

**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF LANGUAGE STUDIES
DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE
(GRADUATE PROGRAMME)**

**EFFECTS OF ACTION RESEARCH ON FEMALE EFL
TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

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Effects of Action Research on Female EFL Teachers' Professional Development

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the Degree of Master of Arts in Teaching English as a
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Teachers' Professional Development**

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Abstract

The objective of the present study is to explore the effects of action research practice on female EFL teachers' professional development.

Nine female EFL teachers participated in the study. The participants were from Debza, Abema and Edetibeb Primary Schools in Debre Markos. They all teach in the second cycle, grades 5-8, in their respective schools. They were selected purposely because they did action research. The teachers were willing to reflect on their experience. Teachers' diary reflection, interview, and document were the major data collection instruments.

The result of the study revealed that the teachers thought that the engagement helped them improve their professional status. Their perception has changed positively. Their interest towards action research has increased. They developed innovative thinking and systematic investigation. The experience increased their awareness about TEFL and brought them opportunities of promotion and award.

Based on the findings it is recommended that to intensify the impact of action research on EFL teachers' professional development, college/university teachers should work in collaboration with the school teachers. Some push factor such as research endeavor should be arranged to break the silence of experienced teachers who have developed comfort with what they already have. The nearby college or university should work in collaboration with the teachers to help the teachers adapt collaborative work with their colleagues. To break the reluctance of teachers' involvement in action research, award bearing action research projects should be prepared.

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1. Background of the Study

Educators strongly suggest that research should be regarded as part of the work of teachers. It actually is one of the major tasks of teachers in addition to classroom teaching and updating them through reading academic writings. In foreign language teaching, classroom activities play the major role in giving opportunity to students to learn the language. Every classroom environment is so unique to itself that what actually works in one classroom may hardly work in another. This makes action research inquiry important in order to exploit each classroom event to benefit students at its best.

Action research is one of the various approaches of educational research methods. It is highly recommended for teachers since it enables them to reflect on their classroom activities (Babcock, 2001). It helps teachers to improve ongoing practice to help students' learning and their own professional development. Students, teachers, administrators, research experts and governing educational bodies' engagement in a continuous process of action improves the environment and makes learning happen to a maximum level.

Action research offers the way how this situation happens through participative practical involvement of the concerned bodies (especially teachers and students) by a cyclical engagement of targeted activities. It is a continuous process of investigation involving planning, acting, observing, and reflecting.

EFL teachers can make use of it to improve their real classroom situation. They should be equipped with Action Research theoretical and practical knowledge.

A continuous improvement of classroom environment is crucial in a foreign language situation like in Ethiopia since the classroom activities should as much as possible be exploited for the learners as it is the sole opportunity available to improve their English, and communicate through the language.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Action Research, though relevant, is lacking in Ethiopian EFL teachers. This is concluded by local researchers by Adoko (2000), Cherie (2003), and Wondu (2006). These researchers conducted study on the awareness, attitude, and extent of implementation of action research in Ethiopian educational centers, and found out that most of them do not participate in AR. The result of these findings shows that most of the teachers have positive attitude towards it and they are eager to know how to conduct Action Research.

The teachers' engagement in action research is recommended not for 'knowledge sake'. Teachers' action research is justified both for the teachers' professional development and students' learning sake. The extent of pressure that the involvement puts on the professional renewal may highly depend on the amount of learning that the teachers grasp out of the experience.

The concern of the present researcher is on what the involvement brings. What effects does it have on the professional development of those who are already making use of it? By pursuing this investigation it is hoped to review the perceived effects of action research on those female EFL teachers who practiced it with regard to their professional efficiency.

The justification for choosing female EFL teachers for the study is because the researches conducted so far revealed that female teachers do not participate in research. However, I personally know many female teachers who conducted action research in their professional career. In order to (1) show that they do participate in inquiry (2) investigate the extent they are making use of it and (3) communicate the benefit it brought them, this study selected female teachers only.

1.3. Research Questions

1. Did the ELT action research engagement raise consciousness, maximize opportunities and improve female EFL teachers' professional development?
2. What changes, if any, does the involvement bring on the teachers' beliefs about their practice, interest and perceptions of their roles as a result of their involvement in their own research?

1.4. Objectives

The general objective of this research is to investigate female EFL teachers' engagement in action research and its effect on their professional development.

Specifically, this study is intended to:

1. explore the effect of the teachers' action research engagement on their professional development.
2. reveal female EFL teachers reaction on their action research experience.
3. show the extent to which EFL teachers feel that action research involvement contribute to their professional efficiency.

1.5. Application of the Results

The result of the study will be useful for:

1. EFL teachers in general who wish to know about the effect of action research engagement on teachers' professional development.
2. female EFL teachers to encourage them to participate in action research.

1.6. Scope of the Study

This study is a case study on nine female EFL teachers. It was done in three primary schools in Debre Markos namely Abema, Dibza and Edetibeb. Only action research that the teachers did in their classrooms or school environment in relation to English language learning and teaching was examined.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.1. Background of Action Research

2.1.1. Historical Overview

The term action research was first coined by the social psychologist Kurt Lewin (1952), as Kemmis 1980 stated in Elliot, 1991). The concept of action research traces back to the works of John Dewey in 1920s and Kurt in 1940s. Stephen Coley and other teachers from College of Columbia University introduced it to education in 1949 (Haley, 2006). As to them, action research is “Teacher-initiated classroom research which seeks to increase the teacher’s understanding of classroom teaching and learning and to bring about improvements in classroom practices” (Snell, 1999:1). Action research can make teachers ‘students of teaching’ (John Dewey, in Verster, 2005).

Action research (AR here after) emerged as a form of curriculum development in schools in the 1960s in UK (Elliot, 1991). Teachers who conducted action research praised, and so the primary purpose of some researchers to conduct one was appraisal (Ibid).

2.1.2. Definition of AR

Singh, (2007) cited the following definitions of action research. AR is a three-step spiral process of 1) planning which involves reconnaissance; 2) taking action; and 3) fact-finding about the results of the action (Lewin, 1947, in Singh, 2007)). “Action Research is the process by which practitioners attempt to study their problems scientifically in order to guide, correct, and evaluate

their decisions and actions” (Corey, 1953, in Singh, 2007:8). “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” (Calhoun, 1994, in Singh, 2007:9).

As the definition of the scholars’ state, AR is a combination of action and research. “It is an investigation in order to act to bring about improvement and understanding” (Singh, 2007:12). AR is practice oriented (Ross, 1999). AR has action as a central element, not passive observation. It requires practitioners involve in reflective action that leads to improvement of practice (Babcock, 2001).

Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) describe AR as inquiry consisting of four main phases: planning, acting, observing and reflecting (Singh, 2007). Elliot’s (1991:69) mostly cited definition says, “... Action research can be defined as ‘the study of a social situation with a view to improving the quality of action within it.’” AR is a kind of inquiry conducted by practitioners (Burns 1999). Language teachers conduct classroom inquiry with the aim of getting a positive change in the teaching-learning process.

Action research is a small-scale study and a disciplined method for intentional learning from experience (Altrichte, et al., 1993). “Action research can be defined as the process of studying a real school or classroom situation to understand and improve the quality of actions or instruction (Hensen 1996, in Johnson, 2002:13). Action research is: ‘...a form of collective self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own social or educational practices, as well as their understanding of these practices and the situations in which the practices are carried out’ (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988; in Singh, 2007).

McCarthy and Riner (1998:47) gave the following description on what action research is and what it is not. As to their list, AR is:

- a process, which improves education by change.

- educators working together to improve their own practices.
- developing reflection about our teaching.
- collaborative, that is, it is educators talking and working with other educators in empowering relationships.
- the establishment of self-critical communities of educators.
- a systematic learning process.
- a process that requires that we "test" our ideas about education.
- open-minded.
- keeping a personal journal about our teaching.
- a political process.
- a critical analysis of our places of work.
- an emphasis on the particular.
- a cycle of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting.
- working in small groups of educators.
- a justification of our teaching practices.

But, action research is not:

- the usual thing that teachers do when thinking about teaching. It is more systematic and more collaborative.
- simply problem solving. It involves problem posing, the search for the questions beneath the questions that we typically ask about our educational practices.
- done 'to' other people. Action research is research by particular educators on their 'own' work, and it is done with the help of other practitioners.
- hierarchical, but rather is democratic. It is educators working together in relationships of equal ownership and influence regarding the action research project.
- a way to implement predetermined answers to educational questions. Action research explores, discovers, and works to create contextually specific solutions.

AR is conducted by participants (not by outsiders) who are involved in the object of research (like teachers or teacher educators who are engaged in the act of teaching some of the aspects of which are being researched). It is carried out within the confines of the social situation in which the participants are functioning, i.e. in educational scenario such type of researches are conducted by the teachers within the school in which they are employed. The method in such type of research predominantly relies on self-reflection of the participant (researcher) rather than on rigorous statistical analysis (Ibid).

Action research can also be defined as a way of thinking and systematically assessing what is happening in the classroom or school, implementing action to improve or change the situation or behavior, monitoring and evaluating the effect of the action with a view to continuing improvement (Thomson, 1987, in Nigussie, 1996).

In general, action research is a systematic inquiry conducted by teacher researchers to gather information, understand how the teaching-learning process operates, how they teach, how well their students learn, developing reflective practice, in order to effect positive change in the teaching-learning environment, the educational practice and improve the quality of the immediate learning environment (Mills in CAL, 2003; Finch, 2004; Elliot, 1991; Snell, 1999; McCarthy and Riner, 1998; Johnson, 2002; Altrichte, et al., 1993; Burns, 1999 etc).

Johnson (2002:14-16) describes AR in the following way.

- action research is systematic: it is a planned, methodical observation related to one's teaching
- you do not start with an answer. The assumption of any research is that you don't know what you are going to find. If you know the answer, there is no point for you to study. For example, if you know that method X is the best way to teach reading, it will not be appropriate to conduct a

study to describe it. However, to see the effect of method X in a particular classroom, it would be appropriate to conduct a study. The goal is to understand method X fully and its effect on student's reading performance. This is the concern of action research, where the teacher becomes an impartial observer (to the greatest degree possible) and study the effect of method X as it is used in his/her classroom.

- an action research study does not have to be complicated or elaborate to be rigorous or effective
- you must plan your study adequately before you begin to collect data: prior plan and schedule is one of the distinguishing factor of a systematic inquiry and an impressionistic view.
- action research projects vary in length. The length depends on the nature of the inquiry, the question, the research environment, and the data collection methods. For smaller action research projects of classroom teachers, 2 weeks is a minimum length. There are also action research projects done with in one or two period's time. Longer studies for master's thesis or an academic journal, the duration ranges from 2 months to a whole school year. The data collection period in both cases should not be too short to avoid the risk of presenting an unrealistic view of that educational setting.
- observations should be regular, but they do not necessarily have to be long. It may range from 1 minute to an hour or more recorded through a quick note or longer and more formal. Consistency and pre planned schedule should be there.
- action research projects exist on a continuum from simple and informal to detailed and very formal
- action research is sometimes grounded in theory. Action research relates itself to the existing theory by the question, results and conclusion of its findings to the existing theory. Teachers may let the reader know how their research is related to what others said. Some action researches

include review literature before data collection to give it a framework; others wait until the result of their study, to compare their work with what others said.

- action research is not a quantitative study. In an action research, the researcher is not trying to prove anything. S/he is not comparing anything to choose the best; neither is there experimental or control groups, independent or dependent variables, or hypotheses to be tested. The goal of action research is not one of the above kind but simply to understand what is going on and improve it.

2.1.3. Theoretical Basis of AR

The primary concern of action research is change (Altrichter et al., 1993). The motive of the change is grounded by the idea of development and innovation being the main elements of professionalism. There is always opportunity of improvement in context of teaching. Action research believes in the inevitability and importance of change and improvements for their educational value not for the purpose of abandoning routine practice. This approach to change is result of a reflexive view of professionalism. Action research can be an agent of change (Johnson, 2002).

Approaches to change: There are two approaches to change called technical and reflexive. A brief discussion about them will clarify their contribution to action research.

- 1. Technical rationality:** This approach assumes that there are general solutions to practical problems, these solutions can be developed outside practical situation, and the solution can be translated in to practice by teachers action which is communicated through publications, training, administrative orders etc (Schon, 1983, in Altrichter et al., 1993). This is operationalized in the classical research model of innovation. Theories are developed through research, they produced into curriculum, teaching-learning materials and manuals and disseminated to teachers

who are to accept the innovation in the form of prescription and use it in the 'told' way.

This approach results in a hierarchy of credibility. The teacher appears to be more credible than the students, the head of department more credible than the teacher, the principal more credible than the head of department etc (Ibid). This gives low value to practitioners, mere applying of the higher theoretical knowledge predefined by the administrative power above them.

2) Reflexive rationality: The assumption behind this approach of change is complex practical problems demand specific solutions, these solution can only be developed in the context in which the problem arises and where the practitioner is a crucial and determining element and the solution cannot be successfully applied to other situations but can be made accessible to other practitioners as hypothesis to be tested (Ibid).

Behind action research is reflexive rationality. The concept of professionalism and teacher as researcher was developed by this view. This is just what Stenhouse refers as "A capacity for autonomous professional self-development through systematic self-study, through the study of the work of other teachers and through the testing of ideas by classroom research procedures" (Stenhouse 1975:144, in Altrichter et al., 1993).

The learning culture of the educational center is a determining factor for reflexive rationality to develop. If there exists local initiatives, and the practitioners are empowered to bring about growth process, then imposed change will replace itself by improvement-centered-change (Altrichter et al., 1993). In order to understand the concepts of reflexive rationality, we need to view the description of complex professional action. Donald Schon (1983) formulated the following relationship between professional knowledge and action.

Action Type 1: Tacit Knowing – in –action

Tacit knowing-in-action represents accumulated knowledge under routine circumstance. When professional practice is simple and appears smooth, action is based on ‘tacit knowing-in-action.’ The characteristic of this type is that thinking and acting are not separate, the profession is frequently unaware of the sources of his practical knowledge, s/he will usually fail to give a straightforward verbal description of his/her practical knowledge. ‘Routines’ are cited as an important example of this kind of action which could not have resulted without knowledge.

Action Type2: Reflection-in-action

When new and complex situation which cannot be solved by routine actions happens, reflection-in-action is needed. This is described as:

When someone reflects-in-action, he becomes a researcher in the practice context. He is not dependent on the categories of established theory and techniques, but constructs a new theory of the unique case. His inquiry is not limited to a deliberation about means which depends on a prior agreement about ends. He does not keep means and ends separate, but defines them interactively as he frames a problematic situation. He does not separate thinking from doing, ratiocinating his way to a decision which he must later convert to action. Because his experimenting is a kind of action, implementation is build into his inquiry (Schon, 1983:68 in Altrichter et al., 1993).

It may not be translated in to words or writing. It resembles a ‘reflective conversation with the situation’ (Ibid). It refers to the competence of self-reflexive act of one’s own thinking and the ability to import knowledge for one context to another (Dorney, 1983 in Altrichter et al., 1993).

Action Type 3: Reflection-on-Action

This action type occurs when there is a need to explicitly communicate knowledge and verbally by distancing ourselves for our actions in order to reflect on it (Ibid). This is an important feature of professional action that it:

- Allows improvement of our ability to analyze and recognize knowledge. It facilitates careful analysis and allows us to plan changes
- It makes knowledge communicable

This type of action is in the main part of professional competency. Professionalism requires the following to be fulfilled:

1. we have to cope constructively with serious problems or complex new situation. By distancing ourselves from our actions, we have better chance of redefining them.
2. we need to take responsibility for the education and induction of motives into the profession and for passing on professional experience to the next generation. Verbal and written record and communication of knowledge gets importance to make this happen.
3. we must be able to communicate our knowledge and our professional action to colleagues and clients, putting forward rational arguments for them and inviting critical discussion.

2.2. The Purpose of AR

Action research is “the study of a social situation with a view to improving the quality of action within it” (Elliot, 1991:69). This definition emphasizes one of the most important purposes of action research. The aim of action research as to Elliot is to improve the quality of the teaching-learning process and the conditions where teachers and students work. Action research supports teachers to cope with the challenges of the teaching-learning practice by way of reflection and investigation of innovations (Altrichter, et al., 1993). An action research experience of teachers has shown that the support and opportunities of the research process helps teachers succeed and achieve. Teacher-researchers become successful in managing professional problems. They showed remarkable change in practice but also developing theories for their actions. Action research helps teachers uncover complexities of the teaching processes and improve it for the student’s sake (Ibid). Not only for the teacher-

researcher but also other teachers and curriculum designers can benefit for teachers' research.

Action research also helps teachers to be reflective (MOE HDP Module, 2004:283). Reflection is "focused thinking before giving a considered response which results in improvement." (Ibid). It is when they reflect their own practices that they can see areas of strength and improvement. A reflective teacher does not want to accept problems and live with them. Instead, s/he wants to search for solutions and improve it.

Briefly, Singh (2007:4) stated that the purpose of AR is:

- To enable the participants (teachers/teacher-educators) to understand their practices.
- To enable the teachers/teacher-educators to assess the sphere of activity more objectively.
- To empower the teachers to improve their teaching practices by testing innovative ideas of their own.
- It is practical and directly relevant to an actual situation in the working world of teachers. The subjects are the students in the classroom, the staff, or others who are primarily involved in the school.
- It is flexible and adaptive, allowing changes during the trial period and sacrificing control in favor of responsiveness and on-the-spot experimentation and innovation.

2.3. The Relationship between Action and Reflection

2.3.1. Action and Reflection

"Action research is a form of self-reflective inquiry undertaken by participants (teacher, students and principals, for example) in social (including educational) situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of (a) their own social and educational practices, (b) their understanding of these practices, and (c) the situations (and institutions) in which these practices are carried out."(McNiff, 1988:2). According to this definition, with the help of action

research teachers may mediate theory and practice, find better ways of implementing theory in to practice, identify successful and unsuccessful alternatives, improve and change situations. “The skill of reflective thinking is equally important in implementing action research” (Joseph, et al., 1998:381). AR practitioners need to develop systematic reflections and habit of their mind.

The teachers will tell and reflect on their professional development as a result of the action research inquiry, they’ll reflect their experience about carrying out an AR in their classrooms. In the literature teacher action research are known as action research, practitioner research, teacher research, practical inquiry, classroom research, and action inquiry (Singh, 2007).The researchers reflect up on what is happening with their project, developing, planning, acting and observing.

AR helps teachers shift from focus on long hours and product to effective hours and process. It helps teachers develop ability of keeping up with new curriculum (Verster, 2005). AR sees teachers and students as the most important players of the process.

The main feature of action research is that it must address the practical problems and needs to bring about a practical outcome (Wallace, 1991). Action research is attractive for reflective teachers for two main reasons:

- I. It can have a specific and immediate outcome which can be directly related to practice in the teacher’s own context.
 - II. The ‘findings’ of such research might be primarily specific, i.e. it is not claimed that they are necessarily of general application, and therefore the methods might be more free-ranging than those of conventional research.
- (Ibid)

AR is part or/and an extension of reflective practice of teachers. “The ‘reflective cycle’ is a shorthand way of referring to continuing process of reflection n

‘received knowledge’ and ‘experiential knowledge’ in the context of professional action (practice)” (Verster, 2005:33).

The base of action research is reflective rationality (Altrichter et al., 1993). In this sense the process of action research is analyzed in terms of the relationship between action and reflection.

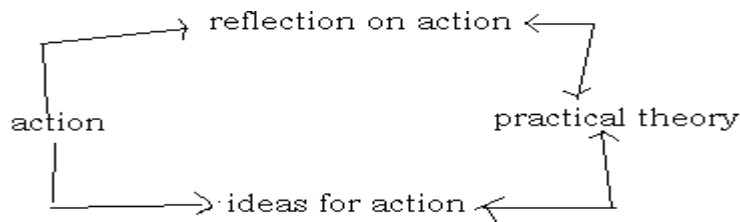


Figure 1: The circle of action and reflection, (Altrichter et al., 1993:207)

2.3.2. Reflective Practice

One of the ways by which theory can be related to practice is what Wallace (1991) called a reflective model. Wallace described the ‘reflective model’ of professional education and/or development by using the following figure.

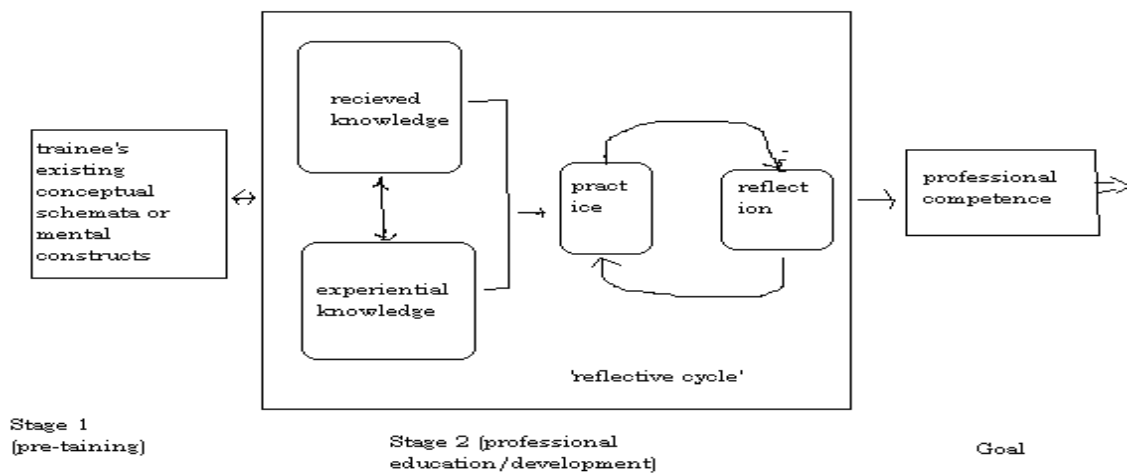


Figure 2: Reflective practice model of professional development/education, adopted from Wallace (1991:49)

Stage 1: pre-training

It is the situation where the participants of the training event know little or nothing about the concept and they have neutral attitude about it.

Stage 2: Professional education/development

What is it that the training brings to the teachers' professional development?

There are two elements here:

1. Experiential knowledge: referred to the 'experiential knowledge' of professional action (practical experience).
2. Received knowledge: facts, data, theories, etc which are either by necessity or by convention associated with the particular profession.

Stage 3: professional competence

Practice is very essential for professional development to the extent that they are reflected up on (Ibid). Development implies change, and fruitful change is extremely difficult without reflection.

Professional competence can be viewed from certification and expertise. If the later sense of professional competence is as valid as the first, then equipping trainees with the techniques to go beyond professional competence might be self-evaluation, or reflection of performance.

By the help of action research to develop teachers' professional development it means that, action research helps teachers to:

- Investigate those aspects of practices that they want to improve
- Develop classroom work to improve students' learning
- Investigate their relationship with students, colleagues, parents, administrators
- Gain more comprehensive view of the teaching-learning situation
- Develop action strategies to bring about improvements
- Take responsible actions in the face of complexities and uncertainties
- Evaluate the outcomes of their efforts
- Share their experiences to improve performance and professional satisfaction
- Publicize their work to contribute for professional thinking

- Professionalize their concepts of work
- Act reflectively in order to develop one's own knowledge
- Develop professional responsibility (Wallace, 1991:50)

2.4. Basic Characteristics of AR

Altrichter, et al. (1993:6) gave the following distinguishing characteristics of action research

- 1) Action research is carried out by people directly concerned with the social situation that is being researched. In the classroom situation, teachers are professionally responsible for what is going on. Teachers may initiate the problem being investigated, but usually it is not possible to improve the situation without the involvement of students, parents, concerned educational experts and governors of the local community. The long term aspiration of action research remains to be collaborative. If it is an individual concern, however, an external adviser like higher institution consultant is needed to provide support not to take responsibility.
- 2) Action research starts from practical questions arising from everyday educational work. It aims to develop both practical and theoretical knowledge of the participants.
- 3) AR must be compatible with the educational values of the school and with the work conditions of teachers. However, it also contributes to the further development of these values and to the improvement of working conditions in the educational system.
- 4) AR offers a repertoire of simple methods and strategies for researching and developing practice, which are characterized by a sensible ratio of costs to results.
- 5) However, specific methods or techniques are not what distinguish action research. Instead, it is characterized by a continuous effort of action and reflection. Both sides gain: reflection gives new options of actions and actions are examined and reflected.

- 6) Each action research project is unique to itself. The process might be the same but each action research has a character of its own irrespective of its scale-large or small.

2.5. The Importance of Publicizing Teachers' AR

The first and foremost beneficiaries of action research are students and teachers since action research is context-specific. However, making teachers' knowledge public is important for others to get access to hypothesis to be tested to improve their own situations (Altrichter, et al. (1993:176-179). He mentions the following importance of publicizing action research:-

- public reporting prevents teachers knowledge from being forgotten
- the process of reporting teachers' knowledge increases the quality of reflection on practice
- through reporting research, teachers clarify their own position and bring influence to bear on educational policy by means of rational argument
- by reporting their research knowledge, teachers meet the requirements of professional accountability
- by making their research knowledge public, teachers can play a more active role in teacher professional development and initial teacher education
- by reporting their research knowledge, teachers reinforce their professional self-confidence
- by reporting their research teachers improve the reputation of the profession

2.6. Process of AR

Different scholars described the process of action research in different ways. Some of them follow;

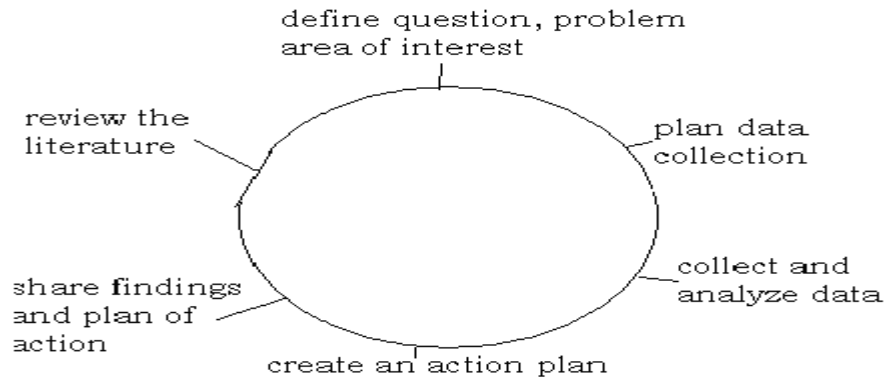


Figure 3: steps of the action research process (Johnson, 2004:14)

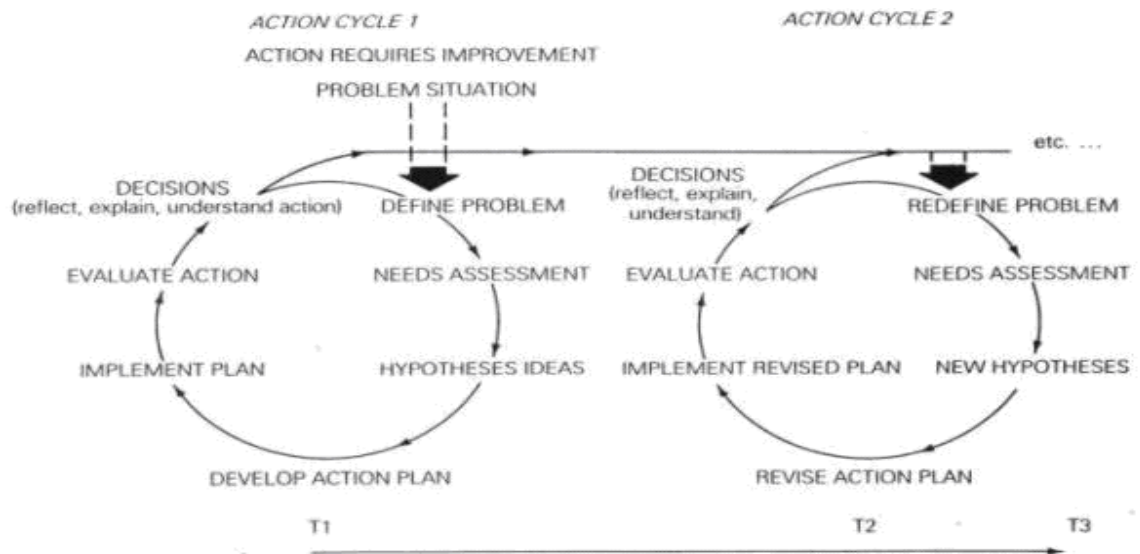


Figure 4: McKemman's action research model (from McKemman 1991:29)

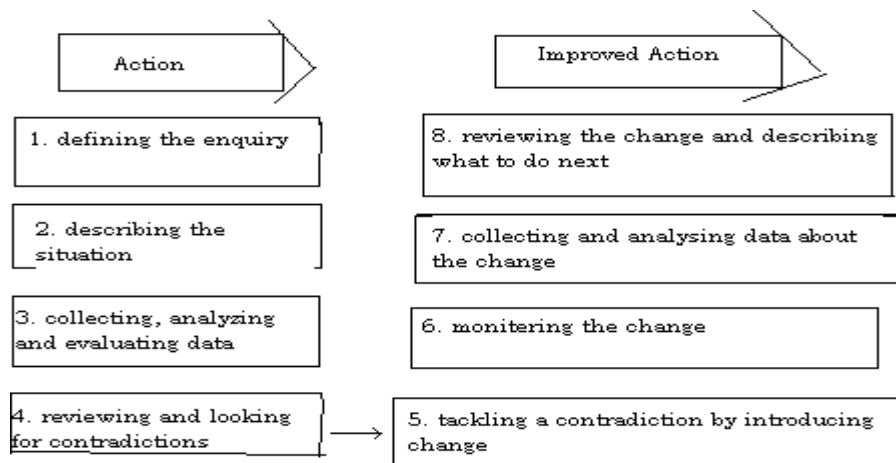


Figure 5: Eight steps in action research (Bassey, 1998:95)

A summarized steps of action research process as given by Sue Davidoff and own van den Berg (1990, in Verste, 2005) is: 1) plan, 2) teach/act, 3) observe 4) reflect.

2.7. Contributions of AR

There are many contributions that the involvement of teachers in research brings to the general improvement of the teaching-learning process. Since every classroom activity is unique and teachers have to responsibly help students in language classrooms, the role of action research is crucial. Teachers involved in research become and read the professional research literature, take leadership role in their schools and influence decisions about school policy, contribute to professional knowledge of their own accord, become better classroom teachers, and it also have epistemological contribution (Nunan, 1992)

Action research is essential in education for three main reasons:

1. to bridge the gap between theory and practice: bottom up approach of research. Since action research projects are directly related to what is happening in their classrooms, teachers are able to link theory with practice in meaningful way.
2. teacher empowerment: action research facilitates teacher empowerment. When teachers collect data to make use of it for decision making about the teaching-learning process. Empowered teachers are able to use their experiences, talents, and creative ideas in order to address students' needs. They will also be able to see their own teaching methods, strategies and styles.
3. teacher in-service and professional growth: traditional teacher in-service were not effective since they usually gather teachers for a long day teaching, or a busy workshop day where an expert will describe the best method of teaching that probably never work in the teachers' classrooms or their teaching style. To make in-service training effective, it must be given for relatively longer time, containing varied sessions to help them

assimilate the information and align the present concepts with the current curriculum, goals, or teaching concerns.

In relation to professional development, action research helps in the following way (Hensen 1996, in Johnson, 2004). It (a) helps teachers develop new knowledge directly related to their classrooms, (b) promotes reflective teaching and thinking, (c) expands teachers' pedagogical repertoire, (d) puts teachers in charge of their craft, (e) reinforces the link between practice and student achievement, (f) fosters an openness toward new ideas and learning new things, and (g) gives teachers ownership of effective practice.

Therefore, professional growth is a valid justification to give teachers time and incentives to encourage them to engage in action research, present their findings and engage in professional dialogue with their peers. The whole process moves the quality of education forward (Ibid).

2.8. AR and Language Teaching

2.8.1. Teacher AR in Foreign language classrooms

Action research is a self-driven, individualized or collaborative type of tool that language teachers can use to develop, reflect, and improve their teaching styles, and student' learning (Haley, 2006). Some of the most important aspects of action research in foreign language classroom are that it is small scale, contextualized, localize, and aimed at discovering, developing, or monitoring changes to improve practice (Wallace, 1991). Teachers explore action research as a tool to develop their professional knowledge and improve foreign language instruction in the context of their own classrooms (Haley, 2006). It is a process of teachers' investigation of teaching and learning in order to improve their own and students' learning (Verste, 2005).

2.8.2. AR and EFL Teacher Empowerment

Teachers' involvement in AR empowers their ability to collect data and manage them for their processes of teaching. Experience of AR backed by reflection and feedback will help teachers make adjustments to the learning processes (Babcock, 2001). AR helps teachers construct experiential knowledge (Ibid). Their empowerment is shown by:

- **Making Choices:** Teachers who involve in AR make choices for experiences. Choices make them participant.
- **Engagement of insightful reflections:** encourage to think and explore about the process of teaching and learning.

In the field of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) research, current theories and practices discover that... (Finch, 2004:1).

- The EFL classroom is not a predictable place (i.e. educational 'truths' cannot be inferred from the examination of isolated factors);
- The EFL classroom is a unique place (the abundance of interdependent variables mean that research conditions cannot be replicated and that generalizations cannot be made from classroom research, since every learning situation is different);
- The learning process not predictable (students learn what they want to learn, rather than what the teacher teaches)
- Affect drives learning (student beliefs, perceptions, attitudes to learning, anxieties, confidence, motivation, and teacher-student relationships, are more important than cognition in the learning process)

AR can be used by individual EFL teacher to investigate and understand his/her local learning reality and the findings be reported for others.

In the past 20 years, focus on TEFL research has shifted from program-product relation to process-product or process-process research (Chaudron, 1997:32). "... a number of innovations and discoveries in classroom-oriented research

have contributed greatly to our understanding of learners' social engagement with the language of education.”. AR has contributed a lot to the recent study of second language acquisition theories (Ibid). Recent changes in research result not only to the emergence of AR but also collaborative research, teacher research and classroom research as well. AR has been used to mean collaborative, classroom and teacher research (Ibid). However some distinguish it from the rest that it is change oriented, empowerment of teacher, students and the surrounding community (even outside of classroom), and broader import of teacher and collaborative endeavor (Ibid). It involves three approaches: individual teacher research, collaborative action research, and individual teacher/collaborative classroom research (Calhoun, 1993). “Second (or foreign) language classroom research is research that is carried out in the language classroom for the purpose of answering important questions about the learning and teaching of foreign languages” (ERIC, 1990:3).

2.9. Justification for Teachers Doing AR

Here are some reasons for teachers to consider action research: McCarthy and Riner (1998:225)

- Action research deals with our questions and our problems, not someone else's.
- Action research starts now, that is, we can begin to use action research immediately.
- Action research has proven itself, time and time again, as one way in which educators such as us can come to develop a better understanding, and thus improve our educational practices.
- Action research can lead to better teaching and better learning.
- Action research helps us to build stronger collegial relationships with those with whom we work.
- Through action research we can gain a greater control over our own teaching practices.
- Action research helps us to develop a greater understanding and appreciation

of the ethics involved in education.

- Action research can break down some of the hierarchical barriers that can separate people in schools, such as principals and teachers.
- Action research will provide us with alternative ways of viewing and approaching our educational questions; with new ways of seeing our educational practices.
- Action research helps us to examine the 'habits' we have developed - what we are "really" doing in our teaching or in our administrative practices.

Verster (2005:3) stated the following reasons:

- To help them notice what they and their students really do, rather than what they think they do
- To get feedback as to the success or failure of what they are doing
- To help them tailor teaching and learning to their learners and their settings
- So that they are able to justify the teaching and learning choices they make
- To increase their knowledge of learning and teaching and become authorities of teaching
- To become less dependent on decisions made by people who are far away from their learning and teaching sites, people like textbook writers and school administrators
- To ensure that they don't become bored with teaching

2.10. Gender and ELT Research

2.10.1. Gender-related Professional Development

“Equality has become an economic necessity” (Atwen, and Heirdsfield, 2000:1). Access to and success in education should be independent of gender (Tadria, 1989; Sunderland, 1994; Almaz, 2003). Female EFL teachers, in the present context of Ethiopia, are illiterate in relation to knowledge of education research.

Learning about and using AR as professional development has emerged recently (Elliot, 1991). “Participatory action research aims at empowering participants” (Atwen, and Heirdsfield, 2000:2). Can participation in AR help Female EFL teachers achieve this aim? Can it allow them to be reflective on their practice? Does it allow them to gain confidence in meeting the demands of students’ learning? “The key to professional growth is inquiry” (John, Carol and Anne, 1999:62). There are various benefits that action research brings to professionalization (Calhoun, 1993). Unfortunately, women are not benefiting from professional development inquiries much as UNESCO report show, “It was frustrating that when a rare opportunity for teachers’ professional development is available, virtually no female candidates were benefiting from it (Almaz, 2003:7). Females are not participating much in higher education centers probably:

... because of a generally poor performance record in their undergraduate and graduate studies. The very few who make it do not advance in the career ladder because they fail to meet the additional requirements such as research output. Women faculty usually concentrate on teaching and performing routine tasks, and spend less time on research activities. Research requires time, experience and techniques. How to obtain advice and training, find research funds, or how to progress within the institutions usually come through networks and informal discussions. Women find that they do not have access to the informal network through which such knowledge is passed on. Many female faculty members find their priorities divided between family/domestic responsibilities and professional responsibilities...” (Ibid).

Participation in research is believed to change the professional status of female teachers.

The UNESCO International Institute for capacity Building in Africa has created an excellent network of teacher training institutions and friends of teacher education in Ethiopia as a result of its in-service teacher training program activities... opportunities for short term training in action research methodology would be provided to assist women to do research officially. This will enhance their professional skills as well as the chances to climb the career ladder. They will have the opportunities for staff development training, and last but not least benefit from the accruing financial remunerations... creating an alliance of working groups within the participating institutions and teams of teachers to

work with the institute to overcome some of the more general problems of female teachers is another are where the Institute's access to the TTCs, TTI and University faculties can be exploited" (Almaz, 2003:8).

To bring about a real change on the situation of female teachers, different support should be provided by different bodies of groups. "These issues require a broad rang of interventions, by many players to bolster the educational status and presence of women in tertiary level institutions such as teacher training institutions in Ethiopia" (Almaz, 2003:8). Let alone the professional expertise, the mere presence of female teachers in schools increase girls' performance and lower dropout rates (MOE, 1999). Studies show that female students at schools consider female teachers as more understanding of student' needs, communicating better and more accessible to students (Ibid).

2.10.2. The Need for Career Development and Advancement of Female Academic Staff in TEFL

Studies show that a research skill in specifically by women teachers is rare. UNESCO (1998) identified the following reasons to be potential barriers: limited access to education, especially higher education; discriminatory promotion practice; the stresses of dual family and professional role; career interruptions; propagation of the glass ceiling syndrome privileges that cover criteria for advancement; and absence of adequate policies and legislation to ensure the participation of women.

FAWE (1998) also suggest that women should be enhanced to do research to improve their career status and cope up with their professional responsibilities effectively.

"In the education sector, there are very few teachers in second cycle primary. In colleges and universities and teacher training institutions, the number of female instructors as compared to men is insignificant" (MOE, 2004:15). This can be improved by building the capacity of women in education.

There are different positive steps taken to back up female educators with the necessary career development. The whole purpose of special considerations and affirmative measure is to enable women teachers be effective and efficient in contributing their role in development. Capacity building of female teachers is justified by the history of inequality and discrimination suffered by women in Ethiopia.

2.10.3. EFL Teachers' Gender Equity versus Equality

EFL teachers need to advance their profession through AR, irrespective of their sex. Gender equality means that all should receive the same opportunities to access research education and participation. Gender equity promotes extending unequal and greater levels of support to the group perceived to be 'at risk' or 'less advantaged' there by enhancing this group's chances of competence at the same level as the advantaged group for the sake of the quality of education (Singh, 1998).

2.10.4. Actions to Promote Gender Equity in EFL Teacher

Ministry of Education (2004) states the following actions to be taken in order to promote gender equity:

1. support the enhancement of female teachers' capacity so that they can compete for promotions.
2. provide education opportunities and training to quality female teaching staff in order to advance their teaching career.
3. encourage female instructors to participate in education and research projects through the provision of flexible leave of a absence policy
4. promote conducive environment for female teachers and create an understanding to see female teachers as assets and threat investing in

their professional growth with ultimately benefit the higher education institutions.

5. create incentives such as scholarships and other benefits once they are in graduate progression.
6. strengthen existing efforts to promote women's leadership in higher education institutions.
7. support female teachers' research projects through scholarships
8. encouraging women to involve in research (Panos-Ethiopia, 2004).
9. equality of opportunity refers to access, participation and achievement in education. Addressing educational disadvantaged groups requires intervention (Habtamu, 2004).

Perception

Perception is the representation of what is perceived; basic component in the formation of a concept (WordNet 2.0, 2003). It is also defined as a process by which individuals organize and interpret their sensory impressions in order to give meaning to their environment (Wikipedia, 2007).

2.12. Related Research

Takaki (2002) conducted study on the effect of action research on EFL teachers' professional development as part of a program in "Action Research in a Grassroots EFL teacher development group: Exploration in Teacher Education" which is an action research initiating group called PIGATE. He discovered that teachers who are involved in action research benefited from the process a lot in relation to their profession.

Another related research is Seider, S.N and Lemma, P.'s "Perceived Effects of Action Research on Teachers' Professional Efficiency, Inquiry mindsets and the support they received while conducting projects on intervention in to student learning" (2004). He found out that teachers sustained the inquiry mindset,

and their professional efficiency was enhanced. Teachers perceived that conduction action research contributed to their professional efficacy.

Atay (2006) also conducted study on “Teachers’ Professional Development: Partnerships in Research.” in Turkey. In his study, he found that teachers are invited to spend more tie in reflection. It allows them to think critically about their classroom problems and the intervention.

In Seichner and Klehr (2007) study entitled “Teacher Research Spurs Professional Development” conducted in Georgia, it was found that teachers adapt flexibility, confidence and acquire habits and skills of inquiry.

Local researches on the area show that action research is lacking in Ethiopian EFL teachers. This is concluded by researchers by Adoko (2000), Cherie (2003), and Wondu (2006). These researchers conducted study on the awareness, attitude, and extent of implementation of action research in Ethiopian educational centers, and found out that most of them never conducted one. The result of these findings shows that most of the teachers have positive attitude towards it and they are eager to know how to conduct Action Research. The reason why most of them do not conduct Action Research is because of lack of know-how (Ibid).

Universities give initial training (course) for teachers on AR, schools may be responsible for induction. Who mediates in the in-service to have teachers make use of it? This project shows how funding both sectors (university and school teachers) allow school teachers connect pre-service training with what is happening in the real situation.

Chapter Three

Design of the Study

3.1. Methodology

Qualitative study is highly subjected to variation in human experience. This phenomenon of the method barely allows to rely on single instrument of data collection. In order to study about a single instance the method called case study is appropriate (Nunan, 1992). The present study is a case study. Case study is “an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single entity, phenomenon, or social unit” (Merriam 1988, in Nunan, 1992).

3.2. Research Participants and Sampling

The subjects of this study are nine female EFL teachers who conducted action research in their own teaching. The method of sampling used is purposive. In purposive sampling, the researchers handpick the cases to be included in the sample as they arrive on the basis of their judgment of their typicality (Leedy, 1989). Nine female EFL teachers who did AR are purposely selected for this particular case.

3.3. Research Setting

The participants in this study are from Debre Markos. Seven of them were from Debza primary school, one from Abema primary school and the last one is from Edetibeb primary school. All of them teach in the second cycle, grades 5-8.

3.4 Data Collection Strategies

In qualitative study varieties of instruments are used to get an in-depth picture of the scene. The following instruments were used in this study.

3.4.1. Teachers' Diary Reflection

There are different kinds of diary entries such as memos and in-depth reflections. Reflections are appropriate for this study. The teachers' diary should contain personal account of observations, feelings, reactions, interpretations, reflections, hunches, hypotheses, and explanations (Elliot, 1991).

The kind of reflection in this study is analytical; it contains one's systematic thinking about the action research experience. The teachers told and reflected on their professional growth and development as a result of the action research inquiry. They reflected their experience about carrying out an AR in their classrooms.

3.4.2. Interview

The teachers involved in the classroom inquiry were interviewed in order to know their evaluation about the experience. Interview in a form of semi-structured way is a free flowing conversation that allows generating rich data from the participants (Nunan, 1992). Semi-structured approach was used to give room for interviewees to explain what knowledge and skill they get from the intervention. A semi-structured interview is done when the interviewer asks certain preset questions but allows interviewees freedom to digress and raise their own topics as the interview progresses (Elliot, 1991).

Tape recording was used to have a full record of the information from the interview. Tape recording allows to capture full information of the situation studied.

3.4.3. Document

End-of-program research reports, or in-house publications of participants' work, were used in the study. Checklist was prepared to assess the documents. A checklist is a list of specifications of certain attributes (Johnson, 2002). The attributes may be behaviors, traits, assignments, or skills. The listed attributes are subjected to be either checked or indicate their frequency of occurrence. Documents that Denzin and Lincoln (1995) refer as 'Mute Materials' are important in providing insight in to other components of lived experience (1994).

3.5. Validity and Reliability

For many research questions combination of data collection instruments is useful. Triangulation means looking at something from more than one perspective (Johnson, 2002). To enhance accuracy and credibility of a research, seeing all sides of a situation is important. In this regard, the different types of data sources used in this study are meant to ensure the validity and reliability of the study. The data was collected from the teachers' perception, their production (second perspective) and their advisors' (a perspective of third party).

All instruments have their own weaknesses and strengths. By using different kinds of instruments, the weakness of one can be compensated by the strength of the other. Triangulation of data allows the verification of qualitative data. Furthermore, consideration of ethical issues contributes a lot to reliability and validity of the study. Triangulation and ethics are the general procedure used in this study to secure validity and reliability.

Ethical justification also is another means of securing validity and reliability. Following these ethical principles in the march to enrich the outcome helped safeguard the dependability and soundness of the study. I considered the following ethical principles given by Altricheter, et. al., (1993):

1. Negotiation: it should be based on the consent of all concerned.
2. Confidentiality: the data belong to those who gave it. It should be communicated by the permission of those who gave it.
3. Participants' control: the participants keep control of the research. Any change resulting from the research should be kept in the hands of those who live with it.

3.6. Data Analysis Strategy

Data were organized by grouping similar responses together. The responses obtained were analyzed into major themes. The data obtained through different instruments were analyzed separately based on their topic. The data were not analyzed for each individual case. Instead, I have grouped the information in to themes and analyzed accordingly.

Chapter Four

Analysis, Interpretation and Discussion of the Findings

4.1. Introduction

The main objective of this study is assessing the effects of action research engagement on female EFL teachers' professional development. The data of the study were obtained from semi-structured interview, teachers' reflection on their action research experience, teachers' action research documents and their advisors' judgments on the participants' work.

The analysis is divided in to five sections. The first section contains the teachers' reflection followed by the teachers' interview. The third part contains the document analysis to be followed by the advisor' judgment on the teachers' researches. The last part of this section contains the discussion. The discussion will be made in relation to other researchers' findings.

4.2. Background Information of the Participants

	School 1. Dibza Primary School							*S. 2	**S.3
	***A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
Teaching Experience	30	26	30	30	24	24	24	30	22
Qualification	Dip.	Dip.	Dip.	Dip.	Dip.	Dip.	Dip.	Dip.	Dip.
Teaching Grade Level	8	6	7	5	7	5	5	6	8
Number of ARs									

Done	3	3	2	3	2	2	2	4	4
Promotion earned as a result of AR		Two Rank							Two rank
Award earned as a result of AR		+						+	+
currently started Uncompleted Research	+			+				+	
Other	- Teacher D is eager to conduct about female students in the future too _ Teacher H is currently working on her own AR and helping others to do								

*School 2. Abema Primary School Fig. 6: Bio-data of participants

School 3. Edetibeb Primary School *Teacher

Seven of the participants were found from Debza primary school. This is where the majority of the subjects volunteered to take part in the study. In this school there is this culture of competition to do action research. The competition is very healthy that the experienced one advises the beginners. One of the participants is from Abema primary school. In this school she has become model for the others. She organizes them, advises and motivates them to take part in research.

The last subject is obtained form Edetibeb primary school. She helps the others in doing action research in her school. Mostly, she works with her colleagues in Debza primary school where many of the teachers conduct action research.

4.3 Teachers' Reflection on Their AR Experience

4.3.1 Rationale

The rationale for the teachers' action research is threefold.

1. The problems that they observed in their classrooms and in the school environment,
2. For promotion and/or incentives, and
3. As a partial fulfillment for their Diploma in language teaching.

4.3.2 AR Enforcement and Training

The participants have had training in a form of workshop for two days. The training was given in collaboration with Debre Markos Teachers Education College. The target teachers learnt their diploma in language teaching in the college. There is a course in action research which requires them to conduct an action research as a requirement to pass the course. The target teachers felt that the action research training offered in their schools was not sufficient for them to conduct an action research. However, the action research course helped them a lot in understanding action research.

The training session offered in their schools was not sufficient. The teachers said that it only throw light on the main points of action research. It would have been useful if the training was given for a longer time. The two days training was far from adequacy as the teachers indicated it in the interview too.

4.3.3 Level of Difficulty/Challenge

The teachers found the action research experience a little bit challenging. Two of them said that they thought that action research can not be accomplished successfully at their level. They have done it to the best of their knowledge and they found it easier. What makes the action research engagement challenging is the fact that the female EFL teachers have other responsibilities in the house

that needs much of their time to spend on. Furthermore, the time when the teachers spend in schools have become all day long presently.

4.3.4 Professional Competencies

The subjects mentioned the following competencies they get as a result of their action research engagement.

1. Critical observation

The teachers confirmed that they have become critical observers of their classrooms and its environment. The knowledge of action research has helped them think that things can be improved through investigation.

2. Detect problems or ask questions

As a result of their being observers, they are able to identify their classroom problems. Being able to identify the problem is said to be half the solution. The teachers felt that it is highly significant to be able to dictate the problem that hinders the teaching-learning process. Moreover, among the problems they select, they prioritize.

3. Alternative solutions

To be able to state the underlined problem is one thing and coming up with solutions to overcome the problem is another. The target teachers felt that their involvement in action research enable them think of different solutions to improve a given problem.

4. Decision making

Making choices is one important skill that the participants claim they learnt as a result of their investigation. Action research is about improving a situation that is found unsuitable for the teaching-learning process. All solutions that

the teachers come up with can neither be implemented nor be the one that can really improve the existing conditions.

Appropriate choice must be made. When the researcher chooses what s/he thinks is the one that can bring a real change, s/he is making decision. How the investigation is implemented; how the change is evaluated; what data collection instrument should be used; and how the result should be analyzed also need decision making. This is what the target group felt they learnt from the inquiry.

5. Implementation of intervention

Once the researcher chooses the intervention which s/he thinks can bring a change on the situation, implementation remains. The how, when, where and by whom of the implementation is decided by the researcher. The target female EFL teachers learnt this when they do their own action research.

6. Reflection on action

As a result of the action research involvement the subjects reflected on the actions they have intervened to improve practice. They looked back to their impact of their action on their practice. The teachers stated that the whole process made them be reflective.

7. Evaluation

Parallel to the reflection ability is evaluation skill. Every time an intervention is implemented it is evaluated to check the extent of the improvement it exerted on the practice. Did the intervention work or not? If it did, to what extent? The teachers evaluated their actions and it is revealed in their research documents.

8. Professional dialogue, discussion and communication

The inquiry demanded the teachers to engage in professional dialogue; talk about their research with their colleagues; ask advice about their inquiry from

experienced researchers, teachers and friends. They said that they have had a lot of talking about their study with their colleagues and learnt a lot. They learnt a lot from discussion with their colleagues that they have already made it a useful habit worth adapting.

9. Reading

The average teaching experience of the target teachers is 28 years. They started teaching right away after college and never exit teaching from the day they are on it. They developed comfort with their situation and want to remain like that throughout their teaching career.

Years have passed without the teachers taking any action of what so ever sort to develop their teaching status.

The teachers used to think that what they have learnt three decades ago is the best ever and it needs no change at all. Whenever a new curriculum is introduced they tend to reject it all at once without giving it a trial.

Action research, the teachers felt, enable them read, explore and see what has been going on in ELT. To accomplish the inquiry at hand they had to dig out and see how the others elsewhere have handled such things. This made them learn not only from their own investigation but also from the literature they reviewed. The research has been a push factor for them to read.

10. Seminar presentation

The findings of the target teachers' study have been presented. Seminar presentation is one important skill that the teachers developed because of the action research participation. They said that findings of studies such as their own need to be shared with colleagues, administrators and others. Otherwise, to use one of the teachers' words, it will remain 'Yegan mebrat' (light in pot).

11. Empowerment

The teachers who did action research felt that they are part of the decision makers. They feel that they are autonomous who knows what is best for their own classroom practice even more than the administrators. Looking at themselves as a researcher enables them improve their teaching conditions at their best. Action research enables them be resource persons who have something to contribute to administrators, parents and curriculum developers rather than being passive recipient, observer, and accomplisher of others' work. The direct involvement of the teachers in the improvement of their own teaching-learning problems made them feel like they are the center and most important element in the process.

12. Professional self-confidence

The participants said that they developed professional self-confidence as a result of their involvement in action research. Any professional development action increases professional confidence on the part of the participants since it increases their ability. Action research involvement also increases the participants' ability in relation to inquiry there by increasing their professional self-confidence.

13. Professional responsibility

In the past, the only job of the teachers was considered to be teaching. In that case, if problems arise in the teaching learning process, teachers used to feel that it is somebody else's job to improve it. All they think they are supposed to do is reporting it; that is if they care to do so. But now, as a result of their involvement in their own problem solving activity, they are being responsible. Worrying about the problems and trying to solve it is a witness of responsibility.

Taking part in problem solving, investigation and reflection, in turn, develops responsibility. The teachers affirmed that their engagement in action research really made them be responsible for their profession.

14. Report writing

The subjects wrote their action researches themselves. They have their advisers comment on their writings. They also read sample action research articles in order to organize their own. They developed research/report writing skill when they produce theirs which they placed in their libraries of their respective schools.

4.3.5. Teacher as Researcher

There is a change in trend these days that research has become part of teachers' job. Especially in the situation where the best methods of second language teaching have become mysterious even for scholars, and where scholars themselves agree on the fact that each classroom situation is unique to itself, classroom research seems to be the way out.

The need for action research in ELT has become the order of the day to respond to the multiple needs of the students as well as to the teacher who is entitled to make the teaching effective. Honestly speaking the teachers who participated in the study confessed that they did not understand the role of action research to such an extent. However, they stated that they know its role in improving their professional carrier.

The teachers stated that they used to think that a researcher is a different person who has a higher and special skill who is born to research. They never thought research being part of their job. Their engagement seems to convince them that action research should be part of teachers' work.

.... I never thought I would ever do research before trying it out. I and my friends thought about it and tried it five years ago. We had no idea but started it with the hope that we will have some idea. I remember how reluctant we were. We were about to give up even after starting it. We thought that we were unable for that. We used to think that some people are born to do that and others, like we, can never have a clue.... In the end; however, we managed to do it. And we learnt that we were really able to do research. I personally said 'waw! I can do research'. I willingly accepted it as part of my job afterwards. I keep doing it.... (Teacher A)

They changed their perception of themselves from implementer of what they were given to problem solver and key facilitator of the teaching -learning endeavor who have much to contribute and without whom the process is a mere impossibility.

4.3.6 Action Implementation

In relation to the practice of the teachers' action research, the participants found it to be useful experience. They learnt how to implement a possible intervention to improve the existing situation.

4.3.7 Quality of the Research

The quality of their research was evaluated based on the specification outlined in relation to the research question and literature review (see appendix E, p.83). Four out of the eleven volunteered researches are of high quality meeting the conventional style of research writing. The rest are also good but lack organization and arrangement.

4.3.8. Future Status

All the participants are eager to conduct action research in the future too. In fact, many of them have already started and are in the middle of it. Some of them have identified topics and are in the planning stage. They feel that they are confident as a researcher as much as a teacher. They stressed on the point

that they are experts of their problems that no one can solve their problem better than themselves.

4.3.9 Change

Many scholars regard action research as change agent. The target teachers of this study also felt the same thing. They cited the following changes in their professional carrier.

1. Teaching strategies and Methods

Some teachers change their methods of teaching. It gives them alternative ways to try out. For example, one of the subjects reported her case in the following way:

My students had difficulty reading in front of the class. Especially ten of them couldn't even utter a word. I planned to do an action research on it. I thought of interventions and asked my friends if they have one. They suggested some. Among the alternatives I came up with, I chose one. It is making them read outside of the classroom alone without audience. I had them do this twice. Next, me being the only audience they read twice. Their progress was improving. The third time, I and three students attended the listening program. The students were improving. Their fear becomes lesser and lesser. As they progress, I added the number of students attending the listening. I did this for five rounds. The students totally improved and managed to read in front of the class successfully. Only one of the students couldn't succeed. I found this method 90% working. Therefore, next time I face such a challenge, I'm going to use it. By so doing, I adopt a new method of teaching such as this one. (Teacher H).

2. Improving practice

The action research experience has helped the teachers improve their practice. It suggests to them a way of doing things better and differently. One of the participants' experiences tells how it improves teachers practice.

With the introduction of continuous assessment and active learning, we have come to use group work as one method of teaching. I didn't find it useful when I practiced it as I heard many suggest it. The problems were that students discuss other things than the topic; that they use Amharic as a medium of communication; that they have one person do the assignment for the group; that they spend much time in one issue and do not complete all the activities etc. I sensed that I have an issue in the practice of group work. Many suggest it as good method and I also know that it is important for many reasons to have students discuss in group in EFL. How can I make 'group work' effective in my classroom? I decided to investigate it systematically and planned intervention. I instructed the students that I would give a test after the group work on the issue they discussed. The scenario amazingly changed. The students discussed fully in a way they never did. I gave the test as I promised. I could have left the test since I got what I wanted but I feared that next time I use such thing they would consider it a fake. I wouldn't want to ruin the sustainability like that. Instead, I keep attaching such activities like quizzes, personal reports, oral questions to individual members, sudden selection of presenters and so on after each group work. This changes everything. The intervention improves the way I practice group work. It improves it totally. (Teacher C).

3. Reflective practice

A reflective teacher is one who looks back at what s/he has taught. The target teachers felt that they have become reflective as a result of their involvement in their own action and reflection. They practiced looking back to their work and viewing what worked, what didn't work, which needs improvement, and so on to do it better next time.

Being reflective, as the subjects mentioned, is a new phenomenon for them. They taught more than half of their lives each and in all their teaching experience, they tend to forget what happened after teaching it. They did not have a habit of looking back for redoing it better.

The teachers felt that because of their involvement in the inquiry, they have become reflective practitioner. They developed looking back to their work after completing it for improvement. After all, they engage in action research practice to understand and /or improve their practice. They find themselves in a

position where they cannot do this without reflecting back to their practice. To this end, they have become reflective teachers and now they are enjoying it.

4. Innovative thinking

The teachers spend most of their teaching by using the text book only. They confined themselves to exploiting the textbook exhaustively. When they do this, they adapt themselves to the textbook. The teachers are intelligent that they know everything in the text book and can practice it in classroom as it is. When the method suggested by the textbook is incompatible with the existing situation in the classroom, problem arises. To solve such problems the teacher needs to be creative. To respond to the demands of the existing situation and manage it, noble and original ideas are mandatory since neither the problem nor the solution is there in the textbook.

Teachers need to have both know-how to ‘use analytic, creative, and practical abilities to reach an intended goal as well as generate new ideas or combine the existing ideas in a noble way’ (Johnson, 2002). This refers to both intelligence and creativity of teachers.

When teachers engage themselves in action research inquiry, they think of new ways of handling difficulties at hand. The process makes them creative since they think of ways of facing the new challenges. This changes the teachers’ status from merely adapting the material to creating noble and original ideas that have a significant value in time of trouble. Effective EFL teachers need to be innovative thinkers to help the students learn the language.

5. Teachers’ beliefs about their practice and perception of their roles

A great deal of change has been observed on the teachers’ beliefs about their practice and perception of their roles. They witness the value by their own direct involvement. They are willing to make it part of their job not only because it is prescribed but also because they saw the benefit themselves. The

experience adds them one more role i.e. researcher. To use their own words, 'kebalebetu Yaweke ...' (no one knows better about a thing more than its owner).

Unless they want to ignore it as they used to in the past, they claimed, there are many obstacles in teaching. Since they have accepted solving the classroom problem as their own responsibility, they have identified 'researching' being their role.

4.4 Interview with Teacher-Researchers

Thirty four questions have been presented for the interviewee with many of them being deliberately repeated to triangulate the outcome. The responses of the participants were organized accordingly to the following major themes.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. contribution of AR for EFL teachers' professional efficiency | 11. effect of action research on practice |
| 2. challenge of conducting AR versus its value | 12. teachers' interest on action research |
| 3. the AR experience | 13. changes resulting the inquiry |
| 4. rationale for doing action research | 14. exploring professional literature |
| 5. sustainability of AR | 15. professional responsibility and accountability |
| 6. TEFL and action research | 16. reflective practice |
| 7. female EFL teachers professional development and action research | 17. action intervention |
| 8. sharing findings and in-house publications | 18. sharing of investigation |
| 9. individual versus collaborative action research | 19. professional dialogue |
| 10. professional self confidence | 20. evaluation of the effect of intervention |
| | 21. systematic investigation |
| | 22. interest and motivation |

- | | |
|--|---|
| 23. promotion | 27. quality of the research |
| 24. award/incentives | 28. teacher as researcher |
| 25. consciousness and awareness
raising | 29. level of difficulty of action
research |
| 26. teachers' perception and beliefs | 30. feeling of the whole experience |

Most of the issues raised in the interview have been analyzed in the teacher reflection part. To avoid redundancy, only new ones were discussed here.

1. TEFL and action research

This section focuses on the potential contributions of action research for teachers of English as a Foreign Language. The English teachers participated in the study identified the following benefit they get out of the investigation process.

a. Provides with alternative method of teaching

The teachers are made to articulate the personal methodologies. The alternatives that they came up with the action research involvement help them see other methods and strategies to do the teaching.

They used to think that what they have gone through both in teaching and learning was the best way ever. Their reading to enrich the investigation as well as the action research engagement brought them with different techniques of teaching. This in turn allow them see that their method of teaching turns out to be outdated, inferior and incompatible. They also confessed that they learned that there is no one way of teaching that works for all classrooms.

They need updating all the time. Action research, they think, is appropriate for this. They learned that they need to exploit all ways that experts come up with and also that they need to see and investigate, plan and implement intervention to come up with an adequate method of teaching English as a foreign language.

b. Every classroom situation is different

The teachers claim that throughout their teaching career, they found out that every problem is different. What was challenging in one class went well and smooth in another. Let alone curriculum developers, classroom teachers sometimes fail to predict it. Every classroom is unpredictable and dynamic. To meet the demands of each situation and handle the teaching, systematic approach is of great importance. Action research offers teachers with this quality.

c. The target situation students are very poor in English

English was given as one subject in Amhara Regional State since the medium of instruction in schools was Amharic until 1998 E.C. In fact, this year, in 1999, the medium of instruction have become English again. However, since partly because they have learnt in Amharic until now, the students' English language status is very low.

There are many problems in teaching English in such a situation. English teachers are to face with the problems every now and then unless they do something about it. A lot of investigation is needed to make the teaching possible and alleviate the problems.

2. Female EFL teachers' professional development and action research

This section is concerned with the role of action research for the professional development of female EFL teachers. The target participants reported that action research can have the following impact in relation to female EFL teachers' professional efficiency.

A. A way of penetrating 'comfortable zone'

There is this sense of comfortability with what they have on the side of female teachers. They have made themselves compatible with the existing situation

that they are familiar with. They wanted to live with this 'comfort zone' until the end of their career. Some of the reasons why these teachers wanted to continue this way were that:

- i. they have other responsibilities at home that needs lots of their time. In our culture, females are expected to suffer from every activity at home even if she has other responsibilities outside of it. Unlike females, males have only one responsibility i.e. source of income for the family. These female teachers have difficulty of attending other in-service trainings, reading and searching for further education.
- ii. there is gender influence among the teachers. Female teachers tend to spend much time on talking about other affairs than professional matters. This is a result of cultural orientation that these female teachers adopt from their mothers and female relatives and neighbors' role.
- iii. there is no competition among female teachers. Male teachers are always on competition as the participants suggest. Unless some kind of 'quota' thing comes along, female teachers do not come to stage by themselves. Many of them are relatively in the same stage; they seem to be comfortable with that.

With these and other minor reasons that the teachers listed, they wanted to remain as they are. Action research presented them with what they can do to develop their profession by themselves. It doesn't ask the teachers to leave school to attend sessions nor does it ask them to spend much time. They can do it as they have planned. They can plan it according to their schedule. They can have the 'talking thing' with their colleagues making their project topic a theme. This is suggested by the subjects as killing two birds by one stone. The action research engagement created competition among female teachers which was lacking.

B. Raise consciousness

Action research engagement urges the participants to read, explore and ask others' work on the area they are investigating. To enrich what they're doing at hand, they dig out other' accomplishments. The effort increases professional knowledge as well as research skill. This raises their consciousness, on what they are doing and how to go about it.

C. Maximize opportunities

When the teachers do the action research to alleviate their classroom problems, they also get other opportunities. There is promotion as well as incentives waiting for the teachers who endeavor such things. Moreover, research is a very crucial skill to pursue further education. Many consider research challenging. It is a way of encouragement especially for the female teachers.

D. Motivation

When we climb up the ladder, female teachers are less in number in higher institutions. One of the reasons could be research skills. When female teachers are equipped with this, it will add confidence and motivation for them to educate themselves. Besides, they stated that it is a way of break from mere teaching.

3. Individual versus collaborative AR

The female EFL teachers conducted AR both individually and in collaboration. They found both useful. Working in collaboration with others, they think that they get alternative means of accomplishing the objective; they see different means of recapping the problem; they have the work done in short period of time. However, there is disagreement on minor issues. Everyone knows better only on what their section is and some members do not participate totally.

The subjects preferred the individual work to the group work though the latter has its own benefits as mentioned earlier. They felt they learnt a lot from the

individual work than the team. In their own inquiry, they know every single accomplishments since they have to do it all by themselves. The dedication and commitment exerted in the individual work is more intense than the participants learnt a lot from it.

4. Interest

The target group confessed that they had interest in action research even before trying one. Their interest has increased more and more when they take part in it. They are interested in the inquiry to the extent of making it part of their work even when there is no promotion or incentive attached to it.

5. Benefits

Amhara Regional State Educational Bureau has arranged promotion and incentives for those who conduct action research. This is to initiate them to explore classroom and school environment problems to facilitate the teaching-learning process.

Teacher B, I and H are beneficiaries of this arrangement. Teacher B and I got two stage promotions with a salary increase of 100 birr. Their status in their professional career has also risen from 'teacher' to 'associate leader'. This is supposed to be great change in their career. If it wasn't for their action research endeavor, they should have waited longer service year to earn this status. Similarly, teacher H got benefit. Her benefit is, however, different from teacher B and I.

She got the benefit from BESO (A foreign NGO working in the education sector). BESO has CPD (continuous professional development) programs for teachers. She contributed her action research and won the competition. As a reward she got 300 birr for her effort. Both the incentive and the promotion appear to encourage the teachers to work further.

There are also some who tried for promotion and /or incentive but failed to get one. Teacher A and D are good example for this. They conducted action research for promotion/incentive purpose. However, they didn't get one for some reason. Though they didn't obtain the promotion/incentive, they claim they are equipped with the appropriate knowledge of action research which is to remain with them. They continue doing it even after being excluded from the promotion.

6. Systematic investigation

Solving problems of teaching may be the routine activity of teachers that they do everyday. When they find one method successful in their class, they try out another. They ask their colleagues and try to normalize the situation. Though it incorporates almost all activities in research, these routine activities are not systematic. Since the teachers do this subconsciously, the effect as well as the learning will be less. Routine activities can be made systematic by subjecting them to conscious, deliberate and scheduled recording. Making these routine activities procedural and conscious changes it from ordinary to systematic activity. Research is a systematic investigation. The participants identified the following systematic investigation they learnt as a result of their involvement in the AR inquiry.

- 1. Planning:** Their activities in the inquiry witnesses that they plan the investigation before hand. They identified the what, how and why of the problem before everything else.
- 2. Hypothesizing and making predictions:** They hypothesize before implementing the actions which are meant to improve the difficulty. Hypothesizing is scientific and systematic activity.
- 3. Collecting and measuring data:** Identifying data collection instruments, deciding on the sample, formulating research questions and collecting, organizing and measuring it is a systematic activity.

4.5. Document Analysis

4.5.1. Research Topics Examined in the Study

The following researches were reviewed in this study.

- “The problem of speaking skill of 7th (A) grade female students during English period at Debza primary school” by Teacher H and others 1998 E.C.
- “Exploring the reasons for dropout female students of Debza primary school” by Teacher B and others 1993 E.C.
- “The problems of less achievement of 8th grade female students in English language at Debza primary school focused on section B” by Teacher A and Teacher I 1999 E.C.
- “Exploring the reasons for dropouts of students of Debza primary school 8th grade students” by Teacher A 1998 E.C.
- “Assessing Debre Markos secondary school female students’ reasons for being less in number to join higher institution” by Teacher A and Teacher D 1994 E.C.
- “Discipline problems and solutions of Debza primary school 6th A students” by Teacher G 1998 E.C.
- “Discipline problems and solutions of Debza primary school 5th A students” by Teacher E 1998 E.C.
- “Alleviating problems of dropouts of Debza primary school students of Grade 4” by Teacher F 1998 E.C.
- “The problems of less participation of 7th D Grade students during English period at Debza primary school” by Teacher B and Teacher E 1998 E.C.
- “Problems on English writing skill of Grade 8th students at Abema primary School” by Teacher C et al 1999E.C.
- “Female students problems on group work participation” by Teacher B 1998 E.C.

Analysis of the ARs

These researches were analyzed with reference to their implication of the female teachers' professional renewal based on the specifications outlined in Appendix E and the advisors' judgment.

1. Classroom/school environment problems

Six researches were concerned with school environment problems. The main concern was alleviating problems of discipline, less achievement and dropouts.

The remaining 5 researches were regarding group work, speaking skill, participation, writing skill and less achievement in English language. There are classroom problems detected by the subjects.

Among these research areas four of them focus on female students. The subjects who focused on female students problems said that they want to explore female students' problems and avoid it for them. Teacher D said:

I'm not satisfied studying female students' problems. In my teaching experience, I have learnt that female students have different problems that lag them back. I want to avoid it for them by studying its cause and source. I have planned to conduct action research even now after just finishing one recently...

This is what is being confirmed by the teacher researchers. A lot of focus has been given to female students' problems. In the interview and reflection also, they confirmed that they want to explore on females' problems more. This is partly because they themselves are female and they pity for them and partly because female students have many academic and non academic problems that influence their learning than male in their schools.

2. Review of related literature

All of the researches contain review of related literature. The teachers said in the interview that they read related materials. In this section of the research

document it is evident that they read and explored what other experts in their field of study have said. Some of the researches' review literatures have, however, not included adequate information.

3. Organization

The teachers organized and reviewed what they found in the literature with their own findings. They related their results with others' works. However, the synthesis is very low in quality according to the reports of their advisors.

The quality of the researches was assessed in four perspectives. First, these researches may not have much to contribute to the established body of knowledge as the university-based researches. If they were meant to do this, they must have gone through a lot of synthesis of others' work. Secondly, there is no reliability/validity judgment. They rely on their personal experiences and their colleagues' judgment as a sufficient assessment of their work.

Third, some researches address other problems than English language teaching. Lastly, the pieces do not follow standardized rhetorical conventions. There is stylistic variation. The pattern changes greatly.

4. Hypothesize or make predictions

The teachers made predictions in their studies. For example, teacher H's research hypothesis is:

- i. most of the time female students are shy to speak English.
- ii. when female students try to use the language other students will dominate them.
- iii. Parents of female students do not give attention for them to practice speaking English at home.

5. Data collection methods and analysis

They used questionnaire, interview and observation to collect data for their study. Mainly the majority used questionnaire only as a means of data collection.

The analysis is mainly done through description. Some also used percentage and tables. The majority described the findings through qualitative method.

6. Evaluation of intervention and recommendation

The teachers evaluated the intervention they applied to improve their problems. An example of evaluation follows.

In chapter four in the implementation time, the participants, that were selected for the discussion, were decide that an English teacher, who teaches in the section apply the active learning method, i.e. student centered method during English period, to fit students active participant inside and out side the class.

In addition to use the method, the teacher and his students at this school in 7th grade section D better to use the target language (English only) in the teaching learning process.

Therefore, the above solution points are exercised fully the students' participation problem may solve and they may become active participant. So the discussion was good because it was fruitful.

7. Language

Many of the researchers' reports were written in Amharic. Only four of the volunteered teachers' researches were written in English. While the problems inspected are all related to English language teaching, the reports were made in Amharic. It would have been better if the teachers made their reports in English since their career development in relation to writing would have been developed when they practiced it.

Advisors' Judgment on the Teachers' ARs

There is research and publication group in Debre Markos Teachers' Education College. This center in collaboration with the Cluster center evaluates teachers' action researches. These centers arrange action research competition programs and facilitate presentations.

Prior to presenting the researches, teachers who conduct action research have to inform their own school principal. The principal arranges time table for the teacher researchers with special consideration.

The administration staff has already been informed about the need of the involvement of teachers in action research. Amhara Regional Educational Bureau has already arranged a promotion strategy for those who conduct action research as a way of promoting investigation. In response to this, many took part in the action.

Teachers found advisers from their own school, the research department of Debre Markos teachers' education college and the cluster group in the college who is responsible for initiating studies funded by BESO as part of the CPD program.

Six advisers volunteered for this study. One of them was from professional studies department who is part of the research center in the college. Another was the chairman of the research center who evaluates the teachers' researches. Two of them were members of the cluster group in the college who are in charge of teachers' action research evaluation group. The remaining two were from the schools where the target teachers were found. One of them is an experienced researcher who is entitled to advise teachers conducting research. The other one is a school principal in Debza primary school where seven of the subjects were found.

The advisers strongly assert that the research experience has benefited not only for the efficiency of the teachers' profession but also for the improvement of students' learning and favorability of the school environment as a whole.

With regard to the quality of the researches, the advisers said that it is of less quality. The problems are redundant, the methods are relatively the same and the organization is less systematic that it lacks consistency.

Provided that the teachers did not have adequate training on action research and their qualification in educational career is low, the researches are satisfactory. There are also some researches that are of high qualities.

The teachers have less presentation skill as they were observed by their advisers. The qualified ones, who have reputation, are better in presentation than the beginners.

Generally, the advisers felt that as the teacher researches conducted more and more research, the quality of their research, their presentation skill, and their interest increases.

4.7. Discussion

In the past few years action research has become increasingly popular in Ethiopian education system. With the shift of focus from planned decision to informed action, classroom and the teacher have got great attention. Empowerment of teachers has become significant to make use of them to feed real and contextual information to improve teaching.

Action research has been suggested as an effective method of in-service professional development strategy. It has been proved elsewhere as an important system of professional renewal. In our educational system too, the inquiry have been promoted to be adapted. Some teachers are making use of it.

What does it change with regard to teachers' profession? What benefits do they get from the involvement? These are the intention of this particular work.

As Halsall (1998) stated, care must be taken in arguing a particular action has generated a particular outcome. When an action research engagement is said to result in equipping the teachers with certain professional competencies such as discussed above, it is in relative terms. This is because we have no proof that these outcomes resulted by some other factors than 'the action research activity itself'. The only evidence would be the claims made by the subjects who strongly suggest that they indeed benefited the mentioned professional growth as a result of their involvement in action research that they never get otherwise in their rich teaching experience in the past.

Green in Halsall (1998) reviewed four emerging definition of professionalism called flexible, practical, extended and complex professionalism. Of these the former two can be resulted as a result of small scale action research such as the focus of this study.

"Flexible professionalism' arises through teacher dialogue on the improvement of teaching and learning in local professional communities (teams, departments, schools)" (Green, in Halsall, 1998:202). The findings of this research indicated that the subjects developed professional dialogue and the resulting knowledge to improve their teaching.

"Practical professionalism' arises from teachers reflecting on their own experience and that of others" (Green, in Halsall, 1998:202). The participants in this study also reflected on their own experience and explored others' works. This is evident that they developed practical professionalism as a result of their endeavor in research.

Extended professionalism refers to a wider change that is related to government reforms. Complex professionalism believes on the complexity of the

work. These two are broader and intense that it is beyond the scope of this investigation to be assessed in such short-scale and less experienced researchers.

Altrichter, et al. (1993) focused on the importance of teachers' investigating their work to renew their profession. As a characteristic of professionalism, individual teacher-researcher should communicate his work to colleagues since "... the practice of an individual member of the profession should be open to scrutiny by professional colleagues" (Altrichter, et al. (1993:177).

Teachers' publicizing their work is a requirement of professional accountability since it shows their commitment and it is a way of disseminating knowledge (Ibid). The process also increases teachers' confidence and authority.

The target teachers in the present study also confirmed the same thing. They adapted professional dialogue when they try to enrich their own research. They also presented their findings to the school community. This adds to their responsibility and confidence. Teachers involved in action research stated that they benefited in getting fresh ideas about their profession, make connections with experienced researchers and learn to reflect on it (Scheeter and Ramirez in Nunan 1992; Dadds and Hart, 2001).

Elliot (1991) focused on action research being change agent in education. He argues action research as a form of teacher professional renewal. The quality of the professional growth, however, highly depends on the level of willingness of everyone involved to tolerate diversified ideas and innovations obtained from literature and colleagues. Making use of the knowledge in the literature and exploring new ways introduces change in meeting the demands of the real context.

In light of the findings obtained from the study, it can be said that what Elliot (1991) said is compatible to this study. AR offered opportunities to consider ways of changing their practice.

AR can make teachers reflective practitioners (Dadds and Hart, 2001). It can make them think of their practice deeply and reflect up on it. The teachers in the present study also said that they have become reflective teachers because of their practice to enrich their research.

With regard to the effect of reflection on professional efficiency, Wallace (1991) claim that reflection play a lot to improve teaching. Experiential knowledge refers to what teachers learn from their own direct practice. AR as a kind of experiential knowledge can teach teachers by bringing their attention and keeping them conscious to observe the effect of intervention.

In-service programs should evolve from the experiences of the teachers (Nunan, 1989). Facilitators should be there to assist teacher-researchers on their activities. The findings of this study indicated that the teacher researchers need technical assistance to check on their activities.

Many scholars such as Nunan (1989) suggest that collaboration is important in action research inquiry. However, unless there is some stimulation done to promote teachers' interaction prior to the actual investigation, the teachers may not use it. The findings from this study also revealed that the teachers did not see much benefit out of collaboration. This shows that either the teachers are 'practically unable or personally unwilling' to do collaborative research (Nunan, 1992).

Evaluation is an important part of action research activity. It is useful when done formatively than summatively as Nunan (1989) suggested. The evaluation of the target teachers were done summatively only. It should have been better if they do it during the course of the project too.

With regard to empowerment and autonomy, action research is suggested by scholars to allow teachers to be self-directed (Nunan, 1989). When they explore their personal methodologies and subject it to evaluation and reflection, they will expand and improve it by themselves.

“...action research must necessarily be concerned with change.” (Nunan, 1992:18). The change, however, will have pressure to the extent that the teachers are ‘given the feeling that what they do is important’ (Scheeter and Ramirez, in Nunan 1992).

Action research is essential for the continued growth of the teaching profession (Johnson, 2002). To keep track of the dynamic change and innovation prevailing, teachers should involve in discovery and dissemination of new ideas. Through this, education can move forward. Action research allows teachers become part of this evolution (Ibid).

In sum, all the participants felt that the process helped them for their professional growth though they may somehow fail to articulate it fully. What they produce may not also be as such significant. Anyhow, they learnt something from the experience of the critical inquiry. Takaki also felt the same thing when he says, “I learned that there is no failure in conducting action research. The fact that I’m involved and I’m learning through the process is important” (Takaki, 2002:6).

Chapter Five

Conclusion, Implication and Recommendation

Conclusion

The findings of the study indicated that:

- The EFL teachers felt that the action research involvement helped them develop their profession.
- As a result of their involvement in the inquiry, they changed their perception of research and their role as teacher and researcher.
- Their interest towards action research develops as they do the research.
- Their consciousness about EFL teaching raises as they do research on their own classroom and environmental problems in relation to English language teaching.
- The teachers felt that AR brings opportunity especially for female teachers who have other responsibilities at home and in the surrounding.
- Action research has brought many changes on the teachers' method of teaching, perception and practice.
- The teachers felt that individual action research is more beneficial than collaborative.
- The action research engagement made the teachers read, explore and expand on professional literature.
- As a result of the action research involvement, the teachers have become reflective practitioners.
- The action research empowered the teachers with leadership, autonomy and innovative thinking and exploration.

- The teachers affirmed that they are going to continue on the inquiry. Some of them have already started doing on their new topics. Others show great interest on it. All of them mentioned that they have planned to do action research in the future.

Implication and Recommendation

- In Ethiopian educational system the instructional method is dominated by the old and traditional system. The action research engagement caused the teachers to re-examine their philosophical trend towards their roles as teachers and their contribution as researchers.
- The teachers have come to realize the way they teach and how to improve it. This implies that the teachers have become critical thinkers of the potentials and pitfalls of their practice on the students' learning.
- The teachers perceived the action research endeavor as a step towards their development as reflective teachers.
- Many of the teachers who conducted action research are found in the same school. This means that the existence of competent researcher creates other too.
- The action research tradition began when the regional bureau offered award for those who conduct action research. To break the reluctance of teachers' involvement in action research, award bearing action research projects should be prepared.
- The teachers' perception shows that they are comfortable with doing action research. This indicates that in-service action research is economical, effective and efficient method of professional development.
- To intensify this impact college/university teachers should work in collaboration with the school teachers.
- The teachers read and explore literature to enrich their research. This implies that some push factor should be there to break the silence of experienced teachers who have developed comfort with what they have.

- The teachers felt that the individual work is more beneficial than the group work. Many scholars on the area, however, suggested that action research is best done in collaboration. The implication is that the near by college or university should work in collaboration with the teachers to show how best they can do in team.
- Many of the teachers have many years of experience. Still they are satisfied because they learn about action research and make use of it even if it is towards the end of their career. It arouse their motivation. This means that their knowledge of the action research brought completion to their profession. The place they give to action research skill is so high that they feel complete when they have it.

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Appendix A

Research ethical principles

Thank you for accepting to participate in my research entitled “effects of action research practice on female EFL teachers’ professional development”. The objective of the study is to identify the perceived effects of female EFL teachers’ engagement in their own action research towards their professional self-renewal.

The information you share with me will be kept confidential and your personal identity anonymous. There are no risks and discomfort associated with this study.

Principles and procedures for the research

The following are ethical principles and procedures I followed in this study. I am willing to share it with you. Do not hesitate to ask any questions in relation to the study.

- Participation in the research is voluntary
- Information you share it with me is your possession. I will use it only with your permission.
- Interpretation and discussion made in the study will be treated as belonging to me.
- I will need your kind permission to use tape recording. You have the right to refuse, change your mind after being recorded or demand for checking.

Thank you!
Rukya Hassen

Appendix B

Addis Ababa University
Institute of Language Studies
Department of Foreign Language and Literature
Graduate Program
Teachers' Reflections on the Action Research
experience

Dear participants;

As part of a research undertaking leading to an MA in TEFL, this question is prepared to get information on your action research endeavor. The aim of the research is to investigate the effects of the action research practice on female EFL teachers' professional development. The data obtained would be used for research purpose at the level of MA in teaching English as a foreign language.

The study is hoped to benefit in giving information on the perceived effects of professional renewal of teacher-researches as a result of their action research practice. Therefore, your genuine response to all the questions is of great significance.

You do not have to write your name. Your response will be confidential

Thank you for your cooperation!

General Instruction

Section 1: Background information

Instruction: please write your response as per each question.

1. How many years of teaching experience do you have?_____
2. What is your highest qualification?_____
3. How many action researches have you done so far?_____
4. Please write the titles of your research topics:
 - a. Published works (if any)

- b. Unpublished works known by your department (if any)

- c. Would you please list down the research topics you have started or you plan to carry out?

Section 2: Dear participants, write your reflections on the action research engagement you have had as honestly as possible. Thank you.

Rationale (*why do you want to do an action research? is it for incentives, to improve your teaching or what?*)

Action Research Enforcement and Training (*comment on the kind of training you have taken about action research. Was it adequate? Did it help you much?*)

Challenge *(comment on the level of difficulty of action research. did you think it was difficult before trying? Have you found it difficult? Did you feel the action research experience a burden?)*

Professional Competencies *(what professional competencies did you get as a result of the action research engagement? Did it make you read? Were you able to identify classroom problems? Were you able to come up with a list of alternative actions (interventions)? Were you able to make decisions in choosing the actions? Were you able to evaluate the effects of the interventions? Did the involvement made you do professional discussion with colleagues?)*

Teacher as Researcher (*comment on the role of action research to improve the teachers in their professional carrier. What is the role of action research to improve English language teaching? How do you perceive yourself as teacher and researcher? Has the action research engagement changed the way you teach? Do you feel the experience has helped you? Did it empower you, increase you confidence, authonomy?*)

Action research implementation (*how was the implementation? Did you find it useful? Did it improve your practice? Comment on the experience of putting the action in to practice.*)

Change *(what change has the action research involvement bring to you?*

Did it help you improve your teaching? What changes did it bring?)

Sustainability *(do you want to conduct an action research again? Are you confident as a researcher as much as a teacher? Did you find action research experience helpful? Are you interested to incorporate action research as part of your professional career in the future?)*

Appendix C

Addis Ababa University Institute of Language Studies Department of Foreign Language and Literature Graduate Program

Interview for ELT teachers

Dear participants;

The major purpose of this interview is to collect information on the impact of action research involvement on female teachers' professional development.

As already indicated in the reflection, the data gathered will be used for research purpose at the level of Master of Arts in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL).

The result of the study is totally dependent on your genuine and honest response to the questions.

Dear interviewee, you are not required to reveal your names during the interview.

Thank you for your participation!

Name of School_____

Action Research Project Title_____

Code of the Participant _____

1. Do you think that conducting action research contributed to your sense of professional efficacy?
2. Do you offset the challenge of conducting action research with the value of your action research project?
3. Why do you want to do an action research?
4. Do you really think that action research engagement helps you develop professionally? If yes, how?
5. Did the action research engagement help you improve your classroom practice?
6. Did you find the action research experience helpful? If so, in what ways?
7. Do you want to conduct action research in the future too?
8. Do you think that teachers need to involve in action research? Why?
9. Did the ELT action research engagement raise consciousness, maximize opportunities and improve female EFL teachers' professional development? If so, how?
10. Did you share your action research with others, such as administrators and colleagues? Did you share experience? What did you get from publicizing it?
11. Did the action research engagement make you read?
12. Did it reinforce professional self-confidence? Explain.
13. Did it help you develop professional responsibility and accountability? How?
14. Did it make you be reflective? What is its effect on your practice?
15. Which did help you much form individual and team work?
16. What changes has the action research involvement brought to you?

17. What is the contribution of action research for EFL teachers' professional efficiency?
18. What is the role of action research in TEFL?
19. What is the role of action research for female EFL teachers professional development?
20. What did action research involvement bring on your practice?
21. What did you learn from exploring professional literature?
22. What benefits did you get from reflective practice?
23. How did you find the sharing of investigation?
24. Did you have professional dialogue?
25. Did you evaluate the effect of intervention?
26. How confident are you on your ability of systematic investigation?
27. Are you interested in the action research engagement?
28. Did you get any promotion?
29. Did you get any award/incentives because of the action research engagement?
30. Do you think that the inquiry raises your consciousness and awareness?
31. What is your perception and beliefs about action research?
32. How do you perceive teacher as researcher?
33. What is the feeling of the whole experience?
34. What advice would you give for other teachers in relation to action research?

Appendix D

Addis Ababa University
Institute of Language Studies
Department of Foreign Language and Literature
Graduate Program
Interview for Advisors

Dear respondents;

The main objective of this interview is to get valid information on the effect of action research practice on professional development of EFL teachers.

The data obtained will be used for research purpose at the level of Master of Arts in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL).

Your genuine response is of great importance to get a true picture of the issues under investigation.

You are not required to disclose your names during the interview

Rukya Hassen

Thank you for your kind participation!

Please give your genuine answers for the following questions.

1. Did you find the female EFL teachers interested in the research?
2. Did they participate in the research actively?
3. Do you think their involvement in the research raise their consciousness about EFL research and its opportunities?
4. Do you feel that the female EFL teachers read, explore and know more about their own profession because of the action research?
5. Did the involvement increase their capacity as a teacher and their potential as a leader in the teaching-learning process?
6. As the activity progresses, did the teachers feel that they benefited from the experience?
7. Were the female EFL teachers challenged by the inquiry, if so, how did they manage it?
8. Did the experience encourage them participate in action research activities in the future?

Appendix E

**Addis Ababa University
School of Graduate Studies
Department of Foreign Languages and Literature**

Checklist for assessing the action research documents

Name of School _____ **Code of the teacher** _____
Action Research Project Title _____

No	Activities	Yes	No
1	Does the topic show reflection of the classroom observation?		
2	Does the report include review literature?		
3	Is it a team work?		
4	Is it an individual work?		
5	Does it show a change in practice?		
6	Does the teacher hypothesize or make predictions?		
7	Did the teacher collect data?		
8	Did the teacher measure the data collected?		
9	Did the teacher organize the data?		
10	Was it systematically planned?		
11	Did the teacher articulate personal methodology?		
12	Did the teacher suggest actions?		
13	Did the teacher make choices?		
14	Did the teacher take responsible actions?		
15	Did the teacher reflect on the experience?		
16	Did the teacher make decisions?		
17	Is it useful and applicable to current practice of the teacher?		
18	Is it related to what actually happens in the classroom?		
19	Does it show understanding of the teacher's practice?		
20	Did the teacher detect problems or ask questions?		
21	Did the teacher make content expertise?		
22	Did the teacher make description/analysis of classroom activities?		
23	Did the teacher evaluate the outcome of the effect of actions?		
24	Did the teacher articulate current and personal methodology?		

Appendix F

Addis Ababa University School of Graduate Studies Department of Foreign Languages and Literature

Checklist for assessing the action research documents

1. Do you think that conducting action research contributed to your sense of professional efficacy?

Teacher C: Yes, it does. I learnt about my profession a lot from my experience in the research. I found problems, study them and implement actions to solve them. I learnt, yes.

2. Do you offset the challenge of conducting action research with the value of your action research project?

There were many problems when I do the action research, to be honest. I have many responsibilities, I am not used to this research thing ... but I did it. I tried it. And I succeeded I think.

3. Why do you want to do an action research?

Teacher C: I wanted to conduct action research because I wanted to solve my classroom problems. I have always wanted to know how to investigate. I thought it was impossible at my level. But when I have the skill, I wanted to do it by my interest only. I see problems, and I want to medicate them.

4. Do you really think that action research engagement helps you develop professionally? If yes, how?

I now know how to investigate problems. I can detect the difficulties... I learnt how to present my research. I learnt how to write reports of my findings. Even the data collection and analysis is a new thing for me... I know many things I didn't know before.... I mean I taught for 30 years but never practiced what I just told you. So for me, it is good experience...

5. Did the action research engagement help you improve your classroom practice?

Yes I changed my way of teaching as detected by the findings of my research. You know, I am too rigid to change ... I am surprised. When it is my work I changed it. I only wish it wasn't at the end of my career. But I am happy that I know about research...

6. Did you find the action research experience helpful? If so, in what ways?

As I said earlier, the whole experience helped me a lot. I have become hunter of classroom problem. I try to cure it. I have become doctor who treats difficulties of teaching by giving medicine of my own. I check if it works or not. I try out other.... By so doing, I think I have changed many things in my class.

7. Do you want to conduct action research in the future too?

I have already found it useful. I am going to do in the future for sure...

8. Do you think that teachers need to involve in action research? Why?

Yes, teachers need to make use of action research. I will change them to be active. It is a good method of making them move.

9. Did the ELT action research engagement raise consciousness, maximize opportunities and improve female EFL teachers' professional development? If so, how?

I for example worked for about 30 years. My friends who started teaching with me 30 years ago are still with me. We never changed a bit. We don't use any opportunities to improve our profession by the excuses of busyness at home and social life. Such things as action research can allow us improve our teaching methods since we are to attend them while we do our jobs. So I think it gives many opportunities for female teachers like us who have a lot of excuses to attend professional development trainings...

10. Did you share your action research with others, such as administrators and colleagues? Did you share experience? What did you get from publicizing it?

I and my colleagues presented our papers in our school. The administrators and our colleagues attended the seminar. We learnt a lot from the sharing. The attendants also said that they benefited from the program.

11. Did the action research engagement make you read?

We are not used to reading. We don't have reading as a habit. We teach by intuition and commonsense since we never got training whenever curriculum and teaching material changes. The action research experience brought a new culture of reading. We have to include review literature; we want to know how to go about it and settle the context of our own inquiry. It urges us to read. There seem to be no way out to come up with good research without reading.

12. Did it reinforce professional self-confidence? Explain.

In teaching profession I have always been confident in doing anything rather than research. I used to think there is no one who are equipped with research skills. I never was confident in difficulties of the teaching. Now, I am fully confident in anything in teaching including inquiry.

13. Did it help you develop professional responsibility and accountability? How?

I never thought it is my concern to worry about any problem solving or understanding thing. My job is teaching. If anything makes it impossible. It is not my concern. There are people who are meant to be worried about difficulties in teaching. These people as to my understanding were the 'administrators, curriculum developers or principals.' By taking part in action research, I am assuming accountability. I am being responsible when I involve myself in problem solving. So, I think that the action research engagement made me be responsible and it, in turn, have become the realization of my being responsible.

14. Did it make you be reflective? What is its effect on your practice?

There was this tendency of ignoring what ever happened in our classroom after our feet walk out of the classroom. We don't have the culture of looking back to our teaching in order to improve it next time. The action research involvement

made me practice reflection. Without doing so I cannot check whether or not the situation needs improvement or the intervention worked or not.

15. Which did help you much from individual and team work?

Both the individual as well as the team work helped me a lot in doing as well as have a better understanding about action research. To speak frankly; however, the individual work was far more beneficial than the group work. I practiced each and every activity in the individual work by my self. The learning and ownership was high in it. In the group work, I should say only our group leader did it all. We were given only some things to perform. Others were excused from doing. This is probably because we are not used to collaborative work or something. Anyway it didn't work much in my case.

16. What changes has the action research involvement brought to you?

Oh... it brought many changes actually. My perception was changed. I have considered research being part of my job after doing it and closely examining its value. I have become critical observer of activities in order to normalize them and reduce their negative effect on teaching. I am motivated to seek further education. It initiates me to learn more. I feel confident in my work. I feel different now. I was kind of stuck with teaching. I was kind of bored. The action research brought a break to my routine work. I feel like it is a different profession....

17. What is the contribution of action research for EFL teachers' professional efficiency?

As the other subject teachers, EFL teachers also did not have professional development training so far. Unlike the other subject teachers, the continuous renewal is mandatory for EFL teachers too. Therefore, exploring others' findings and one's own personal methodologies will give us rich opportunities.

18. What is the role of action research in TEFL?

It gives a different way of doing things which have worthwhile access to learn from experience.

19. What is the role of action research for female EFL teachers' professional development?

It is the path. The learning is up to the investigator.

20. What did action research involvement bring on your practice?

It renewed me, personally, and my teaching, professionally.

21. What did you learn from exploring professional literature?

I learnt a lot. I mentioned it earlier.

22. What benefits did you get from reflective practice?

I practiced reflection on my practice.

23. How did you find the sharing of investigation?

The sharing was great as I said earlier.

24. Did you have professional dialogue?

Yes, we had. We talked much about our work more than ever.

25. Did you evaluate the effect of intervention?

Yes, I evaluated. I learned both from the evaluation and the outcome.

26. How confident are you on your ability of systematic investigation?

I am confident enough. More than what I know now, I am sure that I will always learn whenever I conduct research.

27. Are you interested in the action research engagement?

Yes, absolutely.

28. Did you get any promotion?

No, but my friends got one.

29. Did you get any award/incentives because of the action research engagement?

As a matter of fact I didn't. But many of my friends got.

30. Do you think that the inquiry raises your consciousness and awareness?

Yes, it does. We were almost behind the scene for longer time. It brought us on the stage and see what is out there. Presently, I have a very positive perception about it. I even insist that teachers need to do it.

31. What is your perception and beliefs about action research?

It is entirely positive now.

32. How do you perceive teacher as researcher?

As yet, I never thought it to be part of my job. After trying it out, I willingly accept it and receive my being a teacher researcher.

33. What is the feeling of the whole experience?

I feel excited and complete.

34. What advice would you give for other teachers in relation to action research?

They need to try it out. There is a lot to learn through inquiry.