

Teachers as Researchers; Why are EFL Teachers Reluctant to Conduct Teacher Research? A Case Study at The University of Algiers 2

سبب عزوف أساتذة اللغة الانجليزية عن ممارسة بحث الأستاذ

" دراسة حالة بقسم اللغة الانجليزية بجامعة الجزائر2 (أبو القاسم سعد الله) ."

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This qualitative study aims at investigating the reasons that lie behind EFL teachers' reluctance to engage in teacher research. It also explores the factors that can foster a teacher research culture at their workplace. Two main research questions were used: (a) Why are EFL teachers reluctant to engage in teacher research? (b) How can then, a teacher research culture be fostered among these teachers? Our assumption that EFL teachers are reluctant to conduct teacher research is grounded in Borg's (2009) large-scale study with 505 EFL teachers from 13 countries around the world where teachers reported moderate to low levels of reading and doing research. Thus, before investigating the two main research questions, this study explores how participants perceive teacher research and whether they are already research-engaged or not. In this respect, 15 EFL teachers of different modules, including 5 males and 10 females at the University of Algiers 2 were purposefully selected. Data was collected using a qualitative questionnaire as well as a semi-structured individual follow-up interview. Findings revealed two personal factors: lack of interest in research and fear of change as well as six institutional factors: lack of training, lack of collaboration, lack of support, consideration, and recognition from the

university principal, lack of time, crowded classrooms, as well as financial issues as the main reasons inhibiting our participants from being research engaged. The participants then, suggested training, encouraging collaborative research, making teacher research easy and compulsory, and allowing their voices to be heard as practical solutions to promote a teacher research culture at university.

Keywords: EFL (English as a Foreign Language), Teacher Research (TR), Reflective Practice (RP), Action Research (AR), Professional Development, Factors inhibiting engagement in Teacher Research, Teacher Research Culture.

الملخص: تهدف هذه الدراسة النوعية إلى معرفة الأسباب الكامنة وراء عزوف أساتذة اللغة الانجليزية عن الانخراط في بحث الأستاذ. كما تستكشف العوامل التي يمكن أن تعزز ثقافة بحث الأستاذ في مكان عمله. انطلاقا من نظرة الأساتذة المشاركون في بحث الأستاذ من خلال تجاربهم في مجال بحث الأستاذ. وذلك بالاعتماد على عينة تشمل 15 أستاذ في تخصص اللغة الانجليزية بجامعة الجزائر2 (أبو القاسم سعد الله). تم جمع البيانات بالاعتماد على أدوات بحثية متنوعة (الاستبيان، المقابلة) . توصلت الدراسة إلى تحديد عاملين شخصيين لهذا العزوف، هما: (الخوف من التغيير وعدم الاهتمام بالبحث)، وستة عوامل تتعلق بالمؤسسة الجامعية (نقص التدريب، نقص التعاون الجماعي، نقص التحفيز المعنوي والاعتراف من قبل المؤسسة الجامعية، وانعدام الحافز المادي، ضيق الوقت، الاكتظاظ في قاعات التدريس) .

ولمعالجة هذا العزوف اقترحت عينة الدراسة مجموعة من الحلول العملية الميدانية لتعزيز ثقافة بحث الأستاذ في الفضاء الجامعي، من بينها: تدريب الأساتذة على طريقة بحث الأستاذ، تشجيع العمل التعاوني في مجال البحث، تبسيط بحث الأستاذ وجعله الزاميا، الاعتماد على لغة الحوار والتواصل بين مختلف الشركاء في الوسط الجامعي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تدريس اللغة الانجليزية، بحث الأستاذ، جامعة الجزائر2، عوامل عزوف الأساتذة، تحسين الخبرة المهنية.

Introduction:

In the existing world of schooling and especially in the new educational order being created by technical standards, teachers do not live in the same professional culture as researchers, this entails that knowledge in education has long been something that is produced far away from the school by experts in a rarefied domain⁽¹⁾ (Kincheloe, 2003). As a reaction, in the past 20 years, there has been a growing recognition of the importance of research done by teachers to find solutions to their classroom problems, to understand the teaching and learning process, to produce educational theory that is based on what is really going on in the classroom and to grow as professionals (e.g.,⁽²⁾ Stenhouse, 1975; ⁽³⁾ Allwright & Bailey, 1991; ⁽⁴⁾ Cochran Smith & Lytle, 1993; ⁽⁵⁾ Kincheloe, 2003; ⁽⁶⁾ Borg, 2013; ⁽⁷⁾ Alexakos, 2015; ⁽⁸⁾ Kumaravadivelu, 2008; ⁽⁹⁾ Dikilitas & Hanks, 2018...)

⁽¹⁰⁾ Stenhouse (1975) claimed that teachers are inherently autonomous professionals who do not require directives; they are not professionally subordinate to researchers, innovators, or supervisors. Furthermore, teachers can actively contribute as practitioners in educational research. To achieve substantial improvements in education, it is essential to establish a research tradition that is accessible to teachers and informs their teaching practices.

In this sense, teacher research enables teachers to utilize interpretive frameworks derived from their personal experiences and intellectual pursuits, as the research process is integrated into their practice; hence, the relationship between the knower and the known is profoundly transformed.⁽¹¹⁾ Moreover, it has been concluded from analyses of researchers' self-reports across the world that teacher research helps teachers to become more flexible and more open to new ideas⁽¹²⁾ (Oja & Smulyan, 1989 as cited in Zeichner, K, 2003). It Boosts teachers' self-esteem and confidence levels.⁽¹³⁾ More remarkably, it is claimed that engaging in research 'has the potential to be a powerful transformative force in the professional development of language teaching'⁽¹⁴⁾. Therefore, the initiative to involve teachers more comprehensively in educational research has recently been a significant aspect of educational policy in various contexts, including Australia, the USA, and the UK.⁽¹⁵⁾

Regardless of all these benefits of engagement in teacher research, the reality remains though that it is a minority activity in ELT as⁽¹⁶⁾ study with 505 EFL teachers in 13 countries around the world suggested. Not many teachers are willing to engage with and in research for different reasons⁽¹⁷⁾ they shy away from seeing themselves as researchers and they are reluctant to write about their

teaching practice ⁽¹⁸⁾ (Hancock, 1997). ⁽¹⁹⁾ Stenhouse (1975, as cited in Hancock, 1997:86) anticipated the difficulties to get the majority of teachers engaged in teacher research conceding that it will necessitate a generation of effort if the bulk of teachers –rather than merely the enthusiastic minority –are to acquire this area of research (ibid :86)

Stimulated by the interest in encouraging more teachers to become research-engaged, it seems crucial to explore the basis of teachers' reluctance to conduct research and how to foster a teacher research culture in schools. This paper provides a clear insight into the factors inhibiting EFL University teachers from conducting teacher research. The term teacher research in this paper refers to teachers' engagement in doing systematic teacher research such as action research and exploratory practice, so not to any other kind of activities like reflective practice and reading and using research. We then conclude by exploring some of the ways in which a teacher research culture might be efficiently fostered. In particular, this study aimed to provide answers to the following research questions:

- a) Why are EFL teachers reluctant to engage in teacher research?
- b) How can then, a teacher research culture be fostered among these teachers?

We believe that this study may respond to ⁽²⁰⁾ Borg's (2009) research findings reporting moderate to minimal amounts of EFL teachers' engagement in research. This finding might help to recommend some solutions to eliminate obstacles that prevent more teachers from engaging in teacher research.

Literature Review

Often when people think of research, they make a number of assumptions: that it should be large-scale, objective, and replicable, and that its findings should be generalizable ⁽²¹⁾ (Hanks, 2016 as cited in Dikilitas et al, 2016). But it has been pointed out that there are major problems with this attitude when we consider the context of language education where enormous difficulties were involved in implementing the experimental method satisfactorily in the natural setting of public education. ⁽²²⁾ (Allwright & Bailey, 1991). The fluid, ever-changing dynamics of individuals and groups working in class, mean that research with experimental/control groups is deeply flawed. Classrooms are highly complex social situations where traditional notions of research simply fail ⁽²³⁾ (Hanks, 2016: (pp19-30) in Dikilitas et al, 2016).

⁽²⁴⁾ Cochran Smith & Lytle (1993) argue that it is conceivable to envision an alternative knowledge base for education that is not solely derived from

university-based research but also incorporates research conducted by educators, wherein teachers are not merely subjects of study and recipients of knowledge, but also act as architects of inquiry and producers of knowledge. This view is supported by ⁽²⁵⁾ Tudor (2001) who argues that to comprehend classroom dynamics, we must shift from the perspective of external researchers to that of practitioners, who should be regarded as the primary observers examining their own teaching environments. According to him, this research is often termed naturalistic inquiry, as it examines systems in their existing state and aims to understand their functioning from the viewpoint of participants, rather than evaluating them based on external criteria.

Teacher research is defined by ⁽²⁶⁾ Lytle & Cochran Smith (1992) as a systematic, intentional inquiry by teachers about their own school and classroom work. In the same way, ⁽²⁷⁾ Stenhouse (1975) defined research by teachers on their own practice as a systematic, planned, and sustained inquiry leading to the generation of theory and improvement of practice.

Various studies have recorded the benefits when teachers conduct this kind of research. Action research has been shown to enhance teachers' professional development by elevating their understanding of their responsibilities and their students' needs ⁽²⁸⁾ (Saeb et al, 2021); teacher research helps teachers to become more reflective, critical, and analytical about their teaching behaviors in the classroom ⁽²⁹⁾ (Trotman, 2015 in Dikilitas et al, 2015); establishing a teacher identity primarily defined by the capacity to implement curriculum modifications through informed and democratic choices that are genuinely responsive to the teaching situation ⁽³⁰⁾ (Banegas. D et al.,2013). ⁽³¹⁾ Belanger (1992) classified these benefits into three categories: the political (which serves as means for teacher empowerment), the practical (which positions teachers to assess the efficacy of various methods), and professional growth (which emphasizes their role as reflective practitioners who govern their own teaching practices).

Most of the studies on teacher research focused particularly on its positive impact on teachers' professional development ⁽³²⁾ Elliott, 1991; ⁽³³⁾ Burns, 2009; ⁽³⁴⁾ Slimani-Rolls & Kiely, 2018; ⁽³⁵⁾ Zeichner, 2003; ⁽³⁶⁾ Borg & Sanchez: 2015; ⁽³⁷⁾ Wyatt & Dikilitas, 2016). The cultivation of professional dispositions related to lifelong learning, thoughtful and attentive pedagogy, and self-transformation is a primary emphasis of teacher research involvement ⁽³⁸⁾ (Stringer 2007). Indeed, through engagement in research teachers understand more about their own classroom context and come to a stage where they make informed decisions for development or change in the existing practices ⁽³⁹⁾ (Dikilitas et al 2015). The

most important skill that teachers should acquire is the ability to recognize problems and approach them critically because any classroom might experience problems, questions, and thought-provoking situations. ⁽⁴⁰⁾ Dikilitas, 2015 in Dikilitas et al, 2015 assumes that these never-ending issues faced by teachers render teacher research an ongoing professional development instrument, emphasizing the enhancement of teaching through the examination of personal beliefs and behaviors.

Despite the wide range of reported benefits, teacher research engagement is still a minority activity in schools ⁽⁴¹⁾ (Borg, 2009). Few studies tried to investigate why not many teachers are willing to engage in research ⁽⁴²⁾ Hancock, 1997; ⁽⁴³⁾ Borg, 2009; ⁽⁴⁴⁾ Kutlay, 2013; ⁽⁴⁵⁾ Sakarkaya & Bumen, 2022). Teacher status and public expectations, teachers' working conditions ⁽⁴⁶⁾ (Hancock, 1997), teachers' conceptions of research, lack of time, knowledge, and access to material ⁽⁴⁷⁾ (Borg, 2009), and non-collaborative school culture ⁽⁴⁸⁾ (Atay, 2006) have been recognized as variables that discourage teachers from conducting research. ⁽⁴⁹⁾ Worrall's (2004) study noted that although teaching staff were urged to foster educational research, some of them were hesitant to participate because they believed that research was carried out by researchers rather than by teachers, with the following justification: "research was something that's done to them by people outside" (p.145). Because research looks so "big" to them, the participants in this study also felt embarrassed to admit they have the necessary skills to do it. The results were congruent with ⁽⁵⁰⁾ Hancock's (1997) view that "it is now possible that teachers believe less in themselves than they ever did, less in themselves as professionals with something worthwhile to say about children's learning and development...the idea that they should research their practice in a grassroots way has lost much ground" (p.90)

As a reaction to this, some studies have examined how to support teacher research engagement ⁽⁵¹⁾ Hanks, 2018 in Xerri & Pioquinto, 2018; ⁽⁵²⁾ Padwad, 2018 in Xerri & Pioquinto, 2018; ⁽⁵³⁾ Burns, 2018 in Xerri & Pioquinto, 2018; ⁽⁵⁴⁾ Edwards & Burns, 2016).

For teachers, conducting research is a difficult and time-consuming task that is made worse by their lack of confidence and feelings of inadequacy due to their lack of research training or credentials. Thus, consistent assistance at every stage is essential ⁽⁵⁵⁾ Padwad, 2018:49 in Xerri & Pioquinto, 2018). For example, ⁽⁵⁶⁾ Sakarkaya & Bumen's (2022) study revealed that expert support and colleagues possessing research expertise stimulate teacher engagement in research and foster good experiences with context-specific research initiatives. Additionally, the distribution of research findings in many formats promotes sustainability and encourages participation in future projects.

Methods

Sample:

The selected sample included 15 EFL teachers at the University of Algiers 2 during the academic year: 2022/2023. The sample was purposefully selected: the objective of picking specific examples in purposive sampling is to obtain data that is both relevant and abundant, hence ensuring information richness pertinent to the study topic ⁽⁵⁷⁾ (Yin, 2015). Hence our participants varied between male, female, experienced, less experienced teachers teaching different modules. All these teachers mentioned that they regularly reflect on their teaching and showed their interest in the practice of teacher research. The sample included 4 males and 11 females; their average age was slightly over 28, and they had an average of 2-30 years of teaching experience. There are obviously more female participants than male participants in this study. The lack of male teachers working in the Department of English was noted as one of the limits of the researchers' attempt to achieve gender equality among the participants. They are specialized either in linguistics or literature which means that they teach different modules: linguistics, listening/speaking, reading/writing, grammar, research paper writing, critical writing, study skills, didactics, cognitive psychology, English for specific purposes, and Anglophone cultures. In terms of educational qualifications, 8 teachers hold a Ph.D. degree, and 7 hold a Magister degree. Only 3 participants mentioned that they have conducted action research before while none of the remaining others had previously carried out any kind of teacher research. However, all of them mentioned that they often reflect on their teaching practice.

Research tools

In this study, a qualitative case study design was adopted to obtain in-depth data in order to understand teachers' reluctance to engage in research thoroughly. For this purpose, the data collection tools used are a qualitative questionnaire and a semi-structured follow-up interview.

We started the data collection process with a questionnaire containing closed and open-ended questions. The closed-ended questions were used only to collect background/career information from the participants as well as to know whether they have conducted any teacher research before or not. The open-ended questions formed the most important part of the questionnaire. The questionnaire is used as an initial phase of data collection; its main purpose is to know if our participants conducted teacher research before and how they perceive the concept of teacher

research. It contains 3 sections: background/career information, previous teacher research experiences, and attitudes about teacher research.

The section background/ career information is composed of 7 items: age, gender, educational degree, specialism, years of teaching experience, modules taught, and kind of teacher training they got. The section on previous teacher research experiences consists of one item representing possible answers to the question: 8. Have you already tried to investigate your own practice using action research, exploratory practice, or any other type of teacher research? a. If yes, would you please briefly describe your (or one of your) teacher research experience (when/where/how?), b. If not, please say why? The last section on attitudes about teacher research contained 4 items to answer the following questions: 9. How do you conceive the concept of teacher research? 10. According to you, why are most teachers reluctant to do teacher research? 11. What are some good ways to help involve teachers in teacher research? 12. What suggestions could you make for university principals in order to foster a teacher research culture? The total number of items is 12.

After obtaining the institution's and participants' necessary informed consent in September 2022; the questionnaire was given to 25 teachers, 15 of whom agreed to answer it.

In the second phase of the study, a follow-up semi-structured interview was conducted with the participants during the months of November and December 2022. The interview was piloted with three teachers before it was conducted with the whole population to have an idea about the duration that it takes and the clarity of the questions. The piloting also served the issues of validity and reliability; some questions such as 'do you think that teachers need to attend workshops to learn about how to conduct teacher research?' were deleted from the interview guide because they seemed to be leading questions.

The purpose of this interview is to probe further and get detailed explanations of participants' answers to the questionnaire. Using the interview allowed us to collect thorough data by listening to participants' experiences 'At the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience'.⁽⁵⁸⁾

Another reason for our use of the interview is to understand the issue of this study in context: 'interviewing provides access to the context of people's behavior and thereby provides a way for researchers to understand the meaning of that behavior.'⁽⁵⁹⁾

This helped us enhance our understanding of the conditions that were responsible for teachers' reluctance to conduct research about their practice. Most of the interviews took place in the teachers' staffroom, while some others were conducted in the teachers' offices. Informed consent was obtained by verbally explaining the purpose of the interview, its importance, and how and where to be recorded. All participants accepted being digitally recorded.

Procedure and Method of Analysis

The questionnaire and the interview were designed to provide qualitative data which would help us understand teachers' hesitancy to be research engaged and to explore ways that might support their engagement. This means that the aim of these tools was to understand not to measure. There are many qualitative methods out there for analysing data and interpreting its meaning, and qualitative content analysis is one of them ⁽⁶⁰⁾ (Schreier, 2012), thus, content analysis, was used to analyze data from both instruments. Personal interpretations of what the participants wrote and said were the core procedure of our data analysis.

Qualitative data was prepared for analysis. Interview recordings were transcribed first. Identifying personal details of the participants was kept confidential by assigning codes like TA1, TB1 to replace their real names...etc. Although qualitative research produces a wealth of data ⁽⁶¹⁾ (Leavy, 2017), the transcription of all interviews and the analysis were done by hand for this study. This was primarily done to ensure that the researchers were well-versed in the data before beginning to interpret it.

The process of content analysis started with the exploration of data through several readings of the transcripts and questionnaire answers to get a sense of the data as a whole before beginning a systematic analysis process. Then, to reduce and classify the data generated, we assigned a word or phrase to segments of data throughout the process of coding. In vivo coding strategy was used which relies on using the participants' exact language to generate codes ⁽⁶²⁾ (Strauss, 1987).

After the analysis of data from the questionnaire and interview transcripts, we looked for patterns and relationships between codes. We engaged in the process of theming the data ⁽⁶³⁾ where similar codes were categorized together to develop themes. During the processes of coding, categorizing, and theming, which occurred cyclically in our analysis, we also engaged in Memo writing about the data we have coded and categorized: 'Memos are a link between your coding and interpretation'. ⁽⁶⁴⁾

The Memo notes were used in the step of the interpretation in order to develop meaning out of the coded data. The following figure 1 illustrates the process of linking coding to interpretation through Memo writing:

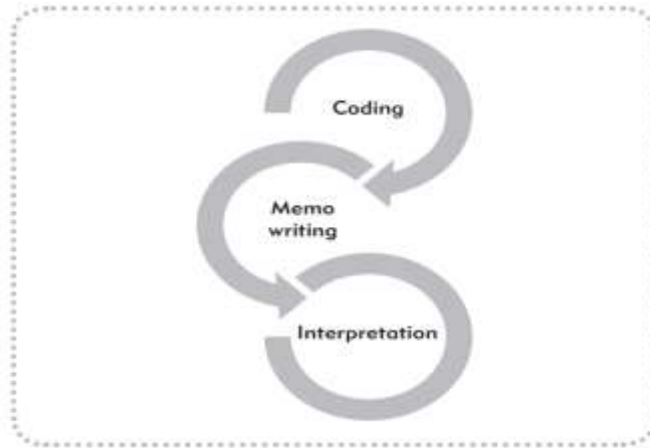


Figure 1. The process of linking coding to interpretation: as cited in Leavy, 2017: 153

A credible study ensures that data collection and interpretation are conducted appropriately, so guaranteeing that the findings and conclusions adequately depict the examined reality ⁽⁶⁵⁾ (Yin, 2015:85). In this sense, some credibility strategies suggested by Yin (2015) were adopted throughout the study:

We triangulated data sources using two different data collection instruments (questionnaire/interview): ‘as a second way of strengthening the credibility of a study, you would benefit from applying the principle of triangulation throughout your study—continually watching for opportunities to triangulate your steps’. ⁽⁵⁹⁾ Respondent validation. ⁽⁶⁶⁾ as mentioned in Yin, 2016:89) to obtain feedback from the people studied in order to lessen the misinterpretation of their self-reported behaviors and views was also used in this study. Coded interview transcriptions were sent back to the participants in order to test whether they accurately reflect their responses.

Moreover, an external researcher who has more teacher research experience served as a rival thinker to avoid any sense of skepticism as the study was being conducted, as well as to lessen any potential bias that the researchers might have owing to their collegiate and personal relationship with the participants: ‘Researchers can strengthen their studies by engaging in rival thinking and searching for rivals throughout the study process’. ⁽⁶⁷⁾ Besides, the external researcher confirmed that the codes and themes were consistent with the data.

Results

Background information

Tables 1 and 2 present the sample according to age, gender, teaching experience, qualification, and teachers' previous engagement in teacher research. Table 1 illustrates the range of EFL teaching experience that the participants had and indicates that all of them had postgraduate qualifications (a Magister or a PhD). It also clearly shows that the number of female participants exceeded the number of male participants for a reason which is discussed previously.

Table 2 illustrates that only 3 participants reported having conducted action research once formerly. The others reported not having conducted any TR before.

Table 1: Participants by age, gender, years of teaching experience, and qualification

participants	age	gender	Teaching experience	qualification
TA1	36	Female	10 years	Magister
TA2	41	Female	20 years	PhD
TA3	30	Male	5 years	PhD
TA4	29	Female	2 years	PhD
TA5	52	Female	30 years	Magister
TA6	49	Female	15 years	PhD
TA7	39	Female	13 years	Magister
TA8	52	Female	20 years	PhD
TA9	45	Female	24 years	PhD
TB1	38	Male	38 years	PhD
TB2	32	Male	4 years	Magister
TB3	45	Male	15 years	Magister
TB4	28	Female	2 years	PhD
TB5	35	Female	4 years	PhD
TB6	42	Female	6 years	Magister

Table 2: Participants by previous teacher research experiences (type of TR and the frequency of doing TR)

Participants	Previous TR engagement	Frequency of TR engagement
TA1	None	–
TA2	Action Research	One time
TA3	None	–
TA4	None	–
TA5	Action research	One time

TA6	None	–
TA7	None	–
TA8	None	–
TA9	None	–
TB1	None	–
TB2	Action research	One time
TB3	None	–
TB4	None	–
TB5	None	–
TB6	None	–

Teachers’ previous engagement in TR

Section two of the questionnaire focused on teachers’ previous engagement in teacher research. Of them, only 3 said they conducted action research once before. The others either claimed to have never conducted TR or were referring to reflective practice when they said that they did TR.

The follow-up interview provided more insight into the kind of participants’ previous engagement in TR. One point here relates to the extent to which what teachers described as TR was really teacher research. Except for the 3 teachers who mentioned that they conducted AR, all the others who also said that they did TR were referring to reflective practice, not to any kind of systematic TR. To explore this issue, teachers were asked to comment on if what they claimed doing as TR wasn’t just a kind of reflection on one’s teaching. Here are some examples of how these teachers clarified what they meant when they mentioned that they have conducted TR before:

maybe what I mean here is that...talking about my case, I keep reflecting on my teaching, I ask myself questions about my students’ needs...I observe my students’ learning...my efforts didn’t go beyond this (TA7, interview)

There are some difficult situations that I encounter while teaching...they push me to think about how – to ask questions about the situation I think that questioning and reflecting are part of research and this is why I said I do research ... if we do not question what is going on in our classrooms then we are passive and means that we can never be researchers (TA4, interview)

I am open to the idea of applying teacher research, however, I have not done so as of yet. My investigation relies mainly on my experience and overall reflection (TB4, questionnaire)

It could be that what I have done so far in terms of investigating my practice was nothing more than reflection... but at least I can say that I am trying to investigate my practice through reflection (TA8, interview)

Some of the participants described the kind of research that they were doing as informal research through reflection:

I do investigate my own practice in the classroom in a rather informal way. Reflecting on students' performance in continuous assessment and exams offers some clues on the effectiveness and shortcomings of certain teaching practices and strategies (TB1, questionnaire)

During my first year of teaching, I didn't know whether I was doing good or not. By the end of the Semester, I counted the range of grades of the reading/writing exam. Then, I sorted out the first quartile [they were 5 and 4]. I asked the students whose marks fell with the quartile to justify in a paper why they obtained those low grades...this might be an example of an informal research that I did to reflect on my students' failure (TA3, questionnaire)

I have done research formally when I was preparing for my Magister degree. Now as an assistant professor in this department, I keep doing a kind of informal research so as not to lose track of my teaching. I just observe and ask my students questions about their needs. After reflection, I adjust my actions to meet their needs (TA1, questionnaire)

I do critical reflection i.e. I assess my teaching techniques to improve the quality of my teaching ...after each lesson, I write details about my teaching. This research might not be as methodical as the one I conducted for my Magister or PhD, however it can be considered as informal research (TB3, questionnaire)

Overall, the responses from the majority of the teachers who said they did TR indicated that their conceptions of teacher research are associated with reflective practice. Essential concepts that resonated with teachers' amplifications on their prior engagement in TR were reflection, reflecting on, questioning, observing, and writing about teaching. Some researchers argue that this process of reflection is a particular kind of research, ⁽⁶⁸⁾ Cross (1988) describes it as the study by classroom teachers of the impact of their teaching on the students in their classrooms and teachers' using their classrooms as laboratories to study the learning process as it applies to their particular disciplines. For him, reflective teachers are skillful, systematic observers of how the students in their classrooms learn. However, it is important to consider if reflection is really a type of teacher research or just an integral part of it.

The difference between the two concepts of TR and RP was plainly explained by ⁽⁶⁹⁾ who assume that reflection can be a step toward a research perspective but not teacher research. For them, ideas from reflections on one's own teaching may sound like they are simply assumptions. The former researchers do not deny that reflection is in fact based on a thinking process, however, for them, it might still require additional data collection and analysis to be called research:

Living and working with assumptions while teaching adds to the confidence levels and the dependability on our assumptive knowledge. Confirming our knowledge is only possible in comparison or contrast with ideas from others. This process requires a carefully adopted process if we access reliable evidence rather than create subjective knowledge on the basis of our own experiences and assumption-driven conclusions ⁽⁷⁰⁾
(Dikilitas & Bostancioglu, 2019:25)

Based on this argument, the teachers who described their previous engagement in TR as reflection were not considered as research-engaged in this study. In this sense, reflection is just an integral component of research, by which experiences are analysed, interpreted, and revisited in a personal way ⁽⁷¹⁾ Nevertheless, research necessitates that teachers participate in an inductive comprehension of knowledge formation through the methodical and rigorous examination of experiences ⁽⁷²⁾ Therefore, the only previous experiences which were considered real TR engagement were the ones described by 3 teachers (TA2, TA5, and TB2) as Action Research. When asked whether they have conducted TR before, these teachers mentioned:

I remember I have done Action Research in 1998 with a third-year group. As I was teaching the module of Listening and Speaking, the aim of my AR was to investigate the influence of the Algerian socio-cultural background on my students' speaking skills... (TA5, questionnaire)

Ten years ago, I carried out Action Research in the English Department, University of Algiers 2 to explore 1st-year undergraduate students' difficulties in the course of writing. I implemented dialogue journals as a tool to collect personal data from them... (TA2, questionnaire)

I conducted 'AR' during my CELTA training course held by Cambridge University Center in Algiers... (TB2, questionnaire)

Yet, the interview provided more details about teachers' previous engagement in Action Research. TA2 mentioned that she and her colleague stopped the AR before doing any analysis of the data collected from their students:

I was really motivated excited ...umm...maybe I was a bit idealistic, I was enthusiastic... I was teaching the module of writing and of course which presents a lot of problems... a lot of challenges for students and my colleague and I wanted to conduct research through dialogue journals to see their efficiency... we thought that it would be a good means to improve students' writing skill so we started the experiment...we implemented this method then we collected data ... unfortunately we couldn't follow and finish the research... because we started to understand and perceive the reality of the department ...of the conditions...(TA2, interview)

Although TA2 cited that she conducted an AR with one of her colleagues in the department of English at the University of Algiers 2, yet, she expressed her dissatisfaction with their working conditions and the 'reality of the department' which have very soon led to their early abandonment of the AR:

To be honest, my colleague and I stopped the AR ... (TA2, interview)

In this sense, ⁽⁷³⁾ Allwright (1997) states that sustainability is essential since the embrace of a research-oriented attitude, which emphasizes continuous inquiry,

is perhaps more significant than the execution of isolated research initiatives; without sustainability, no enduring benefit will be realized in the long term.

When asked in the interview to elaborate on his AR experience, TB2 mentioned that the AR that he conducted before was not at the level of university but during his participation in a private training course (CELTA training course):

It was not at the university, of course, but it was during an independent training course...Unfortunately at the level of the university, I have not, I couldn't do it [Teacher Research] Not even once before. (TB2, interview)

Except for the teachers who said that they have already conducted TR and those who were actually referring to reflective practice when they said that they did TR, the others directly mentioned that they have not conducted any TR before. They answered that like this:

No, the only research I carried out was for the purpose of fulfilling my magistère and doctorate degrees. (TA9, questionnaire)

Since the times I was preparing for my Doctorate research at the university of Constantine 1, I gave students questionnaires to answer, I observed them and later tested them ...I think that preparing for my doctorate degree was the biggest research I have done ...I didn't conduct any other research since then... (TA2, interview)

I didn't know about it [TR] ... I didn't conduct it [TR] before (TB6, interview)

I heard about it but actually I never tried it ...what I did is just...some experiments I carried out in my classrooms but for the purpose to undertake Magister and Doctorate research that's all (TA9, interview)

As a result, our findings are congruent with ⁽⁷⁴⁾ Borg's (2009) study with 505 EFL teachers around the world reporting doing research at a moderate to a low level. Thus, a confirmation of our assumption that the majority of the teachers are not engaged in TR is obtained from their responses.

Reasons for not conducting TR

Table 3 illustrates the analysis of the qualitative data from the questionnaire and interview. We organized data under seven themes representing the most typical inhibiting reasons for teachers' engagement in TR. Two were categorized as personal reasons: lack of interest in research and fear of change. Six were categorized as institutional reasons: lack of time to do research, lack of training, lack of collegial collaboration, lack of support, consideration, and recognition, crowded classrooms, and financial factors. These were the barriers that were most frequently reported by our participants.

Table 3. The reasons for not conducting TR based on the questionnaire and interview

Reasons related to ...	Responses from the questionnaire	Quotes from the interview
Lack of interest in teacher research	<p>Because teaching and finishing the syllabus are more valued than doing research, we are interested in teaching more than in research (TB6)</p> <p>Doing teacher research is not compulsory in our department so a lot of us are not interested in trying it (TB5)</p>	<p>“...most teachers are not really interested in doing teacher research ...I think that the most important duty here is to teach students...” (TA1)</p> <p>“...there is no interest in research...they [administration] just ask you about statistics –how many papers you have corrected? – how many students you have supervised? – everything is about scores and statistics...and that’s all.” (TA2)</p>
Fear of change	<p>Some teachers consider change as a threat to their traditional views about teaching and learning, they regard doing teacher research as challenging which might be one of the reasons for not doing it (TA3)</p> <p>Fear of not being competent with new experiences in the classroom is a big hurdle for teachers who want to investigate their classrooms. I feel extremely scared when trying a new approach to solving a problem or when I lack the experience (TB6)</p>	<p>“Many teachers are good in their comfort zones and afraid of doing research ... afraid of change...afraid even to challenge their assumptions and beliefs” (TA3)</p> <p>“As an experienced teacher it was always motivating me to try something new in my classrooms ...now it’s no longer the case for me ...I am more set in my ways –maybe I have got more experience of what I am doing that I am afraid now to know that the way I have always been teaching is not the right or the perfect one ...I am retiring soon...it’s a kind of challenging now” (TA5)</p>

<p>Lack of time to do research</p>	<p>Lack of time and the heavy workload due to the endless pedagogical and administrative tasks assigned to teachers (TA2)</p> <p>I think that “TR” takes a substantial time to conduct because the teachers need sufficient time to observe the students, analyze the data and recommend solutions, and apply them to see the difference. This is not possible for many teachers who need to divide their time between many classes and some necessary administrative duties (TB2)</p>	<p>“when it comes to this type of research maybe most of the teachers are reluctant to do it due to time constraints because... you know ... of course when we talk about research it means you have to...to make time for conducting appropriate method and data collection tools...we also need a lot of time for analysis and writing results ... we are overworked ... especially those teachers who are doing administrative tasks too ...teachers who work as supervisors and examiners of Master students research papers...you know a lot of things to do” (TA1)</p>
<p>lack of training</p>	<p>Teachers’ lack of training is also a challenge. Some teachers may not have undertaken this kind of research before, they don’t know how to do it (TA1)</p> <p>The lack of training for teachers to become classroom researchers makes them disinclined to take the mantle by themselves (TB4)</p>	<p>“We were never offered any training (...) we were never provided with a training in our department as to how to conduct this kind of research ... so this is a huge problem ... we can't just do teacher research without being trained on how to do it” (TB2)</p> <p>“How am I going to do it? I may have read about it [TR] but how to put it into practice? I forgot about everything since I started teaching, I just kept focusing on my teaching ... I think that training us on how to become good teacher researchers is not a cup of tea of this department (laughter)” (TA9)</p>
<p>Lack of collaboration</p>	<p>We only meet in what is called coordination meetings once a term at the most. We collaborate only for the sake of curriculum evaluation and exam preparation. I think this is not enough. If we collaborate to achieve other goals such as collegial research, then I guess the situation will change...research won’t seem a difficult task with teachers helping each other to do it (TA4)</p>	<p>“I would say that we work in isolation we do not work together as a team ...we don’t try to...we don’t get ...if every teacher ...especially those who teach the same module work in isolation, then no one will help during the teacher research process” (TB6)</p> <p>“To improve teaching, I believe there has to be more academic conversation... I personally feel best when I believe that my colleagues and I are on the same page regarding what qualifies as good teaching,</p>

	<p>I think that teachers are not motivated to conduct research alone. Much of our work is being done separately and in isolation. (TA1)</p>	<p>good assessment and many other issues such as teacher research ... it seems like each of those things is being done individually” (TB2)</p>
<p>Lack of support, consideration, and recognition</p>	<p>Research is not valued by the ministry of higher education nor the ministry of education. Doctorate theses as well as research articles are left on library shelves and are not given any consideration (TA2)</p> <p>The administrative staff is not really supportive of initiatives such as investigating our classrooms. When efforts are not recognized and rewarded, we don't feel the need to do them, we just teach (TB6)</p> <p>There is no doubt that the lack of institutional support hinders teachers' engagement in serious teacher research experiences (TB1)</p>	<p>“The administration considers us teachers only not teacher researchers so any investigation comes from a self-reflection point ... we are only reflective practitioners... we do it on an individual level we are not encouraged to research or share our findings ... many won't see the reason to do it” (TB4)</p> <p>“I think that what made me recognize that there is no recognition for teachers doing research is my PhD experience ... no one got interested about what I found in the results and suggestions ...it was frustrating for me ...so I think that I will get the same frustration if I do teacher research ...who cares about the findings?” (TA2)</p> <p>“The non-supportive attitude from the principal is discouraging to all teachers who would like to do any research for the sake of finding solutions to the problems of our department ... honestly speaking I feel as if my job here is only to teach...any other thing is not recognized by staff members...doing research is not the priority” (TB6)</p>
<p>Crowded classrooms</p>	<p>Teachers are demotivated to do any other activity due to the crowded classrooms in the department of English compared to the other departments. This even makes the teaching difficult so I guess it will be the same thing for conducting research (TA3)</p> <p>“TR” is difficult to do given the large number of students of almost all the groups that we are teaching (TB2)</p> <p>Because of the overcrowding in</p>	<p>“Normally before we start with the LMD system we have been promised that we will have groups of at least 25 students ...now ...the number increased we have groups of 150 students – it is really a daunting task to teach these large groups...it is the same thing for conducting research with them...it is difficult to manage” (TA2)</p> <p>“I can give you a very good example as an ESP teacher in a private school...I have classrooms containing 5 to 10 students only compared to 70 to 100 students in each group in this department ... the quality of teaching is not the same at all ... it's a</p>

	the classes and the inadequate amenities, you entirely lose hope that teacher research will be exciting (TB6)	serious issue ...you lose motivation to investigate too” (TA3)
Financial factors	<p>Teachers are underpaid and consequently feel the need to work extra hours instead of being involved in research (TA2)</p> <p>There are others [teachers] who think that they are not paid for that. They believe that they are teachers, not researchers so they do not engage in research (TB5)</p> <p>Our salary is low, we are obliged to work elsewhere to make some more money and this. Under these conditions, it is impossible to invest time and energy to conduct research (TB6)</p>	<p>“Let me tell you that we are working more in order to make more money...doing extra hours to ... yes...unfortunately as I need to gain more money...my salary is not enough so I need to make extra teaching so in these conditions I have no time for research” (TA2)</p> <p>“I think the first aspect that discourages teachers from engaging in research is related to the social status of the teachers ...I can talk about my own case here ...a university teacher is not given his real status and is not paid enough to have a good social status which can help him focus only on research and how to develop as a professional ...this pushes us to work everywhere else to gain more money” (TB5)</p>

Factors fostering a TR culture

The triggering factors that might foster a teacher research culture according to the suggestions of our participants are categorized under four main themes: training, collaboration, making TR easy and compulsory, and listening to teachers’ voices.

Training. Our participants reported that with the lack of providing teachers with the necessary training on TR methodologies, they don’t know how to apply it in their classrooms, thus, all of them were found out to feel a serious need to be trained on how to do it in order to foster a teacher research culture. For instance, when they are asked what are some good ways to help involve teachers in TR, TA6 wrote that at the level of university, there can be in-service training in which teachers work in workshops to reflect on and improve their practices as teacher researchers. Some others answered that like this:

Encouraging teachers alone is not enough. For me, the main implication is to make teacher research more accessible to them, in other words, universities have to support teachers by training them to become classroom researchers themselves (TB4, questionnaire)

I think that we need to meet regularly, to organize training in order to update our knowledge about new concepts in teaching such as the concept of teacher research... sometimes research methodologies go so fast that the training would help me get updated about new research methods (TA2, interview)

In my opinion we need to learn how to do this kind of research from experienced teachers in the field ... the senior teachers in the department may help a lot (TA9, interview)

Some teachers suggested that this training can take the form of workshops organized by the department to introduce the methods of TR to the teachers:

Organize workshops within the department to introduce the teachers to the methods they can follow to become teacher researchers. This will lead to the establishment of a teacher research culture within the community of teachers (TB5, questionnaire)

This idea of training seems to resonate with what ⁽⁷⁵⁾ Borg (2006) calls mentoring as one of the conditions for TR to be conducted by teachers claiming that without the initial and ongoing assistance of a mentor, many teachers will not conduct or continue doing teacher research.

Collaboration. In addition to training, the participants shared strong feelings related to teacher collaboration to promote a teacher research culture in their department. One participant suggested ‘collaboration between teachers can also yield interesting results in promoting a teacher research culture, especially if the teachers teaching the same modules try to solve their common problems together through teacher research’ (TB2, questionnaire). Another participant suggested ‘providing a culture of collaboration between teachers, encouraging them to share their findings and enabling them to set up problem-solving meetings. This would lessen the individual burden of doing research alone and encourage teachers to become investigators of their own practice’ (TB4, questionnaire). Another participant explained:

It would be great if teachers are assigned the task of collaborative teacher research to solve the very same problems that we encounter in our department...problems ... especially the issues that we face with our students ... learning together and sharing ideas and reflections will be of such a motivation for

teacher research to be part of the departments' culture (TA2, interview)

Participants' suggestion of collaboration to promote a culture of TR is congruent with ⁽⁷⁶⁾ Borg's (2017) view of the social dimension of TR claiming: "teachers in and across schools can work together on teacher research that examines issues of shared interest and collective enterprise of that kind allows the sharing of workloads, achievements and challenges; responsibility to a group can also have a powerful stimulating effect on teachers' sustained engagement in teacher research" (Borg, 2017:178)

Making TR easy and compulsory. A recurring suggestion by our participants was to make research easy for teachers. In this sense, they argued that TR might become part of their institution if they can consider themselves researchers, though perhaps not in the same highly rigorous way as academic researchers who aim at producing new knowledge. TA1 for instance explains how TR can be made easy for teachers by using familiar classroom activities for data collection:

"I think that ...to make it [TR] easy for teachers to facilitate ... if for example – we are not obliged to conduct rigid research to generalize results...we just need to look at our classrooms...we don't ... how shall I put it? ...we can look at our classrooms using the routine activities those that we use for teaching such as working ... yes ...such as working through Moodle [a platform for online learning used by the University of Algiers 2] to discuss our students' frustrations about the lessons...in the chat rubric and then see how to deal with them" (TA1, interview)

TA's words above resonate well with literature about Exploratory Practice (which is one type of doing TR) e.g., ⁽⁷⁷⁾ Allwright & Hanks, (2009) claim that where teachers are encouraged to look to pedagogical tools they already use in their own teaching for help in collecting data for their research to minimize the burden on teachers and learners in reflective work. These were called "Potentially Exploitable Pedagogic Activities" e.g., class discussion, pair work activities, or homework.

Some others suggested making research easy in the following ways:

I believe that by filling the gap between the researcher and the teacher, this could be done through integrating research with teaching [...] Research would, then, appear less of a burden to

teachers and therefore motivates and encourages them to do it more often (TB4, questionnaire)

“Even the procedures of conducting research ... maybe this time – with teacher research we will be dealing with research that is done in the classrooms with our students ...so I mean a way of doing research that is flexible with our conditions and not time-consuming ... we need a kind of research that doesn’t lead us to another burnout” (TA2, interview)

I believe that most university teachers have experienced burnout of doing research to get their Magister or Doctorate degrees. Research is not an easy task for us, so, in my opinion, teachers will be willing to become classroom researchers only if it is made easy for them (TB6, questionnaire)

In addition to teachers’ suggestion to make research easy to practice, they have also recommended making it compulsory. TB4 for example outstandingly stated that TR must become an inclusive task within teachers’ work:

I think a primary need to promote TR is to shift the thinking about teacher research as something done to teachers to something done by teachers for their betterment. So, TR needs to become an inclusive task like all other obligatory tasks that teachers have to do (TB4, questionnaire)

In a stricter way, TA9 stated:

“I don’t think that teachers will volunteer to do classroom research...we should be imposed...it [TR] should be generated by the administration ... given the conditions we work in I think that we have to be instructed to do it [classroom research]” (TA9, interview)

This idea of making TR compulsory was described in a different way when TA1 proposed to include it as a module for Master’s students or at least include it within the modules of didactics and research methodology:

“I mean that we can even teach it as a module for Master’s students...as a lot of them want to become teachers ... or at least include it as lessons within the modules of didactics and research methodology” (TA1, interview)

Listening to teachers' voices.

According to the data of the study, our participants are aware of the centrality of power in their professional lives. They believe that their voices are not heard by decision-makers in the country. One of the teachers commented, "our voices are not heard...teachers and students...our voices are not heard before making decisions" (TA2, interview). This participant believes that when teachers are not consulted before making any change in education, this makes them feel frustrated and incompetent of researching their practice:

People in the top they are not aware of ... sometimes I ask myself ... I wonder if they are really in Algeria? If they have been in classrooms? If they are familiar with our reality? This situation is frustrating ... we have a lot of talented teachers in our department ...unfortunately they are paralyzed by the attitude of those in the top ... we cannot consider ourselves researchers as long as our voice is not heard (TA2, interview)

Similarly, TB3 states:

Our voice as teachers ...as professionals is completely ignored when they [policymakers] tell us what we should do in classrooms ... they [policy makers] make us feel that they really know better than us...its demotivating ... why should I do research if my voice is not heard? (TB3, interview)

⁽⁷⁸⁾ Hargreaves (2001, p. 4) puts it well when he writes that, "in much of the writing on teaching and teachers' work, teachers' voices have either been curiously absent, or been used as mere echoes for preferred and presumed theories of educational researchers." Hargreaves' comment corresponds with our participants' comments above.

Consequently, the teachers in this study stressed that their voices need to be heard if we are looking at promoting a teacher research culture. TA2 stresses:

"I think that improvement can only come from the bottom not from the top ... believe me we have the capacity to raise issues...to investigate and find solutions to our problems– I really hope that the voices of teachers will be heard" (TA2, interview)

Others stressed their voice to be heard in the following ways:

“I feel that we are alone and isolated in our classrooms while a lot of policies and changes are evolving around us...we don't feel valued ... it's high time things changed and our voices were valued and considered” (TB6, interview)

“I guess the situation won't change if our experiences, opinions, and voices keep being ignored ...we can contribute to change if we are being listened to” (TB1, interview)

The best change comes from the classroom...from the teachers and students ...we know what is going on in the classroom better than anyone else it's our voice that can make the best of change in education...they [policymakers] need to listen to it (TA8, interview)

Based on this, ⁽⁷⁹⁾Hargreaves (2001) argues that the validity and assertiveness of teachers' voices can and should cause the theories of educational researchers to be questioned, modified, and abandoned when necessary.

Discussion

The literature is replete with persuasive arguments in favor of the benefits to teachers of being research-engaged ⁽⁸⁰⁾(Borg, 2009), however, it is clear from a number of studies on teachers' involvement in research (⁽⁸¹⁾Borg, 2009; ⁽⁸²⁾Borg, 2007; ⁽⁸³⁾National Teacher Research Panel, 2011; ⁽⁸⁴⁾Kutlay, 2013) that most of the teachers who were interviewed either never conducted research or just seldom engaged in it. Likewise, we found out that only 3 teachers (TA2, TA5, and TB2) out of 15 who participated in this case study mentioned that they have conducted Action Research earlier in their careers.

Another point that emerged from the study was that the majority of the participants who answered a 'Yes' to the question of whether they did TR before in fact confused teacher research with reflective practice. When they were asked to describe their previous engagement in TR, their words included reflection rather than research as they told instances where they reconsidered their practices through questioning and writing about their teaching. No data collection, analysis, and making results public were conducted. This point is different from findings in similar studies (⁽⁸⁵⁾Atay, 2006; ⁽⁸⁶⁾Borg, 2009; ⁽⁸⁷⁾Kutlay, 2013) where teachers confused teacher research with academic, scientific research and where teachers' perceptions of research were guided by scientific concepts such as hypothesis testing, collecting a large amount of information, doing statistical analysis and objectivity of the researcher ⁽⁸⁸⁾(Kutlay, 2013: 196). One teacher in ⁽⁸⁹⁾Atay's

(2006) study commented: ‘To me research meant something very scientific and complicated’ (p:7)

As ⁽⁹⁰⁾ Borg (2009:377) mentioned, this is not a criticism of teachers, as there are clearly powerful interacting factors at play in shaping the current situation. Time is frequently cited as the biggest obstacle to teachers conducting research ⁽⁹¹⁾ Hancock, 1997; ⁽⁹²⁾ National Teacher Research Panel, 2011; ⁽⁹³⁾ Borg, 2009; ⁽⁹⁴⁾ Borg, 2010; ⁽⁹⁵⁾ Mehrani, 2015; ⁽⁹⁶⁾ Sakarkaya & Bumen, 2022), similarly, the findings of this study indicated that the extensive workload necessitates that teachers remain engaged in teaching, assessment, grading, supervision, and administrative tasks. Consequently, they lack additional time for conducting TR.

In addition to the constraint of time, financial factors were found to be the second most frequent barrier to teachers’ engagement in research. These financial factors include the low salary of teachers causing them to work extra hours in private schools, thus, no time is left for them to conduct research. Accordingly, in his summary of the wide range of barriers to teachers’ engagement in research noted in the literature, ⁽⁹⁷⁾ Borg (2010:409) mentioned that in situations when teachers are compelled to do additional employment to sustain their livelihoods and receive compensation solely for instructional hours, participation in research is not a viable pursuit for numerous language teachers.

We have noticed that the lack of time in this study is related to the financial factors mentioned by the participants in a way that having to work in private schools to gain more money is a factor that adds to the constraint of time for conducting research. Not being paid for doing research was also considered one of the main reasons that demotivated the participants to do research since it does not bring them any financial benefits. In this context, a variety of arrangements have been proposed to enable teachers to do research. These include paid overtime, summer seminars or institutes in which teachers can write about and reflect on their teaching practices, and financial support for their research projects ⁽⁹⁸⁾ (Mohr & Maclean, 1987 as cited in Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1993: 21)

Moreover, lack of support, consideration, and recognition as well as lack of interest in TR strictly are factors that impede some of our participants from engaging in TR. All of these are believed to give the participants the impression that conducting teacher research is not a priority of their department, which often places higher importance on unreflective actions such as the achievement of the curriculum, and of the tests and exams. Besides, our participants expressed that their reluctance to do research is a manifestation of the perceived low value of research and the perceived lack of appreciation for the research efforts. This is

parallel with ⁽⁹⁹⁾ Borg's (2006) observation that the classroom is frequently overlooked as a locus for knowledge generation. He posits that if the knowledge derived from teacher research is acknowledged as valuable—by teachers, head teachers, local education authorities, and others—then the occurrence of teacher research is more probable ⁽¹⁰⁰⁾ (ibid :25)

Findings show that the non-collaborative culture among the teachers working for the same department as well as the lack of training are other reasons affecting teachers' engagement in TR. Our participants felt that they are not excited to do any classroom research in isolation, and most of them complain about the absence of supporting collaborative research among colleagues in the Department of English. ⁽¹⁰¹⁾ Cochran-Smith & Lytle (1993) draw a parallel conclusion stating that in numerous educational institutions, teachers have not been incentivized to collaborate on voluntary, self-directed initiatives or to assertively address instructional, curricular, and policy matters.

Along with the challenges from the non-collaborative culture among colleagues, the reluctance of teachers to conduct TR also stems from the lack of training on how to do TR, in other words, this factor generated limitations in participants' skills and knowledge about TR. This is congruent with ⁽¹⁰²⁾ Borg's (2009) finding showing that a lack of knowledge about research was the next factor in the list of teachers that seem less likely to engage in research if they lack self-efficacy in relation to this activity.

Other factors that hinder our participants from engaging in TR stem from their working conditions such as crowded classrooms or from the teachers themselves such as being afraid of change and innovation. These two factors however are not frequent in studies researching the issue of TR engagement. It has been found that some of the participants mentioned that teachers might be reluctant to investigate their practice because they are afraid to challenge their already-held beliefs and assumptions about teaching and learning based on the findings that they might get after doing TR. These participants assume that changing tradition is hard, especially for veteran teachers. Indeed, anxiety is inherently associated with professional risk-taking. When educators experiment with new methodologies or want assistance from peers to enhance their effectiveness, they jeopardize their confidence and perceived competence. Their professional identity and self-concept are jeopardized ⁽¹⁰³⁾ (Dadds, 1993 as cited in Hargreaves, 1998:324).

Besides, all our participants cited working with large classes of 60 to 70 students as a serious issue to the quality of teaching and learning, hence, to the investigation of one's own practice.

The teachers in this study were also asked about how to foster a TR culture in their department. Most of them believe that a culture of TR might be achieved by overcoming the key restraint of the lack of the necessary training to inform and mentor teachers on TR methodologies. In ⁽¹⁰⁴⁾ Borg's (2006) conditions for teacher research, the presence of a mentor that teachers recognize as valuing and supporting their endeavors to become teacher-researchers can motivate additional teachers to embrace this role. This is particularly crucial in contexts when teacher researchers experience isolation and a research culture is absent. Besides, all our participants suggested supporting colleagues to work on collaborative TR as a vital solution to promote a TR culture, this is matching with ⁽¹⁰⁵⁾ Atay's (2006) study where all teachers working on collaborative Action Research mentioned their negative experiences with research from the previous years, comparing it with the present collaborative one 'since everyone was ready to help each other' as one of the participants in ⁽¹⁰⁶⁾ Atay's (2006:11) study mentioned.

Cautioning against the problem of simply adding research to teachers' workloads, ⁽¹⁰⁷⁾ Myers (1987, as cited in Cochran Smith & Lytle, 1993: 21) has argued persuasively for the institutionalization of TR by making inquiry an integral part of the professional lives of teachers. Similarly, our participants in this study suggest making research easy and compulsory. They recommend TR becoming part of the teachers' professional duties using friendly methodologies for teachers wishing to study and improve their practice, echoing ⁽¹⁰⁸⁾ Allwright's (1997) view who thinks that optimism may be appropriate, however, if there is a way to bring a worthwhile research element into teaching and learning without simply copying academic research – what is needed Allwright suggests is a research perspective rather than research in its usual sense –research for local understandings.

This suggestion might also echo what ⁽¹⁰⁹⁾ Borg (2006) calls the condition of expectation stating that if in our field generally and in teachers' own working contexts specifically, there is an expectation that being a professional language teacher involves researching one's own practices, then such inquiry is more likely to occur.

In his explanatory study about why are class teachers reluctant to become researchers, ⁽¹¹⁰⁾ Hancock (1997) observed that teachers' comprehension of pedagogy and their perceptions of students' learning processes have typically not been acknowledged as a legitimate type of professional expertise. Consequently, they have not been led to believe that their work warrants research and dissemination. As a reaction to this situation, participants in this study recommended listening to their voices and valuing the findings of research done by teachers if a teacher research culture is to be promoted.

Limitations and Future Research

The obvious limitation of this study is its size. The investigation is conducted with a limited number of participants in a specific context; thus, it is not possible to generalize its findings to the whole Algerian context of EFL teaching. That is, though the findings showed that only few teachers conducted TR before, this might be restricted only to the teachers who participated in this case study.

Clearly, large-scale survey studies to investigate the extent to which university EFL teachers are engaged in TR in Algeria are recommended. In this sense, any future research might reutilize section 5 of ⁽¹¹¹⁾ Borg's (2009) questionnaire to investigate the level of teachers' engagement in research.

Many issues raised in this study suggest further areas of investigation. Larger scale but also localized studies about TR engagement from the point of view of heads of departments, administrators, and mentors can help inform more feasible considerations on how to foster a TR culture.

During the course of data analysis, it became evident that our participants are used to reflecting on their teaching practice, thus, at last, it is also important to investigate more about EFL teachers' professional development through reflective practices and teacher-research projects at all levels of school not only at the level of the university.

Conclusion

Despite the substantial amount of work which has been conducted into teachers' research engagement in mainstream education, this topic has been awarded scant attention in the field of English language teaching ⁽¹¹²⁾ (Borg, 2007). Thus, this paper presented the results of a study addressing the factors that contribute to EFL teachers' unwillingness to engage in teacher research in Algeria. It also investigated the triggering factors that might foster a culture of teacher research among these teachers.

There were various factors responsible for teachers' lack of enthusiasm to engage in teacher research. These factors derived from the teachers themselves such as lack of interest in teacher research and fear of change and from institutional factors such as lack of training, non-collaborative culture among colleagues, and crowded classrooms. Yet, lack of time and lack of support, consideration, and recognition as well as financial issues were considered the most inhibiting barriers to teachers' engagement in teacher research.

Therefore, in order to enhance a teacher research culture and teachers' engagement in research, these inhibiting factors should be addressed properly. Teachers in this study recommended training, collaborative teacher research, making teacher research easy and compulsory, and listening to their voices as the best solutions if we are to promote a culture of teacher research at university.

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