

## RESEARCH ENGAGEMENT OF TURKISH ELT TEACHERS<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

Teachers play a significant role in educational reforms. How teachers inquire about educational problems they encounter, and what they learn over time in different classroom contexts to improve their knowledge of teaching practice is an increasingly common concern in education. It is emphasized in the literature that teachers are not only the audience of scientific knowledge and publications, but also the implementers of it (Richardson, 1990). Therefore, reflective teaching process in which teachers inquire about what impedes student learning, and how their instruction can increase the students' learning along with how they perceive this inquiry in this process are matters of questions that should be given answers. To fill the gap in this area, teachers' engagement in research has gained importance and attitudes of teachers towards research have become an important issue. The present study attempts to explore the perception of primary, secondary and high school ELT teachers in Turkey towards research engagement through questionnaire and semi structured interview. The analysis of the data revealed that that teachers' research perception is closely associated with conventional scientific research in which information is analysed statistically, the researcher is objective and experiments are used.

**Keywords:** *Research, participation in research, teacher development, engagement.*

### Article History:

**Received**

03.05.2016

**Received in revised form**

10.05.2016

**Accepted**

17.05.2016

**Available online**

27.07.2016

<sup>1</sup> The present study was presented at Çukurova International ELT Teachers (CUELT) Conferences (2nd) "Replacing Cliches: Teaching Subordinated to Learning" April 28-29, 2016

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## INTRODUCTION

As teachers play an increasingly significant role in educational reforms, how teachers inquire about educational problems they encounter, and what they learn over time in different classroom contexts to improve their knowledge of teaching practice have attracted attention of researchers in education so far. It is emphasized in literature that teachers are not only the audience of scientific knowledge and publications, but also the implementers of it (Richardson, 1990); therefore, reflective teaching process in which teachers inquire about what impedes student learning, and how their instruction can increase the students' learning along with how they perceive this inquiry in this process are matters of questions that should be given answers. To fill the gap in this area, teachers' engagement in research has gained importance and attitudes of teachers towards research have become an important issue. This study aims to investigate the perception of primary, secondary and high school ELT teachers towards research engagement in Turkey. In the present study, mixed method was employed since it involves both the collection and the analysis of qualitative and quantitative data and the comparison and mixing of the datasets.

### 1.1. Teacher Research

Teachers' roles have been redefined when they have started to be seen not only implementers of theory but also practitioners of research in education. As Stenhouse (1981) claims, teachers need to test theories in their own classroom context because the findings of education research are generally contextbound which means that they cannot be applied directly in every classroom context. Teacher involvement in research goes back to 1940s when the term action research was introduced to the field by Kurt Levin and evolved to be regarded as a scientific method whose usage dates back to Science in Education movement of the late nineteenth century (McKerman, 1991).

After about three decades, the issue has come fore again in UK with a work on curriculum development conducted by Stenhouse (1975) and Elliot (1991). Stenhouse (1981) emphasized the importance of research engagement by uttering the words “*..it is a way of translating any educational idea into a hypothesis testable in practice. It invites critical testing rather than acceptance.*” Similar to that Elliot (1991) claimed that the movement of teacher-researcher was initiated by teachers against the existing education system in the UK. In addition to that, in the USA, Schön (1983) worked on reflective practice which was a course of inspiration to many teachers. Hargreaves (1996) proposed the increased involvement of teachers in research and he examined the roles of teachers in educational research. On his studies he criticized the gap between theory and practice.

Those arguments have led the teacher research engagement to appear in the literature of ELT and it has brought about the discrimination of engagement types (Allright & Bailey 1991). Many researchers like Borg (2007) and Barker (2005) preferred to follow the distinction drawn by National Teacher Research Panel between *engagement with* and *engagement in*.

#### 1.1.1. Engagement in Research

Even though there are different names for teachers' engagement in research like action research, teacher research, classroom research, it is basically the act of teachers' doing the research. Some authors like Bailey (2001), Nunan & Bailey (2009) tried to define

those terms to clarify the confusion, but it is clear that teachers are the doers of research when they are engaged in research. Similar to that Borg (2010) defines the teacher research, in other words teachers' engagement in research, as

*“... a systematic inquiry, qualitative and/or quantitative, conducted by teachers in their own professional contexts, individually or collaboratively (with other teachers and/or external collaborators), which aims to enhance teachers' understandings of some aspect of their work, is made public, has the potential to contribute to better quality teaching and learning in individual classrooms, and which may also inform institutional improvement and educational policy more broadly.”*

### **1.1.2. Engagement with Research**

According to Hargreaves (2001) “teacher's engagement with research” is teachers' being the reader and user of research. When teacher engages with research they read it or use the suggestions and finding of the research. In this situation they are not the doers of research. Hargreaves (2001) also claims that if teachers engage with research and make pedagogical inferences from research evidence, it will have a positive effect on teachers. Similar to this rationale, authors like Elliot (2001) and Thomas & Pring (2004) supports teachers' engagement with research so as to make teaching as evidence-based profession.

### **1.2. Studies about Teachers' Perception of Research**

In 1998, Shkedi conducted a research to find whether the teachers read research. It was a case survey and two other following case studies were carried out in Israel with 47 participants most of whom were experienced teachers. The first part included questions which tried to find out the professional literature teachers read, barriers preventing teachers from reading research, the motives turning them to read research, teachers' reactions to research finding. In the second phase of the research, a representative group was chosen out of twenty for a deeper analysis of questions. The study showed that teachers do not prefer to read theoretical information, but they prefer to read practical implications which are possible to use inside the classroom.

Christenson et al. (2002) investigated how teachers think themselves as researchers and about the nature of research. They have made pre-post surveys to understand the perception of teachers about research. They also gathered information from reflective journals, video/audio recordings of discussions. The study has conveyed that ten out of sixteen participants did not consider themselves as researcher. In addition to that, most of the teachers thought that doing research is reading books and articles.

In another study, Ratchliffe et al. (2004) investigated the teachers' view of research and its influence on their practice. They used an interview and focus group study to find out perception and influences of educational research. In the study they gathered data from interviews done with 62 primary and secondary school teachers and six focus group discussions. The study revealed that participant teachers think that educational research is valuable and influential on practice. However, they also think that the influence is usually indirect.

Reis-Jorge (2007) has conducted a two-year longitudinal study with a nine teacher from different parts of the world attending to a B. Ed degree in TEFL at a higher education institution in UK. He tried to find out effects of education given to them which includes

research activities on the way to get a degree, and their conceptions of teacher research. In the beginning of the course teachers tend to define the research as a problem solving or assessment tool. However, at the end of the course their definition of research has shifted and they began to define it as a process of discovery, which was seen to them as a very valuable process for professional development. Even though the teachers' conceptions about research have changed positively, they did not think of applying research in classrooms. They proclaimed that some factors such as heavy workload, class size, lack of collaboration from peers and superiors.

Another study related to the field of ELT has been conducted by Allison & Carey (2007). They investigated teachers' perception of actual practice and language teaching research at a university in Canada. They used open-ended questionnaire and a follow up discussion. There were 22 participants some of whom were MA or doctoral level language teachers. The findings of the study proposed that teachers were confused about what is research and what is not, who conducts the research. Some of them reflected the idea of teachers' being in a different distinct group from researchers. Teachers in this also claimed not to have enough time, expertise and encouragement to do research.

Borg (2009) has conducted two studies about language teachers' conception of research. 505 ELT teachers from 13 different countries including Turkey responded to his questionnaires. He analyzed the findings about teachers' conceptualization of research, impacts of institutional culture on their research engagement besides other issues. The results of study indicated that teachers see research as "*....a large-scale survey conducted by academic, analyzed statistically, and published in academic journals.*" Another important thing the study revealed was that positive attitude of institutions affected the rate of teachers' doing and reading research. Also it was reported in the study that lack of time was most cited reason.

### **1.2.1. Studies about Teachers' Perception of Research in Turkish Context**

Similar studies about the teachers' perception of research have been conducted in Turkey too. Beycioglu et al., (2009) has conducted a study to find the teachers' views on educational research. They used a three-part survey questionnaire consisting of demographic, statements aiming to determine teachers' view of educational research, and 18 items aiming to determine teachers' view on the value of educational research. 250 teachers who were taking in-service teacher education during the study were the participants of the study. The study showed that %68 of participants valued the research findings. Another interesting result is that teachers who attaches importance to educational research also want to engage in research, rather than engaging with it.

Another study was conducted by Bulut (2011). The study investigated English language teachers' perception and engagement in research. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected through questionnaires and interviews. The questionnaire was conducted to 225 English teachers and interviews were made with 27 teachers. The result of the study revealed that research engagement was limited because of the perceptions about research which they saw as an unsustainable activity. Even though teachers define research with a positive approach, they gave weight to quantitative methods over qualitative ones. In addition to that they regarded research as a difficult activity that should be performed by professionals.

Kutlay (2012), also, searched for teachers' view of research. 25 ELT instructors in a public university in Turkey participated in the study. The researcher used a

questionnaire developed by Borg (2006) which had six sections. The questionnaire elicited data on instructors' perception of research and their engagement with and in a research. The study revealed that most of the teachers perceive research as a scientific activity consisting of hypothesis testing, collecting large amount of information, doing statistical analysis, and objectivity of the researcher. Another finding was that teachers did not much believe in the effect of research in their classroom practices. In addition to that teachers also rated experiments more than questionnaires. It also has been found that teachers were aware of the difference between reflective practice and research.

### 1.3. Research Questions

The primary concern of the current study is to find answers to the following research questions:

1. What are the characteristics of 'research' according to ELT teachers?
2. To what extent do teachers say they read published research?
  - a. What impact do they believe this reading has on their practices?
  - b. Where teachers do not read research, what reasons do they cite?
3. To what extent do teachers say they do research?
  - a. What are their reasons for engaging in research?
  - b. Where teachers do not do research, what reasons do they cite?
4. Do teachers' experience and qualifications relate to the degree of research engagement they report?

## METHODOLOGY

### 2.1. Research Design

In the present study, mixed method design which covers both qualitative and quantitative methods was employed as the study involves both the collection and the analysis of qualitative and quantitative data and the comparison and mixing of the datasets.

#### 2.1.1. Participants

There were two groups of participants in the present study. The quantitative data was collected from 225 English teachers working in different parts of Turkey. The following table illustrates the distribution of quantitative data participants on the basis of qualification and experience.

Table 1. *Distribution of Questionnaire Participants by Gender and Qualification*

Experience	Count/Total	Bachelor's	Master's	Doctorate	Total
1-5	Count	73	16	2	91
	% of Total	32,4%	7,1%	0,9%	40,4%
6-10	Count	39	11	2	52
	% of Total	17,3%	4,9%	0,9%	23,1%
11-15	Count	45	8	1	54
	% of Total	20,0%	3,6%	0,4%	24,0%
16-20	Count	19	3	0	22

	% of Total	8,4%	1,3%	0,0%	9,8%
20+	Count	6	0	0	6
	% of Total	2,7%	0,0%	0,0%	2,7%
Total	Count	182	38	5	225
	% of Total	80,9%	16,9%	2,2%	100,0%

The table clearly presents that most of the participants taking part in the study were having bachelor's degree. There were only 38 students with master's degree and 5 students with PhD degree. In this sense, the distribution of participants concerning ELT qualification is not consistent as the number of participants with Master's and PhD degree is relatively less than the number of participants with Bachelor's degree. With respect to experience, the distribution is more consistent. About 40 percent of participants who could be regarded as novice teachers have 1-5 years of experience. The participants with 6-10 years of experience are close in number and percentage to the participants with 11-15 years of experience. While the number of participants having 6-10 years of experience is 52, the number of participants with 11-15 years of experience is 54. Only 6 of the participants have more than 20 years of experience according to the table.

The qualitative data was collected from 11 participants. They were selected randomly from the questionnaire participants who were willing to cooperate for the following interview. The distribution of interviewee concerning ELT qualification and experience was given in the following table.

Table 2. *Distribution of Interview Participants by Gender and Qualification*

Participants	Teaching Experience	Highest ELT Degree	Age
1	11 years	BA	33
2	15 years	BA	38
3	11 years	BA	32
4	11 years	BA	32
5	9 years	BA	32
6	3 years	BA	28
7	8 years	MA	30
8	10 years	BA	31
9	10 years	BA	33
10	10 years	BA	32
11	6 years	BA	28

As can be seen from the table 2, more than half of the interview participants have 6-10 years of teaching experience. The number of participants with 11-15 years of experience is 4. There is only one teacher having 1-5 years of teaching experience. No English teachers with 11-15 years of experience and more than 20 years of experience are participated in the interview. With respect to experience, all participating teachers except one with MA degree have Bachelor's degree. The inconsistent distribution among interview participants stem from random sampling procedure in the selection of interviewees.

### **2.1.2. Instruments**

In order to attain the objectives of the study, two instruments were administered to the participating teachers.

#### *a. Questionnaire*

The questionnaire used in the study was developed by Borg (2009). As no changes were made in the content and the structure of the instrument, the scale was not piloted and subjected to reliability and validity analysis.

The questionnaire included six parts. The first part presented some research scenarios with different characteristics and it aimed to elicit information about teachers' perception of research. Section two aimed to collect data about the characteristics of good quality research from the participants' perspective. Section three collects information about the institutional attitude towards research. Section four and section five ask questions about reading and doing research and investigate why teachers do and do not read and carry out research. In the last part, the participants' demographic information was questioned and the relevant data was collected.

#### *b. Semi-Structured Interview*

The interview was developed by the researchers collaboratively by adapting the questionnaire items. It was composed of two parts. The first part elicited demographic information of the participants. The second part included a set of pre-determined open-ended questions which sought to explore participants' research perception.

### **2.1.3. Data Collection Procedure**

Quantitative data was collected from the participants in two ways. First of all, an online version of the scale was created and sent to the potential participants. Additionally, hard copy of the questionnaire was sent to the English teachers working in variety of cities in Turkey in order to obtain wide scale data and broader perspective about the research interest. Qualitative data was collected from the participants on a volunteer basis by taking the confidentiality issue into consideration.

### **2.1.4. Data Analysis**

Quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS 20. Frequency test was run for the collected data and the results were presented in frequency and percentage tables and in bar charts.



Qualitative data was analyzed using qualitative content analysis. Each interview was investigated in detail by the researchers and themes were developed after the identification of the coding categories. For each re-emerging theme a frequency test was conducted and presented in tables.

## RESULTS

This present chapter aims at stating the findings of the research study step by step and part by part in detail. The study attempts to unearth the scientific research perceptions of the teachers working for primary and secondary schools.

### 3.1. Research Scenarios

In the present section, the participants were provided with some scenarios and asked whether they believed the given scenarios were research or not. The overall scenarios used in the instrument were given in Table 3.

Table 3. *Illustration of Research Scenarios*

1. A teacher noticed that an activity she used in class did not work well. She thought about this after the lesson and made some notes in her diary. She tried something different in her next lesson. This time the activity was more successful.
2. A teacher read about a new approach to teaching writing and decided to try it out in his class over a period of two weeks. He video recorded some of his lessons and collected samples of learners' written work. He analyzed this information then presented the results to his colleagues at a staff meeting.
3. A teacher was doing an MA course. She read several books and articles about grammar teaching then wrote an essay of 6000 words in which she discussed the main points in those readings.
4. A university lecturer gave a questionnaire about the use of computers in language teaching to 500 teachers. Statistics were used to analyze the questionnaires. The lecturer wrote an article about the work in an academic journal.
5. Two teachers were both interested in discipline. They observed each other's lessons once a week for three months and made notes about how they controlled their classes. They discussed their notes and wrote a short article about what they learned for the newsletter of the national language teachers' association.
6. To find out which of two methods for teaching vocabulary was more effective, a teacher first tested two classes. Then for four weeks she taught vocabulary to each class using a different method. After that she tested both groups again and compared the results to the first test. She decided to use the method which worked best in her own teaching.
7. A headmaster met every teacher individually and asked them about their working conditions. The head made notes about the teachers' answers. He used his notes to write a report which he submitted to the Ministry of Education.
8. Mid-way through a course, a teacher gave a class of 30 students a feedback form. The next day, five students handed in their completed forms. The teacher read these and used the information to decide what to do in the second part of the course.
9. A teacher trainer asked his trainees to write an essay about ways of motivating teenage learners of English. After reading the assignments the trainer decided to write an article on the trainees' ideas about motivation. He submitted his article to a professional journal.
10. The Head of the English department wanted to know what teachers thought of the



new course book. She gave all teachers a questionnaire to complete, studied their responses, then presented the results at a staff meeting.

Table 3 displays the scenarios in detail and in total, ten scenarios were provided. In addition, the findings obtained from the data about this section were given in Figure 1 which represents the participants' perception of scenarios as research or not.

Figure 1. *Perceptions over Research Scenarios*

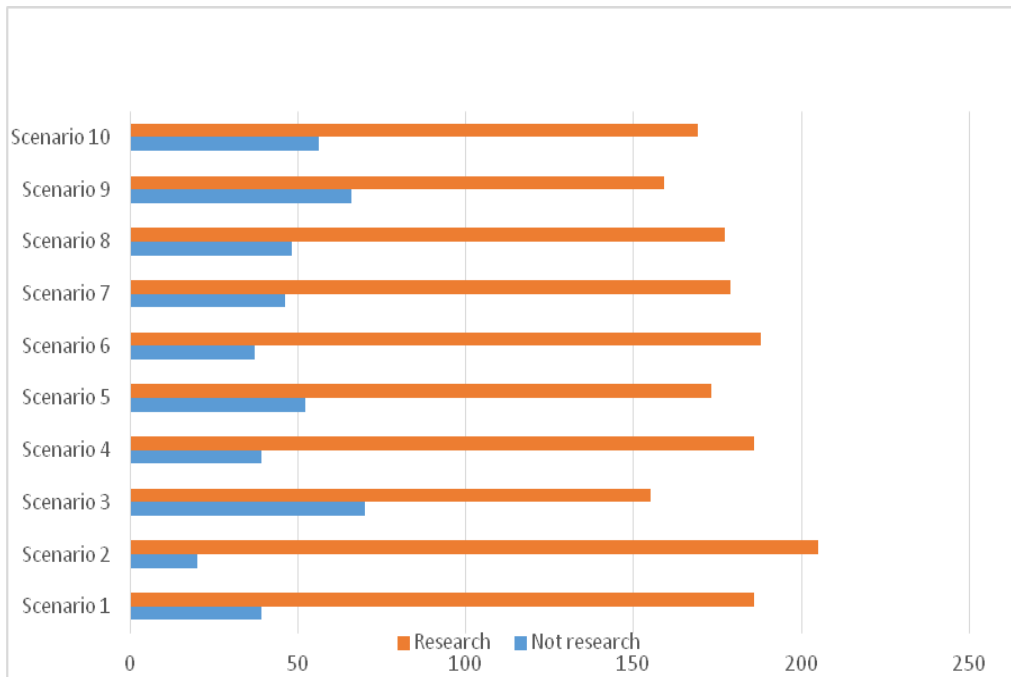


Figure 1 displays that Scenario 2 is rated as *research* by most of the participants and the frequency is exactly 205 while 20 participants report that Scenario 2 is *probably not research* or *definitely not research*. In addition, Scenario 6 is reported as *research* by 188 participants while the rest states Scenario 6 is *probably not research* or *not research*. Last but not least, the ones reporting Scenario 8, Scenario 1, Scenario 4 and Scenario 7 as *research* outnumber the ones stating those Scenarios are *probably not research* or *not research*. Finally, the Scenario 10, Scenario 5, Scenario 9 and Scenario 3 have been reported to be as *research* by less participants with respect to the rest of the aforementioned scenarios.

### 3.2. Characteristics of Good Quality Research

In this section, the teachers were provided with some characteristics that are expected to exist in good quality research and they were asked to rate their importance based on their perceptions. The findings are presented in the following Table 4.

Table 4. *Perception of Good Quality Research Characteristics*

Teachers' views	Unimportant (%)	Moderately important (%)	Unsure (%)	Important (%)	Very Important (%)
A large number of people are studied	4,4	15,6	5,8	34,7	39,6
A large volume of information is collected	2,7	13,3	8,4	33,8	41,8
Experiments are used	1,8	9,3	8,9	37,8	42,2
Hypotheses are tested	1,8	9,3	11,6	37,3	40,0
Information is analyzed statistically	2,2	8,4	4,9	36,9	47,6
Questionnaires are used	4,0	11,1	8,9	40,4	35,6
The researcher is objective	1,8	6,7	6,7	20,0	64,9
The results apply to many ELT contexts	2,7	9,8	21,8	33,8	32,0
The results are made public	4,0	9,3	25,8	33,8	27,1
The results give teachers ideas they can use	2,2	6,2	8,4	44,0	39,1
Variables are controlled	1,8	7,1	17,3	33,8	40,0

The frequency scores related to the perceptions of the participants on the good quality research characteristics are displayed in Table 4 in mixed order. Based on the participants' report over the good quality research, of all the 11 characteristics "the researcher's objectiveness" was rated as the most important one with % 64. Similarly, according to the qualitative data, which were gathered via interviews, "objectiveness" is reported by 8 participants to be the most important quality of a research. In addition, Table 4 also illustrates that % 47 of the respondents ranked "Information is analyzed statistically" as the second most important characteristic and the third most ranked characteristic was "Experiments are used". On the other hand, "making the results public" was considered as the least important characteristic when compared with the other characteristics. The second least important characteristic from the teachers' perspective was "The results apply to many ELT contexts" with % 32 rating level.

### 3.3. Reading Research

In this section, to what extent the teachers read research are subjected to delineation. Table 5 displays the frequency scores over reading regarding the qualification of the participants.

Table 5. *Distribution of Reading Research regarding the variable of "Qualification"*

Qualification		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Total
Bachelor's	Count	13	57	90	22	182
	% within S6_Q5	7,1%	31,3%	49,5%	12,1%	100,0%
	% of Total	5,8%	25,3%	40,0%	9,8%	80,9%
Master's	Count	0	13	17	8	38
	% within S6_Q5	0,0%	34,2%	44,7%	21,1%	100,0%

	% of Total	0,0%	5,8%	7,6%	3,6%	16,9%
Doctorate	Count	0	0	5	0	5
	% within S6_Q5	0,0%	0,0%	100,0%	0,0%	100,0%
	% of Total	0,0%	0,0%	2,2%	0,0%	2,2%
Total	Count	13	70	112	30	225
	% within S6_Q5	5,8%	31,1%	49,8%	13,3%	100,0%
	% of Total	5,8%	31,1%	49,8%	13,3%	100,0%

Regarding the variable of qualification, approximately 50% of the participants holding bachelor's degree report to read research "sometimes" while approximately 25% of the participants report they read "rarely". In addition, approximately 45% of the Master's degree teachers report to read research sometimes while no one of them reports to read research "never". This could be commented a strength on the part of the teachers holding Master's degree. Finally, 100 % of the teachers engaged with PhD report to read research "sometimes" while not uttering they read research "rarely" or "often".

Table 6 displays the frequency scores over reading regarding the experience of the participants.

Table 6. *Distribution of Reading Research regarding the variable of "Experience"*

Experience		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Total
1-5	Count	5	28	49	9	91
	% within S6_Q3	5,5%	30,8%	53,8%	9,9%	100,0%
	% of Total	2,2%	12,4%	21,8%	4,0%	40,4%
6-10	Count	2	18	22	10	52
	% within S6_Q3	3,8%	34,6%	42,3%	19,2%	100,0%
	% of Total	0,9%	8,0%	9,8%	4,4%	23,1%
11-15	Count	5	13	27	9	54
	% within S6_Q3	9,3%	24,1%	50,0%	16,7%	100,0%
	% of Total	2,2%	5,8%	12,0%	4,0%	24,0%
16-20	Count	0	8	12	2	22
	% within S6_Q3	0,0%	36,4%	54,5%	9,1%	100,0%
	% of Total	0,0%	3,6%	5,3%	0,9%	9,8%
20+	Count	1	3	2	0	6
	% within S6_Q3	16,7%	50,0%	33,3%	0,0%	100,0%
	% of Total	0,4%	1,3%	0,9%	0,0%	2,7%
Total	Count	13	70	112	30	225
	% within S6_Q3	5,8%	31,1%	49,8%	13,3%	100,0%
	% of Total	5,8%	31,1%	49,8%	13,3%	100,0%

Regarding the variable of experience, difference is not observed between the self-reports of the teachers. In this respect, approximately the 54% of the teachers 1-5 year experience indicate the read research "sometimes". The similar proportions are observed with the other groups of experience ranging from 42% with 6-10 experience group, 50 % with 11-15 experience group and 54% with 16-20 year experience group. However, regarding the variable of experience a negative correlation has observed between experience and reading research. As teachers become more experienced, the frequency (33%) decreases towards

“reading often”. Moreover, approximately 17% of the 20+year experience group report that they have never read research. To this end, the long years of experience in teaching may have its own share in not reading research. On the other hand, the qualitative data show that of 7 participants who report to read research, only one reads research on a regular basis while the remaining participants report to read research either rarely or irregularly.

Having highlighted the reading research perceptions of the teachers by qualification, most of the teachers (70 %) state that they do not have much time to read research. It could be commented that teachers working in primary, secondary and high schools have long hours of classes, or they are expected to engage with another labor related to the language class. In addition to time insufficiency, the teachers mostly report that they do not read research since they believe the published work does not provide them with practical solutions for their classes. Last but not least, a group of teachers report they have a lack of interest in the academic research as reason for not reading research. Finally, few of the teachers put forward that they have difficulties in understanding what academic research studies try to convey. All in all, various reasons ranging from time insufficiency to disinterest are reported by the participant teachers in not reading research.

#### 3.4. Doing Research

This part aims to present results regarding English teachers research engagement and provides information how frequently they carry out research if they do so and the reasons behind conducting it. It also exhibits data concerning the reasons of not doing research. The relevant results in terms of qualification and experience were demonstrated in the following tables.

Table 7. Reported Frequency of Doing Research by Qualification

Qualification	Frequency/Percentage	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Total
Bachelor's	Count	17	105	38	22	182
	% within the group	9,3%	57,7%	20,9%	12,1%	100,0%
	% of Total	7,6%	46,7%	16,9%	9,8%	80,9%
Master's	Count	1	33	4	0	38
	% within the group	2,6%	86,8%	10,5%	0,0%	100,0%
	% of Total	0,4%	14,7%	1,8%	0,0%	16,9%
Doctorate	Count	0	5	0	0	5
	% within the group	0,0%	100,0%	0,0%	0,0%	100,0%
	% of Total	0,0%	2,2%	0,0%	0,0%	2,2%
Total	Count	18	143	42	22	225
	% within the group	8,0%	63,6%	18,7%	9,8%	100,0%
	% of Total	8,0%	63,6%	18,7%	9,8%	100,0%

The data in the table explicitly demonstrate that almost two thirds of the 225 participants indicated they do research “rarely”. Surprisingly, it was also observed that all of the teachers having doctorate degree said they conduct research rarely. Within Master’s degree group 86,8 % of the teachers reported that they do research rarely and 10,5 %

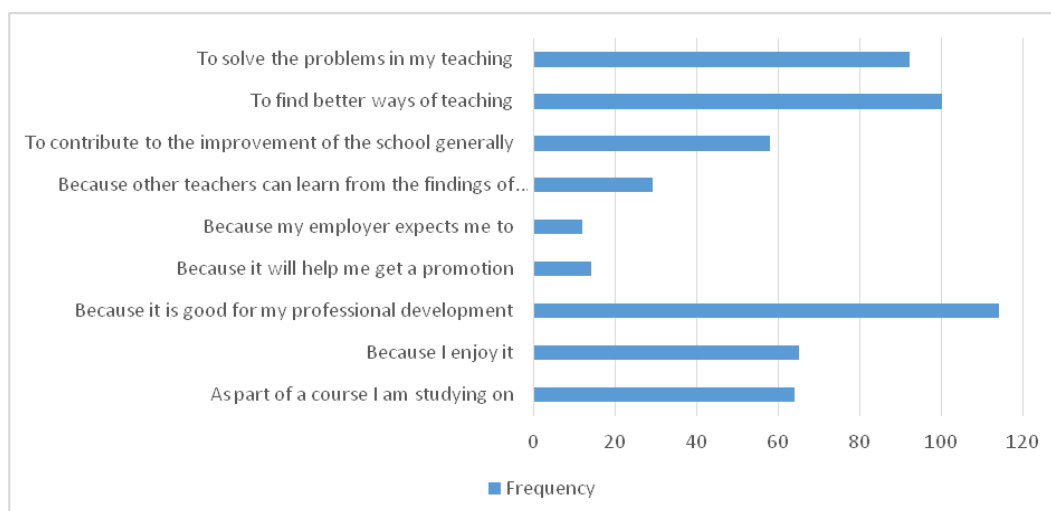
sometimes. None of them indicated that they do research often as observed in the PHD group. Within Bachelor's degree group 57,7 % said that they carry out research rarely, 20,9 % reported sometimes, 12,1 % often surprisingly. On the other hand, the qualitative data produced a surprising result; only one of the participants reports to do research.

Table 8. Reported Frequency of Doing Research by Experience

Experience	Frequency/Percentage	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Total
1-5	Count	6	67	15	3	91
	% within group	6,6%	73,6%	16,5%	3,3%	100,0%
	% of Total	2,7%	29,8%	6,7%	1,3%	40,4%
6-10	Count	2	35	10	5	52
	% within group	3,8%	67,3%	19,2%	9,6%	100,0%
	% of Total	0,9%	15,6%	4,4%	2,2%	23,1%
11-15	Count	6	29	11	8	54
	% within group	11,1%	53,7%	20,4%	14,8%	100,0%
	% of Total	2,7%	12,9%	4,9%	3,6%	24,0%
16-20	Count	3	10	3	6	22
	% within group	13,6%	45,5%	13,6%	27,3%	100,0%
	% of Total	1,3%	4,4%	1,3%	2,7%	9,8%
20+	Count	1	2	3	0	6
	% within group	16,7%	33,3%	50,0%	0,0%	100,0%
	% of Total	0,4%	0,9%	1,3%	0,0%	2,7%
Total	Count	18	143	42	22	225
	% within group	8,0%	63,6%	18,7%	9,8%	100,0%
	% of Total	8,0%	63,6%	18,7%	9,8%	100,0%

With respect to experience, about two thirds of the participants (63.6 %) said that they do research “rarely” as observed in the previous table. Within each experience group, except the teachers with more than 20 years of experience, similar results were obtained. In each group except more than 20 years of experience the frequency of “rarely” category is higher than the other categories. The teachers with 1-5 years of teaching experience have the largest proportion of “rarely” category with 73,6 percent. Surprisingly, half of the teachers with more than twenty years of experience reported that they do research “sometimes” with 50,0 % while the percentage of “rarely” category is 33,3. Other than “rarely” category in which the frequency decreases with increasing experience, a consistent distribution was not observed in the other categories.

Having highlighted the self-reports of the participants, the present section delineates the reasons behind conducting research. Figure 2 displays the reasons in charts below.

Figure 2. *The Reasons behind Conducting Research*

In Figure 2, the reasons behind conducting research are illustrated. The item of “Because it is good for my professional development” is stated to be as mostly rated item. In total, 114 participants indicated that they have conducted research since it is beneficial to their professional development. In addition, the item of “to find better ways of teaching” appears to be the second mostly rated item. 100 teachers reported they conduct research since they are engaged in finding better ways of teaching. Moreover, “to solve the problems in my teaching” follows the aforementioned reasons. In total, 92 teachers indicated that they carry out research with an attempt to deal with the emerging problems in their teaching process. On the other hand, approximately 30 teachers report that they do research since “other teachers can learn from the findings of my work”. In addition, the items of “Because my employer expects me to” and “Because it will help me get a promotion” are the least rated ones by the teachers.

Figure 3. *The Reasons behind not Conducting Research*

The participants report a range of reasons behind not conducting research. One such reason mostly rated is the item of "I do not have time to do research". In total, 55 of the teachers report they are not able to conduct research due to lack of time. In Turkish context, this item may hint that teachers working for primary and secondary schools have busy hours of labor. Although not rated as much as the item of "I do not have time to do research", teachers report a few other reasons. One such reason is the item of "My job is to teach not to do research". In total, the item was reported to be the second mostly rated item by 27 teachers. Those teachers appear to make a distinction between research and labor. In addition, another reason is reported to be as the item of "Most of my colleagues do not do research." The impression left by the ones conducting research is fronted with this item. Similarly, the qualitative data show that teachers do not conduct research because of their workload or lack of knowledge on research. However, the most recurred theme for not conducting research is that teachers think conducting research is not a part of their job.

## **DISCUSSION**

One of the primary concerns of the present study was to find out the characteristics of 'research' according to ELT teachers. In this respect, the teachers' assessment of ten research scenarios demonstrated that over 90 % of the teachers value scenario 2 as a research activity. In addition to this, scenario 6, 4 and 1 were also regarded as research with the highest ranks. Overall, teachers surprisingly considered all of the scenarios as probably or definitely research, with a minimum 60 % proportion for scenario 3. Although the scenarios 4, 6 and 2 also received the highest ranks as research in previous studies by Borg (2009) and Kutlay (2011), scenarios 8 and 1 were considered not to be research by most of the teachers in both studies. This inconsistency with the previous studies might be caused by the teaching context of the participants. While the participants in Borg (2009) and Kutlay (2011) are instructors from universities, the participants of the current study are all teachers from primary, secondary or high schools. Another reason of this conflicting result in this respect could be associated with the participants' qualifications. While only one fifth of the teachers in the current study are engaged with MA or PhD programs, almost four out of five instructors in Borg (2009)'s study holds an MA or a PhD degree. In addition, contrary to what Kutlay (2011) claims, the teachers in the present study seem not to be aware of the difference between reflective practice and research. Moreover, the results imply that they consider every single attempt to improve the quality of their courses as research.

The study revealed that teachers generally describe a good research as an activity in which information is analyzed statistically, the researcher is objective and experiments are used. Additionally, teachers valued the hypotheses to be tested, volume of information and a large number of participants as other important characteristics of good research. On the other hand, a quarter of teachers reported that they were unsure about the dissemination of research results. These findings support the results from previous studies suggested by Kutlay (2013), Bulut (2011) and Borg (2009).

Another focus of the study was research engagement; as defined in Borg (2007), the extent to which teachers read and do research and the factors related to it. The results concerning reading and doing research indicate that although about 65 % of the participants read research, only less than 30 % do research at least sometimes. The results are consistent with data obtained in previous research by Borg (2007) in terms of reading research. However, with regard to doing research, the findings of the current



study differ from Borg (2007), who reports that over 61 % of teachers do research at least sometimes.

Similar to the results suggested in Borg (2009), Kutlay (2013) and Reis-Jorge (2007), teachers considered professional development as the main reason behind conducting research. They also reported that they did research to find better ways of teaching and to solve problems in their teaching; however, almost none of the teachers stated that they did research because their employer expected them to, or it would help them get a promotion. On the other hand, lack of time was by far the most cited reason for not doing research. This finding is significantly in accordance with several other studies previously conducted (see Borg, 2008 & 2009; Kutlay, 2013). In addition to lack of time, the teachers also stated that they did not know enough about research methods similar to the findings from Allison and Carey (2007), or their job was to teach rather than doing research, as one interviewee said: “there are already some people who do research in universities”. Bulut (2011)’s study revealed a similar finding in this respect.

The final aim of the research was to find out whether teachers’ experience and qualifications relate to the degree of research engagement they report. With regard to qualification, the results show that 62% of the teachers who hold a Bachelor’s (BA) degree; 66% of those who hold a Master’s (MA) degree; and 100% of those who hold a Philosophy of Doctorate (PhD) degree engage with research at least sometimes. In terms of doing research, however, the results surprisingly indicate that 67% of the teachers with a BA degree; almost 90% of those with MA degree; and all of the ones with a PhD degree rarely or never engage in research. On the other hand, with respect to teaching experience, over 60% of each experience group, except for those with over 20 years of experience, reported to engage with research at least sometimes. Conversely, when it comes to doing research, only 20% of those with 1-5 years of experience; 26% of those with 6-10 years of experience; 35% of those with 11-15 years of experience; 41% of those with 16-20 years of experience; and 50% of those with more than 20 years of experience stated that they engage in research. Although it was expected at the beginning of the study that qualification would make a difference with respect to research engagement, surprisingly it was seen that the participants did not have a significant difference in their levels of research engagement in terms of qualification. Especially, the results about the teachers with a PhD degree and with more than 20 years of experience might seem surprising, but the findings should be interpreted with caution due to the relatively few number of the participants compared to the other groups.

## CONCLUSION

The main concern of the present study is to investigate teachers’ perception and engagement with/in research in Turkish public schools. Although several other studies have been conducted on the same issue so far, the current study is unique in terms of the teaching context it focused on (namely primary, secondary and high school); the data collection tools (quantitative and qualitative); and the number of participants (225 teachers). The study mainly revealed that teachers in these teaching contexts value almost every single attempt to improve the quality of lesson as research; they claim that they engage with research but do not engage in research to the same extent due to heavy workload in their schools (see Borg 2007, 2008 and 2012; Reis-Jorge, 2007; Kutlay, 2013), being unfamiliar with systematic research methods (see Kutlay, 2013; Borg, 2008; Allison & Carey, 2007) and acknowledging research as a profession of academics rather than practitioners (see Bulut, 2011; Christenson et al., 2002; Allison & Carey, 2007). The study further suggests that teacher’s research engagement significantly decrease as their

teaching experience increase, and even those enrolled in MA or PhD programs are not engaged in research efficiently.

The study has few limitations as it mostly focused on descriptive analysis of data collected through questionnaires and interviews. The interviews were limited to 11 teachers; thus, a further study could be extended to a larger group of interviewees. Furthermore, a sequel study could focus on the observations of teachers' research engagement in public schools, and an attempt could be made to help improve their systematic research knowledge. In that, the development of teachers' research engagement could be observed on a longitudinal study. Additionally, despite the lack of engagement in research, the teachers have a positive attitude towards research in general; hence, in-service research engagement exercises could be integrated in professional development programs. Finally, teachers could be encouraged to engage in research and disseminate their studies on academic platforms.

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