

Exploring the Factors Influencing Novice Saudi EFL Teachers' Implementation of Educational Action Research as a Professional Development Tool

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Abstract—This research investigates the readiness of novice Saudi EFL teachers to adopt Educational Action Research (EAR) as a professional development strategy in higher education institutions. Despite growing interest in using EAR to enhance teaching practices and continuous professional development (CPD), this area remains underexplored in Saudi EFL literature. Employing a qualitative methodology, the study utilizes face-to-face semi-structured interviews with ten novice Saudi higher education EFL instructors to examine their foundational knowledge of EAR, the factors influencing their engagement with EAR practices, and the motivators driving their willingness to adopt EAR strategies. The findings highlight three key factors influencing readiness: (1) prior exposure to EAR, (2) pre-service education and training, and (3) intrinsic motivation as part of their learning agility. However, the study also identifies significant barriers, including inadequate practice opportunities and insufficient training. Notably, high levels of self-motivation were found to help teachers prepare for EAR implementation. To bridge the gap between theory and practice, targeted training programs and curriculum integration are recommended to optimize the use of EAR for improved teaching outcomes.

Index Terms—pre-service teachers, ELT practices, novice educationists, knowledge-doing gap, teachers' intrinsic motivation

I. INTRODUCTION

Recently, introductory educator preparation programs have demonstrated interest in action research (AR) methodologies (Dassa & Nichols, 2020; Phillips & Carr, 2014). It has been suggested that participation in action research will familiarize instructors with a more thoughtful approach to the classroom (Beck & Kosnik, 2000), shape their forthcoming teaching performance (Laudonia et al., 2017), and motivate them to adopt an inquiry-based teaching style (Aras, 2020). In recent years, scholars in the domain of second/foreign language (L2) education for teachers have devoted specific focus to instructors' ideas regarding AR (e.g., Mehrani, 2015, 2017; Doqaruni, 2023). Taking Pardede's (2016) claims into consideration, he states that several studies show that AR is one of the most powerful tools teachers can use to overcome education challenges. It has been proven that action research enables educators to acquire and apply knowledge to enhance their teaching abilities through their techniques. From this point, this study explores the readiness of novice Saudi EFL teachers to implement educational action research to develop their skills as professionals in the field of TESOL.

Clark et al. (2020) maintain that people tackle the objective of action research through the perspective of a thoughtful and reflective instructor. Participating in action research prompts scrutiny and contemplation to identify and implement essential changes in practice for educators and institutions as a whole. Conducting action research helps instructors perform with better understanding and trust. Thus, AR strives to assist instructors in L2 classrooms in improving their practices by identifying gaps in them and aligning practical classroom methods to the ideas and philosophies that support the teaching and learning domain. Clark et al. (2020) point out that those working in education utilize AR to improve their personalities and practices via their actions.

Action research has been under consideration by several scholars who try to highlight its meaning in the field. For example, Susman and Evered (2023) posit that action research (AR) is a method of study that focuses on initiating activities and raising awareness about everyday experiences. Yasmeen (2008) states that "action research is a spiral process that includes problem investigation, taking action, and fact-finding about the result of action" (p. 1). Moreover, it plays a significant role in producing working knowledge that helps endeavor to achieve meaningful aims.

Furthermore, Coughlan and Coughlan (2023) state that action research is an investigation method that helps to achieve two primary goals: practical challenges and the development of theoretical philosophy. In the same way, action research (AR) is a distinctive approach that aims to solve practical problems while expanding scientific knowledge through deliberate intervention and collaboration with stakeholders (Aulianda et al., 2021). Furthermore, action research is a collaborative research method that combines theory and practice to tackle real-world issues and provide practical

knowledge. It encompasses iterative phases of planning, execution, and evaluation, involving stakeholders as co-investigators (Casey & Coghlan, 2021). The procedure generally encompasses determining the issue, data collecting, analysis, and execution of actions (Sharma, 2022). Action research involves planning, carrying out the plan, and then assessing the degree to which the work makes an impact. To determine his or her performance's strengths and shortcomings, the teacher plans and gathers data from the classroom. Then, based on the results, the teacher attempts to improve performance in the school, address issues, and reinforce strengths. Lastly, they test the adjustment to determine whether it is effective.

Gunbayi (2020) states that there are three categories of action research: Technical (scientific or cooperative), Participatory (Practitioner or Reconciliation), and Emancipatory/Developmental/Critical. Technical action research is a type of inquiry in which practitioners rely heavily on the researcher's ability to play a role as a guide, with the primary objective being enhancing performance. Participatory action research is driven by a desire to educate and illuminate practitioners, enabling them to act with greater caution and deliberation. The emphasis is placed on enhancing performance over an extended period. In such a scenario, the practitioner retains the authority to determine the investigated areas and the implemented modifications.

Action research (AR) has a group of principles that make it unique (O'Brien, 1998). Coughlan and Coghlan (2023) introduce a wide-ranging overview of important principles in that context. Among these principles is the reflective critique that helps individuals reflect on topics and processes and make straightforward elucidations, partialities, suppositions, and concerns that underpin adjudications. This practical explanation leads to theoretical respects. Another principle is the dialectical critique that plays a significant role in realizing the connections between the phenomenon, its context, and the elements that form the phenomenon. Some of these elements that form the phenomenon are unbalanced, or sometimes they oppose each other. Those elements are the ones that researchers need to focus on because they are the ones that lead to changes.

People who take part in action research are co-researchers. The collaborative resource concept assumes that every individual's thoughts used to develop the action plan are equally valuable. It aims to avoid the skewing of credibility caused by an idea's past standing. It is particularly beneficial for understanding inconsistencies across different points of view and within a sole point of view. Those who are in the field of action research have mental anxieties because they feel that the change process could jeopardize all currently accepted practices for doing activities. Among the most widespread concerns is that communicating openly about a person's thoughts, ideas, and opinions could hurt the person's self-image. Action research researchers can use this idea to soothe participants' concerns and encourage engagement by reminding them that they will go through the same experience and that learning will occur regardless of the results.

The nature of the research incorporates various perspectives, remarks, and criticisms, resulting in several alternative actions and perceptions. This plural inquiry structure necessitates an array of written material for submitting reports. This implies that many stories will be made clear, with commentary on their inconsistencies and a choice of action alternatives offered. As a result, a report serves as an aid for continuing dialogue among participants rather than as a definitive factual result.

Within the action research framework, theory informs practice, and practice informs theory continuously. Implicit beliefs, ideas, and hypotheses influence people's actions in every circumstance, and theoretical knowledge expands with every visible result. These two elements are intertwined in a single transformation process.

The past literature review has witnessed a wide range of research that explores and investigates action research. Some researchers in the field of action research have linked action research to employees' professional improvement (see, for example, Saeb et al., 2021; Ferencová et al., 2025).

A. Action Research in the Field of TESOL

TESOL is a branch of education that makes a significant effort to benefit from the use of action research in various ways. Moreover, the Teaching English as a Second Language (TESOL) academic community enthusiastically accepted and encouraged action research in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Crookes, 1993).

Initially, in the field of TESOL, educators focused on instructors' beliefs about action research (e.g., Bashir, 2011; Mehrani, 2017). Action research is widely acknowledged as an essential instrument for the professional development of EFL educators and the enhancement of classroom practices. It augments educators' understanding of their responsibilities and students' requirements and fosters reflective thinking (Saeb et al., 2021). In the same vein, Farrell and Guz (2019) maintain that research has demonstrated that, generally, second language (L2) teachers' beliefs significantly impact their professional growth.

Concerning teachers' beliefs about action research, Rainey (2000) conducted the initial comprehensive investigation on the subject, examining the knowledge and practices of AR as well as the perspectives of L2 instructors. A third of the interviewed sample were unaware of augmented reality (AR), while the ones who were informed agreed that its sole purpose was to enhance their skills. In other words, instructors held traditional conceptions of AR and were unaware of its other possible uses.

B. Action Research Pre-Service Education

Pre-service teachers understand the complex action research methods within their teacher education program. This instructional approach enables the participants to practice the practical application of research methodology in educational

settings. They develop pertinent experiences in identifying and working on educational challenges, selecting programs, implementing them, and collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data for action research tasks. The present practical experience also opens for them the skills of how to critically assess and develop their practices based on the findings of empirical research to better their teaching approaches and, in the process, foster in them reflectiveness and adaptiveness of teaching methodologies, which, if well harnessed, can positively impact their future teaching practices.

According to Price (2001), action research is considered to be purposeful, systematic, collaborative, and democratic. The work of understanding the practical consequences of action research raises critical questions concerning the acquisition and application of these principles by pre-service teachers in the process of their learning. This publication brings out the relationship between instructional design, research, and change and supports the requirement for aspiring teachers to understand the work of action research within education.

Kennedy-Clark et al. (2018) pointed out that the construction of circumstances that could teach various teaching skills to future teachers is considered valuable and useful for their teacher education careers before entering the labor market. About future teachers, several issues, such as scarcity of funds and rigidity of assessment, challenge the idea of enhancing the opportunities for future teachers to design and implement their research during their studies (Mitton-Kukner et al., 2015).

C. Action Research in the Saudi Education Context

Within the realm of English language instruction, action research (AR) has emerged as a vital methodology. It provides educators and researchers with a framework that can be adapted to solve actual difficulties that are encountered within classrooms. Education professionals in Saudi Arabia are working hard to satisfy the ever-changing requirements of teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL), and as a result, the implementation of action research has gained pace in the country. When it comes to tackling the linguistic, cultural, and pedagogical complexities that are characteristic of English language learning in Saudi Arabia, this methodology is particularly useful. In the discipline of EFL in Saudi Arabia, the corpus of study on action research can be divided into two separate streams.

The first stream comprises works employing action research as a methodological approach. These works utilize action research systematically to examine and address issues in learning and instruction. These studies frequently include educators functioning as researchers, participating in recurrent cycles of preparation, implementation, observation, and reflection to improve classroom practices. Alkubaidi (2019) uses an action research design consisting of three phases—exploration, intervention, and reflection—to examine the obstacles encountered by Saudi learners while acquiring English writing proficiency and the contributing factors. In the same vein, Al-Roomy (2013) employed an action research methodology to implement and examine an intervention aimed at assessing the efficacy of Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) in enhancing the reading comprehension skills of Saudi medical students.

The second stream concentrates on analyzing the overarching impacts of action research as a mechanism for professional growth. These studies examine the impact of action research on instructors' professional development, educational efficacy, and techniques for reflection. They evaluate the influence of action research on student results, teacher cooperation, and the enhancement of institutional teaching methodologies. Alwafi and Alkubaidi (2024) investigate the knowledge, practices, and challenges of AR among EFL educators at two public colleges in Saudi Arabia. The study utilized a quantitative research approach using an online questionnaire to accomplish this objective. The data was gathered from 96 EFL instructors employed at English language institutions inside two public universities in Saudi Arabia. The study's findings indicated that the majority of EFL teachers possessed familiarity with AR, and knowledge of AR was prevalent among the participants. Conversely, the data indicated a lack in the implementation of AR among EFL educators. The results indicated that time constraints and insufficient training in AR were the primary barriers preventing EFL teachers from using it. Taken as a whole, these two lines of inquiry illuminate AR's dual role as an approach to solving pressing social problems and a revolutionary force in the Saudi Arabian educational and occupational landscapes.

Some studies in the Saudi context have taken into consideration the teachers' reflective practices. Alharthi and Althaqafi (2023) investigated Saudi EFL teachers' perspectives on reflective practices, finding them useful but hampered by insufficient training, organizational impediments, and severe workloads, with female instructors engaged more than males. Alzahrani (2020) identified weaknesses in the professional development of Saudi EFL teachers, including inadequate pre-service training, restricted access to effective professional development, and discontent with poor-quality courses. Educators highlighted the necessity for interactive, localized, and practical professional development approaches, such as conferences and peer mentoring, while advocating for increased participation in the design of professional development programs. Both studies support systemic reforms aimed at enhancing teacher development. Action research was excluded as a form of reflective practice.

D. Knowledge-Doing Gap

In education, the knowledge-doing gap refers to the difference between what educators know is the best practice to teach and what educators do in their classroom. However, it is still possible for many teachers and facilitators of learning to experience difficulties in applying most of the educational research and theory to real-life situations. The reasons for this difference may include, for example, a shortage of funds, a lack of preparation of workers, and organizational barriers to the application of new methods. This remaining gap has to be closed to boost educational outcomes. The application

of theory demonstrates that any approach can be effective when the learner's needs are met and learning is fostered as a continuous and lifelong process. Strategies that constitute good practice for closing this gap include ongoing professional development, professional learning communities, and action research, allowing teachers to try and improve their teaching processes. Such measures can help build the education system by using more efficient and less ambiguous pedagogy.

Recent years have shown that the data used by practitioners and that which occurs naturally from researchers are different. Scholars have particularly focused on the knowing-doing gap and suggested many strategies for addressing this issue (Mehrani, 2014). These initiatives include exploring practices other than journal articles in disseminating scientific knowledge, building partnerships, and supporting the use of participatory structures and approaches (Hulme, 2014).

Pfeffer and Sutton (2000) examine how companies apply knowledge. Moving from knowledge to practice is key, they say. Many businesses struggle to apply new ideas despite widespread information acquisition and sharing. The writers emphasize the importance of a practical and courageous strategy to overcome hurdles and improve organizational performance. They list resistance to change, complex decision-making processes, fear of failure, incentive misalignment, communication gaps, cultural hurdles, a predisposition toward talk over action, and dependence on past methods instead of critical thinking as knowledge implementation challenges. Businesses may bridge the knowledge gap and advance innovation by tackling these challenges.

E. Research Rationale

The rationale for research is that Educational Action Research (EAR) is acknowledged as a potent professional development instrument, facilitating instructors in the reflection and improvement of their classroom methodologies. Nonetheless, in Saudi Arabia, the preparedness of beginner EFL teachers to embrace EAR remains a mostly unexamined domain. Current studies underscore the difficulties encountered by Saudi EFL educators, such as insufficient pre-service training, institutional obstacles, and restricted reflective practices. Notwithstanding this research, EAR has been neglected as a reflective and professional development method, resulting in a significant gap in comprehending its potential to enhance teaching practices.

This study is notably important as it tackles three critical deficiencies: (1) the dearth of research on novice Saudi EFL teachers' perceptions of EAR, (2) the scarcity of qualitative inquiries into teachers' lived experiences and challenges regarding EAR, and (3) the insufficient examination of contextual factors, including intrinsic motivation and institutional obstacles, that affect the implementation of EAR in Saudi higher education.

This research utilizes a qualitative methodology, specifically semi-structured interviews, to provide a comprehensive knowledge of rookie instructors' experiences, perceptions, and obstacles in applying EAR. In contrast to quantitative studies that typically emphasize overarching patterns, this approach elucidates the intricate and contextual reality of teachers' professional development experiences. The results will help to connect the theoretical comprehension of EAR with its actual implementation in Saudi schools.

This study is consistent with Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030, which highlights the significance of teacher empowerment, innovative pedagogical approaches, and professional development to enhance educational outcomes. This research seeks to offer practical ideas for integrating EAR into pre-service education and continuous professional development programs, thereby enhancing the professional competencies of Saudi EFL teachers and improving the quality of language instruction in the region.

F. Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to assess novice EFL instructors' awareness of action research and to identify the elements that help or hinder them from incorporating action research as professional practice in their classroom lectures. The first is to identify the extent of knowledge that novice EFL teachers have on action research with the help of this quiz, which tests their understanding and awareness of this approach. The second one is designed to determine how various factors facilitate or constrain these teachers from adopting action research in their teaching practice. By examining these study inquiries, significant knowledge may be acquired to improve the professional growth and instructional methods of inexperienced English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instructors, finally leading to the advancement of English language education. Two main research questions have been formulated:

1. How do novice EFL teachers perceive and describe their knowledge and understanding of action research?
2. What factors encourage or prevent novice EFL teachers from applying action research in their classrooms as a professional tool?

II. METHODOLOGY

The study applies the qualitative paradigm to answer the research questions.

A. Research Design

Qualitative investigators strive to wholly comprehend how individuals act and the underlying factors that influence such actions (Jameel et al., 2018; Mistry, 2012). For that reason, qualitative researchers employ a diverse range of methodologies to cultivate profound insights into individuals' perceptions of their social surroundings and, consequently, what they do in the realm of society (Ennis, 2016; Beuving & Vries, 2015). The current study aims to investigate the

preparedness of newly appointed Saudi English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers to utilize Educational Action Research (EAR) to enhance their professional growth. Using qualitative research, an exploratory approach was adopted to gain insight into the instructors' experiences, attitudes, and experiences with EAR. Semi-structured interviews were used as the main data collection technique because they offer flexibility to participants and ensure that the key concerns captured by the research objectives are not dismissed (Adams, 2015). Furthermore, the administration of semi-structured interviews provided both closed-ended questions and open-ended responses. The above method enabled one to develop a deeper understanding of the participant's perception of the EAR and their readiness to adopt it as a career enhancement.

B. The Role of the Researcher

In qualitative research, the researcher plays an essential part as the principal tool for data collection and interpretation (Wa-Mbaleka, 2019). In this study, the researcher thoroughly engaged with the participants to cultivate a nuanced comprehension of their experiences, perspectives, and challenges concerning Educational Action Research (EAR). The researcher was responsible for the study's layout, performing semi-structured interviews, ensuring ethical compliance, and maintaining a reflective approach throughout the research process.

(a). Positioning and Reflexivity

The researcher employed a reflective methodology to mitigate biases and guarantee openness throughout the study procedure. By contemplating his role as both observer and interpreter, the researcher acknowledged his impact on the data gathering and analysis stages. This reflexive technique was essential due to the study's exploratory design and dependence on in-depth interviews to obtain participants' viewpoints.

(b). Ethical Considerations

The researcher guaranteed that participants were thoroughly apprised of the study's aims, methodologies, and confidentiality protocols. Participants received a permission form outlining their rights, including the option to withdraw at any point. This ethical obligation not only protected participants' rights but also cultivated trust between the researcher and the participants, which is crucial in qualitative research.

(c). Facilitator and Listener

The researcher served as a facilitator during the interviews, fostering an open and supportive atmosphere that allowed participants to express their experiences openly. Active listening approaches were utilized to guarantee that participants were acknowledged and comprehended, hence enhancing the depth and quality of the data gathered.

C. Participants

Ten novice English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instructors participated in this qualitative study. All participants were employed at higher education institutions in Saudi Arabia and had recently begun their teaching careers. The study utilized purposive sampling based on criterion-based selection. Purposive sampling is a non-probability method that is employed to identify participants who are particularly informative in qualitative and quantitative research (Memon et al., 2024). Purposive sampling has numerous categories, including criterion type (Nyimbili & Nyimbili, 2024). The current research employed criterion type to identify individuals who met the following inclusion criteria:

1. Participants must have no more than two years of university-level teaching experience.
2. Participants must currently be employed as EFL instructors at universities in Saudi Arabia.

The researcher collaborated with the chairs of English departments and faculty coordinators at participating schools to find qualified teachers to take part in the study. Prospective participants were invited to participate in the study through an email that detailed its objectives, methods, confidentiality measures, and the fact that it was entirely voluntary (Appendix). Based on the selection criteria, individuals who indicated interest were evaluated to determine eligibility.

Through the use of semi-structured, in-person and online interviews, each participant was approached individually. There was no experimental manipulation or group assignment because the study used a qualitative approach. Participants were not divided into subgroups or given particular conditions to complete. To determine whether they were prepared to apply Educational Action Research (EAR), the researchers solicited the participants' individual perspectives. Six men and four women, all with one or two years' experience in the classroom, made up the final sample. Table 1 below summarizes the participant demographics.

TABLE 1
PARTICIPANT EXPERIENCE AND GENDER

	Name	Experience	Gender
1	Ms. Fatimah	1	F
2	Mr. Ali	1	M
3	Mr. Hassan	1	M
4	Ms. Noura	1	F
5	Mr. Waheeb	1	M
6	Ms. Nahala	1	F
7	Mr. Yousef	1	M
8	Mr. Dahesh	1	M
9	Mr. Mansour	1	M
10	Ms. Samah	1	F

D. Data Collection

This study utilizes semi-structured interviews that continued for two months. Every interview was conducted at a location that worked for the participants and lasted an average of twenty to forty minutes. Participants received information about the study's goal, assurances that their privacy would be protected, and the choice to withdraw from the research project at any moment to promote comfort and transparency. The interviews were performed in person or online utilizing the Zoom video-conferencing application.

Enhancing data precision and fortifying study outcomes in qualitative studies depends on rigorous methodology strategies. Essential strategies encompass the laborious design of the study, precise data collection, and suitable analytical methods (Mandasini, 2022; Ojoboh & Igben, 2024). It is essential to ensure validity and dependability using methods including audit trails, member checking, and triangulation (Coleman, 2022; Ahmed, 2024). The current study incorporated numerous precautions to guarantee the reliability of the research methodology. As observed by Ravitch and Carl (2016), dialogic engagement is a crucial collaborative and dialogue-oriented methodology that can improve the validity and reliability of qualitative research. Thus, at the outset of the analytical phase, the researchers participated in dialogic engagement. Furthermore, the researcher employed member checking with participants to confirm the precision of data collection and interpretation (Creswell & Clark, 2018). When the researcher finished asking questions and interpreting the data, the participants were given chances to go over and assess the data and interpretations. These strategies guaranteed that the results accurately represented the participants' experiences and viewpoints while promoting a more transparent research approach.

E. Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the interview data. Although Braun and Clarke's (2012) six-phase thematic analysis model—which includes data familiarization, initial code generation, theme searching, theme review, theme definition and labeling, and report production—appears to be a systematic process, its practical application is rife with potential complexities and criticisms. Thematic analysis is considered a valuable tool for providing in-depth and nuanced accounts of complex phenomena, according to its advocates (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). Likewise, Joffe (2012) posits that thematic analysis can facilitate the acquisition of a comprehensive understanding of the underlying meanings and experiences in data by emphasizing pattern identification and examination.

Nevertheless, thematic analysis is subject to critical scrutiny, despite its procedural framework. If not executed with precision, its celebrated adaptability may become a liability, potentially resulting in a lack of rigor and profundity (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). Subjectivity in theme identification presents challenges in terms of consistency and bias (Torres et al., 2018). Additionally, its application may occasionally lead to superficial data summarization rather than in-depth analysis, and its diverse definitions can induce theoretical confusion (Morgan, 2022). As a result, the assertion of an inherent in-depth comprehension necessitates meticulous qualification and a rigorous application.

Thematic analysis of the interview data was undertaken via NVivo software to find the potential themes and sub-themes. The first phase was to select initial codes through interview transcripts to begin the coding process. The second step involved targeted coding, during which the researcher revised the early codes and organized them into coherent categories. The third step, which focused on building themes from the categorized codes, facilitated a greater understanding of the participants' perspectives.

The data were examined using a thematic approach. Methodically encoding the data allows for the identification, analysis, and representation of recurring themes that are present throughout the data. To categorize the data, the researchers made use of theme analysis, which allowed them to obtain insight into the perspectives and experiences of the participants.

III. RESULTS

The interviews with the participants revealed several subthemes. These subthemes can be classified under three main themes. These themes answer the research questions.

Q.1 How do novice EFL teachers perceive and describe their knowledge and understanding of action research?

Based on their answers, it is clear that participants' knowledge and grasp of action research concepts vary. Not all educators were equally knowledgeable or confident when asked to describe the methodology of action research; some seemed to have a basic grasp of the concept as a reflective problem-solving abilities approach.

A. Basic Understanding of Action Research

Ms. Fatimah, Mr. Ali, and Mr. Yousef, three of the participants in this study, explained action research as a methodical way to fix problems in the educational environment. For example, Mr. Ali described it as "solving specific problems in the classroom through a systematic approach," while Ms. Fatimah mentioned it involves "identifying a problem, planning a solution, implementing it, and reflecting on the results." Numerous educators, meanwhile, needed more knowledge of the particular procedures or frameworks of action research.

B. Limited Exposure

A significant number of participants (Mr. Hassan, Ms. Noura, Mr. Waheeb, and Mr. Dahesh) admitted to having minimal exposure to action research in their teacher training or professional development. For instance, Mr. Dahesh noted, "I haven't had much exposure to action research. My knowledge mostly comes from reading articles online".

C. Sources of Knowledge

Most participants reported learning about action research from teacher training programs, professional development workshops, or informal discussions with colleagues. However, several teachers, such as Mr. Mansour, expressed concerns about the lack of hands-on experience, stating, "I've read about different models but haven't applied any of them practically".

D. Perceived Benefits

Teachers perceived action research as a valuable tool for professional development and classroom improvement. Mr. Waheeb emphasized, "It's a great way to grow professionally and improve teaching strategies." Similarly, Mr. Yousef highlighted its potential to "make learning more effective and engaging" by involving students in the process.

Despite these positive perceptions, the findings reveal a gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, with many participants expressing a need for more structured training and support to confidently implement action research.

Q.2 What factors encourage or prevent novice EFL teachers from applying action research in their classrooms as a professional tool?

A. Novice EFL Teachers' Prior Exposure

The novice EFL teachers' experience plays a vital role in the knowledge of new EFL teachers about action research. The interview revealed that novice EFL teachers did not go through the practice of action research before their teaching practices. Mr. Ali mentioned:

I have not read or heard about action research. I am not sure what technique I need to use to start action research. I believe I need to find out more about action research to decide whether to use it or not.

The above extract reflects an individual's initial uncertainty and lack of knowledge about action research, as well as a recognition of the need to explore the topic further before deciding to apply AR in their classrooms. Moreover, this indicates a lack of familiarity with the concept, which is an important first step in the learning process—acknowledging the unknown and unclear about the practical steps or methodologies involved in action research. This reflects a potential barrier to engaging with the practice and suggests a need for guidance or foundational knowledge.

Ms. Nahala noted that:

Currently, I do not have any previous experience conducting action research in my classroom. However, I am eager to explore this approach and its potential impact on my teaching practice.

From the above scripts, an individual can infer that EFL teachers avoid applying action research in their EFL classroom because they lack the skills needed to carry out AR. This lack of skills springs from the absence of needed training and knowledge about action research practices. The above scripts shed light on two levels of knowledge. These levels are theoretical knowledge and practical knowledge. This idea focuses on the difference between theoretical and practical knowledge, linked to the knowing-doing gap (Hulme, 2014; Pfeffer & Sutton, 2000).

Furthermore, the transcript analysis reveals the respondent's initial lack of acquaintance with action research, emphasizing the need for more education to enhance decision-making. Nonetheless, a transition towards comprehension is apparent as the responder depicts action research as a methodical approach for enhancing pedagogical methods, indicating a growing recognition of its advantages. The respondent recognizes the significance of exploring action research and displays interest in possibly using it as a professional development instrument. Recommendations emphasize providing educational materials and training to improve the respondent's preparedness for the successful implementation of Educational Action Research. This advancement indicates a constructive move towards incorporating action research into the EFL teaching context.

B. Pre-Service Education

Some interviewees have raised the issue of the absence of the action research practice during pre-service education. When the interviewer asked questions about the factors that discourage EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia from applying AR, two teachers pointed to the lack of practice during their university courses.

Mr. Ali emphasized that:

There are several reasons that may discourage me from applying AR in the classroom. I do not exactly know how to start carrying out AR. I did not receive any practice, especially during my course at the university.

Ms. Nahala said:

I have faced a lot of difficulties when I tried to use AR in my classes. I believe that there are several reasons that created those problems. One of these difficulties is that I did not have any kind of training or courses focused on AR practices at the university or before I joined my workplace. I think that university programs need to focus on teaching their students how to apply AR and train them well.

The tape recordings highlighted a common concern of lack of preparation and backup relating to EAR in teaching and learning practice. Mr. Ali and Ms. Nahala explained their challenges in implementing EAR because they had no supervision or practical experience during their undergraduate studies. Again, the first respondent was not very clear about when they began implementing AR, which points to their lack of expertise, suggesting there is a need to develop structured training programs to equip the educators with requisite tools and methodologies. From the interview with one of the teachers, the following challenges that hinder the use of AR in courses are shown. The comment underlines the outcome of poor preparation and training involving mechanical challenges in using AR in the classroom. Lack of experience in practicing EAR before getting employed increases the necessity of incorporating intensive EAR classes into curricula to properly prepare future educators. Both transcripts emphasize the need for colleges to prioritize instructing students in the use of AR and to provide comprehensive training in EAR techniques. This indicates a need for institutions of education to augment their curriculum by including practical EAR elements to reconcile theory with application. Training programs designed for EAR practices may enable educators to do significant research, enhance instructional methods, and boost educational results.

C. Intrinsic Drive for Engaging in EAR

The data of the current study revealed a third theme, which highlights the motivation of novice Saudi EFL instructors to engage in educational action research. The following quotes from two participants show the reasons that encourage EFL teachers to implement educational action research in their classrooms. Mr. Yousef shared his views as follows:

What motivated me to engage in action research as a professional tool is the desire to continuously improve my teaching methods and enhance student engagement and achievement. I believe that action research can provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of different instructional strategies and help me tailor my approach to better meet the needs of my students.

In the same vein, Mr. Dahesh raised the same views about the motivating reasons that encouraged her to plan to apply EAR in her class:

I see action research as a valuable personal and professional development tool. In fact, by engaging in research and reflecting on my teaching, I can gain insights into my teaching practices, which will help me to develop a deeper understanding of my weaknesses and try to overcome all the challenges I may encounter in the classroom.

On the other hand, Ms. Samah raised some factors that may represent challenges and may decrease the level of motivation among EFL instructors to use EAR:

While I haven't conducted action research yet, I anticipate potential challenges such as time constraints, limited resources, and the need for technical skills in collecting and analyzing data. However, I am prepared to address these challenges by seeking support from colleagues, utilizing available resources, and enhancing my research skills through professional development opportunities.

A strong desire to continuously improve teaching techniques and student results motivated the volunteers to participate in action research. Problems with time and money and a lack of expertise in data collecting and analysis were among the anticipated obstacles. On the other hand, by reaching out to their coworkers for help and being open to possibilities for professional growth, participants showed initiative in improving their research abilities.

IV. DISCUSSION

This research identifies three primary topics concerning the awareness and determinants affecting the adoption of action research (AR) among novice English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers. The theme of novice EFL Teachers' Prior Exposure indicates that the majority of participants possess little theoretical and practical knowledge of action research. This disparity is seen in their ambivalence towards AR approaches and their reluctance to incorporate technology into educational settings. The comments emphasize the essential need for fundamental training and exposure to AR in the initial phases of professional growth. Participants recognized a knowing-doing gap, in which the lack of training and resources constrains the practical implementation of AR. Rectifying this deficiency through systematic instruction and fundamental education is essential for cultivating confidence and proficiency among EFL educators in using AR as a professional resource.

The second theme, Pre-service Education, highlights the insufficiency of university-level preparation in equipping EFL teachers for action research. The participants highlighted that their undergraduate programs lacked practical AR training, rendering them unprepared to implement these techniques in actual classroom environments. This deficiency in preparation not only impedes their capacity to deploy AR effectively but also engenders more hurdles, including mechanical issues and ambiguity in the application of AR technology. The results support the incorporation of extensive AR training into pre-service education programs. This may connect theoretical comprehension with practical

implementation, providing educators with the resources necessary to perform significant research, refine instructional methods, and elevate educational results.

The third component, the Intrinsic Drive for Engaging in EAR, underscores the inherent drive of educators to embrace AR for professional development and enhanced student outcomes. Participants articulated a robust aspiration to improve pedagogical methods and acquire knowledge regarding instructional efficacy. Notwithstanding this desire, they also foresaw obstacles, including time limitations, resource scarcity, and deficiencies in technical skills. Nonetheless, their proactive dispositions—exemplified by soliciting peer assistance and participating in professional development—exhibit a preparedness to surmount these challenges. This theme emphasizes the necessity of offering constant support, resources, and chances for skill development to maintain teachers' enthusiasm and empower them to utilize action research as a means for ongoing improvement. Collectively, these themes elucidate the complex obstacles and motivators affecting the adoption of AR, providing essential insights for educational policymakers and organizations seeking to enhance EFL instructors' research competencies.

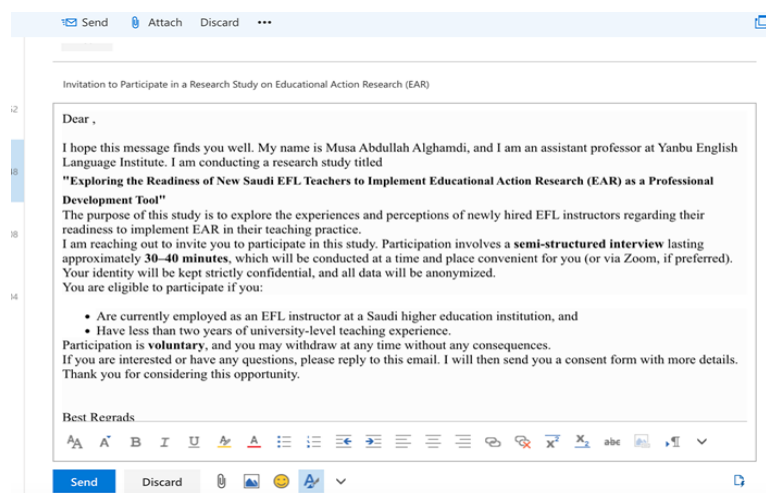


Figure 1. The Areas Underpin the Readiness of the Novice EFL Teachers to Implement Education Action Research (EAR)

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The result of the current study revealed three main areas that underpin the readiness of novice EFL teachers to implement educational action research (EAR) in their classrooms as a professional development technique that may improve their teaching performance. These three areas include the novice EFL teachers' prior exposure to EAR, the role of pre-service education and their motivation to engage in an action research task. These three areas play negative roles that make the EFL teachers hesitate to participate in EAR practices (i.e., their previous experience and pre-service education). The third area (i.e. their intrinsic drive) appears to be a positive area that may encourage them to implement EAR in their classroom. The current researcher recommends for future areas to find out the novice EFL teachers' training needs to employ EAR in the classroom. Furthermore, researchers need to investigate the actual application of EAR inside the classroom and the challenges that teachers may encounter after training.

APPENDIX



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