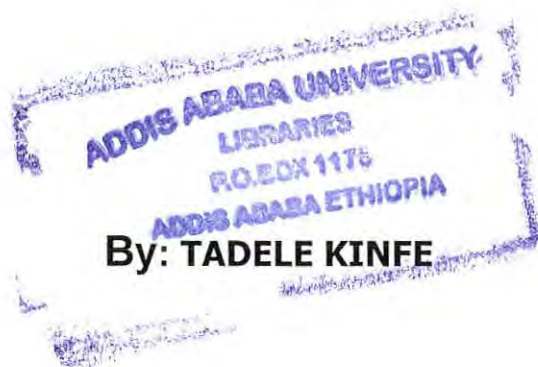


Addis Ababa University

Institute of Educational Research

**The Practices and Challenges in Conducting
Action Research in Secondary Schools of
Silti Woreda**



June, 2013

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MA Thesis

**The Practices and Challenges in Conducting
Action Research in Secondary Schools of
Silti Woreda**

By: TADELE KINFE

**A Thesis Submitted to the Institute of Educational Research of Addis
Ababa University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Master of Arts in Educational
Research and Development**

June, 2013

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By: - TADELE KINFE

Approved By Board of Examiners

Prof. Derebssa Dufera
CHIARMAN, DEPARTMENT
GRADUATE COMMITTEE

SIGNATURE

Mulu Nega (PhD)
ADVISOR

SIGNATURE

G/egziabher Debeb (PhD)
EXAMINER, EXTERNAL

SIGNATURE

Wossenu Yimam (PhD)
EXAMINER, INTERNAL

SIGNATURE



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Acronyms

AED: Academy for Educational Development.

ETP: Ethiopian Education and Training policy.

FGD: Focus Group Discussion.

ICDR: Institute for Curriculum Development and Research.

MoE: Ministry of Education.

SIP: School Improvement Program

SNNPRS: South, Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Regional State.

SWEO: Siliti Woreda Educational Office.

SWSS: Siliti Woreda Secondary Schools.

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural organization.

USAID: United State Agency for International Development

ABSTRACT

The main objective of the study was to investigate the practice and challenges in conducting action research in Secondary Schools of Silti Woreda. In order to attain the objective, the study answered the basic questions such as, What is the current status of teachers' practice in action research activities? And what are the factors that influence teachers' practice in action research in Silti woreda secondary schools? A descriptive survey method was used to describe the situation of the status of practice and challenges in conducting action research in the schools. Data was gathered from two sources; the primary source of information in this study includes secondary school teachers, secondary schools directors, woreda education office expert and supervisors. The primary data relevant to the study was collected using questionnaire, interview and focus group discussions. Secondary data was gathered from documents.

Based on the data analysis, the current status of secondary school teachers' practice in action research was found to be low and considerable number of teachers did not get the opportunity to participate in workshops, seminars and in-service trainings related to action research; also they did not read books, journals and handouts to develop their research skills. Moreover, the study investigated factors that influence Teachers' practice in action research. Shortage of materials (computer access, research journals, reference books, internet service, research works, handouts, etc), lack of support from school administrations, absence of professional training on research, lack of active involvement of stakeholders such as NGOs, School Administrators, Woreda education office etc in action research process in schools, commitment and willingness of teachers in conducting action research and absence of financial support were the major factors that influence action research activity in the schools. Conclusion, suggestions and recommendations for improvement of the current practices and challenges of action research were made based on the findings.

CHAPTER ONE

1. Introduction

This Chapter presents the background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, research question of the study, significance of the study, limitation of the study and operational definition of terms.

1.1 Background of the Study

Education becomes a cornerstone of economic and social development of any country. It improves the productive capacity of societies, their political, economic and scientific institutions (Lockheed and et al. 1994). These overall developments of a country can be achieved through continuous problem solving and research activities in education.

According to Hussein (2000), research in education plays a great role in guiding educational decision makers to take decision without bias and subjectivity, introducing changes for the improvement and development of educational service, understanding the teaching-learning process and taking actions accordingly, evaluating new instructional programs and drawing lessons for further improvements, finding how various aspects of school and classrooms affect learning and other schools outcomes, setting policy statements and strategies and eventually assessing impacts.

The primary function of research in education is to improve educational provision by discovering the best ways of doing educational activities and establishing principles by which these activities are guided (Hussein, 2000).

Having realized its significance for educational improvement, school based action research has been given special attention in the Ethiopian education and training policy (MOE, 1994). For example, as stated in

the policy document, research of practical social impact will be given priority and the necessary steps will also be taken to facilitate the coordinated efforts of all those concerned (MOE, 1994:27). In the same way, as Yalew (2000) stated, by virtue of their important position in the educational system, teachers are required to participate in educational research to improve the teaching learning process and over all school process. It looks imperative that teachers themselves do research in their class and conduct research on their own or their students' problem. Similarly, action research is an interactive inquiry process that balances problem solving actions implemented in a collaborative context with data-driven and collaborative analysis to understand underlying causes and make predictions about personal and organizational change (Reason and Bradbury, 2002). Action research can promote school effectiveness with the internal efficiency of schooling. It uses value added approach that helps to enhance and monitor students' achievement and disciplinary problems and to maximize the overall schools efficiency. Teachers in their schools are, therefore; expected to identify factors influencing teaching-learning process, school efficiency, students' achievements and related day to day school problems through conducting action research. Moreover, Abraham (2004), cited in Gichuru (1993), emphasized that the principal objectives of action research are the improvement of curriculum quality, school quality, instructional quality and the quality of educational outcomes.

According to AED (2006), action research can be appropriately integrated with education if teachers are able to conduct it at all levels and use the findings to solve practical educational problems. Moreover, action research can help teachers to be collaborators in tackling educational problems. Specifically, it can help teachers to collaborate on the revision of the curriculum, improve their work

environment, professionalize teaching, and suggest ideas for the development and revision of educational policy.

From these points of view, it is vital to enhance teachers' practice in conducting action research to improve overall educational process. Hence, this study examines teachers' current practice and challenges of conducting action research in secondary schools of Silti Woreda.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

In the Ethiopian education system, teachers at all levels are obliged to conduct school based (action) research for professional growth and development and promotion to the next professional career (MOE, 2004). In the context of secondary schools in Silti Woreda, there are numerous internal and external educational issues that require research based intervention to improve teaching learning process. These include, drop outs and repetitions, learners' disciplinary cases, late comings, poor academic achievements and teachers' turnover are among others.

However, the above mentioned school related educational problems have not yet been systematically studied and solved in SWSS. There is no conducted research that indicates the status of action research in secondary schools in the woreda. Therefore, examining the practices and challenges in conducting action research in Silti woreda secondary schools is the focus of this study.

1.3 Research Objectives

The main objective of the study is to explore the practices and challenges of action research in secondary schools of Silti woreda. More specifically, the study intends to:

- examine the current status of teachers' practice in action research in secondary schools of Silti woreda.
- identify factors that influencing action research practice in secondary schools.
- recommend actions to be taken to improve stakeholders engagement in action research through identifying its negatively influencing factors.

1.4. Research Questions

Based on the objectives, the study intended to answer the following basic questions:

- What is the current status of teachers' practice in action research activities?
- What are the factors that influence teachers' practice in action research in Silti woreda secondary schools?
- What measures can be taken to improve stakeholders' practice in action research in Silti woreda secondary schools?

1.5. Significance of the Study

It is widely recognized that action research is one of the best vehicle to improve quality of education in schools. This study attempts to provide valuable information to decision makers about the state of action research activities in Silti woreda. It suggests the necessary measures required to improve research activities in Silti woreda. More specifically, this study may be important in various ways:

- it is useful for schools to improve the quality of education through action research by exploring status of stakeholders' engagement in action research.

- It helps planners and decision makers at various levels to identify the factors that negatively affect the practice and utilization of action research outputs in secondary schools.
- it may also serve as a valuable source of literature on the subject studied which strengthen the capacity of practitioners to conduct their own research.

1.6 Scope of the study

The study focuses on practices and challenges in conducting action research in secondary schools of Silti woreda. The research findings are also restricted to the area under study.

1.7. Limitation of the Study.

This study was conducted in Silti woreda secondary schools of the SNNR state. The two sampled areas of the study, Gerbiber and Gensiltie secondary schools were far away from the center of Silti Woreda; the geographical feature of the area was very difficult to get access of transportation. This was one of the biggest challenges of the researcher to distribute and collect data using the selected instruments. Lack of adequate information regarding action research in each schools and Woreda office was other problem that influences the comprehensiveness of the study. Unwillingness of some teachers to fill questionnaires and FGD were another area of challenge for the researcher. To overcome the above challenges, the researcher reached sample school on foot and got adequate information from the participants by convincing them the selected tools in each schools and Woreda office.

1.8 Operational Definition of Terms

This section presents operational definition of terms that are frequently used in this study.

- Action research: is applied research conducted by teachers, supervisors, and school administrators on School problems, improving classroom practices and teaching learning process.
- Collaborative: to work with another person or group to achieve something.
- Design: to make a detailed plan of the form or structure of something, emphasizing features such as its appearance, convenience, and efficient functioning.
- Paradigms: are different models of action research.
- Praxis: is the practical side and application of something such as a professional skill, as opposed to its theory.
- Triangulation: is to examine the research topic or focus from a number of different advantage points.

CHAPTER-TWO

2. Review of Related Literature

This chapter presents a review of available literature. It provides theoretical and conceptual insights related to the topic. Therefore concepts of research, overview of action research, evolution of action research, paradigm of action research, current types of action research, action research process, importance of conducting action research, status of conducting action research in Ethiopia, factors that affect action research and conceptual model of the study are briefly discussed.

2.1 The Concept of Research

Research may be conceptualized as application of scientific method in the study of problems. According to Koul (2006), research is a systematic attempt to obtain answers to meaningful questions about phenomena through the application of scientific procedures. Similarly, research may be defined as the application of scientific method to study the nature, cause, and magnitude of educational problems (Koul, 1984).

Cohen and Manion (1980) state that research is best conceived as the process of arriving at dependable solutions to problems through planned and systematic collection, analysis, and interpretation of data. It is the most important tool for advancing knowledge, for promoting professional progress, and for enabling people to relate more effectively to their environment, to accomplish their purposes, and to resolve their conflicts.

According to Charles (1988), the meaning of the word research is derived from the French word: “recherché” meaning to “travel through” a

“survey”. It gives the equivalent English meaning as careful, systematic, patient study and investigation in some fields of knowledge, undertaken to discover facts or principles.

Gall and associates (1996) also define research as the process of arriving at dependable solutions to problems through the planned and systematic collection, analysis and interpretation of data and it is a process of identifying something unknown and then collecting data to make it known.

In general, research is the process of solving problems in education and teaching learning processes through its contribution both educational theory and practices.

2.2. Overview of Action Research

Different Scholars define the concepts of action research in different forms. Regarding this, Gilmore and associates (1986, cited in Rory O'Brien, 1998) defined:

Action research is known by many other names, including participatory research, collaborative inquiry, emancipatory research, action learning, and contextual action research, but all are variations on a theme. Put simply, action research is learning by doing - a group of people identify a problem, do something to resolve it, see how successful their efforts were, and if not satisfied, try again. While this is the essence of the approach, there are other key attributes of action research that differentiate it from common problem-solving activities that we all engage in every day. A more succinct definition is action research...aims to contribute both to the practical concerns of people in an immediate problematic situation and to further the goals of social science simultaneously. Thus, there is a dual commitment in action research to study a system and concurrently to collaborate with members of the system in changing it in what is together regarded as a desirable direction. Accomplishing this twin goal requires the active collaboration of researcher and client, and thus it stresses the importance of co-learning as a primary aspect of the research process. (P.161)

According to watts (1985), action research is a process in which participants examine their own educational practice systematically

and carefully, using the techniques of research. It is based on the following assumptions:

- Teachers and principals work best on problems they have identified for themselves
- Teachers and principals become more effective when encouraged to examine and assess their own work and then consider ways of working differently
- Teachers and principals help each other by working collaboratively
- Working with colleagues helps teachers and principals in their professional development.

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

Action research specifically refers to a disciplined inquiry done by a teacher with the intent that the research will inform and change his or her practices in the future. This research is carried out within the context of the teacher's environment that is, with the students and at the school in which the teacher works on questions that deal with educational matters at hand. While people who call for greater professionalization say that teachers should be constantly researching and educating themselves about their area of expertise, this is different from the study of more educational questions that arise from the practice of teaching.

Implicit in the term action research is the idea that teachers will begin a cycle of posing questions, gathering data, reflection, and deciding on a course of action. When these decisions begin to change the school environment, a different set of circumstances appears with different problems posed, which require a new look. Indeed, many action

research projects are started with a particular problem to solve, whose solution leads into other areas of study. While a teacher may work alone on these studies, it is also common for a number of teachers to collaborate on a problem, as well as enlist support and guidance from administrators, scholars, and others. At times, whole schools may decide to tackle a school-wide study to address a common issue, or join with others to look at district-wide issues. Action research is not what usually comes to mind when we hear the word research. Action research is not a library project where we learn more about a topic that interests us. It is not problem-solving in the sense of trying to find out what is wrong, but rather a quest for knowledge about how to improve. Action research is not about doing research on or about people, or finding all available information on a topic looking for the correct answers. It involves people working to improve their skills, techniques, and strategies. Action research is not about learning why we do certain things, but rather how we can do things better. It is about how we can change our instruction to impact students. (Eileen Ferrance, 2000).

These scholars emphasize that action research provides scientific solutions for immediate practical day to day problems in one way and provide knowledge through action in another way. Action research or participatory action research is therefore, a research initiated to solve an immediate problem or a reflective process of progressive problem solving led by individuals working with others in teams or as part of a community of practice to improve the way they address issues and solve problems. Action research involves the process of actively participating in an organization change situation whilst conducting research. It is therefore, taken as a tool to resolve day to day educational issues by providing scientific solutions.

Similarly, Reason & Bradbury (2002) stated that, action research is an interactive inquiry process that balances problem solving actions implemented in a collaborative context with data-driven collaborative analysis or research to understand underlying causes enabling future predictions about personal and organizational change.

According to Parsons and Brown (2002), action research is a form of investigation designed for use by teachers to attempt to solve problems and improve professional practices in their own classrooms. It involves systematic observations and data collection which can be then used by the practitioner-researcher in reflection, decision making and the development of more effective classroom strategies. Besides, Emily Calhoun (1994) stated that, action research is a fancy way of saying let's study what's happening at our school and decide how to make it a better place.

Moreover, action research is a natural part of teaching. Teachers are continually observing students, collecting data and changing practices to improve student learning and the classroom and school environment. According to A. Christine Miller (2007), action research provides a framework that guides the energies of teachers toward a better understanding of why, when, and how students become better learners.

Generally, action research is a reflection and enquiry conducted by educators who want to improve what they do and how they do it and aims to make research methods useful on daily basis in classroom and school.

2.2.1 Evolution of Action Research

Kurt Lewin is generally considered the father of action research. A German social and experimental psychologist, and one of the founders

of the Gestalt school, he was concerned with social problems, and focused on participative group processes for addressing conflict, crises, and change, generally within organizations. Regarding this Eileen Ferrance (2000) emphasized that, Lewin first coined the term action research in his 1946 paper "action research and minority problems", characterizing action research as a comparative research on the conditions and effects of various forms of social action and research leading to social action, using a process of a spiral of steps, each of which is composed of a circle of planning, action, and fact-finding about the result of the action. Eric Trist, another major contributor to the field from that immediate post-war era, was a social psychiatrist whose group at the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations in London engaged in applied social research, initially for the civil repatriation of German prisoners of war. He and his colleagues tended to focus more on large-scale, multi-organizational problems. Both Lewin and Trist applied their research to systemic change in and between organizations. They emphasized direct professional - client collaboration and affirmed the role of group relations as basis for problem-solving. Both were avid proponents of the principle that decisions are best implemented by those who help make them.

2.2.2. Paradigm of Action Research

Different scholars provided different paradigms/models of action research in different times. Among them, Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt in *Action Learning and Action Research: Paradigm, Praxis and Programs* and Rory O'Brien in an *Overview of the Methodological Approach of Action Research* are examples. According to Rory O'Brien, paradigms of action research are categorized in three different parts that will be discussed in the next part.

2.2.2.1. Positivist Paradigm

The main research paradigm for the past several centuries has been that of Logical Positivism. This paradigm is based on a number of principles, including: a belief in an objective reality, knowledge of which is only gained from sense data that can be directly experienced and verified between independent observers. Phenomena are subject to natural laws that humans discover in a logical manner through empirical testing, using inductive and deductive hypotheses derived from a body of scientific theory. Its methods rely heavily on quantitative measures, with relationships among variables commonly shown by mathematical means. Positivism, used in scientific and applied research, has been considered by many to be the antithesis of the principles of action research (Susman and Evered 1978, Winter 1989).

2.2.2.2. Interpretive Paradigm

Over the last half century, a new research paradigm has emerged in the social sciences to break out of the constraints imposed by positivism. With its emphasis on the relationship between socially-engendered concept formation and language, it can be referred to as the interpretive paradigm. Containing such qualitative methodological approaches as phenomenology, ethnography, and hermeneutics, it is characterized by a belief in a socially constructed, subjectively-based reality, one that is influenced by culture and history. Nonetheless it still retains the ideals of researcher objectivity, and researcher as passive collector and expert interpreter of data.

2.3.2.3. Paradigm of Praxis

Though sharing a number of perspectives with the interpretive paradigm, and making considerable use of its related qualitative

methodologies, there are some researchers who feel that neither it nor the positivist paradigms are sufficient epistemological structures under which to place action research (Lather 1986, Morley 1991). Rather, a paradigm of Praxis is seen as where the main affinities lie. Praxis, a term used by Aristotle, is the art of acting upon the conditions one faces in order to change them. It deals with the disciplines and activities predominant in the ethical and political lives of people. Aristotle contrasted this with Theory - those sciences and activities that are concerned with knowing for its own sake. Both are equally needed he thought. That knowledge is derived from practice, and practice informed by knowledge, in an ongoing process, is a cornerstone of action research. Action researchers also reject the notion of researcher neutrality, understanding that the most active researcher is often one who has most at stake in resolving a problematic situation

2.3 Types of Action Research

According to Eileen Ferrance (2000), there are different types of action research depending upon the participants involved. A plan of research can involve a single teacher investigating an issue in his or her classroom, a group of teachers working on a common problem, or a team of teachers and others focusing on a school- or district-wide issue. The major types of action research are described below.

2.3.1 Individual teacher research

Individual teacher research usually focuses on a single issue in the classroom. The teacher may be seeking solutions to problems of classroom management, instructional strategies, use of materials, or student learning. Teachers may have support of their supervisor or principal, an instructor for a course they are taking, or parents. The

problem is one that the teacher believes is evident in his or her classroom and one that can be addressed on an individual basis. The research may then be such that the teacher collects data or may involve looking at student participation. One of the drawbacks of individual research is that it may not be shared with others unless the teacher chooses to present findings at a faculty meeting, make a formal presentation at a conference, or submit written material to a listserv, journal, or newsletter. It is possible for several teachers to be working concurrently on the same problem with no knowledge of the work of others.

2.3.2 Collaborative action research

Collaborative action research may include as few as two teachers or a group of several teachers and others interested in addressing a classroom or department issue. This issue may involve one classroom or a common problem shared by many classrooms. These teachers may be supported by individuals outside of the school, such as a university or community partner.

2.3.3 School-wide research

School-wide research focuses on issues common to all. For example, a school may have a concern about the lack of parental involvement in activities, and is looking for a way to reach more parents to involve them in meaningful ways. Or, the school may be looking to address its organizational and decision-making structures. Teams of staff from the school work together to narrow the question, gather and analyze the data, and decide on a plan of action. An example of action research for a school could be to examine their state test scores to identify areas that need improvement, and then determine a plan of action to improve student performance. Team work and individual contributions to the whole are very important, and it may be that problem points

arise as the team strives to develop a process and make commitments to each other. When these obstacles are overcome, there will be a sense of ownership and accomplishment in the results that come from this school-wide effort.

2.3.4 District-wide research

District-wide research is far more complex and utilizes more resources, but the rewards can be great. Issues can be organizational, community-based, performance-based, or processes for decision-making. A district may choose to address a problem common to several schools or one of organizational management. Downsides are the documentation requirements (communication) to keep everyone in the loop, and the ability to keep the process in motion. Collecting data from all participants needs a commitment from staff to do their fair share and to meet agreed-upon deadlines for assignments. On the positive side, real school reform and change can take hold a common understanding through inquiry. The involvement of multiple constituent groups can lend energy to the process and create an environment of genuine stakeholders.

Table.1. Summary of the types of action research.

	Individual teacher research	Collaborative action research	School-wide action research	District-wide action research
Focus	Single classroom issue	Single classroom or several classrooms with common issue	School issue, problem, or area of collective interest	District issue Organizational Structures
Possible support needed	Coach/mentor Access to technology Assistance with data organization and analysis	Substitute teachers Release time Close link with administrators	School commitment Leadership Communication External partners	District commitment Facilitator Recorder Communication External partners

2.4. Action research process.

Different scholars provided different action research process in different ways. Among them, Eileen Ferrance, Calhoun, Rory O'Brien and Mertler are some of the examples who provided action research process in different ways. The following table shows the way how these scholars presented:

Table.2 Summary of action research process.

Action research process	Mertler	Calhoun	Rory O'Brien	Eileen Ferrance
Step 1	Planning Stage	Selecting the Area of Focus	Diagnosing	Identification of problem area
Step2	Acting Stage	Collecting Data	Action planning	Collection and organization of data
Step 3	Developing Stage	Organizing Data	Taking action	Interpretation of data
Step 4	Reflecting Stage	Analyzing and	Evaluating	Action based on data
Step 5		Interpreting Data	Specifying learning	Reflection
Step 6		Taking Action		

In this part, the general process of conducting action research was briefly introduced as Eileen Ferrance. This action research process was preferred in this study for the fact that its expression made easy understanding and shared overall action research process steps of other scholars inclusively. (See Fig.1 below)

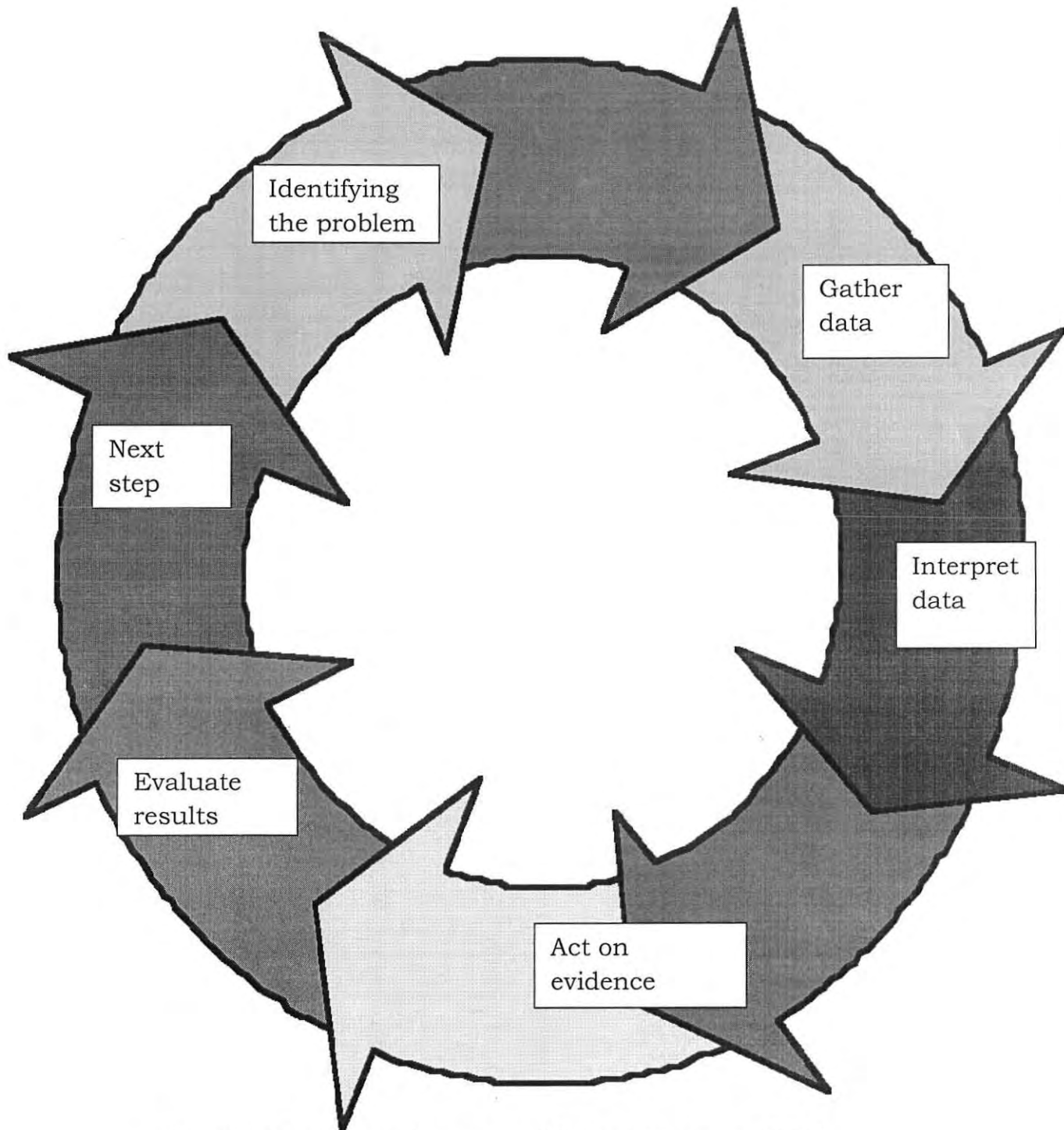


Fig: 1 Action research process (Eileen Ferrance, 2000)

Step One: Identifying the problem

Teachers often have several questions they wish to investigate; however, it is important to limit the question to one that is meaningful and doable in the confines of their daily work. Careful planning at this first stage will limit false starts and frustrations. There are several criteria to consider before investing the time and effort in researching a problem. Is it something of interest and worth the time and effort that will be spent? Sometimes there is a discrete problem that is readily identifiable. Or, the problem to be studied may come from a feeling of discomfort or tension in the classroom. For example, a teacher may be using the latest fashionable teaching strategy, yet not really knowing or understanding what or how kids are learning.

Step two: Gathering data

The collection of data is an important step in deciding what action needs to be taken. Multiple sources of data are used to better understand the scope of happenings in the classroom or school. There are many vehicles for collection of data: Select the data that are most appropriate for the issue being researched. Are the data easy to collect? Are there sources readily available for use? How structured and systematic will the collection be? Use at least three sources (triangulation) of data for the basis of actions. Organize the data in a way that makes it useful to identify trends and themes. Data can be arranged by gender, classroom, grade level, school, etc.

Step three: Interpret data

Analyze and identify major themes. Depending upon the question, teachers may wish to use classroom data, individual data, or subgroup data. Some of the data are quantifiable and can be analyzed without

the use of statistics or technical assistance. Other data, such as opinions, attitudes, or checklists, may be summarized in table form. Data that are not quantifiable can be reviewed holistically and important elements or themes can be noted

Step four: Act on evidence

Using the information from the data collection and review of current literature, design a plan of action that will allow you to make a change and to study that change. It is important that only one variable be altered. As with any experiment, if several changes are made at once, it will be difficult to determine which action is responsible for the outcome. While the new technique is being implemented, continue to document and collect data on performance.

Step five: Evaluate results

Assess the effects of the intervention to determine if improvement has occurred. If there is improvement, do the data clearly provide the supporting evidence? If no, what changes can be made to the actions to elicit better results?

Step six: Next step

As a result of the action research project, identify additional questions raised by the data and plan for additional improvements, revisions, and next steps.

2.5. Importance of conducting action research

Researcher in education often recommended that educators including teachers should conduct research in their fields of specializations with the aim of improving the practice of teaching-learning and management in a systematic way to suggest and made changes to the

environment, context or conditions in which that practice take place and which impede desirable improvements and effective future development.

The primary function of research in education is to improve education by discovering the best ways of doing educational activities and establishing principles by which these activities are guided (Hussein, 2000). Accordingly, action research enables us to economize, to prevent wastage, to increase efficiency and to utilize our work. Looking from different angles, research is found very crucial. From the researchers point of view action research may solve educational problems and brings development to the whole system. In the policy document (MOE, 1994), it is noted that action research minimizes educational wastage and maximizes the quality of education which further helps for the growth of the economy. It is also stated that action research helps teachers to improve their career, to get promotion from one educational level to the next in the system and to develop their knowledge, skills, attitude, and understandings, etc.

Teachers and other educators are responsible to carryout action research to improve the teaching-learning process and provide quality education for their citizens so as to produce quality manpower the country needs to bring about positive change in the county's development (Kibre, 2009).

Most of the teachers if not all, especially those who teaching elementary and secondary schools think that action research is to be conducted only by adept professionals researchers and in well-equipped laboratories if at all they have the idea of action research of course, nobody denies that research is done professionals in the field and laboratories but this is not the only case. Research conducted in a host of situations by variety of individuals, scholars and practitioners

of various levels of sophistication in the academic discipline (Wlwersman, 1998). As professional researcher may conduct research in laboratories and even in classrooms teachers also carry out research on reaching learning process in their respective classrooms and on their subject areas.

According to Corey (1958, cited in Yohannis, 2011), noted that action research is the research undertaken by practitioner so that they may improve their practices. It is the type of applied research in which the researcher and the practitioner is the same person. In the teaching – learning process teachers can do research in their areas of specializations to improve their activities. So as to achieve better educational outcomes conducting action research was important.

In generally, action research is a process of problem solving in teaching-learning and appropriate usages of educational facility, technology, materials, environment-organization and management. So as to strengthen the teaching learning process and the quality of education conducting action research is important.

2.6 The status of conducting research in Ethiopia

Research in education plays a great role specially in guiding educational decision makers to take decision without bias and subjectivity; introduce changes for the improvement and development of educational services, understand the teaching- learning process and take actions accordingly, evaluate new instructional programs and draw lessons for further improvements, see how various aspects of school and classrooms affect learning and other schools outcomes, set policy statements and strategies and eventually assess impacts.

On the other hand, relevance, quality, access and equity are most prominent and complex problems in Ethiopian education (MoE and AED, 2006). These problems and the strategy to reduce them were discussed in a number of policy documents and research papers. In this regard Ethiopian Education and Training Policy (ETP) which was issued in 1994 by the Transitional Government of Ethiopia states that our country's education is entangled with complex problems of relevance, quality, accessibility and equity (MoE and AED, 2006). The ETP proposed nine overall strategies to meet these challenges. These are curriculum, educational structure, educational measurement and examination, teachers, languages and education, nexus between education, training, research and development, educational support inputs, educational organization, and management and educational finance with reference to research and development, the ETP states that research of practical social impact will be given priority and the necessary steps will be taken to facilitate the coordinated efforts of all those concerned. In 1994, the education sector strategy document was separately issued by the government to facilitate the implementation of the policy. This document identifies the main constraints of Ethiopian education in a similar way with the ETP and elaborates on the strategies proposed by the ETP. With specific reference to research and development, the document states that research into curriculum development, instruction methods and evaluation techniques shall be encouraged and assisted. It expresses the need to integrate and coordinate the teaching/learning process with research, and facilitate the participation of teachers and researchers in getting the necessary experience. From the above description, it is clear that the focus of the ETP in meeting the challenges of the teaching learning process and tackle the problem of quality in education is not only by producing teachers who are qualified to teach, but also by facilitating conditions to conduct research in classroom situations. This means teachers are

encouraged to do action research which can be done at all educational levels. In this regard, it is expected that secondary school teachers conduct research for improving the teaching learning process, the curriculum as well as their professional competence.

Educational research in Ethiopia is at an early stage, despite its existence nearly for half of a century. Amare (2003), in his study "The state of educational research in Ethiopia", observed that there were insignificant number of research output in the country and most of educational research products are unpublished compared to the amount of work, demonstrating poor dissemination levels, probably resulting in a failure of research output to reach the beneficiaries. He also found that the existence of poor cooperative efforts among educational researchers and team work in educational research has been found to be very poor. The participation of women in educational research as (actors) was found to be very low. Educational research in Ethiopia had more coverage of tertiary and secondary levels than primary and pre-primary schools. More research was also done to address the issues of quality and efficiency of education (related to pedagogy of education) than the issue of equity and access related to politics of education (Amare, 2000). This suggested that educational research in Ethiopia were disinterested in the political aspect of education. For example the issues of gender and regional inequalities to bring about justice in education are an area that seemed to have been neglected by educational researchers in Ethiopia (Amare, 2000).

Traditionally, higher education has two broad functions: research and learning (Garnett & Holmes, 1995). To use the language of contemporary educational philosophy, the academy is concerned with the production and reproduction of knowledge generating and disseminating ideas.

In a developed world, Universities are the main springs of science; they not only produce high level of manpower but also constitute the main centers of the research. In Ethiopia, though Universities are expected to conduct research by the new educational policy, however, very little research is actually carried out in universities compared to their potentials (Derbessa, 2004). This is partly due to extremely meager resources. Consequently these provide poor environment for the production of new knowledge through research activities. In general, higher education in Ethiopia is neither sufficiently equipped nor ready for the development of research.

According to the 1994 New Ethiopian Education and Training Policy, the main aim of education is to provide students to solve problems and to use the information that acquired from their environment and their communities. To fulfill this aim, the teachers must participate actively rather than in conducting action research in the schools.

Having realized its significance for educational improvement, school based action research has been given special attention in the current education and training policy (MOE, 1994). For example, as stated in the policy document "Research of practical social impact will be given priority and the necessary steps will also be taken to facilitate the coordinated efforts of all those concerned" (MOE, 1994:27).

Above all, teachers at all levels are obliged to conduct school based (action) research for professional to the next professional career (AED, 2007; MOE, 2004; Ashenafi, 2007).

2.7 Factors that affect teachers' engagement in action research

The most necessary conditions to conduct action research are includes inadequate access of means to improve teachers' knowledge and skills in conducting action research in schools, Teachers' willingness and

commitment, financial and material resources, research coordinating body/committee at Woreda level and sufficient time. These are among many of factors that affect teachers' engagement in action research in schools. (See Fig.2 below)

2.7.1. Access of means to improve teachers' knowledge and skills in conducting action research in schools

The research knowledge and skills is basic and necessary not only to do research but also to write research reports and understand their practice a better. In the absence of research skills and knowledge the expectation of the results of action research work in secondary schools are unexpected.

Asrat (2007) states in the secondary schools the capacity of researchers/ teachers including their skills, competences, attitudes and value, are developed primary through appropriate training programs and courses and the involvement in the research activities. The right to the choose the research topic rests with the researcher topic rests with the research depending on the area of his/her personal skill and interests. These interests may be related to external factors such as salary, prestige, promotions, advancement of knowledge, or improvement of social condition or internal factors such as curiosity of the research issue.

In generally, even though Secondary school teachers gained knowledge and skills from universities and colleges on action research methodology, they have limited access to improve and update their skills and knowledge to conduct problem solving action research. It is obvious that knowledge and skills to conduct action research needs day to day practice in conducting action research, improving it and updating it using various sources. Availability of scholars in the field of

action research, updated and vital reference materials, access of applying and technical knowledge using modern devices, etc in the school environment will highly affect secondary school teachers to improve their knowledge and skills in conducting action research in their schools.

2.7.2. Inadequate teachers' willingness, commitment and collegial interaction

Inadequate teachers' willingness, commitment and collegial interaction significantly affected teachers' involvement in action research.

A willingness on the part of the teacher researcher to risk the uncertainty associated with change is necessary. A commitment to continue (such as a concern for students) classroom research and the change process in the face of uncertainty is clearly important (Briscoe and Wells, 2002: 431).

The collegial interaction is also important in stimulating and supporting the research process. Discussing problems with other teachers at schools, peers in college class, professor provides teachers with wealth of potential solutions as well as the opportunity to examine changing beliefs in nonthreatening environments (Briscoe and Wells, 2002: 431). Collaboration among teachers is important to conduct action research (Pedretti and Hodson, 1995: 478-479)

The teacher as a researcher must come to understand that change takes place not only in the teacher, but in the other classroom participants as well. Students and teacher together must negotiate an understanding of what is intended by the change (Briscoe and Wells, 2002: 432).

From the above scholars, we can conclude that teachers' willingness, commitment and collegial interaction are the factors that influence teachers' engagement conducting action research.

2.7.3. Financial and material resources for action research activities

Any researcher to conduct action research activities without financial and material resources is extremely difficult to accomplish. In addition shortage of financial resources, the absence of materials resources like: document reference books, journals, computer access of internet, etc at the schools also significantly affect teachers involvement in action research.

Similarly, Seyoum(1998) found that several constraining factors such as lack of finance, insufficiency of material resources, lack of incentives, lack of research skill, heavy teaching load, and lack of opportunity to participate in Seminars or workshops are major constraint to conduct research. Hence, shortage of financial resources and the absence of material resources can be factors that negatively affect conducting action research.

2.7.4. Sufficient time for research work

Time is very crucial to conduct research activities obviously research work need time to read reference materials, to collect data, and to write research report. So, busier teacher can be busy for various reasons, involvement in various committees working in schools or out of school, excessive teaching load and pre occupation and personal affairs can make teachers busy. Based on this idea Barbara and Robert, (1997:1) stressed as over burdened teachers will not have enough time afford to research work.

Generally, from the above literature lack of sufficient time for research work is one of the factors that affect research work.

2.7.5. Research coordinating body/committee at woreda level

The other factors that affect teachers from conducting action research are the absence of research coordinating bodies at Woreda level.

The structure of the school system, in particular, its bureaucracy, administrative procedures and values can combine to create and sustain an institutional climate that is not favorable to, or supportive of, change. There are many occasions when teachers are constrained from implementing a curriculum consistent with their personal beliefs about science and science education through lack of time, inadequate facilities, pressure of external examination, or class management problems arising from unsupportive administrative structures (Pedretti and Hodson, 1995: 481-482)

2.8 Conceptual Model of the study

The Conceptual Model illustrates the relationship between the variables that influence teachers' practices in conducting action research. As the model indicates the major casual factors that negatively affect teachers' practices in conducting action research are lack of coordinating body, inadequate teachers' willingness, commitment and collegial interaction, lack of sufficient time, lack of financial and materials support, Access of means to improve teachers' knowledge and skills in conducting action research.(See figure.2 below)

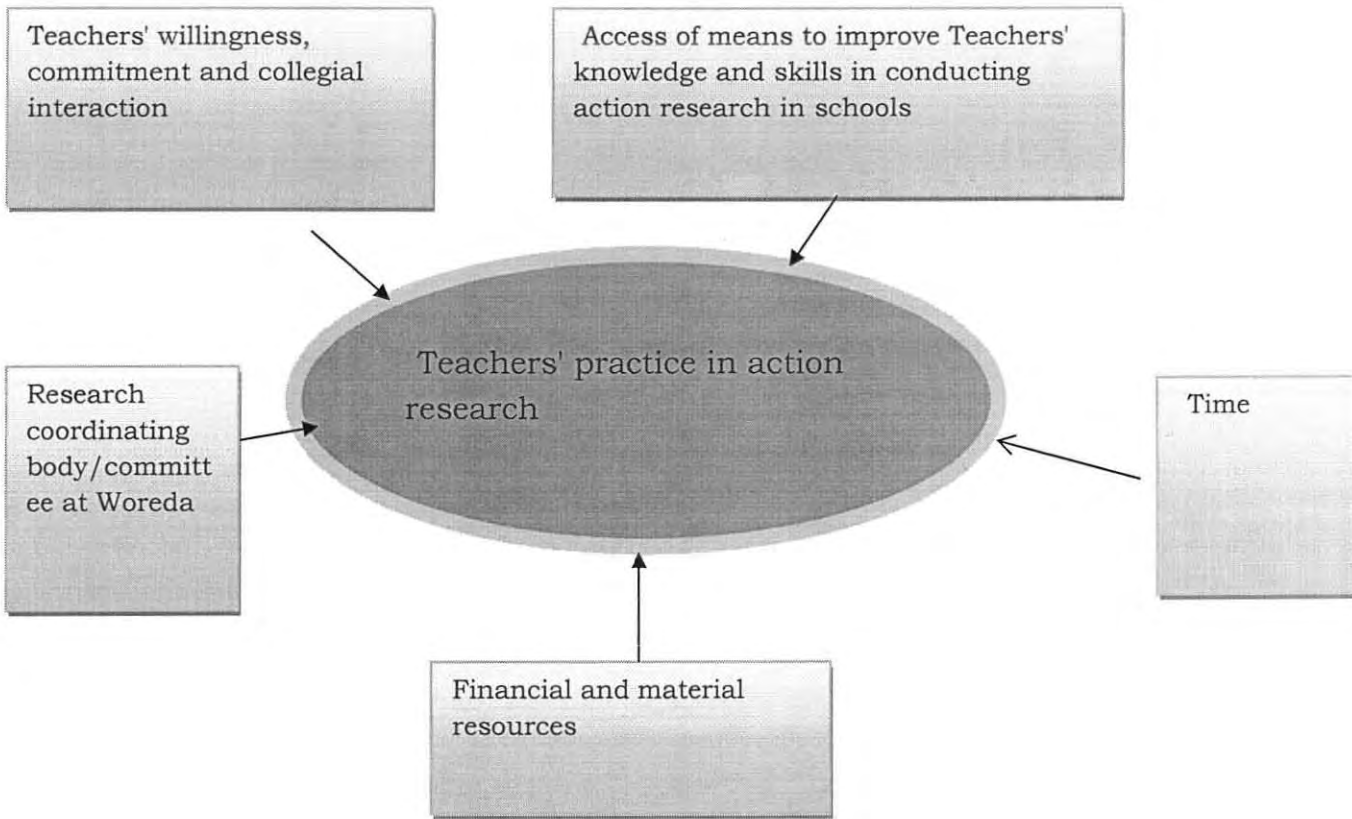


Fig 2. Conceptual Model of the study

CHAPTER THREE

3. Research Design and Methodology

This chapter presents research design and methodology, description of the study area, data source, sampling techniques, data collection and data analysis methods.

3.1 Research Design

In this study, the researcher employed a mixed-method approach to undertake the research. A descriptive survey method was employed to describe the situation of practice and challenges in conducting action research in Secondary Schools of Silti Woreda. The survey method was used to collect data from teachers through questionnaires. Interview was made with school directors, Woreda educational experts, and supervisor regarding the practices and challenges of action research in Silti Woreda secondary schools. And focus group discussions were used to collect data from teachers of selected school. Documents were also reviewed in the woreda educational office and schools. The current study was carried out in four stages. The first one of these was the preparatory stage. It involved proposal development, review of related literature, development of instruments of data collection, selection of samples and training of data collectors. The second phase was the administration of instruments and collection of data. In third stage, analysis and interpretation were accomplished. In the fourth, draft report writing, provision of feed back to the draft, finalization of the draft, publication of the final report and submission of final report were accomplished.

3.2. Description of the study area

Silti woreda is one of the eight Woredas in Siltie Zone of SNNPR state. It is located 7°55"N and 38°12"E. The Woreda is found in the North east part of Siltie Zone and located South of Meskan Woreda of Guraghe Zone, North of Dalocha and Ulbareg, East of Alichu wiriro and West of Lanfiro Woreda of Siltie Zone and Adami-Tulu Woreda of Oromiya region, Kibet is the administrative center of the woreda which is found 27 km from the Zone center, Werabe, 177 km from the region capital, Hawassa, and 147 km from the Federal center, Addis Ababa. The Woreda has a total of 92 Secondary school teachers (79 male and 13 female). Also the numbers of secondary schools were only three in Silti Woreda.

3.3. Variables of the study

The dependent variable of the study is teachers' engagement in action research. While the independent variables include coordinating body and collegial interaction, time, teachers' willingness and commitment, financial and material support, knowledge and skills in conducting, utilizing and disseminating action research work to improve school performance.

3.4. Data Sources

To achieve the objective of the study, primary and secondary data sources were used. Multi-level data sources from teachers, research committee, directors, supervisors and woreda educational officers were taken as primary data sources to represent the different levels of analysis within the system for the same purpose. Relevant and

available reports and printed materials were used as secondary data sources.

3.5. Target Population, Samples and Sampling Technique

The study population includes Silti woreda secondary schools. Three secondary Schools (Silti, Gerbiber and Gensilties) were included in this study. A total of 92 teachers (79 males and 13 females) participated in the study. In addition, one SWEO expert and one supervisor, three directors and thirteen schools educational research committee were included in the study.

The participant's teachers for questionnaires, and schools were selected using available sampling technique. While SWEO expert and supervisor, directors and schools educational research committee were selected using purposive sampling technique.

Table 3: Sample Teachers in Silti Woreda

No	Name of Secondary Schools	Total Number			Total Sample		
		M	F	T	M	F	T
1	Silti Secondary & Preparatory School	51	7	58	51	7	58
2	GenSiltie Secondary School	13	5	18	13	5	18
3	Gerbiber Secondary school	15	1	16	15	1	16
	Total	79	13	92	79	13	92

3.6. Methods of Data Collection

In order to gather information, the researcher used variety of data collecting instruments. Interview was used to collect data from secondary schools directors and Woreda research experts and supervisors. While, questionnaires were used to gather data from secondary school Teachers and document analysis. The instruments used for data collection in this study are described below:

3.6.1. Data collection procedures

Before distributing the instruments, I contacted the selected schools' directors to introduce the purpose of the study and to facilitate the data collection activities. As per the agreed schedule the questionnaires were distributed to 92 teachers at three secondary schools. The response rate of the questionnaire was 100%.

3.6.1.1. Questionnaire

The questionnaire was prepared in English. It was included both open and closed ended questions in order to answer the research questions and achieve objectives of the study. The questionnaire was distributed to secondary school teachers. (See Annex.A)

3.6.1.2. Interview Guides

A semi-structured interview guide was prepared to gather complementary information from school directors, supervisors and woreda educational experts. The guides include items that reflect the basic research questions. The interview questionnaires were developed in Amharic.

The interview was held according to the convenience of the interviewees at their working places. Semi-structured interview was conducted to obtain information about teachers in the study.

3.6.1.3. Document Analysis

Documents like minutes and files about action research were analyzed. The researcher tried to use documents for two purposes. First, in order to get factual information about the teachers' population of all secondary schools in Silti woreda, the researcher consulted the

documents of schools and woreda offices. Second, for examining and analyzing the teachers work, the researcher directly contacted principals of sample schools.

3.6.1.4. Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

Focus Group Discussion was conducted with school based action research committee to examine in detail how the committee conducts and/or facilitates research work in school and woreda.

Focus Group Discussion was held among one group having 13 members from one school, namely Silti Secondary & Preparatory School. Adequate information concerning action research activities, based on the length of establishments and the experience of the school was gathered.

3.7. Methods of Data analysis

The data, which were collected from different sources were analyzed and interpreted using both qualitative and quantitative techniques. The qualitative data which was gathered from open ended questionnaire; interviews, document analysis and FGD were organized and analyzed using content analyses techniques. While the quantitative data that gathered from closed ended questionnaire was analyzed using percentage.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. Data Analysis and Presentation

The purpose of this study was to investigate the practice and challenges in conducting action research in secondary schools of Silti Woreda, located in Siltie zone.

The data collected through different methods (see chapter 3) was analyzed and discussed to seek answers for the basic research questions of the study. Data from the participants was presented and followed by major descriptions of results.

This chapter presents the background information of the participant teachers of the study, training of teachers in action research, teachers' involvement in action research, main issues/ problems addressed by teacher researchers, factors that drive teachers to conduct action research, factors affecting teachers' involvement in action research and solution/measure to conduct action research.

4.1. Background information of the participant teachers of the study.

In the questionnaire, participants were requested to provide information on their personal profiles. Tables below present background information of participants

Table.4: Qualification, specialization, age and experience of teachers.

No.	Items		Sex		Total (%)
			Male	Females	
1	Qualification of teachers	BA/Bsc/BED	73 (79.3 %)	10 (10.9 %)	83 (90.2 %)
		Diploma	6 (6.5%)	2 (2.2%)	8 (8.7%)
		Other	----	1 (1.1%)	1 (1.1%)
		Total	79(85.8%)	13 (14.2%)	92 (100%)
2	Specialization of teachers	Language studies	20 (21.7%)	4 (4.3%)	24 (26%)
		Natural Sciences	24 (26%)	4 (4.3%)	28 (30.4%)
		Social Sciences	24 (26%)	2 (2.2%)	26(28.3%)
		Mathematics	8 (8.6%)	--	8 (8.6%)
		Other	6(6.5%)	3(3.2%)	9(9.8%)
		Total	79 (85.8%)	13 (14.2%)	92 (100%)
		3	Age of teachers	20 years & below	4 (4.3%)
21-30 years	42 (45.7%)			10 (10.9 %)	52 (56.2%)
31-40 years	23 (25%)			2 (2.2%)	25 (27.2%)
41-50 years	10 (10.9 %)			--	10 (10.9%)
Total	79 (85.8%)			13(14.2%)	92 (100%)
4	Experience of teachers	Less than 5 years	20(21.7%)	6(6.5%)	26(28.3%)
		5-10 years	30(32.6%)	6(6.5%)	36(39.1%)
		11-15 years	11(11.9%)	1(1.1%)	12(13%)
		16-20 years	6(6.5%)	--	6(6.5%)
		21 years above	12(13%)	--	12(13%)
		Total	79(85.8%)	13(14.2%)	92 (100%)

Table.4 depicts the respondents' characteristics in terms of their qualification, specialization age and experience. Respondents' academic qualification illustrated in the above table shows that 83 (90.2 %) of teachers were degree graduates. Nevertheless, 8(8.7%) of teacher respondents are diploma holders and 1 (1.1%) is certificate. With respect to degree holder subject specializations, 24(26%), 28(30.4%), 26(28.3%), 8(8.6%) and 9(9.8%) were with the major subject specialization of Language studies, Natural sciences, Social Science, mathematics and Others respectively. Age is other general characteristics of the respondents considered. Accordingly, 5(5.4%) of the respondents were below 20 years age. Of the total teacher respondents, 52 (56.2%) that falls in the year category between age of 21-30 years, 25(27.2%) were within the range of 31-40 years, and 10(10.9%) were within the age range of 41-50 years. Regarding the work experiences of respondents, 26(28.3%) of teacher respondents had less than 5 years of service as teachers.

Table.4 shows that the respondents have academic qualifications of BA/BSC and drawn from fields of studies of language studies, social sciences and mathematics. Majority of the respondents have five to ten years experience and they are in the average 21-30 years age category. As indicated in the above table, majority of the teachers of Silti Woreda secondary schools have low work experience.

Table.5: Academic position and teaching load of teachers.

No	Items	Sex		Total (%)	
		Male	Females		
5	Academic positions of teachers	Beginning	5(5.4%)	1(1.1%)	6(6.5%)
		Junior	29(31.5%)	5(5.4%)	34(36.9%)
		Senior	29(31.5%)	7(7.6%)	36(39.1%)
		Associate	2(2.2%)	--	2(2.2%)
		Leader	14(15.2%)	--	14(15.2%)
		Total	79(85.8%)	13(14.2%)	92(100%)
6	Teaching load	< 5 period	-	-	-
		5-10 period	7(7.6%)	-	7(7.6%)
		11-15 period	17(18.5%)	5(5.4%)	22(23.9%)
		16-20 period	43(46.7%)	7(7.6%)	50(54.3%)
		21 period above	12(13%)	1(1.1%)	13(14.2%)
		Total	79(85.8%)	13(14.2%)	92(100%)

Table.5, depicts characteristics of majority of the respondents with respect to respondents' academic position, among the total 92 teacher respondents 6(6.5%) were beginner teachers, 34(36.9%) were junior, 36(39.1%) were senior, 2(2.2%) were associate and 14(15.2%) were leader teachers. Regarding the teaching load, the great majority of teacher respondents 50(54.3%) had 16-20 periods; 22(23.9%) had 11-15 periods; 13(14.2%) had 21 and above periods of teaching; and 7(7.6%) had 6-10 periods.

The above table shows that most of the teachers are junior and senior teachers with low work experience and they are also loaded by 16 to 20 teaching periods per a week .

4.2. Teachers' practice in conducting Action Research

The following table shows about the teachers' practice in action research in secondary schools of Silti Woreda.

Table 6: Teachers' practice in conducting action research

No.	Items	NO.	%
2.1	Teachers' practice in conducting research in their teaching career.		
	A. Yes	32	34.7
	B. No	60	65.3
2.5	Teachers' evaluation of their teaching experience contributions to their research undertaking		
	A. Very high	-	-
	B. High	6	6.5
	C. Medium	32	34.7
	D. Low	38	41.3
	E. Very low	16	17.3
2.6	Teachers plan to conduct action research in the future		
	A. Yes	68	73.9
	B. No	24	26.1

In the case of table 6 in item 2.1 above, 60(65.3%) of teachers responded that they had not conducted action research whereas 32(34.7%) did conducted action research to solve educational problem. Also, discussant in FGD and participant in the interview described the practice of teachers in conducting action research were unexpectedly in low status. In the same way, the documents in secondary schools and woreda educational office show there were low slandered and few numbers of action research in secondary schools and woreda educational office. Whereas, in item 2.2, respondents who involved in

conducting research in their teaching career were requested to write the titles of their research.

Some of their research titles were listed as follows:

- Students discipline problems
- The attitude of female students towards mathematics
- Impact of plasma
- Improving the low participation of female students on physics
- How to improve English communication
- How to solve missing of female students in tutorial classes
- Improving the students' results in history
- Women education
- Late coming students
- Female students' low achievement in school
- Students dropout
- Factors that affect female students participation in schools
- Lack of interest and experience in conducting action research
- Improving the reading skills of students
- Enhancing the reading skills of students
- The teaching methodology of biology for grade 9th by student centered
- Minimizing the problems of students absenteeism...etc are some of the titles that the teachers conducted.

These teachers replied the purpose of conducting the issue on their research was reported in item 2.3, as 40(43.6%) for solving a problem, 22(23.9%) for the fulfillment of graduation, 12(13%) for knowledge development and the rest 18(19.6%) were for promotion. Those teachers who did not conduct research were reported their main reason in item 2.4 as:

- Because of place, time and preferable conditions to conduct research
- Because of lack of knowledge in the area
- Because they were the beginner teachers
- Because of lack of experience and skills

In addition to these, the teachers indicated in item 2.5 that the extent of their teaching experience contributed to their research undertaking. They rated 38(41.3%) low, 32(34.7%) medium, 16(17.4%) very low and 6(6.5%) high. On the other hand, they were asked to respond whether they have a plan to conduct action research in the future in item 2.6. The majority 68(73.9%) responded yes and the rest 24(26.1%) responded no. Those who said yes for the above point were mentioned their reason to conduct research in item 2.7 to

- Solve educational problems
- Solve students school dropout
- Improve teaching learning process
- Improve students' knowledge
- Evaluate the discipline of teachers
- Evaluate non-plasma teaching
- improve behavior of students
- Promote students' participation
- Get promotion/career structure
- Solve female students' educational problems, and the like, and also the participants in FGD and interview mentioned the importance conducting action research as similarly as stated above.

Whereas, those teachers did not conduct action research were also mentioned their reason for not conducting research in item 2.8 because:

- Of having no plan

- Of not interested in doing it
- The research needs knowledge, experience, sufficient time and budget
- It makes teachers so busy.
- It does not be implemented at school
- It takes time

This indicates that the most teachers had action research in their teaching career and they had a plan to conduct it for future; however there is a significant gap in their teaching experience contributions to research undertaking. This can be concluded that there was no access to update their skill and knowledge on action research work.

4.3. Teachers' access of means to improve knowledge and skills to conduct action research

The following table shows about the teachers' response on access of means to improve knowledge and skills to conduct action research in secondary schools of Silti Woreda.

Table.7: Teachers' response towards access of means to improve knowledge and skills to conduct action research

No.	Items	NO.	%
3.1	Teachers' participation in any research methodology courses.		
	A. Yes	86	93.5
	B. No	6	6.5
3.2	Teachers' evaluation of the usefulness of research course in conducting to do research.		
	A. Very high	32	37.2
	B. High	20	23.2
	C. Medium	28	32.6
	D. Low	6	7
	E. Very low	-	-
3.3	Teachers' participation in any seminar, workshop, or in-service training to develop their research skill.		
	A. Yes	38	41.3
	B. No	54	58.7
3.4	Teachers' evaluation of the usefulness of research course in conducting to do research.		
	A. Very high	10	26.3
	B. High	10	26.3
	C. Medium	14	36.8
	D. Low	2	5.3
	E. Very low	2	5.3
3.5	Reading different books, journals, articles, other handouts of action research and access to scholars and internet or other sources to improve action research activity.		
	A. Yes	22	23.9
	B. No	70	76.1

As indicated in the above table.7, most of the respondents 86(93.5%) responded that they had taken research methodology course in action research. Respondents were also requested to forward their evaluation about the usefulness of research course in conducting to do research. Thus, the majority of the respondents 32(37.2%) replied that attending action research course's usefulness is very high in conducting action research. On the other hand 20(23.2%), 28(32.6%) and 6(7%) replied that their reflection is high, medium and low respectively. Similarly, the majority of the teachers 70(76.1%) indicated that they did not participate in any seminar, workshop, or in-service training to develop their research skill. While, 22(23.9%) of the teachers responded that they participated in seminar, workshop, or in-service training to develop their research skill. In addition to these the teachers were requested to evaluate the degree of their evaluation on the usefulness of trainings to develop their research skill. In this regard, 14(36.8%) of the teachers replied as medium and 10(26.3%) replied equally very high and high; the rest 2(5.3%) each replied very low and low on the usefulness of trainings in conducting action research. The last item of the table shows that 50(54.3%) of the teachers did not read different books, journals, articles and other handouts of action research; however, 42(45.7%) of the teachers responded that they read different books, journals, articles and other handouts of action research.

From these results, we can conclude that the majority of teacher respondents participated in the research methodology courses and the usefulness of this training is high. Whereas the majority of teachers in secondary schools did not get workshops, seminars and in-service trainings; also they did not access to read books, journals and handouts to develop their research skills. In addition to this, they did not get access of scholars, internet and other means to improve their knowledge and skill on conducting action research.

4.4. Teachers' collegial interaction to conduct action research

The following table shows about teachers' response on collegial interaction to conduct action research in secondary schools of Silti woreda.

Table 8: Teachers' response about the collegial interaction to conduct action research

No.	Items	NO.	%
4.1	Teachers access to /of research works of other teachers		
	A. Yes	24	26.1
	B. No	68	73.9
4.2	Teachers opportunity to disseminate research work in their school		
	A. Yes	28	30.5
	B. No	64	69.5
4.5	Teachers' collegial interaction of their research.		
	A. Yes	12	13
	B. No	80	87

Regarding table 8, most of the respondents 68(73.9%) of the respondents did not get any access of research works of other teachers and only 24(26.1%) of the respondents got access of research works of other teachers. Similarly, 64(69.5%) responded that they did not get any opportunity to disseminate their research work. But only 28(30.5%) got an opportunity to disseminate the research work. Respondents, who said yes for item 4.2, were asked how they disseminated their research work. They replied that they made discussions and seminars with the teachers. But those who said no in item 4.3 stated their suggestions as:

- If trainings are conducted

- If seminars, workshops and symposiums were conducted
- If the school plan, encourage, and work with teachers to disseminate it
- If the school set up committee to this issue
- If there is materials availability, etc.

Respondents were also requested to forward whether they had collegial interaction their research work. Most of them 80(87%) did not collegial interaction and only 12(13%) collegial interaction their research work.

Findings from the above data indicate that the majority of the teachers had never collegial interaction, got access to others research and disseminated their research work. Even though very few respondents indicate that they collegial interaction and disseminated their research work.

4.5: Services delivery of research coordinating unit/committee in conducting action research

The following table show about teachers' response on school and woreda action research coordinating unit in secondary schools of Silti woreda.

Table 9: Teachers' response about School and Woreda action research coordinating unit

No.	Items	NO.	%
5.1	If there is any action research coordinating unit in their school		
	A. Yes	40	43.5
	B. No	52	56.5
5.3	If there is any research coordinating unit in their Woreda educational office.		
	B. Yes	24	26.1
	C. No	68	73.9

According to table 9, majority of the respondents 52(56.5%) of the respondents replied that there was no action research coordinating unit in their school. But some of them 40(43.5%) replied that there was. Those teachers said yes for item 5.1, replied that the action research coordinating unit in school provided services in item 5.2 like:

- Guided and supported research works
- Supported teachers
- Facilitated research work
- Computer access, facilities and mentoring services
- Checked the proposal and followed the work
- Initiated all teachers to conduct research

Similarly, 68(73.9%) responded that there was no any education research coordinating unit in woreda level and only 24(26.1%) said there was. Those teachers said yes for item 5.3, replied that the educational action research coordinating unit in the woreda provided services in item 5.4 like:

- Provided new research works for reference
- Evaluated and selected best research work
- Provided titles of research works; however, some of the respondents replied "there is educational action research coordinating unit in the woreda but they do not do anything."

The above data shows that 56.5% and 73.9% of the respondents replied that there is no action research coordinating unit in schools and woreda educational office. But, 43.5% and 26.1% of the respondents replied that there is action research coordinating unit in schools and the woreda.

From this we can draw a conclusion that there is a gap in both teachers and the schools and the woreda action research coordinating units in taking responsibility on research work.

4.6. The factors that negatively influence action research activities

The following table shows about teachers' response on the factors that influence research works in secondary schools of Silti woreda.

Table 10: Teachers' response to the factors that influence research work

No.	Items	1st Choice		2nd Choice		3rd Choice		4th Choice		5th Choice		Total
		NO	%	NO	%	NO	%	NO	%	NO	%	
6.1	Lack of willingness and commitment towards research	31	33.7	29	31.5	12	13	4	4.3	16	17.4	92
6.2	Lack of support from coordinating unit/committee at Woreda and School level	8	8.7	18	19.6	36	39.1	18	19.6	10	10.9	92
6.3	Lack of financial and material resource	14	15.2	24	26.1	14	15.2	26	28.3	14	15.2	92
6.4	Shortage of time.	10	10.9	4	4.3	24	26.1	18	19.1	36	39.1	92
6.5	Lack of access to update knowledge and skill in research work.	28	30.4	16	17.4	6	6.5	22	24	20	21.7	92

As discussed in the table 10 above, the related factors that influence research work were ranked, 31(33.7%), 29(31.5%), 12(13%), 4(4.3%) and 16(17.4%) of the teachers ranked Lack of willingness and commitment towards research as their first, second, third choice, fourth and fifth choice. Lack of support from coordinating unit/committee at Woreda and School level was ranked as the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th by 8(8.7%), 18(19.6%), 36(39.1%), 18(19.6%) and 10(10.9%). Concerning lack of financial and material resource, 14(15.2%), 24(26.1%), 14(15.2%), 26(28.3%) and 14(15.2%) of the teachers ranked it as their 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th choice for factors that hinder research work. With regard to Shortage of time, 10(10.9%), 4(4.3), 24(26.1%), 18(19.1%) and 36(39.1%) of the teachers selected it as their 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th choice. In addition to these, lack of access to update knowledge and skill in research work as 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th choice by 28(30.4%), 16(17.4%), 6(6.5%), 22(24%) and 20(21.7%)

Generally, these indicate that factors influence research work was as most of the teachers selected lack of Teachers' willingness and commitment towards research and lack of access to update knowledge and skill in research work.

In addition to this, limitations of material (computer access, research journals, reference books, internet service, research works, handouts, etc), limited support of school administrations , teachers devotion to spend spare time, Lack of finance, resource and facilities and lack of support from school, educational officers and other staffs, limitations of support of school administrations, school environment and lack of moral and material incentives were another considerable factors hindering research work.

4.7. Issues related to the involvement of teachers and stakeholders, prevailing problems and suggestions in action research.

In this section, issues related to the involvement of teachers and stakeholders, prevailing problems and suggestions in action research were summarized based on the teachers' response.

The respondents' reported the involvement of teachers in research in their school as very poor, very low and medium. Similarly, participants in the FGD and Interview emphasized that the engagement of teachers in research work was very low. This was revealed on the analysis of document; there was no problem solving and standardized research. They also indicated that some teachers have positive attitude towards research work. The teachers were also reported the evaluation of the involvement of the stakeholders as limited, not satisfactory, medium, almost no. Very few respondents replied that the stakeholders tried to involve but they were not keen on research work. In addition to this, participants in the interview and FGD mentioned that there was no significant stakeholders' involvement beyond planning. The respondents mentioned the most prevailing problems in doing action research were:

- Financial and facilities constraints
- Lack of financial and resource support
- Low attention for research
- Lack of initiative to conduct action research
- Low media focus on research work
- Lack of teachers' knowledge and skill in research methodology
- Lack of professional man power in the field
- Lack of support for teachers' and on the implementation of research work, and the like

Moreover, interviewees and participants in FGD strengthened similarly the above stated factors.

Finally, teachers' were asked to list down any suggestions which help to promote teachers' involvement in educational research in their school. They listed as:

- Supporting teachers' in trainings, morally and financially
- Accessing facilities
- Preparing research centre in schools
- Sufficient budget allocations for research works
- Arranging panel discussions to share experiences
- Encouraging teachers who conduct problem solving research
- Assigning skilled man power in schools to facilitate research activities are some of the suggestions that teachers listed to improve the involvement of teachers in schools to conduct action research.

Also participants in the interview and FGD mentioned the above major measures to improve the involvement of conducting action research.

CHAPTER FIVE

5. Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

This Chapter has attempted to present summary, to draw conclusion, and forward recommendations of the study.

5.1. Summary

The teaching learning processes become effective up to date and successful if it is supported by action research. Action research helps to describes, explains, analyzes and interprets educational problems. It also helps teachers and other educators to assess and reflect their teaching- learning process, explore and test new ideas, theories and methods of teaching, educational material (Habtamu, 2000 & Gemechu, 2006). This indicates that there is a need to facilitate conditions to conduct action research in classroom situation by practitioners. Such type of action research helps to solve educational problems and improve classroom situations.

Teachers should be inquisitive in identifying problems and suggesting solutions through continuous action research efforts in areas that have direct or indirect impact on education. Teachers at all level are expected to conduct action research (MoE, 2004). Accordingly, teachers' conduct action research gives special emphasis on the Education and Training Policy (ETP, 1994). Despite this fact, the participation of teachers in research activity use as the criteria of evaluation as well as career structure at this time (MoE, 2004).

In siliti woreda, however, there is no evidence that indicates the status of action research in secondary schools of in the woreda. Research on the practice and challenges in conducting action research in secondary schools provides valuable information for teachers, directors and other responsible authorities at schools and woreda. Besides, it adds

perspectives to concerned bodies and educators about the prior understanding of the involvement of secondary school teachers to conduct action research.

The basic research questions were:-

- What is the current status of teachers' involvements in action research activities?
- What are the factors that influence teachers' engagement in action research in Silti woreda secondary schools?
- What measures can be taken to improve stakeholders' involvement in action research in Silti woreda secondary schools

A descriptive survey research method was employed in this study. For this purpose mainly quantitative but also qualitative data were collected from representative samples. 92 copies of questionnaire were administered for 3 secondary school teachers in the woreda. From this, 92 teacher respondents did returned the questionnaire by filling appropriately side by side interviews were made with 3 directors of secondary schools, 1 woreda expert and 1 supervisor in the academic year 2012. The data secured through interview were analyzed qualitatively. Also FGD were made with 13 teachers on the purposively selected 1 secondary school. The qualitative and quantitative data help to obtain different but complementary data on the same topic to have good understanding of research problem.

The following were the main findings of the study:-

1. The current status of secondary school teachers' practice in action research was low. The data gathered from the respondents, interviewees, document and participants of FGD indicated that the current status of teachers' practice in action research was in low

status.

2. The considerable number of teachers (58.7%) did not get workshops, seminars and in-service trainings; also they (45.7%) did not get access to read books, journals and handouts to develop their research skills. Also they have no access of scholars who help them while conducting action research and absence of access to modern technological devices like internet to improve their research skills and knowledge were some problems.
3. Most of the teachers' personal willingness and commitment to conduct action research as indicated from the data by the respondents (78.2%) was taken as a significant gap identified.
4. The analyzed data shows that 56.5% and 73.9% of the respondents replied that there was no action research coordinating unit/committee in schools and in woreda offices. From this we can draw a conclusion that there is a gap in both teachers and the schools and the woreda action research coordinating units/committee in taking responsibility on research work.
5. The extent of publication and dissemination of action research outcomes was depicted that majority of the teachers (87%) had never published and 69.5% had never disseminated their research work. Even though very few respondents indicate that they published and disseminated their research work; however, there was no published and disseminated research work in the document analysis, in focus group discussion and in the interview conducted.
6. The role of stakeholders in enhancing research undertaking was limited. Very few respondents replied that the stakeholders tried to involve, but they were not keen on research work. In addition to this, participants in the interview and FGD mentioned that there was no significant stakeholders' involvement beyond planning.
7. From the data we can conclude that limitations of material (computer access, research journals, reference books, internet

service, research works, handouts, etc), limitations of support from school administrations, absence of Professional on research, shortage of skill in research methodology and absence of financial support were the major factors influenced research activity.

5.2. Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study it is possible to arrive at the following conclusion; as indicated earlier there are important issues, which should be considered for the current status of low practice in research work. Some of these are teachers' commitment and willingness to conduct action research, lack of access of/to means to improve knowledge and skills in conducting action research and limitations of financial and material resources were also other factors.

As stated in findings the collegial interaction and publication of action research outcomes was unexpected. This is due to skill, knowledge and experience limitations, teachers' devotion to spend spare time, lack of capacity of school administrations and research committees' and woreda experts, absence of budget, lack of access of facilities and not knowing the way how to disseminate research work.

There was no coordination, attention and role identification of stakeholders in enhancing research undertaking. Thus, practice of research work in schools became a challenge.

As indicated on the findings, school research committee and woreda coordinating units are not properly taking their responsibilities in research undertaking. The challenges for this is there is no specialized research coordinating bodies and units in schools and woreda offices

who plan, guide, train, support, monitor and evaluate the overall process of research activity.

5.3. Recommendations

On the basis of the above findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are forwarded:

1. The stakeholders should facilitate opportunities of trainings, workshops, seminars and panel discussions on action research activities to improve the skills and knowledge of teachers, directors, woreda educational experts and supervisors in conducting action research.
2. Teachers should proactively participate in action research activities. Willingness and commitment to conduct action research are essential contributions by teachers' side to improve action research work in the schools.
3. Teachers should develop sense of collaboration with their colleagues to conduct action research that creates learning and improvement in schools' environments.
4. The woreda education offices should establish action research unit with specialized man power who takes over all responsibilities of the research.
5. The schools and the woreda educational offices should allocate sufficient budget for research work.
6. Teachers are expected to update their knowledge and skills to conduct action research activities
7. The school administrations should establish supporting and encouraging systems for research work to motivate and initiate teachers' engagement in research.
8. The schools should avail necessary facilities and materials for conducting research activity.

9. The schools and woreda educational offices should organize different ways (trainings, seminars, workshops, panel discussions, financial support and the like) to disseminate and publish research outcomes.
10. The stakeholders from schools, woreda education office and NGOs should work in collaboration to enhance teachers' practice in research activities.
11. The schools and woreda educational offices should prepare research centre, arrange panel discussions to share experiences, encourage teachers to conduct problem solving research and assigned skilled man power to facilitate research activities.

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obrienr@fis.utoronto.ca

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Appendix, A:

**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES
INSTITUTE OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH**

Questionnaire to be filled by secondary school teachers

The purpose of this questionnaire is to collect data for a thesis entitled “The practice and challenges in conducting action research in secondary schools of silti woreda”, and to recommend possible solutions for further improvement for conducting action research. Thus, your cooperation in responding to the questions honestly and timely is very essential to the success of the study. Your response will kept confidential and will never be used for other purpose other than the purpose mentioned above. Therefore, you are kindly requested to complete the questionnaire honestly and responsibly.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation!

Part one: Information about respondents’

Instruction: please fill the required information by making ‘√’ in the box or on the space provided.

1.1 Name of the school-----

1.2 sex: Male Female

1.3 qualification: Diploma BA/BSC/BED MA/MED

If any other _____

1.4 field of study: Language studies Natural science Social Science

Pedagogy Educational planning and management Mathematics

If any other _____

1.5 Age: 20 years and below 21-30 years

31-40 years 41-50 years above 50 years

- 1.6 Services in years: less than 5 years 5-10 years
 11-15 years 16-20 years 21 years and above

- 1.7 Positions in career ladder (for teachers only):
 Beginning teacher Junior teacher Senior teacher
 Associate leader teacher Leader teacher

1.8 The number of periods you are teaching per a week _____

Part two: Information about teachers' action research practices.

The following items are about your practice in action research. Indicate your agreement by using a tick mark "✓" by the corresponding box.

2.1 Teachers' practice in conducting research in their teaching career. Yes No

2.2 If your answer for the above question is "Yes", please write the title(s),

1. -----
2. -----
3. -----

2.3 If your answer for question number 3.1 is "Yes", what were the purpose(s) of the issue(s) you studied?

- For promotion in the career structure
- To develop knowledge
- The fulfillment of your degree or diploma
- To solve problems in school
- If any other -----

2.4 If your answer for question number 3.1 is "No", State your reason -----

2.5 To what extent your teaching experience contributes to your research undertaking,
 Very low Low Medium High Very high

2.6 Do you have a plan to conduct action research in the future?

Yes No

2.7 If your answer for question number 3.6 is "Yes", what were the purpose(s) of the issue(s) you conduct action research? -----

2.8 If your answer for question number 3.6 is "No", State your reason-----

Part three: Information about teachers' access of means to improve knowledge and skills to conduct action research

The following items are about your access of means in action research by using a tick mark "√" on the corresponding box.

3.1 Have you ever attended any research methodology courses? Yes No

3.2 If your answer for the above question is "Yes", how do you evaluate the usefulness of research course in conducting to do research?

Very low Low Medium

High Very high

3.3 Have you ever participated in any seminar, workshop, or in-service training to develop your research skill? Yes No

3.4 If your answer for the above question is "Yes", how do you evaluate the usefulness of action research course in conducting research over the past five years?

Very low Low Medium

High Very high

3.5 Have you ever read different books, journals, articles and other handouts of action research? Yes No

3.6 If your answer for the above question is "Yes", mention some of the material you have read-----

Part four: Information about collegial interaction of research work.

The following items are about the collegial interaction to conduct action research. Indicate your agreement by using a tick mark“√”on the corresponding box.

4.1 Have you get an access to of research works of other teachers?

Yes No

4.2 Is there an opportunity to disseminate research work in your school?

Yes No

4.3 If your answer for question number 4.2 is "Yes", by what mechanism?

(You can mark more than one option)-----

4.4 If your answer for question number 4.2 is "No", State your suggestion to solve the problem of disseminating action research works in your school -----

4.5 Have you ever collegial interaction your action research?

Yes No

Part five: Information about the services delivered by research coordinating units/committee

5.1 Is there any action research coordinating unit in your school?

Yes No

5.2 If your answer for question number 5.1 is "Yes", what services the office provided for teachers -----

5.3 Is there any research coordinating unit in your Woreda Educational Office?

Yes No

5.4 If your answer for question number 5.3 is "Yes", what services the office provided for teachers? -----

Part six: Information about the factors that influence action research activities

Read the following items carefully and weight their importance in influencing research understanding in schools. Rank each item based on their importance from 1 (to the most acute factor) up to 5 (to the least acute factor)

- 6.1 Lack of willingness and commitment towards research.
- 6.2 Lack of support from research coordinating unit/committee
- 6.3 Lack of financial and material resource.
- 6.4 Lack sufficient of time.
- 6.5 Lack of access of/to means to improve knowledge and skill in research methodology.

If any other-----

Part seven: Open-ended Items: Issues related to the involvement of teachers and stakeholders, prevailing problems and suggestions in action research.

7.1 How do you evaluate the involvement of teachers in research in your school? ----

7.2 How do you evaluate the involvement of stakeholders in your school? -----

7.3 What are the most prevailing problems in doing action research in your school?

7.4 Please list down any suggestions which help to promote teachers involvement in action research in your school-----

Appendix, B:

Interview to be conducted with the Action research expertise & supervisor of Silti Woreda Education Office

1. How do you see the research involvement of secondary school teachers?
2. What are the basic requirements for Action research undertakings?
3. To what extent are these requirements available to conduct the research work?
4. Is there a research coordinating body at school? If so what type of activities do they perform?
5. Is there a research outcomes disseminating process in secondary school(s)?
6. Do you think your office has adequately implement Action research as stipulated in the Education and Training Policy?
7. What are the factors that hinder teachers from undertake Action research?
8. What are the mechanisms to curb the problems and make situation better?

Appendix, C:

Interview to be conducted with the Secondary Schools Principals of Silti Woreda:

1. How do you see the research involvement of secondary school teachers? Can you give me the statistical evidence?
2. What can you say about the opportunity of teachers in your school to publish research work and the techniques of dissemination of research findings?
3. How do you evaluate the application of Education and Training Policy gives high emphasis for research activities in you school?
4. Would you like to list down some of the factors that hinder teachers' participation in conducting research activities in your school?
5. To improve teachers' involvement in Action research for the future, what do you suggest?

Appendix, D:

Agenda for Focus Group Discussion:

1. The status of action research in the school.
2. Teachers' involvement in action research.
3. The role of stakeholders in conducting action research.
4. Factors that influence action research.
5. Measure to improve/conduct action research.

Appendix, E:

ለሰልጢ ወረዳ ትምህርት ቤቶች ጽ/ቤት የጥናትና ምርምር አስተባባሪና ሱፐርቫይዘር የተዘጋጀ ቃለ መጠይቅ

1. በወረዳው ያሉ የ2ኛ ደረጃ መ/ራን በተግባራዊ ጥናትና ምርምር ተሳትፏቸውን እንዴት ይገመግሙታል?
2. መሰረታዊ የትምህርት ተግባራዊ ጥናትና ምርምር የመመልመያ መስፍርት አሉት? ሊዘርዘሩ ይችላሉ?
3. በት/ቤቶች የተግባራዊ ጥናትና ምርምር አስተባባሪ አካል አለ? ካለ ምን ተግባራት አየተወጣ ነው?
4. በሁለተኛ ደረጃ ት/ቤቶች ጥናቶች የሚሰሩ ከሆነ የጥናትና ምርምር ውጤት በምን ሁኔታ ይገለጻል?
5. ለጥናትና ምርምር የሚደረግ ድጋፍ በቂ ነው? የተመደበውስ በጊዘው ይቀርባል? በጀቱስ የተግባራዊ ጥናታና ምርምር ስራ ያበረታታል?
6. ጽ/ቤቱ የሚሰሩ ጥናቶች ከአዲሱ የትምህርትና ስልጣና ፖሊሲ ጋር ተጣጥሞ ተግባራዊ መሆኑን እንዴት ይገመግሙታል?
7. በመ/ራን የተግባራዊ ጥናትና ምርምር ተሳትፎ ላይ አደናቃፊ ምክንያቶች የትኞቹ ናቸው?
8. መ/ራን በተግባራዊ ጥናትና ምርምር ተሳተፎአቸው እንደሻሻል ቀጣይ ምን መደረግ ይገባል?

Appendix, F:

ለሁለተኛ ደረጃ ር/መምህራን የተዘጋጀ ቃለ መጠይቅ

1. በት/ቤቱ የመ/ራን የተግባራዊ ጥናትና ምርምር ያላቸው ተሳትፎ እንዴት ይገመገሙታል? አሃዛዊ መረጃ ሊሰጡን ይችላሉ?
2. የጥናትና ምርምር ውጤት መ/ራን ለሌሎች እንድንገልጹና እንደያሳትሙ እድል አለ?
3. ት/ቤቱ የሚሰሩ ጥናቶች ከአዲሱ የትምህርትና ስልጣና ፖሊሲ ጋር ትኩረት ተደርጎ ስለመሰራቱ እንዴት ይገመገማል?
4. በመ/ራን የተግባራዊ ጥናትና ምርምር ተሳትፎ ላይ አደናቃፊ ምክንያቶች የሚሏቸውን እንዴት ይዘረዝራሉ?
5. መ/ራን በተግባራዊ ጥናትና ምርምር ተሳትፏቸው እንድንሻሻል ምን መደረግ ይገባል?

Appendix, G:

የተወያይ መ/ራን የመወያያ አጀንዳ

1. በሁለተኛ ደረጃ ት/ቤት የተግባራዊ ጥናትና ምርምር ተሳትፎ ሁኔታ
2. የባለድርሻ አካላት ሚና በጥናትና ምርምር
3. የመ/ራን ተሳትፎ በተግባራዊ ጥናትና ምርምር
4. የተግባራዊ ጥናትና ምርምርን ለመስራት አደናቃፊ ምክንያቶች

Declaration

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in other university and all sources of material used for this thesis and all people and institutions that gave support for this thesis have been duly acknowledged:

Name: Tadele Kinf

Signature 

Date 26/06/2013

This thesis has been submitted for examination with my approval as a University advisor

Name: Mulu Nega (PhD)

Signature 

Date 26/06/2013