



Factors Impeding Teachers In The Saudi Public Schools From Becoming Action Researchers: An Exploratory Study

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the perceptions of English language teachers in Saudi public schools towards action research (AR) as a process that enables teachers to address classroom-specific issues without relying entirely on published research. Despite the increase in language teachers' action research narratives, more research is needed on public school English language teachers' perceptions of action research and the factors affecting their engagement with action research. The current study sought to find out how public-school English language (EL) teachers in Saudi Arabia view action research per se, and the factors that impede action research production. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from (n = 19) EL teachers from several schools in Makkah province. The results analyzed thematically and showed that the teachers had primary knowledge of research as a tool to discover new knowledge. Most participants reported having done no research, and even those who claimed to have done so, seemed motivated by personal ambition rather than a systematic process. Findings revealed that teachers' barriers to conducting action research include lack of knowledge, workload, professional development, and administrative attitude, under which the shortage of financial rewards and demotivation of teachers fall. The implications of Saudi schooling guidelines were also discussed.

Keywords: Teacher Professional Development, Action Research, English Language Teaching, Reflective Approach, Teacher Research

1. Introduction

Action research is a sort of research undertaken in a classroom by a teacher. It is a practical attempt for educators to improve the quality of their instruction. Additionally, it helps teachers construct an inquiry to identify and resolve issues in their classroom or school. In other words, Action research is "learning by doing" in which a group of individuals identify a problem, do action to resolve it, see how successful their efforts run, and if not satisfied, try once again. On the part of English language teaching (ELT), action research employed to bridge the gap between theory and practice. Further, it is utilized to encourage teachers to adopt an exploratory stance toward classroom practices (Gebhard 2005). Throughout this literature, action research (AR), teacher research (TR), classrooms research (CR) are terms denoting the same approach.

Action research for language teachers described by Bailey (2001) as a method of collecting and evaluating data that built on a clearly defined and repeated cycle of operations. In the field of second language education, action research has historically been related to the inquiry of classroom activities rather than the investigation of social concerns associated with language teaching. As a result, change can be more convincingly because practical language teachers will find the results more reasonable and valid for their needs. Although several advantages have emerged from teacher research, resulting in investigating their practice based on teacher intuition, academic knowledge, and personal experience (Steinberg and Kincheloe, 1998), many teachers are seldom involved in the research process unless encouraged to do so by education management (Borg, 2009).

In Saudi Arabia, the conventional view of teaching is just as a straightforward process that entails the teacher "simply" presenting information to students and testing their comprehension (Borg, Alshumaimeri, 2012). Classrooms are complex environments, with mentally taxing routines. According to Pica (1996, p59), classrooms are sophisticated "social communities" because teachers interact with a diverse range of students

who bring a variety of abilities, learning styles, motivations, and attitudes toward the teaching/learning process in the classroom. Accordingly, ELT teachers may need systematic inquiry as a continuous component of their classroom atmosphere in order to analyze their teaching practice to be used in planning process for classroom tasks. For ELT teachers, Numerous outcomes have been reported, including increased research skills, awareness of the learning process, renewed enthusiasm for teaching, increased collaborative effort with colleagues (Wyatt, 2011), enhanced competence (Henson, 2001), and a sustained engagement with professional development (Kirkwood and Christie 2006). Through the action research process, Teachers not only improve their instructional practices, but also gain additional knowledge about their students, colleagues, and themselves (Ferrance, 2000). As a result, action research regarded as the most effective tool for teachers' professional development.

Commonly, action research is employed by teachers in the western context to help them improve their practice. While, in Saudi schools, it has not yet become a regular practice for teachers to view classroom research as a principal part of their professional responsibility. Consequently, the Saudi Ministry of Education has issued new guidelines that encourage teachers in public schools to do their action research and has ranked the teachers upon multiple criteria that comprise designing and conducting action research. Despite the growing interest among Saudi ELT teachers in conducting classroom action research, such as the work of Ahmad (Alkubaidi, M. 2019; Alfallaj, F. S. 2017; Siddiqui, O., & Alghamdi, F. M. 2017), this is out of proportion to the expected potential of Saudi ELT teachers and the size of Saudi mass education.

Action research faces multiple challenges, including teachers' conceptions of research; attitudinal factors, such as management's attitude, lack of mentoring and collegial support; technical factors, for instance, lack of research skills; and other factors, including lack of time. The primary cognitive barriers for teachers are their dichotomous views on the separation of teaching and research, as well as the myth that good teachers do not have questions (Macaro, 2003; McDonough, 2006; Schapper & Mayson, 2010).

Besides, a great deal of research has revealed that lack of research skills and time are also common factors preventing TR. A lack of research skills, knowledge, and time are all factors impeding TR, according to research. The role of management varies by context: In some cases, management encouraged but did not support teachers conducting research (Taylor, 2007; Worral, 2004).

2. purpose \ problem statement

The purpose of this work is to delve deeply into teachers' perceptions of research and the role it plays in their classroom. Additionally, this study will examine the insights of Saudi EL (English Language) teachers on action research in the classroom and why teachers of EL courses are unable or unaware of this trendy research approach. These insights may result in a straightforward answer describing the current state of teacher research production and its repercussions. Taking the work carried out by Alshumaimeri and Borg (2012) as an example in the Saudi context, we see that only teachers in higher education institutions were included in this study. We can argue that no work, at least in published resources, has discussed this topic in Saudi Arabia. This exploratory study may help policymakers describe and frame the barriers that school ELT teachers face when conducting classroom research. Indeed, little literature was found on teachers' classroom-based research at the public-school level in the Saudi context, let alone a study conducted on the difficulties teachers face as they conduct research in the classroom. Stenhouse (1975) claimed that for teaching to be recognized as a profession, teachers must assume responsibility for developing and disseminating the latest information about teaching and practice. The interest of Saudi ELT teachers in reflective practice is still at an early stage, and a long time ago, these issues were not discussed in-depth with the teachers. We realize that new guidelines issued in 2017 by the Saudi Education and Training Evaluation Commission (ETEC) demand the teacher have specific skills and knowledge regarding action research, among other standards. The current paper is an attempt to hear from ELT teachers' beliefs and insights about this approach to research, in addition to the challenges they face when trying to conduct such an enquiry. This study is conducted to come up with clear and outlined answers to the following questions:

RQ1: How do in-service public school English language teachers in Saudi Arabia perceive the classroom research?

RQ2: What factors influence in-service public school English language teachers in Saudi Arabia to research in their classrooms?

3. Literature Review

3.1. Action research process and brief history

Kurt Lewin, a social psychologist and educator, developed the concept of using research to alter the researcher's interactions with a natural setting. In the 1950s, he created the term "action research" to refer to work that did not distinguish between study and problem-solving action. His method was cyclical, consisting of a "non-linear sequence of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting on changes in social settings" (McFarland & Stansell, 1993, p.14).

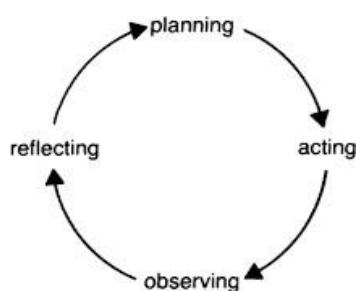


Figure (1) Lewin model of action research (1946).

With its dual goals of action and research, the mechanism of action research helps instructors move theoretically and practically forward. The action goal is to improve a community, organization, program, or intervention, while the research goal is to create new knowledge (Dick, 1992).

Corey (1953), a pioneer figure in educational action research, summarized his views on action research as follows; reading about what someone else discovered about his teaching strategy is less likely to influence and improve our practices than studying a consequence of our own teaching pattern. This genre is called "teacher research," which is a variation on the theme of action research.

3.3. academic vs teacher research

The function of action research is distinct from those of traditional research. In action research, practitioners investigate a topic relevant to their practice and collaborate closely with colleagues to address immediate concerns. Theories pertaining to action research do not accept the idea that knowledge can be isolated from its application context; and researchers are not affected by the subjects of the research (Somekh, 1994)

3.4. perspectives of action research in classroom

perspective 1: AR as small-scale intervention

Action research involves teachers engaging in small-scale interventionist activities to improve their own practice. It can lead to change not only in the immediate setting, such as a classroom, but also in the broader community. Freire, Stenhouse, and Crawford-Lange's Quest for Reform was inspired by action research.

perspective 2: AR as a reflective teaching practice

Reflective teaching can be defined "active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends" (Dewey, 1933, p. 9). Within the scope of reflective teaching, three major themes are emphasized: "classroom-based inquiry", "teacher as researcher", and "action research" (Burns, 2003). The classroom-based inquiry aims to cultivate a reflective approach to teaching by encouraging teachers and students to collect data about the teaching process, examine their perceptions, observations, hypotheses, and teaching strategies, and eventually using information gathered as a springboard for critical reflection on teaching.

perspective 3: Action research as top-down instruction.

The action research is crucial on curriculum reflexivity in the Saudi educational system and recruited as a tool within new guidelines set to achieving education reform in light of 2030 vision of Saudi Arabia. Consider this scenario, a teacher has engaged in reflexive practices, which can have a variety of impacts. Other teachers and administrators rely on action research to improve educational policies and protocols, students are able to observe and participate in reflexivity. Reflective actions in the classroom contribute to a reflective curriculum maintained by entangled relationships between teachers, students, and action research in this case ((Wozole, B.,2021). In schools that follow Western educational models, action research remains one strategy for combating the top-down standardization that marginalizes students' role in reflective practice. Teachers can conduct action research that directly impacts their practice in their own context and act as an extension of their normal reflective practices (Wallace, 1991).

perspective 4: Action Research as Evidence-Based Practice

The recent emergence of evidence-based practice (EBP) as a model for professional practice has emphasized the idea that teacher research is productive and highly engaged in research to inform his/her everyday practice (Davies 1999). There are some ways teachers can improve their skills and knowledge to improve their teaching practice. However, Sagor (2004) asserted that several studies show that conducting action research (AR) is highly effective for helping teachers discover new strategies to improve teaching practices. Likewise, David Hargreaves (1996) believes that education, like medicine, should be an evidence-based profession in which teachers employ research findings in ways that consider the varying contexts in which different schools operate.

3.4. Works on Factor affecting the teachers to doing action research

According to (Sanchez & Borg, 2015), Teachers' unwillingness to do teacher research is influenced by a variety of factors, including professional, cognitive, attitudinal, technological, logistic, and others, according to studies. The essential factors that motivate teachers to conduct research in their classrooms have been identified as career expectations, professional development, and promotion. (Atay, 2008; Borg, 2007; 2009; McDonough, 2006; Wyatt, 2011). McDonough (2006), for example, looked into the experiences of teachers performing action research in a second and foreign language classroom. Participants said they gained a better grasp of research and new insights on language teaching strategies in the classroom due to that study. Tuyan (2018) conducted a study with seven instructor mentees participating in action research in Turkey. According to a survey, the study found that participants in action research gained professional development, improved their grasp of research and sensitivity to students' difficulties, and appreciated the need for teamwork. Teachers' incentive to stay engaged in TR, according to the study, is linked to professional advantages, a sense of delight in critical self-reflection, and self-empowerment.

It's also worth noting that instructors' willingness to participate in classroom research is influenced by their expectations for different forms of rewards and their personal attitude toward their professional growth (Worrall, 2004; Tien, 2000). Worrall (2004), for example, performed research examining schoolteachers' perspectives of TR's impact on their professional growth. Participants in the study said that participating in research was unrewarding because it had no substantial impact on their teaching techniques. Many different models of the action research method have been proposed. Most action research writers, such as Burns, A. (2009), and Feldman (2007), see it as a spiraling process that allows for systematic but flexible planning, acting, data collection, observation, reflection, analyzing, reacting, and evaluation.

TR has been observed to be harmed by management's attitude, a lack of mentoring and collegial support, technical factors such as a lack of research abilities, and other problems such as a lack of time. Teachers' positivist research ideas, the contradiction between teaching and research, and the misconception that excellent teachers don't ask questions are the biggest cognitive hurdles (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993; Macaro, 2003; McDonough, 2006; Schapper & Mayson, 2010). According to the study, the majority of teachers follow a positivistic research paradigm in which objectivity, hypothesis, statistics, and generalizability are the essential requirements for excellent research (Borg, 2007; 2009; Shkedi, 1998). They regard research as a highly sophisticated and difficult activity (McDonough, 2006). Borg (2009), for example, investigated EL teachers' perceptions of research and the factors that influence their research into classroom-specific concerns. The data was gathered from a diverse group of EL teachers (n=505) from around the world with various degrees and language teaching experience. Tests, experiments, peer-observations, and publications were all listed as essential parts in participants' definitions of research. As a result, teachers' positivistic views on research were the main roadblocks to TR. Furthermore, research has revealed that management's attitude, a lack of research skills, and a lack of time are all common roadblocks to TR. For example, research suggests that management's attitude significantly impacts teachers' participation in CR (Allison & Carey, 2007; Borg & Alshumaimeri, 2012; Worrall, 2004; Xie, 2015).

4. Method and design

This study utilized a qualitative method to inquire about both questions of the study. Qualitative research has become an established part of educational research, providing a rich and in-depth understanding of phenomena under investigation. It was considered that quantitative measures could usefully supplement and extend the generated findings when ELT teachers talk about their insights and beliefs. The need for qualitative research studies to generate new knowledge and inform what is known about a topic of study has been emphasized by many researchers (Jensen and Allen 1996).

Semi-structured interviews have been employed in this study for getting more detailed information through open-ended responses. An introduction was presented prior to delving into the questions. This introduction was composed of definitions and other concepts of action research in the ELT field. We assumed that some participants would recognize the intended perception easily if we declared the other, or similar, terms of action research such as "teacher research". Later on, after we posed the items of the semi-structured interviews, participants got familiar with what we had been discussing.

We tried to streamline the process of conducting interviews for the sample in consonance of their capabilities and time to meet. Therefore, we designed a questionnaire through which remote participants can be involved in this study. Participants were given a choice to opt for the mother tongue (Arabic) or English to respond to interview questions. Three questions investigate the demographic information that initiated the interview to include 1. age-category 2. years of practice experience 3. qualification. Each of these demographic data is an important variable that serves as an indicator to know more about participant practice. The rest of the questions were articulated in 'wh' format to allow respondents to talk or express in a free manner about a particular item.

5. sample and setting

A total of 19 English language teachers in Saudi public schools included in this study. The sample consisted of a relatively experienced group of teachers with relatively little experience in doing research. For example, 9 (47.36%) of the teachers had been teaching for more than eleven years. Other experience intervals fall under these categories; teachers with practice less than one year 1 (5.26%), and 1-4 years of practice formed 3 (15.78%), and for teachers whose experience from 5-10 were 6 (31.57%). Among the whole sample, only 3 (15.78%) of them had reported that they were actively involved in conducting action research; one of them has participated as part of research to develop the curriculum. Since the education system and schooling guidelines are unified in all public education schools in Saudi Arabia, and for the limited time to carrying out this study, all participants have been based in Makkah province that we could easily outreach and interview them. The interviews collected and findings of this study analyzed and revealed over two month (October & November 2021).

6. procedure and data analysis

We anticipated that not all respondents would be familiar with classroom action research, and even those who did might not practice it. Therefore, we took into account this limitation and put in a brief introduction defining and outlining the action research from functional process components in the ELT classroom atmosphere. Participants were informed that their responses were kept confidential, and their names would be anonymous. Web-based interviews also were utilized as an alternative to face-to-face interviews with those who are unable to conduct onsite meetings or recorded interviews.

Questions in all forms of interviews were in uniform and participants were given enough time (15 mins) to answer the questions. As long the qualitative data is the source of this study, we employed the thematic analysis technique to organize the findings and give them a weighted score based on times of recurrence. As we explicitly stated in the section above, the purpose of this article aimed to investigate two points only, and we would not go in our inquiry beyond these.

7.

Results

Teachers' perception of action research

In order for answering the first question of this study, we explore the insights and perceptions of in-service English language teachers in Saudi public schools among all responses in the interviews. Those who are involved in doing action research (n=6), have demonstrated a deep understanding of its process. Most of the participants, who do not have a clear conception of action research (n=13), linked the research to something done in only university or higher educational institutions. Holding a PhD degree or doing a thesis are also themes of misconception.

(T13) Research is something done in university by scholars and professors.

Nonetheless, those who hold an MA (Master of Arts) degree bore in mind that no distinction between action and traditional research. For example, one participant reported:

(T6) Yes, I did my dissertation once I was in master.

The conventional imagination about AR among our participants is that the teacher role is confined to delivering the curriculum to students and managing the classroom in addition to evaluating the learning outcome in regular assessments and exams, then doing research. However, some participants demonstrated a knowledge of the term of action research, but they did not have a chance to know what classroom research is. Clearly, teachers without the real practice of action research had a limited imagination of its nature, In particular, when that occurs in the absence of a deep understanding of the action research process and its requirements. While others, who have experienced conducting action research, have a good comprehension of its implications and applications.

(T18) Yes, I have participated in action research as part of an initiative endorsed by the ministry of education in favor of curriculum development.

The participants, who never participated in action research, have a confused and unclear image of action research, and they have a preconceived perspective that any research belonged to the academic community. Some mentioned the research publishing concerns; this denotes an absence of knowledge that action research aimed primarily to get to reflective practice in schooling and teaching community regardless of the significance of that work published or not. Teachers are split over what constitutes teacher research — Is it prestigious or rigorous, is it productive and reflective on curriculum, or would it be a waste of effort and time. Nunan (1997), for example, argues that classroom research should be evaluated according to the same measures that are applied to any other kind of research.

Factors inhibiting ELT teachers in doing AR

Lack of Knowledge about AR process

The first item was “what do you know about action research in ELT classroom.” The aim here was to evaluate the initial knowledge of participants about action research. A (n =5) teachers have a clear thought about action research. However, some participants demonstrated a knowledge of the term of AR, but they did not have a chance for know what the AR practically is.

(T10) it's a process to gather data about the students in the class by using interviews, questionnaires, and so on, in order to solve some educational problems or for improvements.

Other participant added a detailed information such as process of action research

(T8) Action research is an approach that traces the following process: define the problem in the classroom, analysis, develop a solution, implement the new action, and so on.

On the other hand, some attributed to lack of knowledge to weak foundation in BA program. In fact, at a Saudi higher education institution, a research methods module was taught in the classroom throughout the entire BA (Bachelor of Arts) English language program, which lasted the entire semester. Academic research designs are the primary focus of the course, with an equal emphasis placed on technical and academic writing skills as well as other aspects of academic writing.

(T11) I think that during BA, we had a module of research methods, but it is all about traditional research designs, not related altogether to how we deal with classroom problems.

To more clarification, classroom research necessitates the development of specific skills that should be taught both theoretically and practically on pre-service teacher preparation programs. Although the implementation of this pattern of perception is still in its early stages, it is spreading throughout the Saudi educational system as a result of scattered efforts by ambitious and thoughtful individuals, as well as university initiatives, and is expected to spread even further. The development of guidelines that have been endorsed by the Saudi educational system and universities is necessary in order to upskill ELT teachers, so that they can conduct their AR in collaboration with the ELT community in Saudi Arabia. However, T3 touch crucial factor related to formation the of knowledge in ELT teacher which is pre- and in-service preparation program to include among other skills, action research in classroom.

(T3) I sincerely can't think of a way the ELT can do their reflective practice or classroom research without pre-and in-service workshops that upskill ELT teachers in doing their research on their own and could collaborate their experience with other teachers in the Saudi ELT community.

The individual, and collective change begins in the individual mind; to change in and sustainable way, teachers have to possess the sense and want to change (Dahbi, 2014). Therefore, the educational system in Saudi Arabia should be an atmosphere that supports a culture of inquiry produced by teachers. This transformation in the education system requires courage and tenacity. Other findings by (T4, T9), imply that action research is irrelevant to the teacher's profession and should indeed be ignored.

Workload (lack of time)

Once our study explored the factors that prevent ELT teachers from doing their classroom research, time was an essential theme. Most teachers have a teaching burden ranging from 15-24 sessions each week. Workload refers to some factors which hinder teachers' research engagement (e.g., lack of time). Lack of time is one of the recurring constraints and a major reason for teachers not implementing action research (Allwright, 2003; Bailey et al., 2001; Bums, 1999; Gebhard et al., 2003; Nunan, 1993; Van Lier, 1994a, b; Bn,2003). As Van Lier (1994) describes, many teachers fall into “unexamined routines, or rush headlong from one lesson into another, collapsing into the first available easy chair at the end of a long, exhausting day.” Most ESL (English as a Second Language) teachers comment that their daily workload is already heavy for them to bear. In response to “did you conduct action research in your class, and why,” we got this plain reason by (T5):

No, cause as a teacher in these times you are burdened with non-teaching tasks and overcrowded classes and can barely do real teaching let alone do some luxurious stuff like research.

Teachers typically are not given time to do action research (Bailey et al., 2001), and including it in the language classroom is time-consuming (Allwright, 1993). Teachers must conceptualize their concerns, discuss them, develop action plans, gather or create materials, seek advice, collect data, transcribe interactions, analyze the data, and write up the projects for this type of research.

Mitigation of the teaching workload was the motivation for teachers (T2, T13, and T14) who responded to the question about “what are the incentives or motifs for ELT teachers to conduct action research?” The word “time” recurred in our interviews' responses (9 times), the frequency of this theme brings about giving more free time to teachers to prepare their research. The process of action research is not only what happens during classroom intervention, rather it requires a long time of reading, preparation, consultancy, trial, and error. Furthermore, teachers often feel that collecting data is an impediment to the actual teaching process. It becomes a burden to their mounting daily responsibilities (Allwright, 2003; Gebhard et al., 2003; Van Lier, 1994; Wallace, 1991). The teacher (T16) added:

The process of gathering data from students in the class by using interviews, questionnaires, and so on, is a time-consuming task.

In Saudi public schools, teachers need to work not only inside the class but also outside the class for efficient classroom management and time management by discussing with students who can provide useful suggestions to help teachers practice.

Professional development

Currently, in Saudi Arabia teacher licensing examination requires pre-service teachers a minimal knowledge in action research along with other teaching knowledge. Continuing this practice with in-service teachers helps both novice and expert teachers gain fair knowledge about education and teaching. Action research is an intentional and systematic inquiry about teaching and learning that takes place in schools and classrooms (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993). It transforms teachers from research consumers to change agents who support educational reform. Teachers, using this approach, build networks and share knowledge to help students succeed.

(T2) Nothing is clear about what the benefits on the professional development of English language teacher`s if he\she did action research.

Teacher development aims to motivate teachers to reflect on their practice and become more aware of their strengths and weaknesses. The reflective practitioner is a teacher who is interested in learning more about his or her own teaching in order to foster personal and professional growth. Thus, teacher development is a proactive process initiated by the teacher, rather than imposed by others. Given that one of the primary goals of teacher education is the development of a reflective practitioner who seeks to grow both as a professional teacher and as an individual, action research is an important component in achieving this goal. Incorporating action research into in-service teacher training programs can significantly improve development outcomes in Saudi Arabia. Recently, action research has become a recurrent theme in language teaching circles, with a renewed focus on teacher-led initiatives. McNiff (2009) emphasizes the importance of teacher professional development as a contemporary educational challenge. Teachers have a wealth of knowledge and beliefs about teaching and learning that they have gained from their own experiences and training, as described by Nicol (1997). These beliefs, however, are frequently resistant to change in the curriculum.

The teacher (T18) mentioned a bottom-level insight about AR in Saudi ELT public school that it is more linked to self-development as one aspect of professional development.

T(18) One of the main goals of conducting AR is to improve the teachers' practices inside and outside their classrooms in public schools. Learning from the mistakes that they have identified through their self-reflection and searching for multiple strategies to be experienced in their current scenarios would enhance their reservoir and their teaching practices.

According to Al-ahdal and al-awaid (2014), teacher training in Saudia Arabia has not been a systematic and planned programme; this applies both to the pre-service and in-service education/training of teachers. Recent research indicates growth in theory and practice in teaching for understanding, self-study research, and classroom research.

In regard to the Saudi context, the adoption of the Professional pathways and standards for Saudi teachers, issued in 2017 by the National Commission for training and evaluation, came up with drastic reform touching upon aspects. Teachers are, thereto, adapted to the new situation as a result of being held accountable for student achievement in front of the entire community. Teachers in this guideline ranked several orders upon gradual skills and tasks they are in charge of. For example, teacher in rank 'practitioner' is expected to be aware of the action research process and has the ability to apply the recommendations and practices of AR in his\her classroom. 2. 'advanced teacher is who can describe the data collection tools in previous research, (interview, and observation). Systemically control methods and designs, and implement those approaches in data collection. 3. 'expert teacher' as defined by the guideline: a distinguished teacher with comprehensive and deep knowledge and high educational experience in the field of teaching and who carries authentic educational values. He has the ability to conduct action research, produce knowledge and use it creatively in the learning environment to achieve the inclusive growth of students.

Administrative attitude

Funding shortage

A subtle theme was, in essence, that teachers need sources that drive their desire to engage in the research process. The results revealed that the existence and provision of resources are also linked to the administrative requirements and logistics that facilitate conducting research. For example, (T7) stated, "For doing research, we have to have labs for ELT; the audiovisual lab is indispensable for doing research." Additionally, a number of participants (n=4) added that the primary motivation for them to engage in TR was the financial reward. Consequently, in response to a question on what factors influence ELT teachers' conducting classroom research, (T19) stated that "management should offer [cash rewards] to individuals interested in conducting research." Others also viewed money, equipment, and time availability as vital incentives to perform such endeavor. Additionally, participants identified a lack of logistic support, such as adequate workspaces, laptops, and electronic tools, as a significant challenge. (T12) reported:

We don't have the proper infrastructure and facilities to do action research.

Most interestingly, cash rewards were not a powerful motivator for classroom research for the majority of participants.

Demotivation

A number of responses (n=3) called for more encouragement and support for TR, they attributed the lack of incentive to the administration that does not normally perceive that research is relevant to the teacher's job. Likewise, the credit is not placed on efforts teachers make to grow professionally through action research. Thus, management support for encouraging action research or providing recognition to teachers' reflective practice is so far limited.

T17: the management from multiple levels, deem the research belongs only to the university and academic community, therefore, the lack of support and encouragement could cause teachers' practical problems, this notion is also fueled by the widely held belief that teaching is just a job that does not require more than daily tasks. Without administrative support, teachers may feel that the research work is not worthwhile to exert an effort.

Table (1) thematic analysis of responses in semi-structured interviews	
magnitude coding of factors influencing ELT teacher involvement in doing action research	
Theme	Recurrence
Lack of knowledge	13 (63.1%)
Lack of time (workload)	9 (47.3%)
Professional development	5 (26.3%)
Administration attitude (shortage of funding)	4 (21.05%)
Administrative attitude (demotivation)	3 (15.78%)

8. Discussion

In response to the question investigating the ELT teachers' perception of action research in the classroom, participants see the role of teacher in the classroom merely a provider of information, a manager, facilitator, but not researcher. The new education reform guidelines of the teacher practice are currently considered an active catalyst for change in teaching practices, course design, problem-solving and action researcher. There was still a perception that research was

"Something done to them from the outside school," As (T3) stated.

Many Saudi ELT teachers consider this view, the teacher role cannot surpass conducting research which is a responsibility of researchers in MOE and high education institutions. While researchers design, conduct and interpret studies, teachers are invariably relegated to the function of implementation and dissemination (Houser,1990). Mentoring and guidance to action research through workshops presented by expert researchers and experienced teachers could change this stereotype perception. Amid the diverse responses and insights, we got a distinct comment from (T16) who reported, "In the era of dynamic digital development, academic articles are no longer the only means for teachers to share their reflexivity and creativity. For example, new teachers learn from the enquiry that senior teachers do using multimedia as the means to record and share their innovative practices." Using technology in Saudi education systems transformed many facets of learning and teaching perceptions. This draws on as well to process of reflective teaching and doing classroom research. Misconceptions of participants toward the research characterized by the skeptical belief of their potential and abilities to do research on their own.

The first part of the study question has a logical liaison to set out the part two of study questions, it depicts the preconceived thoughts, beliefs around action research paving the way to researchers to set off the discussion of obstacles and challenges face by teachers to involve collaboratively with other colleagues or taking the research task on their own.

The results are borne from questions exploring the factors inhibiting teachers to do research, teachers voiced many themes that touched different domains. Noticeably, participants have discussed multiple factors as mentioned in table (1), and needless to say, the importance of ranking our findings revealed in this study in accord with its recurrence in participants responses. The top-ranked factor, undoubtedly, is a lack of knowledge, whether on the theoretical or practical level. Action research is viewed as an integral part of teachers' professional development (Ado, 2013). The second-ranked factor revealed is the need for more time to prepare, conduct, collect data, and analyzing the results and then implement a new strategy in the ELT classroom. Similarly, drawn on works of (Allwright, 2003; Van Lier, 1994; Wallace, 1998) emphasized that lacking time is an essential factor preventing teachers from doing their classroom research or action research. The third-ranked factor is professional development, which could act as an extrinsic motivator to the teacher to continue its research in the classroom, regulated Continuous professional development (CPD) has a cascade effect on ELT teachers' community resulting in exchange the knowledge, skills, and new contributions in teacher\action research. The collaboration in doing action research and exchanging the emerging remarks and insights could create active research networking amongst ELT teachers in Saudi Arabia. Teachers can continue to grow and learn through action research drawing on their own experiences. The art and science of teaching can only improve when teachers reflect on their daily work and use their findings to enhance their instruction

style the next day, according to Sagor (2004). The fourth-ranked factor comprises managerial or administrative concerns subcategorized into two; the funding, resources, and demotivation that originated initially from administration attitude in the restricted role of the teacher. Broadly speaking, schools mandate and centralize curricula as major teacher tasks, the administration always focuses on timetable pressures (courses and evaluation) instead of teachers' research work (Burns, 2009).

There is close consistency of the findings shown in this study with results revealed in previous literature on factors influencing teacher to do classroom research "action research." For example, lack of research skills and knowledge, as major constraints in classroom action research challenge (Atay, 2008; Xie, 2015), classroom action research seen as time-consuming task and additional burden (Gow & Chow, 2012), participation in classroom research is influenced by teachers expectations for different forms of rewards and their personal attitude toward their professional growth (Worral, 2004; Tien, 2000), management's attitude, is common roadblocks to TR (Allison & Carey, 2007; Borg & Alshumaimeri, 2012; Worral, 2004). The finding of this study cannot be generalized to the whole Saudi ELT community due to two reasons. The limited time of conducting interviews, the sample was chosen and randomly from several schools from Makkah province, so that other parts of Saudi Arabia have not been represented.

9. Conclusion

The aim set first to this study was an answering two main question; one related to the way or pattern in which in-service ELT teachers in Saudi schools perceive the classroom research; whereas the other inquires the factors influencing those teachers to conduct research in their own classrooms. The provoking reason for the ignition of these questions was the limited literature in the Saudi context, as stated above, that addressed this problem. Not only in English language teaching area, but for all subjects taught in our schooling system. Anyhow, this study tried to inquire concisely and precisely the two questions using a qualitative design. Overall, the misconception of classroom research among ELT teachers is clear and can be attributed to a weak foundation in BA programs, beside the absence of robust in-service preparation on action research process. The typical view of research as academic work, and the teacher is just facilitator or information provider is changing with tangible efforts and research contributions by distinguished teachers. Moreover, Teacher licensing examinations in KSA comprise a few questions focusing on action research process, this might be an indicator that novice teachers are prepared to take advantage in doing such trendy research.

Regarding factors influencing or inhibiting the ELT teachers in Saudi public schools, we could order these factors respectively to distinctive themes. ELT teachers' need for raising the awareness of classroom research or so-called action research was a significant theme of this study. Without knowledge and skills of the research process, our classroom will be only space for teaching on a prescribed curriculum lacking reflective practices from experienced teachers. T Saudi teachers also viewed the time constrains as a challenging factor if they want to engage in classroom research, as matter of fact, the weekly workload on teachers ranges from 15- 24 sessions. The action research process consumes considerable effort in preparation, data collecting, analysis, applying the reflections, this represents a heavy, time-consuming burden making the teacher does not even think about doing research. Implications for professional development have been reported as a principal factor that motivates and drives teachers to do research in their own classrooms. They expect sustainable and d maintainable professional development that reflects on their job. According to Wallace (1991), In-service teacher development is supposed to enhance teacher professionalism and self-efficacy, which will have a positive effect on student achievement and learning outcomes. The last factor we deduced in this study is management attitude toward TR, this can be seen from two angles; lack of resources, logistics, and financial incentives when ELT teachers want to conduct action research in the classroom; demotivation occurs when the teacher's role is restricted to delivering curriculum and managing classrooms, while research is marginalized. The current study was conducted over a brief time on a small sample of ELT teachers from Makkah, the western province of Saudia Arabia. That is, the finding cannot be generalized to all ELT teachers in Saudi Arabia. In fact, our aim of this study is not to achieve the generalizability of the results, rather, get a full and clear image depicting the reality of Saudi ELT teachers' perceptions and beliefs about action research. Moreover, exploring the challenges they encounter to involve in classroom research that reflects on other teachers' practice.

Yet, the concerned Policymakers can take advantage of integrating the these findings into a practical framework that allow ELT teachers to have a deeper knowledge about action research, upskilling teachers in research process, linking the involvement in classroom action research to continuous professional development, mitigating the teaching burdens to those teachers who currently involved in action research, activation of schooling system administration in motivating teachers through providing required recourses and rewards. These recommendations can be outlined in alignment with recent reform endeavors made by ETEC, which was in action since 2017. Future works with this line may discuss the perceptions and insights of ELT teachers in Saudi public schools from several facets depending on provinces, size of school, and variance of teacher perceptions from male to female. Therefore, surveying a bigger size sample with quantitative tools and triangulation the result with qualitative findings of the current study or alike is recommended. The inquiry into solutions that tackle the above-discussed inhibitors is suggested to other interested researchers.

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