

EFL University Teachers' Engagement in Research: Reasons and Obstacles

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Abstract

This study aimed to investigate EFL university teachers' engagement in research. It examined EFL university teachers' reasons for engagement in research and the barriers that impede them from doing research. It covered both the engagement and the reluctance aspects of the issue. The data were collected from 24 EFL university teachers through the modality of questionnaire. The results suggested that the teachers had moderate to low level engagement in research. The teachers' main reasons for doing research revolved around the significance of research in developing their professional career, how doing research could improve their teaching and research skills, and how it could give them professional promotions. The results also showed that lack of time, absence of access to up-to-date books and journals and lack of encouragement and motivation are the main obstacles that limit their engagement in research. Understanding these issues, the study ended with suggestions and recommendations for policy makers, institutions authorities and teachers to make EFL contexts convenient for teacher engagement in research.

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, teacher research has received considerable attention from scholars and researchers. Substantial research studies have been devoted to examine the impact of teachers' engagement in and with research on their professional development and other issues related to teacher research (e.g. Kirkwood & Christie, 2006; Cain, 2015; Borg, 2009; Procter, 2015). A number of these studies demonstrated that teachers' engagement with and in research impacts positively on their professional development and contributes to the enhancement of both the teaching and the learning processes (e.g. Lyle, 2003; Kirkwood & Christie, 2006; Cordingley, 2015; Holmqvist et al, 2018). Yet, a search of the literature has revealed that few research studies focused on teachers' research engagement in ELT context (e.g. Atay, 2008; Kutlay, 2012). Moreover, very few research studies have examined EFL teachers', especially EFL teacher academics', voices and ideas on their engagement with and in research (e.g. Phuong et al, 2017). Thus, this study intends to explore EFL university teachers' engagement in research. First, it examines the frequency of EFL teacher academics' engagement in research. Second, it investigates EFL teacher academics' reasons for their engagement in research. Finally, this study probes EFL teacher academics' voices about the barriers that limit their engagement in research. The findings of this study might boost teacher academics' engagement in research and help to promote both the teaching and

learning processes. This study argues that teachers' academic function is not limited to classroom instructions, but it can be extended to research to enrich professional development and academic engagement.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Teacher research or action research is defined as “systematic, rigorous enquiry by teacher into their own professional contexts” (Borg, 2009, p. 377). It works “as a vehicle through which teachers investigate issues of interest and then incorporate the results into their own planning and future teaching” (Parsons and Brown, 2002, p. 4). These definitions suggest that teacher research is conducted by the teachers themselves in their own contexts (i.e. their classrooms), and its main objective is to enhance the quality of teaching as well as learning. Moreover, teacher research involves “a self-reflective, critical and systematic approach to explore one’s own teaching context” (Burn, 2010, p. 2). Correspondingly, Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999, p. 22) acknowledge that teacher research engages “systematic, intentional, and self-critical inquiry about one’s work.” Being critical indicates that teachers try to formulate problems found in their classrooms and work out to find solutions to these problems. This would reflect positively on the teachers’ pedagogical decisions and on their students' learning outcomes. Following a systematic approach, teachers need to follow specific steps (i.e. formulating research problems, collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data) to achieve their objectives which are finding solutions to the problems emerging in their classrooms. Nunan (2006) adds that the results of the teacher research need to be available for the public by means of presentations in conferences or published in journals. This would make teacher research more beneficial not only for the teachers who do the research but also for the professional development of those who engage with that research and for the development of the institutions that the teachers work in.

Teacher research engagement has been considered as a significant strategy that contributes not only to improving the teaching and learning process, but also to the improvement of the institution (Borg, 2010). Thus, educational institutions' policies in several contexts encourage teachers to be research-engaged. Teacher research engagement has two facets: engagement with research and engagement in research. To distinguish between them, the former means teacher reading research while the latter, which is the main concern of this study, refers to teacher conducting research (Borg, 2009). Teacher engagement in research might assist teachers in gaining numerous benefits that reflect positively on their teaching skills and on their students' learning. This engagement boosts teachers’ confidence, keeps them motivated and promotes their autonomy (Borg, 2017). As teachers engaging in research, they collect data by employing several tools, such as surveys, observation, interviews, class discussions, focus group and others. This data expands teachers’ knowledge and understanding of the teaching and learning processes. Similarly, teachers' engagement in collaborative research enables them to generate “new thinking, new learning and new kind of relationships” (Zamorski and Bulmer, 2002). It might also make teachers more excited and enthusiastic about their teaching practice and value the work they do (Zeichner, 2003). It also helps teachers become more reflective, critical and analytical about their teaching practices (Smith, 2005; McDonough, 2006; Atay, 2008; Yassin, et al., 2020) and improves their relationship with their colleagues (Borg, 2014). Being reflective, critical and analytical, teachers would be able to criticize their teaching practices and make better pedagogical decisions (Burton, 2009). This suggests that engagement in research enables teachers to handle and overcome their teaching challenges (Roberts, 1993). Moreover, it enables teachers “to become “agents” rather than ‘recipient’ of knowledge” (Burn, 2009, p. 116), and stimulates them to play a role in the curriculum development (Gurney, 1989). In other words, teachers’ engagement in research enables them to become producers of knowledge, course designers and curriculum developers.

In the last two decades, a number of research studies have been conducted to investigate the benefits gained by teachers from their engagement in research. One of them was a qualitative case study conducted by Wyatt (2011) with four English language teachers in a Middle East context. The results of this study have shown that teachers have gained several benefits of engagement in research. “These included their own awareness of their achievements in helping others through doing the research, their sense of their developing research skills, and the rewarding, highly motivating nature of the research experience” (Wyatt, 2011, p. 424). Similarly, the descriptive and explorative case study conducted by Atay (2006) with EFL English language pre- and in-service teachers’ suggests that the teachers who engaged in collaborative research have developed their critical thinking, enhanced their self-esteem, and raised their awareness of students’ needs as well as of the importance of collaboration. In the same vein, Borg and Alshumaimeri (2012) surveyed the views of university Saudi teacher educators’ reasons for doing research. The teacher participants reported that their engagement in research is beneficial for their professional development, and it assists them in expanding their knowledge about discipline. The teachers also stated that doing research is a part of their work as educators, and it is significant for their job promotion.

These studies clearly indicate that engagement in teacher research fosters teachers' interpersonal and cognitive development. Teachers' interpersonal development includes the increase of their self-confidence, the promotion of their enthusiasm and the development of their commitment to the teaching profession. On the hand, their cognitive development includes expanding their knowledge about teaching and learning, forming positive beliefs of teaching and learning processes, and forming positive attitudes towards the elements of the educational process. The findings of these studies illustrate many substantial benefits gained from doing research, and these benefits might encourage teachers to actively engage in research. However, teachers might encounter some challenges deactivating their engagement in research.

There are a number of essential conditions for teachers to actively engage in research. These conditions are “(1) awareness, (2) motivation, (3) knowledge and skills, (4) choice, (5) mentoring, (6) time, (7) recognition, (8) expectations, (9) community, and (10) dissemination potential” (Borg, 2006, p. 23). The absence of these conditions might impede teachers from doing research. Teachers’ knowledge and skills about research and their motivations towards research are likely to be the most effective conditions on teachers’ engagement in research. If teachers do not have enough knowledge and skills related to research and would not be motivated to engage in research. They would not intend to carry out any research. Thus, teachers need receive research education and be motivated to engage in research. Research education provides them with the basic knowledge of conducting research, and motivation plays a major role in stimulating them to engage in research.

The absence of the above mentioned conditions seems to pose challenges for teachers to engage in research. Some researchers attempt to examine the availability of these conditions and identify the factors that obstruct teachers from doing research. Allison and Carey (2007) investigate the factors that hinder 22 language teachers from carrying out research studies in Canada. They found that lack of time, lack of encouragement and lack of knowledge and skills about the concept of research prevent the teachers from doing it. Nunan (2006) also acknowledges that lack of time, lack of expertise, lack of support, fear of being revealed as incompetent teachers and fear of publishing their research for a wider audience are the main obstacles that impede teachers from doing research. Similarly, Borg (2009) explored the obstacles that prevent teachers from different countries around the world working in ELT context from doing research. He found that lack of time, lack of knowledge, lack of access to the required material and lack of motivation are the main factors that limit teachers’ engagement in research. Borg and Alshumaimeri (2012) also found that the Saudi

teacher educators' main reasons for not doing research are lack of knowledge and lack of time. Thus, the educational institutions should offer these conditions if they want their teachers to be actively engaged in research. Correspondingly, Phuong et. al (2017) investigated what has prevented English lecturers from various universities in Vietnam from doing research. The lecturer participants stated that they do not have time for doing research, and they face difficulties in getting funding for it.

Based on the theoretical and contextual issues presented above, the educational policy in most educational institutions, especially in higher education institutions, needs to encourage teachers to engage in research. This encouragement is based on the assumption that teachers' engagement in research assists them in extending their pedagogical knowledge and helps them to make successful pedagogical decisions informed by the evidence obtained from their engagement in research (Roberts, 1993; McDonough, 2006; Borg, 2009). In other words, teachers' engagement in research would reflect positively on their teaching practice and their students' learning. Borg (2006, p. 22) argues that "more involvement in research can enhance the quality of education." This indicates that teachers' engagement in research contributes to the teachers' professional development as this process helps them to be more confident and motivated (Smith, 2005; Atay, 2008; Borg, 2014) and to be more reflective, critical and analytical (Burton, 2009). However, teachers need specific conditions for promoting their engagement in research (Borg, 2006; Nunan, 2006). These conditions vary from awareness of teacher research, motivation to engage in research, knowledge and skills of how to do research, and others (see Borg, 2006). The availability of these conditions is significant for boosting teachers' engagement in research and in turn developing their teaching practice and enhancing their students' learning.

These assumptions provide the basis for the inquiries of this study which focus on examining EFL teacher academics' reasons for doing research and the obstacles that limit their engagement in research. The motive of conducting this study is that promoting teachers' engagement in research can be achieved by extending the understanding of teachers' reasons for doing research and the obstacles that prevent them from doing research. Such understanding can provide a valuable basis for considering how EFL teacher academics can be supported in engaging in research.

AIMS OF THE STUDY

Reviewing the literature, a limited number of research studies has been conducted to investigate teachers' research engagement in ELT context. Moreover, few studies have examined university English language teachers engagement in research. In addition, little research focuses on teachers' reasons for doing research and includes their voice about the challenges they encounter while doing research. Furthermore, no research study addressing these issues was found in the Libyan ELT context. Therefore, this study attempts to draw attention towards EFL university teachers' engagement in research. It aims to understand to what extent EFL university teachers engage in research, their reasons for doing research and the factors that limit their engagement in it. To achieve these aims, the following research questions are formulated.

1. To what extent do EFL university teachers engage in research?
2. What are EFL university teachers' reasons for engaging in research?
3. What are the obstacles that impede EFL university teachers from engagement in research?

Answering these questions would contribute to a deeper understanding of EFL teachers' perspectives on their reasons for doing research and the obstacles that limit their engagement in research. This understanding might participate in promoting EFL university

teachers engagement in research. Thus, findings of this study might not only contribute to the enhancement of teaching and learning processes, but also to make institutional improvement.

3. METHODOLOGY

CONTEXT AND PARTICIPANTS

This study was conducted at the Department of English, Faculty of Arts, University of Az-Zawia, Libya. This department offers a BA programme in English language, attended by students who finished their secondary school. The participants of this study are EFL teachers who teach at this department. As Libyan university academics, these teachers are expected to be research-active because it is part of their job. All of them are needed to engage in research to be promoted. For example, according to the Libyan Higher Education Act of 2010 appendix 178, a lecturer's progression to the grade of assistant professor requires 4 years of continuous service (for MA holders) and 3 years of continuous service (for PhD holders). Moreover, during these years, the lecturer must publish at least 3 research papers in academic journals. These papers should also be evaluated by the promotion committee members before making their decision about the promotion. This indicates that engagement in research is a significant duty for university teachers.

4. DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Questionnaire is the only and the main instrument employed to collect the data of this study. The items of the questionnaire were formed on the basis of some issues raised in the literature review. Some of these items were adapted directly from the questionnaire used by Borg (2009). The questionnaire was piloted with 3 EFL university teachers; wording, length and organization of some items were revised in line with their feedback. The last version of the questionnaire (See the Appendix) has three sections which address the research questions. The first section asks teachers about their frequency of doing research and about their reasons for engaging in research. The second section asks the teachers about the factors that may impede or slow down their engagement in research. The last section was devoted to collect demographic data about the teacher participants. An online version of the questionnaire was designed and created.

The questionnaire was administrated at the Department of English, Faculty of Arts at Az-Zawia University. Initially, most teachers of the department were invited to participate in answering the questionnaire. Then, they were given enough information about the nature and the aim of the study. After that the online version of the questionnaire was shared with the teachers of the department on an online discussion platform specified for them. Finally, 24 teachers answered the questionnaire.

The quantitative data of the questionnaire were analyzed by using descriptive statistics which give summaries about the responses of the teachers to the items. These summaries were presented in the form of frequencies and frequency distribution (number and percentage) and displayed into tables.

5. RESULTS

Background Information

The questionnaire was answered by 24 university EFL teachers (16 females and 8 males). All of them are Libyan, and their native language is Arabic. Table 1 shows the range of teaching experience the teachers had, though Over 66% of the teachers had an MA and about 33% had a doctorate. The majority of the teachers (58.3%) had 10 years or more experience as university EFL teachers, just 25% had 5-10 years, while 16.7% had less than 5 years (Table 1).

Table 1: Background Information about the Teacher Participants

Teacher Participants	Gender N (%)	Level of Education N (%)	Native Language	Teaching Experience N (%)
24	Female = 16 (66.7%) Male = 8 (33.3%)	MA= 16 (66.7%) PhD= 8 (33.3)	Arabic	Less than 5 Years = 4 (16.6%) From 5 to 10 years= 6 (25%) More than 10 years= 14 (58.3%)

Frequency of Doing Research

The first item of the questionnaire focuses on the teachers’ frequency of doing research. Of them, 16.7 per cent reported they did it OFTEN, 37.5 per cent said they did it SOMETIMES, 41.7 per cent RARELY and 4.2 per cent NEVER. These results indicate that the majority of the participants engage in research. However, these results need to be interpreted cautiously because the frequency descriptors used in this item of the questionnaire (often, sometimes, and rarely) might not refer to the accurate frequency of the respondents’ engagement in research (Borg, 2009). It can be said that often PROBABLY means SOMETIMES, SOMETIMES probably means RARELY, and RARELY probably means NEVER. Thus, the actual level of the teachers’ engagement in research may be lower than they reported, and this is surprising for academics working at universities.

Table 2: Frequency of Doing Research

Frequency	N	(%)
Often	4	(16.7)
Sometimes	9	(37.5)
Rarely	10	(41.7)
Never	1	(4.2)

Reasons for Doing Research

The teachers were asked to indicate the reasons for doing research by selecting items from a list provided and suggesting others. The teachers’ responses are summarized in table 2. The responses demonstrate that the major reason that motivates most of the teacher participates to do research is its benefit to their professional development. The other five main reasons that stimulate approximately half of the teacher participants to engage in research were: research enhances my teaching skills (54.2%); it helps me to get promotion (50%); it promotes my self-confidence as a teacher (50%); it helps me to become more critical and analytical about my teaching practices (50%); and it develops my research skills (50%). These reasons reflect that intrinsic and extrinsic motives encourage and urge teachers to engage in research. They indicate that teachers are motivated to do research by desire to improve their teaching and research skills and advance their academic rank. The least cited reasons for doing research are that teachers do research to contribute to the improvement of their university (37.5%); to become more excited and enthusiastic about their teaching practice (25%); and to help other teachers learn from the findings of their research (12.5%). Although research seems to be an act of altruism, these results suggest that teachers’ engagement in research is driven by self-interest.

Only four teachers gave other reasons for doing research. A number of these reasons are accommodated under these topics (they did research: to be updated with new strategies and theories of language teaching; as part of external sabbatical leave; to inspire the learners; and because research is like game and it is fun.

Table 2: Reasons for Doing Research

Reasons for Doing Research	N (%)
I do research ...	
. because it is good for my professional development	17 (70.8)
. because it enhances my teaching skill	13 (54.2)

. because it will help me get promotion	12 (50)
. to promote my self-confidence as a teacher	12 (50)
. to become more critical and analytical about my teaching practices	12 (50)
. to develop my research skills	12 (50)
. to raise my awareness of my students' needs	11 (45.8)
. to solve problems in my teaching	10 (41.7)
. to contribute to the improvement of my university	9 (37.5)
. to become more excited and enthusiastic about my teaching practice	6 (25)
. because other teachers can learn from the findings of my work	3 (12.5)

Obstacles Impeding Teachers from Doing Research

The teachers were also asked to indicate the reasons that prevent them from doing research. The teachers' responses are summarized in table 3. Their responses indicate that the major obstacle that prevents them from doing research is lack of time (66.7%). The next obstacle was that they do not have access to books and journals which are essential for doing research (62.5%). The other factors that impede teachers from doing research were that they do not have support from their university to do research (33.3%); they do not have enough knowledge of doing research (29.2%). About 20% of the teachers indicate that there was no professional support; learners do not cooperate with them in doing research; and they encounter some difficulties in publishing their research. About 8.3% of the teachers indicate that other teachers do not cooperate with them in doing research, and there is nothing in their work worth researching. Only one teacher believed that the work of the teacher is teaching not researching.

The teachers also reported other reasons. Some of them are put under these topics: lack of logistic and financial support, lack of experience and inappropriate circumstances for doing research.

Table 3: Obstacles Impeding Teachers from Doing Research

Obstacles impede teachers from doing research	N (%)
. I do not have time to do research	16 (66.7)
. I do not have access to the books and journals I need	15 (62.5)
. My employer does not support me to do research	8 (33.3)
. I do not have enough knowledge and skills required to conduct good quality research	7 (29.2)
. There is nothing motivate me to do research	6 (25)
. I need mentoring from professionals who have experience in research but no one is available	5 (20)
. It is difficult to get my research published so that others cannot benefits from its findings	5 (20)
. The learners would not cooperate if I asked their help	5 (20)
. Other teachers would not cooperate if I asked their help	2 (8.3)
. There is nothing in our work worth researching	2 (8.3)
. I am not interested in doing research. I believe my job is to teach not to do research	1 (4.2)

6. DISCUSSION

Before discussing the results of this study, it is important to signify that teachers' voice has been neglected and rather ignored. Therefore, this study focuses on the teachers' voice because they are the closest to the real teaching-learning context. Their voice is of such importance that it can profoundly inform research in this field. In the following paragraphs the key insights of the teachers' voice about their engagement in research will be reviewed and discussed and then concluded with suggestions and recommendations for promoting teachers' engagement in research.

The results show that the teacher participants gave a moderate to low level of engagement in doing research. This finding is contrary to Rahimi and Weisi (2018) who found that most of the EFL teacher participants from different countries (e.g. Iran, Indonesia, Japan, and Thailand) engage in research, and they are skilled to do it. This result would be surprising with a sample of university teachers who are highly qualified with a long

experience of teaching. These teachers are expected to engage actively in research because it is one of their primary focuses of their work. Compared with the findings of Rahimi and Weisi (2018) in other EFL contexts, it seems that the conditions available in the context play significant role in teachers' engagement in research.

The results also demonstrate that the teachers have positive attitudes towards the impact of their engagement in research on their professional development. The teachers reported that doing research develops their professional career and improves their teaching and research skills. These findings are consistent with those of Borg (2009), Borg and Alshumaimeri (2012) who found that teachers engage in research because it contributes to their professional development. They are also similar to those of Atay (2008) who claimed that teachers' engagement in research reflects positively in improving their teaching skills. The teachers in the present study also stated that doing research is fundamental for the progression of their job title. These results suggest that both intrinsic motives (e.g. professional development) and extrinsic motives (such as promotion) play a significant role in teachers' engagement in research.

The teachers also stated that the development of their university and the benefits that their colleagues may gain from the results of their research are not strongly motivating factors for their engagement in research. This finding is contrary to the studies conducted by Atay (2008) and Rahimi and Weisi (2018) which suggested that teachers discuss teaching and learning issues with their colleagues in order to find better ways to deal with these issues through research. One interpretation of this result is that the authorities of the university do not support teachers financially and morally to engage in research. However, the staff engagement in research may reflect positively on the reputation of the university and on its rank among other universities. The academics research output is significant as it is assessed and employed to rank universities against each other. Moreover, the practice of publishing research can be used by the universities to ask for support and fund from the government. These results also indicate that teachers do not care about disseminating their research results which potentially help other teachers to find practical solutions to their teaching problems in classrooms. This might indicate that teachers are afraid to be criticized by the others. However, sharing their research with others might develop their understanding of the complexity and limitations of their research design. Thus, one of the key solutions to this issue is that teachers organize discussion groups where they present and discuss their research. The university also needs to organize conferences where scholars can gather and teachers present their research and gain benefits from their participation. This would develop the culture of research in the institution.

About half of the teacher participants in this study claimed that engagement in research makes them think more reflectively and critically about their teaching as well as promoting their self-confidence as teachers. Edwards and Burns (2016) support this finding by stating that teachers' research practice assist them to think critically and reflectively about the teaching and learning issues in their classrooms. This would help them to improve their teaching practice and their students' learning. Edwards and Burns (2016) also maintain that teachers' research practice boosts their confidence as teachers and this reflects positively on their teaching practice.

In terms of obstacles that limit teachers' engagement in research, lack of time was reported as the main factor that impedes teachers from doing research. This result is in line with the findings of many studies (e.g. Allison and Carey, 2007; Borg and Alshumaimeri, 2012). This indicates that teachers have heavy teaching workloads, and they rarely find time for doing research. This also refers to the fact that teachers' job priority is to satisfy their students' needs, and most of their time is devoted to fulfill their teaching duties. However, doing research is a major part of their job. Time is a necessary condition for teacher research to take place (Borg, 2006; Nunan, 2006). "One way of freeing up time for teachers to do

quality action research is to give them less teaching to do” (Nunan, 2006, p. 8). Thus, the educational intuitions authorities need to decrease the teaching loads of teachers and allocate reasonable time for teachers to conduct their research.

The second main obstacle mentioned by most of the teacher participants is that they do not have access to books and journals which are necessary for doing research. Not only do teachers lack access to online materials, but with the stultifying and hectic workloads they have many of them spend most of their career teaching and grading so much so that they do indeed lack the necessary knowledge to deal with online materials. Very few teachers in Libya, for example, know very little or nothing about Google Scholar and are, in fact, reluctant to create accounts on it. This reluctance reflects the level of frustration and insouciance they have reached.

However, since books and journals are invaluable resources for teachers to conduct research and to discover new topics needed to be researched, and since they provide the teachers of different methods and approaches of conducting research, teachers need to be aware that thousands of valuable e-books and a number of good quality online language teaching journals are freely available. These books and journals can be helpful for them to conduct their research. University libraries also need to play one of their main roles effectively, which is providing access to information. They need to provide free access to books, journals and resources that meet the teachers’ needs. The authorities above all need to provide the libraries with adequate budget that enable them to play their roles effectively.

Another common challenge cited by some teachers is the lack of encouragement and lack of motivation. Some of the teacher participants blamed their employer for not supporting them, and this demotivates them to engage in research. These results imply that the university does not play its role in supporting teachers morally, logistically and financially to conduct research. Motivation is an essential condition for doing research as (Borg, 2006) puts it, and teachers need both external and internal motivations to engage in research according to Allison and Carey (2007). Thus, the institution needs to support its teacher educators physically and financially to engage in research. The institution support might include “enthusiasm and encouragement to take part in research, recognition of research achievements, financial support in terms of a promotion or funding to attend overseas conferences ...” (Edwards and Burns, 2016, p. 13). Moreover, teachers do not have to wait for external motivation to come. They need to start and let the motivation catch up with them; they need to create their own motivation to engage in research.

About a third of the teacher participants revealed that they lack the necessary knowledge and skills to do research. Borg (2006) maintained that research knowledge and skills are part of the main conditions that impact teachers’ engagement in research. Teachers will not be able to engage in research if they do not have the prerequisite knowledge and skills necessary for conducting research. They need to be aware of the different approaches and methods of conducting research and to be familiar with the process of doing research which involves formulating research problems, collecting and analyzing data and interpreting the results. They need to be acquainted with the basic skills of research design which include:

- identifying a problem and turning it into a researchable question
- deciding on appropriate data and data collection methods
- determining the best way of collecting and analyzing the data
- evaluating to research plan and reducing it to manageable proportions" (Nunan, 2006, p. 6).

Organizing seminars, workshops and training courses about a broad range of topics about research can be helpful for teachers to do research. These seminars, workshops and courses would provide teachers with valuable knowledge and skills about doing research, and they would enhance the chance of teachers’ success to do research. Moreover, the notions of an advisory research committee and in-house publication forum which are ideas suggested by

Allison and Carey (2007) can be helpful for teachers to extend their research knowledge and improve their research skills. The function of the advisory research committee is to create close contact between experts and teacher researchers. It guides teachers throughout their research (i.e. determining topics and methods of research, providing access to resources, giving systematic feedback, giving encouragement, discussing ideas, giving advice, answering queries, etc.) The function of the in-house publication forum is providing the teachers opportunity to share and discuss their research at each stage of its development process. "The goals here are to raise awareness more broadly of the work teachers are doing, to create interest amongst colleagues, to enhance teacher research using any feedback colleagues can provide, and to share with other teachers key findings from the study that may be of relevance to them" (Borg, 2017, p. 179).

Overall, most teacher respondents seem to be willing to do research, and they are aware of the benefits that can be gained from engagement in research. However, some barriers limit their engagement in research. These barriers can be divided into two kinds: personal barriers, such as lack of time, lack of knowledge, lack of skills, and organizational barriers, such as lack of access to books and journals, lack of motivation and lack of facilities. These findings suggest that teachers and the institution have a lot to do for enhancing teachers' engagement in research.

7. CONCLUSION

This study contributes to the literature on EFL university teachers' engagement in research by examining their frequency of doing research, their reasons for doing research and the barriers limited their engagement in research. Not only that, however, as the study also discusses the reluctance of teachers to do research. The results of this study highlight that teacher participants moderately engage in research. They also demonstrate three main reasons that motivate teachers to engage in research. These reasons are developing their professions, developing their teaching and researching skills and receiving a promotion. Moreover, the results reveal some barriers that limit teachers' engagement in research. The major barriers are lack of time, lack of access to books and journals and lack of support. To improve the capacity of teachers' engagement in research, university authorities, policy makers and teachers themselves should take initiatives to address such barriers.

Most of the results of this study are in line with other studies conducted in ELT contexts. However, the small number of the teacher participants and the quantitative instruments employed to collect data (i.e. questionnaire) might be considered as limitations of this study. Thus, these results should be considered cautiously. In addition, more studies should be conducted in EFL university contexts with a large number of teachers and using more than one instrument for collecting data, such as interview and focus group.

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