Increasing Teachers' Collaborative Autonomy through Tele-collaborative Action Research

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زيادة الاستقلالية التعاونية للأساتذة من خلال البحث الاجرائي التعاوني عن بعد

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Article info:

Abstract

The aim of the current research paper is to explain the effective role played by tele-collaborative Action Research in increasing teachers' collaborative autonomy. Self-reflection enables the teacher to specify a problem that needs to be solved through designing a plan in collaboration with peers who face the same problem. To reach this aim, a structured questionnaire was administered to thirty-three teachers at the department of English in 8 Mai 1945 university, Guelma (Algeria). Quantitative data indicated that although more than half of teachers (51.51%) preferred individual autonomy, 66.66% of teachers participated collaboratively in tests' design while 78.78% took part cooperatively in syllabus design and adaptation. Moreover, the majority of teachers (81.81%) did not understand Action Research but they concurred that self-reflection is important to evaluate one's teaching. Even though teachers are not implementing change through Collaborative Action Research, the majority of them (66.66%) are aware that Collaborative Action Research could raise collaborative autonomy. In this regard, we introduced Tele-Collaborative Action Research (TCAR) as a new concept that could link effectively thinking to acting and improve teachers' academic performance, and increase their autonomy in the age of technology.

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ملخص

تهدف هذه الورقة البحثية إلى شرح الدور الفعال الذي يلعبه البحث الإجرائي التعاوني عن بعد في زيادة الاستقلالية التعاونية للأساتذة، حيث يقوم الأستاذ من خلال الانعكاس الذاتي بتعيين المشكل والتخطيط لحله بالتعاون مع زملائه الذين يواجهون نفس المشكل. لتحقيق هذا الهدف، قمنا بإجراء استبيان مغلق لعينة تتكون من 33 أستاذ من قسم الإنجليزية بجامعة 8 ماي 1945، قالمة (الجزائر). وقد خلصت النتائج الى أنه بالرغم من أن أكثر من نصف الأساتذة (51.51%) فضلوا الاستقلالية الفردية الا أن 66.66% من الأساتذة تعاونوا في تصميم الاختبارات بينما 78.78% اشتركوا في تصميم المناهج وتكييفها. كما أن أغلبية الأساتذة بنسبة 81.81% لم يفهموا معنى البحث الاجرائي لكن وافقوا على أن الانعكاس الذاتي مهم في عملية تقييم التعليم. ومع أن الأساتذة لا يعتمدون البحث الاجرائي التعاوني كطريقة للتغيير الا أن أغلبيتهم (66.66%) يعون أن هذا الأخير يمكن أن يزيد من الاستقلالية التعاونية. في هذا الصدد، طرحنا فكرة "البحث الإجرائي التعاوني عن بعد" كمفهوم جديد يربط بشكل فعال التفكير بالتطبيق ويحسن الأداء الأكاديمي للأساتذة و يزيد من استقلاليتهم في عصر التكنولوجيا.

الكلمات المفتاحية:

البحث الإجرائي التعاوني

الاستقلالية التعاونية

البحث الإجرائي التعاوني عن بعد.

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1. Introduction

The goal of Action Research is to solve practical problems in education through maintaining a specific plan. The latter is designed after observing one's own classroom to look for students' weaknesses and problems. However, not all teachers could design an effective plan that could be implemented to find solutions to the problem. This is due to the fact that Action Research necessitates a highly independent teacher who is self-reliant and competent. Even though most of teachers in the department of English at the university of 8 Mai 1945 (Guelma) tend to be autonomous, their autonomy is likely to be individual. More importantly, it is observed that teachers do not conduct Collaborative Action Research. Hence, the aim behind this study is to raise teachers' awareness towards collaborative autonomy where peers' collaboration is highly recommended to implement Collaborative Action Research since the latter could enhance teachers' collaborative autonomy especially when collaboration is online.

1.The Literature Review

1.1. Teachers' Autonomy

The issue of *teacher autonomy* was first tackled by Nunan (1989, p. 133) who revealed the importance of the self-directed teacher who is no more "passive recipient of other people's syllabuses and methods" but "an active creator of his or her own materials" and "classroom activities". Moreover, Little advocated teachers' autonomy by explaining that not only learners have to be autonomous, teachers too ought to become autonomous. He further indicated that autonomous teachers have to be responsible for teaching and self-reflection, which requires "affective and cognitive control" of teaching (1995, as cited in Lamb, 2008, p. 274). Within this scope, teacher autonomy is defined as:

-"having a strong sense of personal responsibility for their teaching" (Little, 1995, p. 178).

-"teacher's ability and willingness to help learners take responsibility for their own learning. An autonomous teacher is thus a teacher who reflects on her teacher role and who can change it" (Thavenius, 1999, as cited in Lamb, 2008, p. 278).

-"the capacity, freedom, and/ or responsibility to make choices concerning one's own teaching" (Aoki, 2002, as cited in Benson, 2006, p. 31).

-"self-directed professional action" and "freedom from control by others" (McGrath, 2000, as cited in Smith & Erdogan, 2008, p. 84).

-"teachers' freedom to exercise direction in curriculum implementation" (Benson, 2006, p. 30).

From the above definitions, teacher autonomy denotes self-control, responsibility, independence, and decision-making. More importantly, it is helping learners become autonomous. In this context, two dimensions in relation to teacher autonomy are indicated: "professional action" and "professional development". The former is related to self-directed actions while the latter requires self-directed development through perceiving the teacher as a learner as indicated in the following table:

Table 1

Dimensions of teacher autonomy

In relation to professional action:	
A. Self-directed professional action B. Capacity for self-directed professional action C. Freedom from control over professional action	i.e. 'Self-directed teaching' i.e. 'Teacher autonomy (capacity to self-direct one's teaching)' i.e. 'Teacher autonomy (freedom to self-direct one's teaching)'
In relation to professional development:	
D. Self-directed professional development E. Capacity for self-directed professional development. F. Freedom from control over professional development	i.e. 'Self-directed teacher-learning' i.e. 'Teacher-learner autonomy (capacity to self-direct one's learning as a teacher. i.e. 'Teacher-learner autonomy (freedom to self-direct one's learning as a teacher)'

Source: Adapted from: Smith & Erdogan, 2008, pp. 84-85.

As far as autonomy is concerned, some teachers could not be autonomous because they are not trained to be so. As advised by Deci and Ryan, teachers could become autonomous and autonomy-supportive through "specific training" (2016, p. 22). Hence, some training programmes are needed. Furthermore, research is very influential in making teachers autonomous starting from one's own classroom. In this respect, McGrath stressed that *teacher autonomy* implies "self-directed professional development" through teachers' research and self-reflection (2000, as cited in Sinclair, 2008, p. 244). So, self-reflection implies self-evaluation and self-assessment of one's own teaching practices.

Two types of autonomy are differentiated: individual autonomy and collaborative autonomy. Within the second type, collaboration is influential in increasing teacher autonomy. Thus, Little and Brammerts insisted that the conceptualization of learning as "an interactive process" implies that promoting autonomy could be achieved through collaboration and peers' help (1996, as cited in Reinders & White, 2016, p. 148). Besides, Little advised learners to collaborate with each other so that they could "solve problems" in learning and promote what is called by Bruner (1986) the "meta-linguistic function" which relates "school knowledge" to "action knowledge" (as cited in Little, 1999, p. 82). More importantly, "inter-subjective collaborative autonomy" was introduced by Ding (2005, as cited in Anderson, 2013, p. 89) as "a version of autonomy that not only stresses the virtue of collaboration as a means of facilitating autonomy but also argues that promoting autonomy necessarily entails complex relations of interdependence". Here, interdependence which lies between heteronomy and autonomy is described as a "complex" concept since it entails collaboration between the teacher and the student toward the achievement of autonomy. Similar to learners, teachers should have collaborative autonomy so that they could solve practical problems in their classrooms.

1.2. History and Definition of Action Research

Action Research (AR) is a form of teachers' research that goes back in history to the nineteen thirties (1930's) when it was coined by the American Psychologist Kurt Lewin in 1944 as an effective way in Social sciences to increase "workers' productivity" through "greater involvement". Later, in the nineteen fifties (1950s), AR emerged in education and lasted for a short time in the USA. In the United Kingdom, it appeared in the nineteen seventies (1970's) when many scholars were interested in AR (Whitehead & McNiff, 2006, p. 21).

There is no exact definition of action research; each scholar defined it in a different manner. Bogdan and Biklen pointed out that AR "is the systematic collection of information that is designed to bring about social change" (1982, as cited in Burns, 1999, p. 30). This definition reflects the old status of AR as a tool for "social change" by gathering data through an organized plan. In 1983, Kemmis defined it 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. (as cited in Hopkins, 2008, p. 48)

As stated in the previous quotation, AR is related to self-assessment aimed at a better performance in society and education through the comprehension of change and the process of making change. Furthermore, Gregory, Kemmis and McTaggart considered AR as "teacher-initiated classroom investigation which seeks to increase the teacher's understanding of classroom teaching and learning, and to bring about change in classroom practices" (1988, as cited in Richards & Lockhart, 1996, p. 12). This definition implies that the teacher is responsible for AR which is started to help the teacher understand education by making "change" in the process of teaching. Besides, Elliott claimed that AR is "the study of a social situation with the view to improving the quality of the action within it" (1991, as cited in Hopkins, 2008, p. 48). So, Elliot argued that AR is related to society by changing a specific context after examining it.

Moreover, Gummesson confessed that AR is an "exciting method" where the researchers play "the role of active consultants" (1991, as cited in Jonker & Pennink, 2010, p. 137). Unlike other researchers,

Somekh focused on the "flexible" nature of AR concerning the variation of its methods and its applicability in different situations (1993, as cited in Burns, 1999, p. 5). Cunningham certified that AR encompasses "a spectrum of activities that focus on research, planning, theorizing, learning, and development". He further described it as a "continuous process of research and learning in the researchers' long-term relationship with a problem" (1993, as cited in Jonker & Pennink, 2010, p. 137). Thus, Cunningham asserted that AR includes a variety of aspects that help in developing learning and finding solutions to problems on the long-term. In addition, Van Lier acknowledged that AR is a "small scale intervention in the functioning of the real world and a close examination of the effects of such intervention" (1996, as cited in Burns, 1999, p. 5). Thus, he considered AR as changing a specific situation and observing the results of that change.

Richards and Lockhart (1996, p. 6) veiwed AR as a planned change in education followed by observation and "monitoring". Moreover, Schmuck stated that AR is to "study a real school situation with a view to improve the quality of actions and results within it" (1997, as cited in Mertler, 2012, p. 14). Here, AR is related to real-world change. Wallace pointed out that AR is "basically a way of reflecting on your teaching" on the basis of current teaching evaluation –through data collection and analysis- which may improve future teaching (1998, as cited in MacKey & Gass, 2005, p. 216). Besides, Greenwood and Levin argued that AR is "simultaneously bringing about change in the project situation (the action) while learning from the process of deriving the change (the research)" (1998, as cited in Jonker & Pennink, 2010, p. 137). They think that AR change coincides with getting implications from this research method to use them in the future. Similarly, Burns (1999, p. 5) defined AR as "a self-reflective, systematic and critical approach to enquiry" which looks for solutions to problems.

Mills stated that AR "is any systematic inquiry conducted by teacher researchers to gather information about the ways that their particular school operates… with the goals of gaining insight, developing reflective practice, effecting positive changes in the school environment…and improving student outcomes" (2003, as cited in Hopkins, 2008, p. 48). As indicated in this definition, AR is a pre-planned investigation in the field of education mainly to raise academic achievement. The following quotation by Costello (2003) could be considered as an implicit comment on others' definitions of AR:

Action research is referred to variously as a term, process, enquiry, flexible spiral process and as cyclic. It has a practical, problem solving emphasis. It is carried out by individuals, professionals and educators. It involves research, systematic, critical reflection and action. It aims to improve educational practice. Action is undertaken to understand, evaluate and change. (as cited in Blaxter, Hughes & Tight, 2006, pp. 67-68)

Costello's definition is comprehensive in terms of gathering all the already stated terms by other researchers. What is new is the use of the word "spiral" and "cyclic" to refer to the process of AR in which the research can go back to any previous stage to revise it. Burns (2009, pp. 289-290) re-defined AR as "the combination and interaction" of "action" as "improvement and change" in different situations and "research" as "observation and analysis" of that "improvement and change". Here "action research" equals "observing the change". Again, Burns (2010, p. 2) re-defined AR as "taking a self-reflective, critical, and systematic approach to exploring your own teaching contexts…as teachers, we often see gaps between what is actually happening in our teaching situation and what we would ideally like to see happening". Burns pointed out a new feature which is "the gap" or what we are not able to achieve although we want to. This implies consciousness on the side of action researchers.

It is observed that all the previous definitions share the idea that action research is about changing a problematic situation and evaluating the effected change, either in society or in education. It is conducted generally whenever teachers need to raise academic achievement or specifically when they feel that an educational situation is not productive in terms of students' outcomes. All in all, AR is an effective

domain where one could really understand the role of the teacher-as-a researcher.

1.3. Stages of Action Research

Lewin argued that change occurs through three stages: (1) "unfreezing" the balance, (2) realizing the desired changes (moving) in order to (3) "freeze" the newly achieved state of balance (or: re-freezing) (Jonker & Pennink, 2010, p. 122). The first stage refers to *stopping* what is happening (the problematic situation). The second stage is *implementing the change* while the third one implies *keeping* the new situation/ change.

Kemmis and McTaggart (1988, as cited in Burns, 2009, p. 290) indicated that the first stage is *planning*. Then, the second stage is *the action* or "to implement the plan". Next, the third stage is findings' observation. Finally, the fourth stage is reflection that aims at re-planning. In addition, Richards and Lockhart (1996, pp. 12-13) provided an example of AR "phases" or "cycles" starting with the choice of a theme. Then, specifying a way of data collection such as "recording classroom lessons". After that, gathering and analyzing data and effecting the "changes". Next, making an action plan to realize the changes. Later on, evaluating the results of the plan (reflection). Finally, the last step which may involve proceeding to a new action plan since there have been shortcomings in the previous plan. Norton introduced Action Research stages as follows:

> Step 1 **I**dentifying a problem/paradox/ issue/ difficulty
>
> Step 2 **T**hinking of ways to tackle the problem
>
> Step 3 **D**oing it
>
> Step 4 **E**valuating it (actual research findings
>
> Step 5 **M**odifying future practice
>
> [Emphasis added [(2009, p. 70)

In this model, named ITDEM (the initial letters of the starting words of each stage), Norton starts with topic specification in step one. Then, he proceeds to "planning" in step two and "action" in step three.

Later, he moves to "reflection" in step four including assessment and "evaluation". Finally, he indicated "re-planning" in step five. This ensures that AR is really a cyclical process based on reflection and re-planning. Consequently, all the models share nearly the same stages/ phases starting with identifying a problem and designing the plan of change; then, observing and evaluating the change (reflection) to make some amendments or to re-design a new plan for change.

1.4. Characteristics of Action Research

Nunan indicated that AR has three major characteristics: It is carried out by practitioners (i.e., classroom teachers), it is collaborative, and it is aimed at changing things" (as cited in MacKay, 2009, pp. 29-30). Moreover, Kember (as cited in Norton, 2009, p. 55) claimed that AR is a "systematic enquiry". So, it is an organized and a planned process. According to Burns (2009, p. 290), AR is cyclical since the action could lead again to research after the assessment of findings.

More importantly, reflection is a focal point in action research. Norton (2009, p. 21) argued that the term "reflective practice" originated from the work of Donald Schön in 1983 in his book *The Reflective Practitioner*. Norton considered reflective thinking as a necessity whenever "new situations" are encountered. Moreover, Brockbank and McGill (1998, as cited in Norton, 2009, p. 22) argued that reflection is essential in teaching as well as beneficial for both teachers and learners. Besides, reflection is a complicated issue as indicated by the American philosopher Dewey in 1910 "reflective thinking is always more or less troublesome … it involves willingness to endure a condition of mental unrest" (as cited in Norton, 2009, p. 22). In this respect, Norton agreed with Dewey that reflection "involves thinking of the hardest kind" (2009, p. 22). Within this scope, Norton added that reflection entails "some transformation from previously held assumptions to adopting a new framework" (2009, p. 23). Furthermore, Postareff (2007, as cited in Norton, 2009, p. 32) proclaimed that there are three types of reflection in relation to

time of occurrence: "reflection can take place prior to (reflection for action), concurrent with (reflection in action) and retrospective to teaching (reflection on action)". As a result, reflection is a continuous endeavour by the teacher.

Fanghanel (2007, as cited in Norton, 2009, p. 2) used the word "filter" to indicate factors which affect AR. Accordingly, he added that AR is characterized by three levels: "the macro level", "the meso level" and "the micro level". The first level encompasses "the institution, external factors, academic labour and the research–teaching nexus." The second level entails "the department" and the field of study, while the last one embodies "internal factors" that have an influence over the teacher himself (Fanghanel, 2007, as cited in Norton, 2009, p. 2).

1.5. Limitations of Teacher Autonomy and Action Research

Teacher autonomy is highly effective. However, the teacher should follow "policy makers" in the Ministry of Higher Education who are not related to the school (outsiders). Also, there are "institutional factors" which should be taken into consideration. Other constraints are "conceptions of language" which are about "what the target language is, and ideologies of correct and standard usage". (Benson, 2000, as cited in Shaw, 2008, p. 190). Moreover, the teacher should be aware of the right perceptions of target language use. Besides, what could affect teacher autonomy is "language teaching methodologies, defined in terms of "academic expertise and professional assumptions" (Benson, 2000, as cited in Shaw, 2008, p. 190). In this respect, the teacher should have a critical view towards language teaching methods so that s/he would be able to choose the right method according to the context and students' needs. Besides, s/he has to check the educational laws and policies followed in his/her country and to act in accordance with the faculty pedagogies.

Concerning Action Research, Ebbutt (1985, as cited in Hopkins, 2008, p. 43) criticized unpublished Action Research by considering it as illegitimate. Nonetheless, Hopkins disagreed with Ebbutt's

perception of unpublished research as not being research at all. Armstrong suggested that the word "enquiry" may be used instead of "research" since it is more suitable for the observation of one's own teaching (1982, as cited in Hopkins, 2008, p. 43). Furthermore, Hopkins argued that Hull et al. (1985) "complicated" the situation by stating that it is better to call it "self-monitoring" instead of research. Meanwhile, they differentiated between "self-monitoring" and "teacher research" (2008, p. 43). Also, the lack of a clear methodology has weakened the status of Action Research as an autonomous field of enquiry. Besides, there is no theoretical description for practice (Norton, 2009, p. 60). Eventually, the lack of objectivity and the unique nature of problems have made generalization of findings impossible (Norton, 2009, p. 63).

1.6. Increasing Teachers' Collaborative Autonomy through Tele-Collaborative Action Research

Three levels of Action Research are distinguished: individual Action Research, collaborative Action Research and school-wide Action Research (Mills, 2003, as cited in Mertler, 2012, p. 207). Individual Action Research is done by a teacher-researcher who wants to improve his/her teaching process. In this respect, Mertler maintained that findings have to be shared with others (2012, p. 107). However, Collaborative Action Research (CAR) is undertaken by a group of teachers who work on the same topic (Mills, as cited in Mertler, 2012, p. 207). Within this scope, Woolhouse (2005, as cited in Norton, 2009, p. 31) claimed that CAR helps a teacher to gain time and "support" from his/her peers.

Woolhouse considered CAR as beneficial because it provides the researcher with "time" and "support" (as cited in Norton, 2009, p. 31). Also, cooperation with other teachers could lead to finding out new ideas for implementing change (Burns, 1999, p. 15). More importantly, Kemmis indicated that Action Research is most of the time done individually while it is better to be conducted in groups because it boosts one's energy. He claimed that "it is most rationally empowering when undertaken by participants collaboratively,

though it is often undertaken by individuals, and sometimes in cooperation with 'outsiders'" (Kemmis, 1983, as cited in Hopkins, 2008, p. 48). The term "outsiders" refers to people outside the school such as parents or policy-makers. In this respect, school-wide action research surpasses the level of the school to include practitioners from the whole "community" or "district"; it is "districtwide" action research that could lead to "professional development" (Mertler, 2012, p. 208).

Action Research affects positively teachers' professional career and provides a deep view towards one's self on the basis of "self-awareness" and "self-analysis"(Burns, 1999, p. 14). What matters most is that Action Research is "a source of teacher empowerment, as it develops the ability to evaluate curriculum policy decisions and to exercise professional judgment and it affirms the role of the teacher" (Burns, 1999, p. 16). This implies that Action Research strengthened the role of the teacher by making her/him an active participant in the evaluation and development of educational programmes. More importantly, Smith reported that action research resulted in control of his own learning because he gained autonomy through "teaching-related learning". (2003, pp. 142-143).

Goswami and Stillman (as cited in Burns, 1999, p. 16) declared that teacher's research could enable him/her to relate theory to practice, make a new "perception" of one's self, become "active" and bring out new information, be "critical", evaluate curricula effectively since teachers are insiders, and "collaborate" with students and raise their "intrinsic motivation". In the same line, Dikilitas and Griffiths (2017, p. 36) declared that teachers' Action Research could result in "different dimensions of autonomy" in relation to the stages of research like planning and specifying the goals of research. Moreover, Telford and Seller (2003, as cited in Norton, 2009, p. 23) pointed out the benefits of AR by considering the teacher responsible for "the change" because s/he starts it. Also, it is a way towards cooperation, and teacher's time is spent in dealing with "problems". Also, the method of Action Research is used for generating hypotheses/theories. However, these new theories "are validated through practice" (Elliott, 1998, as cited in Hopkins, 2008, p. 48).

As stated by Burns, Action Research "can be a very valuable way to extend our teaching skills and gain more understanding of ourselves as teachers, our classrooms and our students" (2009, p. 1). One can notice here the applicability and the necessity of Action Research in the field of education. In this context, Norton considered being an excellent researcher in the modern age as a necessity. He claimed that "as university academics we work in a fast-changing environment, which puts competing pressures on us including the need to be excellent at teaching, research and administration" (2009, p. 1). Thus, teachers have to collaborate with each other within the concept of teachers' collaborative autonomy since CAR provides a good opportunity for teachers' collaboration, responsibility, and self-control. More importantly, teachers could benefit from technology and telecollaboration that is defined as "Internet-based intercultural exchange between people of different cultures/national backgrounds, set up in an institutional context with the aim of developing both language skills and intercultural communicative competence (Byram, 1997, as cited in Guth & Helm, 2010, p. 15). In this context, teachers could use real-time chatting, online discussions/interaction and debates as well as other forms of Internet-Mediated Communication to solve pedagogical problems related to teaching/learning within the field of Action Research. As advised by Warschauer and Grimes (2007, p. 2), "linking" persons is more interesting than "linking" the information. This implies that helping teachers/learners to be together through the use of technological applications and software is paramount since they could share information whenever they meet each other online. Hence, they should develop their "online literary skills" which include:

1.Inform and participate

2.Create

3.Communicate and collaborate
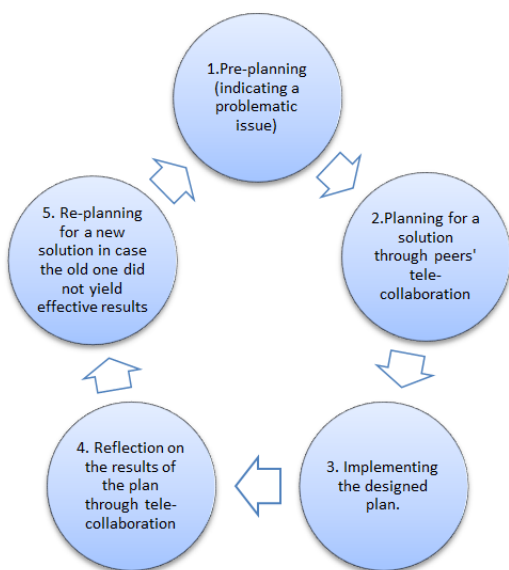
4.Develop social networks

5.Share

(Steele & Cheater, 2008).

Eventually, a new type of Action Research could emerge, namely Tele-Collaborative Action Research (TCAR), we explain its stages in the following figure:

Figure 1

Stages of Tele-Collaborative Action Research (TCAR)

As figure 1 indicates, tele-collaboration could be more helpful in enhancing teachers' collaborative autonomy by gaining time and effort both in the planning stage and the reflection stage through the utilization of online communication which adopts different technological means such as: e-mails and virtual learning environments. However, a clear methodology for Action Research generally and Tele-Collaborative Action Research specifically is needed.

2.Research Method

The current study investigates the prevalence of collaborative autonomy and how it could be promoted through Collaborative Action Research among EFL teachers in the department of English at the University of 8 Mai 1945, Guelma (Algeria). Following the quantitative approach, a structured questionnaire was administered to thirty-three (33) teachers to yield numerical data about the issue.

3.Results and Discussion

Quantitative results from the questionnaire are displayed and discussed below:

Table 2

Teachers' autonomy

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	33	100%
No	0	0%
Total	33	100%

Table 3

Level of teachers' autonomy

Options	Frequency	Percentage
To a high extent	15	48.14%
To a limited extent	18	51.85 %
To a very limited extent	0	0%
Total	33	100%

As it is displayed in tables 2 and 3, all the teachers in the department of English declared that they are autonomous. In this respect, the level of autonomy differs from a teacher to another. More than half of teachers (51.85%) confessed that their autonomy is limited. However, nearly half of teachers (48.14%) admitted that their level of autonomy is high. None indicated that s/he is autonomous to a limited extent. Teachers' self-reliance may be due to many factors such as the inexistence of textbooks and syllabi content. It is observed that some teachers work together to design the syllabus content of all the modules since it is not imposed by the ministry. Due to the unavailability of textbooks and the insufficient books in the library, teachers in the Department of English in Guelma use more digital than printed sources to prepare their courses. Hence, their autonomy is highly promoted.

Table 4

Type of teachers' autonomy

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Individual	17	51.51%
Collaborative	16	48.48%
Total	33	100 %

Concerning the type of teachers' autonomy in the department of English in Guelma city (Algeria), nearly half of teachers (48.48%) asserted that their autonomy is collaborative; while, 51.51% of them argued that their autonomy is individual. This implies that almost half of teachers are aware of the importance of working collaboratively in relation to the different issues encountered while teaching. Simultaneously, the other half of teachers described their autonomy as individual. They neglect the importance of peers' collaboration.

Table 5

Teachers' collaboration in designing tests

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	22	66.66%
No	11	33.33%
Total	33	100%

In contrast to table 4 where a small percentage of teachers (48.48%) indicated that their autonomy is collaborative, the majority of teachers (66.66%) in table 5 admitted that they are collaborative in designing tests. This means that although some teachers prefer individual autonomy, they design tests cooperatively.

Table 6

Teachers' collaboration in adapting/designing syllabus content

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	26	78.78%
No	7	21.21%
Total	33	100%

As indicated in table 6, the majority of teachers (78.78%) maintained that they participate collaboratively in the process of adapting/designing the content of the syllabi. This implies that the type of autonomy may depend on the task to do. Some teachers who prefer individual autonomy are ready to indulge in collaborative tasks like syllabus design and test' design.

Table 7

Conducting Action Research by teachers

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	27	81.81%
No	6	18.18%
Total	33	100%

Action Research is a new concept for the majority of teachers in the department of English in Guelma (Algeria). The term was explained to them during the study. Table 7 shows that few teachers (18.18%) proclaimed that they do not conduct Action Research; whereas, the majority of teachers (81.81%) concurred that they conduct Action research in the sense of making self-reflection to evaluate students' understanding and achievement on the one hand, and one's teaching methods on the other hand. However, their self-reflective practices are always qualitative and based mainly on students' feedback or results as well as teachers' observation and informal conversation. It does not follow specific techniques to collect data related to a problematic situation.

Table 8

Raising teachers' collaborative autonomy through collaborative Action Research

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	22	66.66%
No	11	33.33%
Total	33	100%

The majority of teachers (66.66%) supported the fact that collaborative Action Research could promote teachers' collaborative autonomy. However, it is observed that in our department Collaborative Action Research as a whole method of research does not exist. Surprisingly, 33.33% of teachers do not agree that collaborative Action Research could raise teachers' collaborative autonomy.

Conclusion

Quantitative results from the teachers' questionnaire indicated that nearly half of teachers (48.48%) preferred collaborative autonomy; however, 51.51% of teachers went for individual autonomy. Surprisingly,

some teachers who opted for individual autonomy maintained that they participate in collaborative tasks including tests' design and syllabus design/adaptation. Moreover, the majority of teachers (81.81%) did not know what is meant by Action Research but they agreed that self-reflection should be done aiming at self-evaluation and improvement of one's methods and students' understanding. Although teachers are not implementing change through Collaborative Action Research, the majority (66.66%) are aware that Collaborative Action Research could raise collaborative autonomy.

Our aim behind this survey was to raise teachers' awareness towards the importance of Tele-Collaborative Action Research in enhancing teachers' collaborative autonomy by tackling various problematic issues related to teaching practices and skills, and trying to solve them. However, the type of Action Research depends largely on the topic under investigation. If the problem is common to many teachers, it would be better to tackle it collaboratively; but when it is pertinent to one teacher, s/he ought to solve it individually. Furthermore, some topics may start as individual investigations and end in school-wide/district research.

Conflict of Interest

The author declare that they have no conflict of interest

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How to cite this article according to the APA method:

The author Mounya Abdaoui. (2020), Increasing Teachers' Collaborative Autonomy through Tele-collaborative Action Research, Academic Review of social and human studies, vol 12, number 02, Hassiba Ben Bouali University of Chlef, Algeria, p p : 3-13.