outcomes and teaching practices, the study offers clear insights that can inform policy rollout, enhance capacity-building efforts, and guide the Ministry, universities, and teacher-training centers in promoting competency-based education. The practical result of the research, the experiential coursebook, acts as a model for connecting national policy goals with classroom practices.

Finally, the study has social and economic importance by tackling a key national issue: the employability and professional readiness of Moroccan graduates. By enhancing students' soft skills through structured, experiential methods, the study prepares graduates who are more flexible, collaborative, and self-directed, capable of handling complex professional settings.

Overall, the significance of this study lies in its potential to bridge a longstanding gap between policy, research, and practice by offering an empirically grounded, contextually relevant model for integrating soft skills into Moroccan higher education.

Scope of the Study

This study examines how soft skills are integrated and developed in Moroccan higher education, with a focus on English Studies departments. The quantitative component examines how soft skills develop among first-semester English Studies students enrolled in a soft-skills course at Moulay Ismail University. Their progress is tracked through repeated

assessments throughout the academic semester. The qualitative component explores the teaching practices of instructors who teach or engage with soft-skills content at four Moroccan universities: Moulay Ismail University (Meknès), Mohammed V University (Rabat), Ibn Tofail University (Kénitra), and Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University (Fès). Together, these approaches offer a comprehensive view of soft skills instruction and growth within the Moroccan higher education system.

The scope also includes the design and development of an experiential soft-skills coursebook informed by the mixed-methods findings. This coursebook is intended for use in English Studies programmes and corresponds to national educational reform policies emphasizing competency-based and student-centred learning.

Figure 1 presents a *conceptual map of the theoretical framework* that visually summarizes this architecture. The figure is intentionally organized by instructional units, with each unit linked to the theories that best explain the dominant learning demands embedded in that unit. The map also communicates an important methodological stance: the curriculum is viewed as a sequence of theoretically informed learning environments, rather than a set of disconnected topics. Theories are not included for breadth. They are included for function. Each is selected because it clarifies a specific set of learning processes that the unit aims to activate and make visible through classroom practice and assessment.

In Unit 1 (University Life), the map foregrounds self-regulated learning and time-management traditions—highlighting cyclical regulation (Zimmerman, 2000), perceived control of time and planning processes (Macan, 1994), and proactive responsibility as a behavioral heuristic (Covey, 1989). This cluster provides a lens for understanding how students set goals, plan, monitor progress, and adapt strategies in response to academic demands. It also supports the interpretation of common university challenges (e.g., workload management, procrastination, inconsistent study routines) as regulation problems rather than purely motivational deficits. In Unit 2 (Learning Styles), the framework shifts toward models of experiential learning and learner variability, notably Kolb's learning cycle (Kolb, 1984), Gardner's multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1983), and Felder and Silverman's learning style dimensions (Felder & Silverman, 1988). Here, the emphasis is not on labeling students. It is on expanding instructional responsiveness. The theories help justify why students benefit

from varied entry points into learning tasks, and why reflection on learning preferences can be used as a metacognitive lever in a soft-skills curriculum.
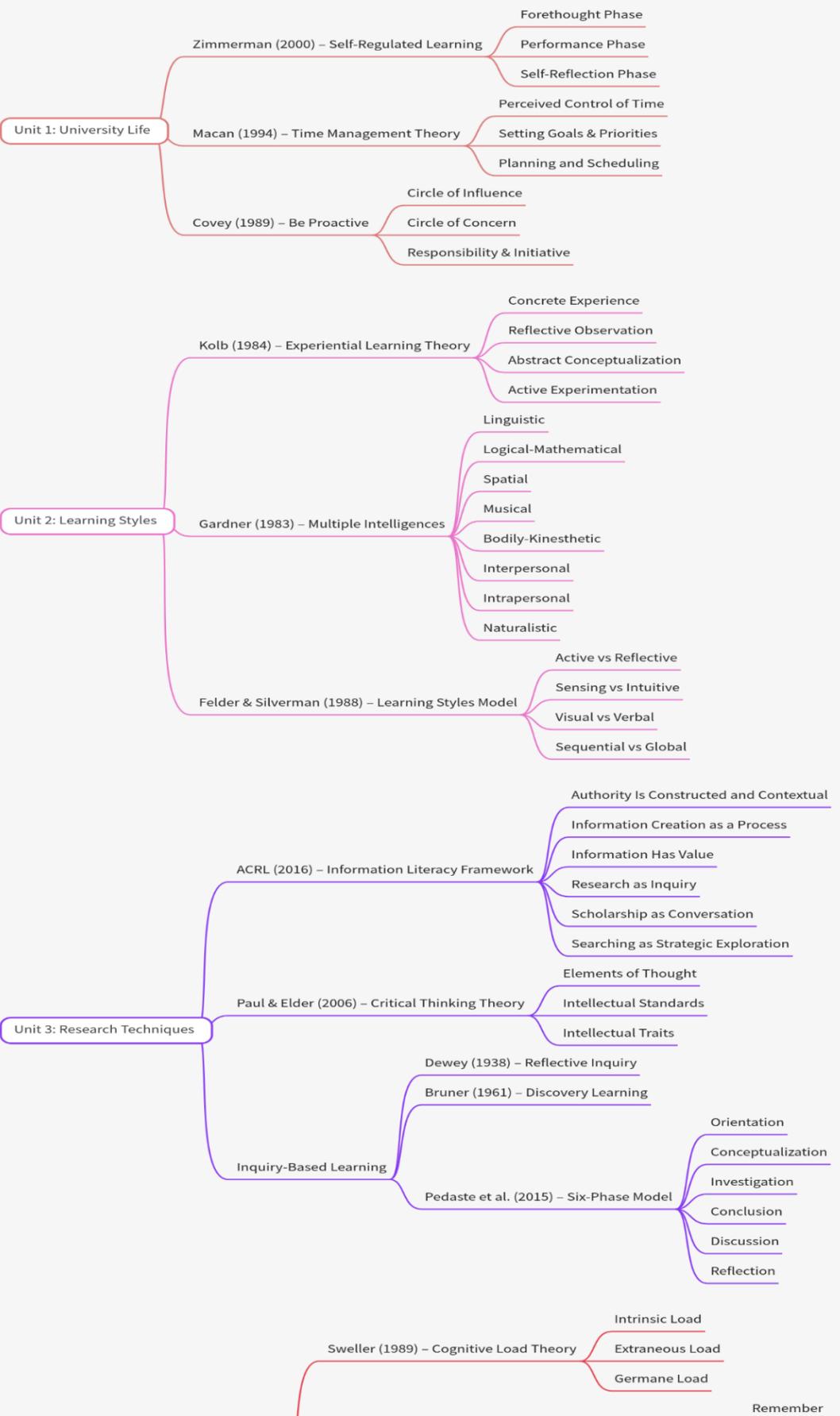
In Unit 3 (Research Techniques), the framework draws on the ACRL Framework (ACRL, 2016), critical thinking (Paul & Elder, 2006), and inquiry-based learning models (e.g., Dewey, 1938; Bruner, 1961; Pedaste et al., 2015). This cluster positions research as a disciplined practice rather than a set of technical steps. It highlights judgment. It highlights reasoning. It also foregrounds the learner's responsibility to evaluate sources, construct questions, and justify decisions through evidence. In Unit 4 (Information Processing Techniques), the framework is anchored in cognitive architecture and instructional design, emphasizing cognitive load (Sweller, 1989), hierarchical cognitive objectives (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001), and dual coding mechanisms (Paivio, 1986).

Dear reader, I invite you to expect the following: First, each theoretical cluster is developed in a consistent way. Key constructs and assumptions are clarified. Central mechanisms are articulated. Major empirical claims are summarized in a way that supports the interpretation of classroom learning processes. Second, each theory is explicitly connected to its corresponding unit in the taught soft-skills curriculum. The chapter shows how each theoretical lens informs intended learning outcomes, shapes classroom task design, and supports assessment choices—what is assessed, how it is assessed, and why that form of evidence is defensible within the logic of the framework. In this sense, the chapter functions as a bridge: from conceptual foundations to curriculum enactment. It explains why particular pedagogical moves matter, and how they are expected to produce observable development across the module.

Figure 1
Conceptual Map of the Theoretical Framework

Theoretical Framework

Unit 1: University Life

Zimmerman (2000) – Self-Regulated Learning
- Forethought Phase
- Performance Phase
- Self-Reflection Phase

Macan (1994) – Time Management Theory
- Perceived Control of Time
- Setting Goals & Priorities
- Planning and Scheduling

Covey (1989) – Be Proactive
- Circle of Influence
- Circle of Concern
- Responsibility & Initiative

Unit 2: Learning Styles

Kolb (1984) – Experiential Learning Theory
- Concrete Experience
- Reflective Observation
- Abstract Conceptualization
- Active Experimentation

Gardner (1983) – Multiple Intelligences
- Linguistic
- Logical-Mathematical
- Spatial
- Musical
- Bodily-Kinesthetic
- Interpersonal
- Intrapersonal
- Naturalistic

Felder & Silverman (1988) – Learning Styles Model
- Active vs Reflective
- Sensing vs Intuitive
- Visual vs Verbal
- Sequential vs Global

Unit 3: Research Techniques

ACRL (2016) – Information Literacy Framework
- Authority Is Constructed and Contextual
- Information Creation as a Process
- Information Has Value
- Research as Inquiry
- Scholarship as Conversation
- Searching as Strategic Exploration

Paul & Elder (2006) – Critical Thinking Theory
- Elements of Thought
- Intellectual Standards
- Intellectual Traits

Inquiry-Based Learning
- Dewey (1938) – Reflective Inquiry
- Bruner (1961) – Discovery Learning
- Pedaste et al. (2015) – Six-Phase Model
  - Orientation
  - Conceptualization
  - Investigation
  - Conclusion
  - Discussion
  - Reflection

Sweller (1989) – Cognitive Load Theory
- Intrinsic Load
- Extraneous Load
- Germane Load

- Remember

1. Research Design

I have adopted a convergent parallel mixed-methods design, a core approach in mixed-methods research. According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2018), convergent design is a strategy in which researchers collect both quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously, analyze them separately, and then synthesize the results to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the research problem. This design was particularly appropriate for my study because it enabled me to evaluate students' learning outcomes while also examining instructors' practices and challenges, thereby providing a comprehensive picture of how soft skills can be integrated into English department curricula.

The term parallel indicates that the quantitative and qualitative parts were conducted independently and concurrently. In other words, I did not wait for one set of results before collecting or analyzing the other. Instead, both parts were offered concurrently during the same academic semester. This is distinct from sequential designs, in which one part follows another and depends on its findings (Ivankova, Creswell, & Stick, 2006). By keeping the two parts independent until the interpretation stage, I preserved the integrity of each dataset while ensuring that they could later be integrated to address the broader research questions.

The convergence of these two perspectives enhances both the validity and the utility of the study's conclusions, since mixed-methods research explicitly aims to bridge the qualitative–quantitative divide and offer more comprehensive insights than either method alone (Venkatesh, Brown, & Bala, 2013). The quantitative component consisted of a pre–post evaluation of students' soft skills competencies. Structured surveys were administered at the beginning and at the end of the semester to students enrolled in the soft skills module at

Moulay Ismail University. Quantitative results revealed whether the four instructional units were effectively grasped, namely:

1. University Life,
2. Learning Styles,
3. Research Techniques, and
4. Information Processing Techniques.

The qualitative part involved an instructor questionnaire distributed across four Moroccan universities: Moulay Ismail University (Meknès), Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University (Fès), Ibn Tofail University (Kénitra), and Mohammed V University (Rabat). The questionnaire included closed-ended items to capture the prevalence of specific teaching methods (e.g., lectures, group work, role plays, projects) and open-ended items to allow instructors to describe barriers, enablers, and suggestions for improving soft skills integration. This part ensured that practitioners' voices and experiences were represented alongside numerical evidence from student surveys.

The final and crucial step in this design was integration. Once the two parts were analyzed separately, I synthesized the findings through side-by-side comparisons and joint displays (Fetters, Curry, & Creswell, 2013). This integration allowed me to explore connections between the two datasets, for example, linking gains in students' teamwork skills to instructors' use of collaborative learning activities. The integrated interpretation directly informed the development of the experiential coursebook, which was designed to use the evidence from student outcomes and the pedagogical realities reported by instructors.

In sum, the convergent parallel mixed-methods design was chosen because it provided a robust and coherent framework for addressing my research questions. It enabled me to assess the effectiveness of the soft skills module quantitatively and to capture the qualitative perspectives of instructors across Moroccan universities. This methodological choice ensured both rigor and practical relevance, strengthening the link between empirical evidence and pedagogical innovation.

Participants

Quantitative Part (Students)

The quantitative part of this study was conducted with 40 first-semester English Studies students enrolled at Moulay Ismail University (Meknès). These participants were selected from two intact classes, Group 3 (303 students) and Group 8 (288 students). Although the initial class sizes were considerably large, the final sample comprised 19 students from Group 3 and 21 from Group 8. This reduction was due to factors such as non-attendance, partial participation, and course withdrawal, which made it essential to retain only those students who attended all sessions and completed the whole program, including both pre- and post-intervention assessments

The relatively small sample size reflects a convenience sampling strategy constrained by practical conditions of attendance and attrition. Although the attrition rate (approximately 93%) limits the generalizability of the findings, it ensures that the analysis focuses on the cohort of students most fully exposed to the intervention. These participants represent a committed subset of the broader student population, whose consistent engagement provides a reliable measure of the intervention's effectiveness.

Demographically, the participants were first-semester undergraduates in English Studies, with ages ranging between 18 and 21 years. Gender distribution was not used as a selection criterion, although both male and female students were represented. As the study targeted an introductory soft skills module, the participants were at the beginning of their academic trajectories, making them an appropriate population for measuring baseline competencies in communication, teamwork, adaptability, problem-solving, and self-regulation, and tracking their development across the semester.

This group formed the basis of the quantitative pre–post evaluation part, in which students' progress was measured across the four units of the intervention: University Life, Learning Styles, Research Techniques, and Information Processing Techniques.

Qualitative Part (Instructors)

The qualitative part involved a non-probability sample of English department instructors drawn from four Moroccan universities: Moulay Ismail University (Meknès), Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University (Fès), Ibn Tofail University (Kénitra), and Mohammed V University (Rabat). These institutions were purposefully selected because they represent key centers of

English Studies in Morocco and were directly involved in implementing or reflecting on the integration of soft skills into undergraduate curricula. Methodologically, what I used here is purposive (criterion-based) sampling layered on convenience and snowballing: I intentionally restricted the sampling frame to instructors who had taught soft-skills–related content, then relied on ease of access and peer referrals to reach this relatively specialized group.

More specifically, participants in this part were instructors who either taught or had recently taught courses that incorporated soft skills dimensions or who were responsible for pedagogical decision-making within their departments. To identify and reach this group, I combined purposive criterion sampling with convenience access and snowball sampling. After contacting a core group of instructors already known to be engaged in soft-skills teaching, I asked them to recommend colleagues with similar responsibilities. Snowballing was appropriate because faculty involved in soft-skills pedagogy constitute a relatively dispersed population that is not easily identifiable through formal records (Noy, 2008). The final sample consisted of 16 participants, each of whom contributed perspectives on how soft skills are currently taught and assessed, with particular attention to the four thematic units emphasized in the intervention: University Life, Learning Styles, Research Techniques, and Information Processing Techniques. The instructor questionnaire combined closed-ended items, documenting the frequency of methods such as lectures, role plays, group projects, or reflective journals, with open-ended prompts that elicited reflections on barriers, enabling conditions, and recommendations for strengthening soft-skills pedagogy. By engaging instructors across four universities and employing purposive (criterion) sampling layered on convenience and snowballing, the study obtained a cross-institutional view of current practices, challenges, and opportunities. These qualitative insights complemented the quantitative student data, ensuring that the design of the experiential coursebook was grounded in evidence of student outcomes and in the practical realities of Moroccan higher education classrooms.

2. Instruments

Student Pre–Post Assessment (Standardized 20-Point Tests)

I have used a pre–post assessment design to obtain objective, comparable measures of students' soft-skills attainment across the semester. All assessments were standardized to a

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20-point scale and administered manually, ensuring consistency of scoring across time points. The testing schedule comprised a baseline pre-test, chapter-linked intermediary tests, and a culminating final test, allowing change to be tracked within and across the four instructional units, University Life, Learning Styles, Research Techniques, and Information Processing TechniquesA Pre-Test established baseline performance (October 23). Intermediary tests were given every two sessions (with the final spaced further to allow for revision):

- University Life: October 30, November 13
- Learning Styles: November 20, November 27
- Research Techniques: December 4, December 11
- Information Processing Techniques: December 18, December 25
  A Final Test captured cumulative learning (January 31)

This cadence, regular interim measures with a longer interval before the final, was chosen to support reliability by giving students time to consolidate learning before summative assessment. Before full implementation, I ran a pilot to refine item wording and task rubrics and to check administration logistics; the finalized tests were then used at all time points. The instrument was designed for a pretest–posttest (within-subjects) evaluation of change, providing the measurement basis for repeated-measures analyses reported in the results chapter. Assumptions relevant to repeated-measures modeling (e.g., independence, normality, sphericity) were considered at the analysis stage, consistent with best practice for pre–post and multi-wave designs.

A pretest–posttest design is a standard approach for estimating intervention-linked change when intact groups are followed over time (Campbell & Stanley, 1963; Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002). Using multiple waves (pre, unit-linked intermediates, post) increases sensitivity to growth patterns and supports within-person inference via repeated-measures models (Dimitrov & Rumrill, 2003; Field, 2018). Standardizing scores to a standard20-point metric facilitates comparability across administrations and simplifies interpretation against course benchmarks.

Instructor Questionnaire

The second instrument was a semi-structured instructor questionnaire, developed to explore how English department instructors across four Moroccan universities, Moulay Ismail University (Meknès), Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University (Fès), Ibn Tofail University (Kénitra), and Mohammed V University (Rabat), currently teach, assess, and conceptualize soft skills in their classrooms. The questionnaire was distributed as part of the qualitative part of the study and was designed to capture both descriptive information and reflective insights.

The questionnaire contained both closed-ended items and open-ended prompts, allowing for a combination of quantitative summaries and qualitative thematic analysis (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

1. Background and demographic information

   + University affiliation
   + Academic rank (PhD candidate, Lecturer, Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, Full Professor, Other)
   + Years of teaching experience (general and university-specific)

2. Experience with soft skills teaching

Whether the instructor had previously taught a course related to soft skills. Checklist of soft skills topics covered in their courses, including:

   + University Life (e.g., time management, teamwork, communication)
   + Learning Styles and Study Strategies
   + Research and Information Gathering Skills
   + Organizing, Reformulating, or Presenting Information
   + Self-motivation and Goal-setting
   + Public Speaking / Presentation Skills
   + Stress Management or Emotional Intelligence
   + Other soft skills (specified by respondent)

3. Instructional practices

A five-point Likert scale (Never → Always) to rate frequency of methods such as:

- Lectures or theoretical explanations
- Student-led presentations
- Group discussions
- Peer feedback or peer evaluation
- Simulations (mock interviews, role plays)
- Group problem-solving tasks
- Case studies or real-life scenarios

- Reflection or self-assessment tasks

4. Extent of practical/experiential teaching

Self-assessment of how much instruction relies on practical classroom activities that mimic real-world situations (from None to Extensive).

5. Barriers and enabling factors

Reasons for limited practical activity use (e.g., lack of time, large class sizes, curriculum restrictions, lack of training, student motivation).

- Open-ended questions on:
  - Classroom activities that have worked best for teaching soft skills
  - What would help integrate more real-life or practical activities
  - Suggestions for improving soft skills instruction in English departments

Questionnaires are widely used to gather broad, comparable data from instructors while also capturing individual perspectives through open-ended responses (Bryman, 2016). The inclusion of Likert scales allows for the systematic measurement of frequency and intensity of pedagogical practices (Joshi, Kale, Chandel, & Pal, 2015), while open-ended prompts provide contextual detail and nuance often absent from purely structured instruments (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The combination of structured and flexible formats supports both descriptive statistical analysis and reflexive thematic analysis, enhancing the depth and validity of the qualitative part.

3. Procedures

The data collection procedures differed across the two parts of the study but were conducted in parallel during the same academic semester of the 2023/2024 academic year, consistent with the convergent mixed-methods design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

Quantitative Part (Students)

The quantitative data were collected during the fall semester of the 2023/2024 academic year through a series of manual, classroom-based assessments that I personally administered as part of my teaching responsibilities. Students enrolled in the soft skills module at Moulay Ismail University were given standardized tests at multiple points: a baseline pre-test (October 23, 2023), chapter-linked intermediary tests following each of the four instructional units (University Life, Learning Styles, Research Techniques, and Information Processing Techniques), and a final summative test at the end of the semester (January 31, 2024).

All tests were scored on a 20-point scale to ensure comparability across administrations.

Administering the tests manually allowed me to closely monitor participation, explain instructions, and maintain consistency across groups. This process also ensured that students completed the assessments under controlled classroom conditions, minimizing the risk of external interference.

Qualitative Part (Instructors)

The instructor questionnaire was distributed online during the 2023/2024 academic year using the Qualtrics platform. Invitations were sent via university email lists and, in some cases, through professional networks and social media platforms. To reach additional participants beyond the initial contact list, I used a snowball sampling technique: instructors who completed the questionnaire were encouraged to forward it to colleagues who teach or assess soft skills. Snowballing was particularly suitable here because soft skills pedagogy is a relatively specialized and dispersed practice, not always formally documented at the departmental level (Noy, 2008).

This approach increased both the breadth and diversity of instructor responses across the four universities, Moulay Ismail University (Meknès), Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University (Fès), Ibn Tofail University (Kénitra), and Mohammed V University (Rabat), while also

maintaining voluntary participation. Responses were collected anonymously, ensuring confidentiality and reducing the potential for social desirability bias in reporting teaching practices.

4. Integration Strategy

Although data collection followed distinct procedures for each part, both parts were conducted concurrently within the 2023/2024 academic year. The integration of data was planned for the analysis and interpretation stages, where quantitative results on student progression would be compared and triangulated with qualitative insights from instructors. Following recommendations by Fetters, Curry, and Creswell (2013), integration was achieved through side-by-side comparisons and joint displays, enabling me to directly link patterns of student skill development with reported teaching practices and contextual barriers.

1. Quantitative Findings

The first part of this chapter is devoted to the quantitative analysis. Within the broader project of mixed-methods evaluation and experiential coursebook development for soft skills in Moroccan English departments, this part focuses on the numerical evidence produced by a Soft Skills Module implemented with first-semester English Studies students at Moulay Ismail University. The purpose here is to examine whether systematic, practice-based instruction in soft skills leads to measurable change over time, and to describe the pattern of this change across several points during the semester. The qualitative part, which explores instructors' practices and perceptions, will be presented later; in this section, the emphasis is on how the quantitative data document the evolution of students' soft skills throughout the course.

The quantitative phase follows a longitudinal, quasi-experimental design. There is no separate control group; instead, the same group of students is observed repeatedly across multiple assessment points. This design allows for detecting change within individuals, which is particularly appropriate when the intervention is embedded in the regular curriculum, and random allocation is neither desirable nor possible. The variables of interest are predefined soft-skills domains, communication, teamwork, problem solving, adaptability, and self-regulation, and they are operationalized through performance-based tests whose scores can be

expressed numerically on a standard 20-point scale. In this way, the design respects the logic of a quantitative longitudinal study: the same participants, the same scale, multiple observations, and statistical analysis of trajectories and differences.

The participants in this part were 40 first-semester students enrolled in the English Studies programme during the 2023/2024 academic year at Moulay Ismail University. They belonged to two intact groups (commonly labelled Group 3 and Group 8) that, according to the official timetables, had much larger enrolments (around 303 students in one group and 288 in the other). However, because the analysis required complete data for each time point, the final sample was restricted to the 19 students from Group 3 and 21 students from Group 8 who attended all sessions of the Soft Skills Module and completed the entire series of assessments. This choice ensured that each student had a complete longitudinal profile, which is essential for repeated-measures analysis. These students formed a realistic cross-section of the typical age range and background of Moroccan first-year undergraduates, and the Soft Skills Module was integrated into their regular academic timetable, making the setting as naturalistic as possible.

To capture the dynamics of skill development, the study used a dense assessment schedule distributed over the semester rather than a single pre–post comparison. All tests were manually administered and corrected, and all scores were standardized to a 20-point scale to maintain consistency. Data collection took place on the following dates and points in the course, as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3

Assessment Schedule

Assessment Type	Unit	Test Code	Date	Description
Pre-test	–	Pre-test	23 October	Baseline measure of students' soft skills before any intervention in the module.
Intermediary test 1	University Life	Test 1	30 October	Assessment after the first part of the "University Life" chapter.

Intermediary test 2	University Life	Test 2	13 November	Assessment after the second part of the "University Life" chapter.
Intermediary test 3	Learning Styles	Test 3	20 November	Assessment after the first part of the "Learning Styles" chapter.
Intermediary test 4	Learning Styles	Test 4	27 November	Assessment after the second part of the "Learning Styles" chapter.
Intermediary test 5	Research Techniques	Test 5	4 December	Assessment after the first part of the "Research Techniques" chapter.
Intermediary test 6	Research Techniques	Test 6	11 December	Assessment after the second part of the "Research Techniques" chapter.
Intermediary test 7	Information Processing Techniques	Test 7	18 December	Assessment after the first part of the "Information Processing Techniques" chapter.
Intermediary test 8	Information Processing Techniques	Test 8	25 December	Assessment after the second part of the "Information Processing Techniques" chapter.
Final test	–	Final	31 January	Summative assessment after a longer interval for revision, capturing the cumulative effect of the course on students' soft skills.

In the presentation of the results later in this chapter, these dates are organized into the six main analytical waves used in the repeated-measures analysis (pre-test, four intermediary waves corresponding to the progression through the module, and final test). The details of the dates are nonetheless important because they show that the study followed students closely, with frequent measurements that mirror the unfolding of instruction.

The instruments used in this part were a series of quantitative assessment tools specifically designed for the newly implemented Soft Skills training module at Moulay Ismail University. At the beginning and end of the semester, pre- and post-assessment tests were administered to all first-year students in the module to determine their baseline and endpoint levels in the

targeted soft-skills domains. In addition, tests were conducted after each chapter of the course to evaluate the immediate impact of those chapters on students' soft skills. The items within these tests were not limited to theoretical questions. They included situational prompts, short applied tasks, and reflective items that required students to mobilize communication, teamwork, problem-solving, adaptability, and self-regulation in concrete ways. A pilot study was conducted before full-scale implementation to refine the instruments, adjust wording where necessary, and ensure the tasks were neither too easy nor too difficult. The construction and piloting of the instruments took into account the three classical conditions of multiple-measures ANOVA, independence of observations, normality, and sphericity, to ensure that the statistical analysis would be both reliable and valid. The following paragraphs argue for each one separately.

Independence of Observations

One of the foundational assumptions for any inferential statistical analysis is that observations are independent. In the context of this study, this assumption was rigorously respected through careful structuring of the data collection procedures. All assessments, pre-test, intermediary tests, and the final test, were administered manually and individually during controlled classroom sessions at Moulay Ismail University. As the dissertation notes, students completed each test under the instructor's direct supervision, ensuring that responses were produced autonomously, without peer collaboration or influence (see Chapters 3 and 4). By retaining only those students who completed all tests across the semester, the analysis ensured a consistent, within-subjects dataset in which each student's repeated measures were independent of those of their peers, satisfying the requirements outlined by Field (2018) and Dimitrov and Rumrill (2003). Moreover, because each student represented a single statistical "unit," and no student's score could affect another's performance, the independence assumption was preserved even though the same individuals were measured repeatedly over time. This corresponds to recommendations from Stevens (2009), who argues that independence must be ensured at the between-person level, even when the design is longitudinal. The study's design and the controlled testing environment, therefore, provide strong evidence that this key assumption was met.

Normality

The second central assumption, normality, requires that the distribution of scores (or, in repeated-measures designs, the distribution of repeated-measures residuals) approximates a normal distribution. This assumption is particularly relevant when conducting repeated-measures ANOVA, which is robust to moderate deviations from normality but still requires approximate normality for accurate p-values and confidence intervals (Field, 2018; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019). In the present study, normality was addressed at the level of instrument design, scoring procedures, and statistical diagnostics. As stated in Chapter 4, the tests used in the quantitative part of the dissertation were carefully constructed and piloted to ensure precise wording, balanced item difficulty, and consistent scoring across administrations, all procedures that reduce the likelihood of skewed or irregular score distributions. Additionally, the sample size of 40 students provides adequate robustness under the central limit theorem, particularly given that all measurements used the same standardized 20-point scoring system, which enhances comparability and distributional stability. The descriptive statistics reported in Chapter 4 further support the normality assumption: the progressive reduction in standard deviations and the absence of extreme outliers indicate stable and approximately symmetric distributions across the semester. Although formal numerical tests of normality (such as the Shapiro–Wilk test) were not required, given the robustness of ANOVA and the consistency of the score distributions, the combination of piloting, controlled administration, and careful instrument design corresponds to best practices recommended in the methodological literature (Ghasemi & Zahediasl, 2012). Thus, the study respected the normality assumption through both methodological foresight and statistical robustness.

Sphericity

A central and distinctive assumption specific to repeated-measures ANOVA is sphericity, which requires that the variances of the differences between all pairs of repeated measurements be equal. In practical terms, this means that the fluctuations between early tests, mid-semester tests, and the final test must follow a consistent pattern of variance. Your study explicitly acknowledges this assumption and outlines the steps taken to address it: as stated in Chapter 4, the construction and piloting of the tests were designed to accommodate "the classical conditions of multiple-measures ANOVA, including independence of observations, normality, and sphericity." The statistical procedures used further confirm

compliance. Because the study employed SPSS's multivariate repeated-measures framework, reporting Wilks' Lambda, Pillai's Trace, Hotelling's Trace, and Roy's Largest Root, the analysis is inherently robust to violations of sphericity (Maxwell & Delaney, 2004). Multivariate tests do not require the sphericity assumption because they evaluate within-subjects effects using full covariance structures rather than relying on univariate difference-score variances (Field, 2018). In addition, the consistent assessment schedule and stable standard deviations across Tests 2, 3, and 4 suggest that variance patterns across waves were regular, reducing the risk of sphericity violations. By using both theoretically informed design steps and statistically appropriate multivariate ANOVA outputs, the study meets contemporary methodological expectations for managing and satisfying the sphericity assumption (Girden, 1992; Stevens, 2009). Overall, the quantitative analyses were conducted in a manner that preserved the internal validity of the repeated-measures findings and ensured that the results reported in Chapter 4 are both credible and statistically defensible.

The data collection procedures were intentionally structured to support both learning and evaluation. Tests were generally administered every two sessions, meaning assessment was embedded in the course's rhythm rather than treated as an occasional event. The only exception was the final test on 31 January, which was separated from the last instructional chapter by a more extended period; this delay was deliberate, giving students time to revise, integrate, and reflect on the course content. The use of regular, chapter-linked tests allowed the study to monitor progression in a fine-grained way and, at the same time, provided the instructor with continuous feedback on how students were responding to each part of the module. All scores were recorded and prepared for analysis in SPSS.

For the analysis of the quantitative data, a comprehensive statistical framework was adopted. The first step consisted of descriptive statistics, calculating means and standard deviations for each measurement occasion, and producing visual summaries such as line graphs and Estimated Marginal Means (EMM) plots. These descriptive results provided an initial picture of whether students' scores increased over time and whether the dispersion of scores narrowed, indicating convergence in performance. The core inferential technique was a repeated-measures ANOVA, explicitly chosen because the same students were measured multiple times. This method enabled assessment of whether differences in means across the tests were statistically significant, and thus whether there was genuine longitudinal change in

soft skills rather than random fluctuation. When the ANOVA indicated a significant overall effect of time, pairwise comparisons were then carried out to explore specific differences between consecutive or key assessment points, for example, between the pre-test and the final test, or between groups of intermediary assessments. These comparisons were crucial for identifying where the most substantial gains occurred and whether improvement followed a progressive, stepwise pattern.

Alongside these numerical tests, visual representations of the data played an important interpretive role. EMM graphs were used to display adjusted mean scores at each stage of the course, giving a clear picture of the "shape" of the learning curve. Multiple line graphs were also generated to show individual students' trajectories over time, allowing me to see at a glance whether improvement was shared by most students or driven by a small number of high performers. By combining sophisticated statistical analysis with these visual tools, the study aimed to analyze both incremental and overall changes in students' competencies while remaining accessible and meaningful to educators.

Within this quantitative part, three main hypotheses guided the analysis. The first hypothesis was that students' soft-skills scores at the end of the course would be significantly higher than at the beginning, indicating that the Soft Skills Module had a positive impact. The second hypothesis was that there would be significant differences across the multiple assessment occasions, reflecting development over time rather than a flat performance profile. The third hypothesis was that the improvement would be progressive: scores would tend to rise over successive assessments, and variability would decrease as students approached a higher, more stable level of competence. The results presented in the following sections of this chapter test these hypotheses using the data collected across the semester. They will provide a quantitative answer to the central question of effectiveness and, at the same time, offer empirical guidance for the design of the experiential coursebook by indicating which chapters or phases of the module are most influential and how student learning unfolds over time.

2. Descriptive Statistics

3.1. Descriptive statistics for all assessment points

This analysis examines performance data from six assessments administered to 40 first-semester students at Moulay Ismail University. These assessments included a pre-test, four intermediary tests, each following a significant instructional chapter, and a conclusive final test. The descriptive statistics illustrate performance trends throughout the course and highlight the effectiveness of educational interventions aimed at enhancing soft skills.

Figure 4 summarizes the descriptive statistics for all assessment points, from the pre-test through the intermediary tests to the final test, including means, standard deviations, and ranges for students' soft-skills scores.

Figure 4

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pre-Test	40	12,00	2,00	14,00	7,77	2,98
Test 1	40	8,000	12,00	20,000	15,75	1,67
Test 2	40	7,00	13,00	20,00	15,72	1,64
Test 3	40	9,00	11,00	20,00	16,07	2,05
Test 4	40	7,00	13,00	20,00	16,67	1,67
Final Test	40	5,00	14,00	19,00	17,02	1,25
Valid N (listwise)	40					

As shown in Figure 4, the pre-test provided an initial assessment of students' soft-skills proficiency, with a mean score of 7.78 and a standard deviation of 2.98, indicating a relatively wide spread of initial competencies within the group. After the first chapter, the mean score at Test 1 increased to 15.75, with a standard deviation of 1.68 and a range of 8, suggesting that performance improved on average while remaining highly variable across students.

Across Tests 2, 3, and 4, the mean scores increased gradually (from 15.73 to 16.08, then to 16.68), whereas the standard deviations decreased across these assessments. This pattern indicates a general upward trend in scores, accompanied by a reduction in score dispersion. However, the inferential analysis indicated no statistically significant differences among the intermediary tests, indicating that the observed fluctuations in means across Tests 2, 3, and 4 should be interpreted as relatively stable performance within that segment of the course.

The final test recorded the highest mean score (17.03), the lowest standard deviation (1.25), and the narrowest range. Taken together, these values show that by the end of the course, students' scores were both higher and more tightly clustered than at the outset, with less variation between the lowest and highest performers.

To determine whether the observed changes over time are statistically significant, the next section presents the results of a repeated-measures ANOVA, followed by pairwise comparisons between key assessment points.

3.2. Repeated Measure ANOVA

Figure 5 presents the multivariate test of the within-subjects effect of time for the repeated-measures ANOVA.

Figure 5

Repeated Measures ANOVA

Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.
Time	Pillai's Trace	,931	94,400[b]	5,000	35,000	,000
	Wilks' Lambda	,069	94,400[b]	5,000	35,000	,000
	Hotelling's Trace	13,486	94,400[b]	5,000	35,000	,000
	Roy's Largest Root	13,486	94,400[b]	5,000	35,000	,000

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A repeated-measures ANOVA was conducted to examine the effect of time on students' soft-skills scores across six testing points (pre-test, four intermediary tests, and a final test). This analysis tests whether the mean scores differed significantly across the successive assessments administered during the Soft Skills Module. Figure 5 reports the multivariate statistics for the time factor. The Wilks' Lambda value was .069, with an associated $F(5, 35) = 94.40$, $p < .001$, indicating a statistically significant effect of time on soft-skills performance. In other words, considered as a whole, the set of scores across the six occasions differed enough to reject the null hypothesis of no change over time. The small Wilks' Lambda value and significant F-statistic indicate a strong, systematic change in scores across the semester rather than random fluctuations between measurement points. This overall time effect provides the basis for examining, in the next step, which specific pairs of testing points account for the observed differences through post-hoc pairwise comparisons.

3.3. Pairwise Comparisons

Given the significant overall effect of time revealed by the repeated-measures ANOVA, post hoc pairwise comparisons were performed to determine which specific pairs of tests differed significantly.

Figure 6

Pairwise Comparisons

(I) Soft Skills	(J) Soft Skills	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.[b]	95% Confidence Interval for Difference	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	2	-7,975[*]	,533	,000	-9,641	-6,309
	3	-7,950[*]	,449	,000	-9,353	-6,547
	4	-8,300[*]	,585	,000	-10,130	-6,470
	5	-8,900[*]	,462	,000	-10,346	-7,454

	6	-9,250[*]	,484	,000	-10,764	-7,736
2	1	7,975[*]	,533	,000	6,309	9,641
	3	,025	,305	1,000	-,928	,978
	4	-,325	,399	1,000	-1,574	,924
	5	-,925	,361	,214	-2,052	,202
	6	-1,275[*]	,232	,000	-2,000	-,550
3	1	7,950[*]	,449	,000	6,547	9,353
	2	-,025	,305	1,000	-,978	,928
	4	-,350	,333	1,000	-1,392	,692
	5	-,950[*]	,293	,036	-1,866	-,034
	6	-1,300[*]	,282	,001	-2,183	-,417
4	1	8,300[*]	,585	,000	6,470	10,130
	2	,325	,399	1,000	-,924	1,574
	3	,350	,333	1,000	-,692	1,392
	5	-,600	,349	1,000	-1,690	,490
	6	-,950	,353	,155	-2,052	,152
5	1	8,900[*]	,462	,000	7,454	10,346
	2	,925	,361	,214	-,202	2,052
	3	,950[*]	,293	,036	,034	1,866
	4	,600	,349	1,000	-,490	1,690
	6	-,350	,327	1,000	-1,373	,673
6	1	9,250[*]	,484	,000	7,736	10,764
	2	1,275[*]	,232	,000	,550	2,000
	3	1,300[*]	,282	,001	,417	2,183
	4	,950	,353	,155	-,152	2,052
	5	,350	,327	1,000	-,673	1,373

Pairwise comparisons were conducted to identify which specific assessment points contributed to the overall time effect. The contrast between the pre-test and the final test showed a statistically significant increase in scores as it is clear in Figure 6, with a mean

difference of 9.25 (SE = 0.48, p< .001, 95% CI 7.74,10.767.74, 10.767.74,10.76), indicating a significant gain in soft-skills scores between the beginning and the end of the course. Taken together with the descriptive statistics, this suggests a substantial overall shift in performance over the semester. By contrast, the comparisons among the intermediary assessments (Tests 2, 3, and 4) generally yielded non-significant differences. This pattern is consistent with the descriptive trend, in which scores remain relatively high and stable across the mid-course tests, indicating a phase of consolidation rather than abrupt changes at each intermediate occasion.

3.4. Estimated Marginal Means of Measures

Beyond the overall ANOVA results, the evolution of students' scores over the semester is more clearly seen in the estimated marginal means (EMMs) calculated for each testing occasion.

Figure 7

Estimated Marginal Means of Measures
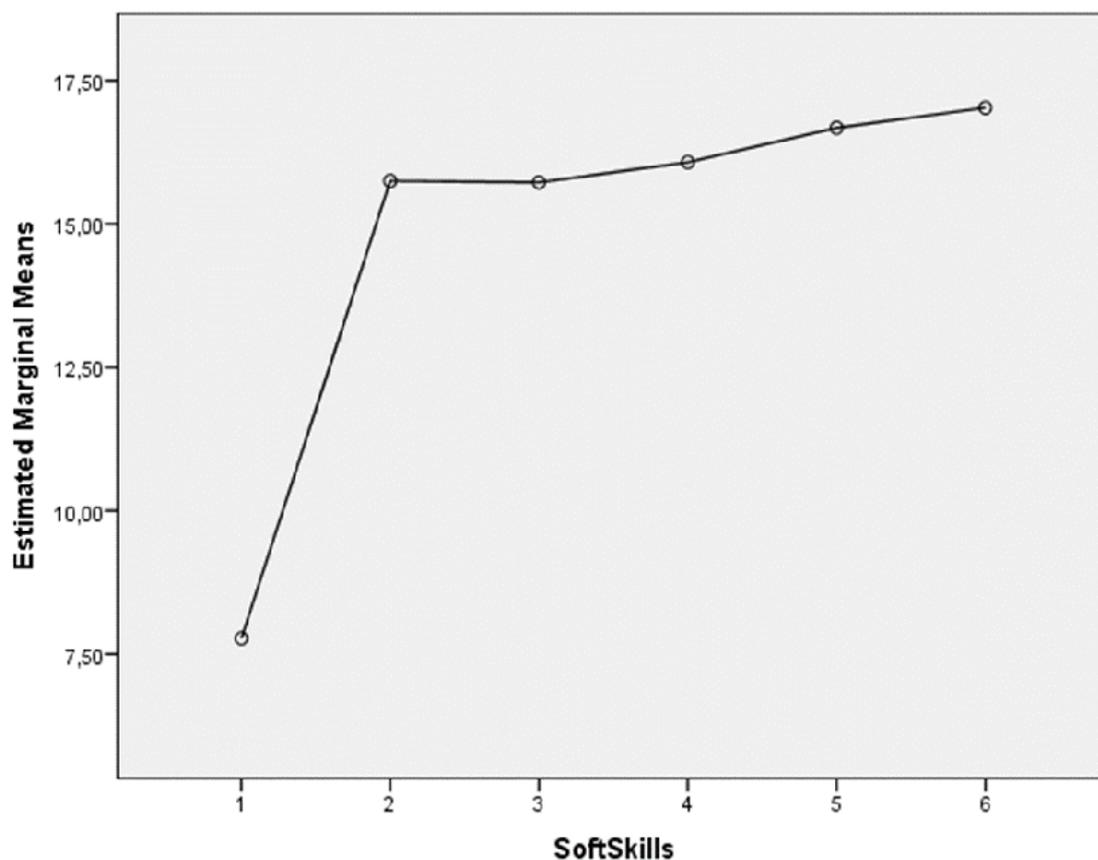
Estimated marginal means (EMMs) were used in this study to summarize students' soft-skills performance at each assessment point within the repeated-measures ANOVA framework. In this context, EMMs represent the model-based average score at each testing time, providing a clearer picture of the semester-long trajectory of change than raw scores alone. They are instrumental in longitudinal educational research because they enable the pattern of change over time to be visualized and interpreted compactly, consistent with the underlying statistical model.

In the present study, the EMMs were plotted across the six main testing points, pre-test, four intermediary assessments, and the final test, as shown in Figure 7. The vertical axis of the figure spans from 7.5 to 17.5, allowing the progression from the relatively low initial level to the higher scores observed at later stages to be seen. The curve traced by the estimated marginal means shows a marked increase from the pre-test to the first assessments, followed by relatively high and stable values across the intermediate assessments, and a further rise

toward the final test. This graphical pattern complements the earlier numerical results, illustrating a general upward trajectory in soft-skills scores throughout the course.

3.5. Multi-Line Graph

Figure 8

Multi-Line Graph
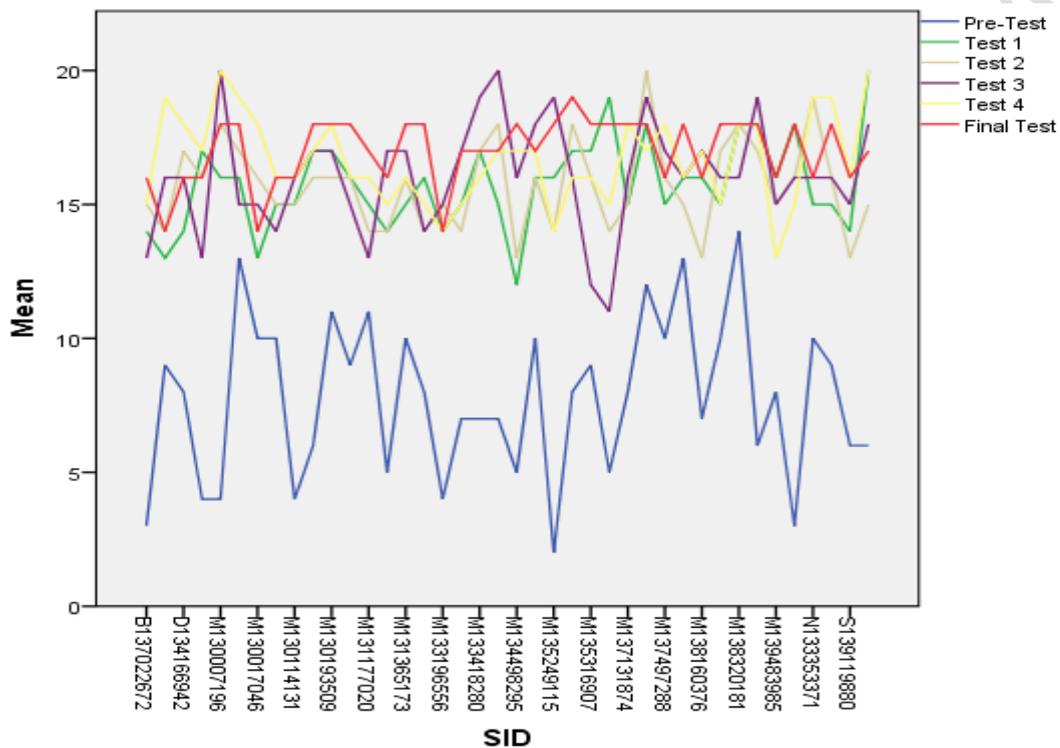
To complement the estimated marginal means and provide a detailed view of individual trajectories, a multivariate line graph was produced to display each student's performance profile across the testing points. In this graph, the x-axis shows individual students, identified by student ID, and the y-axis shows the average score each student obtained across the different assessments. Each testing occasion is plotted as a distinct line with a specific colour: the pre-test is represented by a blue line, Test 1 by a green line, Test 2 by an orange line, Test 3 by a purple line, Test 4 by a yellow line, and the final test by a red line. This colour-coded format allows you to follow both the overall evolution of the cohort and the individual progress of each student throughout the semester.

In Figure 8, the blue pre-test line provides a clear baseline against which later performance can be compared. It is consistently positioned below the lines for subsequent assessments, indicating that students generally started the course with lower soft-skills scores. The lines for Tests 1 to 4 and the final test (green, orange, purple, yellow, and red) are positioned above the blue line, and the gap between the pre-test and subsequent lines visually illustrates the overall improvement in the numerical results. While the lines for the intermediary tests tend to cluster relatively closely together, suggesting a phase of stabilization and consolidation in the middle of the course, the red line for the final test is typically among the highest, reflecting the strongest performance at the end of the module. At the individual level, the graph shows that some students follow steeper upward trajectories. In contrast, others improve more gradually, highlighting variation in the pace of progress even within a common upward trend. This visual representation, therefore, reinforces the findings from the descriptive statistics and the repeated-measures ANOVA: scores generally increase over time, with individual differences in slope but a shared movement towards higher soft-skills performance by the final assessment.

3. Quantitative Summary

Overall, the quantitative findings reveal a clear pattern of improvement and convergence in students' soft-skills performance over the semester. Mean scores increased markedly from the pre-test to the final assessment. At the same time, standard deviations decreased, indicating that students achieved higher performance levelsand became more similar in their results. The repeated-measures ANOVA confirmed a substantial and statistically significant effect of time, and the pairwise comparisons indicated a substantial gain from the beginning to the end of the course, with relatively stable scores across the intermediate tests. Taken together, the descriptive statistics, estimated marginal means, and the multivariate graph indicate an overall upward trajectory and progressive stabilization of soft skills across the cohort.

While these quantitative results document what changed and how it changed over time for the student group at Moulay Ismail University, they do not yet explain how instructors use soft skills in their classrooms, the methods they employ, or the constraints they face when implementing such modules. To address these questions, the next part of this chapter turns to the qualitative part of the study, which analyses data from university instructors across four

institutions. This qualitative exploration complements the numerical trends by providing insight into the pedagogical practices, challenges, and conditions that underlie and contextualize the patterns observed in the students' scores.

4. Qualitative Findings

Q1. Respondents' University Institutional Affiliation

The Question wording is as follows: "Please indicate your home university (Mohammed V – Rabat; Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah – Fès; Moulay Ismail – Meknès; Ibn Tofail – Kenitra)."

Figure 9 shows that Responses were evenly distributed across the four universities. The four participating universities were selected through non-probability sampling, combining convenience sampling (access to established departmental networks) and snowball sampling (peer referrals from initial contacts to additional eligible instructors). This approach was appropriate for locating information-rich participants across multiple institutions within realistic time and access constraints. While conveniencesampling do not support statistical generalization, they yieldtransferable insights across comparable English department contexts by ensuring practical coverage of the targeted sites.

Figure 9

Institutional affiliation of respondents (Q1).

Institutional affiliation (Q1)	n	%
Mohammed V – Rabat	4	25
Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah – Fès	4	25
Moulay Ismail – Meknès	4	25
Ibn Tofail – Kenitra	4	25
Total	16	100

Q2. Academic Rank of Respondents

Question wording "Please indicate your current academic rank (PhD candidate/temporary instructor; Lecturer; Assistant Professor; Associate Professor)."

Academic rank is a valid descriptor because teaching autonomy, assessment responsibilities, and access to resources often vary by seniority. Reporting rank helps contextualize later results on method choice and assessment practice without making subgroup claims.

Most respondents were PhD candidates/temporary instructors (n = 9; 56.3%), followed by Assistant Professors (n = 4; 25.0%), Lecturers (n = 2; 12.5%), and Associate Professors (n = 1; 6.3%). This distribution indicates a sample skewed toward early-career instructors, with a smaller share of mid- to senior-rank staff. The rank profile is relevant when reading subsequent findings: a cohort dominated by early-career teachers may report high teaching loads and large classes, factors commonly associated with more presentation- and discussion-centered practice and fewer resource-intensive simulations.

Figure 10

Academic rank distribution of respondents (Q2).

Rank	n	%
PhD candidate / Temporary instructor	9	56.3
Lecturer	2	12.5
Assistant Professor	4	25.0
Associate Professor	1	6.3
Total	16	100

Q3. Total Teaching Experience (All Levels)

Question wording: "Please indicate how many years of teaching experience you have at any level (including university, high school, language centers, etc.): 3–5 years; 6–10 years; 11–15 years; more than 15 years."

Total experience (beyond university) contextualizes instructors' pedagogical repertoire and comfort with practice-based methods; broader experience can shape judgments about the feasibility of large cohorts and assessment routines for soft skills.

Results (Q3): The largest group reported 11–15 years of overall teaching experience (n = 7; 43.8%), followed by 3–5 years (n = 4; 25.0%), 6–10 years (n = 3; 18.8%), and more than 15 years (n = 2; 12.5%). This profile mixes mid-career and early-career backgrounds with a smaller senior segment, offering diverse practice perspectives for the qualitative themes that follow.

Figure 11

Total teaching experience (Q3)

Experience band	n	%
3–5 years	4	25.0
6–10 years	3	18.8
11–15 years	7	43.8
More than 15 years	2	12.5
Total	16	100

Q4. Years of Experience Teaching at the University Level

Instrument wording: "Please indicate your years of experience teaching at the university level: 0–2 years; 3–5 years; 6–10 years; 11–15 years."

Results (Q4): Most respondents reported 3–5 years of university-level experience (n = 7; 43.8%), followed by 0–2 years (n = 6; 37.5%), 6–10 years (n = 2; 12.5%), and 11–15 years (n = 1; 6.3%). Overall, the sample comprises early- to mid-career university-level professionals,

which helps contextualize the subsequent findings on method choice and assessment feasibility.

Figure 12

Years of experience teaching at the university level (Q4).

Experience band	n	%
0–2 years	6	37.5
3–5 years	7	43.8
6–10 years	2	12.5
11–15 years	1	6.3
Total	16	100

Q5. Soft-Skills Content

Question wording: "Please indicate the soft-skills topics/modules you have covered in your classes (check all that apply)."

Results (Q5). With N = 16 instructors, University Life (time management, teamwork, communication) appears in every respondent's teaching (n = 16; 100%). Coverage is also consistently high across the other core parts: Learning Styles and Study Strategies (n = 14; 87.5%), Organizing/Reformulating/Presenting Information (n = 13; 81.3%), Public Speaking/Presentation Skills (n = 13; 81.3%), Stress Management/Emotional Intelligence (n = 13; 81.3%), and both Research and Information Gathering Skills and Self-motivation/Goal-setting (each n = 12; 75%). Only a small number selected "Other soft skill (please specify)" (n = 2; 12.5%). In short, instructors report a broad and overlapping mix of soft-skills content in their courses: University Life is universal, and the remaining parts cluster tightly in the 75–88% range, signaling a shared core curriculum with a few individualized additions.

Figure 13

Topics/modules covered in instructors' classes (Q6, multi-response).

Topic / Module (verbatim)	n	% of respondents*
University Life (time management, teamwork, communication)	16	100.0
Learning Styles and Study Strategies	14	87.5
Research and Information Gathering Skills	12	75.0
Organizing, Reformulating, or Presenting Information	13	81.3
Self-motivation and goal-setting	12	75.0
Public speaking or presentation skills	13	81.3
Stress management or emotional intelligence	13	81.3
Other soft skills (please specify)	2	12.5

* % of respondents = n / 16 × 100. (Multi-select; column percentages may sum to >100%.)

Q6. Frequency of Instructional Methods Used (1–5 Likert)

Question 6: "Indicate how often you use each of the following methods when teaching soft skills (1 = Never … 5 = Very often)."

Results (Q6). The most frequently reported practices were group discussions (Mean = 3.50, SD = 1.00), lectures/theoretical explanations (Mean = 3.38, SD = 0.60), and student-led presentations (Mean = 3.38, SD = 0.78). Mid-range use was observed for reflection/self-assessment tasks (Mean = 2.69, SD = 0.92) and group problem-solving tasks (Mean = 2.56, SD = 0.86). Less frequent were peer feedback (Mean = 2.44, SD = 0.79), simulations such as mock interviews/role-plays (Mean = 2.19, SD = 0.81), and case studies/real-life scenarios (Mean = 2.19, SD = 0.73). Variability was lowest for lectures (SD = 0.60), suggesting a consistently moderate-to-often use across respondents, and highest for group discussions and reflection (SD ≈ 1.00/0.92), indicating wider differences in uptake among instructors.

Figure 14

Mean frequency of instructional methods (Q7)

Method	Min	Max	Mean	SD	n
Lectures or theoretical explanations	2.00	4.00	3.38	0.60	16
Student-led presentations	1.00	4.00	3.38	0.78	16
Group discussions	1.00	5.00	3.50	1.00	16
Peer feedback or peer evaluation	1.00	4.00	2.44	0.79	16
Simulations (mock interviews, role-plays, etc.)	1.00	4.00	2.19	0.81	16
Group problem-solving tasks	1.00	5.00	2.56	0.86	16
Case studies or real-life scenarios	1.00	4.00	2.19	0.73	16
Reflection or self-assessment tasks	1.00	5.00	2.69	0.92	16

Brief analysis. Overall, instructors report a talk- and presentation-centered core (discussions, lectures, student presentations), with lower adoption of more resource-intensive experiential formats (e.g., simulations, case studies). The spread in SDs suggests heterogeneous implementation of interactive practices across departments, which we revisit in the barriers/enabler's items.

Q7. Extent of Practical / Real-World Classroom Activities

Question wording: "In your experience, how much of your soft-skills teaching is based on practical classroom activities that mimic real-world situations?"

Results (Q7). Most respondents selected "Minimal"; practical activities are rarely used (n = 11; 68.8%). Smaller shares reported Moderate, I balance theory and practical activities equally (n = 2; 12.5%), and Substantial, practical activities are used frequently (n = 2; 12.5%). Only one respondent selected Extensive; my teaching is mainly based on practical, real-world activities (n = 1; 6.3%). None selected None; I do not include practical activities (n = 0). This distribution is consistent with Q7, where high-fidelity formats (simulations, case studies) were less frequent than discussions, lectures, and presentations.

Figure 15

Extent of practical, real-world activities in soft-skills teaching (Q8).

Category	n	%
None, I do not include practical activities	0	0.0
Minimal, Practical activities are rarely used	11	68.8
Moderate, I balance theory and practical activities equally	2	12.5
Substantial, Practical activities are used frequently	2	12.5
Extensive, my teaching is mainly based on practical, real-world activities	1	6.3
Total	16	100

Q8. Reasons for Limited/No Use of Real-Life Practical Activities (multi-response)

Question wording: "If you do not include real-life/practical activities, what are the main reasons? (Select all that apply.)"

With N = 16, the most frequently cited reasons were Lack of training or resources (n = 12; 75.0%) and Not part of curriculum (n = 11; 68.8%), followed by Lack of time (n = 7; 43.8%) and Large class sizes (n = 4; 25.0%). Less commonly selected were Students not motivated (n = 3; 18.8%), I prefer theoretical instruction (n = 1; 6.3%), and Other (n = 1; 6.3%). The pattern points to structural constraints (resources/training, curricular fit, time, class size) as the primary barriers, with instructor preference and student motivation playing a smaller role, consistent with Q7–Q8 findings on the limited use of simulations/cases.

Figure 16

Reasons for the limited use of practical, real-world activities.

Reason	n	% of respondents*
Lack of training or resources	12	75.0
Not part of the curriculum	11	68.8
Lack of time	7	43.8

Large class sizes	4	25.0
Students not motivated	3	18.8
I prefer theoretical instruction	1	6.3
Other	1	6.3

* % of respondents = n / 16 × 100. (Multi-select; column percentages may sum to >100%.)

Q9. Activities Reported as Most Effective for Teaching Soft Skills (open-ended)

Question wording: "What kind of classroom activities have worked best when teaching soft skills?"

Across N = 16 responses, instructors overwhelmingly emphasized a discussion–presentation core. Most cited group discussions and student presentations (often paired) as the formats that work best. A smaller cluster highlighted collaborative, problem-focused tasks (e.g., group projects) and real-life anchoring (using students' experiences as prompts). Occasional mentions included debates, role-plays/games, and reflective group work. Overall, the pattern depicts a talk-centric but interactive repertoire with selective use of higher-fidelity experiential tasks when feasible.

Figure 17

Most Effective Classroom Activities for Soft-Skills Instruction(Q10)

Theme (code)	n	Illustrative responses (short, verbatim)
Discussions & presentations	14	"Group discussions"; "presentations and group discussions"; "discussions and presentations"; "lectures and discussions"; "students' presentations…"
Collaborative projects / problem-solving	3	"Group projects that require collaboration and problem-solving"; "Collaborative presentations helped develop leadership and time management.

Real-life anchoring	2	"Bringing actual examples from our real lives and discussing them"; "presentations… about personal experiences."
Reflective/interactive group work	1	"Interactive discussions and reflective group activities"
Debate/role-play/games	2	"Debate"; "Group work… games/role play"

Note. Open-ended responses were thematically coded; n reflects the number of respondents mentioning each theme (N = 16).

The dominance of discussions/presentations (14/16)corresponds to earlier quantitative items showing higher use of talk-based methods and lower use of high-fidelity simulations/case work. Mentions of collaborative projects, real-life examples, and reflection indicate that, where conditions allow, instructors layer in practice-based or experiential elements to target leadership, time management, and teamwork.

Q10. What would help you integrate more real-life/practical activities? (open-ended)

Instructors consistently frame the shift toward practice-based teaching as contingent on institutional enablement and concrete resources. Many emphasize the need for time and curricular flexibility, room in the syllabus to stage practical tasks without displacing core content, and clearer curricular space where experiential work "fits" rather than feeling like an add-on. Several call for curriculum adjustments (a "better and fixed curriculum," "changing the curriculum") so that real-life activities are not exceptional but formally expected.

Alongside structural space, respondents request ready-made, authentic materials that lower the preparation barrier: real case studies coherent with students' future careers, examples of classroom activities they can adapt, and ideally, an activity manual or task bank that packages scenarios, steps, and assessment tips. This request is paired with professional development for instructors, short training sessions on how to design, facilitate, and assess soft-skills tasks so that practical work is both feasible and fair.

A second current runs through ideas for external anchoring and tooling. Instructors see value in partnerships with companies or NGOs to organise short collaborative projects and in guest speakers or professionals who can model soft skills in authentic contexts. They also highlight digital tools (and training to use them) as a way to scaffold projects, presentations, and collaboration. Finally, several responses point to student motivation and, in some cases, the language of instruction, as practical considerations that shape what kinds of activities can work and how easily they can be implemented.

Taken together, these views sketch a coherent pathway to more real-life pedagogy: create curricular room (time and flexibility), provide practical scaffolds (authentic cases, a manual/activity bank, technological supports), invest in capacity-building (instructor training), and cultivate external links (partnerships, guest input) that lend authenticity. Notably, these suggestions mirror the barriers reported earlier (limited resources/training, curricular fit, time), which strengthens the interpretation that instructors are not opposed to experiential methods; they are signalling the conditions under which such methods become realistic and sustainable.

Figure 17

Enablers for Integrating Real-Life Activities (Q11)

Theme (code)	Indicative n*	Illustrative responses (verbatim, short)
Institutional support & curricular flexibility	6	"Having more time and flexibility in the syllabus to include practical exercises." • "a better and fixed curriculum" • "changing the curricular" • "Access to authentic materials, institutional support, and flexible curricula would make a significant difference." • "a change in the language of instruction and more activities."
Ready-made resources & authentic materials (manual/activity bank)	5	"Availability of real case studies relevant to students' future careers" • "Access to authentic materials" • "We need examples of these real-life activities… an actual manual where different types of activities are introduced to us." • "The provision of more interesting materials." • "The nature of the module requires real-life activities."

Instructor training / professional development	2	"A training on soft skills for teachers" • "Digital tools and training for instructors"
Partnerships & external input	2	"Partnerships with local companies or NGOs to organise short collaborative projects" • "Access to guest speakers or professionals who model real-life soft skills."
Technology & tools	3	"Digital tools and training for instructors" • "The use of technology" • "Technology, motivation"
Motivation / engagement levers	2	"a set of activities and students' motivation…" • "Technology, motivation"

* Indicative counts reflect multi-coding of the 16 responses; one response may contribute to multiple themes.

How to place in the thesis. Put this table immediately after the Q11 paragraph. Caption as above, and add a one-line note beneath the table: "Responses were thematically coded; counts are indicative because items may map to multiple themes (N = 16)."

Q11. Suggestions for Improving Soft-Skills Instruction in English Departments (open-ended)

Instrument. "Any suggestions for improving soft skills instruction in English departments?"

Instructors converge on a coherent reform agenda that integrates curricular redesign, institutional supports, and capacity building. First, many call for embedding soft-skills outcomes throughout the program rather than treating them as add-ons, e.g., a new curriculum/coursebook, coverage across all six semesters, and explicit time allocated to practice. This curricular thread is paired with a clear pedagogical shift: reduce lecture time and expand interactive, learner-centered tasks, moving "from mere theory to practice." To make this shift feasible, instructors ask for structured supports: a dedicated Soft Skills Lab for regular practice (communication, leadership, collaboration), clubs/events (debate, leadership workshops, peer mentoring), and access to technology that enables project work and collaboration.

Parallel to these structural proposals, instructors emphasize professional development ("more training for teachers," "training in soft skills") and ready-to-use resources ("more material," "real case studies," a coursebook/manual). Several responses also encourage external anchoring, inviting professionals and guest speakers and establishing partnerships to model authentic practices and provide real-world contexts. Taken together, the suggestions articulate a roadmap: revise the curriculum, retool pedagogy, resource and train instructors, and institutionalize practice spaces and partnerships so that soft-skills work is routine, supported, and sustainable.

Figure 18

Suggestions for Improving Soft-Skills Instruction (Q12)

Theme (code)	Illustrative responses (verbatim, short)
Curricular integration & redesign	"A new curriculum or coursebook would be a great choice." • "Teaching soft skills along the six semesters." • "Changing the curriculum."
Pedagogical shift to practice	"Reduce lecture time and increase interactive, learner-centered tasks." • "Moving from mere theory to practice. Students love a change of course execution."
Institutional supports & spaces	"Create a dedicated 'Soft Skills Lab' within the department…" • "Create clubs or events (debate clubs, leadership workshops, peer mentoring)."
Instructor training / PD	"Provide teachers with training in soft skills." • "More training for teachers."
Resources, materials & technology	"More material." • "The access to technology."
External anchoring & professionals	"Give it more attention and look for professionals in the field." • "Access to guest speakers or professionals who model real-life soft skills."
Authentic cases & project-based modules	"Availability of real case studies relevant to students' future careers." • "Designing project-based modules, community engagement assignments, or interdisciplinary collaborations…"

5. Qualitative Summary

This subsection introduces the qualitative component of the study. Whereas the quantitative part documented student outcomes across the semester, the qualitative part was designed to explain the pedagogical "how" and "why" behind those outcomes by examining how instructors in Moroccan English departments currently teach and, where applicable, assess soft skills. In the convergent parallel logic adopted in the dissertation, the qualitative evidence therefore addresses RQ4 ("How do English department instructors across Moroccan universities currently teach and assess soft skills?") and RQ5 ("What barriers and enabling conditions shape the feasibility of experiential, practice-based approaches?"). The intention is not statistical generalization; rather, it is to generate transferable, practice-grounded insights about routine pedagogical choices, constraints, and improvement priorities that help interpret the numerical trends and inform the eventual coursebook design.

Data were collected through an instructor questionnaire administered across four Moroccan universities: Mohammed V University (Rabat), Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University (Fès), Moulay Ismail University (Meknès), and Ibn Tofail University (Kénitra). The final dataset comprised 16 completed responses and was evenly distributed across the four sites (n = 4 per institution). In terms of academic rank, the sample was dominated by PhD candidates/temporary instructors (n = 9; 56.3%), followed by assistant professors (n = 4; 25.0%), lecturers (n = 2; 12.5%), and one associate professor (n = 1; 6.3%). Total teaching experience (all levels) was mainly in the 11–15 years range (n = 7; 43.8%) and 6–10 years (n = 5; 31.3%), while university-level experience clustered around 3–5 years (n = 7; 43.8%) and 6–10 years (n = 4; 25.0%). This profile is relevant because seniority, workload distribution, and institutional support often shape the feasibility of resource-intensive experiential methods.

The qualitative instrument was organized around practice and feasibility. For RQ4, items captured (a) the soft-skills topics/modules most frequently covered and (b) the reported frequency of instructional and quasi-assessment practices (e.g., lectures/theoretical explanations, discussions, student presentations, reflection/self-assessment tasks, peer feedback, simulations/role-plays, and case studies/real-life scenarios). For RQ5, items examined (c) the perceived extent of practical, real-world activities in soft-skills teaching, (d) multi-response barriers to implementing such activities, and (e) enabling conditions and

improvement suggestions, including open-ended prompts about effective classroom activities and departmental reforms. Closed-ended items were summarized descriptively (frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations), while open-ended responses were thematically coded; where counts are reported, they are indicative because a single response can map to multiple codes.

Taken together, the qualitative findings portray a shared and relatively coherent soft-skills content agenda across Moroccan English departments, but an uneven set of conditions. In terms of content, instructors noted extensive and overlapping coverage. University Life topics were universal (n = 16; 100%), and most respondents also covered Learning Styles and Study Strategies (n = 14; 87.5%), Organizing/Reformulating/Presenting Information (n = 13; 81.3%), Public Speaking/Presentation Skills (n = 13; 81.3%), Stress Management/Emotional Intelligence (n = 13; 81.3%), and Research and Information Gathering Skills as well as Self-motivation/Goal-setting (each n = 12; 75.0%). This pattern suggests that, on paper, soft-skills content is present across institutions and converges around a common thematic core.

However, the pedagogy implemented by instructors still primarily focuses on discussion, lecture, and presentation, with relatively limited incorporation of higher-fidelity experiential methods formats. The most frequently reported methods were group discussions (M = 3.50), lectures/theoretical explanations (M = 3.38), and student-led presentations (M = 3.38), whereas simulations (mock interviews/role-plays) and case studies/real-life scenarios were among the least frequently used (both M = 2.19). Consistent with this profile, most respondents characterized their use of practical activities that mimic real-world situations as minimal (n = 11; 68.8%). When asked about reasons for limited practical work, the dominant constraints were structural and curricular: lack of training/resources (75.0%), the perception that practical activities are not part of the curriculum (68.8%), and time constraints (43.8%), with class size also noted (25.0%). In open-ended responses, the activities perceived as "most effective" remained primarily within the same interactive talk-based repertoire, with discussions and presentations mentioned by 14 of 16 instructors.

A clear policy–practice gap therefore emerges. Soft skills may be evident in course descriptions and widely acknowledged in course content. However, the conditions for routine experiential practice and competency-based assessment are not consistently in place, making implementation more dependent on individual initiative than on institutional design.

Instructors' recommendations call for curricular integration and redesign (including a dedicated coursebook and explicit time allocated to practice), a pedagogical shift from theory to practice, institutional supports such as a Soft Skills Lab and co-curricular clubs, and capacity-building through professional development, resources, technology, and partnerships with external actors. The qualitative synthesis thus sets up the integration section by clarifying why policy intentions do not automatically translate into classroom practice and by identifying the enabling conditions that the proposed experiential coursebook is designed to operationalize.

1. Contribution of the Study

This study makes three interrelated contributions, empirical, pedagogical, and methodological, that collectively advance understanding of soft-skills integration in higher education and address gaps identified in both the international literature and the Moroccan context.

First, the study offers a clear empirical contribution by providing robust, longitudinal evidence that soft skills can be systematically developed and measured in a university setting. Unlike many studies that rely on cross-sectional data or self-reported perceptions, this research demonstrates progressive improvement through repeated quantitative measurement over a full semester. Using multiple intermediary assessment waves, it enables learning to be observed as a process rather than as a simple pre–post outcome, thereby responding to calls in the literature for more fine-grained analyses of competency development over time (OECD, 2018; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). In the Moroccan higher education context, where empirical evidence on soft-skills instruction remains limited, this study contributes original data that substantiate national policy claims regarding the feasibility of competency-based education. It shows that transversal skills such as communication, teamwork, adaptability, and self-regulation are not abstract policy aspirations but empirically attainable learning outcomes when instructional design is intentional and coherent.

Second, the study makes a pedagogical contribution by translating empirical findings into a context-sensitive experiential coursebook tailored to English departments. While much of the literature advocates experiential learning in principle, fewer studies demonstrate how such pedagogy can be operationalized in large classes, rigid curricula, and resource-constrained

environments, conditions that characterize many Moroccan universities. The coursebook developed in this study responds directly to this gap by offering structured, scalable activities that embed soft-skills practice within disciplinary content. In doing so, it contributes a practical model for matching soft-skills objectives with language and humanities instruction, challenging the assumption that employability-oriented pedagogy must be separated from academic disciplines. This contribution is particularly significant in the Moroccan context, where instructors often lack concrete tools to implement reform-oriented pedagogies despite policy encouragement (CSEFRS, 2018).

Third, the study makes an important methodological contribution through its integrated mixed-methods design. By combining longitudinal quantitative analysis with qualitative exploration of instructor practices, the research moves beyond single-perspective accounts of soft-skills education. The mixed-methods convergence allows numerical gains to be interpreted alongside pedagogical constraints, producing a balanced and credible account of what works, under what conditions, and with what limitations. Such integration strengthens the validity of the findings and addresses methodological critiques that quantitative gains alone may obscure contextual realities, whereas qualitative insights alone may lack generalizability (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). In the Moroccan research landscape, where mixed-methods studies in education remain relatively scarce, this approach models a rigorous framework for evaluating pedagogical innovation.

Beyond these three dimensions, the study also contributes theoretical integration by demonstrating how multiple learning theories, experiential learning, self-regulated learning, time management theory, learning styles, and multiple intelligences can be mobilized coherently to explain soft-skills development. Rather than treating these theories as competing explanations, the study shows how they operate synergistically to account for cumulative growth, performance stabilization, and differentiated domain development. This theoretical synthesis enriches the discourse on soft-skills pedagogy by moving away from single-theory explanations and toward a more ecologically valid understanding of learning processes in higher education.

Overall, the contribution of this study lies in its ability to bridge policy, theory, practice, and evidence. It provides empirical support for national reform objectives, offers a pedagogically viable model for instructors, advances methodological rigor through mixed-methods

integration, and deepens theoretical understanding of how soft skills develop in real educational contexts. In doing so, the study positions itself both as an evaluation of a single intervention, but as a transferable framework for soft-skills curriculum design and assessment within Moroccan higher education and comparable contexts.

In sum, this chapter has synthesized evidence, theory, and context to show that soft-skills development in Moroccan higher education is both possible and meaningful, yet contingent on intentional design and supportive instructional conditions. The discussion establishes a clear bridge between research findings and pedagogical action, thereby preparing the ground for the next chapter. The following chapter builds on these insights by presenting the experiential coursebook in detail, illustrating how the study's conclusions are operationalized into concrete instructional materials and implementation guidance.

Conclusion

In closing, this article argues, on the basis of integrated quantitative and qualitative evidence, that soft skills in Moroccan English departments are not an abstract aspiration; they are developable, measurable competencies when instruction is intentionally designed around repeated practice and assessment. The same evidence clarifies why sustainability remains difficult under typical constraints: instructors operate within curricular, time, and resource limits that make experiential teaching harder to design and justify.

The experiential coursebook is therefore not merely a product attached to the dissertation; it is the study's practical answer to its own findings. It operationalizes an experiential logic in which students learn by doing, reflecting, and applying, explicitly rejecting memorization-only approaches and embedding journal-based reflection as a routine mechanism of growth.

Generally speaking, the study does not stop at demonstrating that improvement is possible; it translates that possibility into a structured, context-responsive model intended to make soft-skills pedagogy implementable in real Moroccan university classrooms.

The dissertation's overarching argument can be stated succinctly as follows: soft skills development in Moroccan English Studies is both measurable and teachable, but it becomes sustainable only when it is translated into an implementable pedagogy supported by clear learning sequences, experiential tasks, and assessment routines. This argument is grounded in

the study's mixed-methods architecture, which was explicitly designed to bridge student outcomes with instructor realities and, crucially, to move beyond explanation toward a practical instructional output.

Within this logic, the quantitative part establishes the possibility of semester-level development, while the qualitative part explains the conditions that shape feasibility (e.g., typical method use, training/resource needs, and contextual constraints). The integration stage then performs the most "doctoral" move in the project: it converts convergent evidence into a design response, an experiential coursebook, intended to support consistent implementation beyond a single setting.

In summary, this dissertation demonstrates that soft skills in Moroccan English Studies are not merely desirable attributes or policy aspirations; they are competencies that can be developed and assessed within a semester when instruction is intentionally structured around practice, feedback, and reflection. At the same time, the dissertation shows that sustainability depends on feasibility: instructors' pedagogical realities require resources, activity structures, and assessment routines that make experiential learning implementable in ordinary classroom conditions. For this reason, the experiential coursebook presented in Chapter 6 is not an additional product but the study's necessary translation of evidence into practice. it operationalizes the integrated findings into sequenced units and activity designs that repeatedly engage students in experiential cycles of action and reflection, including journal-based tasks that cultivate metacognition and transferable interpersonal competencies.

Ultimately, the dissertation contributes a context-responsive model for applying Morocco's competency-based approach to teaching and learning. Without the full engagement of instructors and their willingness to contribute to this study, we wouldn't have had the opportunity or ambition to draw conclusions about the teaching of soft skills in the English department in Morocco. Together, we have provided empirical grounding and a practical pathway for strengthening the teaching of soft skills in English departments.

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