

OMANI TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARD CLASSROOM RESEARCH

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ABSTRACT

Although there has been a lot of research done to investigate teachers' attitudes toward classroom research, there has been little research, if any, in the Gulf area, and especially in Oman. In fact, classroom research is an important tool not only to develop teachers, but also to improve students as well as the educational system in schools. As an English supervisor working in the English departments, I wonder why Omani teachers are reluctant to conduct classroom research. Thus, the purpose of this study is to investigate what Omani teachers think of classroom research. How do they value its findings? Do they believe in it as a tool for their social and professional development? Do they have the basic skills to conduct classroom research properly? What are the obstacles that hinder them from doing classroom research?

In order to investigate Omani teachers' attitudes, I asked teachers and senior teachers to complete a survey of closed-ended and open-ended questions. Then I interviewed a number of teachers and senior teachers to understand their responses to the survey better and to clarify other interesting points. The findings suggest that Omani teachers strongly value classroom research and believe it has a positive impact on the development of teachers, students and schools. The findings also show

Omani teachers' strong desire for the results of classroom research to be partially implemented in their schools, but not completely. However, it is also clear that teachers encounter a number of basic obstacles that distract them from conducting classroom research. Heavy school duties, time, and lack of courage were the most frequent obstacles pointed out by the teachers.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Two years ago, when the Ministry of Education started asking teachers to conduct educational research in their schools or classrooms, teachers were not happy. The Ministry's purpose was to encourage teachers to read more and solve their problems through academic methods so that they could develop themselves professionally. However, many teachers looked down on the idea simply because it added extra work to what they already had in their schools. As an English supervisor, I became interested to find out the reasons behind these teachers' negative attitude toward doing research, and especially classroom research, or teacher research as it is referred to in some studies.

As a first step, a colleague and I conducted a small study in the course "Research Methods and Academic Writing" (ELT 510) during the spring semester of 2005. The study covered Omani and Emirati teachers. It aimed to understand the attitudes of teachers toward classroom research. The findings were very interesting and strongly drew my attention for further investigation. Consequently, I decided to elaborate on our findings in more depth, but only to examine the attitudes of Omani teachers by conducting this thesis study on the topic of Omani teachers' attitudes toward classroom research.

Purpose of the Study

There have not been any studies that have addressed the attitudes of Omani teachers toward classroom research, and more specifically, classroom research as a tool for professional development. Thus, I believe this study enriches the literature in regards to the area of attitudes and research in the Middle East. It can also provide researchers that are interested in the field of classroom research with some Middle Eastern views about conducting research.

Working as an English supervisor, I have found Omani teachers reluctant to do research in their schools. They often complain about the shortage of time and their other heavy duties. Consequently, I see the study as worthwhile because it can help me understand these negative attitudes of Omani teachers toward the idea of conducting classroom research. It can also help me find out the obstacles teachers encounter in their schools and that stop them from conducting classroom research. Understanding the difficulties teachers face can help me overcome such difficulties in

order to encourage the teachers I supervise to start doing and benefiting from classroom research. In short, I hope this study will suggest solutions to help teachers overcome some of the difficulties they encounter in their schools.

Another purpose of the study involves my position as an English supervisor who is always interested in improving his teachers professionally. I really want to convince teachers to conduct meaningful classroom research, because I strongly believe that such research will enhance the development of teachers' positive attitudes toward doing classroom research. A better understanding of their attitudes toward the Ministry of Education's new requirement, as well as toward classroom research itself, will provide a first step in that direction.

Context

Omani teachers work in two different school types, basic education schools and general education schools. Basic education schools implement a new educational system started in 1998 in which teachers use a different course book from the one teachers use in general education schools. In addition, there are two breaks in basic education schools while there is only one break in general education. However, the work day for both starts at 7:30 in the morning and ends at 1:30 in the afternoon. There are seven periods a day and each lasts for forty minutes. In some schools a period lasts for 50 minutes. The teachers work for about four or five periods out of seven periods a day, except for the senior teachers who work for two periods a day. Teachers are responsible for teaching English to their classes, and they can be a class teacher or a supervisor of one activity in the school. If they are class teachers, they should look after the administrative work of their class like writing the students' certificates of marks and following their attendance in school as well as their problems. But, if teachers are activity supervisors, they are responsible to recruit members, arrange meetings, fill out records, prepare exhibitions and journals, and prepare for evaluation by committees from the Ministry. Of course, this is besides their regular classes. Some school activities are morning broadcasts, school health field, trips, and journalism. In addition, when any teacher is absent from school, another teacher must substitute for these lessons.

Senior teachers cannot be a class teacher or activity supervisor because they have other work. They are responsible for not only teaching their normal classes, but

also visiting all English teachers in the school, and writing their mid-year and year-end reports. Besides, they should sign teachers' records and follow their plans of teaching in the semester. In addition, senior teachers prepare professional programs for teachers' development like workshops, seminars, and model lessons. At the same time, they are involved in some of the school committees like cleanliness committees, and student achievement committees. Obviously, both teachers and senior teachers have a great deal of stress because of the very heavy duties assigned to them. These include not only the teaching job, but also the administrative roles that are assigned by the school administration.

Along with all of these duties, the Ministry of Education has suggested recently that teachers should conduct classroom research and report the findings to the English Department. In fact, this is not strictly required of teachers, but the Ministry believes that conducting classroom research would help teachers to improve themselves professionally. The Ministry, in fact, does not want to publish journals of classroom research, but believes conducting classroom research may help teachers understand and overcome their students' problems. There will be no penalty for not doing this. However, the Ministry considers conducting classroom research to be one fundamental criterion for promotion if the teacher decides to be, for example, an assistant headmaster or a supervisor. As a result, many teachers have become upset because this increases their workload. Teachers' feelings on this subject are apparent when supervisors have a meeting with the English teachers and start talking about conducting classroom research. Their reaction tells a lot about how strongly they are against the idea of any extra work, which in this case is simply classroom research.

Omani schools have some teachers with bachelor degrees and some diploma holders. Diploma holders finish two years of English training in Intermediate Teachers Training Colleges. These colleges were meant to graduate teachers for the lower grades, four to six elementary. However, the Ministry closed these colleges because the need for bachelor holders has become vital. Therefore, the Sultan Qaboos University now prepares teachers for higher grades starting from grade seven till grade twelve. As for training, the diploma holders are not asked to conduct research. They prepare short reports in which they summarize articles or chapters, but they never investigate or research problems. Thus, they often have little idea about how to conduct classroom research. They, actually, lack the skills and experience of doing

any kind of research. On the other hand, teachers who graduated from Sultan Qaboos University have the skills of doing research, but these often do not allow them to prepare quality research. Therefore, teachers also claim that they lack the skills of doing classroom research. To understand further, I decided to investigate Omani teachers' attitudes toward classroom research to more deeply understand the situation in the schools. This will help me define the teachers' needs and consequently to suggest solutions.

Teachers' Challenges

When a new academic year starts, teachers are very much aware of how much work they are going to have. In fact, they consider teaching itself to be a challenge because the school day is full of what they sometimes consider unnecessary activities. First, teachers are responsible for following school activities like health, morning program, lectures, and many others. These activities are meant to provide opportunities for students to participate according to their needs and interests. For example, a science student who looks forward to being a doctor can join the science activity in the school. To explain further, each teacher is assigned to one activity and must fill in a register. In addition, teachers need to monitor the activity and document its fulfillment in the school. Second, teachers are responsible for classes of about thirty-five students each. They have to document those students' attendance and achievements. Meanwhile, teachers are also members of one or two committees in the school such as Cleanliness, and Student Affairs. Third, in their regular classes, teachers have to prepare short quizzes and mark them, as well as prepare and mark the end of semester tests. In fact, less time on these activities would certainly allow more time for teachers to focus on research.

Teachers may not even have time to have breakfast, because during the break, they organize students when buying their food from the canteen, or may be busy marking students' exercise books. If the teacher teaches four periods a day and is free for two, these two periods may be occupied by the school administration. The teacher may be required to take a substitution lesson or mark students' work. Another heavy duty that has been started recently is the new assessment document. Teachers are asked to assess their students using many different measures or assessment tools, such as taking notes, projects, class work, homework, portfolios, and end of semester tests.

Clearly, teachers are very busy during the school day so that they often cannot find the time to rest. With all these loads and duties, a classroom research project appears to be another heavy and perhaps unnecessary duty that teachers do not wish to have. As a result, in the last two years very few teachers have actually conducted classroom research.

Research Questions

This study basically investigates Omani teachers' attitudes toward classroom research. I believe that Omani teachers maintain negative attitudes because their school day is bombarded with a lot of other duties, but I am trying to understand why teachers have this negative attitude. Have they conducted any research? Do they believe in it as a tool for professional development? Do they have basic research skills? Does lack of skills represent an obstacle to doing successful classroom research? If not, then what are the obstacles they encounter, both inside and outside the school, that distract them from doing classroom research? Finally, their own research findings can potentially develop teachers' professionally, but do they believe in the results or do they view the results as impractical and unrelated to their actual classroom?

Overview of the Chapters and Appendices

Chapter 1 has described the context teachers' encounter in their schools, as it forms the context for the study. It has also explained the many challenges currently taking place in the schools like heavy duties, time, and limited rewards. Finally, chapter 1 has previewed the purpose of the study as well as the research questions.

Chapter 2 reviews the attitudes of teachers in other contexts toward classroom research in the literature and highlights the need for research in this area in the Middle East in general, and Oman specifically. It sheds light on the value and methodology of classroom research, as well as the obstacles which stop teachers from conducting standard classroom research.

Chapter 3 provides a detailed description of the participants, giving the number, background, marital status, and other important data. It also fully explains the instruments used to collect data, specifically the survey and interviews, how they were

developed, and what they consisted of. In addition, it clarifies the procedures followed to conduct the survey and interviews.

Chapter 4 explains the procedures used to sort out the findings from data collected. Then, it illustrates the most interesting findings of the study according to four categories: value, impact, methodology, and obstacles of teachers' attitudes toward classroom research. The findings, in fact, are demonstrated based on results of the survey and interviews.

Chapter 5 summarizes the findings and offers some recommendations to help teachers have the opportunity to conduct classroom research in their schools. Besides, the chapter also suggests some implications for the Ministry of Education, school principals, and English supervisors.

Appendix 1 contains the actual research instruments: the survey questionnaire (with closed and open-ended questions) and sample of the interview questions. Appendix 2 provides descriptive statistics summarizing attitudes toward classroom research classified into four tables. Appendix 3 lists relevant quotations of teachers' answers to the two open-ended questions on the survey.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

There has been a lot of research done to investigate teachers' attitudes toward classroom research (or teacher research) and its usefulness to the professional development of teachers. In fact, many studies have pointed out that some teachers maintain negative attitudes toward classroom research because of the extra load it imposes in schools. Research also strongly stresses the positive attitudes of teachers toward classroom research because of its significance for the social and professional development of teachers. Studies show that teachers strongly believe in the benefits of classroom research, but they have negative attitudes toward it because of the many obstacles that distract them from conducting classroom research in their schools.

Obstacles to Classroom Research

Many researchers highlight significant obstacles to doing classroom research in their studies. However, they proclaim that such obstacles should not hinder teachers from conducting classroom research because teachers can defeat them. Belanger (1992) highlights a main constraint which keeps teachers away from doing classroom research. According to his study, "the major cost of teacher research is time" (p. 17). In other words, teachers need time to refine questions, read about what others have done on the research topic, discuss with their colleagues, and finally plan and implement the research. Therefore, classroom research is not favorable for many teachers because of its exhausting procedures, but they value its benefits.

Mazzillo (1995) says, "When the idea [of doing classroom research] was first introduced to me, I was skeptical" (p. 45). In fact, she showed a negative attitude toward classroom research because of two significant constraints: the lack of time and the lack of research skills. In addition, Allwright (1997) highlights that lack of support is another reason for making teachers reluctant to do classroom research. In fact, there is a big need for institutional and collegial support for teachers in order to make more satisfactory investigations in the field of education. Teachers alone cannot conduct classroom research because they need time, money, and instruments.

Bondy (1998) conducted a study to understand the obstacles of classroom research. He explains that teachers involved in his study "were generally reluctant to

engage in classroom research" (p. 9). They had concerns like lack of time, lack of administrative support, lack of ownership of their research, and lack of experience in doing research. They also believed classroom research was irrelevant to teaching. Having all these hindrances in mind and trying to solve them, Bondy designed an ideal school environment that would enable teachers to have the time and support in order to conduct classroom research. He, in fact, organized this with the school administration to help him come up with real findings. Therefore, he reduced teachers' work load and release time, gave school and district support, and exposed teachers to existing research models to bridge the gap between classroom research and teaching.

Hopkins (2004) points out that many teachers view classroom research as an extra burden that adds more work and consumes a lot of their teaching time. He states, "Teachers are quite rightly concerned about how far involvement in classroom research activity will impinge upon their teaching and other personal time" (p. 52). Therefore, in order to encourage teachers to conduct classroom research, there is a significant need to consider the time allocated and the effort required for such activity. Moreover, Seliger (1983) classifies teacher research conflicts. He points out that the high cost of standard research and tools can stop teachers from doing research. He also found that a "full teaching commitment" (p. 30) does not leave time for teachers to read the literature in the field or to analyze data collected after a full-day teaching in a classroom. Austin (1995) emphasizes that "doing teacher research is much harder and more exhausting than crossing a desert ... there are so many things working against teacher-researchers, time, energy, levels, and administrative directives" (p. 182).

Value of Classroom Research

Allwright (1997) points out that the change or the move towards formal classroom research imposes extra work on teachers. He explains that when teachers are asked to conduct quality classroom research, they find it very demanding because they must follow fundamental procedures. Consequently, he states, "Attempting to improve the quality of research seems bound to increase the risk of early abandonment" (p. 368). In addition, Hubbard and Power (2003) suggest that classroom research helps teachers little in learning something about their students' abilities and learning strategies. Moreover, according to Stein (2003), "Most teacher-

researchers we know do not receive thousands of dollars to support their work, and few belong to well-organized networks or support groups" (p. 1).

McBee (2004) conducted a study exploring teachers' attitudes toward classroom research. He found that although there is little literature on teachers' attitudes toward existing classroom research, the findings are remarkably consistent and agree that many teachers find classroom research irrelevant to their teaching: "Teachers unfortunately find much of existing research to be inaccessible, irrelevant to their daily experiences in the classroom, or counterintuitive" (p. 52). He also notes that when teachers are asked to make educational decisions in their classrooms, "they rarely turn to research, instead they rely on intuition or take advice of colleagues" (p. 52). They believe that doing so saves them time and effort. McBee assumes, in his investigations, that teachers should view classroom research as a powerful way for them to become more refined practitioners and to help them form evidence-based decisions in their classrooms.

Eisenhart and Borko (1993) discuss collaboration between teachers and researchers. They state that teachers have many duties and much work inside the school. Therefore, they cannot find the time to discuss and synthesize research. However, researchers have the time and the tools to do research. They suggest that if teachers and researchers work together, "the collaboration will be productive" (p. 88). Belanger (1992) conducted a study about teacher research in which he discussed the costs and benefits of classroom research to teachers. He argues, "The potential benefits claimed for teacher research are diverse: an enriched professionalism, increased confidence in instructional decision-taking, a defense against burn-out, a new appreciation for theory, a potential avenue for informing theory and a necessary condition for professional development" (p. 18).

Page (1977), in a doctoral dissertation, investigated the attitudes of English teachers toward classroom research through involving them in the process. He found that teachers were asking important questions related to their teaching and classes, but they only tried to investigate these questions specifically. They never researched such questions in the form of real classroom research to find practical answers. In addition, Lorensen (1994), states "Historically, teachers have never been an important source of information for educational change" (p. 1). However, a reform movement over the last few decades has involved teachers in research for educational change. After Page's

(1977) involvement of teachers as researchers in his study, for instance, he asked for their opinions on the experience. One teacher said, "If I pose questions about my teaching and students' leaning, my effectiveness and enthusiasm are increased" (p. 2).

In addition, Page concluded his study with some advantages for teachers when conducting classroom research. He pointed out that they become more reflective and thoughtful teachers. He also found their teaching has been changed because they think differently about things happening around them in the classroom. Finally, teachers involved in classroom research understand that what is known about teaching comes not only from traditional research, but also from those who practice classroom research themselves. In other words, teachers should take part in conducting research so that they learn from it.

Queenan (1988) suggests that classroom research has "long lists of benefits for teachers, students and the profession" (p. 41). Through classroom research, teachers understand how and what their students need to learn. They also question their assumptions, develop theories, and change their mode of teaching. Besides, they become contributors to the enrichment of the teaching literature and the research field. As suggested by Queenan, students also benefit from classroom research in many ways, since teachers stop focusing mainly on themselves and their lessons and start thinking of their students and problems in their classroom. In addition, teachers and students develop into communities of learners. Queenan suggests classroom research can be made part of the training for new teachers to investigate and solve such problems.

After Mazzilo (1995) finished a collaborative classroom research study about why students use L1 for communication instead of the target language, she stated, "The growth of self-development we derived from the experience has been undeniable" (p. 46). She also believes that not only do teachers benefit from doing research, but students also become more actively involved in the process. She concludes that research contributes to the growth and strength of the teaching profession, bringing more credibility and reliability to their work as educators. According to Zeichner (2003), teacher research has a lot of advantages for teachers' development. He points out that teachers become better at what they do when conducting research. So, the quality of learning is increased. Zeichner asserts that

classroom research stimulates positive changes in schools and can provide policy makers and academic researchers with useful knowledge.

Bondy (1998) conducted a research study to understand the effect of faculty meetings to improve the education system in an elementary school in the United States. The study shed light on three different aspects: those factors that support teacher research, the benefits of teacher research, and the obstacles teachers encounter when doing classroom research. He tells us that after a single experience with classroom research, the teachers in his study noted the following benefits: improved teaching practice, enhanced working with colleagues, and new ways of thinking about themselves and their students. He concludes, however, "If classroom research is to become a habit rather than a fluke, state departments, school boards, district administrators, and universities all have responsibility for recreating school culture to support classroom research" (p. 12).

Impact of Classroom Research

There are a number of interesting findings in the literature about the significance of classroom research to develop teachers' positive attitudes. Belanger (1992) notes, "Recent changes in attitudes toward what constitutes worthwhile research have also made classroom research more attractive to teachers" (p. 16). As a result, a number of books and articles, largely written by teachers of English, on conducting and reporting classroom research have been published. This literature offers both rationales for doing research and suggestions to get started. Johnson (1992, 1993) discusses the relationship between teachers and research. She explains that teachers traditionally have been viewed as consumers of research who are expected to only read research and then apply findings to their classrooms. However, if teachers are viewed as "reflective practitioners" (Johnson, 1993, p. 3), they can be active researchers who contribute to the research endeavor by conducting their own studies. She concludes that "many of the methodological improvements that need to be made in L2 research will not only improve the rigor and the quality of the research, but will make it more credible and more useful to teachers."

According to McDonough and McDonough (1997), classroom research is essential to develop a sense of the reflective teacher. They explain that professional development "portrays teachers as active and questioning professionals willing to

reflect and change in a long-term way over the course of their whole career" (p. 31). They strongly suggest that the linkage between teacher development and teacher research in ELT has been made very explicitly. Moreover, others have also stated that classroom research leads to professional reflection. For example, Hopkins (2004) highlights that teacher-researchers "have extended their role to include critical reflection upon their craft with the aim of improving it" (p. 1).

Pike (2002) points out that assessment system can be one hindrance that stops teachers from doing classroom research: "In schools, the ability of teachers to conduct their own research has been hindered by the bureaucratic demands of assessment" (p. 28). Despite this, however, her study revealed that teacher research is flourishing in many places and generating ideas that provide theoretical models and ideas to improve teaching and learning.

Gunn (2003) states that the majority of researchers maintain positive attitudes toward the involvement of teachers in doing classroom research. For example, she points out that Freeman (1999), Mendelsohn (2001), and Borg (2003) all believe that research by teachers should be encouraged. In addition, she states, "I do not believe that the teacher's role and the researcher's role can be easily separated, nor do I believe they need to be" (p. 6). Furthermore, Gunn explains that conducting classroom research is worthwhile because she believes that "through researching what puzzles me about my classroom ... using pedagogical activities that I am comfortable with and involving my students, I now have a better understanding of why things happen in my class the way they do" (p. 7).

Fleisher and Fox (2004), two teachers, conducted a study to identify the importance of research to improve their careers and their school as well. They state, "Research has become a kind of mantra for what is said to be needed to improve ... education" (p. 259). In other words, they also find classroom research can contribute to school reform and can become a vehicle for "new theory building." As English teachers, they believe their study will be particularly useful for discussions about the value and the future of the teacher research movement. It will also inspire teachers to dig deeper. But Austin (1995) emphasizes that conducting classroom research is difficult and exhausting: "It's like crossing a desert...there are so many things working against researchers, time, energy, levels, and administrative directives" (p. 182).

Although studies of classroom research reveal negative attitudes of teachers, the majority of these studies state its great usefulness for the professional and social development of teachers in the West. However, do Omani teachers encounter some of the obstacles illustrated in the literature? Do they believe in the value and impact of classroom research? In other words, will the issue of classroom research be different in Oman from what has been found in the literature? In fact, through this study I aim to understand the Omani teachers' attitudes toward classroom research compared to what has been said in the literature.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

This study investigates Omani English teachers' attitudes toward classroom research and attempts to understand the rationales behind their negative or positive attitudes. It also investigates whether teachers see classroom research as an important tool for teachers' professional development. In addition, it sheds lights on the obstacles that can stop Omani teachers from conducting classroom research and suggests ideas for overcoming these obstacles based on the findings.

In order to triangulate, data were collected from multiple sources using a combination of quantitative data from a survey and qualitative data from interviews. 60 Omani teachers filled out a questionnaire of 42 agree/disagree statements and two open-ended questions (see Appendix 1). After the survey, ten of the teachers were interviewed in order to uncover more in-depth responses to some of the statements.

The Participants

In order to have a clear picture of teachers' attitudes, I decided to involve 60 Omani teachers in the study. They were 30 males and 30 females from 12 different high schools. Six of the high schools were all-boys schools and six were all-girls schools. All of the teachers were bachelor degree holders. All had graduated either from Sultan Qaboos University or from Leeds University. There were 14 senior teachers, those who act as supervisors or visiting teachers, writing reports, and conducting workshops and seminars. There were 46 teachers whose main work is teaching. I felt that involving some senior teachers, who had been teaching for more than five years, could help me to understand the views of experienced teachers. Therefore, 25 of the teachers had taught for five years or less, while 35 of the teachers had taught for more than five years. Married teachers may not find the time to conduct classroom research because of their family duties, which is especially true for Omani female teachers. Thus, it is important to note that 45 married teachers were involved in the study. I believed this would provide some feedback about marriage and children being an obstacle or not. Table1 below summarizes the background data about the participants.

Table 1. Background Data about the Participants

	Teacher type		Marital status		Experience	
	Senior teachers	Teachers	Married	Single	1-5 years	More than 5
Male n=30	9	21	19	11	15	15
Female n=30	5	25	26	4	10	20
Total	14	46	45	15	25	35
Total	60		60		60	

In the second step, 10 teachers were interviewed: four senior teachers and six teachers. Seven of these teachers had more than five years experience, and three had less than five. Some of them had conducted research during their university study, but only three had conducted research in their teaching experience while working in their schools. I involved teachers who were interested in being interviewed. As for male teachers, five teachers volunteered, but as for female teachers, only three volunteered. Thus, I randomly selected two more female teachers. I wanted to define the attitudes of both new and experienced teachers with reference to their survey responses. I also wanted to find out whether teachers who conducted classroom research were rewarded or not, and if they were, how they were rewarded.

Development of the Instruments

Survey

The basic tool for collecting data was the survey, and the first decision I made was the kind of data to collect about participants' backgrounds. Therefore, on the

cover page, teachers were asked to tick what was appropriate to them (see Appendix 1), for example, data about participants' gender, age, and years of experience. In addition, I wanted to know the level they taught, whether intermediate (preparatory classes) or high (secondary classes). I was also interested to know their marital status because I wanted to investigate whether marriage could be an obstacle for not conducting classroom research or not. Finally, I believe that senior teachers are active in their schools. Therefore, I wanted to discover how many senior teachers conducted classroom research compared to regular teachers.

As for the actual survey, I decided to include two parts, closed-ended statements and open-ended questions. In the first section, when I started developing the questionnaire, I created 72 statements. I collected these based on the survey used in my pilot study in the course ELT 515, "Research Methods and Academic Writing." I also contacted my colleague, Fatima Al Hammoudi, and she suggested some of the statements. In addition, I read the book *Designing Classroom Research* (Eisenhart & Borko, 1993) and it provided very useful information about teachers' views toward classroom research. I got some ideas from that book and incorporated them into the statements.

Later, I reviewed this first draft and reduced the number in a second draft to 55 statements. Then, I classified the statements into four categories: Omani teachers' attitudes toward research value, research methodology, research findings, and research obstacles. After classification, I discussed the 55 statements with my thesis supervisor and we eliminated or combined some vague or repetitive statements and reduced the number to 42 statements (see Appendix 1a). I decided to conduct the survey without making the teachers aware of the four categories.

As for the survey scale, I started with a scale of five responses, which were "strongly agree," "agree," "not sure," "disagree," and "strongly disagree." Later I decided to exclude the "not sure" column because I thought this might not present accurate responses to the statements. In addition, I felt some teachers might tend to tick "not sure" because they would want to skim through the statements and finish quickly. This might not help me collect accurate data. On the contrary, the four-response scale could help find accurate answers when it came to the analysis phase. Regarding the open-ended questions, the same two questions used in the survey of the course ELT 510 were used in this survey (see Appendix 1b).

Having prepared a preliminary draft of the survey, piloting the survey was the second stage to make sure that the tool was appropriately prepared and clearly written. I distributed the questionnaire to six teachers in order to fill out and comment on the survey questions. Fortunately, the survey was clear to teachers and no comments were received. The next stage was to distribute the questionnaire in the selected schools. To do this, I contacted some senior teachers and asked them to be responsible for asking their teachers to fill them out, collect, and return the questionnaire to me. Some schools did not have senior teachers, so I took the questionnaires to the schools myself, distributed them, and asked teachers to fill them out and send them to my office within four days.

Interviews

I found seven teachers, two females and five males, willing to be interviewed. I contacted those who volunteered through email and arranged interviews. Then, I randomly selected three more female teachers to interview a total of 10 teachers. At first, I decided to record the interviews, but all female teachers refused. As for male teachers, only three agreed and two refused to record their interviews because they considered their views to be very personal.

After having studied all teachers' responses to the statements of the questionnaire and especially the open-ended questions, I prepared questions for an interview (see Appendix 1c). The purpose of the interview questions was to help me comprehend teachers' general and specific attitudes, whether negative or positive. Of course, some more questions occurred to me during discussions with teachers for accurate understanding. Later, I agreed with the teachers to visit them in their schools and interview them individually in a private place for about 20 minutes. At the beginning, I highlighted to them that this was a very confidential interview and all data would be used for my thesis and research purposes only. This helped me create a safe, friendly atmosphere which encouraged them to be honest when responding to the questions. I also felt that some Omani teachers might be afraid to express themselves freely, especially if they were asked about their school principal or supervisor. It was important to provide such a relaxed, stress-free environment to help get valid and honest answers.

During the interviews, I asked a question and gave the interviewees time to speak freely. Meanwhile, I jotted down some of their words, expressions, and sentences that would help to support the analysis of the findings. Later, I typed some of the interesting teachers' responses to the questions and organized them separately. I really considered these as quotations to be placed exactly as uttered within in the data analysis.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The information gathered from the quantitative tool, the survey, and the qualitative tool, the interviews, were all analyzed and classified. The closed-ended statements were divided into four categories related to the Omani teachers' attitudes toward classroom research. In fact, I first planned to divide the study into male and female attitudes, but to my surprise, after analysis, there was not a great difference in the attitudes of Omani male teachers and female teachers. Indeed, they indicated almost similar attitudes. Thus, I decided to analyze the attitudes of Omani teachers without referring to male or female teachers. I also combined the two columns "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" together, and "Disagree" and "Strongly Disagree" together, because I felt this combination would result in a better analysis. The most significant findings of each of the four categories are highlighted and discussed in the following order: Omani teachers' attitudes towards (1) the value (2) the methodology, (3) the impact, and (4) the obstacles of classroom research (see Appendix 2).

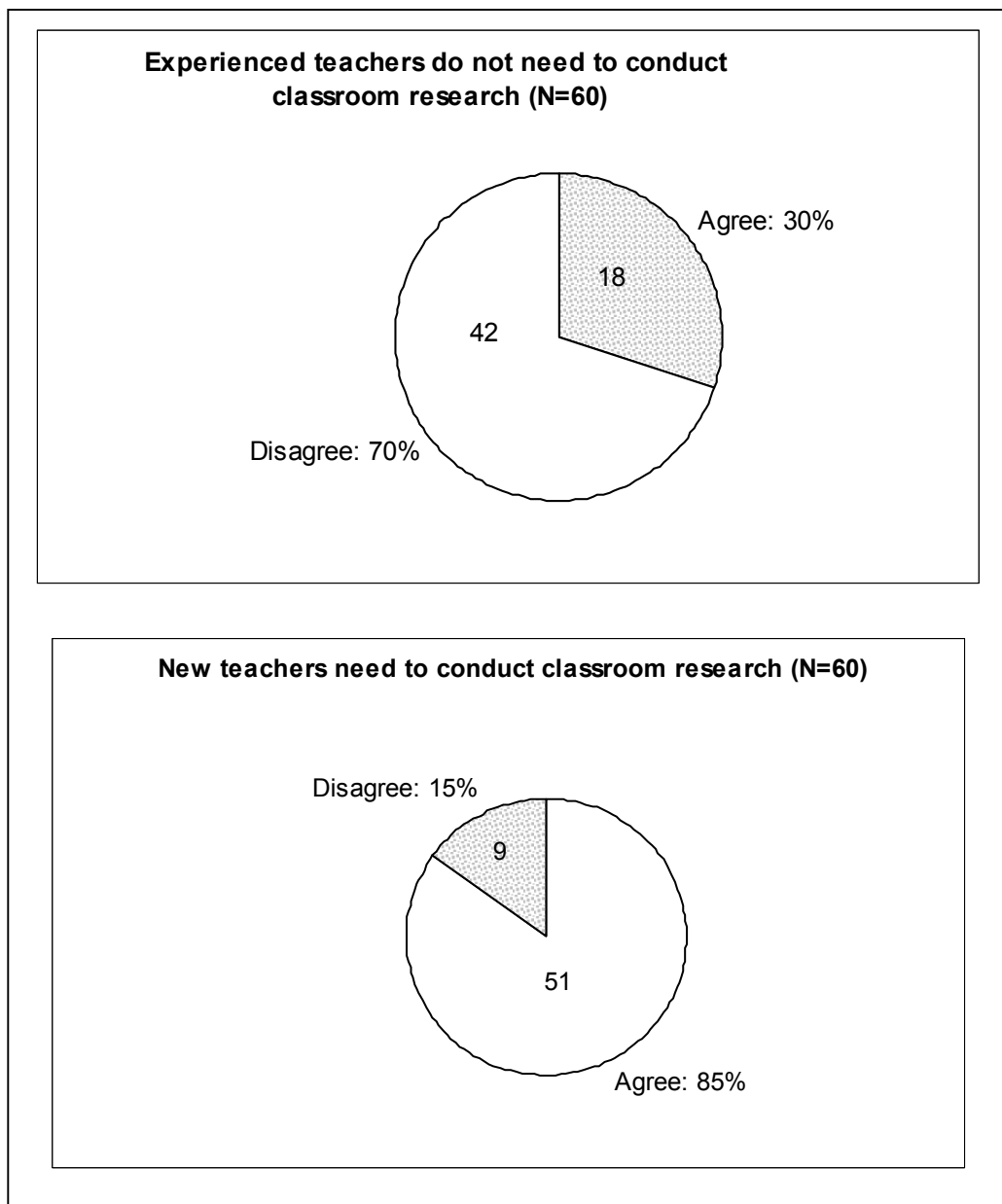
Attitudes towards the Value of Classroom Research

Generally, data in this category were collected based on two tools, the closed-ended statements and the interviews. Results revealed that Omani teachers value classroom research. They are also positive, initiative, and independent. In other words, they prefer to conduct their own classroom research instead of reading research done by others. However, they do not want classroom research to distract them from teaching (see Appendix 2a).

Closed-ended Statements Results

According to teachers' responses to the closed-ended statements, they felt that both new and experienced teachers should conduct classroom research to solve some of their classroom problems. However, the majority emphasized that new teachers should be encouraged far more strongly to do classroom research. Of the 60 teachers surveyed, 85% (51) agreed that new teachers should conduct classroom research and 15% (9) disagreed.

Figure 1. Responses of Teachers to Statements 1 & 2, Table 2



On the contrary, 70% (42) agreed that experienced teachers should conduct classroom research and 30% (18) disagreed. It seems possible that experienced teachers are proud of their long teaching experience so that they underestimate the importance of classroom research as a tool to develop themselves (see Figure 1). In addition, Omani teachers do not want to depend on the classroom research of other teachers because their findings might not be practical to work in their classrooms. Thus, 65% (39) wanted to conduct their own classroom research rather than adopt other researchers' findings, while only 35% (21) wanted to benefit from other research

rather than conduct their own. One of the most significant points is that more than half of the teachers, 53% (32), agreed that they should be paid for conducting classroom research. They think this is a good motive to conduct classroom research. However, 47% (28) considered doing classroom research as a part of their professional responsibility (see Table 2).

Table 2. Attitudes of Teachers toward the Value of Classroom Research (N=60)

No.	Statement	Agree	Disagree
1	Experienced teachers do not need to conduct classroom research to solve their classroom problems.	18 (30%)	42 (70%)
2	New teachers need to conduct classroom research to solve their classroom problems.	51 (85%)	9 (15%)
3	I don't need to work on my own classroom research since I can benefit from others' research findings.	21 (35%)	39 (65%)
4	Teachers should be paid for conducting classroom research.	32 (53%)	28 (47%)
5	The Ministry of Education encourages and supports teachers to carry out classroom research.	23 (38%)	37 (62%)

Interview Results

The interviews aimed to clarify and expand upon some of the interesting findings of the closed-ended statements. Similar to the four categories of teachers' attitudes toward classroom research, my interview questions were prepared to follow-up on the data collected from the survey and to scrutinize some interesting findings as well. The 10 teachers involved in the interviews had all participated in filling out the survey as well.

It is very obvious from the closed-ended statements that these Omani teachers perceived classroom research to be beneficial and fruitful for professional development. In fact, interviews with the 10 teachers revealed that their answers tallied with their responses in the survey. Teachers were asked about the importance of classroom research, and 100% (10) agreed that it is important. One teacher said that it is useful "to improve myself in teaching and to improve students' level." Another teacher commented, "I can solve a problem and gain knowledge." In addition, teachers were also asked "Do you really need classroom research to solve classroom

problems? Why?" 90% (9) of the teachers said they believed that conducting classroom research could help them overcome classroom problems and examine different solutions. One teacher said, "We need research for solving the problems." Another senior teacher said, "For minor problems we don't need, but major problems need classroom research." On the other hand, 10% (1) disagreed and suggested that research takes too much time in a semester to overcome a problem, so it is better to think of solving the problem quickly. Thus he commented, "I don't see [classroom research as] helpful."

Attitudes towards the Methodology of Classroom Research

Generally, data collected reveal that these Omani teachers prefer solving their classroom problems not by doing research, but by reflection. Besides, they strongly emphasize their inability to conduct classroom research. They lack the skills to conduct classroom research, and this is one reason that stops them from doing it. They also need to know the standard procedures and strategies of conducting classroom research. On the other hand, the data show that they are aware of the importance of collaborative classroom research as compared to individual research. They strongly believe in the importance of classroom research in problem solving, and in the development of teachers and students (see Appendix 2b).

Closed-ended Statements Results

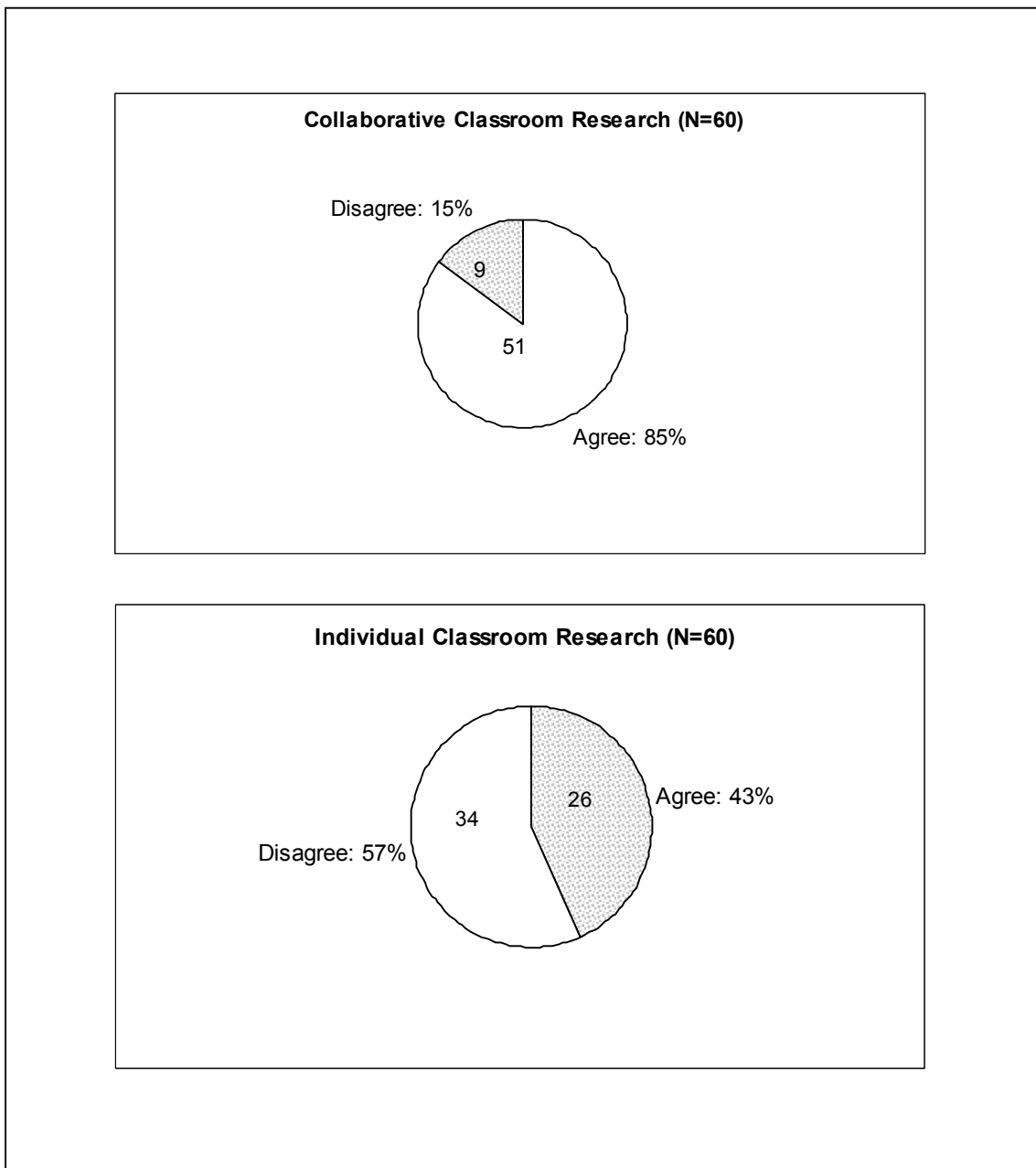
Table 3 below summarizes the most interesting responses of Omani teachers toward the methodology of classroom research. According to teachers' responses to the survey, 85% (51) said they appreciated the value of conducting classroom research collaboratively while only 15% (9) felt that individual classroom research is effective. When teachers were asked, 57% (34) disagreed with the statement "I prefer doing classroom research individually." In another statement, "Collaborative classroom research is very beneficial," 85% (51) believed in the importance of classroom research. Although in the first statement teachers appeared to believe in collaborative classroom research, some still prefer doing it individually (see Figure 2).

Table 3. Teachers Attitudes toward the Methodology of Classroom Research (N=60)

No.	Statement	Agree	Disagree
1	Collaborative classroom research is very beneficial.	51 (85%)	9 (15%)
2	I prefer doing classroom research individually.	26 (43%)	34 (57%)
3	I prefer solving my classroom problems in my mind quickly rather than doing classroom research.	49 (81%)	11 (19%)
4	When doing classroom research, it is important to follow the standard procedures.	55 (92%)	5 (8%)
5	I'd like to have training courses about classroom research in order to learn how to conduct it properly.	56 (93%)	4 (7%)

In addition, 92% (55) said it is important to follow standard procedures of classroom research while 8% (5) thought it is unnecessary to follow standard procedures. When teachers were asked about their need for a training course in order to do classroom research properly, 93%, (56) said they would like to have a training course, and only 7% (4) did not want the training course. This justifies the teachers' responses to the statement "I prefer solving my classroom problems in my mind quickly rather than doing classroom research." Actually, 81% (49) agreed with this statement, perhaps because they lack the skills of conducting good classroom research to solve their problems, while only 19% (11) referred to classroom research in order to solve their problems. Another issue addressed within the methodology of classroom research is who should conduct classroom research. These teachers seemed to believe that researchers are too far removed from the real classroom environment. As a result, 65% (39) agreed that teachers and only teachers should conduct it, and 35% (21) disagreed and wanted other educators to do classroom research. They also saw it as practical to investigate problems occurring in the classroom rather the ones that take place outside it.

Figure 2. Responses of Teachers to Statements 1 & 2, Table 3



Interview Results

The closed-ended statements revealed that the teachers believe in collaborative research although some prefer working individually. They were also in favor of following the standard procedures of real classroom research, but interviews

emphasize to a large extent the teachers' need for training programs about how to conduct classroom research. To illustrate, 70% (7) of the teachers interviewed found themselves unable to conduct proper classroom research because they lacked the basic skills. Only 30% (3) felt they were capable of doing classroom research, but this was based on skills acquired from their university studies, not from the field of teaching. Teachers were asked, "Do you have the skills to conduct classroom research? How?" One teacher said, "I don't have the skills because they don't train us." Another teacher said, "Maybe, from the university life." In addition, the survey reveals that teachers prefer handling their classroom problems through reflection instead of doing classroom research. When teachers were asked "Why do you prefer solving your problems in your mind rather than conducting classroom research?" teachers blamed lack of time and heavy school duties. In fact, 80% (8) supported the mental solutions rather than classroom research, and 20% (2) referred to research. One teacher said, "I try to solve the classroom problems without research using my own ideas because we don't have time." One senior teacher said, "I used classroom research to understand why my students achieve poorly in the writing questions."

Attitudes towards the Impact of Classroom Research

Data were collected in this category based on three different sources: closed-ended statements, open-ended questions, and interviews. Findings generally showed that these Omani teachers value conducting classroom research because they see it as appropriate to overcome their teaching and classroom problems and believe it is useful for their professional development. They also see it of great benefit for both schools and learners. Therefore, they recommended that the results of classroom research should be shared not only with other teachers, but also with learners (see Appendix 2c).

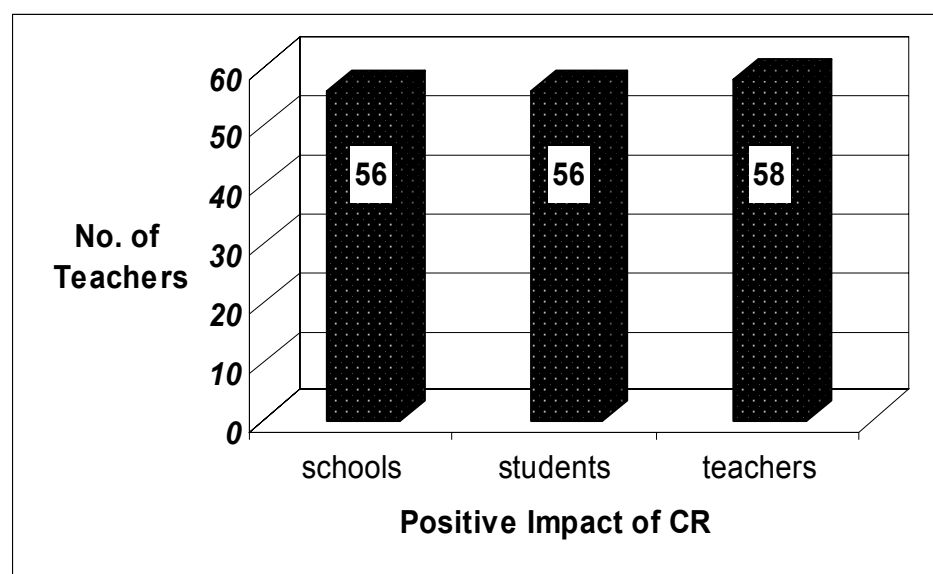
Closed-ended Statement Results

When the teachers were asked about the importance of classroom research to improve their professional knowledge, 97% (58) agreed that it is a great tool for this, and only 3% (2) did not see the importance of classroom research for teachers. In addition, 95% (57) agreed that classroom research encourages teachers to improve their teaching practices, while 5% (3) disagreed. Moreover, 93% (56) agreed that classroom research is a good tool to improve students' low achievement (see Table 4).

Table 4. Attitudes of Teachers toward the Impact of Classroom Research (N=60)

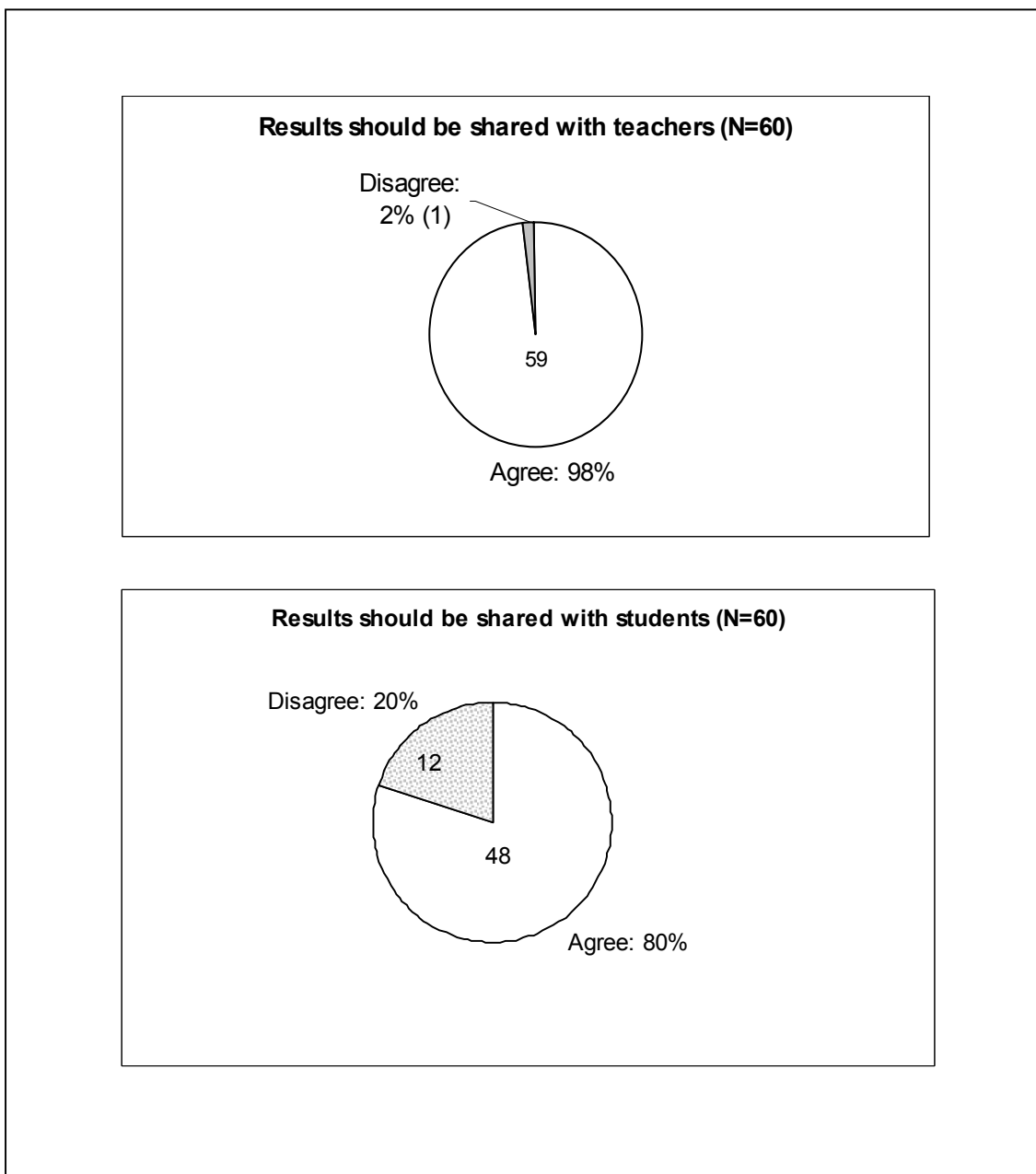
No.	Statement	Agree	Disagree
1	Classroom research is a good tool for improving students' low achievement	56 (93%)	4 (7%)
2	Being involved in classroom research enriches teachers' professional knowledge.	58 (97%)	2 (3%)
3	Classroom research encourages teachers to improve their teaching practices.	57 (95%)	3 (5%)
4	Results of classroom research should be shared with students.	48 (80%)	12 (20%)
5	Results of classroom research should be shared with other teachers.	59 (98%)	1 (2%)

Figure 3. Teachers' Attitudes toward the Impact of Classroom Research on the Development of Teachers, Students, and Schools



Another significant finding was teachers' interest to share research results, not only with their colleagues in the field, but also with students. In fact, 98% (59) of the 60 teachers surveyed agreed that results should be shared with teachers, and only 2% (1) wanted to keep results private. 80% (48) agreed results should also be shared with students, but 20% (12) found it unnecessary to make students familiar with research findings (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Responses of Teachers to Statements 4 & 5, Table 4



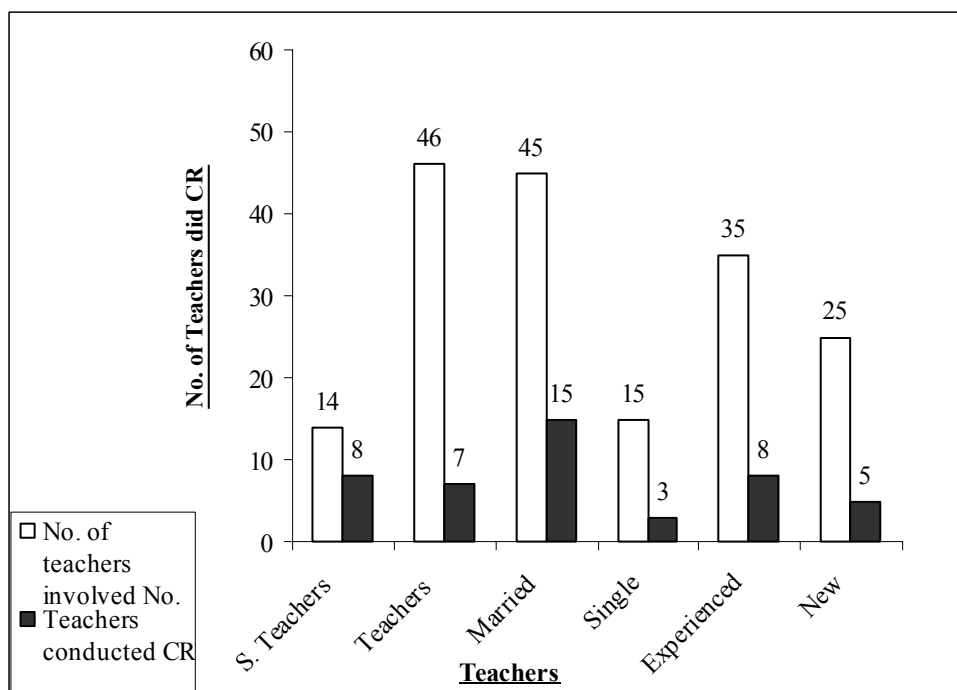
Open-ended Question Results

It was obvious that these Omani teachers believe classroom research to be one of the most powerful professional tools for their development. In fact, findings of the survey of their attitudes toward the value, methodology, and findings of classroom research stress Omani teachers' strong belief in classroom research. According to

these teachers, classroom research helps develop teachers professionally and enriches their knowledge. It also improves students' low achievement and provides schools with useful ideas to make change. However, when teachers were asked in the survey to answer the open-ended question, "Have you ever done classroom research? Why or why not?" their responses were surprising given the strong belief in the classroom research that the closed-ended statements indicated. In fact, I expected that the majority of teachers had conducted classroom research before since they appeared very positive toward it, but I was really surprised to find few teachers had actually conducted classroom research (see Appendix 3a).

To illustrate, 60 Omani teachers answered the open-ended question mentioned earlier, but out of those 60 teachers, only 15 teachers had conducted classroom research during their teaching career. In addition, 14 senior teachers were involved in the study, but only eight had conducted classroom research. One of the senior teachers said there are "no real benefits" for classroom research. In addition, 15 of the married teachers had done classroom research out of the 46 teachers who were married. One married teacher wrote, "No, I haven't. I don't have time. I have a lot of duties as a class teacher and 20 periods a week," and, of course, other duties at home. Moreover, three single teachers had conducted classroom research out of 15 single teachers. In fact, I expected more than this number since they, at least, do not have family duties. In spite of being a single senior teacher for more than five years, the same teacher commented, "No, I have never thought about it." Although the closed-ended statements indicated that less experienced teachers, that is new teachers, should conduct more research, the open-ended questions indicated the majority felt that it should be the other way around. As for experienced teachers, eight had done classroom research out of 35 teachers, while only five new teachers out of 25 had conducted classroom research. One of the teachers whose experience was from 5 to 10 years wrote, "No, in my teaching experience, I didn't face a problem in my classroom" (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. Number of Teachers Who Had Conducted Classroom Research According to Their Marital Status and Experience



Interview Results

The survey, generally, showed that the majority of teachers' had positive attitudes toward the findings of classroom research. They believed that the findings could affect their teaching, their students' performance, and their schools as well. However, trying to understand some of the negative attitudes in the interviews, the teachers were asked, "Do you find classroom research findings believable and practical to be used in your classes? Why?" 60% (6) agreed saying for example, "Yes, but not all findings" of research can be applied; only some can be adopted to be used in their classes. Another senior teacher said, "Yes, findings can help us." On the other hand, 40% (4) disagreed and highlighted that it is difficult to believe in classroom research findings because of different environments and participants. For example, one teacher said, ""Results are not useful and we can't apply them in teaching."

Attitudes towards the Obstacles of Classroom Research

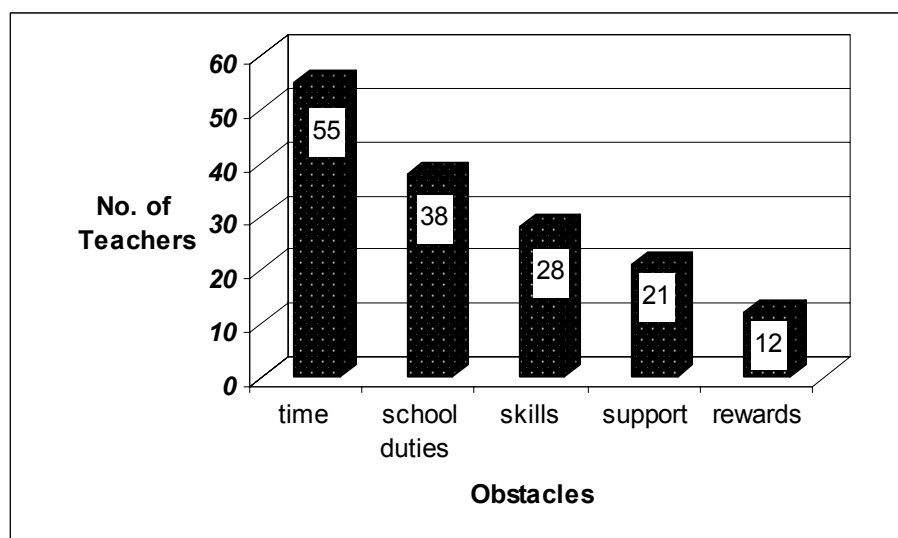
I believe that this is the most significant part of the study. I believe that Omani teachers value classroom research, but there are factors that distract them from doing it. Therefore, I decided to collect as much data as possible about the obstacles teachers suffer from in their schools. I used three sources to gather data in order to identify these obstacles in the schools. The three tools were closed-ended statements, open-ended questions, and interviews. Data collected strongly indicated three major obstacles that hinder Omani teachers from doing classroom research: their school duties, lack of time, and lack of skills. There were also some minor obstacles like lack of support, interest, reward, and resources. However, these did not seem as important as the three main obstacles mentioned earlier (see Appendix 2d).

Closed-ended Statement Results

According to the data analysis, the first major obstacle is time. Teachers said they do not have the time to conduct classroom research in their schools. 92% (55) agreed that they do not have enough time because they are busy with a lot of work. Only 8% (5) said that time is not an obstacle. The second major obstacle is school duties, especially those assigned by the administration. In fact, 63% (38) considered heavy school duties an obstacle, and 37% (22) disagreed. In other words, the school administration always makes teachers busy participating in extra activities like preparing for celebrations and exhibitions, as well as being a class teacher. In addition, school teaching timetables are very heavy. Teachers teach between 20 and 28, 40-minute periods a week out of 30, and a period lasts for 45 minutes. They face difficulties in adjusting their time in order to conduct classroom research.

The third major obstacle is teachers' shortage of skills and training to conduct good research. To illustrate, 47% (28) agreed that they do not have the skills needed to do classroom research, although 53% (32) thought the problem is not with the skills (see Figure 6).

Figure 6. Responses of Teachers to the Closed-ended Statements of the Obstacles of Classroom Research



Teachers indicated that support and rewards could also hinder teachers. 65% (39) agreed that school headmasters support classroom research, and 58% (35) agreed that teachers are rewarded in different ways. For example, some school administrations distribute certificates or prizes for those who conduct classroom research. On the other hand, 35% (21) claimed that school headmasters are not supportive of classroom research and this is the fourth obstacle. Besides, 42% (25) looked at rewards as an obstacle (see Figure 6).

Open-ended Question Results

In the second part of the survey, the 60 Omani teachers answered the open-ended question "What are some of the obstacles that stop teachers from doing classroom research?" To understand teachers' obstacles, I looked at all the answers and made a list of the obstacles noted. Then, I counted the number of times each obstacle was mentioned by teachers. Actually, the majority of teachers wrote pretty similar answers which included the responses found in the closed-ended statements. However, there was a vast difference in what were considered to be major obstacles. I believe that the teachers stressed the strong obstacles which they are fed up with and

which bothered them very much. Their answers were very negative and interesting (see Appendix 3b).

According to the teachers' answers, school duties are the main obstacle that hinders teachers from doing classroom research, because it was mentioned by 46 teachers out of 60. One teacher wrote, "The huge number of documents in school, teachers are very busy with their school activities and filling the documents." Another teacher commented interestingly, "With this current heavy load on teachers, they cannot even think of doing a formal research, so teachers can only discuss students' problems with them, their parents and other teachers." Then time became the second major obstacle because it was mentioned by 37 teachers. One teacher wrote, "Some teachers don't find the time to do research, busy at home and also at school." Another teacher said, "Time constraints due to the heavy syllabus and the never-ending demands by the school administration and the Ministry itself."

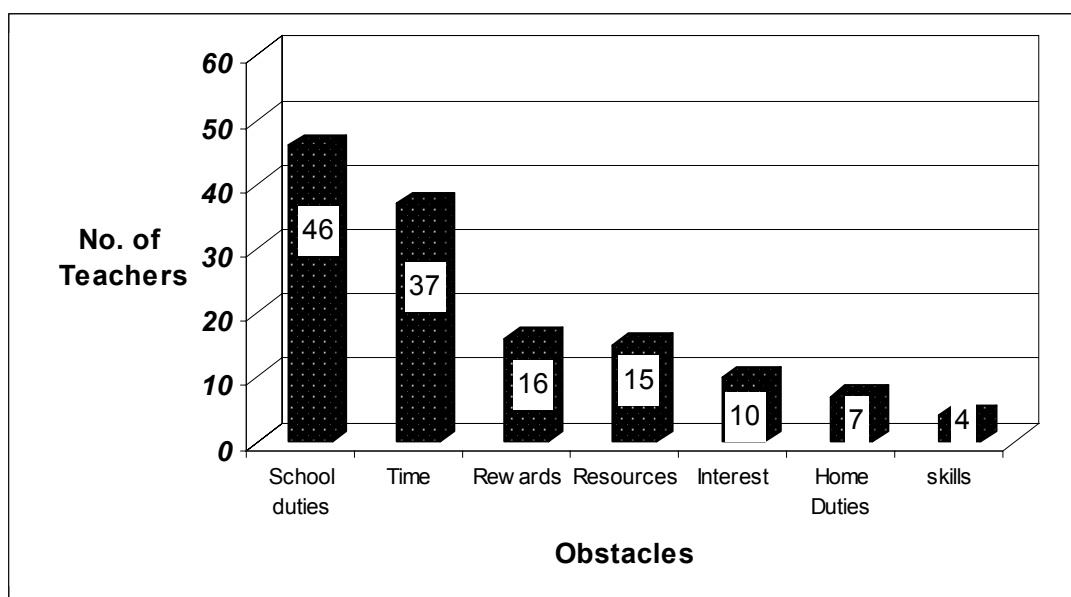
A very significant point uncovered in the open-ended question was that "reward" turned out to be the third obstacle. Although only 16 teachers mentioned it, I consider it to be a crucial factor which motivates teachers to conduct classroom research or even any type of research. Therefore, I planned in the interview to ask a question about how teachers are rewarded for their research. In fact, teachers wrote interesting comments about rewards. For example, an experienced senior teacher wrote, "Lack of reinforcement in its various meanings from the ministry." Another teacher pointed out, "Teachers aren't rewarded for this."

Besides the previous three obstacles, teachers also saw some other obstacles to conducting classroom research. These obstacles perceived by the teachers were not the three mentioned earlier. In fact, these minor obstacles could be overcome if school duties were reduced, time were available, and rewards were available. They considered the lack of resources in the school library or resource center as another obstacle, because appropriate resources would help them read and prepare to conduct classroom research. To illustrate, 15 teachers mentioned this obstacle. One teacher indicated, "Materials needed in researches aren't available and searching for them is time consumer."

Moreover, 10 teachers said that they did not have the interest to do research. Perhaps low interest in conducting classroom research might also be because of teachers' low interest in the teaching profession. Furthermore, seven teachers

mentioned home duties when answering the open-ended question. An experienced teacher wrote, "Because of families and other things at home, I don't have the interest." Finally, only four teachers mentioned lack of research skills to be an obstacle. One senior teacher pointed out, "Some researches need help on skills to do the research." Not only this, but teachers are not trained for research. One teacher wrote, "I don't have any training in holding classroom research" (see Figure 7).

Figure 7. Responses of Teachers to the Open-ended Question about the Obstacles of Classroom Research



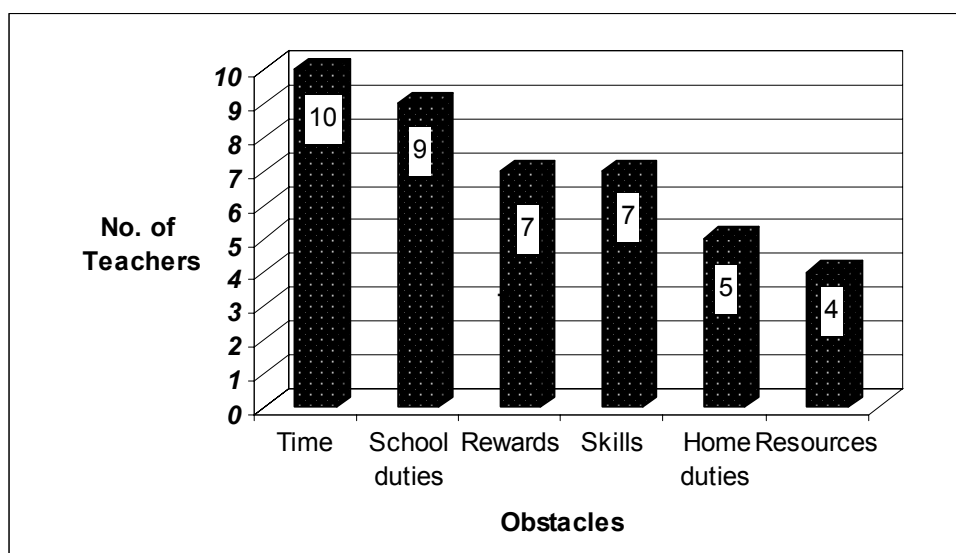
Interview Results

The findings of the closed-ended statements and the open-ended questions indicated that teachers encounter serious constraints in their schools. However, the purpose of the questions asked in the interview was to identify the most serious factors that hinder teachers from conducting classroom research. The interviews focused on time, skills, rewards, and support, because these were strongly stressed in the survey. According to the teachers' answers, time was the first obstacle. All 10 teachers interviewed (100%) considered shortage of time to be the main obstacle because of the many different roles they have in schools. One teacher said, "Yes, it is the main problem because there is a lot of work." When the teachers were asked about other obstacles besides time, 90% (9) said that school duties are another main

constraint. Teachers are bombarded with extra work besides teaching, like being class and activity teachers, taking substitution lessons, and being organizers if any celebration approaches.

As for the rewards, teachers appeared to have no idea about how teachers are rewarded if they conduct classroom research. In fact, 70% (7) didn't know about and had not heard about any rewards. There were four teachers who said that they had conducted classroom research and were never rewarded. One teacher said, "I made an interesting research, but nothing. They keep it in their drawer." Moreover, 70% (7) said they need some training course on how to do research because they only remember university research. One teacher commented, "If we have training, [it would be] better." Of course the teachers also mentioned other obstacles. For example, 50% (5) pointed out that home duties stand as an obstacle. A female teacher said, "I can't do school work at home because I have four children at home." 40% (4) mentioned that resources available in schools to help conduct classroom research are limited as well (see Figure 8).

Figure 8. Teachers' Attitudes toward the Obstacles of Classroom Research according to the Interviews



In conclusion, findings of this study definitely revealed that Omani teachers' value the importance of classroom research to develop themselves professionally. This correlates with what has been said in the literature about classroom research. Not

only this, but the literature highlights main obstacles encountered by teachers in schools, and this is exactly what I have found in my investigations. Lack of time, lack of skills, lack of support, and school heavy duties are main constraints of classroom research. In addition, classroom research has great impact on teachers, and students, as well as schools. Generally, the findings show that classroom research helps very much to promote the pillars of the educational system: schools, teachers, and students.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

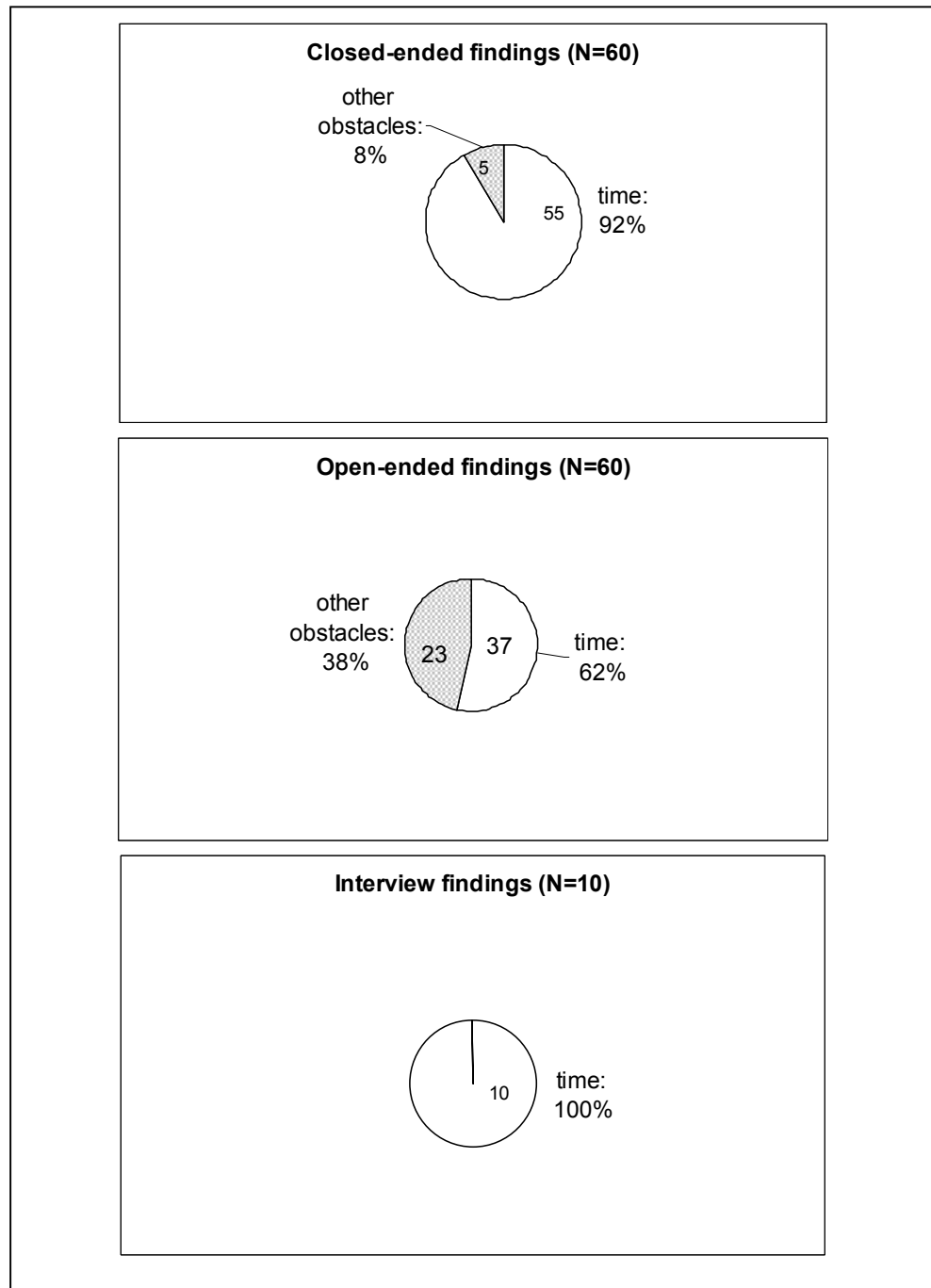
Summary

It is really interesting to conclude this study with some clear similarities between what has been said in the literature and what I have found in my study in regards to teachers' attitudes toward classroom research. Generally, these 60 Omani teachers maintain positive attitudes toward the value of classroom research as well as its results. First, these Omani teachers emphasized the significance of classroom research as a tool for not only their professional development, but for "critical reflection upon their craft with the aim of improving it" (Hopkins, 2004, p. 1). In addition, they believe that classroom research has a "long list of benefits for teachers, students and the profession" (Queenan, 1988, p. 41). To some extent, they also see some of the findings of classroom research to be irrelevant to what happens in their classrooms, just as Stein (2003) pointed out in his study that "teachers unfortunately find much of existing research to be inaccessible, irrelevant to their daily experiences in the classroom, or counterintuitive" (p. 52).

On the other hand, they seemed to be negative toward doing classroom research because of the extra work classroom research imposes on them. The study shows that these Omani teachers are reluctant to do classroom research to help solve their problems because they prefer to turn to colleagues for help rather than troubling themselves doing classroom research. This was similar to the findings of McBee (2004) that teachers "rarely turn to research, instead they rely on intuition or take advice of colleagues" (p. 52).

As for constraints of classroom research, these Omani teachers pointed out, to a great extent, the same obstacles stressed in the literature. Belanger (1992), for instance indicates that time is a major constraint (p. 17). These Omani teachers also strongly view time to be the main constraint that stops them from conducting classroom research in their schools. This is because of the many duties beside their teaching lessons during the school day in which they may teach six lessons a day out of eight (see Figure 9).

Figure 9. Teachers' Responses toward the Major Obstacle of Conducting Classroom Research Based on the Three Tools of Data Collection



In addition, Stein (2003) points out teachers who conduct classroom research do not get financial support (p. 1) Similarly, these Omani teachers also saw lack of rewards as an obstacle. They feel that rewards and support are crucial. All in all, these Omani teachers suggested a number of obstacles that back up Austin (1995) when he

says that doing teacher research is difficult and exhausting. It is like crossing a desert where many obstacles stand in the way of doing it (p. 182).

Implications

What is significant to me out of this investigation is the implications and the recommendations that the study suggests in order to allow the concerned authorities and teachers to be able to conduct classroom research. Since teachers strongly believe in the impact of classroom research and they have the will to do it, I think the opportunity should be offered for such teachers. In order to achieve this purpose, I suggest that the Ministry of Education, school principals, English supervisors, and teachers share the responsibility to activate classroom research in schools.

Implications for the Ministry of Education

The Ministry plays a vital role in enabling teachers to conduct classroom research because it rests on the top of the pyramid of the educational system and it also looks after developing teachers professionally and socially. Therefore, a committee which looks after classroom research is strongly needed. Its role should be to provide teachers with guidance and rewards. It could also examine findings of classroom research to decide whether they can be implemented in the field or not. In addition, the Ministry can encourage teachers by establishing competitions between schools and teachers to solve problems through research. Then the innovative teacher researcher will be rewarded and some teachers' research will be distributed as a successful model.

Moreover, teachers believe that classroom research findings are never looked at and their recommendations are never considered. Consequently, it would be a great idea if the Ministry applies some of the research findings in the schools, so that teachers feel confident and enthusiastic. Finally, a serious problem that appeared in the study as one obstacle that teachers suffer from is the new assessment policy. Teachers complain it demands a lot of work like filling out many forms, organizing students' work in their portfolios, and conducting quizzes, as well as teaching and marking. Classroom research needs real preparation and organization, and this needs time. In addition, teachers are not interested in doing school work at home, so they should do it in school. As one senior teacher commented, "Teachers refuse to do

anything relating to school at home." In this sense, if the Ministry wants to have well-prepared examples of classroom research, the learners' assessment should not add much more work for teachers.

Implications for School Principals and English Supervisors

A very essential role of encouragement and guidance is to be fulfilled by both principals and supervisors, because they are very close to teachers in the schools. For instance, teachers do not have the time to conduct classroom research because of many administrative roles assigned by the school headmaster, such as being a class teacher. Other duties are also assigned by supervisors. The problem is that teachers view these duties to be useless and irrelevant to their profession. However, they are forced to do them simply because they know that not doing any of these will affect their end-of-year report. Consequently, school principals and supervisors need to reduce some of these duties and create more time for teachers. However, if they do reduce the amount of work, teachers may have the time, but not the skills to conduct classroom research. Therefore, the principals and supervisors should also organize training courses to orientate teachers to be able to conduct proper standard classroom research. The next step would be for supervisors to be serious when asking for classroom research, not just imposing the idea, but following it up by considering the outcome. Later, both principals and supervisors must strongly value and reward that outcome.

Implications for Teachers

I believe it is not enough for teachers to confess that classroom research helps to overcome classroom problems and improve them professionally, but what is most important is to start actually doing classroom research. In other words, teachers identify the value based on theoretical knowledge, but they seldom take the risk to conduct classroom research to be convinced practically. Therefore, in spite of time constraints, teachers need to create the time to conduct classroom research. In addition, classroom research should not be considered a requirement only for new teachers, but also for experienced ones. To illustrate, new teachers can benefit from reading research done by the senior experienced teachers before they start their own research. Moreover, the senior teachers should involve their teachers in conducting a

classroom research project, and this might be a good start to convince teachers by the impact of that classroom research. Eventually, teachers may become interested in conducting their own classroom research.

Limitations of the Study

There has been little research on teachers' attitudes toward classroom research in the area of the Gulf, and this study has tried to investigate, especially, Omani teachers' attitudes. Because I found so little research within this area, I believe similar research will be of great help to improving our understanding in this area. However, I also believe my study would have been more powerful if some other factors had been taken into consideration. For example, the study sample consisted only of Omani with bachelor's degrees teachers who teach in high schools. Thus, it might be valid to examine the attitudes of diploma teachers, those who teach in low level schools. Diploma holders perhaps have limited background of classroom research due to only two year studies in the Intermediate Teachers Training College. However, while working in schools, some teachers may have conducted classroom research. Thus it would be worth examining their attitudes.

In addition, the study depended on teachers as the only source for obtaining data about teachers' attitudes. From another perspective, the views of school principals and English supervisors could lead to better understanding. In other words, they may be involved in a survey or even interviewed because they work closely with teachers. Their direct contact in the field would be, of course, influenced by teachers' attitudes, especially when they ask teachers to do classroom research. Perhaps principals and supervisors see different values and obstacles roaming in the field.

Finally, I believe there is much more to be investigated in order to understand teachers' attitudes toward classroom research. I also believe there are other factors that are underestimated and should be examined for their impact to reach more valuable conclusions. Of course, many of us believe that classroom research could have the potential to promote professional development of teachers, but this potential can only be realized through the active and willing participation of teachers. We also believe that investigating teachers' attitudes toward classroom research is a crucial and interesting area in the field of education which requires more attention from researchers. In fact, the findings of this study correlate with what can be found in the

literature about teachers' attitudes toward classroom research. Although these specific findings may be restricted to the Gulf area, the study reveals attitudes similar to those of teachers around the world. Consequently, the findings can be generalized to teachers worldwide. Finally, further research is needed to foster classroom research as a basic tool for teachers' professional development.

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Appendix 1. Research Instruments

Appendix 1a. The Survey: Closed-ended statements

Omani Teachers' Attitudes toward Classroom Research

This survey will help me understand Omani teachers' views and attitudes toward classroom research. I would greatly appreciate having your honest opinions. The results of this survey will be used in my MA TESOL thesis. Please note that all personal information will remain confidential.

- Gender: Male Female
- Age (optional): _____
- Years of teaching experience: 1 – 5 5 – 10 More than 10
- Levels teaching now: Preparatory Secondary
- Marital status: Single Married
- Are you: Teacher Senior Teacher

Would you like to be interviewed on this topic? In the interview, we will discuss some of your answers so that you will have a chance to explain your opinions in more depth:

- Yes, I would like to be interviewed.
- No, I would prefer not to be interviewed.

If yes, please provide your name and contact information so I can contact you:

Name _____

Phone or e-mail: _____

Survey Instructions

Dear teachers,

- 1- Read each statement below very carefully and tick the appropriate column.
- 2- Please answer all statements, and make sure you tick only one box for each statement.
- 3- Also, please answer the two questions at the end of the survey. You can write your answers in either English or Arabic.

Thank you very much!

Read each statement carefully and tick (✓) only one appropriate box.

SA: strongly agree

A: agree

D: disagree

SD: strongly disagree

No.	Statement	SA	A	D	SD
1.	Classroom research rarely finds its way into classrooms because it focuses on issues irrelevant to our real classrooms				
2.	Experienced teachers do not need to conduct classroom research to solve their classroom problems.				
3.	New teachers need to conduct classroom research to solve their classroom problems.				
4.	Classroom problems can be solved without conducting classroom research.				
5.	Teachers do not have the time to do real academic classroom research.				
6.	Heavy school duties and time do not hinder teachers from conducting classroom research.				
7.	I don't need to work on my own classroom research since I can benefit from others' research findings.				
8.	Working on classroom research may waste time needed to solve immediate classroom problems.				
9.	The Ministry of Education encourages and supports teachers to carry out classroom research.				
10.	School headmasters appreciate teachers' classroom research and value its findings.				
11.	Supervisors value classroom research findings.				
12.	Classroom research keeps teachers from focusing on teaching because it makes them busy doing research.				
13.	Teachers should be paid for conducting classroom research.				
14.	I am interested in doing classroom research even without being asked to do it.				
15.	Classroom research findings are believable.				
16.	Collaborative classroom research is very beneficial.				
17.	I prefer doing classroom research individually.				

18.	I prefer solving my classroom problems in my mind quickly rather than doing classroom research.				
19.	I'd rather read and implement others' research findings than do my own classroom research.				
20.	Classroom research should be based on some theory.				
21.	When doing classroom research, it is important to follow the standard procedures.				
22.	I'd like to have training courses about classroom research in order to learn how to conduct it properly.				
23.	I believe that I have the skills needed to conduct classroom research				
24.	Classroom research should be conducted by teachers and only teachers.				
25.	Classroom research should not be done by teachers.				
26.	Classroom research should investigate practical problems experienced by teachers.				
27.	I conduct classroom research regularly.				
28.	Classroom research is a good tool for improving students' low achievement.				
29.	Collaborative classroom research helps develop new relationships with teachers, students, and students' parents.				
30.	Classroom research encourages teachers to improve their teaching practices.				
31.	Classroom research may not help teachers solve classroom problems completely.				
32.	Classroom research can provide useful ideas to make change in schools and classrooms.				
33.	Classroom research has great benefits for teachers, students, and schools.				
34.	Classroom research provides answers to questions teachers never asked and solutions to problems they never had.				
35.	Teachers want classroom research results to be directly related to classroom practice.				
36.	Classroom research results usually cannot be implemented in schools.				
37.	Classroom research enhances students' learning.				
38.	Results of classroom research should be shared with students.				

39.	Results of classroom research should be shared with other teachers.				
40.	Teachers are rewarded in different ways for classroom research done in their schools.				
41.	Being involved in classroom research enriches teachers' professional knowledge.				
42.	Professional research is more useful than teachers' classroom research.				

Appendix 1b. The Survey, Open-ended Questions

Please answer the following questions.

1. Have you ever done classroom research? Why or why not?

2. What are some of the obstacles that might stop teachers from doing classroom research?

I truly appreciate your time in filling out this survey.

Appendix 1c. Interview Questions

Omani Teachers' Attitudes toward Classroom Research

Sex: Male / Female Teacher / Senior Teacher

Experience: 5 years / More than 5

1- Do you think CR is important? How?

2- Do you really need CR to solve classroom problems? Why?

3- What are the ways that teachers' are rewarded when doing CR?

4- Do you have the skills to conduct CR? How?

5-Why do you prefer solving your problems in your mind than conducting classroom research?

6- Do you find classroom research findings believable and practical to be used in your classes? Why?

7- Do you consider time as a main obstacle for not conducting CR? How? Any others?

8- How do the following help you conduct CR, Ministry of Education, school principal, and supervisor?

9- Do you think classroom research finding should be shared with students? Why?

Appendix 2. Teachers' Survey Results

Appendix 2a. Teachers' Attitudes toward the Value of Classroom Research (N=60)

SA: strongly agree

A: agree

D: disagree

SD: strongly disagree

No.	Statement	SA	A	D	SD
1	Classroom research rarely finds its way into classrooms because it focuses on issues irrelevant to our real classrooms	8 (13%)	32 (54%)	14 (23%)	6 (10%)
2	Experienced teachers do not need to conduct classroom research to solve their classroom problems.	3 (5%)	15 (25%)	28 (47%)	14 (23%)
3	New teachers need to conduct classroom research to solve their classroom problems.	21 (35%)	30 (50%)	9 (15%)	0 (0%)
4	Classroom problems can be solved without conducting classroom research.	5 (8%)	36 (60%)	16 (27%)	3 (5%)
5	I don't need to work on my own classroom research since I can benefit from others' research findings.	3 (5%)	18 (30%)	31 (52%)	8 (13%)
6	Working on classroom research may waste time needed to solve immediate classroom problems.	4 (7%)	28 (47%)	23 (38%)	5 (8%)
7	The Ministry of Education encourages and supports teachers to carry out classroom research.	4 (7%)	19 (32%)	23 (38%)	14 (23%)
8	Teachers should be paid for conducting classroom research.	10 (17%)	22 (36%)	25 (42%)	3 (5%)
9	I am interested in doing classroom research even without being asked to do it.	8 (13%)	24 (41%)	23 (38%)	5 (8%)
10	Professional research is more useful than teachers' classroom research.	7 (12%)	6 (10%)	45 (75%)	2 (3%)

Appendix 2b. Teachers' Attitudes toward the Methodology of Classroom Research
(N=60)

SA: strongly agree

A: agree

D: disagree

SD: strongly disagree

No.	Statement	SA	A	D	SD
1	Collaborative classroom research is very beneficial.	12 (20%)	39 (65%)	7 (12%)	2 (3%)
2	I prefer doing classroom research individually.	3 (5%)	23 (38%)	30 (50%)	4 (7%)
3	I prefer solving my classroom problems in my mind quickly rather than doing classroom research.	10 (17%)	39 (65%)	8 (13%)	3 (5%)
4	Classroom research should be based on some theory.	9 (15%)	45 (75%)	3 (5%)	3 (5%)
5	When doing classroom research, it is important to follow the standard procedures.	11 (18%)	44 (74%)	5 (8%)	0 (0%)
6	I'd like to have training courses about classroom research in order to learn how to conduct it properly.	22 (37%)	32 (5%)	3 (5%)	1 (2%)
7	Classroom research should be conducted by teachers and only teachers.	4 (7%)	17 (28%)	34 (57%)	5 (8%)
8	Classroom research should not be done by teachers.	2 (3%)	9 (15%)	36 (60%)	13 (22%)
9	Classroom research should investigate practical problems experienced by teachers.	23 (38%)	31 (52%)	6 (10%)	0 (0%)
10	I conduct classroom research regularly.	1 (2%)	13 (22%)	38 (63%)	8 (13%)
11	Collaborative classroom research helps develop new relationships with teachers, students, and students' parents.	16 (26%)	38 (64%)	5 (8%)	1 (2%)
12	Teachers want classroom research results to be directly related to classroom practice.	10 (17%)	43 (71%)	7 (12%)	0 (0%)

Appendix 2c. Teachers' Attitudes toward the Impact of Classroom Research (N=60)

SA: strongly agree

A: agree

D: disagree

SD: strongly disagree

No	Statement	SA	A	D	SD
1	Classroom research is a good tool for improving students' low achievement	12 (20%)	44 (73%)	4 (7%)	0 (0%)
2	Classroom research encourages teachers to improve their teaching practices.	22 (37%)	35 (58%)	3 (5%)	0 (0%)
3	Classroom research may not help teachers solve classroom problems completely.	1 (2%)	44 (73%)	14 (23%)	1 (2%)
4	Classroom research can provide useful ideas to make change in schools and classrooms.	15 (25%)	41 (68%)	4 (7%)	0 (0%)
5	Classroom research has great benefits for teachers, students, and schools.	15 (25%)	39 (65%)	6 (10%)	0 (0%)
6	Classroom research provides answers to questions teachers never asked and solutions to problems they never had.	9 (15%)	39 (65%)	9 (15%)	3 (5%)
7	Classroom research results usually cannot be implemented in schools.	2 (3%)	16 (27%)	38 (63%)	4 (7%)
8	Classroom research enhances students' learning.	9 (15%)	45 (75%)	6 (10%)	0 (0%)
9	Results of classroom research should be shared with students.	6 (10%)	42 (70%)	12 (20%)	0 (0%)
10	Results of classroom research should be shared with other teachers.	25 (42%)	34 (56%)	1 (2%)	0 (0%)
11	Classroom research findings are believable.	4 (7%)	42 (70%)	12 (20%)	2 (3%)
12	I'd rather read and implement others' research findings than do my own classroom research.	3 (5%)	27 (45%)	29 (48%)	1 (2%)
13	Being involved in classroom research enriches teachers' professional knowledge.	26 (43%)	32 (54%)	2 (3%)	0 (0%)

Appendix 2d. Teachers' Attitudes toward the Obstacles of Classroom Research (N=60)

SA: strongly agree

A: agree

D: disagree

SD: strongly disagree

No.	Statement	SA	A	D	SD
1	Heavy school duties and time do not hinder teachers from conducting classroom research.	6 (10%)	16 (27%)	16 (27%)	22 (36%)
2	School headmasters appreciate teachers' classroom research and value its findings.	9 (15%)	30 (50%)	19 (32%)	2 (3%)
3	Supervisors value classroom research findings.	12 (20%)	36 (60%)	11 (18%)	1 (2%)
4	Classroom research keeps teachers from focusing on teaching because it makes them busy doing research.	9 (15%)	19 (32%)	29 (48%)	3 (5%)
5	Teachers do not have the time to do real academic classroom research.	37 (61%)	18 (30%)	4 (7%)	1 (2%)
6	I believe that I have the skills needed to conduct classroom research	5 (8%)	27 (45%)	26 (44%)	2 (3%)
7	Teachers are rewarded in different ways for classroom research done in their schools.	10 (17%)	25 (42%)	19 (31%)	6 (10%)

Appendix 3. Teachers' Responses to the Open-ended Questions

Appendix 3a. Responses for the Question: "Have you ever conducted a classroom research? Why? Why not?"

- 1- "Yes, once when I noticed students interested in studying skills." Married senior teacher, more than 5 years experience
- 2- "No ... I try to solve the classroom problems without research using my own experience." Married senior teacher, more than 10 years experience
- 3- "No, I have never thought about it, but now I'm thinking of doing it because we're forced to." Single senior teacher, more than 5 years experience
- 4- "No, I have too much work." Married teacher, more than 10 years experience
- 5- "Yes, to find out why students don't like studying English." Married teacher, more than 5 years experience
- 6- "We've done a school research." Single teacher, (1-5) years experience
- 7- "I've a lot of duties whether in school or at home." Single teacher, (1-5) years experience
- 8- "No, it isn't useful; it's a waste of time since... results aren't applied in teaching." Married teacher, (1-5) years experience
- 9- "Yes, I've done... difficulties of reading and writing." Married senior teacher, more than 10 years experience
- 10- "Yes, during the BA program." Married senior teacher, more than 10 years experience
- 11- "Yes, because I felt I have to answer some questions about punishing he students." Single senior teacher, (1-5) years experience
- 12- "Yes, results of exam were bad, it was necessary to follow reasons behind." Single senior teacher, (1-5) years experience
- 13- "No, I haven't. I haven't been asked to do so." Married senior teacher, (5-10) years experience
- 14- "No, I haven't. I don't have time. I have a lot of duties such as class teacher and 20 periods a week." Married teacher, (5-10) years experience
- 15- "Time is never enough for any other procedures." Married teacher, more than 10 years experience
- 16- "No, in my teaching experience, I didn't face a problem in my classroom." Married teacher, (5-10) years experience
- 17- "I preferred to solve what I face in my mind and through asking some colleagues." Single teacher, (1-5) years experience
- 18- "No, I think I'm not capable." Single teacher, (5-10) years experience
- 19- "No real benefits." Married teacher, more than 10 years experience
- 20- "No, the new assessment needs a lot of work." Married teacher, (5-10) years experience

3b. Responses for the Question: "What are some of the obstacles that might stop teachers from doing classroom research?"

- 1- "The huge number of documents in school, teachers are very busy with their school activities and filling the documents as well as families and other things at home." More than 10 years experience teacher
- 2- "Short time and the results which might not be implemented in schools." 1 – 5 years experience teacher
- 3- "Lack of reinforcement in its various meanings from the ministry, schools. Some teachers are lazy and they don't want to do extra activities other than working in classes." 5-10 years experience senior teacher
- 4- "Administrative works, time, more effort, some teachers and pupils refuse to take part in the research. Some researches need help on skills to do the research." More than 10 years experience senior teacher
- 5- "Time constraints due to the heavy syllabus and the seemingly never-ending demands by the school administration and the ministry itself." More than 10 years experience teacher
- 6- "Lack of sources might be one of the obstacles that faces classroom research." 1 – 5 years experience senior teacher
- 7- "The teacher thinks that he can deal with his problems directly, there is no encouragement and they are busy at their schools." More than 10 years experience senior teacher
- 8- "I don't have any training in holding classroom research." 5-10 years experience senior teacher
- 9- "Some teachers don't find the time to do research, busy at home and also at school. Materials needed in researches aren't available and searching for them is time consumer. School duties and the evaluation system." 1 – 5 years experience teacher
- 10- "Solving a problem need to be done directly and conducting the research might take time. Heavy school duties and activities." 5-10 years experience teacher
- 11- "School duties. It needs a lot of time even at home. Plenty of sources and effort to be done perfectly." 5-10 years experience teacher
- 12- "Teachers aren't rewarded for this. Heavy duties from the ministry." 1 – 5 years experience teacher
- 13- "It needs budget and time to be done. With this current heavy load on teachers, they cannot even think of doing a formal research, so teachers can only discuss students' problems with them, their parents and other teachers." 1 – 5 years experience teacher
- 14- "There is a competition between the Arabic classroom research but there isn't in English." 5-10 years experience senior teacher
- 15- "In schools, the teachers don't have special place to sit together in order to discuss such ideas and to put down plans to studies. It is better to provide schools with academic references... because teachers refuse to do anything relating to school at home." More than 10 years experience senior teacher