Exploring action research on a professional development course in Chile

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his/her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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To Martin, Gerardo and Pablo

ABSTRACT

This thesis presents an exploration of the action research (AR) component of an in-service course as presented to a group of Chilean English language teachers. It aims to investigate how AR was conceptualised, the rationale for its inclusion and how it was ultimately operationalised. Additionally it aims to shed light on what effects AR may have on teachers' professional development (PD) and how contextual factors may hinder its impact. For this purpose, data was collected from three course designers, nine teachers taking part in the course, and the teacher educator responsible for offering the AR component.

This study followed a qualitative research design and a critical paradigmatic orientation. Data was collected over a ten month period using an initial questionnaire to collect factual data and semi-structured interviews and focus groups to obtain more in-depth data. Additionally, document analysis was carried out on the course syllabus and teachers' written AR reports.

The findings showed the conceptualisation of AR underpinning the course involved notions of emancipatory AR, whereas teachers viewed AR as problem-solving. Additionally, the training format exposed a transmission approach to teacher education and provided little support to teachers to carry out AR in the way envisioned by course designers. As a consequence, teachers' skills in and knowledge of AR remained limited and it did not promote their professional development in any way. While findings support studies which claim the main difficulties associated with AR are time and research support, they also highlight other contextual constraints and the thesis argues the need for major socio-cultural adjustments if AR is to promote PD in Chile. The study demonstrates that the manner in which AR is conceptualised is inconsistent with contextual realities within the education system as a whole thus it cannot meaningfully contribute to or support teachers' professional development.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ALTE= Association of Language Testers in Europe

AR = Action Research

CD = Course Designer

CEFR= Common European Framework of Reference

CPD= Continuous professional development (see PD)

DIPRES = Dirección de Presupuestos (Budget Department)

EFL = English as a Foreign Language

EL = English Language

ELT = English Language Teaching

EODP = English Open Doors Programme

INSET= In-service teacher training

LTD= Language teacher Development

MoE= Ministry of Education

PD = Professional development

PIAP = Programa Inglés Abre Puertas

PISA= Programme for International Student Assessment

PSU= Prueba de Selección Universitaria (University Selection Test)

RP = Reflective Practice

SIMCE = Sistema de Medición de la Calidad de la Educación (Quality of Education Assessment System)

SLTE = Second Language Teacher Education

T = Teacher

TE= Teacher Education

TR = Teacher Research

TT = Teacher Trainer

UNDP = United Nations Development Programme

1 GENERAL INTRODUCTION

My interest in action research originated as a professional need to know how to teach English teachers taking part in an in-service course, how to conduct action research in their classrooms. My aim was to train teachers about the processes involved in action research so that it could become part of their on-going practice. After two years of such experience, I am still uncertain about how successful I was and the outcomes of the training. However, after much reflection and further reading, my curiosity towards action research grew.

In this study, my aim is to investigate the underpinnings, processes and effects of action research as presented to English language teachers in an in-service course.

Such exploration will be focused on three areas;

a) The kind of action research promoted in the course and its rationale.
b) How evidence of AR learning can be identified in teachers accounts and in their AR reports.
c) The effects of AR for teachers' on-going professional development once the course is over and how contextual factors may hinder or promote such effects.

My interest in the areas described above originated from my work as a teacher trainer in a similar course as the one proposed for this study.

I was influenced by the discussion in the literature about the benefits teachers who conduct AR can gain and how contextual constrains may foster or hinder its implementation as intended in the current course. Therefore, my main goal was to explore teachers' understandings of AR and its effects on their professional development.

The areas described above will be investigated through the following research questions, which also derived from the analysis of literature presented in chapter 2;

RQ1. What model of AR does the course reflect (according to course designers, teacher trainers and teachers)?

RQ2. How do teachers' own accounts and AR reports evidence their learning about AR in the course and the training provided?

RQ3. What contributions, if any, do teachers feel AR has had on their professional development after the course? If none, why do they think that happened?

By proposing these questions I wanted to gain further insights into the kind of AR teachers engaged in, how they experience the AR process and the learning involved and the effects AR may have had on their PD.

I will begin by discussing the context where this study takes place. I will begin with the description of the educational system in Chile and its views on teachers, ELT in Chile and the most important action taken to improve its teaching and learning and finish with an account of the methodology course to be explored.

In the second chapter I will begin explore the literature about educational innovations particularly those which promote PD in the field of ELT. I will continue with a closer examination of the process of teacher change and the definitions of PD according to various authors. I will conclude this chapter by focusing on action research, its different conseptualisations, its suggested role in teachers' professional development, its limitations and examine published accounts of similar AR-oriented initiatives.

I will continue by discussing my critical orientation in the study and presenting the research design. Here I will explain the research adjustments taken place, the methods used and the data collection and analysis procedures.

In chapter five I present the research findings followed by the discussion of such findings and ending in chapter six with the final conclusions of the study along with suggestions for further research and the limitations of the study.

1.1 Context of the study

The purpose of this section is to describe the context where this study takes place providing an overview of ELT in Chile and highlight one professional development (PD hereafter) initiative commenced by the Ministry of Education which introduced action research. I will begin by providing some background information about the country's educational system which will contribute to a better understanding of the setting where ELT takes places. Subsequently I will discuss the current actions taken by the ministry of education to improve the status of ELT in Chile and the impact they have had in schools, teachers and learners.

1.1.1 The Chilean education system

The Chilean education system has undergone a number of changes over the past decades principally driven from political forces (pre and post Pinochet) which have failed to respond to the demands of the Chilean society which involves quality education for all (UNESCO, 2004, OCDE, 2004). On the contrary, the educational system has fallen into a spiral of initiatives which seem to have enlarged the gap between the rich and the poor and caused protests which have made headlines both nationally and abroad.

The educational system in Chile is currently in crisis and therefore it is the focus of intensive scrutiny and debate by academics, policy makers, governmental authorities and Chilean society as a whole. I believe that discussing the existing conflicts in education in Chile today is essential in order to understand the role that teachers and ELT play in this crisis.

The current situation originated with the 1980s educational reform by the hand of the military regime. The changes enforced at the time have had a major impact on the educational system in place today since 'many of the neo-liberal economic policies introduced under the military regime have been retained' (Matear, 2008:133-134). Regarding school administration, one change was the administrative decentralization of state schools moving from ministerial to municipal control. Thus, state schools have changed their denomination to municipal schools.

Another change was the introduction of subsidised schools in the system. These schools are privately run but partly funded by the state through a per capita voucher system. Hence, the state decreases its expenditure on education per student transferring such investment to school owners who in turn charged parents fees. Subsidised schools have become popular in the last two decades holding 50% of students in the country over municipals schools with 43%, whereas private schools have kept their numbers at 7% (MINEDUC, 2008). Municipals schools have reduced their enrolment numbers considerably mainly due to their questioned educational quality.

The highly marketised provision in the Chilean education system has caused segregation and lack of control by the ministry of education setting the scenario for two problematic situations to unfold; inequity and lack of quality (UNESCO, 2004, Matear, 2008). Arguably, the issue of quality has largely been attributed to teachers (Inzunza et al., 2011). There is a general belief in the population and also among government authorities that the main responsibility rests with teachers. Evidence for such claim was found in the results of the 2008 SIMCE test (Quality of Education Assessment System) which measures school performance in the areas of maths, language, science and recently physical education and English. This exam indicated there was a correlation between scores and teachers' performance. High exam results corresponded to learners whose teacher was also positively evaluated in the teaching assessment system (devised by the MoE and based on the assessment of teachers' portfolios) and the opposite also took place, low scores correlated with teachers poorly evaluated (Ministerio de Educación, , 2008). This has placed teachers, their education, competence and knowledge at centre of the debate.

The educational reform in the 1980s reduced funding for state schools, as a consequence teachers were no longer public employees (Cox, 2003). Their salaries were reduced, many of their benefits were cut-out and the Teachers' Union (highly politicised and very powerful in the prior government) was weakened and taken apart. Along with that, universities no longer provided initial teaching education programmes as they were now conducted by Technical Formation schools. This lowered the status of teaching since the qualification obtained no longer carried a university degree causing a dramatic drop in the number of students who registered

in teaching programmes. Teaching was no longer an appealing profession therefore teaching programmes were chosen by university candidates with low PSU (University Selection Test) scores and less academically able. Although in the 1990s, teaching programmes got their university status back, enrolment did not improve significantly (Cox, 2003). The teaching profession is considering to be unprestigiuos, salaries are the lowest in comparison with those of other professionals and working conditions are adverse (Belleï and Valenzuela, 2010). Moreover, as the privatisation model extended to higher education with the creation of private universities, the appearance of teaching programmes with questionable academic standards exacerbated the problem with little involvement from the MoE (Inzunza et al., 2011, Belleï and Valenzuela, 2010, British Council, 2012).

The decline of the status of teachers is portrayed in a study carried out in 2008 which revealed teachers' disenchantment with their profession due to the lack of opportunities offered to have a say in education. The perception of society towards teachers in Chile has also fostered teachers' feelings of anxiety, pessimism and lack of motivation about education and their professional development. The article asserts that 30% of the teachers surveyed do not envisage a solution to the existing educational problems and their pessimism is due to their non-existing level of participation in educational reforms (La Tercera, , 2008). This aspect will be dealt with later on in the findings chapter as well as it appears to affect teachers' views about their professional development.

The issue of inequity has been perceived by the population through scores in standardized SIMCE tests which revealed lower test results in students from municipal schools and higher results in students from fee-paying institutions (subsidised and private). The 2006 international PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) report has also established Chile as a highly segregated country (PISA, 2006). Although much debate has taken place over an education system characterized by segregation and the pursuit of profit, no changes have been applied to the funding system in education. In turn, alternative and highly popular actions have been taken to bring a sense of equity into the system. Such is the inclusion of ELT as a core subject in the national curriculum to narrow the gap between socio-economic groups and provide equal opportunities. Thus, English language learning

has been perceived as opening doors for students (Walker, 2003) and as a vehicle to climb the social ladder. The actions taken by the governments since 1990 to the present with regards to ELT in Chile evidence how pivotal the command of this language has become in the country.

1.1.2 English language teaching in Chile

The Chilean MoE has progressively increased its spending in all areas of education and as discussed above, the learning and teaching of English as a Foreign Language became essential.

Firstly, an initial reform made EFL a compulsory subject in the national curriculum disregarding the teaching of other foreign languages. A second reform started EFL earlier in primary schools (in year 5 instead of year 7) with the subsequent demand for more EFL teachers and training of ELT for young learners. The former modification was applicable mostly for municipal schools since subsidised schools usually introduce EFL in year 1 of primary education; this is due to a flexible curriculum approach which allows schools to set their own curricular goals.

Later, the focus of EFL teaching and learning shifted from receptive skills to an integrated four-skill approach. The perceptions of teachers regarding this change have not been explored yet, although they had expressed the former receptive-skill proposition was considered more context-appropriate (Mckay, 2003). Additionally, the MoE launched the English Open Doors Programme (EODP hereafter) which proposes, plans, organises and runs all the actions taken by the government to improve the learning of English a foreign language. This programme will be discussed in further detail below as it is the initiator of the professional development initiative researched in the present study.

1.1.3 The English Open Doors Programme (EODP)

The EODP originated as a pilot programme supported by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in 2003 to

> 'improve the level of English learned by students in year 5 of primary education to year 4 of secondary education through the definition of national standards for the learning of English as a foreign language, the professional development of teachers and the support to English teachers in their classrooms' (PIAP, 2012:2 my translation).

The initiatives devised by the EODP also receive funding from the private sector and other international organizations such as the British Council and the Fulbright Commission and its 2009 budget reached US$9.0 million (DIPRES, 2009). The programme belongs to the Curriculum and Evaluation unit of the MoE and as outlined above, its activities have three lines of action; curriculum and evaluation; support for students and schools and professional development for teachers .

In the area of curriculum and evaluation, the EODP elaborates the national curriculum for ELT; designs progress maps and curricular adjustments and manages the provision and selection of textbooks. Within this area, the EODP also defines standards for students and teachers regarding the learning of English a foreign language. According to the current standards (aligned to the CEFR and ALTE), year 8 students from primary education must reach level A1, year 4 students from secondary education must reach level A2 and English teachers are expected to certify their competence at B1. The programme also proposed the application of a standardised SIMCE exam (see above) which was applied in 2010 in order to measure students' performance in the language. The results indicated 11% of year 3 secondary students reached level A2 (the set standard at the time).

In the area of support for students and schools, the EODP organizes summer and winter camps; debates and public speaking competitions; provides resources and coordinates the National English-speaking volunteer programme which promotes the linguistic and cultural exchange between English-speaking volunteer co-teachers and students at state-funded schools (municipal and subsidised).

The role of the EODP in the professional development of EFL teachers is of prominence in this study and therefore will be discussed in more detail as follows.

1.1.4 Professional development initiatives by the EODP

Providing PD opportunities to teachers has been a central concern for the programme and it has benefited pre-service and in-service teachers. For pre-service teachers, the EODP awards grants for students in their last semester of their initial ELT programme to study one semester abroad with the main objective to help them develop their language skills (PIAP, 2012). For in-service teachers, a number of strategies have been implemented both to improve their English language skills and also to update their knowledge of ELT methodology.

Among the strategies implemented by the EODP are;

- Local teachers' networks
- District-level workshops
- Scholarships to study abroad.
- English Summer Town and English Winter Retreat. These are annual total immersion seminars where foreign professionals share their expertise with EFL teachers.
- English language and methodology courses

1.1.5 ELT methodology INSET course

In 2003 local ELT experts were called to design two in-service courses for English teachers working in state and subsidised schools. Universities located in the main cities of the country applied in a public bid to teach these courses which were offered on a first come first served basis (first-registered basis in this case) with a limited number of spaces. The cost of the course was shared between the EODP and course participants, therefore teachers paid 20% of the course whereas the EODP paid the reminder. These courses were not compulsory for teachers and their completion did not necessarily meant a salary increase.

The first course implemented (in 2004) aimed at secondary teachers who needed practice opportunities to improve their English language proficiency to reach the level set by the ministry (ALTE 3). This course then had a focus on improving teachers' language proficiency.

Later in 2007, a second course was implemented for teachers who had a proficiency level at B2 (according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Language) or ALTE 3 (level diagnosed by taking an online test) with high concentration of ELT methodology. This second course consisted of 300 hours and was carried out every Saturday morning during one year with an intensive period of two weeks in the summer.

According to the syllabus the main objective of the course states the following;

> The participants will be able to select the strategies , methodologies, techniques and activities to answer to the students and the MINEDUC Curriculum requirements aiming at improving their classroom practices and thus the students' learning of English as a foreign language. At the same time this course will offer the teachers the chance to turn themselves into agents of change, to grasp current and innovating methodology models and to promote critical, creative and autonomous learning attitudes (Ministerio de Educación 2003)

In order to achieve its main objective, the syllabus provided a fixed syllabus which included the following modules and temporal organisation;

<table>
<tr><td colspan="3">CONTACT HOURS</td><td colspan="2">PRIVATE STUDY HOURS</td><td>TOTAL HOURS</td></tr>
<tr><td>%</td><td colspan="2">80%</td><td colspan="2">20%</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>HOURS</td><td colspan="2">240</td><td>60</td><td>20</td><td>320</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td colspan="2">CROSS-MODULAR</td><td colspan="2">COMPLEMENTARY</td><td rowspan="8"></td></tr>
<tr><td>48</td><td>MODULE 1: Teaching and learning a foreign language: critical review of current approaches</td><td rowspan="7">MODULE 6: Action research in the EFL classroom</td><td rowspan="7">Comple-mentary programme</td><td rowspan="7">Private study hours</td></tr>
<tr><td>48</td><td>MODULE 2: Language learning/ teaching strategies</td></tr>
<tr><td>48</td><td>MODULE 3 Classroom management</td></tr>
<tr><td>48</td><td>MODULE 4 Assessment in language learning</td></tr>
<tr><td>48</td><td>MODULE 5 Teaching practice</td></tr>
<tr><td>240</td><td></td><td></td><td>60</td><td>20</td><td>320</td></tr>
</table>

Table 1.1 Course syllabus

In the table above, there is no indication of the number of hours dedicated to action research since such module was conceived as cross-modular and consequently aspects of AR could be present in any of the other modules with no time restriction.

In terms of assessment the course was not prescriptive but it suggested assessment tasks such as presentations, microteaching and an action research project which was worth 40% of the final course marks. In addition, a minimum attendance of 80% was required for course certification.

At the end of the course, the ministry mainly required teachers to take the Michigan test (Pearson, 2013) as a final evaluation to assess their English language performance. The rationale for such examination was to check whether teachers' language abilities had improved after the course. The impact of the course in teachers' classroom practice was not formally assessed in any way in the first cohort

but this changed in the second run of the course in 2009 since teacher trainers were also required to make assessed classroom observations.

1.1.6 My role as a trainer

I became involved in the ELT methodology course in 2007 as a teacher trainer for a group of fifteen teachers in the north of Chile. In such course I taught the modules of SLA Theory, ELT methodology, Language learning strategies and Action Research. As a teacher trainer my only source of information was the course syllabus and a list of books to be used as reference for each of the modules covered.

For the AR module, the syllabus stated the following objectives and suggested the following contents;

Objectives

- To carry out action research.
- To collect information, identify students learning problem and propose suitable solutions.
- Observe and analyse the impact of the proposal.
- Socialise findings and the proposed alternatives

Contents

- Samples of carried out models of action research
- Main characteristics of action research.
- Action research stages.
- Data analysis

(Ministerio de Educación, 2007)

The limited information contained in the syllabus prompted me to do my own research about AR its definitions, objectives and processes. I was still a school teacher at the time so my approach to teaching the module was highly teacher-oriented and practical. I decided to avoid academic jargon neither teachers nor me could fully understand. My main goal was to show course participants the benefits

AR could bring to their teaching practice and their professional development in the longer run. With this idea in mind I introduced the concept of AR and its purpose six months into the course and then I asked teachers to think about areas they wanted to explore which could come from their own practice, their learners or the issues discussed in the course modules. After a couple of weeks of reflection and discussion we began to work on the AR project itself particularly on defining research questions. I must clarify that this process was taking place while other modules of the course were being taught so that the areas covered in other modules could inform and support their research process. During our discussions, and despite my insistence on the benefits of conducting AR, teachers felt unconfident about conducting research and did not acknowledge the benefits of engaging in such activity. To overcome this, I provided support and feedback throughout the research process and we discussed collaboratively, as a group, the various stages teachers were at in their research. At the end of the research process and for reporting purposes, teachers argued writing a research report would be too time-consuming and challenging, instead they suggested to share their research through oral presentations using Power Point. During their presentation they focused on their research topic, data collection methods, findings and final conclusions in relation to their practice i.e. how doing their research was (or was not) helpful for their practice. This reporting stage gave teachers the opportunity to share their findings, their views of research and comment on and assess their peers' projects informally. Moreover, it allowed teachers to see the research process in a more positive light since they became aware AR could inform their practice thus help them improve it. However, since the course finished soon after I am not aware if their perceptions toward AR have remained and/or whether it has had any effect on their professional practice.

My experience as a trainer of the AR module in this course and the puzzles arisen from it originated the current study. Here, I am interested in exploring how the teachers in one of the current methodology courses (and follow the same syllabus) have embraced AR; how they view action research, what led their topic selection, the methodology used and ultimately to what extent it has promoted their professional development. As it will be seen in the next chapter, AR has been regarded as potentially beneficial in this respect.

However and as it will be seen in the findings chapter -whether the context and the syllabus remains the same- the current study revealed important differences in the way the AR module was organised and taught, leading to outcomes which raise questions about the feasibility of action research as a professional development initiative.

1.2 Conclusion

In this section I have provided information about the Chilean educational system, its current crisis and the role ELT and teachers play in it. I have described how negatively teachers are perceived and the how they are considered responsible for the lack of quality in the system. I have explained how the government seeks to provide more opportunities to students and solve the inequity problem by promoting ELT. I concluded this section by discussing the actions taken by the ministry through the EODP to improve the teaching and learning of English focusing on the training of teachers and how my involvement in such courses as a trainer originated this study.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

As outlined above, the focus of this study is the AR component of an in-service methodology course for English language teachers in Chile. This course was devised by the MoE as part of their PD policies for the improvement of ELT in the country. In this exploration, my aim is to examine what underpinned the inclusion of AR in the programme, how teachers' research reports evidence AR learning and what role it had in promoting teachers' PD.

In what follows, I will provide the theoretical framework of the study by discussing its central issues. Since this initiative emerged from an educational reform, I will begin by exploring the literature about management of educational change with a particular focus on ELT as well as PD-oriented innovations. I will continue with a closer examination of the process of teacher change and the definitions of PD according to various authors. I will conclude this chapter by focusing on action research, its suggested role in teachers' professional development, its drawbacks and examine published accounts of AR in in-service.

2.2 Defining change in this study

I will begin by clarifying what the terms *change* and *innovation* mean in the change literature and how they will be used throughout the thesis.

Innovation or change?

There is general agreement in the literature that the difference between change and innovation lies in the intention and planning of the latter usually associated with some form of advancement also perceived as novel by its adopters (Markee, 1997, Lamie, 2005) whereas change is viewed as an alteration usually unintended resulting in progression or deterioration. Consequently, Markee (op cit) argues not all changes involve innovation whereas all innovation involves change since it implies doing something different that the existing practice. He defines the term innovation as 'a managed process of development whose principal products are teaching (and/or testing) materials, methodological skills, and pedagogical values that are perceived

as new by potential adopters' (1997:46). Whereas I acknowledge the differences between change and innovation asserted in the literature, I will use both terms interchangeable throughout the thesis for two reasons. Firstly because I agree with those who argue that the sense of improvement and newness associated to an innovation is subjective depending on people's perceptions in a given context about such innovation (Wedell, 2009, Markee, 1997). As for the change discussed in the study, its newness and advancement can also be debatable. Secondly because it is common practice (Markee, 1997, Lamie, 2005).

In section 1.2.5 I described how the PD initiative this study focuses on is part of an ELT curriculum reform proposed by the MoE aiming at *improving learners' EL competencies* -with hopes of turning Chile a bilingual country by 2018 (Fábrega, 2006). Within this *major* innovation teachers were seen as key *agents of change* (Ministerio de Educación, 2007) and substantial investment was made in the provision of a wide range of PD opportunities aiming at a) promoting teachers' EL proficiency and b) improving and updating teachers' ELT practices. The methodology in ELT courses focused on the development of the latter and the AR component was described as a cross-modular strategy acting as a precursor of critical thinking, reflective practice, problem-solving, inquiry attitudes and self-oriented PD. Consequently, I would argue that the *major* MoE innovation namely the improvement of learners' EL proficiency, also called teachers to change and such *teacher change* is the focus of this study and can be defined as *the development of reflective practice, critical thinking, problem-solving and inquiry attitudes through AR engagement aiming at ELT teachers' own professional development.* Throughout the thesis I will use the term change or innovation to refer to the former. Whereas I will not discuss the *major* ELT innovation in greater detail, I will refer to the change literature firstly at the level of policy and particularly in relation to curriculum innovation to shed light on the processes involved in managing change and particularly how they involve teachers.

2.3 Managing change

The change process has been characterised as complex, unstable, dynamic, multidimensional, intricate and moving in a cline between opposites such as order and chaos, process and product, intentional and unplanned (Wedell, 2009, Fullan,

2007, Lamie, 2005, Markee, 1997, Kennedy, 1988, Bolitho, 2012, Waters, 2009, Hayes, 2012a). Most of these features unfold in the process of managing change which comprises procedures occurring at different stages involving different stakeholders at the various levels where they operate. Keeping this dynamism in mind, Fullan (2007) proposed a conceptualisation of the change process as involving three stages; initiation, implementation and institutionalisation. He warns the reader though that such process is iterative since each stage feeds into previous and subsequent stages while being affected by numerous factors.

2.3.1 Initiating change

The initiation stage is the period when the idea of change is first conceived followed by discussions regarding its subsequent implementation and it can originate outside or inside the system aiming to affect. Thus, an idea involving teacher change may begin within schools where teachers operate as well as outside schools by ministry officials as in this study. Markee (1997) asserts 'immanent change' -originated and recognised internally- is the most likely to be successfully adopted since a sense of ownership is achieved in that those identifying the need for change and those proposing how to solve it come from the same social system (ibid) (Fullan, 2007, Rudduck, 1991). However, innovations started internally are rarely identified in practice.

Drivers for initiating curriculum change -particularly in ELT- can relate to economic, political and social forces as Wedell (2009) details below;

1. to enable the national educational system to better prepare its learners for a changing national and international reality
2. to make the education system more clearly accountable for the funding it receives
3. to increase equality of opportunity within society as a whole
4. to use the announcement of educational changes for some kind of short-term political advantage (2009:15-16)

In this study, similar forces as those proposed by Wedell (ibid) have been identified as driving the *major* innovation and teachers' professional development as a central

element for its achievement (Fullan, 2007). Thus teacher change can also be initiated from external economic, political and social forces.

Awareness of the scope of the change, consultation with those it will affect, careful planning of implementation issues and a long-term commitment are desirable elements during this phase before deciding whether to adopt or reject the change idea (Wedell, 2009, Waters and Vilches, 2001). Once an idea has been accepted, implementation issues will lead the agenda thus the change process will progressively move away from initiation towards implementation.

2.3.2 Implementing change

The implementation phase involves the first attempts and subsequent actions to put the innovation into practice and as such it demands attention to 'parts' and 'partners' of the educational system (Levin and Fullan, 2008). Wedell (2013) argues that such 'parts' of the ELT curriculum system comprise teacher education, assessment, materials and syllabuses. Partners include educational leaders, institutional leaders (locally), material and test writers, teacher educators, teachers, learners, parents and the wider community. Teacher education then is seen as one part of the system concerned with curriculum change but not just any part, Elliott (1991) argues 'there can be no curriculum development without teacher development' (1991:54) and teachers' role in such process is stressed by Fullan (2007); 'educational change depends on what teachers do and think - it's as simple and as complex as that' (2007:127). Teachers are then central to any educational change process and so is their development.

How the different innovation partners operate in the implementation process will depend on the nature of the change (what it proposes), scope (who it will affect directly and indirectly) and the implementation strategy used. In the change literature power-coercive, rational-empirical and normative-educative are the most cited strategies for managing change as drawn from the work of Chin and Benne (1969) (in Wedell, 2009, Markee, 1997, Lamie, 2005).

Power-coercive and rational-empirical strategies have a unidirectional view of change as happening from the centre to the periphery (or top to bottom) with central

management and control. Thus government officials at the top enforce changes on those at the bottom of educational structures in a hierarchical way usually with lack of involvement by those expected to implement the changes, particularly teachers. Innovations illustrating power-coercive strategies enforce change through policy using sanctions or rewards as the main influence (Wedell, 2009). Following a similar top-down approach empirical-rational strategies are based on the assumption that people will accept the change once proved it is beneficial, thus it is usually presented in a good light stressing the gains involved. Both strategies have been criticised for being overly objective since they ignore how different people at different levels experience change (Wedell, 2009, Markee, 1997). In the same vein Kennedy (1988) claims the personal, social and systemic factors of change are not easily influenced by research-driven innovations particularly if such complexity is not recognised. Overall, top-down approaches disregard the voice of those the change will affect and do not encourage their participation during implementation. Most importantly, top-down, policy-driven changes have not had a lasting effect on students' learning (Levin and Fullan, 2008).

In Figure 2.1 I attempt to illustrate how different stakeholders act in the implementation of the teacher change for PD explored in this study. This illustration proves useful to discuss how top-down approaches operate. Wedell explains this issue further;

> 'very broadly, 'people' working at 'primary' level are at the bottom of this hierarchy and people working in the better known, older universities are at the top.... where policy makers do tend to talk to anyone, it tends to be to 'educational experts' who, in a hierarchical system, are usually assumed by policy makers to be clustered in universities' (2009:23).

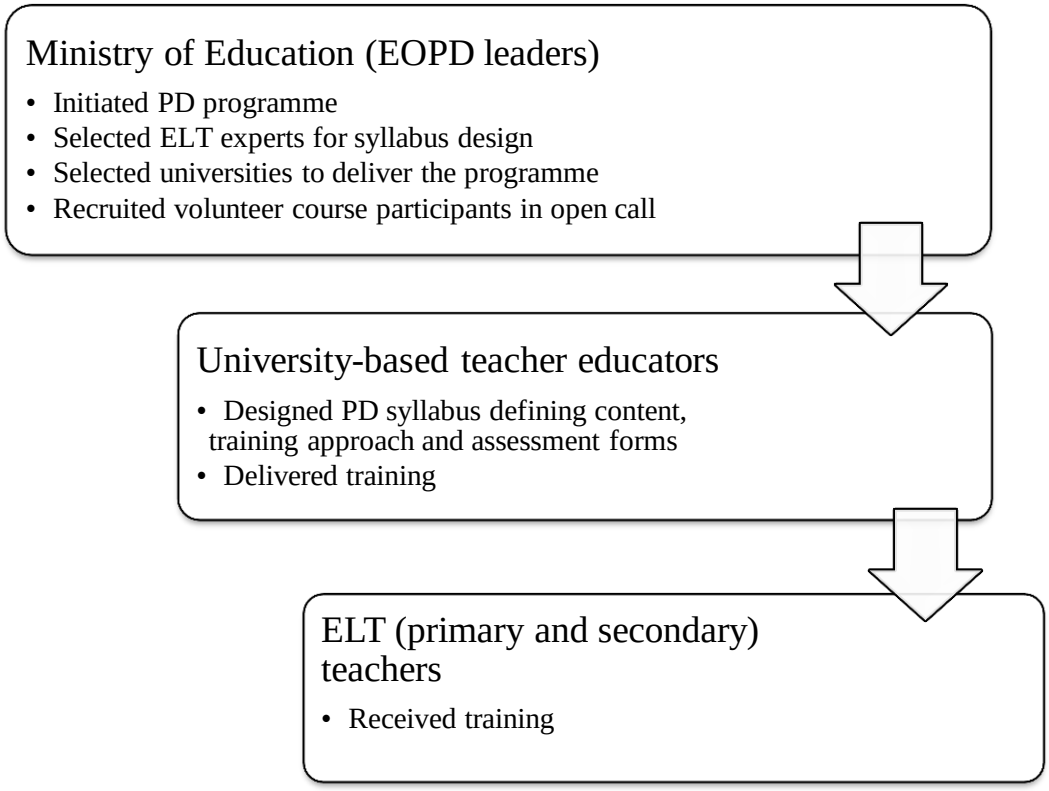

Figure 2.1 Stakeholders in the implementation process

The innovation approach illustrated in Figure 2.1 is typical of hierarchical cultures where stakeholders at each level seem to work in isolation from the rest of the system. The communication between them is mainly unidirectional. Thus, those working at the MoE devise PD initiatives and inform universities the INSET courses to be designed without further consultation from those it is aimed for whereas universities design and run courses disregarding the views of teachers, their experiences and work realities.

Innovations implementing top-down approaches are a common phenomenon though there is widespread agreement over the importance of participation of stakeholders at different levels of the system, particularly teachers (Wedell, 2003, Waters and Vilches, 2012, Torres, 2000, Carl, 2005, Kirk and MacDonald, 2001, Hayes, 2012a). Changes which focus on teachers and their development need to acknowledge their needs as well as school needs since teachers may not be willing to change if schools do not support such change (Lamie, 2002).

Participation of teachers in planning can be logistically challenging in a country like Chile (geography-wise). A solution for this comes from Wedell (2009) who proposes an strategy to involve teachers in educational planning (adapted from Goodson) which entails holding discussions at the initiation stage with representatives of creative and committed (also called 'vanguard') teachers and other 'vanguard' people at different levels who represent 10-20 percent of key participants at each level. This strategy would allow teachers to be more than mere recipients of a change initiative and take the role of key partners in the process. Wedell (2009) claims the benefits gained from stakeholders' participation surpasses any associated practical challenges it may cause. Similarly Torres (2000) argues that 'dialogue, alliance, consultation and consensus-building are steep and rocky roads demanding much time and effort. But the single-track road, however broad and well paved, has proved to lead nowhere' (2000:269).

An opposite bottom-up pattern is observed in normative-educative strategies which emphasize the role of the end user as the initiator of the change through the identification of a need (Kelly, 2009). This strategy explains how change can be introduced when a group of people adopt new behaviour (change) thus influencing their peers to follow. This approach involves participation and decision-making of those directly involved thus achieving the ownership lacking in top-down approaches. However, pitfalls have been associated to this strategy as it demands a substantial number of followers to make it policy. Additionally, it is believed to be ineffective for large-scale innovations (Waters, 2009). Fullan (2007) has called for an approach which combines top-down and bottom-up strategies since 'top-down change doesn't work because it fails to garner ownership, commitment, or even clarity about the nature of the reform. Bottom-up change .. does not produce success at any scale' (2007:11). Combining top-down with bottom-up approaches is also encouraged by Wedell (2009) who suggests a model for change where initiation and implementation may start at top structures by policy makers though adding constant participation and consultation at local levels allowing change adjustments to fit contextual variables. In addition, implementations stages must include constant monitoring or what Kennedy (1988) calls 'formative evaluation' to enable the provision of feedback to guide implementation throughout the process rather than towards its end.

As has been previously discussed, top-down approaches are still the norm in the educational change arena despite the proposition of alternative frameworks which may render better results (Wedell, 2009, Waters, 2009). Moreover, ELT innovations have often been characterised by ill-defined changes portraying fragmented processes lacking communication and consultation systems (Goh, 1999, Hayes, 2012a, Hu, 2002, Prapaisit de Segovia and Hardison, 2009). In this scenario, the potential realisation of Fullan's (2007) institutionalisation phase becomes utopian. Fullan has characterised institutionalisation as the stage when the innovation stops being new and becomes part of the norm. In this light, an innovation is institutionalised when it becomes practise which is sustained over time. For this to happen, efforts must be made to embed the innovation in the system and at the same time minimise any obstacles anticipated by outlining well thought-out implementation procedures. Furthermore, managers of the change must be involved throughout the process providing appropriate support and participation opportunities for teachers.

Some of the factors for innovations' lack of success -ergo their failed institutionalisation- include implementation strategies (such as those discussed above), external factors and the nature of the change itself. These factors will be discussed below.

2.3.3 Factors influencing change

Altrichter (2005) developed a comprehensive summary of factors which may influence change organised in four dimensions; local characteristics (regional administration, community characteristics, contextual stability); organization (actors – management, teachers, students' and other participants' competencies and attitudes, organizational characteristics); government and external agencies (quality of relationships between central and local actors, resource support and training) and characteristics of the innovation itself (need, clarity, complexity, quality, contextual suitability and practicality). This exhaustive list provides a glimpse of the complexity and multidimensional nature of innovations.

Many factors provided in this list re-appear in the discussion of change features or change characteristics identified in the literature. The degree of absence or presence

of these features can denote either positive or negative aspects of the innovation consequently becoming hindering or facilitating factors. In Table 2.1 I detail the different feature conceptualisations found in Fullan (2007), Lamie (2005) Stroller (2009) and Rogers (2003). From these conceptualisations, I will discuss the features pertinent for this study.

ROGERS (2003)	FULLAN (2007)	LAMIE (2005)	STROLLER (2009)
Relative advantage	Need	Relevance	Originality
Observability	Clarity	Knowledge	Visibility
Triability	Quality/Practicality	Feasibility	Explicitness
Complexity	Complexity	Compatibility	Flexibility
Compatibility			Complexity
			Compatibility

Table 2.1 Characteristics of change which may influence its impact

Relative advantage (Rogers, 2003) is the degree in which an innovation is perceived as better to the idea it precedes thus seen as gainful for its adopters. I would argue empirical-rational approaches of change stress this feature of an innovation to persuade potential users. A characteristic which may relate to advantage is relevance by Lamie (2005) and 'need' as proposed by Fullan (2007). An aspect of advantage which focused on teachers is what Kennedy (1988) calls the gain/loss calculation which refers to the potential costs and benefits associated with change for teachers such as heavier workloads as a loss or increased knowledge and skills as a benefit. Consequently, teachers may evaluate any proposed change based on such parameter thus determining its advantage. An example showing a negative side of relative advantage is reported by Lamb (1995) who described the low impact an INSET course had on Indonesian teachers' practices claiming one of the factors was the change approach adopted in view of the fact that it 'assumed that a clear explanation of the rationale behind the teaching approach we favoured would convince' (1995:74)

Another change feature is complexity and it is the degree to which an innovation is perceived as difficult to understand and use. Complexity is undesirable since its implies innovations are large in scope demanding the adjustment of other parts of the system such as new materials, assessment and teaching practices which involve new understandings and possibly a new set of beliefs. It usually concerns other actors such as curriculum developers, material writers, school authorities, teachers and possibly learners. An innovation of this kind is long-term and systemic. Fullan (2007) argues complex such changes demand but achieve more so instead of being discouraged they must be thoroughly planned by breaking them into smaller components to be managed in a progressive manner. However, a number of cases found in the literature about ELT curriculum innovation shows that complex innovation are common and usually change initiators' are not aware of such complexity or simply downplay this aspect (O'Donnell, 2005, Nunan, 2003, Wedell, 2003, Goh, 1999, more case studies in Tribble, 2012). Examples of complex changes in teacher education and PD programmes are less common though I would argue from experience that the fact they have not been documented does not mean they have not occurred. On the contrary, if curriculum change is so closely linked to teacher change (Fullan, 2007) then a complex innovation will also affect teachers. In this light, Hayes (2000) contributes to an understanding of the complexity of change in PD programmes in a case study based in Sri Lanka which describes how an INSET course was disjointed from practice thus failed to achieve the desires effects lacking in-school follow-up and teacher involvement revealing conflicting perspectives about effective PD forms.

Fullan (2007) asserts that when complex changes involving different parts of the system are proposed, 'what is being changed is the organizational culture itself' (p.93) since at different levels of the system people need to change their behaviours, attitudes and beliefs. He calls such deep multi-systemic change 'reculturing' and has argued it is long-term process.

Compatibility is the degree in which an innovation fits the existing values and practices of a given context. An innovation characterised as compatible will propose changes which match the norms of a social system and does not disregard them. Examples of incompatible innovations can frequently be found in the ELT curriculum reform literature reporting the encouragement of learner-centeredness in

countries where such approach contravenes long-standing teacher-centred educational traditions (Hu, 2002, Prapaisit de Segovia and Hardison, 2009). In PD programmes more specifically -although there is little discussion on the issue- similar lack of coherence has been reported resulting in failed attempts to promote teacher change (Lamb, 1995, Godfrey et al., 2008). Wedell (2003) argues that if the change proposed implies a major cultural shift, then support mechanisms must be in place to assist the parts and partners of the system.

The 'compatibility' feature of change as a determining factor in the change process is of prominence in the current study therefore it will be dealt with in more depth below.

2.4 Socio-cultural context and change

What happens inside the micro context of a classroom and its participants is highly influenced by what happens in the wider societal macro context (Holliday, 1994, Wedell and Malderez, 2013). In this light, any innovation proposed to affect those at the micro context will necessary demand consideration of the macro since educational processes do not take place in a vacuum (White, 1987).

The multi-dimensional nature of change and the interconnectedness of its systems are portrayed by Kennedy (1988) who proposed a framework to explain the hierarchical relationships of the systems at play in the process of change. He claims change is a systemic enterprise where a number of interrelated subsystems can be identified. His model is illustrated with onion rings each representing a system or network. Outer rings exert power over inner rings thus the cultural system would be highly influential followed by political, administrative, educational and institutional subsystems which in turn impact on the inner core subsystem where classrooms are located. Although Kennedy's cultural networks are hierarchically arranged, he later clarified that each network may influence each other since they are 'in a constant state of flux as contact triggers changes' (Kennedy and Kennedy, 1998:457). His framework has remained influential since it stresses the fact that no innovations can focus on classrooms without acknowledging the enormous influence that outer systems will impose and therefore change is 'bound to the social context in which it occurs' (Kennedy and Kennedy, 1996b:11). Similarly Hayes stresses the fact that

change is not culture-free 'but must be considered in relation to the context in which it is to be implemented' (Hayes, 2012b:59).

A more recent model proposed by Wedell & Malderez (2013) illustrates the complexity of context expanding Kennedy's (1988) hierarchical networks to a more detailed framework which identifies place, people and time as core elements of any context. At a macro level, place can be a region and at a micro level it can be a classroom. Here is where people operate as central components of a context who in turn add value and meanings to what they observe in a place. Thus, as indicated in Table 2.2, the 'invisible' dimension of such place or cultures are 'the result of meanings that unite people within these groups and within a society' (Wedell and Malderez, 2013:26).

Visible aspects of the context of '**Place**'		**Invisible** aspects of the context of '**Place**'
Classroom	**P**	Group dynamics
School/institution	**E**	Institutional culture
Village/Town/City/	**O**	Local attitudes
Region	**P**	Regional educational culture
Country	**L**	National educational culture and socio-political belief system
Part of the world	**E**	Balances of power and philosophical tradition
World		Human-ness
_____(At points in) **TIME**_____		

Figure 2.2 Context as Place: Visible and Invisible layers (Wedell & Malderez 2013)

Wedell and Malderez (2013) stress in their model that what happens in a classroom between teachers and students can be influenced both by its immediate micro layers such as the institutional culture and by the macro context such as the wider national educational culture. Overall, what their model illustrates is the multi-dimensional nature of context where people, place and time are fundamental elements and

existing micro and macro cultures influence people's beliefs and behaviours. Consequently, when large educational changes imply cultural changes, 'they have implications for the present and future actions and behaviours of large numbers of people both within education and outside it' (Wedell and Malderez, 2013:205-206).

Holliday (1992) contributes to a macro cross-cultural discussion by claiming that innovations that do not take into consideration the socio-cultural context where they are being applied, 'tissue rejection' is likely to occur. Holliday (ibid.) uses this term - borrowed from Hoyle (1970)- to describe what happens when a proposed change (the implanted innovation namely some form of teacher change) does not match the host institution (eg. the school setting where teachers work) causing its ineffective implementation. He argues 'tissue rejection' is usually the result of change initiators' failure to perceive 'informal orders' in other words what *really* happens in the host environment unlike the 'official version' or what *should* happen. This rhetoric versus reality tension seems to worsen when changes are proposed from the outside since ideas and theories imported from overseas do not commonly fit the existing socio-cultural norms of the host institution.

The work of Hofstede (1991) on characteristics of national cultures has been used for macro cultural analysis in an attempt to understand why imported theories result ineffective in certain contexts. From his research in the field of business Hofstede identifies five dimensions which categorise national cultures; the power-distance dimension; the collectivist-individual dimension; weak uncertainty avoidance cultures; masculine and feminine cultures; and short-term versus long-term orientation (ibid.). Kennedy (1988) argues that most of ELT theories have emerged from national cultures characterised by small-distance, individualist and tolerance-avoidance cultures which differ from the characteristics of the national cultures where attempts of curriculum innovation are being made. Lamie (2004) also claims the difference between national cultures may be an explanation of the lack of fit of some Western ideas. Lack of cultural fit is a recurrent factor which hinders adoption thus Carless claims 'the design of a culturally appropriate curriculum may be more effective than importing an overseas model' (1999:128), a view also supported by Kennedy & Kennedy who argue 'we should perhaps design around the context rather than impose a change on it' (1996a:360).

Regrettably, the examples of innovations which have effectively taken into consideration the contextual 'picture' described above are scarce (Wedell, 2012, Palmer, 2012). On the contrary, the literature suggests socio-cultural considerations although crucial are mostly neglected during the initiation and implementation process of change. In ELT most examples can be found in relation to curriculum changes particularly in those which promote more learner-centred classrooms and CLT (O'Donnell, 2005, Hayes, 2012b, Vavrus, 2009, Prapaisit de Segovia and Hardison, 2009, O'Sullivan, 2004, Zappa-Holman, 2007, Hu, 2002, Carless, 1999, Shamim, 1996). An innovation of that kind demands changes at all levels: materials, assessment, methodology but more so, a change in teacher-learner roles in the classroom which may contravene the existing -and sometimes deeply entrenched- educational norms.

In ELT change literature; there has been little discussion about the role of context in the process of teacher change except a few exceptions (Hayes, 1997, Bax, 1997, Shamim, 1996). Also reducing this deficiency, Katyal and Fai (2010) describe their exploration of teacher educators' perceptions of good practice in higher education in Hong Kong concluding that notions of good practice originating from constructivism are compromised when applied to a context where teacher-centeredness is still the norm in initial teacher education programmes. Lamb (1995) describes how the original input of an INSET course was reinterpreted by course participants to fit their beliefs and the educational norms of their context. Hayes (2012) emphasises the importance of acknowledging contextual issues in INSET when he pleas that MoE authorities 'would do well to devote more time and resources to re-imagining how teachers and schools operate, rather than simply assuming that the mere provision of INSET courses for teachers will yield the changes in teacher behaviour and thus student learning outcomes that they seek' (Hayes, 2012a:104)

Still on the role of contextual variables in change and particularly teacher change, one article merits attention for the purpose of this study. Padwad and Dixit (2010) provide an in-depth analysis of the Indian teacher education policy which calls for a paradigm shift from transmission to socio-constructivist views of teaching and learning suggesting reflective practice (RP henceforth) as the path for effective teaching. Their analysis focuses on a critical evaluation of the TE policy arguing that RP lacks validity and coherence in the Indian context. The authors claim this is

another example of top-down imported theory applied to TE policy which clashes with local contexts where RP is nonessential and ultimately unfeasible.

In mainstream educational PD literature, there is further agreement that the influence of context is crucial whether the focus is the individual teacher or the entire educational system (Guskey, 1994, Villegas-Reimers, 2003, Day and Sachs, 2004, Darling-Hammond, 1990). What matters here is not quantity of people or the involvement of different levels of the system but acknowledging that every individual is part of a culture which may positively or negatively impact on the change process since 'just as conditions in classrooms affect the ability of teachers to provide the best learning opportunities for students, so the school culture provides positive or negative support for its teacher' learning' (Day and Sachs, 2004:10)

For Guskey 'the key is to find the optimal mix of individual and organizational processes that will contribute to success in a particular context' (1994:11) adding there is no single appropriate approach to PD since it is a highly contextualized process.

The consequences of disregarding contextual realities in the change management process have been emphasized by Fullan (2007);

> 'The real crunch time comes in the relationships between these new programs or policies and the thousands of *subjective realities* embedded in people's individual and organisational contexts and their personal histories. How these subjective realities are addressed or ignored is crucial for whether potential changes become meaningful at the level of individual use and effectiveness' (2007:37 my italics).

Propositions which attempt to minimise this problem include taking a systemic approach to change (Kennedy, 1988, White, 1987), comprehensive analysis of the nature of the initiative and its effects and feasibility in a given context (Fullan, 2007), consideration of the 'invisible' and 'visible' aspects of change and building support systems when a cultural clash is likely to occur (Wedell, 2009, Wedell and Malderez, 2013). In the same vein, Holliday (1999) suggests the need to consider maximising 'cultural continuity which is achieved when meaningful bridges are built between the

culture of the innovation and the traditional expectations of the people with whom we work' (1999:169).

Hitherto, in my review of the literature I have discussed issues that the literature regards as influencing features of the change process and how they can influence its impact. Since the change explored in this study is included in a broader policy-driven innovation, I have discussed this process and the social-factors involved from the macro perspective of change management. I have drawn part of this review from the ample discussion in the ELT literature about the process of curriculum change. In what follows, I will look at the process of change focused on the teacher and how it relates to the notion of professional development. At this stage I would like to clarify that I view the processes of curriculum change and teacher change closely interconnected which for purposes of clarity and textual organisation are examined and discussed separately. Furthermore I agree with Stenhouse when he asserts that 'although curriculum development and teacher development are often treated as separate issues, they are in fact indivisible' (Stenhouse 1975 in Markee, 1997:4).

2.5 Teacher change and PD

It may be appropriate at this point to restate that the innovation studied here focuses on teachers and their development. To be precise, the change under study is the *development of reflective practice, critical thinking, problem-solving and inquiry attitudes through AR engagement aiming at ELT teachers' own professional development.*

The relationship between change and development has at times been misconstrued by those who think that asking teachers to change necessarily means they are not doing something right. However, others have claimed teacher change relates to teacher development in many ways arguing that when teachers develop, they change (Fullan and Hargreaves, 1992, Guskey, 2002, Kennedy, 2005, Freeman, 1992, Clarke and Hollingsworth, 2002). Evidently, any initiative either shaped as INSET or part of a long-term PD programme seeks some form of positive change and the extent of such change will vary. Freeman (1989) indicates that changes do not mean doing something differently and describes the following aspects of change;

- First, change can mean a change in awareness. Change can be an affirmation of current practice.
- Second, change is not necessarily immediate or complete. Indeed some changes occur over time, with the collaborator serving only to initiate the process.
- Third, some changes are directly accessible by the collaborator and thereafter quantifiable, whereas others are not.
- Finally, some types of change can come to closure and others are open-ended (Freeman, 1989).

Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002) also contribute to the discussion by claiming change can have multiple interpretations which in turn underpin different notions of professional development. They identify six perspectives on teacher change;

- Change as training – change is something that is done to teachers; that is, teachers are 'changed'.
- Change as adaptation – teachers 'change' in response to something; they adapt their practices to changed conditions.
- Change as personal development – teachers 'seek change' in an attempt to improve their performance or develop additional skills or strategies.
- Change as local reform – teachers 'change something' for reasons of personal growth.
- Change as systemic restructuring – teachers enact the 'change policies' of the system.
- Change as growth or learning – teachers 'change inevitably through professional activity'; teachers are themselves learners who work in a learning community. (2002:948)

The authors assert they adhere to the perspective of 'change as growth or learning' and argue views of teacher change as training have proved to be inefficient.

2.5.1 Training and development

There is extensive discussion in the literature about a paradigm shift in teacher education from a transmission to a constructivist view of teacher development (Roberts, 1998, Wallace, 1991, Jacobs and Farrell, 2001, Darling-Hammond, 1990,

Crandall, 2000). In a more traditional paradigm, PD has been thought of something done by other *to* or *for* teachers (Johnson, 2009). Thus, teachers were seen as recipients of knowledge from experts with little choice from teachers about how to regulate and promote their own development.

The concept of 'training' has been associated with INSET -usually used as synonyms- and a delivery model (Dadds, 1997) which is based on the assumption that teachers are 'delivered' something from experts. Additionally, much training assumes a 'deficit' model where the training is needed to address a perceived weakness in teachers or when they are considered to underperform (Sandholtz, 2002, Avalos, 2007). This former view corresponds to a top-down strategy where those in superior positions particularly policy makers impose teacher change whereas teachers remain accepting to innovations which directly affect them. On this point, Kennedy adds 'the training model provides an effective way for dominant stakeholders to control and limit the agenda, and places teachers in a passive role as recipients of specific knowledge' (Kennedy, 2005:238)

Those who criticise the training approach to PD argue it reflects a skill-based and technocratic view of teaching which no longer exists. However, there are those who argue there is room for training particularly in initial education courses and for specific purposes such as the use of new software (Richards and Farrell, 2005, Mann, 2005). Although teachers have not claimed favouring a training approach to INSET, it has been identified as the most frequent source of change (Richards et al., 2001, Sandholtz, 2002).

Proposing an alternative perspective, development is associated with constructivists views of learning which emphasize how teachers construct and generate knowledge thus shaping their beliefs and practices (Jacobs and Farrell, 2001). The role of experience is stressed as an important part of development as teachers make sense and interpret new knowledge in order to make it fit their existing teaching theories (Roberts, 1998).

2.5.2 Defining PD

The notion of professionalism in the concept of PD is claimed to mean 'taking responsibility for identifying and attempting to meet the professional development needs of oneself and one's institution' (Craft, 2000:7). For Hargreaves (2000) being a professional relates to status, improved quality and high standards though he argues concepts of professionalism are not universal or eternal. He asserts teacher professionalism has gone through changes so four ages can be identified. He suggests we are currently living in the post-professional era when due to the marketisation of education, teachers' working conditions have worsened, unions have weakened and their active involvement has been greatly reduced. This has resulted in a de-professionalisation which has lowered the status of teachers. In such climate 'the profession generally is subjected to public blaming, shaming and intrusive inspection' (2000:169). In section 1.2 I have reported a similar situation occurring in Chile which has recently been intensified by the current educational crisis (Avalos, 2007, Inzunza et al., 2011, Belleï and Valenzuela, 2010, Avalos, 2001). Similar issues to those described by Hargreaves (2000) have been identified in the Chilean context such as a low status of the teaching profession, heavy workloads, general public blaming and increasing supervision which may be followed up by standardisation of teaching and teachers. These issues are in turn causing demoralization, stagnation and teachers leaving the profession (Belleï and Valenzuela, 2010).

The terms staff development, teacher development, continuous professional development and professional development can be found in the second language teacher education (SLTE hereafter) literature used distinctively and others interchangeably. Whereas staff development is seen as being used at organizational levels, continuous professional development (henceforth CPD) has been used at institutional levels particularly in school settings (Mann, 2005). On the other hand, teacher development has a dual focus; on the personal and professional side of teachers.

In mainstream education, Evans (2002) claims there is no clear definition of PD in the literature since as I mentioned before, different terms are used to mean different or similar things causing problematic confusions about its meaning and purpose

(Friedman and Phillips, 2004). She argues that 'the absence of shared understanding is a problem that manifests itself as: threatened construct validity, difficulties in establishing the parameters of the field of study, and difficulties in identifying the teacher development process' (Evans, 2002:128). Still, the most well-known and cited definition of PD is proposed by Day (1999) which has also been used to inform PD policy in Chile (Ministerio de Educación, 2002);

> 'Professional development consists of all natural learning experiences and those conscious and planned activities which are intended to be of direct or indirect benefit to the individual, group or school and which contribute, through these, to the quality of education in the classroom. It is the process by which, alone and with others, teachers review, renew and extend their commitment as change agents to the moral purposes of teaching and by which they acquire and develop critically the knowledge, skills and emotional intelligence essential to good professional thinking planning and practice with children, young people and colleagues through each phase of their teaching lives' (1999:34).

In addition, Guskey's proposes a definition of PD which adds an element which has before been implicit in other conceptualisations of PD by asserting that 'PD is defined as those processes and activities designed to enhance the professional knowledge, skills, and attitudes of educators so that they might, in turn, *improve the learning of students*' (2000:16 my italics). Here, the explicit reference to students' learning makes it the ultimate goal of PD -although he uses 'may' cautiously to avoid indicating a direct relationship between PD and students' learning and expresses a possible outcome instead. Indeed, effective PD activities have been claimed to enhance students' learning. Villegas-Reimers (2003) details a number of studies which assert there is a correlation between PD and students learning when such activities have allowed improved instruction (Darling-Hammond 1990, Borko & Putman 1995, Falk 2001 in Villegas-Reimers 2003). Guskey (2002) argues that in fact what attracts teachers into PD is becoming better teachers and consequently improving student's learning.

In her review of the PD literature Villegas-Reimers (2003) suggests the paradigm shift from training to development described above gave birth to a new way of looking at PD which encompasses the following characteristics;

1. *It is based on constructivism* rather than transmission where the teacher is treated as an active learner who is engaged in refection, assessment, observation, etc.
2. It is a *long-term* process as it acknowledges teachers learn over time.
3. It is *a process that takes place within a particular context*.
4. It is *intimately linked to school reform* so it has to be in connection to and by supported by that setting.
5. *A teacher is conceived as a reflective practitioner*
6. *It is a collaborative process* involving interaction within the entire educational community
7. *Professional development may look and be very different in diverse settings*. There is no one better model of PD (2003:13-55 italics in original).

In Villegas-Reimers' list, the notion of PD as highly contextualised emerges once again to emphasize that all those initiates proposed to promote teachers' PD depend on where they takes place, they purpose in that setting and the systemic support they demand.

Mann proposes a definition which is specific for the language teacher denominated language teacher development (LTD henceforth);

> 'Language teacher development is a bottom–up process and as such can be contrasted with top–down staff development programmes; values the insider view rather than the outsider view; is independent of the organisation but often functioning more successfully with its support and recognition; is a continuing process of becoming and can never be finished; is a process of articulating an inner world of conscious choices made in response to the outer world of the teaching context; is wider than professional development and includes personal, moral and value dimensions; can be encouraged and integrated in both training and education programmes' (Mann, 2005:105).

This comprehensive definition stresses the self-oriented nature of LTD unlike organizational notions. Whereas using the PD denomination, Richards and Farrell (2005) also emphasize development involves a bottom-up process directed to personal and organisational goals. Institutional perspectives of PD are commonly based on curriculum changes, new adopted ideas, innovation, or new standards. This view of PD 'is intended to directly or indirectly enhance the performance of the institution as a whole, as well as to contribute incidentally to the teacher's individual development'(Richards and Farrell, 2005:10)

Malderez and Wedell (2007) claim that when planning PD activities, it is necessary to unpack the goals of the programme and particularly what they call 'the goals of teacher learning'(2007:7). They suggest five categories which I summarise below:

1. 'Good' teachers': The focus here is on teachers developing their identity as teachers in a holistic way. They are kind, knowledgeable, patients, caring who develop personal relationships with their students.
2. Teachers who are 'good at teaching': Unlike 1 the focus here is on teachers developing their craft, on teaching as an activity. These teachers are creative, flexible, willing to experiment, able to manage the multifunctional nature of teaching.
3. Teaching professionals: These teachers have high-status, are accountable, up-dated, collegial, highly-qualified, flexible, well-informed and active participants of ELT professional bodies.
4. Teachers as reflective practitioners: These teachers constantly observe and inquire about their students, themselves and their practice. They critically analyse their context and their profession thus make informed decisions about their practise.
5. Technicists: Teachers who strictly follow the syllabus and schools plans. They execute schools procedures as instructed and therefore are accountable.

The authors assert such goals are not exclusive but closely connected. Regardless of the theory of learning they reflect –behaviourism or social-constructivism- and the value being given to any of them in a given setting, 'contextually specific views of education as a whole influence which of the ultimate goals for teacher learning is likely to be most prevalent as well as what exactly is considered as 'good' (Malderez

and Wedell, 2007:8). Consequently, teachers' attitudes, skills and knowledge to be developed as a result of a PD programme in one context will differ from another based on the goal of teacher learning it proposes.

What is important to add to the discussion of PD are the characteristics associated to effective PD activities. In mainstream education, Guskey (2000) suggests the following;

- A clear focus on learning and learners
- An emphasis on individual and organizational change
- Small changes guided by a grand vision
- Ongoing professional development that is procedurally embedded

In addition, Richards and Farrell (2005) suggest different activities which support teachers' PD which vary according to their perspective as Table 2.3 indicates.

Individual	One-to-one	Group-based	Institutional
Self-monitoring	Peer coaching	Case studies	Workshops
Journal writing	Peer observation	Action research	Action research
Critical incidents	Critical friendships	Journal writing	Teacher support groups
Teaching portfolios	Action research	Teacher support groups	
Action research	Critical incidents		
	Team teaching		

Table 2.2 Activities for teacher development (Richards & Farrell 2005:14)

Notably, AR appears as a PD activity suitable to be developed at every level, something which will be discussed in more detail in 2.8.

2.5.3 Models of teacher change

Fullan & Hargreaves (1992:7) claims PD "involves more than changing teachers' behaviour ... it also involves changing the person the teacher is". What they argue here is that PD is both a professional and personal endeavour –as many definitions of PD stress- which must also be oriented to teachers' attitudes and beliefs. For clarity purposes, attitudes will be defined here as 'a stance toward self, activity, and others that links intrapersonal dynamics with external performance and behavior' (Freeman, 1989) and beliefs as 'statements teachers made about their ideas, thoughts, and knowledge that are expressed as evaluations of what should be done, should be the case and is preferable' (Basturkmen at. al. 2004 in Borg, 2006c:47). Consequently, any PD programme needs to focus on those aspects particularly if the ultimate goal is to enhance students' learning. In this light, Guskey (2002) proposed a model of teacher change which rejects former notions of teacher change. In his view, the traditional model of teacher change usually follows the sequence in Figure 2.3 which illustrates the implicit model of change where INSET influences changes in beliefs, followed by changes in practices resulting in students' outcomes.

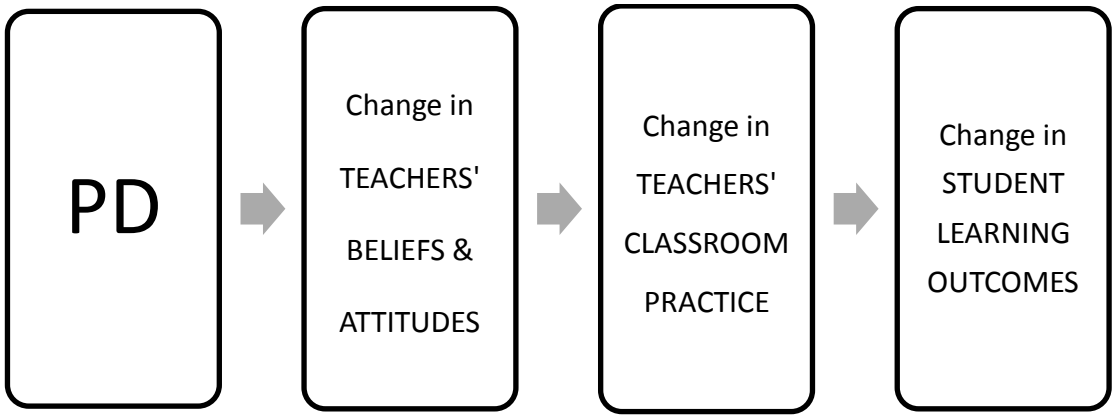

Figure 2.3 Implicit model of teacher change

In opposition to this model, Guskey (2002) alleges teachers' primal interest is students' learning therefore, any change in their beliefs would depend on the effect the innovation has on students' performance, he stresses that 'it is important to note that, for the vast majority of teachers, becoming a better teacher means enhancing student learning outcomes' (ibid:384). Figure 2.4 depicts how teachers' attitudes and beliefs will only change after they observe evidence of students' learning. Thus, 'the crucial point is that it is not the professional development per se, but the experience

of successful implementation that changes teachers' attitudes and beliefs' (2002:383).

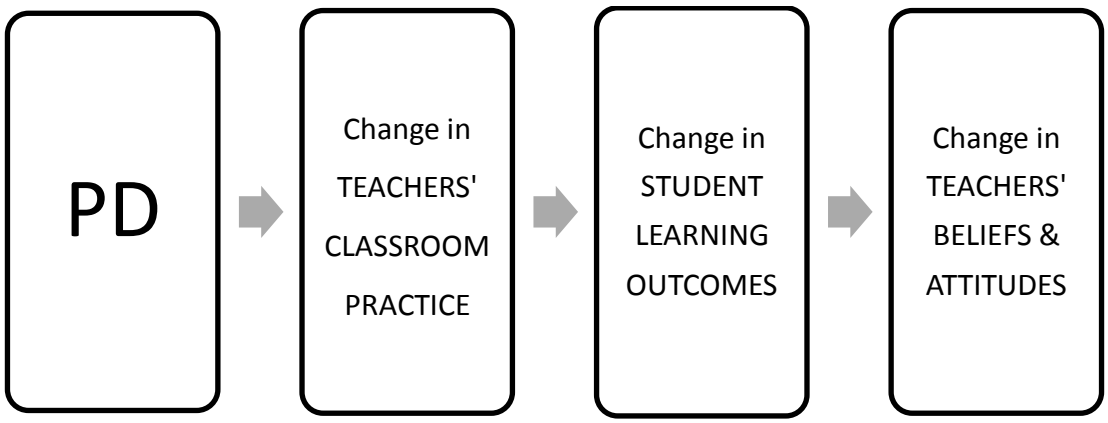

Figure 2.4 Guskey's model of teacher change

The implications of this model regarding PD programmes include the careful planning of initiatives which include sufficient time for teachers to try out innovations gradually. Another implication is that inclusion of feedback systems which inform teachers about learners' progress are desirable. Finally, it stresses the need for ongoing support.

However, Guskey's model has been criticized for portraying teacher change as a linear process. In response to such criticism Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002) elaborated an alternative model denominated 'interconnected model of professional growth' which locates learning as a central feature in the process of teacher change. Unlike Guskey's model they highlight the non-linear but iterative nature of teacher change which is characterized by cycles of reflection and enactment between the new input, teachers' knowledge and beliefs, their experimentation and the outcomes of such experimentation. In their view, teacher change is a learning process caused by reflection and enactment resulting in growth. Notably, they claim their model 'suggests that the spiral of action research as undertaken by many teacher researchers can be seen as the formalization of a learning process intrinsic to teacher professional growth' (Clarke and Hollingsworth, 2002:969).

The notion of action research as promoting teacher development is the focal point of this study and will be discussed in detail below.

2.6 Teachers as researchers

According to Borg (2010b), the notion of teacher research (henceforth TR) is an umbrella term which encompasses concepts such as practitioner research and action research whereas classroom research often linked to TR relates to research conducted *in* classroom –and not necessarily by teachers. Furthermore, practitioner research refers to inquiry performed by people to explore their own practices; therefore it is not exclusive to teachers or any other professional in the area of education. For the purpose of this study, I will however concentrate on the general principles of teacher research and in further detail on action research.

Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999), who are leading authors in the field of teacher research in the U.S. provide a definition of teacher research;

> 'in the broadest possible sense to encompass all forms of practitioner inquiry that involve systematic, intentional, and self-critical inquiry about one's work in K-12, higher education, or continuing education classrooms, schools, programs, and other formal educational settings. This definition includes inquiries that others may refer to as action research, practitioner inquiry, teacher inquiry, teacher *or* teacher educator self-study and so on but does not necessarily include *reflection* or other terms that refer to being thoughtful about one's educational work in ways that are not necessarily systematic or intentional' (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1999:22 italics in original).

Interestingly, in the previous definition the authors propose what teacher research *is* and also what it is *not* as a way to avoid the common confusion of teacher research with other processes involved in inquiry such as reflection.

Lankshear and Knobel (2004) put forward a definition of TR claiming teacher-researchers are 'classroom practitioners at any level, from preschool to tertiary, who are involved individually or collaboratively in self motivated and self-generated systematic and informed inquiry undertaken with a view to enhancing their vocation as professional educators' (2004:9)

Finally, Borg (2010b) proposes the following definition of teacher research as

> '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' (2010b:395).

Borg's definition adds a broader purpose to TR –inform policy advancements- as well as the aspect of dissemination which has also been proposed by Stenhouse (1981) who defines research as 'systematic inquiry made public' (in McKernan, 1996).

Lawrence Stenhouse has been identified as the main figure in the TR movement by coining the term 'teacher-as-researcher'. For Stenhouse, the main goal of teacher research is curriculum development. This 'bottom-up' reform stresses the importance of curriculum being developed from where it takes place, at classrooms. In this light, curriculum development becomes a result of teachers' reflections from practice through the inquiry process they engage in. In his view, this process will promote the building of theories with the collaboration of full-time researchers. Curriculum development is achieved by observing typical everyday classroom practices which can help teachers see patterns to be connected to others. Such observation can be shared in form of dialogues where teachers reflect on practice so developments in curriculum can be made (Lankshear and Knobel, 2004, McKernan, 1996).

According to Elliot (1991) 'the act of curriculum theorizing is not so much the application in the classroom of theory learned in the academy as is the generation of theory from attempts to change curriculum practice in the school' (in Zeichner and Noffke, 2001:11). Claiming the importance of teachers in such enterprise Stenhouse stated that 'all well-founded curriculum research and development… is based on the study of classrooms. It thus rests on the work of teachers'(Stenhouse, 1975:143).

Freeman (1998) claimed TR was in the past a foreign activity for teachers since they had allowed researchers to build theories outside the classrooms to inform what they do inside them so 'have left it to others to define the knowledge that forms the

official basis of teaching'(p.13). He appealed teachers to become actively involved with what happens in their classrooms not only at the level of doing things for their learners (the teaching itself) but also enquiring about what may or may not happen as a result of their teaching (learning or absence of learning), stresses the importance of teachers shifting their role from consumers to producers of knowledge. In doing so, teachers will be developing what Freeman calls a discipline of teaching (ibid.). Therefore, the notion of teachers as researchers calls teachers to take a role they are ideally situated to carry out. The knowledge teachers can gain in this new role as researchers is not only contextualized to their particular classroom but can also be of public use for a wider educational community and it is valuable and legitimate (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1992, Schön, 1983).

2.7 Action Research (AR)

The main focus of this study is the action research module contained in an in-service course part of a national PD programme for Chilean English teachers. In the course syllabus, AR was a cross-modular component seen as a vehicle for critical thinking, inquiry attitudes to assist teachers in their decision-making processes thus improving their teachers' practices. The role of AR for PD has been discussed in the literature particularly in relation to a paradigm shift from transmissive to constructivist notions of SLTE (Burns, 2005).

2.7.1 Defining AR

At word level, unequivocally one may assume that because of its name there is some research and action involved and it may be mistaken for some form of applied research. While it does share some features of such a field, AR supposes an intervention in a given situation and the involvement of those taking part, classroom teachers in this case, rather than external researchers.

Corey who was the initiator of the AR methodology in educational settings in the US, emphasizing its 'scientific' nature in order to stress the rigorousness of the approach by stating that 'it is a process in which practitioners study problems scientifically so that they can evaluate, improve and steer decision-making and practice' (Corey 1953 in Cohen et al., 2007:297). Whereas Corey's definition was

very influenced by the empirical approaches of its time , some stress its intention to improve practice and its reflective nature by defining it as 'a form of disciplined inquiry, in which a personal attempt is made to understand, improve and reform practice' (Hopkins 1985 in Cohen et al., 2007:297). The potential of AR to assist teachers in understanding their practice is highlighted by Altrichter et al. (2008:i) in their definition; 'action research is a method used by teachers and other professionals to improve their understanding of their practice situations, and as a way to generate knowledge about practice'.

In Cohen et. al.'s definition of AR as a 'small-scale intervention in the functioning of the real world and a close examination of the effects of such an intervention'(2007:297), the element of change or action of AR, as expressed in its name, is stressed as its key feature which is described here as 'intervention'.

In the area of language education, Wallace's definition of AR as 'the systematic collection and analysis of data relating to the improvement of some aspect of professional practice', stresses its methodology and call for improvement (Wallace, 1998:1).

A definition of AR that tends to recur in the literature is the one provided by Carr and Kemmis (1986) which states that 'action research is simply a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own practices, their understanding of these practices, and the situations in which the practices are carried out' (Carr & Kemmis 1986:162). Even though this definition was not envisioned for language education, it still provides a very thorough description of what the term entails. Authors who have written about action research in the language education field such as Burns (2010) also uses such definition to explain its meaning. She states that AR involves the interaction of two activities: *action* which is located in the setting where an improvement would be brought about and *research* which locates in the systematic observation and analysis of the changes put in place. In addition, Burns (1999) uses the term 'collaborative action research' in her publication to stress the element of collaboration in the kind of AR she proposed arguing AR in isolation has been considered as to be likely to have a 'reduced action' (Burns, 199; Elliot, 1991). This feature of AR has been pervasive in the literature and viewed as a central

requirement of the approach (Carr and Kemmis, 1986). This collaboration which may include colleagues, school authorities and in Stenhouse's view also full-time researchers, is seen as help for the researcher-teacher to make sense of the observations carried out. Furthermore, Kemmis and McTaggart talk about 'group reflection' to stress this aspect Cohen et al. (2007) which McKernan expands by stating that cooperative work among teachers provides a valuable opportunity for professional development since 'through initial and in-service work and collaborative projects in real classroom settings, teachers would learn the joy and intellectual pleasure of working on real problems' (1996, p.36)

Despite this, I think considering collaboration as a characteristic of AR can exclude many individual projects which follow the AR methodology. I certainly value the role of collaboration in AR but there is no clarity in the literature that research which is done in isolation cannot be called such. Undoubtedly, it is beneficial for the researcher-teacher to count on collaboration from other stakeholders involved, but I am uncertain if the lack of such collaboration can weaken and/or limit the effect of AR in such contexts. In fact, Burns (1999) while considering collaboration and participation as indispensable in AR processes, she does not consider it a determining feature of AR (see also Borg, 2006b). Overall therefore, it seems that the participative and collaborative character of AR correspond to a 'desirable feature' more than to an underlying principle.

Nunan (1990) stated that unless applied research which is rigorous and more interested in obtaining generalisable scientific knowledge, AR is more concerned with a direct contribution to solve problems in a particular situation and less with theory building. He continues to pose his interest in AR as a tool to 'contribute to professional development, particularly in encouraging self-directed teachers, who are capable, through action research, of furthering their own professional self-development' (1990:64). On a similar vein Richards and Farrell (2005) define AR as teacher-conducted classroom research that seeks to clarify and resolve practical teaching issues and problems' (2005:171).

Origins of AR

Kurt Lewin, a social psychologist, has been widely credited for coining the term action research in 1948 since he provided an elaborated theory to support it (McKernan, 1996). Although he did not come from an educational background, educators identified its potential and it gradually developed to what it is today.

Dewey's arguments against a separation of theory and practice set the basis for teacher research and action research in particular along with the notion of practitioners moving from being consumers to producers of research. In his view, scientific enquiry was better served if shaped by context and applied in practice and not restricted to academic researchers (Hammersley, 2004). Dewey's views of democracy and the need for learning to be grounded in experience can also be related to the origins of AR and particularly of the work of Lewin. As a social psychologist, Lewin identified the potential of using social science to address social problems. In his view, learning can become active when participants of an organization solve their own problems through experimentation. His goal at the time was to enhance the productivity of workers by testing an intervention based on a theoretical framework. Therefore, his model of AR was mainly oriented to problem-solving in work places.

Lewin's main interest was to promote participation, emancipation and self-management by arguing that not only experts or outsiders can bring out improvement.

2.7.2 The AR cycle

Action research involves as series of steps which are not followed in a linear way but is a rather spiral or cyclical process which can be rather messy at times. Two steps of the cycle may be in place simultaneously or when teachers may take a step back in the process and then take a different direction to move on. Several cycle models have been offered in the literature which attempt to provide an account of the procedures involved in AR. Whereas it has been discussed that such attempts may not portray accurately what really takes place, AR has evolved and its theorists have provided different views on its cycle, but viewed as a less linear and more

unpredictable one which usually involves some form of planning, acting, observing and reflecting.

The most commonly cited cycle was devised by Kemmis and McTaggart (in Burns 1999) and identifies four stages as follows:

- Plan: based on prior observations, a plan of action is devised which will include possible difficulties to encounter, material needed and strategies to develop it.
- Action: Implementation of plan keeping track of possible deviations from original plan.
- Observation: Using different techniques such as for data collection such as class notes, journals, interviews, questionnaires, snapshots, recordings and other supporting documents.
- Reflection: Critical thinking involved about challenges encountered, positive observations, further improvements and actions. Evaluative and descriptive account of the action and changes observed.

For ELT contexts, Nunan (1990) also developed a cycle which described seven stages which comprise similar steps as above, but include initial observation stages to determine the problem to be solved and more detailed observation steps before the action and after the plan stages.

1. Problem identification, survey and observation of current situation.
2. Record of previous observations
3. Change identification (to solve problem stated in 1)
4. Change implementation.
5. Observations of change implementation.
6. Record observations as in step 2.
7. Compare records in 2 and 6 to determine results.

Also in ELT and through her involvement in AR projects with teachers in Australia, Burns (1999) suggested 11 stages which emerged from her observations and talks with teachers; 1. exploring 2. identifying 3. planning 4. collecting data 5. analyzing/reflecting 6. hypothesizing/speculating 7. intervening 8. observing 9. reporting 10. writing 11. presenting. This extensive list seems to include actual

activities (such as collecting data) with mental processes such as speculating which in previous lists does not appear explicitly stated. It also adds an initial exploration stage and a final reporting and writing stage which indicates her view of the process involves dissemination of findings through reports.

2.7.3 Types of AR

The AR literature provides categorisations which highlight different kinds of AR in terms of goals, scope and processes (Burns, 2005, McKernan, 1996, Noffke, 1997). One of them, and probably the most frequently discussed distinguishes three models; technical, practical and emancipatory. Since these schools of AR have been identified as the best known views of AR in the literature, I will discuss them in more detail below.

AR for problem-solving; the technical model

Lewin (1948) argued that 'research that produces nothing but books will not suffice' (in McKernan, 1996:10) to stress the role of research as a way to assist in the solution of social problems and not only to produce theories. He believed in the importance of social science for causing change, improvement through action and deemed empirical evidence to be central for understanding social practices.

For Lewin, AR was a means of systematic enquiry which enabled all the participants to achieve greater effectiveness through democratic participation. Thus, Lewin stated that social problems should be resolved through the participation of those affected. He was concerned with minority groups achieving independence, equality and co-operation and the analysis of connections between power and knowledge as well of racial, gender and economic issues (Rearick and Feldman, 1999). However, Adelman claims that ‘Lewin's ideas on democratic participation in the workplace did not include any critique of the wider society’ (1993:10) which is an important feature of the emancipatory model described later on. In addition, McKernan (1996) asserts unlike other types of AR technical action research involves the participation of researchers whereas as teachers act as facilitators. In this light, researchers keep an authoritative figure since they determine the framework and direct the research process.

Lewin's model of action research consisted of spiral steps of analysis, fact-finding (or reconnaissance) and execution which were later understood and interpreted as an AR cycle of planning, acting, observing, and evaluation of action or reflecting (McNiff and Whitehead, 2002).

Although Lewin did not come from an educational background, others identified the potential of AR for use in education. Such is the case of Corey who borrowed the term and took it to the field of education arguing the important role of teachers in researching their own classroom to solve practical problems.

Due to its orientation towards solving problems, this model of AR has been considered of less value in comparison to the practical and emancipatory model since it does not seek to understand the problem arisen nor the solutions found (Altrichter et al., 2008). Its language was also considered positivistic and therefore having a limited view of reality. This is due to its description of research methods using mathematical work and laboratories, thus labelled scientific and rational as well as technical (Carr and Kemmis, 1986, McKernan, 1996). However, those judgments are not shared across the literature and must be taken cautiously.

The practical model of AR

Even though Stenhouse did not use the term action research in his work, he and Elliot originated the teacher-as-researcher movement which is considered to be related with the principles of practical AR in the educational arena. This model of AR has been denominated practical because it aims not only to solve problems but also, in comparison with Lewin´s model, to understand the situation where they take place. In Stenhouse and Elliot's view, the main goal of teacher research is curriculum development which originates from teachers' reflections of practice through an inquiry process.

The bottom-up reform which proposed curriculum change starting from teachers instead of education authorities proposed by Stenhouse, stressed the importance of curriculum being developed from where it takes place, at classrooms. Claiming the importance of teachers in such enterprise Stenhouse stated that 'all well-founded curriculum research and development… is based on the study of classrooms. It thus rests on the work of teachers' (Stenhouse, 1975:143).

Stenhouse claims that the characteristics of a teacher-as-researcher should include:

- the commitment to systematic questioning of one's own teaching as a basis for development;
- the commitment and the skills to study one's own teaching;
- the concern to question and to test theory in practice by the use of those skills; (Stenhouse, 1975:144)

His view of teachers as extended professionals, proposes research as a path for the professional development of teachers. The contributions and main goals of AR as seen by followers of Stenhouse and Elliott, depend on the context where it takes place. It can engage teachers in problem-solving, improvement of practice and curriculum restructuring as well as a means of encouraging professional development when used in teacher education programmes and/or university credit bearing courses (Altrichter et al., 2008).

Elliott sees the potential of collaborative AR for teachers to understand and analyze their practice for subsequent generation of critiques to curriculum structures. He acknowledges the importance of individual reflections but also stresses the role of collaboration through a research-teacher partnership to enhance the impact of the research activity. For Elliot, if AR takes place in isolation, teachers can 'reduce action research to a form of technical rationality aimed at improving their technical skills' (Elliott, 1991:55). In these words, he claims the importance of extending AR beyond problem-solving so that the collective reflective phases teachers engage in can serve for curriculum development, otherwise, the real benefit of AR for broader educational settings can be minimised.

The emancipatory model

I see this form of AR as evolving from the work of Stenhouse's notion of teachers' empowerment and extended professionalism and from Lewin's ideas of empowerment and democratic participation.

This model has also been called critical AR due to its connection to critical theory developed by Habermas whose model states that action and theory are mediated through the development of critique. In this light, priority is given to a critique of

practices in order to achieve understanding. It is important to state that such critique is not only addressed to one's own practice but also to society as a whole and to practices which can impede justice and equality (Rearick and Feldman, 1999). Both Lewin and Carr & Kemmis' work had clear social agendas and their views of AR are intrinsically political, seeking more democratic forms of education by demanding the participation of all those involved; teachers, parents, learners and school authorities. Carr & Kemmis' interest in society and call for emancipation becomes clear in their definition of AR as

> 'a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own social or educational practices, their understanding of these practices, and the situations in which the practices are carried out' (Carr and Kemmis, 1986:162).

Their view can be seen as resembling Lewin's, however Lewin was concerned with achieving productivity in workplaces through democratic participation, whereas Carr & Kemmis were more interested in promoting critiques to social structures through collaboration. In addition Carr & Kemmis, in their definition of AR, influenced by the work of Schön (1983), also argue for individual reflective enquiry. This is another point of divergence with Lewin's work since he stressed the importance of group reflection over an individual reflective stance which he believed downplayed the role of democratic participation.

I would argue that published accounts found of AR in Chile and its theoretical underpinnings are mainly in line with emancipatory AR. The only known and published evidence of some form of research conducted by teachers in Chile is the journal *Docencia* produced by the Colegio de Profesores (Teachers' Union). The research projects presented in this journal are highly political in nature and are mainly oriented towards curriculum change, improvement of educational policies and broader social issues (Montecinos, 2009). However, there is little information in such accounts whether the main researcher was a teacher educator, an academic or a classroom teacher.

My position with regards to these three different kinds of AR is that their goals vary from personal to systemic. AR being conducted for personal purposes would include

teacher or even school-initiated inquiry which looks for instructional problem-solving and improved practice. Elements of reflective practice may still be part of the process as described in the AR cycle but the scope of its outcomes may not go beyond the classroom and possibly the school. On the other hand, a systemic form of AR expects to inform curriculum design moving beyond the institution and possibly doing a critique of the entire educational system in search for equity and fairness. In this light, I understand the different perspectives of AR as being located along a continuum where a more personal version is located in one end and a systemic version is located at the other. The personal version consists on a form of inquiry-based problem-solving which aims for individual professional development and the improvement of practice. At the other end, the systemic version seeks social change and educational improvement including curriculum development and goes even further to pursue the betterment of society. I see those versions as located on extremes of a continuum rather than mutually exclusive. Many examples of AR may fall somewhere in between. In other words, it is possible that some AR events have features which belong to the personal and systemic version at the same time since the systemic perspective would also encompass personal perspectives.

Figure 2.5 AR continuum

I have identified scholars who criticise technical models by downplaying their value and effect. Some of them claim that a more problem-oriented kind of AR (see features in Figure 1) can only have a limited effect in teachers' development and is therefore, undesirable (Carr and Kemmis, 1986, Crookes, 1993, Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988, Zuber-Skerritt, 1996). These scholars advocate for an emancipatory version of AR since it fosters critical practices in broader settings and is not circumscribed to classrooms and teachers. Collaboration has also been seen as

a positive feature of AR and individual engagement as weakening its impact. However, many examples of AR described in the literature may fall in the personal AR category (Atay, 2008, Bartlett and Burton, 2006, Freeman, 1998, Kirkwood and Christie, 2006, Profile, 2000, Burns and Rochsantiningsih, 2006, Dadds, 1995). On the other hand, I have identified examples which portray systemic goals although to some degree since they may engage teachers in curriculum development but not necessarily promote emancipation (Burns, 1996, Burns, 1999, Rust and Meyers, 2006, Zeichner, 2003).

Overall, I would argue most AR initiatives that take are currently taking place are likely to be of a personal nature and many of them have probably remained unpublished. Moreover, systemic forms of AR demand more in terms of time, collaboration, support and maybe research knowledge. In addition, AR for curriculum development presupposes empowered teachers who will be allowed to express their views, be listened to and encouraged to take an active part in decision-making processes which may prove challenging in a de-professionalisation age (Guskey, 2002) and particularly in Chile where teachers are regarded poorly (Belleï and Valenzuela, 2010). Consequently, I would argue the type of AR being promoted in a given setting would depend on how personal or systemic AR features and goals can be operationalised and sustained in such setting.

2.7.4 AR challenges and criticism

A number of limitations have been reported when conducting AR. These are not possible problems which have been envisioned by AR advocators but actual challenges which teachers have expressed. These limitations, which are not unique to AR but have been mentioned in other forms of TR as well, they include; time (Borg, 2006b, McKernan, 1996, Atay, 2008, Widdowson, 1992), unfamiliarity with research (Borg, 2006b, Burns and Rochsantiningsih, 2006, Atay, 2008) and colleagues' disapproval, (Borg, 2006b, Burns and Rochsantiningsih, 2006, Rainey, 2000). Borg (2013) provides a list of barriers associated to teacher research more generally which illustrates the complexity of the process;

- Non-collaborative school cultures
- Limitations in teachers' awareness, beliefs, skills, and knowledge

- Limited resources
- Lack of teacher motivation
- Economic matters
- Unsupportive leadership
- Political issues (2013:18)

In addition, AR has received criticism in regard to its methodology and its un-generalisable knowledge production. Burns (2005) lists some commonly expressed criticisms which claim that AR

- has not developed sound research procedures, techniques and methodologies
- is small-scale and therefore not generalisable (has low external validity)
- shows low control of the research environment and therefore cannot contribute to causal theories of teaching and learning
- exhibits strong personal involvement on the part of the participants and therefore is overly subjective and anecdotal
- is not reported in a form that conforms to a recognizable scientific genre (2005:67).

The issue of validity seems to be highly discussed and argued by both advocators and detractors of TR. There have been several attempts to produce a set of criteria to assess the validity of teacher research but they have been considered to be unfair to this approach since they have been devised by university academics and not by practitioners themselves. (Zeichner 2001). This difficulty is encountered again when TR takes the form of award-bearing courses or as part of inset training, where research projects are usually assessed by university academics and therefore they impose their views on validity and quality research without the involvement of practitioners to develop their own. About the criteria debate for assessing the quality of AR, Borg (2013) suggests 'a basic level of (not necessarily scientific) rigour must apply to the collection and analysis of data if teacher research is to generate understandings we can have confidence in' (2013:20). The question is whether 'we' refers to academics once again valuing and assessing the quality of teachers' AR efforts against academic parameters. There seems to be an overall agreement though that the process of AR needs to be systematic and rigorous and be disseminated in some manner.

2.8 AR for PD

AR shares with TR most of the aims described in the first section of this chapter. As TR, AR also sets to promote teachers' PD (Burns 1999, Freeman 1998, Wallace 1998), attempt to narrow down the gap between teachers and the academic world (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1998, Crookes, 1993) and improve practice. In addition to those aims which are the most recurrent ones of AR in the literature, its distinct approach to other forms of traditional research is its intention to 'solve the immediate and pressing day-to-day problems of practitioners' (McKernan, 1996:6) i.e. improve practice through problem solving (Allwright and Bailey, 1991, Burns and Rochsantiningsih, 2006). This purpose may be exclusive of AR in comparison to other forms of teacher research since they do not intent to 'intervene a problem' to gain improvement but observe a particular situation to gain understanding.

As discussed earlier, different schools of AR have different notions of AR purposes; they include improvement of practice, professional development, democratisation, curriculum development, educational and social change through critique and emancipation.

The role of AR in teachers' PD has been widely discussed in the literature (Atay, 2008, Rainey, 2000, Nunan, 1990) as it has also been stated in the methodology course taken by teachers in Chile (see Appendix 1). The notion of teachers improving their practice by systematically exploring it, it is AR's main benefit since conventional educational research has been perceived as unsuccessful and irrelevant for teachers' practical concerns (Hammersley, 1993). On this same issue, Borg argues that 'teachers are more likely to be influenced by what they see as credible evidence, rather than generalized statements' (2003, p.2). The argument here is that teachers may be more influenced by research conducted in their own context and about issues of their immediate concern.

According to Stenhouse the systematic inquiry teacher-researchers engage in also result in a professionalization of the teaching activity (Stenhouse, 1975) since it enforces other demands in teachers' professional lives. He takes the notion of extended professionalism from Hoyle (1975) but takes it further by adding an

element of unlimited autonomy. Therefore in his view, the characteristics of a teacher-as-researcher should include:

- the commitment to systematic questioning of one's own teaching as a basis for development;
- the commitment and the skills to study one's own teaching;
- the concern to question and to test theory in practice by the use of those skills; (Stenhouse 1975:144).

This view resembles what Malderez & Wedell (2007) have denominated 'teachers as professionals' in terms of goals for teacher learning (see 2.5.2). The point here is how AR is closely linked with the idea of professionalisation which in turn gives high-status to the activity.

Another aspect widely discussed is the role of reflection as an essential part of the AR process. Even though only the final stage of the Carr & Kemmis' AR cycle states the involvement of reflection, Burns (1999) claimed that teacher reflection must be present at each step in the inquiry process consequently reflective practice becomes part of the cognitive AR process. According to Schön (1983) reflective practice assists teachers in thinking critically about their work learning from experience by trying out what works best in a particular teaching situation. Richards and Farrell (2005:7) define reflection as 'the process of critical examination of experiences, a process that can lead to a better understanding of one's practices and routines'.

Yet in AR, the presence of reflection must be accompanied by systematic collection and analysis of data otherwise AR can become an activity where only incidental reflection but no true research takes place, something also cautioned by Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1992). In fact, Wallace claims that AR can be seen and misled as an extension of the normal reflective practice teachers carry out on a daily basis.

Golombek (1998) stresses the importance of reflective practice in AR by claiming that through AR 'teachers can more directly examine tensions and instructional strategies. 'Reflection, ongoing dialogue, autobiographies, ethnographies, images, and action research can thus provide a means for teachers to recount their past, present, and future' (1998:462). Indeed, it is argued that AR can be a catalyst of reflective practice leading to sustained development (Edge, 2001).

In addition to the benefits of AR envisaged by scholars and academics, teachers who have participated in AR projects have also expressed some advantages in conducting AR for their PD. Among these are;

- Increased engagement with their classroom practice (McDonough, 2006)
- Informed problem-solving related to teaching and learning (Wallace, 1998, Edge, 2001)
- Significant collaboration with other teachers for problem-solving. (McDonough, 2006, Kirkwood and Christie, 2006, Atay, 2008)
- Personal and professional growth (Zeichner, 2003, Kirkwood and Christie, 2006, Burns and Rochsantiningsih, 2006)
- Increased self-awareness (Zeichner, 2003, Atay, 2008)
- Insights of curriculum change (Rust and Meyers, 2006, Burns and Hood, 1995)
- Better understandings of research (Atay, 2008)
- Improvement in teachers' practice (Burns, 1999, Burns and Rochsantiningsih, 2006)

2.9 AR in INSET

The proposal that teachers should be trained to be researchers in teacher education programmes has received increasing attention over the past two decades. Burns (2009) argued that such interest is associated with notions such as teacher development, teachers as reflective practitioners and problem solvers and the emergence of models which call for a transformative approach to teacher education. These new models called teachers to be involved in two different activities: teaching which involves doing and acting based on the known but also researching which involves enquiring, speculating and wondering about the unknown (Freeman, 1998). The potential of teacher research in these new models of teacher education have unsurprisingly called teacher educators to encourage research, and AR as one of its facets.

Through the discussion of some examples of AR and, more generally, teacher research projects several issues can be identified. Reports of teachers conducting

research do exist but with a few exemptions (Burns, 1999, Freeman, 1998, Borg, 2009b) many of them do not include the research projects developed by teachers. In a study about the occurrence of AR by language teachers conducted in 10 countries, Rainey found out that only 9 out of 33 teachers claimed that they always wrote a research report, and found no information regarding its publication (Rainey, 2000). These reports thus exemplify some of the benefits and limitations of conducting AR that have been described and illustrate that 'local' AR is more frequent than AR which aims for curriculum development and social critique.

Because of the benefits described (see 2.8) and despite some the difficulties envisioned (see 2.7.4), more TE programmes which promote AR or TR more generally, have emerged. Table 2.4 shows the different programmes identified in the literature.

SOURCE	CONTEXT	PARTICIPANTS/ DURATION	FUNDING AGENCY/INITIATOR
Borg (1996)	BA programme in Oman	900 teachers-2 years	Ministry of Education Oman
Burns (1995)	TESOL, Australia	30 teachers – 2 years	Educational agency and University partnership
Atay (2008)	Turkey	18 Pre and in-service teachers -6 weeks	School and University partnership
Ticker-Sachs (2002)	Hong-Kong	8 high school teachers-2 years	Educational agency and University partnership
Vergara (2009)	PD programme, Colombia	16 school teachers (elementary & high school) -5 months	Educational agency and University partnership
Labra et. al(2005)	PD programme, Chile	13 school teachers (elementary – high school)	University partnership

Table 2.3 AR in INSET

From the table above, Atay (2008), Vergara et. al (2009) and Labra et. al (2005) will be described in greater detail since they share features with the course under study.

AR in Turkey

Atay (2008) reports an INSET programme for secondary teachers who were new to research and its process. The course lasted six weeks and it included sessions of ELT theory, discussions about research and possible research areas; and training on conducting research. The areas included in the sessions regarding ELT theory were chosen by the teachers and examples of research were also discussed. In the second part of the course teachers talked about research, its value for their professional development and teachers chose their research area based on issues that had arisen in their classrooms. After some sessions on research methodology, teachers presented their proposal to their colleagues and once sessions concluded, feedback was provided while teachers conducted their research projects. The author succinctly reports some difficulty in obtaining teachers' final written research reports and stated the lack of time to provide more support to teachers and the absence of a follow-up session was problematic. The report provides useful information about the onset and the process of the course, features which are shared by the INSET courses in Chile. However, it does not inform the perceptions of the participants regarding the course, what difficulties they encountered during their research process or their re-engagement in research in the future. Due to time constrains, the research projects could not be shared among the participants, therefore no opportunities for common findings, possible replication and knowledge building were possible (Atay, 2008). I experienced similar problems when I conducted the course in 2007 and as it happened then, I still cannot find a report which provides more information on those issues and they were addressed.

AR in Colombia

I will now describe in further detail a research programme for English teachers in Colombia which holds striking similarities to the programme explored in this study. Vergara L. et al. (2009) describe a PD programme conducted by the Universidad del Valle in Colombia which included a research module. The participants were sixteen EL teachers working in elementary and high school in the educational system in

Colombia. The programme covered topics such as language development courses, cultural aspects, ELT methodologies, materials design and evaluation, introduction to ICT, ethics in the teaching profession and classroom research. It does not clarify how the modules were sequenced but it states the research module was covered during 5 months every Saturday morning.

The objectives of the research module included the following:

- The familiarization with what learning and teaching processes involve through observation and reflection.
- The acquisition of theoretical elements for classroom research design and development.
- The recognition of strengths and limitations of a variety of data collection instruments such as observation, interviews, surveys and diaries.
- The practice and implementation of qualitative and quantitative data analysis, and of ways of organizing and presenting the information.
- The incorporation of all these elements into the design and implementation of a research project in educational institutions (Vergara L. et al., 2009:174)

The objectives above show how the programme was aiming 'at offering the teachers basic research elements which help them to know, understand, evaluate and improve foreign language learning and teaching processes' (2009:171) and therefore it was two-fold; research knowledge and skills, and reflective attitudes through self-inquiry. The approach used was process and product-oriented; teachers learned about the process of doing research while doing the project. Additionally, they were required to submit a final AR report according to guidelines provided by the course tutors. Table 2.3 shows the course modules and units.

MODULE	UNITS
Educational research	• The concept of research; research approaches and types; the research process. Types of classroom research.
Two ways of doing	• Ethnographic research • Action research
Proposing	• The research project
Learning to do	• Data collection instruments

Discovering	• Analyzing qualitative data • Analyzing quantitative data
Formalizing discoveries	• Writing the research report • Holding advisory sessions • Socializing the research results

Table 2.4 Modules of the research course (Vergara L. et al. 2009)

Vergara L. et al. (2009) claim teachers' final reports evidenced learning about research and teachers expressed benefiting from the experience by becoming more context-aware and were able to apply theory to practice. An asset of the project is that all teachers belonged to the same institution so they were able to share common interests and work as a team. Moreover, they got institutional support to facilitate their research and their collaborative work. Overall, time was reported as the main challenge to comply with tasks assigned and everyday school demands.

AR in Chile

One report could be identified which described AR being conducted in Chile. It was organised by one university which invited three in-service and four pre-service Spanish language teachers who participated voluntarily. The project developed through three months and it included AR input sessions and a final report. Information about teachers research topics is absent since the data analysis was focused in teachers' own accounts of their learning and reflection process. The results indicated teachers benefited from the experience by commenting feelings of professional satisfaction.

The examples described in Table 2.4 are some of the few accounts of AR conducted in an in-service setting. From such projects, four of them involved school teachers (Atay, 2008, Tinker Sachs, 2002, Vergara L. et al., 2009, Labra G. et al., 2005) although none of them describes AR being introduced in a nationally-run PD programme and the MoE as the sole initiator as in the present study. Consequently, I would argue this research makes a contribution by exploring AR-oriented PD initiatives in an under-researched setting.

2.10 Summary of the literature

I this section I have provided the theoretical framework of the study. Since this initiative emerged from an educational reform, I began by exploring the literature on educational change and how some of its approaches may foster or hinder its ultimate institutionalisation. Such is the case of top-down approaches which disregard the voice of those the change aims to affect discouraging their participation. I also described innovation features and the factors which may negatively or positively impact its application. The role of contextual variables was discussed in greater detail as an important factor. Here the consideration of local realities is fundamental to avoid a possible mismatch between the innovation proposed and the host environment. I provided examples found in the literature which describe how these factors have been identified particularly in ELT and more specifically in PD-oriented innovations.

Since teachers and their development are regarded central in any educational innovation I continued with a closer examination of the process of teacher change -involving behaviour, attitudes and beliefs -and the definitions of PD according to various authors. Whereas I argue variety in understandings of PD, I highlighted its main features as contextualised, ongoing, self and institutional- initiated and aiming to the improvement of practice and students' learning. Next, I discussed the paradigm shift in teacher education from training to development and how different views of teacher learning can be used to inform PD programmes thus programmes seeking teachers-as-technicists will differ to those looking for teachers-as-professionals. In addition, I described three models of teacher change, one of which proposes teachers' attitudes and beliefs will only change after they observe evidence of students' learning.

I concluded the chapter focusing on teacher research and action research more specifically. In such discussion, I provided various definitions of TR which emphasise its contribution in teachers' professional development. Similarly, I defined AR, explained its origins, challenges and criticism and described the AR process characterised by iterative cycles which involve planning, acting, observing and reflecting among other stages. In the literature I identified three types of AR; technical, practical and critical. Although the first concentrates on technical problem-

solving mainly directed by researchers, practical AR denotes mutual collaboration oriented towards understanding a situation aiming at curriculum development. On the other hand, emancipatory action research is mainly teacher-driven and directed and it seeks the empowerment of practitioners and a critical stance to macro structures for social change. I have also argued the different types of AR can be located in a continuum from personal to systemic AR involving different goals which vary from problem-solving to emancipation. Next, I described some examples of INSET which contain a TR/AR component while arguing the absence of reports which explore similar initiatives aiming at school teachers in nationally run programmes.

To summarise, much has been said about the role of AR in teachers' professional development. It has been claimed that by conducting AR, teachers grow personally and professionally by engaging in reflective practice, developing knowledge about research, increasing their self-awareness, improving their teaching practice and participating in curriculum development (Atay, 2008, Burns, 1999, Burns and Rochsantiningsih, 2006, Elliott, 1991, Golombek and Johnson, 2002, Kirkwood and Christie, 2006, McDonough, 2006, McKernan, 1996, Rust and Meyers, 2006, Stenhouse, 1975, Zeichner, 2003). My intention here is to examine whether such development takes place during the course in this study and whether teachers feel that such development continues after the course ended in order to establish the impact of the AR module on their professional lives.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In the current chapter, I will describe the research process. I will detail the research design and its paradigm and the collection methods used in order to address the projected research questions. I also provide information about the participants of the study and the different phases of data collection. I also briefly revisit the justification for the study and will describe how it called for adjustments in the light of the data obtained and also the analysis process carried out. I will conclude by discussing issues of ethics and validity relevant in the thesis.

3.2 Research paradigm

Guba & Lincoln define paradigm as 'the *basic belief system* or worldview that guides the investigator, not only in choices of method but in ontologically and epistemologically fundamental ways' (1994:105 my italics). A paradigm then can be understood as a set of principles and a theoretical framework which influences researchers' views, their practice and ultimately the position they take in their research and their notions of what legitimate enquiry is. A paradigm has also been described as a *network of coherent ideas* about the world (Bassey, 1999) and as *worldviews* which is the term used by Creswell (2007, Creswell, 2009) to illustrate how they provide 'a general orientation about the world and the nature of research that a researcher holds' (2009:6)

The literature describes three major research paradigms: positivism, interpretivism and critical theory. From such paradigms, at the beginning of this study I placed myself in the interpretive paradigm and I will explain this position below.

According to Guba & Lincoln (1994) a interpretative research paradigm represent a worldview which views reality as relative and subjective to can be realised by answering to people's various perceptions, contexts and interactions (ontology). From an interpretative stance knowledge is socially constructed and dependent on beliefs and values. Theories are sensitive to the context describing multiple realities (epistemology). An in terms of methodology, the researcher engages in a dialogue in

order to reach mutual interpretations of phenomena which may also be influenced by the researchers' subjective views (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). In the current study, my objective was to examine the perceptions of individuals who construct reality according to their experiences and values and as researcher, to approximate their version of the truth or a given phenomenon through the interpretations we build dialogically. In such interpretative perspective, I would examine, interpret and describe phenomena in rich descriptions interacting with research participants and acting as a facilitator for their construction of reality.

As the study progressed, I moved to a more critical stance in the light of the analysis carried out as Carspecken and Apple helpfully describe;

> Critical qualitative research begins the process of inquiry in much the same way as does other qualitative research –with the collection of data and with attention to the same criteria for "trustworthiness" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) as other approaches…. it is only in the stages in which various forms of analysis of data collected in fieldwork that the distinctive features of the critical approach emerge (Carspecken and Apple, 1992:511).

My position as a researcher in the study became critical when I identified issues of social justice and power imbalance which I believed deserved more than interpretation and description but questioning and contesting. In fact, whereas interpretative perspectives neglects the political dimensions of social phenomena, critical research challenges power relations and struggles to break down institutional structures which cause oppression and inequity.

Heavily influenced by the work of Habermas, critical theory is a part of the transformative paradigm which represents a world view which addresses issues of power, politics and oppression in research. It views reality as historically shaped by the influence of social, political, economic, gender, and disability values (ontology). From an epistemological perspective, knowledge construction is not value-free since the researcher seeks to emancipate disempowered people and promote social justice (Cohen et al., 2007). Thus, both the knower and the participant engaged in a dialogic relationship to encourage the understanding of unfair conditions characterized by oppressive societies.

Social justice, examining political relations and advocacy are central in critical research. Critical researchers aim to explore, expose, inform and transform issues of inequity caused by social divisions and power tensions. In this light, it seeks to aims to unveil problems of social justice, critique such unfair systems, question and contest oppressive power structures and encourage those oppressed or disempowered to have an understanding of their situation and ultimately free themselves from their constrains which limit empowerment (Creswell, 2007).

In this paradigmatic orientation, my position as a researcher is not neutral since I react in opposition to social injustice uncovering unfair power relations and propose actions for change. According to Kincheloe et. al (2011) criticalists accept the basic assumption that

> certain groups in any society and particular societies are privileged over others and, although the reasons for this privileging may vary widely, the oppression that characterizes contemporary societies is most forcefully reproduced when subordinates accept their social status as natural, necessary, or inevitable (Kincheloe et al., 2011:164)

In the present study I take a critical standpoint by arguing that those who propose this innovation use their power in the educational system –teacher educators and policy makers- to enforce changes to those in less powerful positions -teachers. Those proposing educational innovations neglect the voice of those the innovation will directly affect making their working conditions worsen by adding additional pressures to their existing situation. Consequently -unless its claims- it does not allow for self-development and perpetuates the 'I say-you follow' superior-inferior relationship between teachers and policy makers.

Regarding the qualitative-quantitative distinction, the proposed study adhered to the qualitative notion which stresses the role of context and a need for understanding by exploring what was below the surface allowing the researcher and those participating in the research to construct meaning in an interactive manner (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009, Mason, 2002). On this point, Denzin & Lincoln (2005) argue that qualitative researchers 'study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpreting phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them' .

Qualitative research's exploratory nature allows for in-depth understandings where the role of the researcher is central in interpreting the phenomena under study. It usually involves a small number of cases to observe and it is less concerned with replicability. It also focuses on the view of participants, being sensitive to their social context in order to obtain a more holistic analysis of a situation (Mason, 2002).

3.3 Research adjustments

I started this research from queries which originated from my experience as a teacher educator in a similar course as the one I am studying here. From such experience, I was interested in understanding the rationale of the inclusion of AR in the course, its impact on teachers' professional lives but I was also interested in how teachers experienced the AR process itself, what areas they researched, their motivations and the choices for sharing their findings. To do so, I planned to gather data about these aspects through interviewing course designers, teacher educators and teachers. I also intended to interview teachers four times in a period of ten months to gather data of the developmental impact of AR. In addition, I would collect documents which included the course syllabus, AR session slides and teachers' reflective journal entries.

However, I had to make adjustments to my original research design at an early stage. Due to administrative reasons, the AR component of the course had been covered in one five-hour session one week before my arrival in Chile –unlike in a cross-modular fashion as stated in the course syllabus– so teachers had not yet developed any part of their AR project. Consequently, I used the initial questionnaire (this will be explained further below in 3.7.1) to get background information about teachers and their motivations to join the course whereas the semi-structured interviews concentrated on expanding the data provided by the questionnaires as well as exploring teachers' understandings about AR mainly based on the learning in the AR session. Second, it was stated in the course syllabus that teachers would keep a reflective diary which entries would be collected weekly. I planned to collect such writings to gather reflective data about the AR process. However, such entries were discontinued before the AR session started and they were no longer available. Therefore, I asked teachers about such session and their perceptions on it in the interviews we held. This did not seem problematic since the AR session had taken

place one week prior. Consequently, the first phase of data collection consisted in interviews which focused on teachers' views about AR –what they have learnt about it until that point- (see Appendix 10 for the interview schedule).

In terms of focus, the study also suffered adjustments based on the first set of data obtained and the analysis carried out.

Initially, the study was focused on three areas;

1. The conceptualization of AR reflected in the course according to the syllabus and the actors involved (course designers, trainers and teachers) thus exploring the rationale of such conceptualizations and how they were interpreted by trainers and understood by teachers,
2. Teachers' views of research, their motivations to do research, , the process involved and how their final action research projects shed light on their knowledge of research and its procedure.
3. The effects of action research in teachers' classroom practices and their professional development immediately after course completion and over a year's time.

To explore these areas, the following research questions had been proposed;

1. What model of AR does the course reflect according to course designers, teacher trainers and teachers?
2. To what extent do teachers feel knowing about AR and conducting AR projects have contributed to their professional development during and after the course?
3. What were teachers' views of research before and after doing AR?
   3.1.What did they research?
   3.2.How did they choose their research project?
   3.3.What, if any, was the final product of their research project?
   3.4.What kind of support did they get to carry out their project?
   3.5.What challenges did they face in completing their projects?

The former research questions reveal how -I later realised– I had assumed (quite naively) that teachers had had a meaningful experience doing AR, learned how to do it, possibly had re-done it after the course ended and became aware of the purpose of doing AR for them, their practice and their teaching. These assumptions guided my

original plan and although I was aware I would find some difficulties in the process (many of which could be foreseen), I had not expected teachers' accounts of their experience to be as negative as they were.

For the first question my intention was to explore the model of AR underlying the course and how the notions such as critical reflection, autonomy and agency which are used in the course syllabus have been interpreted by teacher trainers and have actually been operationalised on the course. The purpose then, was to examine the extent of how viable the emancipatory model of AR, which the course syllabus suggests is in this context. This question did not suffer modifications at the end of the study since the data collected provided interesting insights about the different views of AR co-existing in the course and the implications of this for the significance of AR for CDs, TTs and Ts. This question was mainly addressed in the first stage of data collection by interviewing the teacher trainers and course designers but it was further illuminated by data collected throughout the study. Moreover, teachers' accounts about their understandings of AR were so inconsistent that they shed light on a possible need for adjustment in the study. I realised this by reading teachers transcripts and finding their answers about AR (what it is and it helps to do and how to do it) to be brief, repetitive, erratic and filled with pauses. Six teachers apologised for not knowing or not remembering arguing the training received was insufficient to learn about AR or to do it.

In my second phase of data collection and considering teachers had already done their AR, I had planned to focus on answering my third research questions aiming at exploring how teachers' views of research may have changed after doing their AR and issues in relation to the research process and topic selection. As teachers' former responses revealed their knowledge of AR was limited, I was interested to know whether this issue could be identified in teachers' AR reports and whether it had impinged on their research process. In fact, after reading their reports and talking to teachers about their projects, their pauses and apologetic tone re-emerged. Further, when asked about possible benefits of AR, teachers' answers were irregular again since all of them claimed it could help them solve classroom problems but were unsure about its potential for their professional development. In addition, more data

seemed to indicate teachers felt the training received was inappropriate for them to learn how to do research in such limited period of time.

At this point and after going through two phases of data collection, I became aware that my original plan and focus would not yield sufficient data to build a comprehensive picture of what had happened. I consulted the literature for guidance on the possible risks and viability of adjusting my research focus and the following quote by Cohen et al. (2007) seemed relevant;

> To change the 'rules of the game' in midstream once the research has commenced is a sure recipe for problems. The terms of the research and the mechanism of its operation must be ironed out in advance if it is to be credible, legitimate and practicable….The setting up of the research is a balancing act, for it requires the harmonizing of *planned possibilities* with *workable, coherent practice*' (Cohen et al., 2007:78-79my italics).

Whereas they start their assertion on a rather gloomy note, it assured me such changes were not only allowed but also needed since they are the result of 'coherent practice' (Cohen et al. ibid.). I realised research requires the skill to know the difference between what one would like to do and what one can actually do and will work out.

As a result, I read though all the data once again to identify other areas which may prove interesting to explore. Once done that, I decided to abandon my third research question and decided to take a closer look at the reasons for the limited AR knowledge reported. Even though I could have assumed the short AR input session may hinder a meaningful AR experience, I also noticed other elements which beset deeper and signaled other problematic issues which were worth exploring. All in all, my study went into a process of progressive focusing defined as 'the progress by which a qualitative analyst interacts with the data and finally refines his or her focus' (Engel and Schutt, 2010:242). Hence, adjustments of the study were made in light of the data obtained. Miles and Huberman (1994) have argued flexibility is a characteristic of qualitative research and particularly essential in case studies as Stake (1995) points out

> We emphasize placing an interpreter in the field to observe the workings of the case, one who records objectively what is happening but simultaneously examines its meaning and redirects observation to refine or substantiate those meanings. Initial research questions may be modified or even replaced in mid-study by the case-researcher. The aim is to thoroughly understand (1995:9).

Since I had assumed 'some learning' had occurred and therefore that learning could have 'some' impact to their professional lives -if not to their practice-, the question was the extent of such impact and mainly why this happened. Consequently I moved away from the research process into factors which may have caused teachers' limited research knowledge and skills and explore more deeply the training and learning occurred. For this purpose, I posed the following question;

How do teachers' own accounts and AR reports evidence their learning about AR in the course and the training provided?

Even though I had collected data in previous phases in relation to this issue, I re-planned the third phase of data collection to get richer information about the different factors conflicting the appropriate learning of AR mainly through focus groups. Such re-focusing resulted effective since teachers provided further data about issues I had not envisioned.

The last research question was slightly edited to stress the potential 'weakened' contributions of AR to teachers' PD and its causes. The third research questions was then revised to:

What contributions, if any, do teachers feel AR has had on their professional development after the course? If none, why do they think that happened?

Because of the progressive focusing mentioned above which involved the adjustment of the research focus -and subsequent abandonment of a research question- and the revision of the research design, the study proved to be highly reflective, inductive and iterative as it has also been reported of the AR research cycle (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988). In every data collection stage I engaged in cycles of planning, collecting and analysing data to inform further cycles. This feature of research has been similarly described by Berkowitz's (1997) who claims research is

> a loop-like pattern of multiple rounds of revisiting the data as additional questions emerge, new connections are unearthed, and more complex formulations develop along with a deepening understanding of the material. Qualitative analysis is fundamentally an iterative set of processes (in Srivastava and Hopwood, 2009:77)

The spiral-shaped nature of my study, contained by four cycles of planning, collecting and analysing is illustrated in Figure 3.1 and it characterized the data collection and analysis process in my study. The figure also indicates how the focus of the study varied according to the data collected and the research questions later refined.

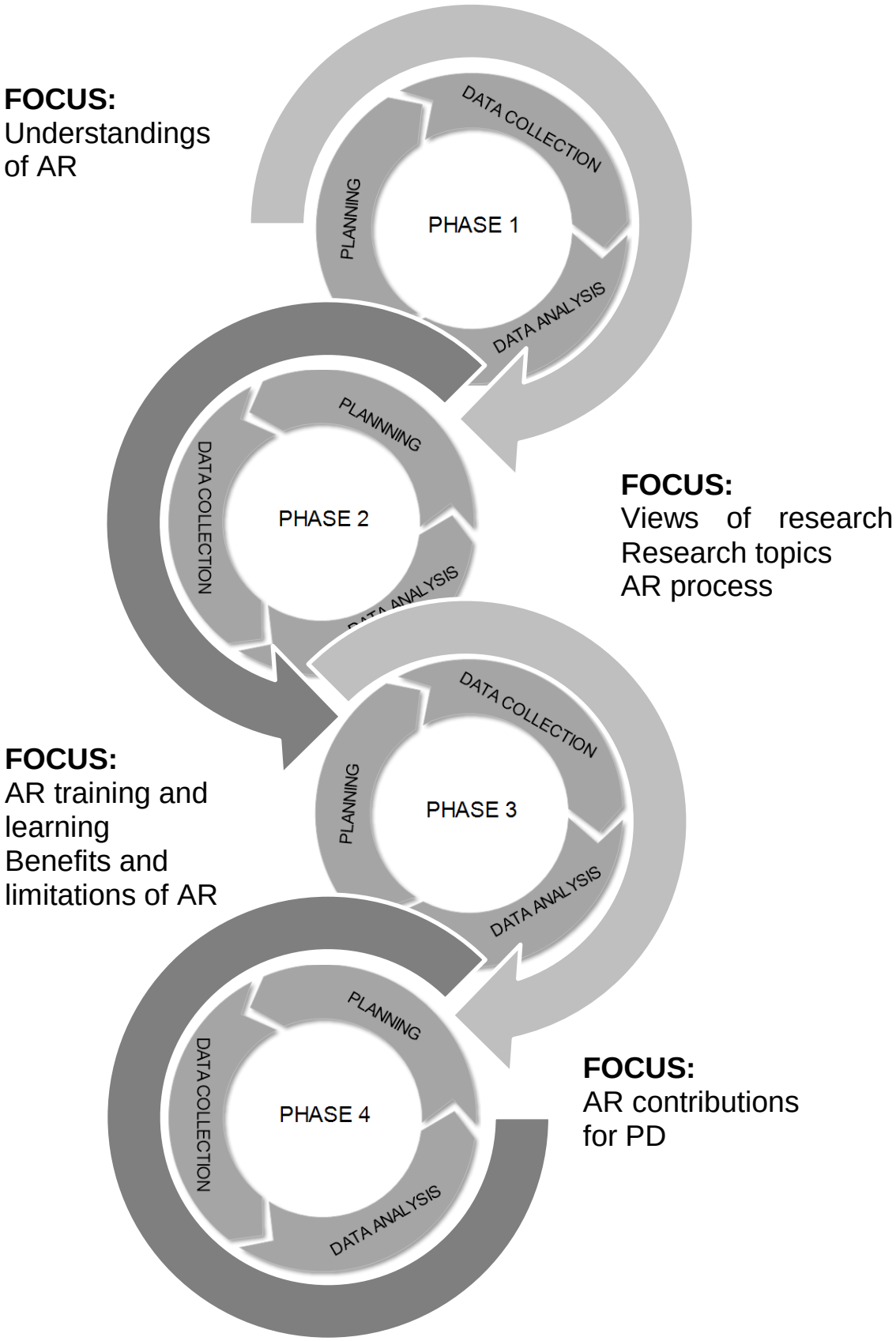

Figure 3.1 2 Study spiral process of data collection and analysis

In section 3.7 and 3.8 below I provide further information of the data collection and analysis processes and how the data was ultimately presented.

3.4 Case study

Case studies are widely used in qualitative research due to the in-depth information they help the researcher obtain from a singular event; a case. The examination of such an event or the participants in an event (as in the proposed study) over a period of time, provide systematic and rich data occurring in real-life settings. Yin (2009) defines a case study as empirical enquiry that 'investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context; especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident' (p. 18). In this definition, Yin stresses that a case-study focuses on a real-life event in depth which also entails understanding the context where it is located. A case-study researcher then cannot limit her/his exploration of the context since in real-life situations, phenomenon and context are not always distinguishable.

From the different types of case studies described in the literature, the present study will draw on a holistic case study to address the research questions proposed. The holistic case study will be represented by the course itself including the course designers, teacher trainers and teachers. The embedded cases will involve individual teachers through the collection of data over a more prolonged period of time, thus, attempting to obtain a deeper analysis of the perspectives provided by participants over time and not replication (Yin, 2009).

Case study enquiry is seen as enabling the researcher to explore beyond the scope of more controlled approaches and to obtain an insider's perspective of what is little known about (Gillham, 2000a). On the other hand, it has been criticized since it has been considered a 'soft' form of research which lacks rigor and provides little basis for scientific generalizations (Stake, 2005, Stake, 1995, Yin, 2009). The issue of rigor has been addressed by stating that the use of multiple methods of data collection allows for more precision whereas the issue of its un-generalizability is contested by arguing that in case studies it may not be essential and that

generalizations have been overvalued as they cannot be the only legitimate criteria to assess research (Bassey, 1999, Flyvbjerg, 2006) and also that they can be possible depending on the case (Flyvbjerg, 2006). I agree with Flyvbjerg when he states that 'the force of example has been underestimated' (2006:228) as I believe that a case may be used as an example with others which share commonalities. In this light, the use of case study was valuable to understand the views of the teachers participating in the AR course in-depth.

3.5 Course selection

The in-service course used in this study had been selected because of the relatively easy access it provided. Since I had been a teacher educator in a similar course two years before, I knew the course manager (who was also the AR teacher educator) and I had access to important course deadlines such as registration and starting dates. Having such deadlines in mind, I contacted the course manager before the course began and I expressed to him my desire to focus my research on the ELT methodology course which was about to start in a given locality. As soon as he granted access, he provided further details about the course timetable. This was particularly important because the course was one-year long so I needed to know when the AR component of the course would start. Once the registration process had concluded, he informed me eighteen teachers had enrolled and kindly offered to briefly introduce teachers to the idea of participating in my study as soon as the course began. Therefore, the selection of the course can be labelled as convenience sampling. Patton (1990) discourages the use of convenience sampling by saying that '*while convenience and cost are real considerations, they should be the last factors to be taken into account* after strategically deliberating on how to get the most information of greatest utility from the limited number of cases to be sampled' (Patton, 1990:181 italics in original). However, while convenience and cost also favoured the course selection, Patton's (ibid) last recommendation also applied since the information I had access to in early stages and the disposition from the manager to take full part in my study, made this course also a strategic choice. In addition, such selection had not been solely a matter of convenience but of purpose since such course was being run in twenty cities in the country using the same core syllabus and therefore it may be considered typical of what happened elsewhere. For ethical

reasons, further information cannot be disclosed regarding the location of the course and the university administering it since there was only one course being conducted in this locality and therefore, participants may be identified easily.

3.5.1 Participants

For the current study, the participants involved course designers, course teacher educators and course participants. More details about each of these participants is provided below.

English teachers

The main tutor and course manager informed me that from eighteen teachers participating in the course, twelve teachers showed interested in taking part in the study. Teachers did not have much information of the focus of the study at that time although I explained the study focus and process when I met them in Chile. From our meeting, nine teachers accepted to participate and one of them stopped contact. Teachers participating in the study are non-native English language teachers, eight females and one male who worked at elementary and secondary subsidised schools (see context chapter). Their experiences vary from 5 to 13 years and they registered in the course voluntarily. From the questionnaire (which I describe in section 3.7.1) I obtained further background information about them.

Course designers

In order to contact course designers, I e-mailed the professional development area at the EODP (see context chapter) who indicated a group of five university academics had worked collaboratively in such design. I was able to contact three of them and they all agreed to participate in the study. The course designers are professors located in traditional universities in Santiago. They participate in in-service programmes but mostly teach pre-service teachers. They became involved in designing the current course in 2004 and had continued to participate in initiatives proposed by the MoE and the EODP either as teacher educators or as course managers through the university they work at. These course designers are fluent non-native speakers of English and they hold post-graduate degrees in education and ELT and have conducted and publish research in the field. Their average teaching experience is 30

years whereas they did not specify how much of that experience took place in primary or secondary education.

Teacher trainers

The course included three teacher trainers. The main tutor and course manager agreed to participate in the study at the onset and other two teacher educators agreed to do so when I contacted them by e-mail. The main teacher educator conducted the AR module and therefore became a crucial participant in the study. He works at a pre-service English teaching programme and holds a PhD in education, particularly in the field of educational evaluation and has 30 years of teaching experience mostly at university level. The second teacher educator also works at a pre-service programme in the local university and the third one works as an English teacher in a secondary school. As it will be discussed in the findings chapter, the participation of two teacher educators in the study was limited as they claimed they were not involved in the AR component of the course in any way since they worked on the ELT methodology modules exclusively. Additionally, they provided limited data about any other aspects of the course which may have been valuable for the study.

3.6 Data collection

To provide both suitable volume and variety of data to answer the research questions proposed, three methods of data collection were used in this study: an initial questionnaire, interviews and focus groups. Although questionnaires were used as the first data collection method to obtain factual data, in-depth information was mainly obtained through interviews, focus groups and also teachers' AR reports. As indicated above, reflective journals had been considered as well but they were not kept throughout the course. Even though those participating in the study are fluent speakers of the English language, the questionnaire and interviews were conducted in participants' native tongue for three reasons; a) to ensure clarity of the data obtained b) to avoid any perceptions from participants that their competence in the English language was being judged thus restraining them for freer talk c) to allow for in-depth perspectives to emerge.

As Yin (2009) points out, in case studies it is common for researchers to rely on multiple sources of evidence as real-life situations are complex and the phenomenon under study and their context are usually connected. This is why he stresses the importance of the use of various data collection methods in the search for triangulation. Triangulation, has been defined as the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behavior (Cohen et al., 2007). Researchers use this technique to confirm findings and guarantee the collection of rich and in-depth data in order to gain deeper understanding of phenomena by studying it from different standpoints.

In the proposed study data triangulation and methodological triangulation was used (Denzin 1978 in Patton, 2002). Data triangulation was achieved by collecting data at different points in time and from different people. The views of the different participants and their perceptions' over time were needed to explore how they develop and change over time. In addition, such data could also allow for a more holistic and deeper understanding of the particular case. Methodological triangulation was attempted by using the three methods mentioned above (interviews, reports and focus groups) to approach the data from different angles. This allowed for a multi-dimensional exploration needed when the case under study involves many actors and may be influenced by the context where it occurs (Mason, 2002). In addition, as three data collection methods were used, the weakness of any particular method can be lessened by using an alternative strategy which did not present such limitation. Such strengths and weaknesses as well as their main characteristics will be discussed in the next sub-section.

3.6.1 Questionnaires

The use of questionnaires in research has been suggested for studies where mainly large numbers of respondents are surveyed and have often been related to quantitative research. However, questionnaires have also been used in small-scale qualitative research. They can yield factual, behavioural and attitudinal information (Dörnyei, 2003) which can also vary according to the level of structure of openness of their design (Gillham, 2000b).

The self-administered questionnaires to be used in the suggested study contained closed questions and collected factual information as well as attitudinal data. The literature points out a weakness of questionnaires in that they provide only limited information which in fact will not offer the depth needed to address the proposed questions (Dörnyei, 2003). Nevertheless, the questionnaire in this study was administered to all the teachers participating in the course under study and it presented a preliminary, though very general, picture of some of the information needed to be obtained in the subsequent interviewing stages. Its main role was thus to inform the interview phase and help me get prepared as a researcher for the issues to arise. In addition, it may have also prepared teachers and informed them about the main areas I was interested in.

The information to be retrieved from questionnaires was administered in my fist encounter with teachers, immediately after the AR session and it focused on teachers' teaching experience, involvement in any form of research prior to the course, teachers' working conditions and workload, besides their expectations regarding action research and their professional development. This data provided a starting point for a better understanding of teachers' professional development through AR and the role of contextual factors. A copy of the questionnaire used is included in Appendix 3.

3.6.2 Interviews

Interviews are the most widely used strategy in educational research (Tierney and Dilley, 2002, Borg, 2006c). They allow for the collection of in-depth, personalized data in order to gain rich knowledge of people and the events they participate in. Kvale stresses the collaborative nature of interviews whereas Fontana & Frey (2005) have described interviews as active mutually created stories and are therefore considered an appropriate method in qualitative enquiries which allow for the description and interpretation of real-life accounts in the context of participants.

In exploring teachers' views about action research and their feelings regarding their professional development, interviews were central to obtain in-depth data in order to address my research questions. For such purpose, I kept an outline of the issues I needed to address but was also mindful of the flexibility needed to allow for other

issues to emerge. Semi-structured interviews allowed for the control needed in skilled interviewing to have a sense of structure (Gillham, 2000c) but also provided the flexibility of open questions where the tone of the interview still remained fairly informal and conversational.

Mason (2002) identified four major features of a semi-structured interview:

1. Its interactional exchange of dialogue.
2. Its relatively informal style.
3. Its topic-oriented approach designed with a fluid and flexible structure.
4. Its construction of knowledge between interviewer and interviewee which is situated and contextual.

Gray (2009) adds that the effectiveness of interviews lies in its flexibility due to the possibilities it provides for probing, defined by Robson (2002:276) as a 'device to get the interviewee to expand on a response when you intuit that the she or he has more to give'.

Despite the number of strengths interviews offer such as the rich and vivid reports they may provide, they can also present some challenges. They are costly and time-consuming due to time devoted to the actual interviews and also to the time invested in transcription and analysis.

As I mentioned earlier, the interviews in this study were conducted following a schedule which allowed structure and control of the themes to discuss (see the interview schedules in Appendix 10, 11 and 13). However, such a guide was kept flexible since changes and additions emerged as the interview turned into a conversation where a dialogue and mutual construction of knowledge was sought (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). In addition, the interviews were recorded in order to obtain as much detailed information as possible and also to focus myself on listening rather than taking notes. Listening as an active process during semi-structured interviews is an essential element I added to my interviews. As participants may feel self-conscious with the use of the recorder, they were assured that the information provided would be confidential and that it would be used for easier transcription and data analysis.

The first set of interviews performed took place face-to-face with course designers, teacher trainers and ELT teachers and lasted between 30 to 45 minutes, always keeping in mind participants' availability. The second set of interviews was conducted over the telephone due to practical issues of accessibility. Such telephone interviews allowed continuing building a dialogue with teachers but at a lower cost. Nevertheless, such strategies also present certain challenges. In telephone interviews it is difficult to sustain a conversation about complex issues where the respondent can provide thoughtful answers (Gillham, 2000c, Shuy, 2001). To avoid such problems, telephone interviews were focused to cover key issues in order to reduce the number of questions as participants become impatient with long conversations. Once again, I developed my skills as an interviewer to keep the respondent engaged by showing I was listening actively by providing verbal feedback.

3.6.3 Focus group

I decided to use focus groups in phase three of the research process and I did so because focus groups have the potential of providing data which I had not originally envisaged. The opportunity given by the interaction promoted through such method was in fact highly valuable as participants reacted to other people's contributions and expanded their opinions and perceptions about the topics discussed. This was particularly important after the interviews carried out yield limited data. In this light, the data emerged from focus groups provided further areas of interest which were originally overlooked.

Though focus groups were originally used in marketing research, they have become gradually of extensive use in education as well as in business and politics (Cohen et al., 2007). According to Krueger and Casey (2000), focus group interviews are a 'carefully planned series of discussions designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment' (2000:5)

As Morgan (1997) suggested, focus groups allow the collection of in-depth qualitative data emerged within a social context which is difficult with other methods. Focus groups differ from group interviews in the sense that unlike group interviews the emphasis relies on interaction within the group based on a theme of mutual interest (Oates, 2000, Morgan, 1997) in order to 'gain insights into

participants' views, perceptions and attitudes on a given topic' (Litosseliti, 2003:8).Therefore, the term focus groups was coined to illustrate how a group of people converge in some kind of collective activity where various issues may emerge (Barbour and Kitzinger, 1999).

What makes focus groups distinctive is its attention to interactions among participants and how such interactions may yield rich data of their opinions, feelings, attitudes and perceptions. Then it explores a human tendency consisting of developing such opinions and perceptions in groups, derived from social processes they engage in (Sink 1991 in Morgan, 1993). Focus groups use the data generated from such interactions in order to gain an understanding of the "the multivocality of participants' attitudes, experiences, and beliefs" (Madriz, 2005:364). This approach, allows participants to react to other participants' opinions which may trigger subsequent reactions and additional comments. Interaction also enables participants to ask each other questions, as well as to re-evaluate and re-consider their own understandings of specific situations (Kitzinger, 1994). In this respect lays the main difference with individual interviews which 'aim to obtain individual attitudes, beliefs and feelings, while focus groups elicit a multiplicity of views and emotional processes within a group context' (Gibbs, 1997). Focus groups can also provide the opportunity to explore how participants express their views using other forms of communications such as jokes, anecdotes, debate, stories which may not be possible to find in one-to-one interviews.

Focus groups have also been called a naturalistic approach as participants' contributions are less controlled and the discussion takes place under less tension than face-to-face interviews. Such setting provides a non-threatening environment where the group may provide more information (Krueger and Casey, 2000). Though, I have to argue that conditions must be in place for such non-threatening environment to exist given that participants may reveal information of a sensitive nature which may prevent them from taking part freely.

A crucial element in the development of focus groups is the moderator. Their role is to facilitate the discussion. Their agenda must be flexible enough to promote participation, while guiding the group through issues which may emerge. Furthermore, if focus groups are meant to be a way of listening to people and

learning from them (Morgan, 1997, Krueger and Casey, 2000), the moderator must foster the communication among participants as 'the data arise out of the interaction between group members, rather than from interaction between the moderator and the group' (Gibbs, 1997).

From the previous discussion certain benefits of focus groups can be identified.

- Group interaction can provide insights with are not possible to obtain through individual interviews as participants can express their opinion in other forms of communication.
- Group interaction can trigger can more elaborated responses and shared understandings.
- They allow for multiple explanations of a given phenomenon.
- It is less time consuming and more cost effective.

However, focus groups are not free of limitations which must be considered for qualitative research.

Issues such a sampling and lack of individual views did not present a problem in my study as individual views were already collected earlier and the sample involved the participants of the course who volunteered to be part of the study. Issues such as disclosure, equal participants' discussion time and lack of control over topic were my main concerns (Wilson, 1997).

First of all, some participants may feel uncomfortable about revealing their opinions and perceptions in the group. This issue was addressed by stressing the importance of anonymity and confidentiality of what was said during the exchange.

In addition, people who are less articulate and less confident may refrain from contributing in the argument especially if other people constantly take over the conservation. My role as a moderator was crucial in this respect to allow for more equal dialogue.

Focus groups had been considered more difficult to control than one-to-one interviews since participants may drift from the main topic. However, I did not

experience such difficulty since participants were focused but the discussion took place in smooth manner.

3.6.4 Data collection process

For this study, I planned four main stages of data collection. As the in-service course under study began in September 2009 and finished mid-August 2010, most of the data in the first stage was collected in the last two weeks of the course, a second stage two months after, a third stage four months and a fourth stage 10 months after course completion. The details and rationale for such phasing will be discussed below and are outlined in the following table.

Date	Participants	Activity
August – September 2010	Course designers	Face-to-face Interviews
	Teacher Trainers	Face-to-face Interviews
	Teachers	Questionnaires & Face-to-face Interviews
October 2010	Teachers	Telephone Interviews
December 2010	Teachers	Face-to-face Interviews
June 2011	Teachers	Telephone Interviews

Table 3.1 Stages of the study

Before data collection, I recruited participants personally by introducing myself and provided a brief presentation of the study in course time granted by teacher trainers. I did so in order to provide explanation and description of the process to clarify doubts and enquiries teachers had.

For data collection, firstly, teachers were asked to complete a questionnaire where teachers provided factual information which informed the interviews taking place later.

Next, a series of interviews were carried out, all of which lasted approximately 30 minutes. First, course designers were interviewed in order to address RQ 1. Next, teacher educators were interviewed to explore their expectations and understanding of the potential benefit of AR for teachers' professional development. I must clarify that at this stage, the interviews were conducted with one teacher educator since only one of them conducted the AR module and this study aimed to explore his/her views in particular. The data collected through these interviews was also relevant to address RQ 1 and 2.

Later, teachers were interviewed face-to-face, off-duty and in a location of their choice and immediately after the AR module had ended. Minimizing the gap between the event and the reporting increased the likelihood of teachers remembering various aspects of the module.

Two months later (in October 2009), teachers were interviewed by telephone. The rationale of such interviews was to collect teachers' information about the AR process, any perceived benefits from conducting AR, how and to what extent they saw their expectations being met and the immediate effect that the AR module had on their practices.

After this second interview phase was concluded, I analysed the data obtained and realised I needed to obtain more data about the AR training and learning process. I have explained above that teachers' answers about AR were brief and lacked depth. I decided then to ask questions about something they did know about, their AR learning process and their perceptions about the training conducted. My rationale here is that these teachers may not know about AR, but they know about teaching and learning so they could in retrospective, make a critical appraisal of the teaching-learning process they experienced. I also asked them about their views regarding the different conceptualisations of AR and how feasible they were. For this question I also relied on the fact that these teachers have valuable inside knowledge of the educational system and could –and in fact did– provide further insights on the factors hindering the successful development of AR as an activity to promote PD.

To organise focus groups, teachers were contacted to find out their availability during the second week of December. One of the teachers was interviewed separately

as she had recently had a baby and therefore could not attend the focus group session. Based on teachers' availability two groups were organized. The first group included 3 teachers and the second group encompassed 5 teachers and both lasted approximately 45 minutes.

Upon arrival, teachers were asked whether they would agree to be videotaped during the session. It was clarified that such video would only be used for the purpose of transcribing the sessions in case some voices were difficult to identify. They all agreed and then I explained the procedure to be used during the session. I have to precise here that viewing the video session was not necessary since teachers' voices were easily recognised. I also explained to them that the issues to be discussed and the main questions would be provided in pieces of paper for them to read and their contributions to the discussion would be welcome at any time provided equal participation took place. In such case, my role as a moderator would be to provide assistance if needed and also to clarify doubts. For the first task, teachers were asked to answer four questions in relation to their understandings of AR as follows.

According to the interviews carried out, these ideas summarize your views about AR:

- ✓ *AR helps solve problems in the classroom.*
- ✓ *AR is specific and short-term.*
- ✓ *AR is carried out by teachers in their classrooms.*
- ✓ *AR helps improve teachers' practice.*

1. *What kind of problems did you mean?*
2. *How did your practice improve through AR?*

3.1 Questions Focus group task 1

In the following task, teachers were provided a table illustrating the different views of AR. I stressed the fact that none of these views could be considered better than other but different conceptualisations of AR found in the literature. The concept of emancipation was clarified further.

Technical AR	**Practical AR**	**Emancipatory AR**
Problem-solving	Improve practice	Improve practice
	Problem-solving	Problem-solving
	Curriculum development	Curriculum development
		Empowerment/emancipation
		Wider social critique

Table 3.2 Focus group task 2

After the clarification of concept and some sharing of ideas between participants, they discussed the questions indicated below:

According to the table and your views about AR
1. What do you think of the three conceptualisations?
2. What form of AR reflects your understandings?
3. What do you think of the feasibility of these forms of AR?
4. What conditions should be in place for these views to successfully take place in Chile?

Table 3.3 Questions Focus group task 2

Finally, as experienced teachers who had also experienced the process of being taught, learn and do AR, I asked them to provide suggestions for further similar initiatives. The following questions were addressed as an extension to the discussion developed previously:

According to the your experience learning and doing AR: 1. *How should AR be taught to be useful to you?* 2. *Would you include AR in future INSET courses?*

Table 3.4 Questions Focus group task 3

To finalize the data collection process, teachers were interviewed by telephone ten months after course completion (June), each phone interview lasted approximately 25 minutes. The gap of six months from previous data collected is due to practical and developmental reasons. First of all, teachers start their school year in March and therefore begin their year lesson plans in April since March is usually a revision and diagnostic month. Therefore, teachers usually settle down in April and organize their school year at that time. If my intention was to follow the extent AR had contributed to their development and their re-engagement with research (or non-engagement), I believe some time had to be set aside for teachers to adjust to their teaching schedules and continue with their professional lives without intrusion or continuous questioning. Consequently, teachers' interviews within ten months after the course ended included retrospective questions about their perceptions of the role AR played in their development. Additionally, I asked teachers their views about PD since their ideas of PD appeared to differ from those held by course designers.

3.7 Data analysis

There is no agreement in the literature about how to analyze qualitative data 'because each qualitative study is unique, the analytical approach will be unique' (Patton, 2002). Nonetheless, the literature suggests various stages for qualitative data analysis and has suggested certain stages to help organize a process which has been characterized as messy, ongoing, and interactive. Creswell (2013) presents a series of general steps to conduct data analysis which indicate the process starts when raw data is first collected and ends with the interpretation of the data. In this particular study, this process took place four times since as described in 3.8 data was collected in four stages which involved different people and different sources. Although the analysis of the data varied to some degree in each stage of the study certain procedures were used in all four stages such as translating, transcribing and coding.

For the procedure involving translation and transcription, I engaged in both processes almost simultaneously by listening to the recording, transcribing in full and then translating. Then, I listened to the recording a second time and re-assessed my transcription and translation to make sure it was accurate. By engaging in translating and transcribing, I progressively started the interpretation process in a rather unconscious way though it was a valuable way to begin the analysis. Lapadat and Lindsey (1998) argue 'analysis takes place and understandings are arrived at through the process of listening and re-listening, viewing and re-viewing. We think that transcription facilitates the close attention and the interpretative thinking that is needed to make sense of the data'(1998:17). In adherence to the argument that transcription is also interpretative, I decided to transcribe in full in order to present accurately what the speaker is expressing through words but also through intonation, volume and tone. For this purpose, I will present transcriptions in a tidy and grammatical manner to assist readability and further analysis since for the present study the focus of the data is in the content of what is being said. Having said that, I will also inform the reader of verbal and non-verbal cues such as lengthening, intonation and pauses which can provide a more transparent and clarifying representation of the speaker's account particularly when these aspects of speech also carry meaning of relevance for data analysis and interpretation. The former proved to be of relevance in the study since in preliminary phases of data collection and analysis, recurrent evidence of pauses in particular area of the data found in most of the teachers interviews (if not all) along with further content data analysis suggested the focus of the research needed to be adjusted. Consequently, these paralinguistic features of speech will be represented in transcriptions for a better appreciation of these issues.

In addition, and since I want to keep the foreigness of the data, I will contextualise situations, slang and cultural expressions whenever possible to keep the voice of the speaker but allowing comprehension. What is more, I will provide the transcribed Spanish version so the reader can have the most accurate representation of what has been said. On the other hand, I will not provide interpretation of the data within the transcription to avoid causing confusion between interpretations and actual transcribed talk.

Appendix 19 provides the transcription elements used and their meaning within the transcription with an example taken from the data to provide further clarity of the transcription approach used. The examples provided illustrate how the identification of (verbal and) non-verbal cues were included in the transcription process. During analysis, such additions added valuable information about teachers' accounts and what they were trying to communicate.

I indicated above that interviews were conducted in Spanish to allow participants to interact with the researcher in a relaxed manner thus avoiding the pressure of speaking English accurately thus participants could focus on the content of our talk and not its form. Consequently, as soon as the first set of data was collected, I started the translation and transcription processes which although they involved a tiring and lengthy job, they allowed me to get closer to the data. As Temple & Young (2004) claim 'the researcher/translator role offers the researcher significant opportunities for close attention to cross cultural meanings and interpretations and potentially brings the researcher up close to the problems of meaning equivalence within the research process' (2004:168). In addition, Kvale (1996) asserts researchers must be familiar with the social context where the study is taking place. In my study, my knowledge of the social context favoured the transcription process particularly when participants made comments about the educational system and Chilean society. Therefore, my role was not transcribing words only but giving meanings to ideas that are socially-bound and that fortunately I was able to understand. I provide an example below to illustrate this further. I underlined the ideas which I thought needed further explaining;

Coding

The third process which took place in every data collection stage was coding. Cohen et al. (2007) define coding as 'the ascription of a category label to a piece of data; which is either decided in advance or in response to the data that have been collected'(2007:480). The process of coding, as well as the transcription process is an essential part of the analysis and interpretation of data (Miles and Huberman, 1994). For the coding process I used thematic analysis which is used in qualitative research for 'identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organizes and describes your data set in (rich) detail' (Braun and Clarke,

2006:79). In their description of the stages involved in thematic analysis, Braun & Clark (ibid.) suggest six stages outlined in Table 3.4. They caution the reader these stages do not occur in a linear fashion but most likely in a recursive way. This aspect of thematic analysis was particularly relevant for this study since each coding phase and further analysis informed further collection of data, in this light, coding phases in later interviews became more refined while I was constantly looking back to the transcribed data as well as to initial codings.

Phases of thematic analysis
1. Familiarizing yourself with your data: Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes: Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes: Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Reviewing themes: Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis.
5. Defining and naming themes: Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6. Producing the report: The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

3.4 Phases of thematic analysis (Braun & Clark 2006:87)

After data was collected, transcribed and translated, as in the initial stage proposed in Table 3.4, I began coding the data manually using Microsoft Word. I started by reading the transcripts which I kept in separate folders and files. In one folder I kept the transcriptions from the first phase of data collection and in that folder I kept the interview transcriptions of the course participants (teachers), teachers' educators and

course designers also in separate folders as illustrated in Figure 3.1. In turn, each folder contained a file for each interview carried out.

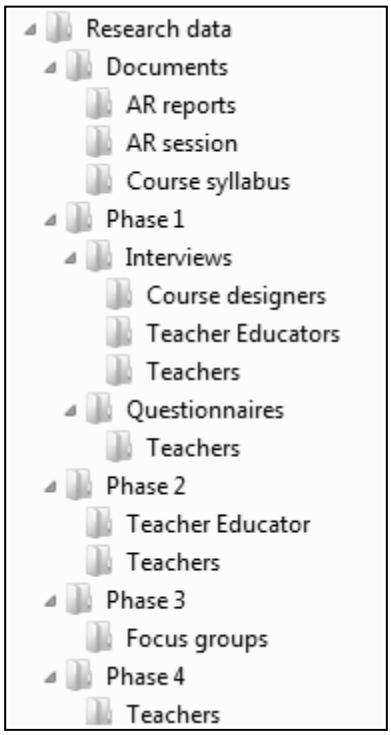

Figure 3.3 Folders for data organisation

The coding process was carried out in each interview separately in Microsoft Word as illustrated in Appendix 14 using the highlighting tool with different colors for the different codes (in the appendix, alternative tools were used to illustrate the different codes). Next, I collated all the quotes where one particular code was identified and I copied them in one separate file titled as the code and the event, for example, 'AR benefits-I1' (I1 for the first semi-structured interviews). I also assigned labels to the different quotes such as [T4:I2] to identify the participant and the event. This is further illustrated in Appendix 15.

Since I used codes as labels to identify the data in order to assist my analysis and later reporting process, I used codes which clearly express the idea being conveyed. I began the analysis with repeated readings of the transcriptions starting the coding process with the first interviews I held with teachers then I moved to teacher trainers and course designers using some of the codes generated in teachers' interviews such as 'AR as short-term and 'AR session' but also adding new codes where necessary.

After coding this first set of data, I re-read the data and checked the assigned codes once again, I deleted the codes which were not relevant for the scope of the study and I merged similar ones. The following set of data was slightly different since it came from teachers' AR reports so although codes such as 'AR as problem-solving' re-appeared in reports, further codes such as 'testing as data collection' and 'numerical reference' were generated.

The following sets of data involved more document analysis such as AR module slides and class notes and further interviews. For this coding process, the same approach as above was used although each time new data was introduced further codes were generated while I removed redundancies, merged and deleted irrelevant codes.

The first phases of data collection aimed at exploring the understandings of AR of teachers, teacher educators and course designers, as well as the learning of AR occurred and how such learning could be identified in teachers' AR reports. At this stage, I organised the data collected in categories and sub-categories with their analogous codes. Appendix 16 shows the initial coding carried out indicating preliminary categories, sub-categories and codes. The categories made reference to the research participants (course designers, teacher educators and teachers) and the sub-categories referred to the main areas explored such as 'learning about AR' and 'doing AR'. However, after further analysis of the data this initial coding appeared to be inappropriate since the sub-categories revealed a chronological instead of a thematic organization of the data. For instance 'learning about AR' referred to the first data collected immediately after the AR module ended whereas 'doing AR' and 'AR reports' referred to the data collected after teachers conducted and wrote their research project. As I have explained in section 3.3, the focus of the study had to be re-adjusted since in research areas such as 'AR reports' codes contained scarce information whereas other areas such as 'learning about AR' and 'benefits and limitations of AR' seemed more promising as emerging themes were identified. In this light, an approach involving inductive thematic analysis was used (Braun and Clarke, 2006, Boyatzis, 1998) to allow key themes to emerged from the data. This analysis process was in turn used to feed subsequent data collection stages since codes signaling key issues were pursued in further data collection stages.

Subsequent field work phases originated data particularly in relation to the benefits, limitations and contributions of doing AR. The inductive codes from this data set were organised in major categories and themes with their embedded codes as indicated in appendix 17. Due to the re-focusing of the study, new categories indicated the main areas of exploration and the themes show issues where prominent data was identified. These themes were the result of a lengthy and iterative data analysis process where interpretation was enriched through cross-checking of the data in three ways; a) from different data sources (interviews and documents), b) from different teachers at one point in time (for instance, after doing AR) and c) from the same teachers throughout the process of data collection (after the AR session and ten months later). The interpretation of the data using different sources was particularly useful when I analysed teachers' understandings of AR. I looked at the codes from interviews and I compared them with codes and notes I had made on the AR reports as well as the AR session slides. I also cross-checked the interview data from different teachers where similar codes were identified. For instance, regarding teachers' perceptions about the limited potential of AR to promote PD or the ineffective AR training received. The third strategy used to enhance my analysis was the examination of codings which appeared repeatedly throughout data collection by a single teacher such as teachers' views about their workloads, limited time to conduct research and the lack of support to do AR. Thus, from early stages onwards, a constant validation of accuracy of the information was needed by constant revision of the data obtained and analysis of the interpretations drawn (Creswell, 2009).

Finally, a third and last inductive coding process generated a refined list of categories, themes and codes used for the presentation of findings. This list shows the organization of the data based on the study research questions while presenting the main issues emerged more clearly. This coding involved merging and re-locating codes in more appropriate categories such as 'perceptions of teachers in the context' and 'disproving view of teachers' now located under the theme 'factors hindering AR', deleting codes containing limited data such as 'teachers' prior research experience' and 'restricted data collected' (such as 'ideal and real AR' which was located in understandings and embedding codes within a major theme such as 'AR for PD' now embedded within 'contributions of AR to classroom practice'.

3.7.1 Presentation of the data

In chapter 4, I present the data collected throughout the course of the study. My original intention was to report the findings in a temporal order (after the AR session ended, after AR project, 3 months and 10 months later) making reference to the various participants (teachers, teacher educators and course designers) and also the sources of data (AR reports, course syllabus, AR session slides and AR class notes). For reasons I have explained in 3.3, I realized that presenting the data in the stages they occurred, while it may have informed the process teachers engaged in, did not prove to be useful and clear for reporting purposes since the data was occasionally repetitive and trivial. Hence, I decided a thematic presentation would be more appropriate to present the data around the main issues emerged (which originated after a revision of the second coding process) and in relation to my research questions.

3.8 Ethical considerations

In any educational research ethical issues need to be considered throughout the course of the study particularly if threats to ensure a moral conduct are identified.

In this study, the ethical issues to consider relate to informed consent, confidentiality and avoidance of harm (Bryman, 2008). Regarding informed consent, I was granted access in by the course coordinator and the teacher trainers. Teachers' participation was requested by the course coordinator at the end of May 2009 when they expressed their interest verbally but they were only considered participants until the informed consent form had been signed and they were fully aware of what the study entailed (See Appendix 2). The informed consent also gave participants the right to withdraw (Cohen et al., 2007) if they felt they needed to and in fact one of them did.

Confidentiality –another important ethical consideration– was granted at the onset before participants signed the informed consent and they were informed that throughout the research process any information they provided would be kept anonymous. This aspect is particularly important in this study since the course studied is easily identifiable as well as its participants due to the size of the locality

and the existence of only one course taking place in 2009. In addition, participants' names have not been used in any report.

Threats in the study to cause participants' any form of harm (physical or psychological) have been minimised through anonymity. Some comments made by teachers in this study can be considered negative towards educational authorities as well as those directly involved in teaching and designing the course. That is why keeping confidentiality of the remarks made and their authors is essential to prevent participants any retaliation caused by their comments.

3.9 Trustworthiness in the study

An interpretative approach to research supposes a different perspective towards the world which is not related to issues of measurement and objectivity. Accordingly, subjectivity is 'embraced as a pathway deeper into understanding of human dimensions of the world' (Patton, 2002). In this light, the concepts of validity and reliability have been considered particularly problematic in qualitative research (Creswell, 2009, Bassey, 1999, Mason, 2002) and particularly in case study (Bassey, 1999) since such constructs are emphasized in conventional positivistic forms of research. Instead, the term trustworthiness has been suggested to address issues of validity in qualitative research (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005, Guba 1981 in Guba and Lincoln, 1994, Patton, 2002, Bassey, 1999).

Trustworthiness in research can be assessed by using four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability. Credibility, which is an analog to internal validity, refers to how reliable the data obtained is and the interpretations drawn. In this study, I enhanced credibility by using two strategies; triangulation (which has been discussed in section 6) and peer debriefing (Creswell, 2009).

Transferability, relates to the extent to which the current study can be generalized to other settings. In the proposed research, detailed and rich description is provided thus allowing for the identification of shared features. This technique is an important one when the design corresponds to a case study (Yin, 2009).

Dependability which is also known as reliability, refers to the stability and consistency of the data obtained and the inquiry process developed over time

keeping in mind possible contextual changes which may affect the study. To address the issue of dependability, I also use the strategy of detailed description to achieve transferability. In addition, external auditors can assist by overseeing the entire project. I believe my supervisors have provided helpful feedback in this matter.

Finally, confirmability which assesses how well the interpretation and conclusions reached in the study match the data obtained. It can also be addressed by the participation of auditors as well as clarifying any possible bias which may affect my interpretations. The term reflexivity is used in the literature to illustrate the need of an honest narrative from the researcher (Creswell, 2009, Mason, 2002).

3.10 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have outlined my research methodology and its rationale. I have presented my research questions, the adjustments of the study as well as my choice of case study for the proposed study. It has been explained that the participants included teachers, teacher trainers and course designers. The data collection used included an initial questionnaire, semi-structured face-to-face interviews and telephone interviews, focus groups and AR reports. Such interviews were carried out in four stages; August, October, December and June to explore teachers' changing views regarding their development and a qualitative approach to data analysis was used.

I have also explained how in light of the data, I adjusted the focus of the study. Through the process of data analysis I was involved in a continuous process of planning, data collection and analysis which allowed me to refine the focus of the study.

4 FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

In this paper I will present the findings obtained from the study in relation to the aims proposed namely to explore the role of AR in teachers' professional development as well as its possibilities and limitations.

In order to explore the areas detailed above, I posed three research questions which will be used subsequently to discuss the key findings of the study.

RQ1. What conceptualisation of AR does the course reflect (according to course designers, teacher trainers and teachers)?

RQ2. How do teachers' own accounts and AR reports evidence their learning about AR in the course and the training provided?

RQ3. What contributions, if any, do teachers feel AR has had on their professional development after the course? If none, why do they think that happened?

The following diagram illustrates the organisation of the findings in the chapter and the main areas and sub-areas identified.

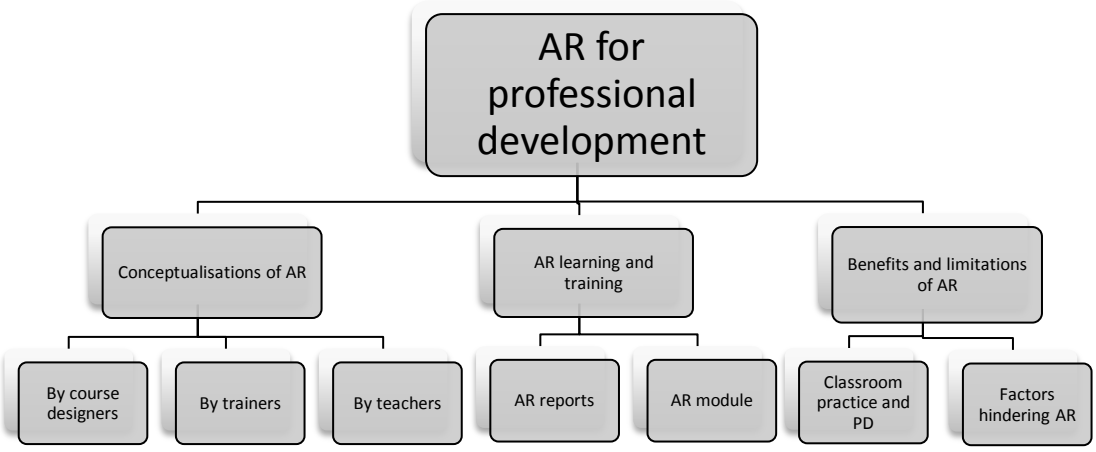

Figure 4.1 Findings organisation

Findings will be presented providing quotes from participants following the coding detailed in Table 4.1.

T1, T2, etc. = Individual teachers 1, 2, etc.
TT1, TT2 or TT3= Teacher trainer 1, 2 or 3 (Note=TT1 taught the AR module)
CD1, CD2 or CD3= Course Designer 1, 2 or 3
I1, I2, etc. = First, second, etc. interview
R = Researcher
FG1= Focus Group (Group 1)
FG2= Focus Group (Group 2)
ARR= Action Research report
CN=Teacher class notes
ARS= AR session slides

Table 4.1 Codes used to present data citations

4.2 Conceptualisations of AR

In this section I will present findings which evidence the conceptualisations of AR of course designers, trainers and teachers. This data intends to clarify the kind of action research promoted in the course by course designers and AR module trainer and also how this was understood and expressed by teachers.

4.2.1 Course designers' views of AR

The study revealed course designers viewed AR as a vehicle to promote reflective practice and critical thinking particularly of the Chilean educational system, society and the current state of affairs.

I asked course designers regarding the underpinnings of the course and they argued they 'brought notions like critical thinking and critical pedagogy into the discussion since such issues shape our philosophy' [CD2:I1] indicating these views of education underpinned every aspect of the PD programme and its components. I inquired further about some of the notions which encompassed such philosophy and particularly about the role of agency in the course and how it was conceived. They argued agency was an essential aspect of the course though expressed doubts about teacher capabilities to be critical and reflective of issues beyond their pedagogical expertise. Regarding this point one course designer said the following;

> Our plans were truly that they became agents of change. That for once EL teachers became critical, creative, autonomous to reflect constantly upon their practice and also to share honest and openly what was happening and have a critical vision not of the verb 'to be', but of what it means to teach English in a country which is an example of capitalism where macro indicators say that we are the South American Switzerland and the micro indicators say that we are starving as some last surveys indicate. So… that was our vision... and use the teaching of English as a vehicle, as a means to look beyond [CD1:I1].

An important issue to be noted here is that this statement reveals CDs had emancipatory notions of AR (see 2.7.3). The idea of calling teachers to be critical of socio-economic issues –such as the disparity between macro and micro indicators- and use ELT to 'look beyond' was also stressed by another course designer which indicates this conceptualisation of AR underpinned the module. Moreover, one course designer dismissed more technical views of AR as misreading its philosophical underpinnings when arguing 'AR is supposed to empower teachers for them to become more critical of themselves but also education and society as well …Sometimes the philosophy of AR is disregarded or it is not understood and it becomes operational. Instead of a philosophical conception it becomes a technical conception' [CD3:I1].

The course syllabus, as written by course designers indicated AR in the course

> considers teachers as professionals who reflect on their own teaching practice aiming at solving difficulties encountered in the classroom contexts. This approach leads to improve the teacher's capacity to collect and select

> information and to apply the acquired knowledge in the classroom on the one hand and towards their own teacher development. (Course syllabus) (See Appendix 1)

In relation to this, I asked CDs about the role of AR in the course. CD2 claimed the objective was for teachers to become long-term researchers so that they could research their classroom systematically and self-assess their work while criticised teachers for lacking abilities to engage in such self-evaluation;

> The idea was that teachers became long-term researchers to give him/her the tools to research their own classrooms…The point was AR to be grounded, situated and participatory research. Most of teachers don't know how to assess themselves, they don't know what they are doing, they follow whatever trend they are told, like a sort of recipe and by doing AR they can see how they are in the classroom and they can produce a change and learn from that experience, that was the idea behind that. [CD2:I1]

CD1 indicated the importance of teachers sharing their experiences with research and their findings so that some form of publication could arise and the knowledge gained could expand from one school to another asserting they wanted them to 'reflect and share and from them something from such instances could be published in some way to expand from one school for teacher to connect to make network' [CD1:I1]. In this light, course designers envisioned AR projects to be disseminated although by looking in the course syllabus I found no indication there as to how to achieve this.

However, despite course designers initial motivations claimed above about the inclusion of emancipatory AR to promote critical thinking and inquiry attitudes, CD1 and CD2 questioned the feasibility of AR since the EODP (English Open Doors Programme) did not establish entry-requirements. For course designers, teachers participating in the ELT methodology course would have participated in other EOPD PD programmes such as EL courses, workshops, networks among others before registering for the methodology course which include AR (see 1.2.4).

> We thought of it because at that time we had the hope that what EODP was doing in all their different projects could have had some impact since they were choosing the same people to have some follow-up and after all those

> instances be ready to go and do AR, those were our expectations. That didn't happen, for many reasons [CD2:I1].

The assertion above suggests course designers were viewing the PD process as ongoing and that AR would become relevant to teachers who had already experienced prior forms of PD and so were 'ready' to start doing AR. In addition, course designers indicated that the conceptualisation of AR underpinning the AR module and its inclusion in the larger PD programme was one which encouraged teachers to become critical and empowered by evaluating their practice permanently. The hoped-for effects here were not limited to their classroom and just the duration of the course, but involved a long-term attitude change that would enable teachers to become empowered. However, course designers expressed their expectations were not met principally due to the discontinuity of the process which was meant to involve the same teachers in a number of PD initiatives instead of teachers who had not been involved before and so were, in their views, unprepared for AR as intended. This reveals deficient communication systems between the MoE and course designers regarding who the AR aspect of the PD course was aimed at.

4.2.2 Trainers' views of AR

TT1 was the main trainer of the module for reasons I explain in 3.3.1 below. He was also the senior trainer and programme coordinator so he liaised between EOPD authorities –who funded the course- and the university delivering the programme.

He stated the main objective of the course as stated in syllabus is for teachers to become agents of change which can be accomplished by teachers' desire to learn, access new information and get updated. He indicated that the change referred to here is in the hands of teachers, with it being their responsibility to begin a change process through an analysis of their own practice which can be assisted by something like AR.

> Basically the rationale of AR according to the MoE is ((*for teachers*)) to introduce specific modifications in the system which teachers themselves are initiating.. I mean all this originates from the notion that top-down approaches are not working out in Chile, and I think nowhere in the world [TT1:I1].

His view of teachers 'introducing specific modifications in the system' relates to the idea of teachers becoming curriculum developers of their own contexts which also characterises emancipatory notions of AR. He adds to this point saying that 'by doing AR, teachers change their focus and the best of all this is that they do by themselves because AR is not imposed. They can do all this thanks to their abilities to reflect' [TT1:I1].

However, he reduces the scope of AR to smaller settings and also criticises its rigour in his statement;

> It ((*AR*)) could be bigger but not something which involves the system or a whole school, that is not AR, that is traditional applied research so a limitation is that teachers need to know what AR is first, because AR is not considered to be so rigorous. [TT1:I1].

Despite the teacher educator thinks AR lacks rigour in comparison to applied research; he argued rigour can be obtained if teachers conduct research properly by following certain methodology and protocol. He added the difference between AR and how teachers usually approach problem-solving is 'they do it as trial and error and another different thing is doing it following certain methodological protocol' [TT1:I1]. As I tried to establish more clearly his understandings about AR, he provided the following explanation he had given to a teacher to exemplify its meaning and scope; 'AR is related to what happens in the classroom.. AR is a method of work, this is how I define it, which helps teachers solve problems inside the classroom' [TT1:I1].

In his last two accounts provided above, the teacher educator's views of AR as localized in the classroom and also the consideration of AR as problem-solving for specific situations is inconsistent to the notion of teachers 'adding modifications to the system' expressed above. I was also interested in knowing how he managed the cross-modular nature of the AR component as it was defined in the course syllabus; 'This module goes across the other four modules' (Course Syllabus). In this respect, he indicated he had linked AR with evaluation;

> The procedures in research are basically the same as in evaluation and that is why I linked them, besides I didn't have enough time. So I linked them

> ((laughter)) because what is evaluation? It is to plan how to collect information to make a better decision, isn't that research? [TT1:I1]

The previous quote evidenced that the AR module was not covered throughout the course as intended by course designers although the trainer indicated AR was linked to the evaluation module. One of the arguments for this is what he confessed to be lack of time but also his belief in the close link between research and evaluation, at least at the level of definition and procedures.

From the above data, I identified points of agreement and divergence with the views of AR expressed by course designers and also stated in the syllabus. He agrees with the importance of reflective thinking and bottom-up approaches to change. However, AR as a critical activity was downplayed and at a more methodological level, the scope of AR was reduced and its rigour was questioned.

4.2.3 Teachers' views of AR

Talking to teachers soon after the AR session and immediately after conducting the project, I naively thought teachers' understandings of AR would be, though not broad, somewhat more articulate, especially considering teachers' non-existent experience with research before the course. On the contrary, their comprehension of AR was limited, to the point that their explanations were apologetic expressing distress for the limited knowledge of a term they claimed they should have known more about. However, teachers were able to indicate what they thought were the main features of AR; problem-solving, short-term, specific, improved practice and part of their daily practice.

When teachers were asked to describe their understanding of AR in their own words, all teachers defined it as a way to solve specific problems inside their classroom as in 'it's a way of finding a solution by myself to a problem I encounter in my classroom' [T2:I1] and 'identify the problem, find a solution, test that and then based on the data obtained you have to verify if it worked or it didn't' [T9:I1]. Similarly, another teacher also expressed the application of strategies for problem solving and the subsequent analysis of the outcome of their application;

> Trying different alternatives and choose the one which worked better and if it didn't, you have to change the strategy and then conclude that it wasn't what I had originally thought and then try to do something else to re-plan things [T1:I1].

However, cycles of interventions through the application of strategies is an aspect of AR which did not become evident in teachers' AR reports as some of them applied only one strategy to 'solve the problem' instead of the variety of solutions described above.

In another definition of AR, this teacher quoted a metaphor used by the teacher educator which allowed her to comprehend the term;

> The teacher explained many things but the simplest one I am using is applying a solution for one or two weeks, using the solution that you chose a lot and then conclude if it worked or it didn't according to what you expected. It is something very simple… as he said 'somebody is ill, you give them medicine and the person gets better' but it could also happen that the person doesn't get better. [T4:I1].

Teachers in the study also viewed AR as specific to mean it is small-scale and applied to a concrete situation as well as conducted in a short period of time. This is an example of a definition provided by a teacher who stressed AR was specific and small in scope.

> What we were explained is that erm very briefly... erm it's something that is not right and we would like to change in our classrooms … something little erm (6) not something like reading comprehension ... as to improve that? no, it's not that. It's something specific. Something very small that I would like to change in my students' ways' [T1:I1].

The aspect of time was salient in most of teachers' accounts. In the former statement the teacher indicated a time frame of two to three weeks to work on a 'solution'. In later interviews she (T4) emphasized the importance of time again by claiming that AR could not last more than 3 weeks otherwise it would not be AR but a broader

form of research resembling applied research. As in the following definition, other teachers had avoided mentioning a time period but have stated AR was short-term;

> I identify a problem, I figure out what methodology I will use, look for a solution, look for the instruments I will use to improve such problem and then I will evaluate if it worked or it didn't work. It is used to solve something specific and it is short-term [T7:I1].

For this teacher, AR could not be used for language skills as the improvement of such areas was too broad and in her view AR was used only to solve 'small' problems. This aspect of AR was found in five definitions of the term as teachers indicated the problem to be solved had to be manageable. In addition, teachers argued that the focus was on a problem, a weakness or an area of low-performance in the EL curriculum;

> Mmm… it is to research a problem that students currently have so we have to find out what is a weakness in our students' English. So, we have to make comparisons, research what the problem is, why that problem took place (5) so investigate the weakness of our students in some skill to learn English. That is what I think many of us understood and that is what we began to do now [T8:I1].

The focal point of problems in AR was also discussed in the focus groups;

> T5: It has to do with problem related to methodology
>
> T3: a problem connected with low performance or problems with learning certain content.
>
> T2: I also related it to problems about self-esteem, learning disabilities or specific problems in the classroom. I focused on the development of one skill; speaking.
>
> [FG2]

Teachers' view of AR as a means of addressing learning difficulties related to a specific content of the syllabus such as a grammar point, a thematic unit, or a language skill can be further identified in teachers' AR projects to be analyzed in section 4.3.3.

As AR had been defined as problem solving, unsurprisingly teachers claimed such approach was an 'everyday thing' for them as they also used strategies in their classrooms to solve everyday problems.

> but in reality I always do it, we are always doing it but we didn't do it in writing.. we always have problems of different kinds and then I reflect and think for example 'Why can't my students learn the third person singular?'... there must be a problem there so I need to find a solution and by myself I start looking for other ways of teaching, maybe if I use a game, if I do pair or group work… But I didn't collect data [T4:I1].

In the quote above, the grammar content 'third person singular' is described as the problem providing further evidence of the kind of difficulties being solved and the lack of data collected in their usual 'everyday problem-solving'. Regarding data collection, another teacher claimed the following;

> For me AR is an everyday thing because when a problem presents itself when I teach something, I try to solve it like that. It is a short-term thing… I do it every day but without the methodology of AR I mean a survey, an interview, not using research methodology, saying qualitative or quantitative but it's something informal which I feel it's similar to AR. AR has more technical aspects but I feel I am doing AR without using the technical part, not graphics or tabulations [T7:I2].

What teachers say about AR being similar to their everyday problem-solving, reveals they understand AR as no different from what they do already but just a more formal version of their everyday practice, some form of small scale problem-solving in the light of classroom experience.

In the description provided above, T7 used the term qualitative and quantitate to illustrate that both could be used if he were to follow certain protocol, however, at the end of his explanation he indicated the use of graphics and tabulations. It is unclear whether he preferred quantitative methods to present data, but it revealed research methodology for him is related to the use of tabulations which in any case, would not be necessary for his everyday or 'informal' as he calls it, form of AR.

After teachers had conducted their AR projects, and as they had experienced the process with their students, the notion of AR for the application of strategies to improve teaching became more frequent. T1 indicated;

> 'I think it is very beneficial for students because since we focus on doing a better job by helping them and try to find one and as many strategies possible and create these projects to focus on a particular weakness. '[T1:I2]

For this teacher, the benefit lays in doing her outmost to help her students by choosing a variety of strategies to solve what she calls a 'weakness'. I would argue this is a rather simplistic way of assessing the benefits of AR since as they claimed earlier; this resembles the kind of problem-solving they commonly engage in which does not involve research. On a similar vein another teacher added this merit to AR by saying it allowed her to plan better lessons;

> Yes, it is beneficial because of the fact that you prepare a class which motivates students in a way that you plan with the intention of solving a problem and prepare yourself well using resources and present contents in a more interactive and fun way so that students learn fast and everything is easy and nice. [T6:I2].

This statement further evidences teachers' notion of AR to promote more consciously improved instruction as another teacher added;

> Well, I always tried to solve problems arisen in the classroom but this time ((*while doing AR)*) I was consciously and purposefully doing something to solve a specific situation because most of times it is unconscious, you do it in the moment and it is not planned whereas with AR you plan, find possible solutions to try to solve that particular problem [T1:I3].

In the statement above, this teacher established a difference between AR and general problem solving arguing in the former she had the 'intention' of finding a solution in a more planned way. In a focus group discussion, the words 'systematisation' and 'scientific' came up to describe the AR process in a similar way;

> T3. it is the systematisation of a problem. What you did without much planning before…. trying one and one more time. This is more planned, orderly,

> structured, you think about it more.
>
> T9: well, AR must include a scientific method, something well structured, supported with literature which is something I didn't do because of time. [FG2]

The findings above indicate teachers' claimed perceptions of AR were limited to the application of more careful and planned instruction to solve problems thus resulting in improved practice. Further data regarding this issue will be presented in section 4.4.

In some of the quotes above as in many other explanations provided by teachers, I identified phrases such as 'what we were explained', 'what I understood', 'I think' and 'what the trainer said'. I would argue the persistency of these phrases indicate teachers' lack of confidence when expressing their own understandings of AR. Moreover, I had noticed teachers being very careful about their choice of words when talking about AR and also rather hesitant. When I became interested in their opinions about the objectives of AR in the course and the kind of AR proposed, they became quite vocal and critical. At one point they seemed to defend their 'more practical' idea of AR as they considered it was more useful for them as 'knowers' of their context.

> T2: I honestly think classroom-based projects are more valuable that large-scale ones. They are local, contextual, based in our reality, Chile. Based on the amount of hours we teach, etc. The people who have such visions ((*systemic AR)*) are people who do not know about the classroom, they work at a different level [FG2].

The idea of emancipatory models to be promoted by people, who do not know and understand their reality, re-emerged in many of their discussions. Here is an extract from one focus group discussing the feasibility of different types of AR (see Appendix 13). The talk from the teacher T2 is also presented in Spanish to present accurately the expression she used.

Spanish version:

> T2: Los que diseñaron el curso están sentados en el Monte Olimpo… y esto no les permite ver nuestra realidad y en esa realidad no podemos hacer el tipo de investigación acción que ellos tenían en mente. Desde su punto de vista ellos

ven investigación acción para el desarollo del curriculum como algo realizable pero ellos no saben lo que esto implica para nosotros. Sus intenciones son buenas pero ellos no fueron claros porque su mensaje no llegó a los profesores ni a nosotros. El profesor puede haber cambiado lo que ellos querían o puede haberse chocado con la realidad nuestra o simplemente el profesor se dio cuenta de eso y de manera intencional planificó hacerlo así para considerar nuestra realidad

Final transcription:

T2: Course designers are seating at the Mount Olympus *((Ivory Tower))* and this doesn't let them see our reality and in such reality we cannot do the kind of AR they envisioned. From their standpoint they see AR for curriculum development as feasible but they do not know what that implies for us. Their intentions are good but they are not clear, because they did not reach the trainers or us. Their intentions may have been changed by the trainer's or they may have clashed with our teaching reality or simply the trainer may have noticed that and deliberately planned to do it that way considering our reality.

Other teachers added;

T9: We need to consider that the designers of the course are academics who work at that level and have such vision of AR and its potential but we work at a different level and our experience and knowledge is still limited so maybe in time when we reach certain level we may be able to become long-term researchers where our time can be divided into teaching and researching; but our job now is teaching. I don't think their ideas are bad at all; we are just working at a different level.

T3: Imagine that they wanted us to do all this for this course, not later, in this course! From that perspective they were too ambitious because we need to gain experience to get there.

T9: I think they should have lowered their objectives and say; for us this is what AR is but for these teachers who work in these conditions this is what we will try to achieve, this is what we will ask them to do, to start [FG2].

Teachers here identified two levels of work in the Chilean education system which do not meet, one where academics (course designers) work and a different one where teachers work. They claim academics' knowledge and experience is not precisely better but simply different and it is such difference which causes the different views of AR identified in the course. Similar ideas were shared by a second focus group discussing the same issue;

> T1: I could do something cross-curricular in my school, but to have a say in what happens at school, I don't think so. We usually do not have the chance to change something. That part doesn't look doable but working among colleagues, yes.
>
> T7: I could do it at school but now that I know teachers from different schools we could do something together. But that also means time to do it, and we have very busy lives.
>
> T6: the problem is that decisions are being taken by academics, designers, government authorities, not us.
>
> T1: Even at school level sometimes it is difficult to be heard.
>
> I think that our view is what is real and designers' views is the ideal. In practice those large-scale projects cannot be done, not because we don't want to, they just cannot happen. We are not given time for example to work on projects, to be part in decision making. I think the country is not prepared for that, our educational system I mean.
>
> R: Why?
>
> T1: because all institutions have a pyramidal structure or a hierarchy. The top positions take decisions, they inform people in lower positions and we teachers, execute, we are the workforce. It's not a democratic thing where we can say what we can do.. we are never consulted about anything, ever. So because of the way our system is, it can't be done. So the systems takes us here, we cannot complain or try to convince them, they do not care [FG1].

Generally, the picture portrayed by these discussions is that course designers' ideas are well-intended and in fact, needed. However, they cannot become a reality because of what teachers call 'the system', where teachers' voices are not heard and therefore notions of curriculum development and emancipation sound far-fetched to them. The contradiction between what the syllabus indicated, the actual training received and the trainers' expectations was stated by this teacher; 'the contradiction is that even though this is very clear in the course syllabus we were asked to do something completely different. We were asked to do something at a small-scale, individual, short term and specific' [T5:FG2].

The data presented in this section has demonstrated the existence of different views of AR existing in the course. For teachers, AR is viewed as problem-solving through the application of a strategy which teachers' perceived as resulting in improved practice. The notion of the application of a strategy or an intervention and posterior assessment of its effects has been identified as a characteristic of AR in the literature (Cohen et al., 2007). I am not purposefully trying to simplify AR here by saying it only consists of assessed intervention but stating that such feature is in fact mentioned in the literature and therefore, it highlights that teachers' appreciation of AR as the application of a strategy to improve a situation, though limited, is pertinent. Teachers' conceptualisations of AR as problem-solving are not rare as other studies have also indicated such tendency (Rainey, 2000, Tinker Sachs, 2002, Reis-Jorge, 2007). AR for problem-solving has also been criticised as downplaying the role of exploring and understanding. Arguably, the teachers participating in this study did not make reference to understanding, analysis, self-assessment and reflection thus revealing an incomplete appraisal of the activity reducing it to a technicist view (Elliott, 1991).

Having argued that teachers' conceptualisations of AR may be deficient –and too focused on problem-solving– teachers expressed AR's main appeal was precisely its potential in assisting them to solve classroom problems thus catalysing improved practice and subsequently enhancing student learning. The appeal associated with AR here has also been stated in the literature as teachers' search for changes which are 'pragmatic' and ultimately improve students' learning (Guskey, 2002). However

and as I will discuss later, some of teachers' claims about the enhancement of students' learning may not be substantial.

Course designer's views about AR include improved practice as well, so in this aspect, both views of AR match. However, discrepancies between their conceptualisations can be identified in terms of impact and purpose. Whereas teachers focus on their classroom, their practices and their students, course designers go further by aiming at participation to inform curriculum design. The view of the trainer was rather inconsistent arguing AR is for specific purposes, classroom-based and lacking rigour whereas claiming AR originated as an attempt for teachers to become agents of change promoting 'systemic modifications'.

4.3 AR training and learning

I will begin this section by describing the AR module as it was defined in the course syllabus and also as it took place according to the accounts of trainers and teachers. I will provide information about learning of AR in the course and teachers' perceptions about appropriate AR training.

The intentions of course designers as expressed by them and also as reflected in the syllabus provide sufficient information about the objectives set for the AR module but little recommendations for the trainer in terms of the methodology to be used, contents to be covered and the criteria to be applied to assess the AR projects. However, based on the course syllabus and data obtained from CDs I would argue after doing AR, course participants are expected to;

- Develop critical and reflective skills
- Systematically assess micro and macro issues involved in the teaching profession, but also at a wider level (i.e. from classroom events to situations at school level, the educational system and even society)
- Develop knowledge and skills to develop quality research which assist them to solve problems and improve their practice
- Become longer-term researchers thus re-engaging in teacher research
- Use the information obtained from their research to inform curriculum development

- Share findings and their possible implications
- Ultimately, develop professionally

4.3.1 The AR module

In this section, my intention is to turn to pedagogical aspects of the module which determined how the notion of AR may or may not have been integrated with other modules of the course as intended by course designers. They indicated this element was essential as it allowed teachers to see the use of AR as a way to evaluate and reflect on the knowledge gained in all the modules covered in the programme. One of them stressed that teachers 'would be doing some form of AR in every single module' [CD3:I1].

The descriptions of the course syllabus regarding the AR module indicate the following;

> This module goes across the other four modules and considers teachers as professionals who reflect on their own teaching practice aiming at solving difficulties encountered in the classroom contexts. This approach leads to improve the teacher's capacity to collect and select information and to apply the acquired knowledge in the classroom on the one hand and towards their own teacher development (Course syllabus:7).

However, it did not allocate hours for its development nor provided clear information about how it would go throughout the other modules. In the previous section I presented findings which indicated that the trainer claimed he had developed the cross-modular aspect of the module by linking it with the module of evaluation. He indicated he did so because he believed there was a strong connection between research and evaluation but he also confessed lack of time was a determining factor since he taught the module at the end of the course and in a single session.

The AR module involved the development of an AR project which weighted 40 percent of the course final mark, more than any other assessment method in the course. I would argue then that AR was an important aspect of the course. However, when I interviewed the trainers of the course (who did not teach the module) and

asked how they implemented such module, they stated ‘we did not know the cross-modular nature of AR. We saw it as one module so it was covered as such and it was covered by TT1. I didn’t know what it was about’ [TT2:I1]. Her statement not only indicates they were unaware of this aspect of the course syllabus but it also reveals the difficulty of including aspects of AR in every module as the trainers teaching the other methodology modules did not know they were supposed to include AR in them.

It is evident that the level of importance given by the course designers and the assessment was different to the time and attention given to it by the AR trainer; ‘I think in this course that part ((*AR*)) was covered very lightly, it wasn’t systematic’ [TT1:I1].

I was also interested in how reflective practice was incorporated in the module and the course more generally. Furthermore, teachers were supposed to write reflective journal entries on a regular basis. This aspect of the course may be relevant when teaching about AR as this kind of writing promotes the reflective attitudes closely linked with the AR construct. Nevertheless, such reflective writings did not take place for the AR component as they stopped a few months into the course. Hence, reflective journals were unable to support it.

From data collected from teachers and trainers I concluded that reflective writing or thinking were anyway not the main objective of the journal entries, as trainers chose to assess them mainly by asking teachers to recall topics discussed in class as it was important ‘that they had understood the main points covered in class’ [TT2:I1] and also to evaluate the most appealing contents covered which could be used in their lessons. As one teacher indicated, this is the kind of feedback she received; ‘corrections to grammar mistakes, comments about how we could have developed an idea better, or not to extend our writing so much on one idea but maybe on another [T8:I1]’. Unfortunately, journal entries were not available for further analysis since they had stopped the year before this research began and teachers no longer kept copies, suggesting they were not particularly valued.

A negative aspect of the way in which the AR module was actually provided by trainers in different parts of the country was recognised by course designers. They

claimed such aspect was the absence of any follow-up which would allow teachers to share their findings and experiences with research.

> What was missing in the course was people connecting and sharing their findings in the different cities where the course was running. That was not implemented. Ideally, people in different cities would be sharing their results [CD2:I1].

4.3.1.1 AR input

The contents covered in the AR module were preceded by the assessment module and particularly by 'norm-reference testing' which was the topic the trainer used to make a link with AR. Concepts such as 'variables', 'measurements', 'data collection', 'validity' and 'reliability' were linked to notions and processes involved in AR.

The topics which included AR input were presented in two PowerPoint presentations. The first one focused on research in more general terms and it included the following topics;

- Types of research
- The scientific method (John Dewey)
- Problem or topic identification
- Characteristics of AR
- Importance of research
- Steps in a micro-evaluation process [ARS]

From these topics, two issues deserve attention. Firstly, the study of the scientific method and the subsequent steps in a micro-evaluation problem evidence a quantitative research stance on the part of the trainer. I believe this had an impact in teachers' understandings of research as will be discussed below.

Secondly, AR was characterized as 'not aimed at generalising to other educational settings' and as 'less rigorous than other educational research' (T1:CN). The first assertion has in fact been shared across the literature but there is also a position which claims that the knowledge emerged from AR could contribute to broader

educational settings whereas the notion of AR as less rigorous research has been addressed by means of thorough data collection and analysis processes.

A second set of PowerPoint slides presented to teachers focused on AR and included the following topics;

- Definition of AR
- Steps into topic selection
- Research techniques [ARS]

The definition of AR presented to teachers was taken from Wallace (1998) and it emphasized AR as problem-focused and a practical way to solve problems in teachers' professional practice. Conceptualisations of AR for other purposes were not mentioned except its role in self-evaluation (to be noted here the use of self-evaluation as the closest equivalent to reflective practice).

In addition, the list of AR techniques proposed included questionnaires, interviews, experimental tests, evaluative tests and techniques or 'activities' such as dictation, games, silent reading and drama among others. This list -let alone its meaning- was problematic as it contained research methods -four of them quantitative- along with teaching strategies which may or may not be used in problem-solving.

In section 1.1.5 I detailed that the contents of the syllabus included;

- Samples of carried out models of action research
- Main characteristics of action research.
- Action research stages.
- Data analysis

It can be observed there was a disparity among the contents proposed and the contents presented. No samples of AR reports were provided for teachers to identify its structure and content. The availability of examples as guidance could have proven useful especially for teachers' who had not read a research report before. Tinker Sachs (2000) reported teachers expressed the need to read an exemplar of AR to support their writing and also adjust their reporting style. AR stages where not

discussed during the lecture therefore teachers were unaware of the procedure involved. Indeed, the research process was reported as the most problematic.

As conclusion regarding the input provided in the course, the data indicates the input session about AR promotes learning *about* conventional AR but little reference is made to *how to* do AR. The references made to the AR process are only made through one slide which listed the stages of a micro-evaluation process as;

1 Choosing what to evaluate
2 Describing the focus of the evaluation
3 Planning the process
4 Collecting the information
5 Analyzing the gathered information
6 Reaching conclusion and making recommendations
7 Writing the report [T1:CN]

These stages identified in the micro-evaluation process also proved to be problematic since they are not explicitly stated as part of the research process and its association with evaluation may have also been confusing.

4.3.1.2 Teachers' perception of the AR training and learning

Teachers' perceptions about the training received were not positive. They claimed they were trained poorly mainly because of the limited time devoted to the topic. They indicated a five-hour lesson did not provide enough time to comprehend such an abstract and alien concept as it limited the possibility of fully grasping its full meaning. This was a discussion they had about the training received in one focus group session;

> T1: In our case, when we started talking about AR we only saw it in theory we never discussed an example to help us understand what it was. I think that prevented us from getting the right guidance. Besides there was no bibliography. Just one session and a very tight deadline.
>
> T7: we were in a hurry.
>
> T1: yes, so none of us knew well what it was about and what to do clearly.
>
> T6: we were all calling each other to try to find out.

> T1: we all did what we thought was right [FG1].

The main difficulty they identified was the absence of an example which would help them understand the AR process. Here are some comments they made;

> We didn't see an example of action research, this is the way it is and how they did no.. that didn't happen… that is what we wanted to be shown an example or be guided more that is why we asked him the last two session to work there in class to know if we were doing things right or wrong but unfortunately it didn't happen. I don't think I learnt much from that class. [T8:I1]

Teachers' dissatisfaction with the training approach used was also shared by another teacher;

> I think leaving it at the end was not good. Well, I think that when you teach something to your students, something new which they have never seen or done before you have to show them how it works, show them examples, then more examples, then exercise with them, then correct their mistakes, then to evaluate. We didn't have examples, anything [T2:I3].

The comment above illustrates how this teacher was making connections between what she thinks is 'good teaching' and 'good training' and making a parallel between these two processes. In her comment I would argue there is evidence trainers did not 'model practice' which is deemed as a highly desirable feature of successful training (Smith, 2005).

Additionally, the fact that the module was linked with evaluation was also something teachers found confusing as it added more unknown concepts to the already unknown concept of AR.

> Because of the little time devoted to it in class and because there was terminology used that I am sure teachers didn't understand so that limited what we could do. So I truly believe it was the time and the terminology used. I also think there was a lot of statistics involved, lots of math and some teachers were not comfortable with that [T3:I3].

Some teachers also commented that the limited time given to the module did not allow them to clarify doubts regarding the scope of AR. Most of them claimed they had trouble establishing the difference between applied research and action research as terms such as 'general', 'broad' and 'long-term' were never clearly defined. One teacher separated applied research from action research by relating the former with larger social problems;

> I have the impression that the word applied implies more dedication. The trainer explained that in fact applied research was to solve a social problem for instance, why certain students consume drugs, sociology sort of thing, whereas AR is more specific, we use our reality to solve a problem but here and now [T6:I2].

There are clearly questions here about the trainer's own understandings of AR and his competence in teaching others about it. Yet another teacher expressed her confusion with regards to the time AR took to be carried out in comparison to applied research;

> I had doubts at one point because a colleague of mine told me my project was not right because it lasted more than a month and therefore it wasn't AR, it was applied research but I read about it and nowhere it read the time should be short or it wouldn't be AR [T1:I2].

In their comments, teachers had expressed their disappointment with the way the module was conducted. They believed the way the module was devised had a negative effect on the way they conducted their projects.

> ..we didn't know how to begin, how to collect the data, what to do.. I mean.. at least we needed some samples of what to do, how to collect the data and all that. Collecting data was difficult because with my colleague we didn't know what to do next. Ok we have the data, what do we do next? [T8:I3].

Similar comments were made in focus groups;

> T7: we got and did the kind of AR appropriate for the time dedicated to AR in the course, because we had approximately two weeks to do this.

> T6: if not AR, I think we only tried to solve a problem. Because research for me has also to do with consulting the literature, your peers, other institutions, etc.
>
> T1: I think our understanding of AR is ambiguous as what we were taught. I still do not feel technically knowledgeable in the subject, or how to do it. [FG1]

They also felt this hindered their desire to do it again;

> I would do it again but I am also unclear about some things, especially about data collection. That's my only problem. So, I think the problem was in the data collection because he ((*the AR trainer)*) didn't explain much or he didn't say what it was required, specifically in the project what he wanted us to do. He talked about it too generally [T4:I3].

Six teachers in the study claimed needing more guidance and the provision of one AR report as an example to understand its process. I would argue this is particularly important for teachers who have never read a research report and therefore are not aware of its structure.

When I met teachers for the first time, I gave them a questionnaire with some questions which would allow me to prepare subsequent interview sessions. One of the questions I asked was whether they had any prior research experiences as I thought such experience may inform the knowledge gained about AR. The questionnaires indicated that none of them had had any research experience.This is not surprising since these are high school teachers who do not hold a master's degree, did not participate in any prior university-led training programme or work in a university. I specify these facts because there is a tendency for university-based teachers to be engaged in research (Borg, 2009a) either by knowing about it, reading about it or doing it. In an attempt to identify whether teacher' null prior research experience may be considered a difficulty when enrolling in a research-based INSETT programme, I identified two examples where teachers had scarce or no prior experience and the author did not report this as being a major issue which may prevent teachers to participate in the programmes effectively (Atay, 2008, Burns and Rochsantiningsih, 2006).

Based on the data I had collected about the training received -particularly in early interviews- I decided to ask teachers to reflect on what they perceived about effective 'AR training'. Their comments are provided next.

4.3.1.3 Teachers' views about effective AR training

As teachers' perceptions of the training of the course were generally negative, I was interested in their views about effective AR training i.e. how they think learning about AR could have taken place in order to prepare them to conduct a project. Being teachers, they indicated that overall AR should be taught as a 'good' teacher teaches any topic or content. Firstly, they claimed the learning must be gradual and guided as they explained it to me as if I were their future trainer.

> if you want us to do AR, let's do it together, a process… let's talk about AR the first class, let's begin the following class, let's check understanding properly, next week ((*we check*)) the structure. We apply it in our schools and then we start fixing things together <u>with your help</u>…we didn't have any feedback by the way… well I didn't ask for it either but I think we need to be working together to get guidance in order to have a project which can have a bigger impact. [T7:I3]

Another point of discussion was clarity about the objectives of AR and its inclusion in the course. They asserted the goals of AR in the course were not clear.

> First, indicate objectives saying how AR can actually be useful for teachers. In which way it could help them improve, what were the objectives in mind, also to be sure whether this would be helpful to create or design a project or to improve their teaching [T5:I3].

Another teacher questioned whether an AR module should be integrated in a methodology course as he claimed it was not the reason why teachers registered in it. He claimed the focus of the course was in ELT methodology and not research so he failed to make connections between his new knowledge of methodology and how it could be enhanced through AR.

> I'd eliminate the module of AR because this is a methodology course to update your knowledge in it, how to work, use strategies and resources, use of

> technology. I'd take more advantage of technology and other available methods to teach. AR doesn't help me with that [T7:FG1].

Another aspect which teachers related to effective training was how trainers showed their knowledge. They said trainers had to be knowledgeable but more importantly to clearly show their knowledge to their trainees.

> First, show how well prepared you are because the trainers we had this time didn't express their knowledge, so we didn't trust their knowledge because they didn't show it. Because in that way you give us confidence [T1:I3].

From the comments above, I can conclude teachers characterise effective AR training as gradual and experiential having a clear stated purpose and be supported by a knowledgeable trusted educator.

The data presented in this section evidences operational difficulties associated with the AR module. In turn, these difficulties had an immediate impact on teachers' learning about AR and their abilities to carry it out. As they did not have prior experience in research, the inappropriate training conducted did not support their learning while their trainer did not appeared knowledgeable to course participants as to trust his teaching methods. Hence, their experience had allowed them to identify key elements to be considered if further AR training is envisioned.

In the following section, I will present the findings obtained at the end of the course. By analysing the AR reports produced by teacher, I tried to establish whether the data about the models of AR described in section 4.2 and the training and learning of AR described above could be traced in teachers' accounts of their experience conducting their project as well as in their written reports.

4.3.2 Doing AR

I will begin this section by presenting data about teachers' initial motivation to conduct their projects. I will also present an analysis of the AR reports written by

teachers which described their projects. I will also present their views about the experience and the challenges they faced.

4.3.2.1 Original motivation to do AR projects

The course syllabus indicates teachers are required to complete a research project on curriculum design or classroom practice. Such project has a weight of 40 percent (the remainder is distributed in assessment tasks which include microteaching sessions, reflective writing and oral presentations). The syllabus does not state whether any of the assignment tasks can be modified or omitted and therefore if a teacher does not carry out the AR project (or any of the assessment tasks establish in the course syllabus) it implies the minimum mark will be obtained. As a consequence, an average failing grade may be obtained. For teachers such assessment requirements mean than carrying out the AR project is indeed a requirement to be granted the course certification. What is more, I would argue, this whole requirement atmosphere is hardly in line with the ethos of empowerment and agency that AR is supposed to engender.

The need to conduct the project to pass the course was then not well received by teachers as they felt too tired to carry out such demanding task at the end of a 12-month course. Indeed, all teachers interviewed confessed they only carried out the project because it was the last 'barrier' to get their certification; 'I motivated myself to do it well because I wanted to get a good mark and to get it over with because it was a requisite to be able to finish the course' [T7:I3]. Some other expressions teachers used to describe their feelings about conducting their projects were 'get it out of the way', 'get rid of it' and 'errand' which illustrate the project was an obstacle.

Teachers' lack of enthusiasm to conduct the AR projects is as they expressed partly due to the timing chosen for such task, I should point out at the AR module is numbered as number 5 in the syllabus but it is not described as happening at the end of the course. I have already explained that in fact, it was cross-modular and input sessions about AR or discussions about their projects could take place at any time during the course. However, teachers expressed the learning of methodology is the main reason for entering the course and therefore their main interest. In this light, I could argue that conducting research was not something they envisaged themselves

doing and ultimately wanted to learn about and do. In addition, teachers indicated they had not read a research report, either in the course or before the course during their initial training. Exposure to such reports, accompanied by an analysis of its findings and implications, may have contributed to their understanding of the impact research can have for practice and in turn, resulting in a more committed and willing take on the AR project.

Three teachers participating in the study felt somewhat interested in carrying out the project but mainly because it implied solving a real problem occurring in their classroom but expressed they were not engaged in the process of doing AR, as one of them explained;

> I didn't do it willingly, it was more because it was a requirement… I was interested in solving the problem, but if I had been told to solve it in any other way, then I would have solved it in another way but I was not interested in AR [T4:I3].

As discussed in previous sections, this quote also makes reference to the appeal of AR for teachers as an approach to assist them in problem solving. However, the extent and effectiveness of the solutions found through the AR projects did not become evident in some of their reports. Moreover, doing AR was not something teachers felt they signed up for and their main motivations to carry it out was to comply.

4.3.2.2 Usefulness of conducting the AR project

Despite what I have said above, four teachers commented that in retrospective, they could estimate doing the AR project was a beneficial experience. Even though many situations regarding training and their working conditions (to be discussed in section 4) were conflicting, they argued that it was useful. One teacher claimed it had allowed her to become aware she can change things in her classroom.

> Well, my colleagues in the course are a lot younger. I have 12 years of experience so I was already a bit unmotivated in terms of my teaching and this course was a refresher for me and change a bit of the way I taught and one of

> those things is that we can change things… as teachers we can do big things inside the classroom and we can also change and also help our students learn in different ways.. and also that I can use the same strategies later with other courses when I detect a problem I will be able to do it. So I think it was very useful for me [T4:I3]

This teacher made an interesting point in 'we can do big things in the classroom' arguing she felt capable of promoting change within her working environment.

Another teacher valued the 'scientific' aspect she can add in her problem solving using AR which as T4 above, felt she can do things other than just teaching. A sense of empowerment within the classroom can be then identified in her words;

> It ((*AR)*) has its usefulness and … Let's say (3) it is interesting for a teacher to do something like that because it gives you the scientific bit, it takes you off the routine, do classes is one thing but researching is another, is not only to be a teacher but you become a researcher and observing things from a scientific perspective of how I can fix certain situations which are happening in my classroom to improve them and to do a comparison between two classes, seeing what works best, that is interesting for us, because it gives you another vision of things, going to bibliography and using a given strategy and formulate a hypothesis and see whether it works or not, take that to concrete data or results, etc. [T9:I3]

4.3.2.3 Students' learning in AR

As I talked to teachers after their projects I realized phrases such as 'the project worked out' came up close together with the phrase 'my students learnt' as if they thought that by finding a solution to the problem detected by proposing a strategy; meant necessarily that learning took place. I will mention below how some claims made by teachers in their reports were not supported by evidence (see 4.3.3.4). Even though an enhancement of students' learning may not in fact have occurred, it is still important to note that the data indicated teachers were not interested in understanding the problem (eg. factors causing it and how it originated) but on solving it. In this particular instance, solving the problem was more rewarding that the mark obtained in the report.

> T3: well, my objective was to find a solution to a problem because it was something I was worried about. I wanted to accomplish learning so at the end it worked because by looking for the strategies and all that, I accomplished that they learned what I wanted.
>
> T8: thanks to this we could solve the problem. Because we couldn't stop until we found a solution.
>
> T9: if they reached the goal, you felt happy.
>
> T2: if you reached the objective, you were right, no matter the mark [FG2].

It is worth noting that the comment above revealed teachers need for definite solutions, therefore their search was consciously planned to make the strategy work. What is more, another teacher valued the role of AR in supporting learning and having the chance to apply changes in her classroom but still did not feel motivated to do it.

However, one teacher was cautious about the impact of AR in their students' learning and questioned this issue by claiming the learning occurred was short-term since the strategy was only applied for one month.

> T1:.if the problem was solved then the objective was achieved, so we felt happy it had worked out… In a way we linked the solution to the problem with learning, because our objective was achieved.
>
> T7: I cannot say much about learning because this was short-term so I don't know if that learning will last in time [FG1].

I will report the findings obtained from AR reports below in order to establish connections to what teachers have indicated regarding the impact of AR and learning.

4.3.3 AR reports

From nine teachers who participated in this research, I only considered eight reports for this analysis since T2 submitted a plagiarised AR report. This was not something commented on by the teacher herself but it was something I discovered as I made an

online search of some of teachers' bibliographic references where the same report was found. My position regarding this issue is not to judge the teacher's decision to submit such report but on the contrary, I argue that the tight deadline, the scarce and inappropriate guidance may have led this teacher to do this. Additionally, the teacher's main interest was on compliance and it gives further evidence of the high importance provided to the final outcome -the report- over the process of learning to do AR. I must clarify that I purposefully did not ask T2 about this situation since I felt questioning her about an unfinished task would cause her to lose face particularly if asked by an outsider. In light with the ethical consideration of 'avoiding harm' psychologically (Bryman, 2008) I decided not to ask the teacher about this matter. Moreover, a similar problem was reported by one teacher who did not submit the report until two months later. She claimed she had decided not to conduct the project due to the stress it involved. She later contacted the trainer who agreed to assess her report but deducting marks from her score due to the late submission. Overall, teachers' busy working lives, their self-confessed limited knowledge about AR and their lack of interest added an extra burden to the tight deadline provided.

As I detailed previously, teachers were taught *about* AR in one 5-hour lecture. In addition, they had not been informed the AR project would be added at the end of the course or that it would be assessed as a requirement for course completion. They claimed feeling worried about the timescale of one month to do it and write the report. They asked for an extension which the trainer agreed to as long as it would not exceed 10 days after the original deadline.

1. Project antecedents	Marks
1.1 Project area	2
1.2 Coverage	2
2. Problem statement	
2.1 Significance of study	4
2.2 Concern area	4
2.3 Objectives	4
3. Research methodology	
3.1 Hypothesis/ Question	3
3.2 Data collection	5
3.3 Data analysis	5
3.4 Findings	5
4. Conclusions	4
Total Score	38

Table 4.2. AR report framework

It is important to mention that teachers did not receive guidance while they conducted their research but they received a framework to follow when writing their report. The AR report framework included the main aspects to be contained in the report as well as the score for each of them. Moreover, I would argue teachers used such framework for guiding their process of doing AR as well. The report framework provided by the trainer is detailed in Table 4.2.

This framework may be useful for teachers to follow when writing their report as it can be used as a guide for text structure and language or terminology to be used. In the literature similar frameworks can be identified (Borg, 2006a). Arguably, even though teachers followed a research-like structure of research reports, they failed to grasp the terminology it contained since they confused collection methods with intervention strategies and research design with data analysis and findings. In terms of language, it was academic-jargon free –except the headings from the framework in

Table 4.2- and easy to comprehend. According to the trainer, the framework outlined above was intended to help teachers guide their research project. He indicated 'the outline was very specific and it was very practical… very much for AR so that it is understood by classroom teachers since they have heavy workloads they need to think of something doable' [TT1:I2]

In the previous quote, the trainer indicated the format was appropriate for an AR project in being practical and specific. However, I would argue such framework includes terminology which teachers are not familiar with since teachers did not fully understood what each term meant. Confusion was mostly identified in data collection, data analysis and findings where teachers provided similar information.

The confusion evident in teachers' reports also came up during their discussion in the focus group session;

> T3: In my project, the teacher told me many things were categorised or named incorrectly. I confused data collection methods with evidence for example.
>
> T9: I think we were more worried about how it was done in our classroom, not on the report. Not on each heading having the right name, concept or label. So, our mark reflected the work on paper really not what we did in the classroom. The use of terminology was complex [FG2].

The outline provided by the trainer included scores for each area and sub-area to reach a total of 38 points, 23 points being the passing score. The highest scores assigned to research methodology indicate the focus was on the research process itself; the question originating the research, the actions taken by teachers and why, the instruments used to collect the data and the type of data to be collected. Interestingly, these aspects of the AR process were not fully treated during the AR session, not addressed in later discussions.

I will now attempt an analysis of teachers' AR reports (see AR report summaries in Appendix 19) in order to identify further evidence about teachers' AR learning. Although there is not much agreement in the literature about the criteria to use to judge AR reports and teacher research more generally. On the one hand, there is a position which suggests teacher research should be judged as any other research (Nunan, 1997) another suggests different criteria should be used which are more

appropriate to the audience, purpose and outcomes of teacher research (Zeichner and Noffke, 2001). Consequently, I will base my analysis drawing on similar reports found in the literature. Considering the characteristic of the teachers participating in this study (classroom teachers, no prior research experience, BA degree) I have opted to conduct my analysis comparing them with similar reports published in the *Teachers' Voices* series, in the journal *PROFILE*, the volumes from Oman and the Emirates. Whereas these accounts do vary in terms of structure and methodological design, there are aspects in them which can be analysed and I will use these to assess the AR reports in this study.

In the analysis I will begin by describing the aspect observed, discuss its presence in the AR teacher-led reports found in the literature and then conduct an analysis of this aspect of the reports conducted by the teachers under study.

4.3.3.1 Purpose

The aspect observed here is whether the study has a clear purpose, whether it is relevant for the teacher and more importantly, how the teacher explains such relevance. The intention of a project may be in solving a problematic situation, understanding a situation or assessing an intervention, in any case, here I will observe how it clearly supports its purpose.

Reading other AR reports, I observed teachers provide several arguments for their choice of topic and the importance of their study; to improve a problematic situation detected through the use of strategies (Khameis, 2007), to understand a situation (Al-Rubkhi, 2009), answer a puzzle (Kozar, 2001) and also to address and cater for a need identified in their education settings (López Clavijo, 2009). Overall, I could argue that teachers express the purpose of the study and its relevance for their teaching, their setting or their learners quite clearly. A reason for this may be that the choice of topic has been made by themselves according to their own interest or teaching situation with the only exception of the reports in the *Teachers' Voices* series where teachers were asked to conduct a project in a given area (the question to be answered and therefore specific concern is of their choice).

Teachers' conceptualisations of AR as problem-solving is reflected in their projects as of 8 reports, 7 of them indicated the main purpose was to solve a problem with the

objective to cause more effective learning either to challenging language units such as countable and uncountable nouns or broader areas such as vocabulary. Despite these topics being rather narrow, teachers have argued their relevance appropriately.

In terms of topics, the reports evidence that teachers tend to select topics which correspond to language units. The list of topics selected by teachers to conduct their projects appear in Table 4.3 below.

T1: Application of strategies for learning past verb forms effectively
T3: Alternative instruction to compensate reduced teaching hours.
T4: The role of games in vocabulary learning.
T5: The role of realia for enhancing oral production.
T6: Application of strategy to promote the learning of present tense in the third personal singular
T7: Application of strategy to promote comprehension of subject-verb agreement of the noun *people*.
T8: Application of strategy to promote comprehension of countable and uncountable nouns
T9: Application of strategy to promote speaking when answering open ended questions

Table 4.3 Teachers' AR topics

The following list evidenced that 5 teachers selected to focus their project on language units thus attempting alternative ways to teach them and assess their outcome. I believe teachers selected such topics because of their views of AR as specific and small-scale and its capacity to help teachers solve an immediate problem. However, this kind of topics is not common among AR done by school teachers. I have searched for similar examples in the series of *Teachers' Voices* from Australia, the volumes of teacher research conducted by teachers in Oman, the projects contained in the journal *PROFILE* from Colombia and the reports conducted by ELT school teachers in the Emirates and they do not include research conducted on strategies to teach specific language contents. I could argue that such level of specificity is hard to find because AR does not look for pedagogical solutions to a

grammar point but to areas where solutions may be adapted and re-used to broader situations. T3 conducted a comparative study which described a series of alternative, or improved, strategies of teaching to a class which had reduced number of teaching hours in comparison to another class. The objective for this teacher was to assess whether using these alternative strategies would ensure similar learning as the class with regular number of hours. Arguably, I noticed the strategies used in the experimental class were by large better prepared, more motivational and innovative as in the control class which poses a problem in the design of the study. These kinds of inadequacies were located at several points of the reports and therefore they represent the outcome of the module.

The framework used by teachers required the formulation of objectives. As I think they are research objectives, I detected confusion between these and what they call lesson or pedagogical objectives.

T1: Improve knowledge of irregular verbs in students of 9th grade.
T3: Students will be able to express ideas and actions in past simple using time expressions.
T4: Improve the learning of vocabulary in the English class of a 4th Grade through games.
T5: To make first grade students relate the new knowledge to their own life.
T6: 7th graders will be able to know and use the third person singular in simple present tense through exercising on handouts in classes.
T7: Solve the problem of subject-verb agreement of the noun *people* and the verb that proceeds it using activities to develop oral and written production.
T8: To help students from the 8th grade to revise or discover a particular grammar structure how much / how many questions.
T9: To introduce speaking skill in the students through answering wh-questions orally using present simple tense related to the lesson 'Who's in control' in the 8th grade.

Table 4.4 AR reports objectives

The objectives listed in the table above evidence what teachers see as research aims is to solve the problem identified. This is why they formulate objectives which stress either the end result expected as learning objectives would, or they stress the solution proposed to solve it. An example of an objective posed in a report by T4 stresses the result desired in a similar way as it would appear in a lesson plan as expected outcomes: 'Students will be able to express ideas and actions in past simple using time expressions' [T4:ARR]. The second common feature of the objectives posed is the inclusion of the solution suggested as in 'Improve the learning of vocabulary in the English class of a 4th Grade through games' [T5:ARR]. On the other hand, the objective posed by T9 'To introduce speaking skill in the students through answering wh- questions orally using present simple tense..' [T9:ARR] does not state a goal but rather describes an activity which possibly aims to promote speaking.

4.3.3.2 Discussion of literature

Here I will look at the extent to which the teacher-researchers connected their research with the literature and the ways in which they did so.

The reports found in the literature are quite varied in this respect. Though most of them do refer to the literature to frame the study theoretical discussion, they do not explore and analyse other studies done in the area. The reasons for this last point may be issues of access to research or lack of awareness of how to connect existing research with their own study. Overall, unlike more conventional academic research which is characterized by a comprehensive discussion of the literature, AR reports seem to vary in this respect from inexistent to somewhat brief but appropriate literature reviews.

The reports written by teachers in this study evidenced there was no requirement of consulting bibliography to support their claims or to guide themselves while doing the project. The trainer indicated he did not ask for bibliographic references because he understood teachers were running out of time and therefore he 'allowed them some freedom' [TT1:I2]. Only one report evidenced literature discussions which unsurprisingly belonged to the only teacher in the group who at the time of doing the project had started a MA degree. He was able to connect his concern area and argue its relevance with the literature by claiming 'students are prone to make mistakes

which may become fossilized if they are not properly acted upon on time (Lightbown & Spada, 2006)' [T7:ARR]. In report T6, the teacher-researcher provided a list with references but no allusion to it was made in the report. In report T4 the teacher quoted a definition but does not say its source. One could argue that these reports are not far from some of the AR reports found in the literature where bibliographic reference was not always present, however the lack of discussion about the main areas of concern and flaws in referencing and quoting indicate teachers' unawareness of these conventions and certainly the lack of guidance while writing the report.

4.3.3.3 Research design

The area to observe here is the design of the study, the data collection methods used and how they address the research questions posed, the situation to be explored or the hypothesis to be tested. I will also look at whether the method selected was properly designed and applied.

The AR reports found in the literature reflect a diverse use of data collection methods; surveys, interviews, observation protocols, recordings, tests and anecdotal records (Borg, 2010b). Moreover, more than one method of collecting data is identified in attempt to collect information in different ways and from different sources in order to facilitate validation. Details of research design and methodology also usually reduced in reports which favored a more narrative style to report the research process.

After analysing examples of AR in the literature, I could argue this is the weakest aspect in teachers' AR reports. When teachers used observations, a checklist was provided in only one report so there was lack of information about the aspects observed and how data was obtained from them thus raising concerns in terms of methodology. In addition, four reports evidenced one method to collect data thus limiting cross-referring which may ensure validity of the findings. In T6's report, a survey was used to collect information about students' social background which did not relate to the problem stated in the study.

TOPIC AREA	DATA COLLECTION METHOD
The role of games in vocabulary learning.	Survey, observation
The role of realia for enhancing oral production.	Oral test
Alternative instruction to compensate reduced teaching hours.	Pre-test, post-test (comparative study)
Application of strategy to promote speaking when answering open ended questions	Observation
Application of strategy to promote comprehension of countable and uncountable nouns	Test
Application of strategy to promote comprehension of subject-verb agreement of the noun *people*.	Observation (use of rubric)
Application of strategy to promote the learning of present tense in the third personal singular	Test, survey
Application of strategies for learning past verb forms effectively	Observation, pre and post-test

Table 4.5. Summary of methods used

Besides unstructured observations, the range of methods used to collect data was mostly limited to tests and surveys as indicated in Table 4.5.

The previous table shows teachers' tendency to use tests to collect data for their study which provide further evidence of how the link made with evaluation may have had an impact in their understandings of the AR process.

The use of tests is highly frequent in teachers' AR reports. In fact, six teachers have used them to collect data from their students. In addition, eight teachers have used numerical references to describe their data, either by using percentages or whole numbers.

This is what one teacher described about the procedure followed;

> First, I selected a problem, then I had to do a re-adjustment of lesson plan to include the topic, then I planned 3 strategies for three different lesson where students had to use the expression I wanted to evaluate, then I started to tabulate the data and at the end I organized the results, I presented them using graphs. [T7:I2]

In section 4.2.2, I had argued the trainer indicated preferences for quantitative approaches may have influenced teachers' reports. On this issue, the following teacher commented (Spanish version provided for more clarity);

Spanish version:

> Basado en la clase, porque te diste cuentas que fue sólo una. El profesor empezó con algunas fórmulas y algo de estadística, algo así. Creo que se usa para tabular los datos que obtengas en la investigación lo que no me quedó tan claro a mí en algunas cosas porque nunca revisamos si los resultados estaban buenos [T9:I1].

Final transcription:

> Based on the class, because you realised that it was only one. The teacher began with some formulae and some statistics, something of the sort. I think you use them to tabulate the data you obtain with your research which it wasn't all clear for me in some respects because we never checked that the results were correct [T9:I1].

In fact, most teachers presented data in graphs, pie charts, tables, percentages or some form of numerical data. One teacher made a comment of what she had observed as follows;

> After three weeks of working on this new strategy I noticed that my students entered my class with a different attitude. I saw happy faces and most of them were eager to participate. Most of them are still asking me for doing more games in class. I observed that they got better marks in the vocabulary dictations and in the tests [T4:ARR].

The comments made by this teacher were based on observations which did not follow any protocol. The feedback provided by the trainer was 'I believe you could have shown data in a more statistical fashion' [TT1:ARR] indicated his preference for numerical presentation of data.

At a more methodological level, four teachers interviewed talked about 'variables' when describing examples of AR and indicated the use of 'experimental and control groups' to apply their strategies. Here is an example of T9´s comments about AR;

> In the class about action research what I understood is that problems that emerge from your teaching or the learning of English in our students and how you can find a solution to them. Identify the problem, find a solution, test that and then based on the data obtained you have to verify if it worked or it didn't, and do a kind of comparison, for example, take group A and group B, one of them would be the experimental group, the other one would keep the same structure and then see in which of the two groups the methodology worked better. And that is what I understood [T9:I1]

Along with terms such as 'strategy application' and 'problem-solving', teachers also used the terms 'experimental group', 'control group' and 'variable' to explain some of their understandings of AR and its process, however the extent to which teachers understood these terms is questionable as their reports evidenced. The fact that teachers associated the research process with positivistic terminology and more scientific methodological design involving statistics has also been reported in the literature (Borg, 2009a). For teachers in this study, it was hard to determine whether they held such views before, but I would argue they were influenced by the training received. As I explained above, the session conducted was preceded by a lecture on norm-reference testing including statistical calculations with headings such as 'data collection' , 'variables' and 'validity' which may have originated the use of statistical methods in their projects and consequently in their conceptions of AR. In addition, the trainer's argument of the strong link between research and evaluation by defining them as 'to plan how to collect information to make a better decision' [TT:I1] suggested his views could have influenced teachers' tendency to explain their knowledge of AR using terminology aligned to a quantitative paradigm. To

conclude, I would argue the research design of the reports lacked coherence and did not allow teachers to address the problem or puzzles stated.

4.3.3.4 Analysis and conclusions

Probably the most important aspect to explore in research reports is the analysis conducted to findings. Such analysis is later used to make claims which support the conclusions reached in the study. My intention is to observe whether the claims made are in fact based on appropriate analysis of the findings and how conclusions inform the reader about the contribution of the study to teachers' own practices, their learners or to broader settings.

This point is closely linked with aspects of research design since flaws in design may cause unjustified assumptions. What is looked after then is coherence (Borg, 2010a) which encompasses the methods selected, the analysis conducted and the conclusions reached.

As expected, teachers' reports also portrayed lack of analysis and unjustified conclusions. Primarily, the flawed design described above was accompanied by teachers' inability to analyse their data as their accounts were mostly descriptive. What I considered most problematic is the little connection between the data obtained and the conclusion made especially in the cases where no pre-tests were applied. Generally, the conclusions reached were not supported by the data and analysis conducted –however limited.

One example of this aspect of AR reports:

> As teachers, we should realize that in evaluation results, there eventually will be a percentage of students which will not achieve the goal totally. This occurs because of some reasons such as: they do not have breakfast in the morning, go to bed late at night, have some problems at home, and have some social problems at school with classmates and concentration problems in the classroom [T6:ARR].

This teacher gave students a survey to collect information about some of the issues described above, nonetheless there is no evidence that the information she collected is in any way linked with students' low performance in the test applied.

There is a feature of research which I have not discussed previously which deserves attention; dissemination. The published accounts which I have used in this analysis meet this important requirement and therefore in Stenhouse's views, they could be denominated research (McKernan, 1996). The AR reports here are not only, inaccessible to a readership but they have not been orally shared in teachers' educational settings either among themselves once conducted. In section 4.21. I argued that one of the objectives of the course was to allow teachers to share their findings and reach recommendation collaboratively. That evidently did not happen thus reducing the potential of action research to become emancipatory.

The analysis conducted above led me to argue that the reports conducted by these teachers are *not* appropriate examples of action research. The purpose stated, the language used and the somewhat little reference to the literature are the only aspects were they resembled its published peers. However, the most important aspects of research which involve a sound research design, a thorough analysis of the data and evidence-based claims are evidently missing in the reports.

4.3.3.5 Trainer's feedback and views of the reports

The feedback provided to teachers in their AR reports was very limited and it only a few cases, provided guidance to teachers on how to improve certain aspects. His comment were mainly 'well done', 'ok, 'clear' when he considered something was correct, and comments such as 'needs more precision', 'objective needs to be more precise' among others were used to correct teachers projects. However, there were a few examples when the trainer provided a longer comment such as the following; 'Say what sort of data you will collect, either quantitative or qualitative type. Good instruments, incidentally, did you make an effort regarding validity and/or reliability?' [TT1:ARR]. This comment was not understood by the teacher as it includes unfamiliar terminology she could not benefit from as she stated 'I don't know why I got such a low mark, I couldn't understand any of his comments' [TT1:I2].

Overall, the trainer indicated he felt satisfied about the outcomes of the AR module by saying; 'Some projects were really good, there is people who worked really well' [TT1:I2]. When I asked him whether their project portrayed what they learned about

AR, he indicated; 'I think 70 or 80% of students got and learnt the concept of AR maybe they didn't concretise it well. '[TT1:I2]

With regards to how teachers' projects exemplify and illustrate what an AR project is, he claimed that 'this was an AR project and AR is for solving problems in the classroom. They all did AR but some of them better than others' [TT1:I2]. I would argue even though this statement is coherent with teachers' definitions of AR, the reports provide little evidence whether the problem were in fact 'solved'.

I also asked him which areas he thought teachers were less clear about and therefore, may need more guidance and he claimed 'it depends on the kind of research they use.. but I think they do not understand very well statistics for example when they compared groups, they are not using of the right statistics for that.' [TT1:I2]. Yet again, this statement illustrates that although the projects revealed teachers' confusion of terminology and lack of data analysis, he focused on the use of statistics.

Overall, the reports have provided evidence of teachers' understandings of how to develop a research project and the stages it involves at a superficial level which is mostly based on the guidance of a framework which they did not particularly understood. Their projects lacked rigour since they showed limited data was collected to support some of the claims made.

4.4 Contributions of AR

The course syllabus stated ambitious objectives which included notions such as: critical thinking, self-evaluation, agency and empowerment. I could then conclude that course designers had expected the course to have had some form of impact on teachers. Evidence on the extent of such impact and the contributions or lack of them, caused by the AR module is what I will present now.

4.4.1 Re-engagement of AR

As one of the objectives of course designers was to turn teachers into long-term researchers, I deemed important to ask teachers whether they had engaged in any form of research after the course finished. Considering what teachers had indicated in

early interviews, I did not expect them to have done so. However, two teachers indicated they had done something *similar* to AR.

One of them indicated the she had found a solution for a problem she had identified in her students. The problem she had identified was the low-performance shown by students in a given grammar topic; specifically the comparative forms. She then applied this solution and after a formative test she concluded it was successful. Her accounts of this experience seem very similar to the process carried out by teachers in their AR projects; the problem is usually related to the learning of a given content, a strategy is detected and used, and then a test measures whether students have 'learnt' (here I use this word as teachers use it in their accounts and their projects) the content. I asked her whether she had collected other forms of data, she replied;

> I did but very little. After I gave them a quiz but it was only like a formative test and I also did a survey, an interview in fact but I didn't keep records of that.. I took some notes but not many [T6:I3]

In fact, I could argue that the strategy used by this teacher is similar to what she described as AR as it also contained the same characteristics described in 4.2.3.

The second teacher who expressed engaging in AR again, shared a similar description but instead of using an 'improved' strategy to teach a topic, she carried out daily evaluations to motivate students to learn. This is her description;

> I do mini evaluations so for instance we cover a topic or some reading and from that I ask them questions and vocabulary which had been covered in class and at the end in the last 20 minutes, I do an evaluation and that gets a mark and thanks to that now that the semester is finishing and they have improved a lot, a lot... just by doing it like that [T8:I3].

As in the previous example, in her view, it is the application of a strategy to any problematic situations what makes such activity AR disregarding the use of data collection methods, data analysis or other forms of methodological research protocol. However, she argues that such element is present in her form of AR;

> We are also tabulating the test and that also is related to the AR project, we tabulate all the test, all the evaluation, question per question, item per item,

> then we established the number of students where students are at elementary, intermediate and advanced and we try to answer why that happened. [T8:I3].

The data obtained from these two teachers gives further evidence of their understandings of AR and how they informed further forms of AR (I use the term AR here as it is understood by these teachers).

Overall, most teachers indicated they had not engaged in any form of research since they did their AR project. The factors which hindered such developments will be discussed below.

4.4.2 Factors hindering AR

As I mentioned in section 4.3, most teachers felt their lack of knowledge about AR and the steps involved in the process was the biggest impediment while carrying it out. They also claimed they did not receive guidance from their trainer and their main source of information was internet and their colleagues.

In addition, three teachers claimed the project conflicted with their lesson plans as the statement of one teacher indicated 'AR demands to leave everything aside and forget about everything you planned and at school they demand that your daily lesson plan cannot be modified' [T9:I2]

Teachers had to allocate a given period of time to carry out their project and in such period of time, they applied the strategies they had proposed to solve the problem they had identified. This means the project did not become part of their normal teaching, but it took time from the time already devoted to their planned lessons. A teacher told me this caused problems with her supervisor; 'well I had problems with my supervisor because I went off my lesson plan because I was doing the project, I didn't follow the lesson plans with that class' [T8:I2]. What this data indicates is that school coordinators presumably knew nothing or very little of teachers' AR projects. This was confirmed by six teachers who told me they had to inform schools which in turn, did not pay much attention to their project and on the contrary requested no lesson plan modifications. Two teachers indicated she had received support whereas one teacher argued the school requested her to inform the results obtained to the school community allowing her to share her findings with her colleagues. Other

teachers claimed changing their lesson plans was not a problem but confirmed their lessons *had* to be modified to allow time to conduct the project.

Additionally, teachers argued the main factor hindering AR was lack of time, an issue which is closely related to their working conditions.

4.4.2.1 Time constraints and teachers' working conditions

I asked teachers to complete a timetable indicating the numbers of hours they teach each week as well as the hours they dedicate to other non-teaching but work-related activities such as lesson planning, test corrections and department meetings (See Appendix 9). Teachers' timetables indicate that they work an average of 33 teaching hours per week and another 18 hours are dedicated to other activities mainly called lesson planning, parents' meetings, school meetings and test corrections. Of those 18 non-teaching hours they devote to their work, 6 of them are spent on weekends.

Unsurprisingly, teachers claim they do not have time to conduct AR as some of them feel they would rather spend their time in other activities as this teacher indicated in a discussion about AR promoting empowerment.

> T3: I think it could be done, even all our curriculum could be teacher-originated and developed through research but I think we would have to work no more than 20 hours a week in classrooms. It is a matter of time. I am not willing to give all my life to school. My job doesn't define who I am. I am a lot of other things other than a teacher. It is my job not my life. So it's great doing that, but the conditions must be in place. The intention and interest are there but many things would have to change [FG2].

This is again another comment where teachers express their desire to do things but their context is not supportive.

I asked teachers about their opinions regarding this workload and how they felt it affected their work, these were the comments produced by two of them.

> I think it's crazy. It's total exploitation to teachers to give us such workloads. We hardly have any time for our families. We hardly have time as well for preparing classes and correcting tests. It impedes many things, it impedes to do

> a class as you wish, to prepare properly, to do a good job at home with your family. Our workload is awful, it doesn't leave any time to do well at school neither at home' [T4:I3].
>
> 'I think it is exhausting… It hinders reflection about your own teaching; I mean self-analysis, preparation of situations to improve, and many more. So you spend most of your time teaching and there is no time for analysis' [T2:I3].

In the second comment above, the teacher argues how her teaching conditions prevented her from reflecting about her practice. Interestingly, self-evaluation, reflection and analysis are notions strongly linked with AR although she suggested despite her wanting to engage in them, her workload did not provide the sufficient support to carry them out.

4.4.2.2 Lack of interest and motivation

Four teachers interviewed expressed they did not re-engage in AR because they did not feel interested in doing so. One of them claimed she was not interested because she had not encountered problems in her class worth approaching using AR; 'I haven't detected problems which need improvement. I have the same classes this year so I am applying the same solutions; games'. It is worth noting here that this teacher argues the solution found through her project (it was more the application of a strategy as evidenced in AR reports) was being used again indicating teachers -however questionable these may have been- had validated their AR conclusions and so they were informing their practice.

Another teacher felt the amounts of problems in her classes are so many that she felt she had lost interest in solving them; 'I just cannot cope, the problems are so many. I wouldn't have the time to devote to only one and leave the others aside because all of them need a solution' [T3:I3].

Another teacher simply did not feel she got motivated in the course to do AR again and the fourth one explained her main interest was in ELT methodology and not AR.

> There could be a number of reasons, first of all, we didn't have a clear goal, we were originally told this would be a course focused on methodology where we would study different methods and when this AR bonus came up, we all sort of

> went with it but at least in my case I wasn't particularly interested in that or found it was particularly interesting, it was another element of the course, we didn't have the interest to find about it, it sort of came with the course, that's all [T3:I3]

4.4.2.3 Disappointment with educational system

Also related to their working conditions, teachers argued they feel disappointment with the educational system they work in and thus it was a factor which impeded activities such as AR. Their disappointment was caused by the lack of support they received from schools;

> You get that sensation that sometimes you can do a lot but if there isn't support, it's disappointing because you feel you are alone trying to go against the flow.They ask you for one thing but they don't provide the means to carry it out, it's very de-motivating [T5:I1].

And also disappointment with universities due to their inappropriate training;

> The course was more of the same old thing so I have to be able to handle the situations in my own setting, I became aware of that… that teachers are alone and we have very little support and in fact the ministry is trying to support us but the people or the organisation who wins the bids to provide the courses (*PD*) do not take them seriously[T6:I3].

Furthermore, these feelings of disappointment had also been expressed by one of the course designers who agreed with the view of teachers about the role of the current educational system in the limited impact and occurrence of AR.

> I am convinced the course we designed is very good and I am convinced that AR is the best thing we could think of. But AR having any impact, I think there is none. In these conditions we cannot ask for that. It is very difficult for AR to have an impact because it touches every aspect of the Chilean educational crisis which is not ELT only, but all of it [CD1:I1].

Her assertion here indicated her view of AR being systemic and its occurrence is greatly dependant on contextual aspects Chile is not yet ready for.

4.4.2.4 Perceptions of teachers in the context

In the first section of this paper, I indicated that one of the objectives of the course and also of the AR module was to empower teachers. Some accounts provided by teachers in section 4.2.3 had shed light about the feasibility of teachers being heard and having a say even in their own institutions. In this respect, the findings obtained from teachers, trainers and course designers have revealed that teachers are regarded poorly in the Chilean context. One course designer indicated the following;

> Teachers do not know what they are doing and why. They don't take courses because they think they know it all.. they are a very mediocre group of people. With this course we thought we were giving them enough to promote them as agents of change, we were too ambitious. It was a mistake I think [CD1:I1].

Interestingly, the term 'mediocre' was also used by a teacher describing the attitude of her peers; 'I insist that teachers in general, my colleagues, are too mediocre, I don't know in other countries but here, it's embarrassing to see teachers being so mediocre' [T6:I3].

This highly disapproving view of teachers can be found at many levels but it is especially greater in the eyes of university professors and authorities as one teacher here explains;

> T3: I think in Chile there is also a big dispute among academics and teachers. There is this idea of 'you don't know what we do down here' and they say 'you don't know how to do things'. At least in Chile that tension still exists. There is also a problem of trust because good teamwork can promote change at the bottom and authorities do not trust us, are teachers doing their job right? They don't seem to trust what we teachers do [FG2].

As I said previously, the perceptions of teachers of the context in general may not only hinder AR but many other teacher-originated initiatives. These views are highly inconsistent with the notion of teachers as agents of change and more particularly, emancipatory AR. It is interesting to note one comment came from one course designer who argued for such agency in 4.2.1 above. This data revealed a rhetoric-reality dichotomy which despite being known was not fully addressed.

4.4.3 Contributions of AR to classroom practice

Before interviewing teachers for the first time, I had asked them to answer a questionnaire which included some questions about their expectations of the course. Teachers' responses indicated that all of them were interested in improving their classroom practice as well as expanding their knowledge of ELT methodology. Only one teacher expressed the desire to develop professionally. Since this information evidenced that their main expectations of the course was the improvement of classroom practice, I wanted to find out the extent to which AR may have contributed to this. Teachers' answers varied. While most of them claimed it did not, some argued it had contributed to some aspects of their work such as promoting meaningful leaning;

> Yes, but it wasn't immediate, it happened after some time. Later, I started to observe my work more analytically… in the way I plan my lessons and the way I teach them because before I planned everything with the intentions of students getting good grades, now I go further trying to find ways to promote meaningful learning in my students which can be valuable for them [T6:I3].

Two teachers valued the fact that because of AR they had become more analytical as well as more resourceful;

> In my view yes (it was beneficial). If something doesn't work I analyse other possibilities to accomplish my objectives and I always analyse why, why this didn't work out, why these results? [T9:I3]

> Yes, I think so…because I try to think more about what I am doing and try to think of different strategies to help them. So it did help me, maybe not in the way it could have but it did help a little [T1:I3].

Furthermore, another teacher mentioned AR had contributed to his work in similar way, though for him, this contributions were not reflected in his classroom practice but he thinks it had helped him develop professionally since 'it makes you more accurate, study, elaborate, learn' [T7:I2].

Overall, the data indicating the way teachers benefited from AR is limited. Whereas three teachers made reference to the application of strategies and more analytical

thinking, AR reports illustrated their analysis lacks depth and therefore they may be based on observations and data which lacks verification.

In terms of their PD, some teachers said they did not know what the term meant whereas others indicated having a vague idea. They defined it as; 'Training, remembering, learning new strategies, that..(3) and it should imply improving my practice… since it should be concretised there.' [T3:I3]. Another teacher said it implied 'To improve techniques and strategies as a teacher inside the classroom' [T4:I3] and another asserted 'it means to become better teachers.. and to give us tools to maybe use new things and to improve others' [T7:I3].

In the previous definitions provided by teachers as well as other accounts, teachers had mentioned the terms 'improve practice' and 'better teachers'. I think this revealed that their notion of professional development is one which stressed good and better teaching.

4.5 Key findings

In section 4.2, I discussed the conceptualisations of AR module by course designers, AR trainer and teachers. In short, I claimed that after the course and through AR, teachers were expected to;

- Develop critical and reflective skills
- Systematically assess micro and macro issues involved in the teaching profession, but also at a wider level (i.e. from classroom events to situations at school level, the educational system and even society)
- Develop knowledge and skills to develop quality research which assist them to solve problems and improve their practice
- Become longer-term researchers thus re-engaging in teacher research
- Use the information obtained from their research to inform curriculum change
- Share findings and their possible implications
- Ultimately, develop professionally

I argue that after the course and through AR teachers have only gained limited conceptual knowledge of research and become aware of action research to solve pedagogical problems. Hence the mismatch between the objectives of the course and

its outcomes is ample and evident. The kind of knowledge teachers gained about AR is limited as it would be expected after a 5-hour lecture with no follow-up support. There is little –if any- clear evidence to argue AR had any significant impact in teachers' professional development at any degree.

In addition, the distance between teachers and academics, the views of teachers in Chile, the hierarchical organisational structures and contextual constraints make AR an activity which can only be promoted in rhetoric but hardly achieved in practice.

To conclude, I think a comment provided by T3 provides a full summary of teachers' view regarding the whole AR experience;

> I like and understand CDs' vision. They want a change in ELT but they want the change to start from the bottom. They are trying to give us the tools to do all that, to cause a revolution in ELT. But that takes time. If at some point teachers will do AR, great, but it will take some time. There are good intentions behind this. They want to help us solve real problems. The difficulty is that there is resistance to change, because there is time, change involved, etc. There are also some people who will not get the idea, some us will not do it right since we will not see immediate results, because this takes time and there will (*emphasis*) be obstacles [T3:FG2]

In the table below I summarize the key findings presented in this paper.

RQ1. *What conceptualisation of AR does the course reflect (according to course designers, teacher trainers and teachers)?*
AR according to course designers • AR as having the potential to lead to 'transformative' change. • Highly academic and conventional • AR promotes criticality, reflection, empowerment and agency. • It questions issues at a micro and macro level. AR according to AR trainer • AR is an activity which promotes criticality, reflection and self-evaluation. • It is classroom-focused but it can allow systemic changes

- It is individual rather than collaborative.
- It is methodologically academic and conventional

AR according to teachers

- AR is short-term and specific
- AR solves problems related to language learning
- AR can promote improved practice through analysis
- It is classroom-focused
- It is part of everyday teaching

RQ2. *How do teachers' own accounts and AR reports evidence their learning about AR in the course and the training provided?*

AR training

- The AR module was focused on AR theory
- AR training was conducted in a limited period of time.
- AR training disregarded AR processes.
- Teachers claimed effective AR training entails gradual and experiential learning.

AR learning

- Teachers' learning *about* AR was limited and confusing.
- Teachers' learning regarding *doing* AR was limited and confusing.

AR reports

- AR reports were completed because they were a course requirement
- AR reports described the application of a pedagogical strategy for problem solving.
- AR reports focused on language contents and skills
- AR reports evidenced more use of quantitative methods
- AR reports lacked data analysis so their conclusions were mostly unsound
- AR reports indicated the search for definitive solutions

RQ3. *What contributions, if any, do teachers feel AR has had on their professional development after the course? If none, why do they think that happened?*

Contributions of AR

- Teachers did not do AR again.
- Teachers stated AR may have had impacted their practice since it

allowed them analytical decision-making

- Factors such as teachers' workloads, lack of interest, disappointment in the educational system and disapproving views of teachers hindered AR.
- Teachers' prime goal of professional development is *better teaching*.

4.1 Summary of key findings

5 DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will discuss the findings of the study according to its overall aims namely to explore the effects of AR as presented in an in-service course to promote the professional development of ELT teachers.

In general terms, the findings indicated that the objectives of the AR module as presented in the syllabus and expressed by the course designers were not achieved. Teachers' AR learning was inadequate and its contribution to their professional development was limited to problem-solving. More importantly, the data revealed that practical constraints associated with doing AR were ignored both by course designers and the trainer.

In this chapter I will start by discussing the features of the training and learning of AR in the study in comparison with other similar AR initiatives and how most of the recommendations reported in these programmes were disregarded by designers and the AR trainer in this study. I will continue by discussing the conceptualisation of AR in the study as emancipatory AR and how such notion calls for a cultural change demanding the participation of various stakeholders at different levels of the system. Since literature about such systemic aspect of AR is scarce I will make a parallel with curriculum change to illustrate how AR demands similar cultural changes as those described in the curriculum change literature. My point here is to argue the way teachers are perceived in the Chilean context which will not promote the successful development of AR. Next, I will discuss the conditions emancipatory AR demands for such cultural change to happen and argue for a more accessible form of AR which may be more appropriate for the Chilean context according to existing practical constraints. Lastly, I will describe the limitations identified in the study and provide suggestions for further research.

5.2 AR training and learning

In the literature review (section 2.9) I made reference to some of the accounts found in the literature which described research-oriented PD initiatives. They provide

valuable information about the process of teaching and learning about and how to do AR and TR more generally. Although a number of features which facilitated its effectiveness were identified, I would argue four features are particularly relevant for this study. First, in all reports described teachers volunteered to take such courses (Vergara L. et al., 2009, Atay, 2008, Borg, 2009b, Burns and Rochsantiningsih, 2006, Barkhuizen, 2009) and their research nature was clear from the outset. Secondly, extensive time (several months) was provided for teachers to conduct their projects (Borg, 2009b, Vergara L. et al., 2009, Burns, 1996, Tinker Sachs, 2002). Thirdly, on-going support systems were in place throughout the project (Borg, 2009b, Tinker Sachs, 2002, Burns, 1996). Burns & Rochsantiningsih (2006), reported trainers visited teachers in their own setting and planned additional meetings to support them during the research process. Similarly, online assistance and support throughout the writing stage of the reports was an effective strategy reported in Borg (2009b). Lastly, follow-up systems were placed for teachers to share their work as in Burns and Rochsantiningsih (2006) who reported follow-up instances either through poster presentations and talk at seminars as well as dissemination opportunities for teacher to share their work with colleagues, their communities and more broadly (Cárdenas et al., 2011, Burns, 1995, Borg, 2009b).

Borg (2013) provided a list of facilitative features to be present in TR initiatives which have been adapted in Table 5.1.

- Teachers' willingness and motivation
- Teachers are informed the scope and final product of the course
- Teachers and schools have been informed of possible benefits
- Opportunities for teachers to unpack their beliefs about research and teacher research
- Project includes sound and structured opportunities to develop skills and knowledge to do teacher research
- Teachers' are allocated hours to spend on the project
- Teachers' choice of research focus

- Focus of research is relevant for teachers own PD
- Schools, colleagues and students are aware and supportive of the project
- The project includes sufficient time for the project (planning, doing research and writing report)
- Teachers receive ongoing support from professionals with adequate knowledge and skills
- Teachers (and those who support them locally) have access to someone with expertise and experience with teacher research
- The programme has a clear structure and time frames
- The project leads to a concrete outcome
- Teachers' research is feasible in terms of time and resources
- Teachers have access to resources with information about how to do TR
- Project provides opportunities for teachers to share, collaboration and received support
- The project include opportunities during and after the course for teachers to share their work inside and outside the school
- Teachers' efforts are acknowledged by their managers or supervisors.
- Managers consider implication of teacher research for policy or practice
- The project minimises additional work and disrupting to colleagues' activities
- Teachers' expected commitments are idealistic given their working conditions

Table 5.1 Facilitative features of TR projects (adapted from Borg 2013)

The features discussed above and outlined in Table 5.1 were not present in the current study and their absence had an evident impact on its effectiveness. Findings exposed that a time frame of four weeks to conduct and write teachers' AR projects

was limited, inadequate and untypical of similar initiatives. The programme also lacked on-going support and feedback. Follow-up sessions for teachers to discuss their projects and the findings obtained were not planned as there was no time allocated for such purposes. Moreover, teachers in the study indicated they had no time to conduct their project and felt their workload was a major conflicting factor. However, this issue is not uncommon as it has also been reported in similar initiatives (Burns and Rochsantiningsih, 2006, Atay, 2008, Tinker Sachs, 2002). Teachers in this study felt pressured by the assessed nature of the written report. In fact, since the AR report was the final requisite to pass the course, teachers felt obliged to carry it out thus giving greater value to the final product of the activity rather than the process. The Colombian AR programme described in 2.9 also described that written AR reports were assessed course requirements though it does not indicate this aspect had any negative impact on the process (Vergara L. et al., 2009).

Two additional aspects of the AR module also determined its inefficacy; its technical and academic orientation. The findings showed that AR was treated as a technical matter guided by steps to be followed. In this light, AR was reduced to linear procedures which teachers followed in the hope of finding a solution to a problem. McTaggart (1996) warns 'action research is not a 'method' or a 'procedure' for research but a series of commitments to observe and problematise through practice a series of principles for conducting social enquiry' (1996: 248). He adds the role of the AR cycle is a description of the iterative nature of the process though it is not to be mistaken for a 'template' to follow. This study shows the final product overshadowed the importance of the process and the analysis and reflection involved. Moreover, such lack of analysis caused teachers to make assumptions about learning and their learners which were not based on evidence. The risk here is the possible application of practices based on unsound conclusions. In this sense, teachers' decision-making may be based on a defective procedure lacking appropriate analysis and evidence.

Another important ineffective feature of the AR module studied is associated to its academic orientation. This orientation was identified in the framework provided to teachers (see Appendix 10) which guided teachers' written report and research process. Academic standards were problematic in this study because of three reasons;

teachers' lack of knowledge *about* and *how to* do research, the limited time allocated to the AR module which is particularly relevant if teachers have to engage in an unfamiliar activity, and finally because of the negative perceptions teachers shared about academia. The technical and academic duality this course revealed proved to be ineffective as it encouraged the uncritical procedures described above which were exacerbated by teachers' limited research skills. Borg (2013) asserts that promoting TR projects driven by academic requirements is unproductive since 'they can override teachers' concerns for conducting meaningful inquiry in their own contexts' (2013: 184). I would also argue academic requirements constrain teachers' creativity and purpose since the process and product of the activity –the latter consisting of a written report- is alien to them. In relation to formal research reports, Dadds (1995) states teachers prefer posters, stories, poems, and oral presentations to tell their experience since they are perceived as more relevant forms to communicate their work.

I have indicated above that the inefficacy of the initiative can be identified in teachers' own accounts which evidence their limited knowledge about and how to do AR as well as in their AR reports which indicate unsound research procedures and conclusions. Additionally, I have argued time, support, follow-up opportunities, technical procedures and academic requirements have been factors which have -in practical terms- hindered the effective training and learning of AR as well as the long-term impact of the AR initiative.

To establish a contrast, a TR initiative has been deemed successful in the literature when teachers have reported and published their research projects (Borg, 2009b, Burns and Hood, 1995, McDonough, 2006, Atay, 2008), increased their knowledge of research methodology (Atay, 2008, Borg, 2009b) and engaged in collaborative work (Burns and Rochsantiningsih, 2006, Bartlett and Burton, 2006, Denny, 2005). The accomplishment of PD has been characterized by the following;

- Increased engagement with their classroom practice (McDonough, 2006)
- Significant collaboration with other teachers for problem-solving (McDonough, 2006, Kirkwood and Christie, 2006, Atay, 2008)
- Increased self-awareness (Zeichner, 2003, Atay, 2008)

- Improvement in teachers' practice (Burns, 1999, Burns and Rochsantiningsih, 2006)
- Participation in curriculum development (Kirkwood and Christie, 2006, Burns and Hood, 1995, Rust and Meyers, 2006, Atay, 2008).

However, I would argue the degree of success reported by Atay (2008) can be debatable. In this report, she asserts that through the discussion of research findings teachers became 'active builders of knowledge' though does not provide evidence to support such claim. Moreover, none of the reports listed above indicate that participating teachers have continued to conduct research for their professional development, they may have, but AR as a sustained activity has not been reported. My argument here is that if AR is seen as a vehicle for PD which in turn is an ongoing process; then it should be a sustainable and meaningful activity, not a one-off event. Consequently, I would argue the reported benefits of AR -although highly favourable- may have been short-lived. Additionally, the findings from this study suggest that the course designers who advocated the inclusion of AR in the present initiative may have paid attention to its benefits but disregarded its challenges. In other words, they subscribed to the benefits associated with AR in theoretical terms, but failed to consider the process of teaching AR.

There is one aspect of AR for PD which merits space in this discussion and that is teachers' notions of PD and how AR can contribute to it. The findings indicate teachers are mostly interested in improving their practice. Similar views have been reported in the PD literature (Guskey, 2002, Friedman and Phillips, 2004). Teachers seem to be driven to PD with more 'pragmatic' goals seeking to have a positive effect on their students and thus according to Guskey's change model (2002), teachers will adopt new ways of teaching and thinking only after seeing results in their students' learning. Consequently, if teachers do not see immediate positive effects on their students, they may not buy into the AR idea. Tinker Sachs (2002) reports how participants of an AR course claimed they joined the project with the intention of improving their practice and also to enhance students learning although she does not indicate whether their expectations were met in this respect. The AR Chilean experience reported by Salgado L. and Silva-Peña (2009) indicated teachers perceived students' learning improved as a consequence of their participation in the

AR project. Again, such report provides no further evidence of how this occurred but I believe teachers' perceptions of the impact of AR for improving learning makes them, rightly in my opinion, evaluate the AR experience in a good light. Furthermore, I believe there is a direct relationship between teachers' interest in students learning and their views of AR as problem solving. One teacher expressed 'the beauty of AR is that it solves a problem' [T4:I4] so consequently it would help them improve students' learning by applying corrective strategies rather than through the process of reflecting about their own practice and re-adjusting their practice. The findings indicate teachers are not interested in their PD for curriculum development and emancipation.

To conclude this section, I believe it is necessary to point out that the examples of AR training and learning described above have been written by researchers describing programmes of their own design (Borg, 2009b, Atay, 2008, Burns, 1996), or located in ESOL contexts (Kirkwood and Christie, 2006, Burns, 1996), or describing small projects (Atay, 2008, Burns and Rochsantiningsih, 2006, Vergara L. et al., 2009), or reporting well-resourced initiatives (Borg, 2009b, Burns, 1996) or including volunteer and motivated teachers (Burns and Rochsantiningsih, 2006, Vergara L. et al., 2009) or taking place in higher education settings (Borg, 2006a, Barkhuizen, 2009). I would argue then that there is little information coming from EFL contexts where AR projects are short–term (though aiming for longer term effects) state-run projects at a national level focused on primary and secondary school teachers working with minimal support and/or resources. Ergo, this study contributes to an understanding of the practical constraints associated with such initiatives in less resourced contexts. In this light, the evaluation of this initiative should be viewed 'through a context-sensitive lens' (Katyal and Fai, 2010:329) and be recognized as referring to a context where conditions are very different to those in which the benefits associated with AR and the notions of what is considered effective AR training originated. Thus, I will move on to discuss contextual matters in further detail and how they hampered the efficacy of the AR module. I will begin by discussing the conceptualisation of AR promoted in the course and how such conceptualisation is inconsistent with contextual realities within the education system as a whole.

5.3 Conceptualisation of AR in the study

In the literature, AR has been considered a vehicle to promote teachers' professional development in a number of ways. A technical stance has been described as teachers testing and applying theories defined by others which can promote awareness-raising for classroom problem-solving (Lewin in McKernan, 1996, McTaggart, 1996). A practical perspective adds to this notion by claiming this activity is self-directed promoting reflective practice which can also inform curriculum development (Stenhouse, 1975, Elliott, 1991). Another position proposes AR as an emancipatory activity where teachers can as a result of their inquiry, become more self-aware and reflective. Moreover, emancipatory AR calls teachers to take their reflection beyond the classrooms to question the implications of educational policy for equity and social justice (Carr and Kemmis, 1986, Noffke, 1997). In the course syllabus studied, all these aspects can be identified; improvement of classroom practice, problem-solving, reflective practice and agency. Moreover, findings from course designers support the idea that course designers' ultimate goal is in line with emancipatory notions of AR, thus aiming at encouraging teachers to take a critical stance towards policy for the purpose of social equity and stressing the importance of such AR's philosophical underpinnings. One course designer expressed they hoped teachers would have 'a critical vision … of what it means to teach English in a country which is an example of capitalism ... and use the teaching of English as a vehicle, as a means to look beyond' [CD1:I1]. Moreover, they claimed they wanted the syllabus of the course to reflect their communion with critical pedagogy; an education movement highly influenced by the work of Paulo Freire who challenged teachers and learners to think critically and to search for social change and democracy (McLaren and Leonard, 1993). Pennycook (2012) argues the criticality involved here is concerned with a critique of ways in which language perpetuates inequitable social relations. He adds that in its strongest version -which he denominated emancipatory modernism- it aims "to see one's work as overtly aimed towards trying to change inequitable social conditions and people's understanding of them" (2012:129). Chile's political history –pre and post Pinochet's dictatorship- has had a great influence on the views of academics who are increasingly concerned with social issues and have expressed their political agenda particularly in relation to educational

policy (Belleï and Valenzuela, 2010, Abraham and Farias, 2010, Inzunza et al., 2011, Prieto, 2004). On this point Somekh (2006) claims;

> what has changed over time is not the inescapable social justice imperative underpinning action research, *whether or not explicitly stated*, but the level of awareness of action researchers about the social justice implications of their work and the rejection of over-simplistic notions about equity (2006:25 my italics)

In her statement, Somekh (ibid.) argues there is an increasing awareness of the role of action research to contribute to the discussion of inequity plus succinctly indicates this may or may not be explicitly stated. In fact, this aspect of AR was not explicitly stated in the AR component of the course syllabus though it was stated in the general programme objectives thus indicating AR had an important role to play in its achievement.

Although there are few references to draw on about AR in Chile, Labra G. et al. (2005) argued the need to incorporate AR in pre-service teacher education programmes explicitly stating their advocacy for emancipatory AR. Consequently, critical assessment of social justice is not an uncommon goal for Chilean educators who urge teachers to observe their classrooms and critically assess the implications of their observations beyond their classroom walls. However, I would argue this plea is not a personal matter (for the individual teacher) since if it is ever to be more than rhetoric it demands a systemic approach to educational change, one which in turns demands a culture change. I will elaborate on this point below.

5.3.1 AR as cultural change

In 2.2 I have stated that this study is exploring a particular initiative focusing on teacher change which I defined as the development of reflective practice, critical thinking, problem-solving and inquiry attitudes through AR engagement aiming at ELT teachers' own professional development. My argument in this section is that the AR module explored demanded not only teacher change but cultural change. For this initiative to have had some level of success, it involves what Fullan calls 'reculturing' (2007) (see chapter 2 for details). It implies the development of new

habits, beliefs and norms in a long-term process which affects the educational system as a whole.

The notion of teachers doing AR presupposes that teachers are expected to reflect about their practice, make informed decision about their work thus constructing their own knowledge. However, the lecturing method used in the AR module leads teachers to 'overdependence on experts' (Roberts, 1998:113) and immediately defeats one of the tenets of action research which calls on teachers to become autonomous professionals who explore their own practice critically, or in other words, to emancipate from the reliance of experts. This is particularly ironic as, action research originated as a shift from transmission based approaches (which were considered inadequate and ineffective) to constructivist views of teaching and learning (Crandall, 2000, Lee, 2011, Atay, 2008, Burns, 2009).

I would argue that there seems to be an assumption then, that by engaging in action research teachers will become more active learners and therefore it will denote a movement away from transmission models. This study evidences that merely introducing the idea of action research in itself cannot ensure reflectivity, criticality and effective teacher learning if the training provided involves *lecturing about* action research. If this was what the trainer thought, it brings into question the understanding of the teacher educator regarding the practices conducive to PD through AR. On this point Russell (1999:6) claims

> If genuine change is to occur in schools, then those changes may have to occur FIRST in teacher education. It is certainly not enough for teacher educators to advocate changes that they have not achieved in their own practices. I have long regretted the tendency of teacher educators, situated in universities, to criticise teachers, situated in schools, for faults that the teacher educators themselves cannot show, with evidence, that they avoid in their own classrooms. Teacher educators must lead by example, not by words. My recent and intense experience of change suggests that teacher education must make changes first before we can expect schools to consider them" (1999:6)

Furthermore, some findings regarding the reflective journals can shed light on the approach to teacher education used, evidencing the reflective journals were used as

assessed coursework rather than as suggested in the literature for reflective purposes (Richards and Farrell, 2005, Bailey, 1990). Here their use was mostly to assess teachers' writing skills, grammar and understandings of the topics covered in the course. The evaluative nature of journal writing suggests teachers were not appropriately *invited* to reflect. Teachers' reflective writings thus echoed conceptual ideas and beliefs disseminated' (Mena Marcos et al., 2011:33) since even though teachers were asked to reflect about the contents of the course, they were judged according to a) how accurately the course content were understood and interpreted and b) how appropriately teachers' writing skills were developed through their reflections. As a result, such writings did not involve reflection on the feasibility of what was covered in the course or how it might be adopted but rather their writings illustrated a restatement of 'represented valid practices' (ibid.) provided by the trainer. In the literature, the use of journals to develop reflective writing has not always been reported as an effective and straightforward tool to develop PD. Richards & Ho (1998) claimed reflective writings are not easy to analyse and findings regarding their effectiveness to promote reflective thinking are inconsistent. However -and acknowledging the difficulties associated with the use of reflective journals for PD- I argue that in the present study no attempts were made to achieve reflective thinking.

Consequently, there is evidence in this study that the tenets of AR to promote PD were not fully understood since the TE approach used reflects a view that is inconsistent with constructivism. I would add these findings show this issue cannot be explained as lack of awareness or knowledge exclusively on the part of the trainer, but it reflects the way teachers are perceived and also taught in Chile. Encouraging teachers to do AR presupposes they are perceived as professionals having high status, being collegial and updated (Hargreaves, 2000, Malderez and Wedell, 2007). However, the Chilean reality is quite different. Teachers' decisions and practices are questioned at different levels: by school administrators, parents (also influencing learners), teacher educators and policy makers (Belleï and Valenzuela, 2010, Prieto, 2004, Avalos and Aylwin, 2007) (see chapter 1). There is thus a paradox here: a PD initiative that calls teachers to engage in research to inform curriculum design and criticise the current educational situation, in a context in which they are in fact not regarded as capable of doing so. In other words "teachers are valued in theory and

neglected and distrusted in practice" (Torres, 2000:257). Teachers' involvement in curricular decision-making is unheard-of in Chile and school support for teacher-initiated change is not provided. This is well explained by Prieto (2004) who argues in Chile;

> Society does not perceive teachers as social reflective agents neither they are given the institutional freedom to identify problems which affect them and take decisions accordingly. They are not acknowledged as competent enough to break the knowledge accumulation transmission approaches... on the contrary, they are expected to develop agendas, apply practices and transmit knowledge developed by others. In this context, it becomes challenging to expect teachers to question school norms (2004:43 my translation).

I would consequently argue this study reveals Chilean teachers' disempowered position in the educational system is caused by the existence of deadlocked hierarchical structures and the constant discredit of those at higher levels who rhetorically claim for teacher emancipation while create conditions which perpetuate their submission.

Whereas I have made reference to the way teachers are perceived in Chile and how challenging AR can be in such conditions, I would add such conditions are not exclusive to Chile as similar contradictions have been identified elsewhere (Hayes, 2012b, Hayes, 2012a, Carless, 1999, Carl, 2005). Hayes (2012) makes a similar point when he states;

> It is no exaggeration to say that, at present in South Korea, INSET seems to be largely something done to inferiors (teachers) by superior others (education officials, inspectors, university professors), rather than a shared enterprise amongst equals collaborating for the improvement of education for students in school (Hayes, 2012a:103).

In agreement with Hayes' views (ibid.) the current exploration provides further evidence that teachers doing AR is a complex enterprise if proposed in a setting where teachers are not valued and listened to.

Promoting AR as conceived by course designers then, implies what Wedell (2013) calls a 'major cultural change' which he suggests can only be accomplished by promoting involvement of teachers and the development of functioning communication systems between teachers and the other partners in such a change. In the same vein Wedell & Malderez (2013) claim that 'what people in outer layers (eg. MoE) need from teachers is honest information about what is happening in classrooms where attempts are being made to implement the change, and about how the teachers and learners involved are feeling and thinking, and why teachers think this is so' (2013:222). This presupposes that partners in such outer layers want to listen to, be receptive to, and trust what teachers have to say. Empowering teachers in this fashion suggests they are perceived as respected professionals whose opinions matter. If they were so regarded, one might expect the MoE to provide opportunities for teachers to express their views openly, by establishing communication systems which allow their participation in policy design. Additionally, teacher empowerment also presumes that the MoE, as the highest level of the education system, encourages similar empowering attitudes at school-level, keeping schools informed about innovations concerning the development of teachers and making it clear that, teacher-initiated inquiry is welcome and supported.

Views of teachers and their roles in the Chilean context	**Views of teachers and their roles presupposed by AR**
Teachers as technicists	Teachers as professionals
Teachers as recipients of knowledge	Teachers as generators of knowledge
Teacher control	Teacher empowerment
Teachers as subjects of change	Teachers as agents of change
Teachers as curriculum followers	Teachers as curriculum developers
Teachers as passive individuals	Teachers as proactive partners

Table 5.2 A paradox of teachers' roles

In Table 5.2 I describe how contrasting views of teachers and their roles in the system are reflected in the study. Here I suggest that encouraging Chilean teachers to carry out AR presupposes a view of teachers inconsistent with how teachers are viewed in Chile today. Through the teacher researcher lens, teaching then is not only seen as teachers teaching the curriculum but exploring it, questioning it, collaboratively informing its adjustments, questioning old assumptions about teaching, actively observing their own practise and studying their learners. All of the former implies a cultural change. If emancipatory AR is hoped-for, then it can only be possible by reculturation and not by fiat as asserted by Fullan (2007) since merely devising a paper blueprint does not 'make it happen'.

The paradox continues when one considers that teacher educators at universities encourage teachers to be agents of change through participation in AR while in fact perceiving them as mediocre and uncritical (see Findings 3.3). Their views are thus in conflict with what they promote to achieve through AR and what is needed if some degree of success is expected. As also showed in this study, Tinker Sachs (2002) described an AR project in Hong Kong which demanded a change in the way teachers were perceived;

> 'Collaborative work settings needs to be developed within schools and between schools, and between schools and tertiary education, for the development of teaching and learning.. However, collaboration needs to take place in a setting where teachers are seen as professionals who are capable of decision making and whose ideas are welcomed and incorporated by those in authority' (2002:46)

Asking teachers to engage in emancipatory AR implies that university academics – who are also educating practising teachers– are expected to educate teacher researchers, support them and possibly work alongside them to inform curriculum development. This suggests that they see teachers as colleagues, understand their classroom realities and support their professional development. More so, if teachers are also called on to inform curriculum design, partnerships between universities and teacher-researchers become crucial to allow mutual understandings. Even though a number of reports do highlight the benefits of such university-school-teacher collaboration (Burns, 1996, Tinker Sachs, 2002, Vergara L. et al., 2009, Borg,

2009b), Kirk and MacDonald (2001) have argued teachers' involvement in curriculum design is desirable but unlikely. They report on a study which explored teachers' participation in a large-scale curriculum reform conducted in Australia and it aimed to join curriculum and teacher development involving different stakeholders at schools in partnerships where teachers provided recommendations for curriculum design with examples of best practice. Findings indicated teachers did not participate in designing approaches from the data obtained but mainly contributed with their knowledge of their learners, their resources and their local contexts. This study suggested teachers did not make substantial contribution to curriculum design since this task was limited to authorities and university experts. As a consequence teachers did not feel they 'owned' the newly designed curriculum.

Kirk & MacDonald's accounts of what happened in Australia illustrate how teachers' participation can become challenging in small power-distance cultures (Hofstede, 1991) (see 2.4) as well as in a country such as Chile characterised by a top-down, hierarchical system. The issue then arises as to whether imported educational initiatives effective elsewhere or even partially successful (Lamie, 2005, Kennedy, 1988) may be suitable in educational and cultural contexts that are very different from those in which they originated. If applied uncritically, such initiatives often fail to achieve the outcomes expected. As Villegas-Reimers claims these are commonly difficulties reported when 'a model of professional development successful in one context, fails when transferred to another context' (Villegas-Reimers, 2003:122)

The lack of support of institutional cultures described in the AR literature (Kirk and MacDonald, 2001, Tinker Sachs, 2002, Nunan, 1995) and some other issues discussed above such as complex changes involving participation at different levels of the educational system as well as the role of context, have been more extensively described in the curriculum literature (Waters, 2009). In fact, in reports which describe AR projects there is scarce reference to the complexity of a change demanded by AR and its systemic nature. There is also limited discussion of these issues in TE literature (although see Padwad & Dixit 2010 in 2.4). In the literature review chapter, I have also made reference to contextually incompatible change and inappropriate approaches for change implementation, both issues that apply to this study.

Because the AR literature makes little reference to the systemic complexity of genuinely implementing emancipatory approaches to AR, I am drawing on curriculum change examples hoping to demonstrate there is a possible appropriate analogy to be made between curriculum change more generally and what AR for PD means in the Chilean context.

5.3.2 A parallel with curriculum change

Although curriculum change involves a large number of people and possibly the adjustment of various parts of the system (e.g. materials and assessment) for its successful application, the successful transition of ELT classroom teachers to ELT action researchers involves similar demands particularly in relation to socio-cultural aspects. My point here is that although acknowledging curriculum change and teacher change through AR are not identical processes, I would argue both processes share features in terms of the 'reculturing' that they entail by calling for a change in behaviour, beliefs and attitudes and by involving different partners within the education system (MoE, universities running TE programmes and schools).

Educational reform initiatives from many different parts of the world which have been inconsistently conceived and show ignorance of the educational traditions and socio-cultural norms of their implementation contexts are, surprisingly, widely identified in the curriculum change TESOL literature such as Lamie (2002) in Japan, Hu (2002) in China, O'Sullivan (2004) in Namibia, Waters and Vilches (2008) in Philippines and Zappa-Holman (2007) in Argentina.

Other challenges associated with curriculum change discussed in the literature I identified the following;

- Curriculum innovation may demand a systemic change affecting institutions and the people within them (Padwad and Dixit, 2010, Kirk and MacDonald, 2001)
- Innovation principles may be in conflict with classroom realities such as class size and resources (Prapaisit de Segovia and Hardison, 2009, Zappa-Holman, 2007, O'Sullivan, 2004, Waters and Vilches, 2008)

- Innovation may demand a change in teacher and learner roles (Shamim, 1996, Hu, 2002)
- Innovation may not consider the need to change other parts of the system (e.g. textbook, assessment and training) (Prapaisit de Segovia and Hardison, 2009, Li, 2001)
- It may involve a change to traditional views about education (e.g. moving from transmission to facilitative ways of teaching) (Li, 2001, Hu, 2002, O'Sullivan, 2004)
- The innovation may reveal socio-political tensions (Zappa-Holman, 2007, O'Sullivan, 2004, Waters and Vilches, 2008)

Interestingly, reports which focus on teacher education and how teachers experience curriculum change describe similar pitfalls (Lamb, 1995, Hayes, 2000, Waters and Vilches, 2008, Vavrus, 2009). Vavrus (2009) described an educational reform in secondary teacher education in Tanzania which promoted social constructivism through learner-centred settings which clashed with accepted norms in school systems characterized by authoritative teacher-centred classrooms. The former illustrates the 'incompatibility of these goals and underscore the political-economic dimension of educational reform' (2009:309). Similarly, Waters and Vilches (2008) report on a study exploring the characteristics and effectiveness of a system-wide curriculum reform introduced in Philippines which called for a learner-centred approach to teaching and learning. This innovation called for modifications in teachers' methodology which involved moving from transmission to facilitation of knowledge. The findings obtained through interviews and focus groups from managers and teachers indicated that the reform implementation was difficult to achieve because it was under-resourced and because curriculum design followed a hierarchical/top-down model. With regards to the latter, he argued that 'government curriculum policy and school-system implementation levels inhabit such different 'universes' that 'intercultural' understanding between the two is often difficult' (2008:19 quotations in original). These examples and those above demonstrate innovations may neglect contextual aspects which signal the need for a major cultural adjustment, similar to the one which is needed if teachers in Chile are to become action researchers, particularly of the emancipatory kind.

Most of the curriculum change literature, reports how calls for learner-centred approaches and communicative language teaching (CLT henceforth) demand a change for school cultures where teachers are still seen as the source of knowledge and learners remain passive receivers of information. To the contrary, CLT demands teachers and learners to take roles uncommon in many settings. Wedell (2013) argues that curriculum changes which demand more communicative classrooms often fail to consider cultural aspects about the role of teaching and learning. Table 5.3 taken from Wedell (ibid.) illustrates how a curriculum change proposing the development of communicative skills implies that teachers' behaviours change from acting as transmitters to facilitators of knowledge.

Teacher as Transmitter of Knowledge about English	**Teacher as Facilitator of learners' English communication skills**
Learners are assumed to be a single entity with a single set of language needs.	Learners are recognised to be individuals with different ways of learning and different personal needs and interests.
A teacher can teach the language with only limited personal proficiency in spoken English.	A teacher needs a high level of proficiency in spoken English to deal with a range of materials, activities and classroom management issues.
A teacher usually uses a single textbook which follows a predictable sequence of knowledge inputs / exercises and activities	A teacher may be expected to use teaching-learning materials from a wider range of sources, and to be able to adapt these to contextual realities and to learners' needs and interests.
A teacher needs mastery of a predictable and limited range of largely whole-class teaching procedures and classroom management skills.	A teacher needs to develop a range of more flexible and complex classroom management skills to cope with a range of varied procedures / techniques / activities entailing varied patterns of classroom interaction, and differing degrees of focus on form.
A teacher can focus on summative assessment of specific knowledge that has been taught.	A teacher needs to understand how to design / carry out assessment (continuous and formative) of language performance as well as knowledge.

Table 5.1 From transmitter to facilitator (Wedell 2013:145)

The table above demonstrates the complexity such a transition entails thus shedding light on the professional reculturing demanded since 'a successful change of role requires significant professional adjustments to almost every aspect of teachers' daily classroom practice and behaviour' (Wedell 2013:144). I would argue the degree of cultural change revealed above shares similarities with Table 5.1 which showed different roles and perceptions of teachers in the Chilean reality in comparison to what AR demands since it also denotes a change in teachers' beliefs and behaviours whereas also stressing the systemic nature of such shift. More so, the need for a similar shift, that from transmission to facilitation, has been identified in this study in relation to in-service teacher education. Expecting Teachers to carry out emancipatory AR in Chile can then be compared to innovations promoting constructivist curriculum reforms since both, to a lesser or greater degree, entail teachers in making a cultural shift. Wedell and Malderez (2013) have argued that all educational cultures can be found at some point along a continuum with more hierarchical cultures (which usually promote top-down innovations) can be found at one extreme and flatter hierarchical cultures (those promoting more bottom-up initiatives) at the other as shown in Table 5.4. Few educational cultures are at either extreme, however moving from one type of culture to the other can often imply a substantial cultural change.

Individuals within and institution feel they cannot (and do not) influence decisions made about their work	**Individuals feel they can (and can and do) influence decisions made about their work.**
Hierarchical organizational culture. Changes almost always occur in response to 'top-down' initiatives from 'leaders'	A fairly flat hierarchy within the organization, changes may be (and often are) initiated by teachers, from the 'bottom-up'
Teacher as expert knower/transmitter of knowledge	Teacher as creator of learning opportunities and supporter of learning
Learners as more or less identical empty vessels.	Learners as individuals with personal prior experiences, existing knowledge learning styles and purposes.

Organisations and individuals with little experience of professional change, since teaching-learning approach and body of knowledge remains stable over time.	Organisations and individuals familiar with change since alterations to practices, knowledge and its uses are a permanent features of professional life.

Table 5.2 Features of an educational culture continuum (adapted from Wedell & Malderez 2013)

Whereas most recent ELT curriculum innovations promote a transition towards the right-hand column (above), awareness of the practical, social and cultural modifications that such a transition entails is still lacking. Promoting the empowerment of teachers through AR in a hierarchical culture such as that in Chile involves similar challenges. One example which highlights the gap between both ends of the continuum is identified in this study when teachers indicated they were discouraged from deviating from their lesson planning to finish their AR projects. This suggests that there was little tolerance of lesson flexibility and that teachers are used to having limited power to make their own decisions.

Some of the curriculum innovations described above described national reforms thus denoting their large scale. However – and although this is small-scale study- through my discussion above I am hoping to demonstrate that, for AR in this study to be able to be of the emancipatory kind that the course designers wanted, the degree of systemic change and reculturing needed would have had to be equivalent to that referred to in the wider ELT curriculum innovation literature mentioned above. Consequently, and based on the understanding of the demands imposed by such innovation, I would argue certain conditions must be in place if AR is to become part of teachers' daily professional lives and successfully promote their PD.

5.3.3 Conditions for AR in Chile

In 5.2 above I have provided a summary adapted from Borg listing a number of facilitative features for programmes promoting TR in a sustainable manner. In the present study I identify a number of conditions that I believe need to be in place for

teachers to do AR in Chile as intended by course designers. I understand such conditions in terms of scope and depth as Figure 5.1 illustrates.

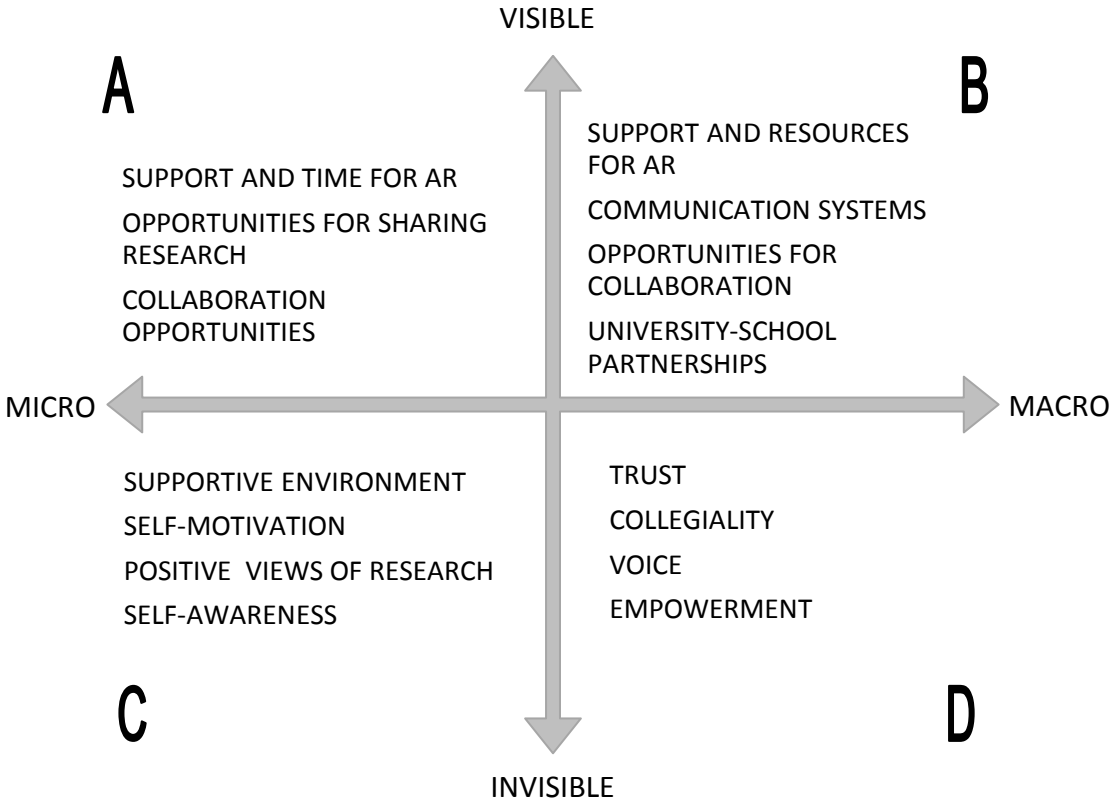

Figure 5.1 Conditions for AR in Chile

In the figure above, I use the terms visible and invisible to refer to depth, drawing on the work by Wedell and Malderez (2013) to illustrate these aspects of context, and micro and macro to denote scope.

In this figure it is not my intention to provide an exact position for these issues along each extreme of the continuum in terms of scope and depth but to propose an approximation of where they may be located and to illustrate the complex and multi-dimensional nature of any attempt to introduce AR in Chile.

The limits between visible and invisible and micro and macro also become diffused around the centre, for example communications systems which can be present at micro and macro ends. However, such systems are usually likely to be initially

developed outside schools, mostly at regional educational level which make them larger in scope.

I use the term micro to denote the setting where such conditions are identified to refer to the classroom and the school. Macro settings involve wider institutions such as municipalities, regional educational offices, universities and the MoE, all of which have a role to play in educational innovations. The conditions that need to be provided at a micro or macro level can also be visible or invisible, a visible condition will be more easily noticeable and can be associated with actions or behaviours. On the contrary, the invisible dimension involves aspects of culture and beliefs and unspoken norms at individual institutional or societal levels.

At a micro visible level, in quartile A, schools will portray supportive attitudes towards AR by either providing teachers with additional time to do AR as well as providing opportunities for them to share their findings and use them to take decisions for their classrooms and at school level. Burns (1999) argues that professional development activities such as action research that are "integrated into school or organizational change become a powerful way of facilitating school curriculum renewal and ensuring that language teachers retain greater ownership of curriculum implementation" (1999:209). Thus, principals and colleagues will also be AR advocators and teacher inquiry will become another 'teaching activity'.

Ideally, parents will also be informed turning the activity a collective endeavor involving the entire educational community. Unlike in this study, teachers will be backed if modifications in their planning are needed to suit their research.

Similarly, in quartile B, the macro education system will encourage institutions to enable teachers to engage in AR. They will build effective, bidirectional communication systems to allow teachers to request and receive support for their projects as well as share their findings with other partners in the educational system. An effective approach to achieve good levels of collaboration is the setup of university-school partnerships where academics and school teachers work together for common goals, balanced participation and sharing their expertise. As at schools, the MoE will also support teachers to do research through the allocation of additional time and resources for teachers to continue learning about AR.

In quartile C, teachers and school authorities will have supportive attitudes towards AR. Teachers will be willing and motivated to do research while developing awareness which allows them to explore and reflect on their own practice. Additionally, teachers and their immediate school culture will have positive views of research and acknowledge the benefits of AR. Teachers in this study expressed themselves negatively towards research and academia more generally which also had a negative impact on its outcomes since they perceived research as *theory*, *ideal*, *unpractical* and *alien to teaching*. Moreover, the conditions located in quartile C at the invisible micro level are likely to be true if conditions in A are identified.

At a macro invisible level in quartile D, partnerships and collaboration among all partners within the education system will be based on mutual trust. Those at the higher levels of the hierarchy will empower those in lower positions; allow their active involvement in decision-making valuing and listening to their views. Trust appeared as an essential missing element in this study indicating if teachers are not trusted and are not viewed as colleagues within their education system, there will be less chances of AR becoming sustainable.

I would also argue that the existence of conditions at the invisible quartiles will determine the presence of visible conditions and therefore their initiation and development will be a prerequisite for any visible condition to exist. On this matter Wedell & Malderez argue that 'seeing visible evidence of different classroom ELT behaviours depends on implementers working through a process of invisible culture change, this is bound to take considerable time' (2013:205). Thus, changes to happen at the invisible level for them to become visible involve a long-term undertaking.

Whereas a number of studies have made reference to these conditions by listing challenges associated with AR and providing recommendations for better practice (Burns, 2005, Borg, 2013, Atay, 2008, McKernan, 1996), they have focused their discussion mainly on what is visible; lack of time, training, support and research knowledge (see 2.7.4 for details). Furthermore, the analysis is also somewhat limited to micro settings and the description of university-school partnerships whereas there is an acknowledgement of the complexity involved in promoting teachers to do AR. Borg (2001) touches on some of these issues when he asserts

> Language teacher educators must be aware that making teacher research happen -especially in in-service teacher contexts- involves much more than ensuring teachers have the technical competence to do research, and invokes a range of psychological, social, institutional, commercial and political considerations" (2011:221)

Overall, discussions of macro issues in relation to AR are scarce. In this light, this study makes a contribution by raising awareness of the multi-dimensional and complex nature of this innovation particularly regarding macro issues and at deeper levels.

In this study, problems associated with teachers' lack of involvement and active participation in the system have been reported as crucial and worth addressing. In the literature, similar conclusions have been reached (Kirk and MacDonald, 2001, Lamie, 2002, Prapaisit de Segovia and Hardison, 2009, Wedell, 2003).

Carl (2005) reported on a survey-based study in South Africa which explored teachers' perceptions regarding their involvement in curriculum reform. Findings indicated teachers wished to participate in the initiation phase of educational change. More importantly, he argued lack of participation may hinder professional development.

> 'Quality teacher involvement is essential, not only for the sake of institutional and curriculum development in schools and the country's curriculum, but also for nurturing the personal and professional growth of the teacher. Teacher participation can therefore bring positive results. Sadly, this principle is not always fully endorsed, in which case the teacher's professional status is placed in jeopardy' (2005:228)

In the same light, Kirk and MacDonald assert teachers could in fact provide an authoritative voice when participating in curriculum change, though their expertise may not be in the subject matter 'their expertise is rooted in their local conditions, of their school, facilities, programmes, classes, politics, and so on. It is their immersion in the local context of implementation from which they derive their authoritative voice' (2001:558). In Chile, I would argue that practising teachers could also

provide invaluable information to teacher educators about their teaching contexts and consequently how AR could best be embedded.

Teachers are in fact in a privileged position to provide valuable information regarding classroom realities and from that perspective to contribute to various aspects of educational innovation (see 2.6) (Stenhouse, 1975, Freeman, 1998, Wedell, 2013). On the contrary, I would argue that some of the partners who are currently involved in planning educational change may actually be less suitable for this role task due to their detached view of the reality of classrooms. Teacher educators (usually working at traditional highly prestigious universities) are seen as educational *experts* though I have noted that their academic expertise and little recent classroom teaching experience may make them unaware of the constraints of classroom realities. I believe that in this study this lack of awareness of classroom realities could have been avoided by involving the teachers who were the ones this initiative is actually supposed to support. Teachers' lack of involvement distances *experts* even more from understanding classroom settings since not only are they not used as source of information regarding what happens 'at the bottom' but through their lack of involvement, they are kept out of the planning loop and subsequently any sense they might have of ownership of the change is lost (Fullan, 2007).

5.4 Summary

My discussion has shed light on the possible challenges encountered when promoting teacher AR and the conditions which need to be in place if such activity is to become sustainable and meaningful for teachers. I have argued the demands imposed by this innovation are deep and large in scale particularly in contexts such as Chile.

This study proposes that the implementation of an AR initiative for teachers which expects them to become reflective, long-term researchers, empowered agents of change needs to be viewed and planned for as a system-wide initiative involving adjustment to existing beliefs, attitudes and norms across society at large; not just for an individual teacher. As Villegas-Reimers (2003) points out 'Effective professional development and change can only take place when linked to a significant reform of the structures, policies and systems' (2003:122).

I have argued above how the evident lack of teachers' voice in education and decision-making processes in Chile and the appeal for teachers' empowerment through AR discloses a contradiction between the *real* and the *ideal*. By listing the conditions needed for AR in Chile in Figure 4.3 I have also provided a picture of the complexity and utopian-nature of the innovation. From a critical perspective, I have contested the notion of emancipatory AR in a context where power structures limit teachers' advocacy and social mobility.

Moreover, this study has contributed to the lack of literature about state sponsored attempts to introduce AR projects involving non-native teachers in EFL primary and secondary schools who represent the largest number of ELT teachers today.

6 CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter I present an overview of the study highlighting its main goals and the research process. I also provide the study key findings and discuss its contributions and implications for practice and policy. I conclude the chapter by pointing out limitations and providing suggestions for further research.

6.2 Overview of the study

In this study, my aim was to investigate the underpinnings, processes and impact of action research as presented to English language teachers in an in-service course. My intention was to explore the kind of AR underpinning the course and how the notions such as critical reflection, autonomy and agency identified in the course syllabus were interpreted by teacher trainers and were in fact operationalised. In addition, I was interested in exploring teachers' learning experiences, the training conducted and what factors hindered or facilitated the effects of AR in teachers' classroom practice and their professional development more broadly.

This study originated from my own experience as a trainer in a similar course when I became interested in how teachers do action research and how they perceive AR for their professional development.

The research questions proposed (see Chapter 3) were aimed at gaining further insights into the kind of AR teachers engaged in, how they experience the AR process and the learning involved and the effects AR may have had on their PD. To answer these questions my study followed a qualitative design and data was collected over a period of ten months using an initial questionnaire, semi-structures interviews, focus groups and documents. The participants of the study involved nine teachers, three course designers and three teacher educators.

6.2.1 Key findings

The findings of the study revealed the conceptions of AR of course designers, teacher educators and teachers did not match. Course designers adhered to emancipatory and critical notions of AR which were highly academic and had the potential of turning teachers into agents of change. In this light, AR's main role was to promote reflective attitudes with a critical stance towards micro and macro issues thus to assist teachers' empowerment. The teacher educator who taught the AR module showed inconsistent understandings of AR since though claiming AR could have an important role in teachers' agency, he argued AR was limited to the classroom setting and was aimed at solving specific classroom problems to be addressed in a short period of time. In addition, he favoured conventional views of research encouraging methodological protocols with academic standards. On the other hand, teachers viewed AR as problem-solving which could assist them to solve everyday problems in their classroom particularly those associated with language learning. Thus they indicated AR was a more systematic form of their everyday problem-solving. In addition, a few teachers' claimed that AR could potentially improve practice by making them more analytical in their teaching.

Whereas the module aimed to promote reflective practice, critical thinking, improvement of practice and empowerment; teachers gained limited and confusing knowledge about AR and its process. The AR module was conducted in one single five-hour session with no follow-up, based on AR theory and lacking support for teachers to conduct their projects. Teachers' own accounts of their experience doing AR and their reports illustrated teachers were confused and wrote their reports using academic language which they did not understand fully. AR reports revealed teachers were in search of definite solutions to their classroom problems through the application of improved teaching strategies. Teachers asserted they had noticed the application of such strategies enhanced their students' learning although teachers' limited understandings of data collection and data analysis caused them to make unsound research conclusions. Teachers' argued not benefiting from the training conducted since it did not provide sufficient support and it failed to show AR examples to assist their learning. Moreover, teachers claimed their teacher educator failed to model good practice.

Considering all the above, the contributions that AR made to teachers' professional development was limited. Although some of them argued becoming more analytical, they claimed it did not encourage improved practice which was their most important PD aim. Consequently, teachers did not do AR again and argued a number of factors prevented them from doing so; heavy workloads, lack of interest, disappointment in the education system and the current adverse conditions which prevent them to be part of decision-making processes.

6.3 Implications for practice

I have highlighted above a number of factors which hampered the efficacy of the introduction and development of AR for English teachers which originated this study. Through the analysis of these issues, I am able to present the main implications for practice this exploration suggests in what follows.

6.3.1 Context-appropriate AR

If some form of teacher inquiry is desired in Chile, let alone AR, a more context-appropriate alternative is needed. A version of AR which is highly academic may appear preferable in other contexts and also among those working in universities and directly involved with research. However, this study highlights the need to adapt rather than adopt existing conceptualisations of AR and avoid popular trends which may not respond for what is needed in the context. In that case, policy makers and those designing courses which include research-oriented components should make carefully considerations about the kind of AR being promoted. One aspect to consider is the need for AR to be integrated in teachers' daily work, particularly while teaching. This study has shown how school authorities' reluctance to support research that takes time away from syllabus coverage. The former indicates the research process must be seamlessly part of the teaching process.

In addition, academic-oriented AR alienates teachers. A more accessible version may be more appropriate for teachers such as those in this study. Such a version should be expressed in more simple terms avoiding academic jargon and allowing alternative forms of dissemination. Consequently, AR reports may not be a suitable way for teachers to share their experience and particularly so if their structure is characterized

by conventional academic norms. An alternative here may be posters, reflective diaries or audio accounts which allow teachers to explain their research in a familiar language. Furthermore, for critical AR to take place, follow-up stages must be provided for teachers to share their experiences at least with their colleagues at their schools. This could allow collective decision-making regarding curriculum adaptations, further professional development initiatives and aspects of teaching; and learning which may -considering contextual constraints- be closest to the emancipatory kind of AR that is currently feasible in Chile.

If this or any kind of teacher research is to be promoted in the context, ongoing support systems must be in place. These support systems may take the form of TR/AR teacher networks where teachers could also present their work thus allowing dissemination of their findings. As such, such dissemination does not necessarily entail publishing; it could also involve presenting in network seminars, small conferences and other teachers' groups.

6.3.2 Systemic support for AR

This study demonstrated the need for policy makers to be fully aware of who will directly or indirectly be affected by any educational reform initiative (including PD programmes for teachers) that they might wish to introduce, and how these are likely to understand what is expected.

The findings in this study indicated the need for AR to be supported by micro and macro structures, i.e. schools, regional offices, universities and the MoE. Therefore, attempts should be made to involve those institutions when planning PD activities which include AR, so that systemic support for such activity is built at the onset. Such systemic effort may result in the provision of resources by the MoE to create university-school partnerships based on mutual collaboration. A sense of partnership between such settings can take considerable time though small-scale projects may be put in place to initiate such collaboration and create a bridge between them. Additionally, the literature indicates initiatives which have school support have more chances to be successful and this study has demonstrated that lack of school support minimises the chances of AR to become a sustained activity. Therefore, the active involvement of schools and those working there (such as inspectors, colleagues and

head teachers) is desired. Planning should involve consultation stages involving teachers and schools to understand the kind of AR to be most appropriate for the setting.

6.3.3 Examination of teacher education current views and practices

The process of teaching AR to teachers reported in this study lacks all the facilitative elements discussed in the literature (Borg 2013). However, there is an additional aspect which is worth stressing and that is the approach used to teach AR was mainly based on technical research procedures disregarding the value of analysis, critical appraisal of data and the reflective processes which teachers could and should have engaged in to make more substantial claims of the data they collected. The evidence here indicates teachers were taught *about* AR in a transmissive manner. The latter is in opposition with constructivist views which propose AR for PD.

Additionally, AR as a required assessed piece of coursework is not in line with AR notions promoting professional development. Teachers in this study have also claimed the need for an educator who is not only knowledgeable about AR both theory and practice but also about their classroom realities.

What is needed then is for teacher education rhetoric to become feasible in practice. As it has been suggested for school teachers in the literature, teacher educators also need to act as facilitators allowing teachers to become autonomous learners and reflective decision-makers. This can in turn -in time- support teachers' empowerment to re-gain their lost voice.

6.4 Contributions

This study illuminates some of the conditions needed for AR promoting PD to take place within the state system and highlights the need for those planning such innovations to be aware of the full scope of what such initiative entails. In the same vein, this research provides an understanding of some factors that need to be considered by policy makers and teacher educators when planning and implementing an AR-oriented PD initiative. Even though this research focuses in the AR

component of a PD course, these findings can also inform PD initiatives more generally.

In addition, this study contributes to the limited discussion in the literature of research conducted in non-native contexts with a focus on state-school teachers. On this point, Borg (2003) argues that 'there is also a need for more research in contexts which, globally speaking, are more representative of language classrooms. I am thinking here of classrooms in state schools, taught by non-native teachers, and where syllabuses are to various degrees prescribed' (2003:98)

Most importantly, I believe this study highlights some of the factors which can influence either the success of failure of this kind of initiatives and the prominence of contextual aspects. I have argued that emancipatory AR involves a process of systemic reculturing which presumes deep changes in a system's perceptions regarding teachers, their capabilities and their professional status. Hence I believe that calling teachers to become empowered through AR needs to be viewed and planned for as a system-wide initiative involving adjustment to existing beliefs, attitudes and norms and not just as an individual teacher PD activity.

From a methodological perspective, this study focuses on the views of different stakeholders of the process and has highlighted through a critical perspective issues of social justice and unbalanced power structures. As a longitudinal study, it focused on teachers' perceptions regarding the benefits of doing AR over time. Something which has not been establish in other reports. Additionally, teachers' views and their voice was the focus. In other studies the researcher has a dual researcher/trainer role so the description of events may be overly positive overshadowing teachers' perceptions.

Also in methodology this study highlights the importance of flexible research designs which allow the researcher to adjust the focus of their study in light of the data obtained.

6.5 Suggestions for further research

I believe further research is needed which study the impact of AR as a life-long professional activity. Even though a number of studies inform the role of AR for

teachers professional development (Burns and Rochsantiningsih, 2006, Kirkwood and Christie, 2006, Rust and Meyers, 2006, McDonough, 2006), there is a lack of longitudinal studies which further explore the extent in which -through their engagement with AR- teachers' views about research, their practice and their beliefs change.

Moreover, the impact of AR on teachers' professional identity is another area in need of further study. I have insufficient data to make valid conclusions on this issue but some teachers felt doing AR did not relate with their identity as teachers since doing AR did not involve activities they usually do. This issue was not followed up further because it was not within the scope of my study though I would argue there is much to learn from such exploration.

Finally, I think there is lack of research conducted in Chile which studies the perceptions of teachers in the context and particularly the views of in-service teachers in relation to their own professional development. The area of professional development and in-service teacher education in ELT is under-researched which provides further data about how teachers' experiences and views are neglected.

6.6 Limitations

The current study did not involve school authorities as research participants. Since they were missing from my analysis, the views of these partners in the education system are lacking. Through their participation the study may have benefitted from their perceptions about the needs of AR in schools and the potential benefits or problems they perceived in relation to it. I would argue though, that data which highlighted the importance of school authorities as facilitators of the research activity only emerged in later stages of data collection therefore its collection was not originally planned.

I acknowledge that the findings concerning teachers' views about AR and its impact are limited to what teachers say. Although collecting data at different stages in the process and from different sources helped triangulation, reflective writings were not available in order to establish how teachers perceptions changed in light of the training received and classroom observations were neither planned during the

research process. Although richer data could have been obtained through these methods, journal writings were not available and classroom observations involved additional financial costs and timing issues.

The findings and the conclusions drawn from this study are context-bound and therefore, this may limit its generalisability. Still, some characteristics of the Chilean context which hampered the initiative studied –heavy teachers' workloads, top-down implementation and transmissive teacher education approach–may be identified elsewhere.

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8 APPENDICES

8.1 Appendix 1. Course syllabus

METHODOLOGY COURSE SYLLABUS

1. General Presentation and Course Description

The challenges that current practice in teaching English as foreign language in Chile require the use of updated, pertinent and contextualized methodologies to allow teachers of English to deliver more efficient lessons and learners to show better linguistic outcomes. The specialized literature in TEFL indicates that recent trends in methodology increasingly suggests that methodologies are discipline oriented (Ellis 1994, Brown 2004, O'Maggio 1994)

This course in TEFL Methodology is aimed at providing an in-depth upgrading of current methodological contents much needed to improve the teaching and learning processes in the foreign language curriculum. The proposed innovations are organized in the following lines of action:

- An approach that fosters a critical interaction between teaching and learning a foreign language and its cultural dimension, cross-curricular objectives and other school subjects.
- Adoption of an interactive and strategic approach for the TEFL process.
- A profile for the course graduate and the course tutor.
- A flexible curriculum design embodied in a modular currículo including core and complementary training areas, integrated modules consisting in action research and classroom reflective practice.
- Opportunities for teachers to become agents of change, empowering them with current and innovating teaching models, establishing meaningful relationships with other subject areas and promoting critical, creative and autonomous attitudes.

The course activities combine theory and practice and contribute to the participants' personal and professional development. This course is organized in five core modules and one cross-curricular module.

2. Graduate Profile

a. Ability to analyze the students' needs to be able to propose meaningful learning units.
b. Ability to plan and select teaching strategies and resources to
c. improve the students' learning outcomes.
d. Ability to work in teams and to promote critical thinking, creativity and autonomy.
e. Demonstrate competence in socio-cognitive, affective, linguistic and communicative strategies in the process of learning English as a foreign language..
f. Ability to develop good practices that will favour the learning of English as a foreign language and promote positive attitudes towards learning.

g. Ability to carry out classroom-based research to improve the participants' own classroom practice and the students' learning outcomes.
h. Investigative and a life-long learning attitude.

3. Entry Requirements

a. ALTE 3 or equivalent competencies.
b. A minimum of two years of teaching experience in public or subsidized schools.

4. Length Of Studies

320 hours

300 face-to-face

20 non-contact hours

5. Objectives

General Objectives:

The participants will be able to select the strategies , methodologies, techniques and activities to answer to the students and the MINEDUC Curriculum requirements aiming at improving their classroom practices and thus the students' learning of English as a foreign language. At the same time this course will offer the teachers the chance to turn themselves into agents of change, to grasp current and innovating methodology models and to promote critical, creative and autonomous learning attitudes.

Specific Objectives

- Analize the dimensions of the classroom context and community aiming at designing teaching and learning proposals for English as a foreign language.
- Select and organize the contents, strategies an techniques to reach the learning outcomes.
- Analize and design items to assess the planned learning outcomes.
- Select, analyze and adapt teaching resources and textbooks.
- Develop their students and own cognitive abilities and strategies to promote critical thinking
- To grasp and critically apply the teaching knowledge of the Chilean curriculum to their teaching practice.

6. Modules Description

The activities of each module include debates that consider the teaching and learning process of a foreign language. The dynamic interaction between text based processes and the students' previous knowledge is the scaffolding needed for grasping the foreign language.

All the modules will be characterized by discussions which will be guided to approach SLA as a socio-constructivist activity in which interactions between bottom up and top down processes lead to a scaffolded appropriation of the target language by the learner.

MODULE 1

TEACHING AND LEARNING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE: CRITICAL REVIEW OF CURRENT APPROACHES.

Objectives:

- Analyze different models of language learning and teaching critically.
- Become familiar with the latest trends in language learning and teaching
- Contextualize the models reviewed in the Chilean curriculum for TEFL.

Structure of the Module:

- Unpacking beliefs: looking into the four sources of teachers' beliefs
- Reflecting session(s)
- Review of approaches to language teaching: teaching English in national and international settings.
- Review and analysis of models of language learning (the psycholinguistic, cultural and sociolinguistic dimensions)
- Journal and hands-on activities

Main Contents :

- Approaches to Language Teaching
- International Context: Needs and challenges
- National Context: Needs and challenges (Marco de la Buena Enseñanza, OCED Report, Mineduc Framework)

Methodology

Input from the teacher, group discussion and reflection, individual and group presentations, simulations, peer observation, microteaching and use of TICs. Action research project.

MODULE 2

LANGUAGE LEARNING/ TEACHING STRATEGIES.

Objectives:

This module on strategy training aims at providing trainees with the following:

- Self-diagnostic of their strengths and weaknesses in the language teaching and learning process.
- Becoming aware of what helps students to learn the target language most efficiently
- Study of the different strategies per language skill.
- Monitoring and evaluation of their students' performance
- Offering students opportunities to use successful strategies in new learning contexts.
- Capacity to select and incorporate the use of TICs
- Decision making about how to introduce and approach a language task

Structure of the Module:

- Reflection session
- Review and analysis of learning variables: motivation, affect, attitudes, personality, styles.
- Review and analysis of taxonomies of language learning strategies and Importance of metacognition.
- Training of LLSs; LLSs FOR THE 4 SKILLS
- Identify learners' strategies
- Identify and analyze the presence of strategies in the Mineduc programs
- Journal and hands-on activities.

Main Contents:

- Theories and models of language learning strategies (Oxford, Wenden, Brown, O'Malley and Chamot)
- Frameworks for Strategy Training (Cohen et al.)
- Instructional Models
- TICs and CALL

Methodology

Teachers should be taught/trained to conduct Strategy Based Training (SBT) by starting with established course materials, then determining which strategies to insert and where, starting with a set of strategies they wish to focus on, design activities around them and the use of TICs .Action research project

MODULE 3

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

Objectives:

This module of classroom management will promote the following capacities:

- To plan contextualized lessons integrating the four skills.
- To handle group dynamics successfully

- To analyze, select and adapt materials to complement assigned textbook.
- To handle error correction in the classroom.

Structure of the module:

- Unpacking beliefs connected with classroom management skills.: Microteaching
- Review of classroom management skills
- Reflection session(s)
- Establishing links with other subjects in the curriculum (transdisciplinarity)

Methodology:

Group discussion and reflection, individual and group presentations, simulations, peer observation, microteaching and the use of TICs. Action research project

MODULE 4

ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING AND EVALUATION

This module addresses the process of evaluating and measuring language learning.

Objectives:

- to consider the role and functions of evaluation and testing and their contribution to the understanding of learning and teaching,
- to show a sound knowledge of language test design and test evaluation,
- to analyze, select and design assessment instruments to be applied at different target groups of students.(Brown, D. 2004)
- to provide feedback to improve the process of learning.
- to gain critical awareness of different test types and items, and their appropriacy for different target groups

Structure of the Module:

- Reflection session
- Review and analysis of literature on assessment in EFL
- Review and analysis of assessment procedures.
- Training in designing assessment instruments.
- Journal and hands-on activities.

Main Contents:

- The relationship of curriculum and assessment
- Purposes of assessment
- Using tasks in language assessment

- Test construction
- Observation and learner achievement and progress in the classroom
- Criteria for assessing spoken and written language
- Assessing reading and listening
- Assessing grammar and lexis
- Self-assessment, peer-assessment, diaries and portfolio assessment

Methodology :

Group discussion and reflection, individual and group presentations, simulations, peer observation, microteaching and use of TICs. Action research project

MODULE 5

TEACHING PRACTICE

This module gives teachers in training the opportunity to put into practice what they learnt in their Methodology components. Participants will be videotaped to be able to receive objective feedback and analyze what they did or did not do and to look at possible alternative procedures to improve their professional practice.

Objectives

- Plan lessons according to teaching contexts.
- Apply different approaches, strategies and techniques to improve learning.
- Assess learning outcomes.
- Evaluate critically their peers and own teaching practice.

Contents:

- What disciplinary knowledge constitutes the core of applied linguistics
- How to teach the four language skills: approaches, strategies, activities.
- What you do to become an EFL teacher in the classroom and outside of it
- How you work with your students, your colleagues, your school and your society
- How you base your classroom practice, as a reflexive human being, on your values and beliefs (G. Crookes. 2003)

Methodology:

Presentations by tutor and participants. Interactive, reflective classroom observation, feedback and follow-up and use of TICs Diary and lesson planning. Action research project.

MODULE 6

ACTION RESEARCH IN THE EFL CLASSROOM

This module goes across the other four modules and considers teachers as professionals who reflect on their own teaching practice aiming at solving difficulties encountered in the classroom contexts. This approach leads to improve the teacher's capacity to collect and select information and to apply the acquired knowledge in the classroom on the one hand and towards their own teacher development.

Objectives

- To carry out action research.
- To collect information, identify students learning problem and propose suitable solutions.
- Observe and analyse the impact of the proposal.
- Socialise findings and the proposed alternatives

Contents

- Samples of carried out models of action research
- Main characteristics of action research.
- Action research stages.
- Data analysis

Methodology:

Interactive, reflective classroom observation, feedback and follow-up and the use of TICs. Diary and lesson planning. Action research project.

7. Evaluation

- Portfolios
- Diaries
- Presentations
- Microteaching
- Original research project on curriculum design or classroom practice.

8. Tutor Profile Requirements

The tutor should provide certification for the following:

- Skills and experience in TEFL methodology
- ALTE 4 or 5 English level
- English teaching degree

8.2 Appendix 2. Informed consent

INFORMED CONSENT

You are being invited to take part in a PhD research project. Before you decide whether to participate it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

Topic: Exploring action research in a teacher development course in Chile.

Name of Researcher: Paula Rebolledo, University of Leeds, UK.

1. What I am conducting the study?

This study is designed to investigate the purpose and effects of an action research module presented to English language teachers in a methodology course.

2. What it will involve

If you accept to participate in this study, you agree to the following:

1. Allow me to read the journals entries you wrote for the methodology course during the months of June, July and August.

2. Answer a brief questionnaire.

3. Participate in four interviews spread out between August 2010 and June 2011 which will take around 40 minutes. Such interviews will be conducted at the following times:

- Face-to-face interviews in August when the course has finished.
- Telephone interviews in October.
- Face-to-face interviews in December.
- Telephone interviews in June 2011.

All interviews will be recorded. The recordings produced will be used solely for research purposes.

3. Confidentiality

All the information collected will be kept strictly confidential. Your name will not be used in any reports or publications.

4. Possible risks and benefits

There are no known risks involved in this study except the use of your time.

Whilst there are no immediate benefits for those participating in this study, it is hoped that this work will help you evaluate your involvement in action research and contribute to your understandings of such activity.

5. Consent

Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may also withdraw your participation at any point.

If you have any questions about this study, please contact:

Paula Rebolledo

prebolledoc@gmail.com

Thank you for your invaluable time and collaboration.

I have read the information above and I voluntarily agree to participate in this research.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Based on an example of a consent form available on the University of Leeds Research Support website:

http://researchsupport.leeds.ac.uk/index.php/academic_staff/good_practice/ethical_review_process/university_ethical_review-1/. Retrieved on June 28th 2010.

8.3 Appendix 3. Questionnaire

TEACHERS' QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Teacher,

This questionnaire is part of a research study I am conducting into teacher professional development. At this stage of my work I would appreciate some background information about you and about the methodology course you have just completed.

Thank you for your cooperation.

I. Personal and School Information

Please read the questions and either circle the appropriate answer or fill in the blank with the information requested. If you think you may need to select more than one choice, you can do so.

1. Levels of teaching: Primary: 1° - 2° – 3° – 4° –5° –°6
   Secondary: 1° - 2° - 3° - 4°
2. N° of years of teaching experience: _____
3. N° of teaching blocks you work per week: _____.
4. N° of schools you work in: _____
5. School where teaching most number of hours: Subsidized – State
6. Number of hours English is taught at school where you work most hours: _____

II. Professional development and methodology course

Select all the answers which are true for you.

1. What kind of incentives do you get at school to develop professionally?
   a) Extra bonus for training
   b) Promotion possibilities
   c) Encouragement to participate in school projects
   d) Other: _____

2. How do you believe undertaking this course would contribute to your development as a teacher of English?

   a) Improve my teaching practice
   b) Career development
   c) Develop my ELT knowledge
   d) Improve my language skills
   e) Other: _____

3. Have you conducted any form of research which involved data collection before?

   Yes - No

4. What is the title of the Action Research project that you conducted at the end of the course?

   Title: _____

5. Did you face any challenges when developing your action research project?

   a) Yes - If yes, please answer question 6
   b) No - If no, please continue to question 7.

6. What were the challenges you faced when developing your action research project?

   Select all the answers which are true for you.

   a) Lack of time
   b) Lack of knowledge about conducting research
   c) Lack of knowledge about the research topic
   d) Unsupportive colleagues
   e) Unsupportive school authorities
   f) Lack of guidance to conduct the research project
   g) Lack of motivation to conduct research
   h) Insufficient resources
   i) Other: _____

7. How beneficial have the modules covered on the course been to your classroom practice? 5 means 'very beneficial' and 1 means 'not beneficial at all'.

a) Theories of foreign language learning	5	4	3	2	1
b) ELT methodology	5	4	3	2	1
c) Classroom management	5	4	3	2	1
d) Assessment for learning and evaluation	5	4	3	2	1
e) Language learning strategies	5	4	3	2	1
f) ICT in ELT	5	4	3	2	1
g) Action Research	5	4	3	2	1

In the next stage of the study I would like to talk to teachers on the course about the action research component. If you would be interested in talking to me please write your name here with an e-mail address I can contact you on.

Name: _____

E-mail address: _____

8.4 Appendix 4. Summary of teachers' questionnaire responses

I. Personal and School Information

Levels teachers teach:

Primary: 8 Teachers

Secondary: 5 Teachers

Years of teaching experience: 7 years in average

Teaching periods per week: 30 hours

School: All teachers worked at subsidised schools

II. Professional development and methodology course

1. What kind of incentives do you get at school to develop professionally?
   1 None: 6 teachers
   2 Other: possibilities to do research and other personal projects: 2 teachers
   3 Promotion possibilities: 1 teacher
   4 Encouragement to participate in school projects: 1 teacher
   5 Bonus to salary: 1 teacher

2. How do you believe undertaking this course would contribute to your development as a teacher of English?

   a) Improve my teaching practice: 6 teachers
   b) Develop my ELT knowledge: 5 teachers
   c) Improve my language skills: 2 teachers
   d) Career development: 1 teacher
   e) Be a better teacher: 1 teacher

3. Have you conducted any form of research which involved data collection before?

   All teachers responded 'No'

4. How beneficial have the modules covered on the course been to your classroom practice? 5 means 'very beneficial' and 1 means 'not beneficial at all'.

   Assessment for learning and evaluation: 4 points
   ELT methodology: 4 points
   Action Research: 3 points
   Language learning strategies: 3 points
   ICT in ELT: 3 points
   Theories of foreign language learning: 2 points
   Classroom management: 2 points

8.5 Appendix 5. Sample of AR session slides

SLIDE 1.

Action Research. Part I

What is research?

- It is a systematic way of asking questions, a systematic way of inquiry.
- Systematic
- Reasons for conducting research:
- Solving problems
- Expanding knowledge
- Increasing understanding
- Curiosity

SLIDE 2.

Types of research according to purposes

- *Basic* research. *Pure* research
    - Knowledge
- Applied research

- Solving problems
- Action research: It is focused on inmediate application. A problem here and now in a given setting.

SLIDE 3.

John Dewey

- In his ***Scientific method,*** elements of the inductive-deductive process are identified:
- Identification and definition of the problem.
- Hypothesis formulation (probable solution to the problem).
- Data analysis (gathering, organizing)
- Conclusion(s) formulation
- Verification, rejection, or modifying the hypothesis by testing.

SLIDE 4.

Problems on human beings research

- No two persons are alike. Difficult predictions.
- We are not consistent from one moment to another. Predictions are bizarre.
- Participants are influenced by the research process itself. Either from direct or indirect observations.
- Difficulty to observe certain traits under study., e.g. intelligence, hostility, anxiety, etc.

SLIDE 5.

Problem statement

- It is always difficult.
- Eventual areas: Team teaching, learning styles, instruction by internet, sex education, audiovisual programs, etc.
- Help may come from the literature or experienced researchers.

SLIDE 6.

Helpful evaluating questions

- Is this problem feasible to be solved by research?
- Is such a problem significant?
- Is it a new problem?
- Is research on such a problem feasible? (competency, data, resources, time, determination)

- An appropriate research problem comes from good questions.

SLIDE 7.

Requirements of the research problem.

- It should be concise and should identify the key factors (variables) of the study.

SLIDE 8.

Statement of the research problem

- Compare:
- Original: High-school dropouts
- Restatement: An ethnographic study of the factors of the school environment affecting dropouts upon regular high-school students.
- Question form: What factors of the school environment are related to potential dropout of regular students?
- On your own.

SLIDE 9.

Action Research

- It is a study conducted by a teacher or other educational professional to solve a specific problem in a school or a class.
- It focuses on a day-to-day problem at a local and specific level.
- The results of action research are not aimed at generalyzing to other educational settings.
- Less rigorous than other educational research.
- Often it uses intact groups.

SLIDE 10.

Why is research important in teaching?

- Theory and published research. Teachers need to be aware of what others have found.
- Be aware of replication. The main asset from theory and research is that it gives teachers the feasibility to replicate by making their own questions as applied to their own settings.
- Micro evaluate. The best avenue is that teachers conduct a micro-evaluation process of their own teaching.

SLIDE 11.

Steps in conducting a micro-evaluation process

- Choosing what to evaluate.
- Describing the focus of the evaluation.
- Planning the process.
- Collecting the information.
- Analyzing the gathered information.
- Reaching conclusions and making recommendations.
- Writing the report.

SLIDE 12.

Action Research. Part II

It is Problem Focused

- "It nearly always arises from some specific problem or issue arising out of our professional practice." (Wallace, 1998)
- It is very practical effort in its intended outcomes and therefore, problem-focused.

SLIDE 13.

Selecting and developing a topic. Critical headings

- Purpose. Why am I engaging in this action research effort?
- Topic. What specific area am I going to investigate?
- Focus. What is the precise question to pose to myself in such an area?
- Product. What is the intended outcome of the study?
- Mode. How am I going to conduct the research?
- Timing. How long can I get involved in the research? Is there a deadline?
- Resources. What are the resources I can count on to develop the study?
- Refocusing. As I proceed with the study am I going to eventually change the original research question?

SLIDE 14.

Purpose

- It is crucial to be clear when stating why a study will be conducted.
- There should be some time devoted to, hence the need to relate the task to personal/professional interests.
- If the topic is not related to one´s professional needs, then that is not action research

SLIDE 17.

Focus

- What specific aspect of the topic we want to investigate?
- Make a list of up to …areas.
- Say why you have chosen them
- prioritise them according to how important and interesting they are for you.

8.6 Appendix 6. Sample of T1' AR session class notes

Page 1

John Dew

What is a research

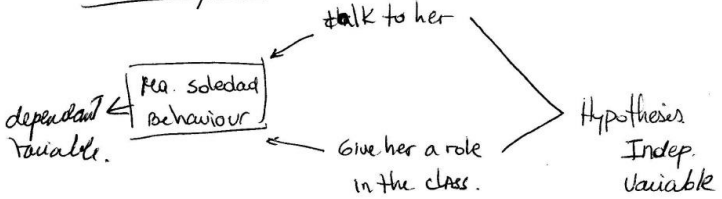
It is a sistimatic way of asking.

- Basic Research → • Knowledge. (Pure research).
- applied Research → • Solve a problem.

↓

action research → it is focused on immediate application. A problem here and now in a given setting.- (focus in an specific element).

Example.



* Problems on Human beings research.

* Problem statement

- It is always difficult. (we tend to solve everything but we need to focuse our attention in one thing at the time

Helpful Evaluation Questions

- Is this problem feasible to be solved by research.
- Is such a problem significant.
- Is it a new problem
- Is research on such a problem feasible. (competency, data, time determination)

Page 2

Action Research

- It's focused in a day-to-day problem.
- Less rigorous than other educational research.
- Often uses intact groups (whole class).

Why is research important in teaching

- micro evaluation - it helps to evaluate ourselves.
- steps:
  - choose what to evaluate
  - Decide the focus of the evaluation
  - plan the process of ev.
  - collect the info
  - analyze the info
  - reach conclusions and make recommendations.
  - write the report

Page 3

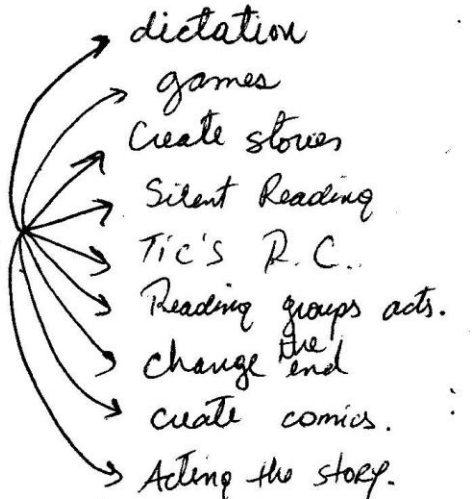
Action Research

- It's problem focused
- It's practical

- Selecting and developing a topic, critical heading
  - Purpose (Why am I doing this research?)
  - Topic (What specific area am I going to investigate?
  - Focus -- (What is the Q. to pose myself in such an area?)
  - Product (What is the intended outcome of the study?).
  - mode (Why am I engaging in this Act. R.)
  - timing (How long can I get involved in the research?)
  - Resources (What are the resources I can count to develop the study?)
  - Refocusing (am I going to change the original research questio

Techniques

1.- Questionaire.
2.- interview *
3.- Experimental Test.
4.- R. C. (Techniques) Act.
5.- Evaluation Test.



TIMING

1.- To a deadline Sep. 11th.

Resources

1.- People and material -

8.7 Appendix 7. AR report framework

ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT

Objective:

Participants should design and carry out a well-supported action research project to solve a specific problem in a class as applied to English Teaching-Learning in their own working environments.

1. Project antecedents	Max score
1.1 Project area	2
1.2 Coverage	2
2. Problem statement	
2.1 Significance of study	4
2.2 Concern area	4
2.3 Objectives	4
3. Research methodology	
3.1 Hypothesis/ Question	3
3.2 Data collection	5
3.3 Data analysis	5
3.4 Findings	5
4. Conclusions	4
Total:	38 pts.

8.8 Appendix 8. Samples of teachers' AR reports

T3 AR Report

1. Project settings

Project area

The goal of this project is to establish how the amount of classes could affect the learning process in a positive or negative way

1.2 Experimental group identification

This project was carried out among the students from 6th grade "A" from the school "……". The class has 34 students. Their ages go between 11 and 12. The schedule of the English classes in this level is organized in such way that students attend 7 hours of English, which are divided in 4 hours of formal classes with one teacher, and 3 hours of a new project called "Funglish" with a different teacher. This new project is developed following a content based methodology

2. Problem statement

2.1 Roots

This project is focused only in formal classes and carried out with 6th grade "A". The schedule of this class is organized in the following way:

6th "A": 2 hours on Mondays

2 hours on Fridays

The other two classes, 6th "B" and "C" are organized in the following way:

6th B: 1 hour on Tuesdays

2 hours on Wednesdays

1 hour on Fridays

6th C: 2 hours on Tuesdays

2 hours on Thursdays

Due to this schedule organization, we are now facing big differences in terms of language management and production among the three classes.

2.2 Concern area

During this year, different celebrations, holidays, events and extra activities has taken place on Mondays or Fridays, which has provoke big differences in the amount of classes the students have attended, causing a big gap between those who has completed their weekly amount of hours against those who has not.

Concerning formal classes, 6th "A" has lost approximately a 20% of classes in comparison of 6th "B" and "C"; the results in 6th "A" are notoriously lower than the two other classes who has almost never lost classes. Contrasting this situation, "Funglish" classes has excellent results with 6th "A", who has never lost classes, and very low results with 6Th "B" and "C", who lost 1 hour out of 3 every week. This information is only relevant to establish a background that supports the problem we are stating in this research, and not to be considering in this project.

In order to delimit the aim of this research, we focused on the results of the last test and the contents that were covered. The contents were simple past with regular verbs and time expressions.

2.3 Objectives

2.3.1 General Objective

Students will be able to express ideas and actions in past simple using time expressions.

2.3.2 Specific Objectives

Students will be able to differentiate regular verbs and irregular verbs.

Students will be able to orally produce the three different endings for regular verbs in past, /-t/, /-d/ and /-id/.

3. Research methodology

3.1 Hypothesis formulation

Due to the information given before, students from 6th "A" have shown the lowest results in comparison with the other two classes. There are many factors that are involve in having these results, such as internal motivation, the moment of the day the class is developed, attendance, hours of classes done, among others; but in this research we focused our attention on the last factor.

Taking into account the results on the last test, the question we attempt to answers is what strategies will lead us to reach the same result in the three classes despite the difference of classes done.

3.2 Data collection

Checking the results from the last test, which content was simple past tense with regular verbs, the following graphic was obtained.

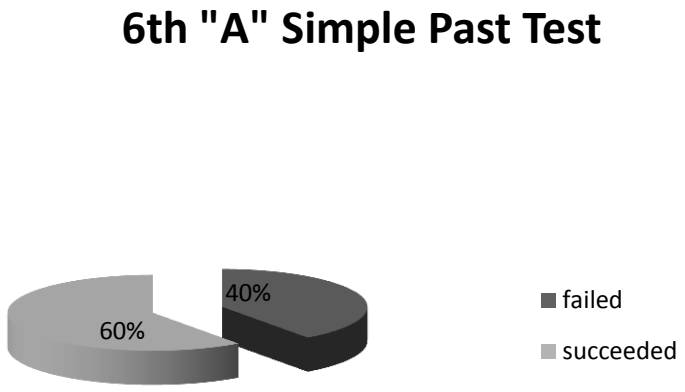


Figure 1

13 students out of 33 failed

20 students out of 33 succeeded

Whereas the other two classes, which were exposed to formal classes more often than 6th "A", got the following results

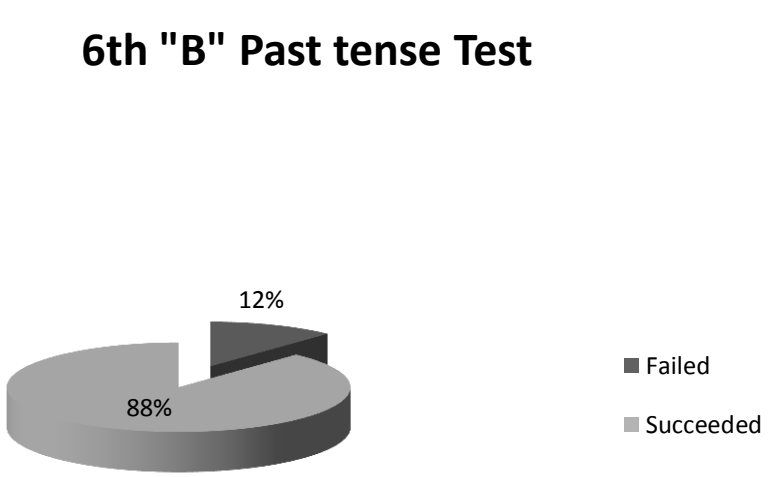


Figure 2

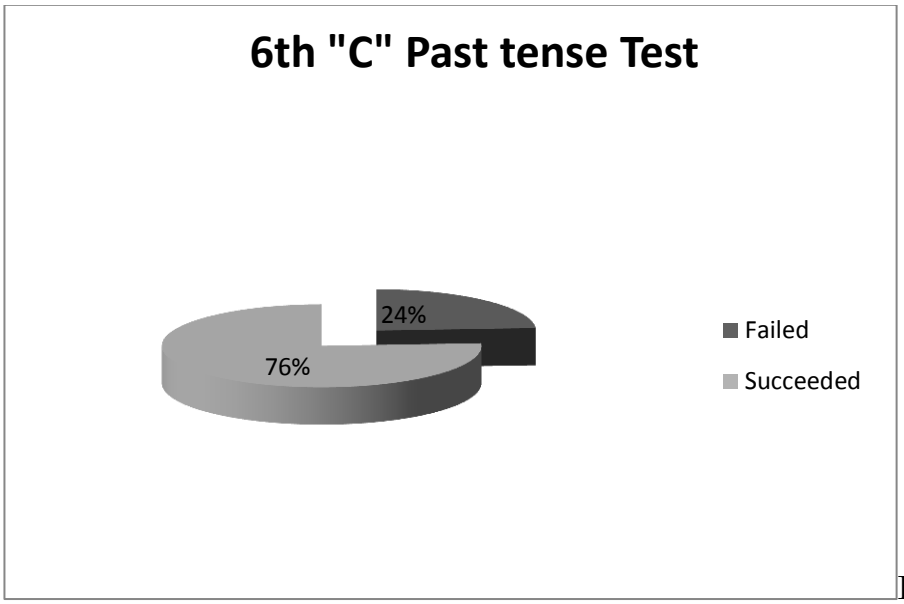


Figure 3

Although in 6th "A"60% of the students passed this evaluation, the range of students who passed successfully this evaluation were only 5 out of 33. The following graphic represent this.

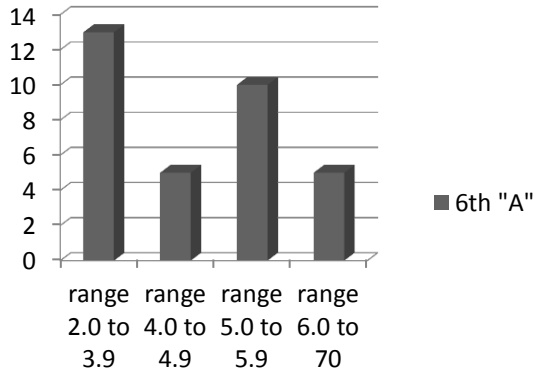


Figure 4

There are 13 students out of 33 in the first range.

There are 5 students out of 33 in the second range

There are 10 students out of 33 in the third range

There are 5 students out of 33 in the fourth range.

Our intention with this research is not only lead students to reach the same level of understanding as the other two classes, but also make them reach it meaningfully.

3.3 Data analysis

After analyzing and contrasting the results of the three different groups, we came up with the following strategies:

Visual Aids: We prepared a poster which was part of a game. Its aim was to work out with the students the three different endings of a regular verb in past. Students had to compete among them placing a verb given by the teacher in the correct ending classification. This poster will remain on the wall until the end of the year, so they will see it every day.

Changing Time: During the intervention of this project, some Counseling classes were changed for English classes in order to level the hours with those ones lost during the year.

Pop quiz: Different pop quizzes were given to the students weekly during the intervention of this project, where they were asked to discriminate by listening the ending of a regular past verb, create sentences according to a picture and put sentences in order.

3.4 Findings

After applying the strategies mentioned before, the results were the following:

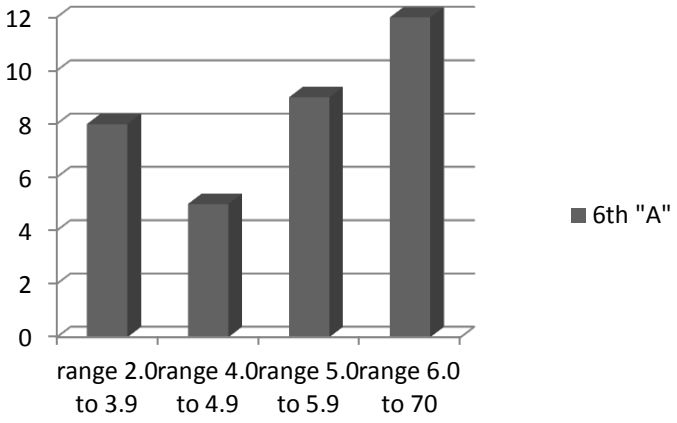


Figure 5

There are 8 students out of 33 in the first range.

There are 5 students out of 33 in the second range

There are 9 students out of 33 in the third range

There are 12 students out of 33 in the fourth range.

The research showed us an increase in the understanding and usage of past rules applied in regular verbs. Students were highly motivated and it was not tedious for them to have extra hours of formal classes since most of the activities were their interest and games.

4. Conclusions

Doing this action research, we realized there are many factors that affect the normal understanding of the lesson, such as motivation, attendance, hours of classes done, among others. None of them are the teacher's responsibility, in terms of being the one who cause this, but we, as educators, have the responsibility of taking these factors and turn them from weakness into strength.

As teachers, we follow a lesson plan and organize our classes according to it, so, when we have to postpone some classes because of days off, schools events or any other situation, students definitely are in disadvantage because they are not practicing and being expose to the language in the same terms as the others classes. This situation provokes in the students to feel insecure when facing the language, stress during evaluations, boredom because they do not feel they are learning something new due to a continuous reviewing of the previous classes, and finally, they become reluctant to attend to classes.

From the teacher's perspective, this situation is as stressful as it is for students. It also provokes anxiety due to a continuous reviewing of contents in order to elicit information from the previous classes and link it to the new lesson, tiredness because of the need to fit a 4-classes lesson plan in 1 or 2 classes, and stress since we have to try to satisfy parents', students' and school's expectations to the subject.

In order to give a solution to all this factors, we designed this project and applied all the strategies were planned. Visual aids were perfect and helpful to avoid an excessive reviewing of previous contents since it was there in the classroom and students see it all the time, not only in English classes. As they were an important part in the construction of the material, they also learnt by doing.

Games and competitions lighten up their internal motivation and made the drilling more meaningful.

Pop quizzes made students realize what their mistakes were, so, as it was a weekly activity, they made efforts in order to improve for the next one. It was also attractive for students because finally they can turn all the accumulative good grades into a formal one.

Finally, we can conclude that the extra time we asked for to the head teacher was successfully used by doing all these strategies and, as the graphic 5 shows, it definitely enhance the results in 7 more students in range 6,0 to 7,0.

T8 AR Report

ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT

Project antecedents:

Project area: This project is focused in a very common mistake done by young learners and the wrong recognition between countable and uncountable nouns through oral and written exercises.

Coverage: Eighth graders from a local government-subsidized Chilean Secondary school. Thirty students from 8TH grade A are going to participate in this project.

Problem Statement:

Significance of Study: It is a problem that students from 8TH grade have lately. We as teachers have a concern about how to make the difference between HOW MUCH / HOW MANY. With this project we pretend to increase the motivation to use the correct form of making questions using the quantifiers.

Concern area: We are going to focus in solving an specific problem of the grammar area in the recognition of the quantifiers HOW MUCH / HOW MANY questions.

Objectives:

2.3.1 Main objective:

To help students from the 8th grade to revise or discover a particular grammar structure HOW MUCH / HOW MANY questions.

2.3.2 Specific objective:

Ask the students to complete the sentences from a worksheet with the correct use of quantifiers.

Help the students to relate each question to the kind of noun countable or uncountable noun.

Research Methodology

Hypothesis /Question

How to relate questions to the countable and uncountable nouns using the quantifiers HOW MUCH / HOW MANY?

Dependent Variable: Relating the question words HOW MUCH/HOW MANY to the countable and uncountable nouns.

3.2 Data collection:

We worked with an 8Th grade class that obtained low performance in how to make the difference between the use of quantifiers HOW MUCH and HOW MANY and the countable and uncountable nouns. In order to know about their knowledge we asked to complete a worksheet. Then we feed back the content and finally we applied a test. And after that class, we obtained the data collection.

ENGLISH WORKSHEET 8th GRADE

How much / How many

I Choose the correct alternative

1 We need some tea. _____ do we need?

a) How much b) How many

2. We need some eggs. _____do we need?

a) How much b) How many

3. We need some paper _____do we need?

a) How much b) How many

4. We need some money. _____do we need?

a) How much b) How many

5. _____cigarettes do you smoke a day?

a) How much b) How many

6. _____packets of cigarettes do you have?

a) How much b) How many

7. _____work have you got to do?

a) How much b) How many

8. _____sleep did you get last night?

a) How much b) How many

9. _____children have you got?

a) How much b) How many

10. _____bottles of juice are there in the fridge?

a) How much b) How many

11. _____English grammar do you know?

a) How much b) How many

12. _____friends do you have?

a) How much b) How many

13. _____sugar do you take in your tea?

a) How much b) How many

14. _____apples did you buy?

a) How much b) How many

15. _____chairs are there in your classroom?

a) How much b) How many

16. _____books do you have in your schoolbag?

a) How much b) How many

17. _____times must I tell you?

a) How much b) How many

18. _____experience do you have in playing a video game?

a) How much b) How many

ENGLISH WRITTEN TEST 8th GRADE

HOW MUCH / HOW MANY

NAME:…….. DATE:…….. CLASS:…….

IDEAL SCORE: 18 POINTS. STUDENT'S SCORE:……

OBJECTIVE TEST: The students will be able to recognize between HOW MUCH / HOW MANY and choose the correct alternative.

I CIRCLE THE CORRECT ALTERNATIVE (10 points)

How …… apples did you buy?

a) Much b) Many

How ……do you weight?

a) Much b) Many

How ……does it cost to fly to America?

a) Much b) Many

How……brothers and sisters do you have?

a) Much b) Many

How ……times a day do you brush your teeth?

a) Much b) Many

How ……was your computer?

a) Much b) Many

How ……..photos did you take?

a) Much b) Many

How……people did you invite?

a) Much b) Many

How ……..mistakes did you make on the test?

a) Much b) Many

How ……..water did he drink?

a) Much b) Many

II COMPLETE THE QUESTIONS USING MUCH or MANY. (8 points)

How ……money do you have?

How……people live in your city?

How……does that book cost?

How……..rice is there?

How……..apples are there in the basket?

How……..petrol do we need?

How……..children are there in the class?

How……teachers do you have?

3.3 Data analysis

After we applied the worksheet to the class. We obtained the following result:

With the worksheet we obtained that a group of students conforming the 62 % of them did well that means that they were able to identify the HOW MUCH and HOW MANY questions. And the rest of the students' equivalent to the 38 % did wrongly. They were not able to recognize them.

After these results the students were given a feedback in order to reinforce the content. The reinforcement consisted on: show countable (objects in the classroom as chairs, desks, students, books and pencils) and uncountable (study, time, sleep, work and effort) flashcards. And the students had to identify which one was the correct to complete the questions orally. The reinforcement lasted two classes in a week. And then the test was applied.

The results of the test were 91.4 % of the students were able to identify the correct of HOW MUCH and HOW MANY questions.

And the 8.6 % of the students were not able to do it successfully.

3.4 Findings

After the reinforcement, we realized that the students have a lack of vocabulary. So, it was difficult for them to make the difference between the countable and uncountable nouns. Hence, they made questions wrongly.

However, they were supported and reinforced with several examples in oral and written way. In order they could achieve the recognition of what they were required.

4 Conclusions

At the end of this piece of research we have found an additional value in this experience: the positive response of the students, proud to play a role in this study, eager to contribute with their participation to the improvement of the schoolwork. Student have considered themselves as protagonists not as objects of this study and for them this has been also an experience of self-evaluation an d reflection if what is been done, how they learn, and what they should do to improve as learners

Action research has allowed us to reconsider our work in teaching English.

"…*Action research can be powerful means of improving classroom practice and an important tool in teacher education in the field of ELT. I have seen good teachers become better, more effective practitioners, and organizations open up to new ideas and beneficial changes as a result of the impact of Action Research". (UEA Reader MLA 72, D. Allan, p.32)*

8.9 Appendix 9. Samples of teachers' weekly timetable

T8' WEEKLY TIMETABLE

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
08:00-09:00	school	school	school	school	school		
09:00-10:00	school	school	school	school	school		
10:00-11:00	school	school	school	school	school	Family	Family
11:00-12:00	school	school	school	School	school	Family	Family
12:00-13:00	school	school	school	school	school	Test correction	Lesson planning
13:00-14:00	LUNCH	school	school	school	school	LUNCH	LUNCH
14:00-15:00	lunch	LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH	Family	Family
15:00-16:00	Lesson preparation	Home	school	Home	School	Lesson planning	Family
16:00-17:00	Lesson preparation	Home	school	Home	School	Lesson planning	Lesson planning
17:00-18:00	Dept Meeting	Test correction	Dept Meeting	Home	school	Lesson planning	Lesson planning
18:00-19:00	Dept Meeting	Test correction	Dept Meeting	Lesson planning	Dept Meeting	Test correction	Test correction
19:00-20:00	Home	Test correction	Dept Meeting	Test correction	Home	Test correction	Test correction
20:00-21:00	Home	Test correction	Lesson planning	Test analysis	Home	Family	Test correction
21:00-22:00	Lesson planning	Lesson planning	Home	Test analysis	Home	Family	Family

T4' WEEKLY TIMETABLE

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
08:00-09:00	school	school	school	school	school		
09:00-10:00	school	school	school	school	school		
10:00-11:00	school	school	school	school	school	Family	church
11:00-12:00	school	school	school	School	school	Family	church
12:00-13:00	school	school	school	school	school	Family	church
13:00-14:00	LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH
14:00-15:00	school	school	school	School	School	Family	Family
15:00-16:00	school	Dept Meeting	school	School meeting	School	Family	Family
16:00-17:00	Family	Dept Meeting	school	School meeting	Family	Family	Family
17:00-18:00	Family	Dept Meeting	Family	Family	Family	Test correction	Family
18:00-19:00	Private teaching	Family	Private teaching	Private teaching	Family	Lesson planning	Family
19:00-20:00	Family	Family	Family	Family	Family	Family	Family
20:00-21:00	Test correction	Lesson planning	Test correction	Family	Test correction	Family	Family
21:00-22:00	Lesson planning	Family	Lesson planning	Lesson planning	Lesson planning	Family	Family

8.10 Appendix 10. Semi-interview schedule phase 1

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE – TEACHERS

(Translated version)

Teachers' experience and working conditions

- Years of teaching in current job and/or other jobs
- Hours allocated to teaching and other activities
- Collaboration with colleagues at school

Prior training and the current methodology course

- Motivations to sign up to take this course
- Prior training
- Expectations of current course
- Felt benefits of taking the course
- Procedure for journal writing
- Views on journal writing

Experience with research

- Prior research involvement
- Experience reading research reports

Action research

- Understandings of action research
- Potential perceived benefits of conducting action research

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE – COURSE DESIGNERS

(Translated version)

The course designer's background

- Years of teaching experience as a teacher and as a teacher educator
- Experience as teacher development course designer

The design of the methodology course

- Instructions received by the ministry of education for course design
- Objectives of ministry for the course
- Procedure used to design the course
- Understandings of objectives as a 'chance to turn teachers into agents of change'
- Views on promoting critical thinking in teachers
- Training provided to teacher educators
- Assessment criteria of the course

Action research in the course

- Understandings of AR
- Elliot's work and its role on the inclusion of AR in the course syllabus
- Experience regarding AR
  - Views on such experience
- Views on benefits and limitations of AR
  - Views on impact of AR for teachers' practices
  - Views of impact of AR in learners' learning outcomes
- Views on the role of AR for professional development
- Expectations on the effect of the AR project in teachers' practices
- Expectations on the effect of the AR project in learners' learning outcomes

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE –AR TEACHER EDCATOR

(Translated version)

Their teaching background

- Years of teaching experience as teachers and as teacher educators

About the course

- Number of hours and module taught in the course
  - Procedures for such decision-making
- Views of objectives of the course according to course syllabus
- Understandings of objectives as a 'chance to turn teachers into agents of change'
- Views on promoting critical thinking in teachers

About journals

- Procedure for journal writing
- Training for journal writing
- Content and purpose of journal writing

About action research

- Understandings of AR
- Views on benefits and limitations of AR
  - Views on impact of AR for teachers' practices
  - Views of impact of AR in learners' learning outcomes
- Prior experience teaching about AR
- Process for AR module preparation
- Ways of making the AR module, cross-modular
- Contents covered in the AR module
- Procedure of AR projects
- Support provided to conduct AR projects
- Final product of AR project
- Procedures used for socialization of findings
- Assessment criteria of AR projects

8.11 Appendix 11. Semi-interview schedule phase 2

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE – TEACHERS

(Translated version)

Action research projects

- Area of action research topic
- Reasons for topic selection
- Support received to conduct AR
- Usefulness of feedback received from tutor
- Procedure used in the action research project
- Challenges faced when conducting the AR project
- Reading of research reports or other ELT material
- Use and sharing of AR findings and report
- Collaboration from other course participants
- Collaboration from colleagues
- School reactions to their project
- Perceived changes in their practices because of the AR project
- Changes in understandings about AR
- Changes in perceived benefits of conducting action research
- Impact of project in their teaching

Note:

In this stage, some questions asked in Stage 1 were re-visited to be expanded on. In addition, more questions were added for individual teachers to follow-up issues emerged in such stage.

8.12 Appendix 12. Focus group questions

Questions for Task 1

According to the interviews carried out, these ideas summarize your views about AR:

- ✓ *AR helps solve problems in the classroom.*
- ✓ *AR is specific and short-term.*
- ✓ *AR is carried out by teachers in their classrooms.*
- ✓ *AR helps improve teachers' practice.*

3. What kind of problems did you mean?

4. How did your practice improve through AR?

Questions for Task 2

Technical AR	**Practical AR**	**Emancipatory AR**
Problem-solving	Improve practice	Improve practice
	Problem-solving	Problem-solving
	Curriculum development	Curriculum development
		Empowerment/emancipation
		Wider social critique

According to the table and your views about AR

1. What do you think of the three conceptualisations?

2. What form of AR reflects your understandings?

3. What do you think of the feasibility of these forms of AR?

4. What conditions should be in place for these views to successfully take place in Chile?

Questions for Task 3

According to the your experience learning and doing AR:

3. How should AR be taught to be useful to you?
4. Would you include AR in future INSET courses?

8.13 Appendix 13. Semi-interview schedule phase 4

AR module and learning

- Perceptions of learning about and how to do AR
- Perceptions of the AR module and its delivery
- Reasons for doing or not doing AR again
- Recommendation for further AR training

AR

- Opportunities/Motivation for doing AR again
- Challenges of doing AR
- Teachers' workload as a limitation for AR
- Usefulness of AR, in retrospective.

PD

- Role of AR for PD
- Teachers' views of professional development
- Impact of AR in their classroom practice
- Impact of AR in their professional development

Note:

In this stage, some questions asked in Stage 1 were re-visited to be expanded on. In addition, more questions were added for individual teachers to follow-up issues emerged in such stage.

8.14 Appendix 14. Sample of coding in transcribed data

Event: Interview 1 [I1]

Participant: Teacher 8 [T8]

Interviewer: Do you know how to do your AR project?

T8: Well, that class went very fast. I remember that it was a bullet point of all questions and then we were given a guide with the questions to be asked. So, for example, *the objective, general, specific*. What is it focused on, and then we began to understand why we want to investigate that. Who is involved? And then at the end.. it is the collection of data and the conclusions.. all that. But all of us are already developing that because as I said we didn't see an example of action research.. this is the way it is and how they did no.. that didn't happen… that is what we wanted to be shown an example or be guided more that is why we asked him the last two session to work there in class to know if we were doing things right or wrong but unfortunately.. it didn't happen. I don't think I learnt much from that class.

Codes: AR session, *AR is specific*, support, AR process, AR learning, *AR framework*

Interviewer: So, how did you get an idea about what to first and second?

T8: *Only by following the bullet points we gave* us. He told us to come up with the question first and then start to develop each of the points in the list. But we wanted him to show us point by point with an example (4) like a case of a school with x number of students, that is what we wanted. For us to take a good route but it didn't happen. So we were all really lost after that. We starting calling each other asking each other questions..

Codes: AR session, AR process, confusion, Peer support/collaboration, *AR framework*

Interviewer: Have you decided any area or topic yet?

T8: Yes, in reading comprehension. It is the biggest weakness of our students. They have difficulty reading, they have difficulty reading in Spanish, imagine in English.

Codes: AR topic, language skill

Interviewer: Now that you are in the middle of the process, do you perceive benefits of doing that?

T8: Yes. Yes, because ... ***I started looking for things on the internet and I noticed that it was very important for everything. In everything, there was action research, everywhere*** … ***'it's important to find a problem and this and that'.. and by looking around, we found many things and we started to read.. and there I found some examples of research***.

Codes: ***external support***, AR learning

8.15 Appendix 15. Sample of collating data according to codes

Code: Workload/lack of time

School takes up so much of your time… with everything we have to cover now if you look at teachers' faces we all have a very tired look because we don't even have weekends … How many of us would like to have the time to read about our area but you don't have the time, no matter how much you want to do it [T9:T1]

Quality of teaching has to come from the main actors who are teachers. Now, why don't we do it? Because we are tired, working 44 hours, Saturday mornings are golden for me, sleeping a bit more is invaluable [T7:I1]

Reflections helped me when I concentrated on an action plan. What I could do to improve things. Unfortunately many things I thought of doing I haven't been able to do because of the little I have at school to do them. [T7:I1]

I think the main limitation is that we need time to really dedicate ourselves to it. To do it properly, I mean, as a process. [T7:I2]

Academics are paid and given time to research, it's different to our situation. We all work in different schools with different schedules. Those factors prevent AR from happening. [T6:FG1]

In practice systemic AR cannot be done, not because we don't want to, it just cannot happen. We are not given time for example to work on projects, to do things. [T1:FG1]

Well, AR must include a scientific method, something well structure supported with literature which is something I didn't do because of time. I couldn't could that because I have little time at school for anything extra. [T9:FG2]

We don't have time. Schools demand time for us to do other things. [T3:FG2]

I think AR is possible …but I think we would have to work no more than 20 hours a week in classrooms. It is a matter of time. I am not willing to give all my life to school. [T3:FG2]

we are in a country who believes that if you are not working in classrooms you are not working so you have to do lesson plans and evaluations at home in your own time. [T2: FG2]

I think we work too mucho so we don't time to do AR within our schedule. I would have to work weekends and I have a Family too. [T4:I2]

8.16 Appendix 16. First coding

COURSE DESIGNERS	TEACHER EDUCATORS
Emancipatory AR	Assessed reflection
Critical thinking	Critical thinking
Views of teachers	ELT in Chile
ELT in Chile	Agency
AR as cross-modular	AR as cross-modular
Course goals	Course goals
Designers expectations	AR and evaluation
Absent follow-up	Assessment
Agency	Reflection

TEACHERS

Learning about AR	**Doing AR**
AR session	External support
AR as problem-solving	Peer support/collaboration
AR learning	Confusion
Applied research	Workload/lack of time
AR is specific	Tutor's feedback
AR is short-term	Deviation from planning
AR examples	Language skills
AR as a daily activity	Improved teaching
	Strategy
Benefits and limitations of AR	**AR reports**
Improved practice	AR framework
School support	Research evidence
Decision-making	Data analysis
Time	Conclusions
Students' learning	Research objectives as learning objectives
PD	Testing as data collection
Chilean education system	Numerical references

8.17 Appendix 17. Second coding

UNDERSTANDINGS OF AR

Understandings of AR of course designers

Emancipatory AR

Critical thinking

Disapproving views of teachers

Teachers as agents of change

Trainers' understandings of AR

Critical thinking

Assessment

AR as cross-modular

Practical AR

Teachers' understandings of AR

AR as problem solving

AR as an "everyday thing"

AR as improved practice

Ideal and real AR

AR TRAINING AND LEARNING

The AR module

Teachers' prior research experience

Teachers' perception of the AR training and learning

Teachers' views about effective AR training

AR examples

Doing AR

Original motivation to do AR projects

AR report framework

Limited evidence to support claims

Research objectives as pedagogical objectives

Confusion of terminology

Prevalent use of numerical reference to report findings

Language contents as the common topics selected

Absence of bibliographic reference

Restricted data collected

Trainers' feedback

Trainer's views about AR reports

Usefulness of conducting the AR project

The role of students' learning in projects

Challenges faced while doing AR

CONTRIBUTIONS OF AR

Re-engagement of AR

Factors impeding AR

Time constrains and teachers' working conditions

Lack of interest and motivation

Real and ideal AR

Disappointment with educational system

Perceptions of teachers in the context

Contributions of AR to classroom practice

Views of PD

AR for PD

8.18 Appendix 18. Third coding

Conceptualisations of AR

- Course designers' views of AR
- Trainers' views of AR
- Teachers' views of AR

AR training and learning

- The AR module
  - AR input
  - Teachers' perception of the AR training and learning
  - Teachers' views about effective AR training
- Doing AR
  - Original motivation to do AR projects
  - Usefulness of conducting the AR project
  - Students' learning in AR
- AR reports
  - Purpose
  - Discussion of literature
  - Research design
  - Analysis and conclusions
  - Trainer's feedback and views of the reports

Contributions of AR

- Re-engagement of AR
- Factors hindering AR
  - Time constraints and teachers' working conditions
  - Lack of interest and motivation
  - Disappointment with educational system
  - Perceptions of teachers in the context
- Contributions of AR to classroom practice

8.19 Appendix 19. Transcription Conventions

<table>
<tr><th colspan="3">Transcription Conventions</th></tr>
<tr><th>Transcription Element</th><th>Meaning</th><th>Example</th></tr>
<tr><td>Underlining</td><td>Used for emphasis (parts of the utterance that are stressed)</td><td rowspan="3">Context of the data: Interview 1. The participant is talking about a project she was once involved which she claims could be considered research.

Spanish version:

Hicimos un PME una vez pero no usamos un grupo experimental donde lo aplicamos y luego usamos otro grupo donde no aplicamos nada, no hicimos nada de eso. Fue aplicar, resultados y … eso era todo, muy relajado, bien al lote, muy Chileno ((risas)). Eso no fue investigación fue ‘in-’, sólo eso ((risas)). [T3:I1]

Translation:

‘We did a PME once but we didn’t use an experimental group where you apply it and another group which you don’t apply anything, we didn’t do any of that. It was application, results and … that was all, very relaxed, very messy, very Chilean ((laughter)). That was not research it was ‘re-’, just that ((laughter)).’ [T3:I1]

Final transcription:

‘We did a SIP ((School Improvement Project)) once but we didn’t use an experimental group where you apply it and another group which you don’t apply anything, we didn’t do any of that. It was application, results and … that was all, very relaxed, very messy, very Chilean ((unsystematic like Chilean people usually do things)) ((laughter)). That was not research it was ‘re-’ ((only the first syllable of research)) just that ((laughter)).’ [T3:I1]</td></tr>
<tr><td>((comment))</td><td>Transcriber’s comment of a paralinguistic feature.</td></tr>
<tr><td>((comment))</td><td>Transcriber’s contextualisation or description of a situation or a cultural expression.</td></tr>
</table>

<table>
<tr><td>erm</td><td>Filled pause</td><td rowspan="3">Context of the comment: A course participant is asked about her understandings of AR

Spanish version:

Lo que nos explicaron fue que mm muy brevemente ..mm es algo que no está bien y que nos gustaría cambiar en nuestra sala de clases … algo como mm (6) no algo como comprensión lectora ... como mejorar eso así? No, no es eso. Es algo específico. Algo muy corto que me gustaría cambiar en mis alumnos’

Final transcription:

‘What we were explained is that erm very briefly... erm it’s something that is not right and we would like to change in our classrooms … something little erm (6) not something like reading comprehension ... as to improve that? no, it’s not that. It’s something specific. Something very small that I would like to change in my students’ ways’ [T1:I1].</td></tr>
<tr><td>(5)</td><td>Longer breaks (over three seconds) Length indicated by the pause length in parentheses.</td></tr>
<tr><td>…</td><td>Pause</td></tr>
<tr><td>:::</td><td>Lengthen sounds or words.</td><td>Context of the comment: A course participant is asked about her expectations when enrolling the PD course.

Spanish version:

‘pensé que iba a prender mu(:::)chos métodos ((risas)) que además de practicar mi Inglés quizás iba a aprender cómo usar distintos métodos para enseñar o a lo mejor actualizarme más y aprender muchas cosas nuevas’

Final transcription:

‘I thought I was going to know ma(::)any methods ((laughter)) that besides practising English maybe I was going to learn how to use different methods to teach or maybe become updated and learn many new things’. [T8:I1]</td></tr>
</table>

8.20 Appendix 20. AR reports summary

T1 AR report summary

Topic	Application of strategies for learning past verb forms effectively
Main question/hypothesis	How can I help my students to improve their knowledge in irregular verbs?
Students' level	9th grade secondary students
Strategy used/Intervention	Games with verbs, memorization techniques, use of verbs in different contexts.
Method for data collection	Tests (quizzes), survey, observation
Final conclusion	In this project in particular I can say that I was surprised with the results because I never thought they would be happy memorizing verbs and learnt them in that way.

T3 AR report summary

Topic	Alternative instruction to compensate reduced teaching hours
Main question/hypothesis	What strategies will lead us to reach same results in the three classes despite the difference in the numbers of hours allocated to ELT.
Students' level	6th grade elementary students
Strategy used/Intervention	Use of visual aids, increased teaching hours, pop quizzes for self-evaluation for the teaching of simple past.

Method for data collection	Tests (quizzes)
Final conclusion	The research showed us an increase in the understanding and usage of past rules applied in regular verbs. Students were highly motivated and it was not tedious for them to have extra hours of formal classes since most of the activities were games so they were interesting to them.

T4 AR report summary

Topic	The role of games in vocabulary learning
Main question/hypothesis	Will my 4th grade students of School '…..' motivate and learn the vocabulary words faster in English if they are exposed to different and engaging activities (games) designed for their age and level?
Students' level	4th grade elementary students
Strategy used/Intervention	Use of games: guessing game, the musical game, play on words, tic-tac-toe, stop, throwing the ball, the hangman.
Method for data collection	Survey, observations
Final conclusion	These findings show that the introduction of vocabulary games as a teaching tool in the English class have been completely successful. Most of the students have felt that the English classes were more motivating and interesting, that they have learnt more vocabulary words and that they would like to continue working in the same way.

T5 AR report summary

Topic	The role of realia for the development of oral production
Main question/hypothesis	Is the use of 'realia' a powerful tool for oral production and for a better learning in first grade students?
Students' level	1st grade elementary students
Strategy used/Intervention	Self-description and physical description of family member (use of flashcards and pictures)
Method for data collection	Oral test
Final conclusion	The activities I have incorporated in my own teaching with the use of important people and characters for the kids showed me that they felt more eager to participate in classes, because they could relate the new knowledge to something that they already know and something that is important or significant for them.

T6 AR report summary

Topic	Application of strategy to promote the learning of present tense in the third personal singular
Main question/hypothesis	Why some seventh graders have difficulties using the 3rd person singular in Simple Present tense?
Students' level	7th grade elementary students
Strategy used/Intervention	Two extra reinforcement classes using a reading comprehension worksheet.
Method for data collection	Survey, test

Final conclusion	All the students were able to improve their performance in identifying and recognising the third person singular in simple present tense such as in affirmative, interrogative sentences, negative and affirmative short answers.

T7 AR report summary

Topic	Application of strategy to promote comprehension of subject-verb agreement of the noun *people*.
Main question/hypothesis	Solve the problem of subject-verb agreement of the noun *people* and the verb that precedes it using activities to develop oral and written production.
Students' level	9th grade secondary students
Strategy used/Intervention	Application of three activities which required students to be exposed to situations in which they are required to use the word *people* as subject of a sentence, the aspect of the verb should agree with the person and number of the mentioned noun.
Method for data collection	Observation of students output (use of rubric)
Final conclusion	The action research project 'People What?' proved to be successful as the results shown that 94,4% of the group was able to create and express ideas in which the noun *people* agreed with the aspect of the verb that proceeded it.

T8 AR report summary

Topic	Application of strategy to promote comprehension of countable and uncountable nouns

Main question/hypothesis	How to help students relate questions to the countable and uncountable nouns using the quantifiers how much/how many?
Students' level	8th grade elementary students
Strategy used/Intervention	Two feedback sessions which included the use of realia (countable and uncountable objects) and flashcards
Method for data collection	Test
Final conclusion	After the reinforcement, we realized that the students have a lack of vocabulary. So, it was difficult for them to make the difference between the countable and uncountable nouns. Hence, they made questions wrongly. However, they were supported and reinforced with several examples in oral and written way. In order they could achieve the recognition of what they were required.

T9 AR report summary

Topic	Application of strategy to promote speaking when answering open ended questions
Main question/hypothesis	How to introduce speaking skill in the students through answering wh – questions orally using present simple tense?
Students' level	8th grade elementary school
Strategy used/Intervention	Reading aloud (no correction to pronunciation mistakes), motivating wh- questions, use of rubrics for assessment
Method for data collection	Observation

Final conclusion	The result of the information gathered through this action research is that the activity chosen to introduce oral activities was the key of success because it creates an environment of confidence and motivation along with patience. It gave the chance to the students to answer the questions without fear and they were motivated and encouraged to do it.