

**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY  
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION  
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES**

**INVOLVEMENT OF PREPARATORY SCHOOL  
TEACHERS IN ACTION RESEARCH: THE CASE OF  
GELEMSO SECONDARY AND PREPARATORY SCHOOL**

**A Thesis submitted to the School of Graduates of Addis  
Ababa University in partial fulfillment of the Requirements  
of Degree of Masters of Art in Curriculum and Instruction**

**ASHENAFI TSEGAYE TELEGN**



**AUGUST 2007**

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## **List of Abbreviations / Acronyms**

- AAU** – Addis Ababa University
- AED** – Academy for Educational Development
- GSPS** – Gelemso Secondary and Preparatory School.
- HWEO** - Habro Woreda Education Office
- IDI** - In-depth Interview
- MOE** – Ministry of Education
- NETP** - The New Education and Training Policy
- TGE** – Transitional Government of Ethiopia

## **Abstract**

*The primary purpose of this study was to explore the extent of preparatory school teachers' involvement in action research in GSPS. The study further aimed to investigate factors that affected the teachers to conduct action research and to come up with suggestions for action. To achieve these purposes, a qualitative research method and a case study research design were employed.*

*This study has found out that the extent of the preparatory teachers' involvement in action research was very low, or was so limited. The study depicts that there was a thin line (a weak nexus) between the teachers teaching tasks and action research, and the current status of action research found to be marginal, or suggests a characteristics of infancy. At the same time, the study has established that both the external factors (i.e. lack of institutional inputs) and the internal factors (i.e. lack of personal inputs) considerably impeded the teachers to conduct educational action research as much as expected.*

*For future improvement of the preparatory teachers' engagement in action research, arrangements and provision of training on action research, improving school facilities and enhancing the support system, introducing the culture of action research, improving the incentives or rewards, lightening heavy teaching loads for teacher- researchers, and doing research on collaborative basis are the major points( but not exhaustive) suggested by the research participant as the dimensions that need intervention.*

# CHAPTER ONE

## 1. INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

This chapter consists of background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, significance of the study, the scope of the study, limitations of the study, and definition of terms and phrases.

### 1.1 Background of the Study

The principal purpose of this case study was to investigate the extent of preparatory teachers' involvement in action research at Gelemso Secondary and Preparatory School (GSPS), identify factors that obstructed the teachers from conducting action research and come up with suggestions for action.

The issue which triggered my interest to undertake the study in point was the absence of any evidence that indicates the extent to which, the conditions under which, and the purpose for which preparatory school teachers conduct action research. Therefore, I had the need and intentions to research these issues.

Various types of research approaches or methods could be employed to study different kinds of educational problems. Recently, however, one particular research approach that has been found to be quite amenable and appropriate to bring improvement in the practice of the teaching learning process is known as *action research* (Seyoum, 1998). In confirmation of this idea, Best and Kahn (1994) have posited that if most classroom teachers are to be involved in research activity, it will probably be in the area of action research, which may be made for the purpose of trying to improve local class room practices.

*Action research* can be defined as an applied form of educational research commonly done by practitioners (that is, teachers) at the classroom and school level in order to improve practices. Justifications for the need to conduct action research by school teachers have been given by many foreign and local scholars. According to these scholars, action research can be conducted to attain three main objectives or goals: to improve practice (the teaching learning process), to improve the practitioner (the teacher) and to improve the practice setting (i.e., the school).

With regard to the first goal of action research, that is *improving educational practices*, Burton and Mickan (1992) stated that one major reason for teachers' involvement in action research is the need for continual professional development or renewal through reflection- on and evaluation of practices, and the importance of linking theory with practice by testing ideas in their classrooms. Adane (2000) has mentioned that teachers' engagement in research activities would enable them become participants in the process of planning and improve an education system rather than being a mere part of the machine; and also they will have a multiplier effect on their students. Another writer, Yalew (2000) has noted that teachers by virtue of their important positions in the educational system are required to participate in educational research to improve the teaching-learning quality and quantity. Similarly, Yeshimebrat (2000) said that the teacher is taken as the first person that undertakes the research activities and utilizes its results to improve his/her teaching skills and experiences for enriching the teaching-learning process. Hussen (2000) also raises that as teachers become familiar with educational research, they can daily improve their techniques and methods of instruction and evaluate results in a scientific manner. Added to this, Schmuck (1997) has remarked that action research offers a means for changing from current practices toward better practices. In brief, engagement in action research enhances the quality of instruction, and research results generated by

teachers can form the basis for updating contents of the subject matter, methods of teaching and techniques of evaluation.

Regarding the second objective of action research that is *improving the practitioners' understanding*, authorities in the area put forth their rationales for advocating teachers' involvement in action research. For example, Corey (1953) has pin-pointed that teachers can make better decisions and can become more successful practitioners if they conduct educational action research in their classrooms. Lehtinen (1990) posited that when a teacher does his regular job, there is every possibility for researching educational problems and acquiring more knowledge and understanding. By the same token, Degarge (1999) has described that undertaking educational research is one way through which teachers understand the educative process at the macro and micro levels. Stenhouse (1984) stated that conducting action research in the classroom helps teachers become more autonomous and improve their own professional judgment and decisions. In this connection, Schmuck (1997) has also expounded that action research fosters individual (teacher's) freedom when the process increases or enhances every one's opportunity to search for and to choose voluntarily among alternative actions, enhances social equality, or social well-being among participants. Accordingly, teachers are not the dependent of researchers or superintendents, of innovators or supervisors. Thus, it is possible to say that by doing action research; teachers can liberate themselves from the dictates of educational authorities and can decide for themselves on what to do and how to do. Hopkins (1993) further indicated that it is possible (for a professional teacher) to attain 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 or concepts by classroom research procedure. One basic reason for conducting action research by teachers, as stated by Burton and Mickan

(1992), has been the need for continual professional renewal, or development through reflection- on and evaluation of practices.

Concerning the third goal of action research, that is the *improvement of the setting or the school environment*, educators, such as Adane (2000) remarked that teacher's engagement in action research can help in the development of research cultures in the schools. Another writer, Sizer (1984) in Schmuck (1997), has said that good schools will become more and more possible as teachers actively engage in action research. In the same vein, McNiff (1988) stated that true action research involves fundamental transformation of the school culture. Degarge (1999) also held the idea that action research is one way in which teachers can create a more energetic and dynamic environment (or what Schmuck calls democratic schools) in which teaching-learning can occur. Furthermore, Schmuck (1997) suggested that to actualize democratic participation in bureaucratic and hierarchical educational social systems, teachers (and students and administrators) should initiate action research in their classrooms and schools daily, weekly, and monthly. Moreover, Seyoum (1998) pointed out that action research is an appropriate and quite amenable activity undertaken in order to bring about improvement in the practices of school management. In a nutshell, engagement in action research ensures that teachers are able to change or transform the setting in which they work.

In the Ethiopian context, all the three goals of action research are reflected in the current educational policy (NETP) and its directives. That is, at present, the NETP of the country has accentuated the importance of research and related competencies, such as problem solving and creative thinking. In line with this, the policy's document states "Research of practical societal impact will be given priority and the necessary steps will also be taken to facilitate the coordinated efforts of all those concerned"

(TGE, 1994:27). According to the policy, research that can solve practical societal problems is given priority.

Besides, the MOE has developed TESO (Teacher Education System Overhaul) program in 2002 as a new scheme in teacher preparation and development and to encourage research practice in the schools, the TESO policy document (2003) stated that school teachers should participate in research programs to alleviate educational problems in the classrooms / in the schools.

Furthermore, the recent directives issued by the MOE (April,1996) requiring teachers to stay all day in school during week days claims that such measure will enable teachers to take the initiative to engage in research activities. All these show that research has got a pivotal place in our education/school system. Therefore, in the light of such new developments that encourage the culture of research in the school system, it seems a sound justification to examine the status of action research activities of teachers in preparatory schools.

## **1.2. Statement of the Problem**

As precisely indicated so far, research literatures show that action research can serve many purposes: it is one way through which teachers improve the quality of their practice and profession, acquire more knowledge and skills, make independent judgment, improve their techniques and methods of instruction, raise their understanding of the educative process and get personal promotion.

In the same vein, the current Ethiopian educational policy directives emphatically stressed the importance of action research at school and class room levels. According to the policy documents, teachers at all school levels (that is, from kindergarten to secondary school) are required

to engage in action research activities. More specifically, apart from teaching-learning processes or activities, school teachers are expected to conduct practical study and research to support and strengthen the teaching-learning process and examine the curriculum and give suggestions to improve it (MOE, 2002:35).

In the teachers' evaluations scheme, the above conditions are set as requirements for the school teachers to be eligible to get awards or promotion on to the ladders of the career structure. In other words, in Ethiopia educational action research has three major goals: for improving the practice (i.e., the teaching-learning process), for improving the school environment, for professional development and even for getting license for teaching. However, it seems that school teachers try to solve practical problems encountering them by trial and error method and personal experience. Obviously, common sense and trial and error alone can not provide reliable information for action and change.

The education policy directive (MOE, 2002:32) also states that school directors and deputy directors are charged with the tasks or responsibilities of facilitating conditions for teachers to enable them engage in action research (that is, in school-based studies and research), which could help improve the teaching-learning processes and other school practices; and are supposed to evaluate the results of the studies, assist their realization, and make use of them to improve school situations.

By the same token, AED(2006:4) has indicated that school teachers, apart from their responsibility of teaching, teachers are expected to conduct action research in order to solve the day-to-day practical problems of education. This is a professional requirement for all teachers at all levels. Moreover, teachers are obliged to conduct action research for their

professional growth and development, and promotion to the next professional career is based on teaching and research out comes (ibid).

At preparatory schools, there is high expectation that teachers (as university graduates) can do action research to solve actual classroom problems. However, there is no evidence that indicates the extent to which preparatory teachers conduct action research to solve real educational problems in classrooms/ the schools. Nor is there any systematic attempt made to study the conditions under which preparatory school teachers do action research to the above end.

Since schools are known to be the primary beneficiaries from action research, it is expected that they provide teachers with sufficient support. Nevertheless, evidence is required as to the extent to which such support has been given to preparatory teachers, the types of support made available, and the reactions of preparatory teachers with the support given so that others may learn form useful experiences.

More important than all the above concerns, there is an issue of the purpose for which action research is carried out by the preparatory teachers. Given the multiplicity of problems that school teachers face in schools, it is interesting to know which problems attracted the greatest attention and how they were prioritized for research.

As clearly indicated, teachers are expected to conduct (involve in) action research, but involvement in action research undoubtedly requires adequate knowledge and skills that are to be acquired through training and practice. It is not yet documented or researched to what extent preparatory school teachers feel that the knowledge and skills they acquired at universities helped them to involve in action research in actual classrooms, and to improve school situations. Thus, I had a need to document the knowledge and skills of preparatory school teachers in

utilizing action research for improving the teaching-learning process and then develop along the career structure.

In line with this understanding, it has become significant and necessary to explore the status and experience of teachers' involvement in action research in preparatory school.

The current study was conducted to address the following three basic questions and sub questions:

1. What was the extent/the trend/of Preparatory School Teachers' involvement in Action Research from the past to the Present (1995-2007 G.C)?
  - ❖ What types of educational issues were addressed in the research papers? For what purposes the teachers undertook the research? And how they conducted it?
2. What factors affected the teachers to engage in action research?
3. How can Action Research be further popularized and promote among the preparatory teachers in the immediate future?

### **1.3. Purpose of the Study**

In order to answer the three basic questions and their sub-questions in the study, I have employed a qualitative research method and an exploratory case study design. Obviously, the purpose of any qualitative case research is to generate data or educational information rich in detail and embedded in identifiable local context. To this line, the purpose of this case study was to:

1. explore the extent to which preparatory teachers of GSPS involved in action research;
2. identify the major factors that affected (positively or negatively) engagement in educational action research;

3. Provide suggestions for actions that would help to promote action research activities among the preparatory teachers in the school in the future.

#### **1.4 Significance of the Study**

Any educational research is conducted with the aim of meeting certain values in one way or another. Therefore, this study would have significant importance in the following ways:

Firstly, the study appears to be quite useful, informative and timely, particularly considering the emphasis given to professional development through action research and reflective practice.

Secondly, it would raise the level of awareness for the need to popularize and promote action research activities among teachers, directors and authorities at school, woreda and zone levels. And indeed, it identifies major constraints to engagement in action research and provides suggestions to alleviate them.

Finally, it is also hoped that the study will serve as, in its own small way, a valuable source of information or literature on the subject studied and may inspire the participants and help other beneficiaries to conduct their own research on issues that matter to them.

#### **1.5. Delimitation /the Scope/of the Study**

The need for conducting action research is of paramount importance and may require wider coverage at the various levels of the education system. However, the scope of this study was delimited to Gelemso Secondary and Preparatory School (GSPS) of West Hararghe Zone.

Furthermore, though a research project may have many purposes, this research was confined to exploratory purposes in its orientation, and as such, it focused on how far educational action research was conducted in the school by preparatory teachers as a practice.

### **1.6 Limitations of the Study**

The limitation of this study lies in that there was shortage of documents that do indicate preparatory teachers' involvement in (educational) action research activities at different times. That is, the scarcity of documented information at the school level as well as at the woreda level has had influences in counter-checking how many of the teachers have been really involved in research activities since the implementation of the NETP and its directives.

### **1.7 Definitions of Terms /Phrases**

Here under, I have provided working definitions of the terms and the phrases I used in the study:

**Action Research** – is a scientific inquiry that involves a systematic collection and analysis of data about one's practices with the view of improving it. It is a self-reflective practice (Schmuck, 1997).

**Educational Action Research** – is a reflection and an inquiry conducted by educators who want to improve their own practices. It is practitioners' (teachers') research which uses to assess their day-to day activities (Zubber – Skirret, 1993; Schumck, 1997).

**Career Structure** – is a change in the structure of teaching profession that provides teachers to advance or progress (from one rank to the next) in their profession. It is a six-tiered scheme that provides teachers (working at all

school levels) with good performances, to grow from a *beginner teacher* to a *lead teacher*.

**A 'Case'** – is a single bounded system, or an instance of a class of phenomena (Merriam, 1988).

**Educational Research** – is a systematic attempt to gain a better understanding of the educational process, generally with a view to improve its efficiency (Derebssa, 2000).

- is a scientific/ systematic activity or inquiry aimed at solving an educational problem and improvement of educational processes (Abogi, 1995).

**Professional Development** – refers to actual change or progress in status of employees (teachers) within an organization (the school) as a result of good performance and it is also one of the motivation factors (Silver, 1983).

**Preparatory School** – according to the NETP, it is an educational level/ the second-cycle of secondary school which provides education in two years duration for students of grade 11 and 12.

**Reflection** – is thinking about one's own behaviors, or practice or actions in the past, or the present, or the future. It is a problem-solving activity by *thinking through* (Schmuck, 1997).

**Reflection -in- action** – entails thinking critically about one's own actions / practices while they are on going (Donald Schon, 1983).

**Reflection-on-action** – implies thinking critically about one's actions /practices after they have had an effect, or after they are accomplished (Donald Schon, 1983).

**Reflective Practice** – is a thinking that integrates reflection with action research in problem solving to achieve continuous improvement (Schmuck, 1997).

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

In this section, I have made an attempt to review the scholarly literature pertaining to my study. I also briefly addressed the status of educational research in general and of educational action research in the primary and secondary schools of Ethiopia. I have utilized the review of the scholarly literature as a source of data (or as a source of results of other prior studies), of the existing theory or assumptions about action research, of strategies or methods for my study, and indeed, I used it to relate my study to the larger on- going discussions in the literature about educational action research.

#### **2.1. The Concept of Action Research**

##### ***2.1.1. What Is Action Research?***

Many scholars with deferent focuses have defined action research differently at different time. For instance, Elliot (1991: 69) defined action research as the study of social situation with a view to improve the quality of action within it; as a means of demonstrating the steps one has taken to improve practice in classrooms and schools; as one mode of professional development. For Schmuck (1997: 28), action research is a sort of formal investigation into oneself or into one's own social system.

Degarge (1999: 40) defines action research as a type of applied or decision- oriented research where the researcher is the person as the practitioner who will use the decision. He further viewed action research as a form of self-reflective inquiry undertaken by participants in educational setting for the purpose of understanding their practice and solve immediate problematic situation.

Corey (1953: 6) has also defined action research as the process by which practitioners attempt to study their own problems scientifically in order to guide, correct and evaluate their decisions. Others define action research as a practical way of looking at one's practice in order to check whether it is as one feels it should be, and as a reflective practice – a practice that involves one to reflect on his/her own activities.

Carr and Kemmis (1991: 162) defined action research as following:

*Action research is simply a form of self-reflective inquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own social or educational practices, their understanding of these practice, and the situations in which the practices are carried out.*

Generally speaking, action research in the field of education has been commonly defined as a form of self-reflective inquiry undertaken by practitioners (i.e. teachers) to improve their practices (i.e. the teaching-learning process), their understanding, and the social situations that is the school system. When we say action research, it encompasses three elements: research, action and participation. Unless all three elements are present, the process can not to be called action research.

### **2.1.2. Purpose of Action Research**

The efforts of an educational investigator who is engaged in action research have different primary purposes. As to Schmuck (1997: 28), action research is to study a real school situation with a view to improve the quality of actions and results within it. It aims also to improve one's own professional judgment and to give insight into how better to achieve desirable educational goals. Action research offers a means for changing from current practices toward better practice

Zuber-Skerritt (1993) stated that the aims of action research are to improve the practice of learning, teaching and management in a

systematic way and if warranted, to suggest and make changes to the environment and effective future development. For Kemmis (2001:92), action research aimed at critical reconstruction of the work (practice), the worker (the practitioner) and the work place (the practice setting). Action research, as stated by Stuart (1991: 150), tries to keep problem solving in close touch with reality at every stage. It is concerned with the immediate problem here and now in the local setting.

Furthermore, Elliot (1988) enumerates the following purposes of action research in school: action research in schools investigates human actions and social situations which are experienced by teachers; the aim of action research is to deepen teacher's understanding of her/his problem; action research espouses a theoretical stance in which action intended to change the situation is temporarily suspended until a deeper understanding of the practical problem has been achieved; in explaining what is going on, action research tells a story about the event; action research interprets what is going on by relating it to a context of mutually interdependent contingency.

All the descriptions cited above imply that action research has been used often in the field of education for the purpose of improving practices (teaching-learning processes) as well as improving the practitioner (teachers) and the practice setting (schools). The action researcher is interested in the improvement of the educational practices in which he/she is engaged. He/she undertakes research in order to find out how to do his/her job better.

### ***2.1.3. Historical Development of Action Research***

Action research emerged as a distinct line of inquiry notably after the end of the Second World War (Elliot, 1991; Kemmis, 1990; Schmuck, 1997). Practitioners have presented action research as an alternative to overcome

the limitations posed by positivism, often giving the impression that action research and positivism are contradictory research movements.

The term *action research* was the brain-child of Kurt Lewin (1890- 1947), a social psychologist. That is, Lewin was the first scholar to use (to coin) the term "action research", in the 1940's, to refer to a specific research approach in which the researcher generates new social knowledge about a social system, while at the same time attempts to change it (Schmuck, 1997; Kemmis, 1990). Action research, according to Lewin (in Kemmis, 1990), consists of the activities as *analysis, fact-finding, conceptualization, planning, execution, more fact-finding or evaluation* and then a preparation of this whole circle of activities; indeed a spiral of such circles.

After Lewin, Alice Miel and Stephen Corey were two pioneers in linking action research to school improvement (in the 1950's), both worked at the Horace-Mann-Lincoln Institute of School Experimentation at Columbia University in New York (Schmuck, 1997: 141-142). Either way, on applying action research to the field of education, the first systematic attempt was made by Stephen Corey and Alice Miel. This fact indicates that the idea of action research was absorbed into education almost as soon as it was originated.

The evolution of an action research agenda within education has also been influenced by people, such as Stenhouse (1975); Kemmis (1983, 1990); Hopkins (1985); Elliot (1991).

The idea of action research was swallowed by other traditional research thoughts until 1980s. Nevertheless, as of the 1980s, there has been a revival of interest in action research that reflects contemporary trends and issues (AED/MOE, 2006: 16-17).

As reviewed by Zeichner (2001:273-276), there are five major traditions of educational action research that have exerted influence (in conjunction

with local factors) on the development of action research in the educational system of many countries.

First, there is *the action research tradition in the USA* that developed directly out of the work of Kurt Lewin and was brought into US schools by Stephen Corey and others at the Horace Mann-Lincoln Institute at Columbia University. Secondly, there is the *British 'teacher-as-researcher movement'* that evolved in the 1960s and 1970s out of the curriculum reform work of British teachers and the support provided by several academics, such as Lawrence Stenhouse and John Elliott. Thirdly, there is the *Australian participatory action research movement*, supported by the work of Stephen Kemmis and Robin McTaggart at Deakin University and other Australian academics. Fourthly, there is *contemporary teacher researcher movement in North America* that has developed since the 1980s primarily by teachers (often with the support of their university colleagues and subject matter associations). Finally, there is *the recent growth of self-study research* by college and university educators who inquire into their own practice as teachers and educators. Zeichner has also remarked that educational action research has also been influenced by the traditions of participatory research which developed in Africa, Latin America and Asia with oppressed groups and later was adapted to community-wide research in North America.

#### **2.1.4. Theories of Action Research**

Theories of action research, according to Schwandt (2001: 3), are found under a variety of different labels - for example, *action inquiry*, *action science*, *participatory inquiry*, *pragmatic action research*, *collaborative inquiry*, and *participatory action research (PAR)*. Moreover, theories of action research are also found within critical educational science (Elliott, 1991). The summary of some theories that may correspond to the very nature of educational action research are presented as follows:

#### **2.1.4.1 Grounded Theory**

Glaser and Strauss's term "grounded theory" (1967), which has had an important influence on qualitative research, refers to theory that is inductively developed during a study (or series of studies) and in constant interaction with the data from that study (Maxwell, 2005: 42). This theory, as noted by Maxwell, "grounded" in the actual data collected, in contrast to theory that is developed conceptually and then simply tested against empirical data (p. 43). In a nutshell, the focus of Grounded Theory is the development of theory as a result of rigorous data collection and data analysis, and it is a result of logic and premises.

#### **2.1.4.2 Pattern Theories**

First referred by Guba and Lincoln in 1985, are broad explanations that develop during naturalistic or qualitative research. These "Pattern theories" or "generalizations" (as the endpoints of research) represent interconnected thoughts or parts linked to a whole. They are based on inductive reasoning where the researcher begins by gathering detailed information from participants and forms this information into categories or themes. These themes or categories are developed into broad patterns, theories, or generalizations that are then compared with personal experiences or with existing literature on the topic (Creswell, 1994).

#### **2.1.4.3 The Critical Theory/ the Theory of Emancipation**

The Critical theory is especially relevant to contemporary discussion and debate about the nature of action research. This theory aimed at critical reconstruction of the work, the worker and the work place. It emphasizes social realities incorporating historically situated structures. Here, assumptions are essentially subjective and hence knowledge is grounded in social and historical routines and is therefore value-dependent and not value-free (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Kemmis, 2001).

#### **2.1.4.4 The Theory of Communicative Action**

It privileges the kind of reflection and discussion (communicative action) we do (generally technical or practical action) to explore its nature, dynamics and worth (Kemmis, 2001). For Kemmis, the aspirations of communicative action could be written into or alongside the practices of reflection and discussion which is characteristic of action research.

The theory of communicative action includes a substantive theory (*the theory of system and life world*) which offers a new way of construing many of the problems critical action researchers worked on. Communicative action (that is, action oriented towards mutual understanding and unforced consensus) is the process by which participants test for themselves the comprehensibility, truth (in the sense of accuracy), truthfulness (sincerity) and rightness (in the sense of moral appropriateness) of the substantive content of these processes as it applies in their own situations (PP. 93 – 97).

#### **2.1.4.5 The Theory of system and Life world**

According to Kemmis (2001:98), this theory provides a theoretical discourse clarifying a significant shift in the social conditions of late modernity. It allows us to articulate problems which have emerged in late modernity as social system have become more extensive, and as problems of integrating different kinds of social organizations and systems have emerged. It provides a useful framework from which to view changes in schooling - for example, the functional integration of schooling with political - legal and economic systems. It also provides a new perspective on action research. He added saying that the theory of system and life world offers a way of understanding participants' perspectives as structured by contrasting and sometimes competing imperatives of social systems and the life world's participants inhabit (P. 98).

#### **2.1.4.6 Constructivism**

Like the Critical theory, Constructivism inquires about the ideologies and values that lie behind a finding so that reality actually consists of "multiple realities" that people have in their minds. Researching this constructed reality depends on interactions between interviewer and respondent, that is, the researcher has to be a "passionate participant" during his/her fieldwork (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Constructivism, broadly speaking is characterized by understanding, multiple participant meanings, social and historical construction, and theory generation.

#### **2.1.5. Attributes /Distinctive Features/ of Action Research**

It was suggested that action research differs from other types of social inquiry (which are not action research) in several ways (Elliot, 1991: 107-108; Altrichter, 1993:6; Cohen and Mannion, 1994:192; Schmuck, 1997: 29-31; Degarge, 1999: 41-42). Most obviously, action research is primarily concerned with solving immediate practical problems and making continuous improvements in practice; it strives for development and planned change whereas other forms of educational or social researches are concerned with creating theory or knowledge, that is, they strive for knowledge, explanation and truth.

Furthermore, the following distinctive features of action research are particularly noteworthy: *it is practical* (and directly relevant to an actual situation in the working world); *it is a reflexive practice* (i.e. it is a form of self-reflective inquiry and self-evaluation); *it is collaborative and /or participatory* in most of the cases (i.e. freedom and equality are essential features of action research); *it is flexible and adaptable*; *it is empirical* (in the sense that it relies on actual observations and behavioral data); *it is a cyclical process* (i.e. it is conducted in cycles involving a succession of intervention and reflection stages); and it allows *the deep involvement or intervention of the researcher* with the environment being studied.

### **2.1.6. Models of Action Research**

There are two models of action research, as identified by Schmuck (1997: 31-35). They are *proactive* and *responsive*. According to the writer, these two models differ primarily at when the data are collected and analyzed during the cycle of events. In *proactive* action research, *action* precedes data collection and analysis. The educator acts and then studies effects of the actions. Whereas, in *responsive* action research, *data are collected and analyzed* before action is taken. The educator diagnoses the situation, or does a need assessment, before acting. In both cases, *action* and *research* are alternating parts of the same overall project.

Although the two models of action research differ significantly, they differ primarily at start up. Once a continuous cycle of action research is under way, the two models both call for new action and new research and so forth (ibid).

### **2.1.7. Phases of Action Research**

Three phases of action recur and recycle through all action research projects. They are *initiation*, *detection* and *judgment* (Schmuck, 1997: 50-52). The writer portrayed when these phases occur in proactive and responsive action research. Accordingly, action researchers collect data at each of these (three) phases to understand what they are doing or to reflect or what they should be doing.

Generally speaking, each phase of action research entails research of one sort or another. *Initiation* (also referred to as "*research for action*") calls for either a *formal data collection*, as in *responsive* action research, or a more information retrieval of fresh ideas by reading or conferring with colleagues, as in *proactive* action research. *Detection* (also known as "*research in action*", or "*formative evaluation*", or "*process analysis*") calls for data collection to track (find out) how new actions are working.

*Judgment* (referred to as “*research of action*”, or “*summative evaluation*”) calls for data collection to assess results and to revise the action so it will be more effective in reaching desired objectives. Thus, data collection is a formal feature of virtually every aspect of action research (ibid).

### **2.1.8. Approaches in Action Research**

There are different ways or approaches action research can be conducted under different circumstances. Elliot (1991:69) has noted that action research follows three approaches: *the collaborative, the individual, and the whole school staffs approaches*. In *the collaborative approach*, a voluntary group of teachers or school administrators, students and parents may constitute as part of the research team. In *the individual approach*, action research is carried out personally by an individual teacher. In *the third approach*, the entire school may get involved in the selection of the educational problem to be studied.

### **2.1.9. Modes /Forms/of Action Research**

Various modes of action research alive and well today in the fields of education. Carr and Kemmis (1986:202-207), and Stephen Kemmis (2004: 92-93), who was influenced by Habermas's *Theory of Knowledge Constitutive Interests*, have identified three modes of educational action research on the basis of their purposes or aims: *technical, practical, and critical or emancipatory*. Following are descriptions of these three forms of action research.

#### **2.1.9.1 Technical Action Research**

According to the writers, much action research was/and is of technical form. It is oriented essentially towards functional improvement measured in terms of its success in changing particular outcomes of practices. This mode of action research is a form of problem-solving, and it is regarded as 'successful' when outcomes match aspirations—when the defined goal of

the project has been attained. But such action research does not necessarily question the goals themselves, or how the situation in which it is conducted has been discursively, socially and historically constructed. It takes a narrow, generally 'Pragmatic' view of its purpose.

#### ***2.1.9.2 Practical Action Research***

The practical form of action has technical aspirations for change, but it also aims to inform the (wise and prudent) practical decision-making of practitioners. Much of the action research influenced by the work of Donald Schon (1983, 1987) is of this kind. On this view of action research, practitioners aim not only to improve their practices in functional terms, but also to see how their goals, and the categories in which they evaluate their work, are shaped by their ways of seeing and understanding themselves in context. The process of action research is a process of self-education for the practitioner. Unlike technical action researchers, however, practical action researchers aim just as much at understanding and changing themselves as the subjects of a practice (as practitioners) as changing the outcomes of their practice.

#### ***2.1.9.3 Critical or Emancipatory Action Research***

According to the writers, this form of action research aims not only at improving outcomes, and improving the self-understanding of practitioners, but also at assisting practitioners to arrive at a critique of their social or educational work and work settings. This mode of action research aims at intervening in the cultural, social and historical processes of every day life to reconstruct not only the practice and the practitioner but also the practice setting (or, one might say, the work, the worker and the work place).

### **2.1.10. Procedures of /Steps in/ Action Research**

The steps or procedures of action research are more flexible as compared to other inquiries. Though the flexibility of the process looks reasonable, different scholars give different steps or procedures of action research as a working guide line.

As I have tried to see in different books (e.g. Altrichter et al. 1993; Cohen and Mannion, 1994; Schmuck, 1997; Elliot, 1991) action research doesn't have a fixed procedure of steps. But in most of the books, the process of action research is stated in the following pattern in one way or the other: *reflection* (i.e. reviewing one's own practice), *identification of a problem* (i.e. diagnosing a problem); *action planning* (i.e. the consideration of alternative courses of action to solve the problem identified); *action taking* (i.e. implementing the plan according to the schedule); *observing* (i.e. using different methods, collect data to see the effect of the action taken, or the careful recording of the actions and accumulation of evidence to determine if the desired goal has been achieved or not); *reflecting* (i.e. re-assessing the problem / studying of the out comes or the findings); and *trying new practice* (i.e. implementing the next action step).

From the above descriptions of steps or procedures of action research, one can possibly say that action research broadly encompasses research, action, participation or intervention, and reflection. And, specifically, the procedures of, or "moments" of the action research process can be explained as a 'self-reflective spiral' of *reflecting*, *planning*, *acting*, *observing*, and *re-planning* in one way or another.

### **2.1.11. Methods of Data Collection in Action Research**

Action research requires a planned method for gathering data. The most popular ways to collect data are *interviews*, *observations*, *Focus Group Discussion (FGD)*, *questionnaires*, and *documents* (Schmuck, 1997: 52-56; Degarge, 1999: 42-45; Merriam, 1988:71-118).

*Interviews* are conversations in which interviewer poses questions to interviewees. *Observation* involves attentively watching and systematically recording what is seen and heard. *Focus Group Discussion (FGD)* is an informal yet structured discussion in which a small number of participants (usually 6 to 12) are asked to discuss a particular topic in the presence of an interviewer or a facilitator. *Questionnaires* are printed lists of interrogative or declarative statements that individuals respond to in writing. *Documents* are public records, press clippings, and private journals and diaries.

Schmuck (1997:56) has also reminded that every action research project should include its own unique mix of interviews, Observations, FGD, questionnaires, and documents. It is, he added, each teacher's challenge to create his/her own special package of the aforementioned methods.

#### **2.1.12. Strengths and Limitation of Action Research**

Any type or form of action research has strengths as well as limitations or shortcomings. These are summarized and presented as follows.

##### **2.1.12.1 Strengths of Action Research**

As far as the strengths or the merits of action research are concerned, different scholars and authorities (e.g. Cohn and Manion 1994; Schmuck, 1997; Ken Zeichner, 2001; AED/MOE, 2006) advocate it in different ways. Major but not exhaustive strengths of action research are: it enhances teacher' motivation; it is a means of improving student learning; it is a means of professional development ;it raises direct practical questions; it is like an in-service training; it helps in professionalizing teaching; it could be a means to improve the traditional research methodology, which derivate theory first and goes to practice; it shows commitment and create positive relation with parents, students and the society as a whole; it is a means to influence educational policies; and it develops teachers' confidence.

Moreover, based on Zuber-Skirt's acronym "CRASP", AED/MOE (2006: 24-25) states the benefits of action research as follows:

*Action research promotes a critical attitude, research into teaching, accountability, self-evaluation and professionalism, which all of these are important goals any where in the world. Action research may provide a practical solution to these problems of achieving these goals. Through systematic investigation, teachers can become more professional, more interested in pedagogical and other aspects of the school and more motivated to integrate their research and teaching interests in a holistic way. This, in turn, can lead to greater job satisfaction, better academic programs, improvement of student learning and practitioners' insights and contributions to the advancement of knowledge in education.*

From the aforementioned descriptions, it is clear that action research helps educators, primarily, to solve practical educational problems, and moreover; it can help teachers to be collaborators in tackling educational problems. Specifically, it can help teachers to collaborate on the revision of the curriculum, improve their work environment, professionalize teaching, and suggest ideas for the development and revision of educational policy.

### **2.1.12.2 Limitations of Action Research**

Despite its many benefits or strengths, action research has been the target of severe criticism from positivists, who typically view Experimental and Survey research as the only "valid" modes of scientific inquiry. Three main possible action research weaknesses or limitations emerge from the discussion by Orlikowski and Baroudi (1991), about the clash between positivist and non-positivist assumptions. They are the *contingency of the research findings, low control of the environment, and personal over involvement.*

## **2.2. Factors Affecting Teachers' Involvement in Action Research**

Undertaking action research and its effectiveness could be influenced by a number of factors (Seyoum, 1998, 7-9; Yalew, 2000:257-260; AED/MOE, 2006:36-39). These factors or inputs can be expressed under two broad categories: internal (*personal*), and external (*institutional or environmental, and situational*). Some, but not exhaustive, are presented below.

### **2.2.1. Personal / Internal Factors**

Action research is a part of teachers' professional development, and as such it requires teachers' reflection 'on' and 'in' action. The capacity to reflect (which is one of action research attributes) can be affected by individual(personal) factors as knowledge and/or skill level, self-confidence, esteem, attitude and interest in research, inquisitive mind, perseverance or discipline, and training pattern. That is, the inputs that are often expected from the individual researcher need to constitute some or all of the above attributes. This means that if all of the above attributes are not available, teachers could not undertake educational action research.

As examination of research literature reveals, the importance of personal interest in research activity is highly emphasized. For instance, scholars such as Jones (in Seyoum, 1998) regard it as the major driving force behind research. This is indeed true, because interest in research activity is not something that can be imposed from without unless it comes from within the individual.

Similarly Good (in Seyoum, 1999) argued that having an inquisitive mind could be quite an asset in research. It is often said that research favors the one who is curious about problems as opposed to the one who takes every thing for granted or one who is blind to problems. Furthermore, by

its very nature, research activity calls for the disciplined mind, a mind that is tenacious and unwavering. That is why success in research is often attributed to the individual researcher's perseverance.

Moreover, other educators, for example, Elliot (1991) have emphasized that it would be virtually impossible to think of carrying out research activity without the individual being equipped with basic research skill. Basically, the only way to acquire competence in research is by doing it, but before research can be put into practice some skills must be acquired. Therefore, the need for competency in research methods becomes indispensable to the individual teacher.

At the same time, it should be noted that having some or all of the above attributes does not necessarily guarantee the individual to effectively engage in research activity because teachers' capacity to reflect- on their practice can also be affected by institutional or environmental, and situational factors.

### ***2.2.2. External factors***

These can be grouped in to institutional/environmental and situational factors.

#### ***2.2.2.1 Institutional/Environmental Factors***

It is believed that reflective practice and action research are more effective in those environment that promote the culture of inquiry for teachers. In other words, it becomes clear that some or all of the above personal attributes one has in research practice do not by themselves take one anywhere unless other essential conditions for research are facilitated.

Among the basic essentials that are needed to carryout research activity are obviously financial resources which are in short supply (as such, the existence of research-sponsoring institutions becomes indispensable), the

availability of research facilities (ranging from office space to sophisticated pieces of research equipment), the provision of material and psychological incentives, the creation of publishing outlets (such as Journals, magazines, news letters).

Putting in simple word, institutional inputs include such things as provision of research funds, and facilities, time, incentives, and publishing outlets. Besides, the nature of state and school policy on continuous professional development of teachers, administrative problems can be regarded as impeding factors to initiate action research and exercise reflectivity. In general, an action researcher, to do effective job, should be guaranteed with all sorts of favorable conditions, such as economic, social, political as well as cultural security.

#### ***2.2.2.2 Situational Factors***

Apart from the above two factors (personal, and institutional /environmental), action research practice can be affected by situational constraints as work over load (which leaves little or no time for teachers to conduct research), innovation, phase of development and so on. Writing about the indispensability of time for research activity, Seyoum (1998:9) reminds that research is a time-consuming activity, and consequently, teachers need to be provided with adequate time in order to be able engage in research activity. This implies that if a researcher's time is taken from him or her, he or she will remain sterile.

In conclusion, it could be said that research activity in classroom and school situations is a function of the integration of the various personal (internal) and institutional (external) inputs. That is, without inputs from the two major factors, it would be hard to effectively engage in research activities.

### **2.3. The Status of Action Research in Ethiopian Schools**

In Ethiopia, as I have mentioned earlier in the 'Introduction' Section, the need to conduct research in classroom and school situations is clearly stipulated in the Education and Training Policy (ETP) and the Education Sector Strategy document of 1994. With specific reference to research and development, the document states that research into curriculum development, instruction methods and evaluation techniques shall be encouraged and assisted. It expresses the need to integrate and coordinate the teaching- learning process with research, and facilitate the participation of teachers and researchers in getting the necessary experience.

From the above description, it is clear that one of the major concerns or the focus of the educational policy in meeting the challenges of teaching-learning process and tackle the problem of quality in education is by facilitating conditions to conduct research in classroom and school situations. This entails teachers are encouraged to conduct action research. In this regard, it is expected that Preparatory School teachers (who are University graduates) can conduct research for improving the teaching-learning process, the curriculum as well as their professional competence.

Generally speaking, it is acknowledged that action research, if teachers are able to conduct it, can help them to be collaborators in tackling educational problems (such as quality, relevance, etc.). More specifically, action research can help teachers to collaborate on the revision of the curriculum, improve their work environment, professionalize teaching, and suggest ideas for the development and revision of educational policy (AED/MOE, 2006:3).

Unfortunately, however, the available research works in the area (e.g. Seyoum, 1998; Firdissa, 2000; Hussen, 2000; Yalew, 2000; Yeshimebrat, 2000; Teklehaimanot, 2000; Amare, 2000; Abraham, 2004; Aster, 2004; the AED/MOE, 2006; Yibeltal, 2006) indicated that, the status of research activities in schools was marginal.

An examination of the aforementioned studies shows that they were conducted at tertiary levels as M.A. Theses (e.g. Aster, 2004; Abraham, 2004; Yibeltal, 2006); as Journal articles (e.g. Seyoum, 1998; Hussen, 2000; Yalew, 2000; Yeshimebrat, 2000; Teklehaimanot, 2000; Amare, 2000); as a national document for educational development (e.g. AED/MOE, 2006); and as a regional document for educational development (e.g. Firdissa, 2000).

From the above studies (research works), only very few studies (e.g. Aster, 2004; the AED/MOE, 2006; Yibeltal, 2006) dealt with action research, of which the first two studies aimed at assessing the state of action research in primary schools, while the latter has attempted to assess the status of action research in a secondary school.

In her study that examined the current status of action research in the upper primary schools of Sidama Zone, Aster (2004) has found out that there was very little research outcome. The study has also revealed that lack of resources, absence of on-the job training, shortage of finance and the under-developed research culture were the major problems that impeded action research activities in the research area. According to the same study, lack of moral and material incentives, limited research knowledge and skills of teachers, inadequate provision of research courses at TTIs and TTCs have contributed negatively for its low development.

Further more, the AED/MOE (2006), in its study, which aimed to explore how action research in primary schools is carried out in Ethiopia, found

out nine major findings (pp.110-115): the knowledge (training and skills) of teachers in action research are not adequate; teachers do not practice action research as much as expected, that is, there was less effort of doing action research among teachers in primary schools; collaboration in doing action research was encouraging among teachers, but more collaboration took place in urban schools than rural schools; both inside and outside school factors were motivating factors for those teachers who do action research; factors inside and outside impede doing action research by teachers; most of the teachers who participated in doing action research used or applied the procedure of traditional - descriptive research to do action research; support provided by school and authorities for teachers who did action research seems inadequate or insignificant in many schools, against the basic assumption of action research; schools do not use the results or findings of action research in real life situations; most of the students do not have an idea about research conducted in their schools.

In his study that tried to assess the status of action research in Ambo General Secondary School, Yibeltal (2006) has found out that the status of action research activities was marginal due to teachers' lack of motivation that resulted from interruption of promotion in the career structure, teacher's lack of interest and negative attitude; teachers' lack of commitments, inadequate facilities; lack of research knowledge and skills, lack of financial support, and others.

By the same token, most of the studies conducted on the Ethiopian secondary schools (Seyoum, 1998; Hussien, 2000; Yalew, 2000; Yeshimebrat, 2000; TekleHaimanot, 2000; Abraham, 2004) have witnessed that the idea of initiating research by school teachers is at its infancy in most of secondary schools.

According to the major findings of these studies, the state of educational research in the Ethiopian secondary schools has suffered from the

following problems or constraints: inadequacy of research skill (i.e., low expertise and lack of experience in research activities); lack of imagination; lack of financial and material resources in the schools; lack of confidence; work overload (which leaves little or no time for teacher to conduct educational research); lack of motivation and of interest; administrative problems; absence of government policy with regard to academic freedom; failure in coordinating efforts among education authorities in research activities.

From the above descriptions of the findings of the available studies on the current state of ( educational) action research, one can safely infer that undertaking action research is perceived as a complex process by most school teachers, and hence, there is less effort and less participation; the few teachers who participated to undertake research had applied the traditional research approach; action research in Ethiopian schools (Primary to Secondary) is at its early stage of development, that is, most available studies disclosed a characteristic of infancy though some attempts have been made by teachers to undertake research. In general the extent to which action research was carried out was low in secondary schools of Ethiopia due to various internal and external factors.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **3. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY**

#### **3.1. Methodological Approach**

In this study, I have applied a qualitative research method to explore the research participants' understandings and interpretations as regards what preparatory teachers' involvement in action research looks like, and problems that encountered them to involve in it. That is, for fuller understanding of the educational issue under study (i.e. the magnitude of the engagement of preparatory teachers in action research), I have found the qualitative research method compatible to my study. In fact, a holistic approach that allowed a qualitative analysis in a natural context is opted for reasons that include ease of securing qualitative information that has depth and opportunity for me to experience and directly observe the context of the study.

#### **3.2. Research Design and Procedures**

This study has applied the exploratory *Case Study approach*. Since it intended to investigate a single educational issue (i.e. the status of action research) in a single research setting (i.e., Gelemso Secondary and Preparatory School), Case Study approach appeared appropriate to be utilized.

This study was carried out in three stages. The first stage, which was the preparatory stage, involved proposal development, writing of review of related literature, development of methods of data collection and strategies of data analysis. The second phase was the preliminary assessment (i.e., creating rapport with the teachers and the directors within the school), employment of methods or techniques of data collection, data transcription, data coding, data categorization, analysis and interpretation.

n the third stage, draft report writing, finalization of the draft, and publication of the final research report were accomplished one after the other.

### **3.3. Research Setting: Gelemso Secondary and Preparatory School (GSPS)**

The study was conducted at Gelemso Secondary and Preparatory School. The school is found in Gelemso town (in Habro Woreda, West Hararghe Administrative Zone), which is located at a distance of 400 kilometers east of Addis Ababa. The school was founded in 1971 E.C. It started offering the preparatory education in 1994 E.C/2001G.C., being one of the pioneer schools in the zone. There were 18 teachers who teach in the school at Preparatory program: 1 teacher was with M.Sc. degree, 8 teachers were with first degree qualification, 4 teachers were with 12+3 qualification, still other 4 teachers were with diploma qualification, and 1 teacher with certificate.

In addition to the responsibility of teaching, the preparatory teachers are expected to conduct action research in order to solve the day-to-day problems of education. This is, of course, a professional requirement for all teachers at all levels. Moreover, teachers are obliged to conduct action research for their professional growth and development, and promotion to the next professional career is based on teaching and research outcomes (MOE, 1994).

The school was purposely chosen for the fact that it was my first place where I started teaching and, indeed, I had served there for fifteen years (1983-1998 E.C.) as a history teacher for eight years and as the school's principal and vice-principal for seven years. As a result, I have had a special acquaintance to the majority of the school's teachers and directors as well as to the Habro Woreda Education Office's officials. This had

facilitated my entry and access to the research setting and the research participants. Besides, my past experience in the school gave me an opportunity to sense the problem in point.

In the Ethiopian educational system, Preparatory School is the second cycle of Secondary School, which offers pre-college education in two years duration for students of grade 11 and 12. The principal goal of preparatory education, which was derived from the educational policy (NETP), is to prepare students for tertiary level education (ICDR, 1994 a: 4). At this level of educational program, students who complete the General Secondary Education and pass the national exam given at grade 10 would be streamed into the natural science field or the social science field, and would learn for two years (grade 11&12). After taking the college entrance national exam at the end of the program, those students who are successful in their results would be placed in to respective universities.

At Preparatory Schools, it is claimed that teachers can do action research to solve actual classroom problems. However, up to now there is no evidence that indicates the extent to which Preparatory teachers engaged in action research to solve real educational problems in classrooms and in the schools. Nor is there any systematic attempt made to study the conditions under which Preparatory School teachers do action research to the above end. This was the principal issue that initiated me to select GSPS and conduct the present study.

### **3.4. Sources of Data and Selection of Research**

#### **Participants**

The main data sources for this study were eight preparatory teachers and the director of GSPS, one expert and two members of career structure committee (from HWEO), documentary sources (e.g. Time table, school's

strategic plan, and previous research papers produced by the teachers), and I my self.

Since school teachers are required to demonstrate engagement in action research activities for professional development and to improve instructional process, (MOE, 2002: 35), I had felt that getting their reaction is helpful. There fore, I have selected eight teachers.

As stated in the education policy directives (MOE, 2002: 32), school administrators, particularly directors and deputy directors, are charged with the tasks or responsibilities of facilitating conditions for teachers so as to conduct school-based studies and research that could help improve the teaching-learning process as well as the school's organization and administration. Furthermore, they are empowered to evaluate the results of the studies and assist their realization, and are also expected to make use of the result of the studies to improve school situations. Thus, one of the principals of the school was included in this study as data source.

According to the same directive (pp. 6-7), woreda education office has the responsibilities to guide, coordinate and supervise school activities and to extend the necessary support to schools. Besides, it is entitled to offer rewards or incentives to educational professionals (school teachers and education administration bodies) who would make an outstanding contribution. Therefore, one expert from the office was selected as source of data based on his role, concern, responsibility, and other related qualities.

Moreover, the educational directives indicates that the career structure's committee, which usually consisted of representatives of the woreda education office and of the teachers' association is supposed to evaluate the efficiency of teachers with respect to both teaching performances and school-based research activities, and decides on teachers' fate in the

career structure/ professional development. Thus, I have selected two persons from the committee as research participants.

Added to this, I have mined data from available documents (e.g. previous research papers produced by the school's teachers, the school's strategic plan, and the school's time table).

Finally, since a researcher essentially stands at the heart of a qualitative study (Merriam, 1988; Creswell, 1994), I myself was a major data source of this study, that is, my personal concepts and reflection were included in the study.

In this study, *the purposive selection* was employed for the selection of key informants. The informants were selected depending on their relevance to the study being conducted, that is, the criteria used to select informants were their experience, competence, roles, concerns, responsibilities, qualification, and cooperativeness or willingness to participate in the study.

### **3.5 Characteristics of the research participants**

Of the total 18 Preparatory teachers working in the school, 8 teachers were purposely selected for the study on the assumption of the potentials they have to contribute to the development of insight and understanding of the case under study. Besides, one of the directors of the school, one supervisor (out of two), two members of the committee of career structure (out of six individuals) from HWEO were selected depending on their relevance to the present study as sources of data. All the information related to the research participants' background were collected directly from them during the interview.

As it is depicted in Appendix-E, the research participants have had 7 to 31 years of work experiences. They had diversified work experiences as teacher, director, supervisor, committee members, and educational personnel.

Regarding the educational background and qualification of the research participant, it is exhibited that they were from diverse fields of study and have had different levels of academic qualification (i.e. certificate to master's degree). Besides, their rank or status on the career structure ladder range from *Teacher (Memihir)* to *Associate Lead teacher (or Tebabari Meri Memihir)*.

Therefore, their perceptions and ideas can be judged from different perspectives. Diversity of points of view and experiences can help to consider problems and opportunities, and look for divergences and convergences of ideas concerning the issues under study. Therefore, it is possible to say that the research participants have had profiles that are appropriate to this study so that their opinions, understanding and interpretations can be accepted as valid and reliable.

### **3.6. My Role as a Researcher**

As I have mentioned so far, a researcher essentially stands at the heart of a qualitative study. Therefore, in this qualitative case study, I was the major data source by being a passionate participant, careful observer, neutral (sensitive) interviewer and sympathetic listener, and sensitive recorder, and a major data interpreter and data analyzer, narrator, and descriptive writer.

### **3.7. Methods of Data Generation**

The methods and techniques used for data generation in this study were semi-structured (less-structured) interviews, observation and documentary

sources. These methods were developed in such a way that they maximize the possibility of generating answers to the basic research questions and sub-questions.

### **3.7.1. Planning and Conducting the Interview**

At the very start, I established a rapport with the research setting (i.e. with the working teachers, the directors, and woreda education administration bodies), though I had had previous acquaintance with most of them. Then, interview protocols were prepared to undertake the interview, and for recording information. And I have discussed them orally with the research participants regarding their consent and anonymity, the confidentiality of the information and other related ethical issues.

Subsequently, in-depth interview (IDI) was utilized on one-to-one bases using semi-structured (less structured) questions supported by tape-recorder in order to get detail information from the informants. The one-to-one interview has given me the opportunity to explore the participants' perceptions, thoughts and opinion in-depth.

The whole process of interviewing was supported by tape-recorder based on the rationale that it was convenient and saved the time for me; it was because cumbersome for me to jot down every content of the interview directly on to the paper while the conversations were ongoing; and the quality of responses would be more factual, that is, I found the taped interview highly helpful to grasp participants' ideas, perceptions and feelings effectively.

I recorded the interview based on the consent of the informants, and conducted the interview on an intermittent basis with separate sessions that lasted about forty-five minutes on average. Finally, by playing back the recorded interview again and again; I transcribed it word by word.

### **3.7.2. Planning and Conducting an Observation**

In this study, I conducted unstructured observation with particular emphasis on the research setting (i.e. what the school's environment and facilities look like). In my observation, I intended to generate empirical data on the school's library organization and availability of reading materials (e.g. research literatures and journals), and on the school's internet room.

### **3.7.3. Document Assessment**

In this study, I have tried to consult documents to analyze educational research outcomes produced by the school's teachers, to examine the school's strategic plan (1996-1998) and to gather data about teachers teaching load.

### **3.8. Data Analysis Procedures and Strategies**

In my study, I have utilized a single-case analysis strategy where I attempted to make a comprehensive analysis of the case. The use of a single-case analysis gave me the opportunity for the in-depth understanding of the issues in the study. I have also applied interpretational analysis, or categorizing analysis where, first, I coded and organized the data into three major categories or themes in order to compare and contrast them and to look for connections or correspondence among the categories or themes of the data. Moreover, I have utilized reflective analysis by using my own experience, personal judgment or concepts and reflection to assess the case under study, and to draw conclusions.

To wards this line, I have developed categories or themes based on the basic research questions and their sub questions, and on the basis of the assembled data themselves. The categories I developed were: *the past to*

*the present trends of the preparatory school teachers' involvement in action research, major factors that affected the teachers' engagement in action research, and the future trends of the teachers' engagement in action research.*

### **3.9. Standards of Quality and Verification, and Ethical Considerations**

Amare (2003), cited in Ali(2005:49), states that the terms '*standards*' and '*verification*' are used in qualitative research to deconstruct the positivistic terms '*validity*', '*objectivity*' and '*reliability*'.

In this line, the general procedures, or strategies that were followed for maintaining standards of quality and verification in the present study were *triangulation* and *ethical principles*.

#### **3.9.1. Triangulation**

In this study, I have applied *data triangulation*, that is, the use of a variety of data sources, such as human sources, document sources and observation notes. Utilization of these data sources was fundamental in verifying the convergence and divergence of views and interpretations regarding the issue understudy, and helped me to secure an in-depth understanding of it.

#### **3.9.2. Ethical Considerations**

Denzin and Lincoln (1994), Merriam, (1988), and Creswell (1994/2003), have remarked that in qualitative research full attention should be given for moral and ethical issues. Therefore, I have given a particular consideration to ethical principles developed by these scholars, particularly regarding ensuring informed consent and assent, developing confidentiality, maintaining anonymity and other related ethical issues. Accordingly, I prepared and proposed a set of ethical principles (or research protocol) for

my research and informed the participants before data collection commenced. And I adhered to the ethical principles indicated in Appendix-A (Adapted from Merriam, 1988) throughout my study. Furthermore, all the research participants were renamed (P1, ---, P12) so as to protect their identity.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### 4. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION AND FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

One of the issues highly emphasized by the education policy and its directives is teachers' research practices for promotion and enhancing the quality of teaching-learning process. In line with this, the educational policy directives had designed and put into play an advancement (or promotion) and a career ladder schedule for teachers to initiate them to increase their capabilities and responsibilities.

Thus, a six-tiered scheme had also been developed and teachers working at all school levels (i.e., from kindergarten up to Secondary level) have been evaluated and such evaluation would enable an individual teacher to grow from a *beginner teacher* ('*Jemari memihir*') to a *lead teacher* ('*Meri Memihir*'). Accordingly, as teachers do progress from one level or rank to the next, their salary increases, and their esteem in the society grows, and they would become increasingly respected figures in the school as well as in the community.

Career structure in this context defined as a change in the structure of teaching profession that provides teachers to advance and progress in their profession. Major purpose of career structure is: to enhance the motivation, interest and diligence of teachers; attract good entrants to the teaching profession; encourage the development of the teaching profession; and to enhance the quality of the teaching-learning process (Befekadu, 1995).

In brief, the claimed benefits from the career structure were to improve the productivity of Ethiopian schools, at least gradually, using a motivated teaching staff.

In the same Vein, at grassroots level, the school (GSPS) in its so-called *mission statement* (SPM, 1996-1998:3) has spelt out the need to conduct educational (action) research by stating:

*At this level of education, the school commits it self to provide its learners with quality instructional process that is assisted by (integrated with) research practice...*

This entails that the school in its grand 'mission' has intended to get its teachers participate in educational action research (i.e. school-based studies) and thereby, to make their work research-based.

To this line, the school in its performance evaluation scheme has accentuated research practice by incorporating it into the regular tasks. Accordingly, those veteran teachers who have had teaching service of six and more years (i.e. those teachers who have already progressed to the four highest levels or ranks of the career structure's ladder scheme: *Memihir, Kefitegna Memihir, Tebabari Meri Memihir, and Meri Memihir*) are required to do research, that is, they have to produce 1 publication every 3 or 4 years.

Although the provision of clear policy directives and criteria is a primary step or action to get research activities done, it may not be a guarantee for implementation at school level and at teachers' disposal.

Therefore, the present study has attempted to explore what looks like the trends of preparatory teachers' involvement in action research from past to the present in one of the Preparatory Schools (GSPS). Besides, it tried to identify major factors that had adversely affected the teacher to engage in action research; and collect different suggestions that may help to improve the teachers' participation in action research in the immediate future. In this chapter, thus, the data generated from different sources analyzed thematically and discussed vis-à-vis to three major categories and their

sub-categories that were created based on the basic research questions. The data are presented in narrative form. I have also shown my own interpretation and understanding of the issues in addition to the research participants' own interpretations and understandings.

#### **4.1 The Trends of Preparatory Teachers' Involvement in Action Research from the Past to the Present (1995- 2007)**

Under this major category, I have discussed about the extent to which the teachers involved in educational action research; major research issues addressed by the teachers in their research works; research method utilized by the teachers; and the purposes for which the teachers conducted educational action research.

##### ***4.1.1. The Extent of the Teachers' Involvement: Low Status or Infant Stage of Teachers' Involvement in Action Research***

The informants of this study discussed the extent to which the preparatory teachers involved in action research from the past to the present. The result of the study has demonstrated that the extent to which the preparatory teachers involved in action research was very low, or was so limited. The over whelming majority of the research participants have uniformly reported that , in general terms, the effort made by the teachers to do action research was almost inexistent.

In this connection, for example, one of my informants (P4) expounded the past-present research situation in the school as follows:

*Teachers' participation to do research is a rare case in our school for the main reason that it was usually associated with writing of senior essays for a partial fulfillment of course requirement and with the career structure, that is, promotion. Therefore, I can say that involvement in research activities is*

*very low, or insignificant. Most of the teachers have distanced themselves from any research endeavor, and as a result, one could not come across any exemplary research work that initiates you or a model teacher who could prompt you to engage in educational research activities. (24/07/99).*

This view implies that action research practices were not common and popular among the Preparatory teachers of GSPS.

Similarly, another informant (P<sub>2</sub>) explained the research conditions of the teachers by saying:

*Frankly speaking, every individual teacher knows (in his/her mind) that he/she must do research. Nevertheless, the attempt made to involve in action research activities proved to be very low, or so limited. We often think about doing research, but we have lacked commitment and courage to make it a reality20/07/99).*

Still another teacher informant (P<sub>12</sub>) expressed his regret for his failure to do any research by uttering:

*I have taught for the last nineteen solid years in the school and had many practical problems (in my mind) that need to be researched. However; I have done nothing worth mentioning hitherto. As a result, I feel regret and get ashamed of my weakness. I am embarrassed for not doing a single research (12/08/99).*

Teachers with long service years and experience should have to conduct research, and be models and advisors to the young and novice teachers. However; this was not observed in the school.

The ideas of P<sub>12</sub> (i.e. the absence of involvement in research activities) were shared by P<sub>1</sub>. He said:

*I had never involved in any form of research activity hitherto, that is, since I graduated. I dare to say that my participation in research was almost absent. Now I have an intention to carryout one research in the near future. That is, currently I am pursuing my first research project that seeks to evaluate curricular material (19/07/99).*

The trend of the teachers' involvement in action (educational) research, according to one informant (P8), has shown certain improvements:

*For me, the teachers' effort to participate in research activities is encouraging as compared to the past many years. For instance, within the last five and four years I have seen those summer-in-service trainees and others engaging themselves in research activities. Hence, these days there are better attempts and attentions, and improvement in the teachers' involvement in different educational research activities even though it is not satisfactory (09/08/99).*

According to the view of P8, the involvement of those summer-in-service trainees in research activity can be counted as an indicator of a positive trend of teachers' participation in action (educational) research since the last five years.

In general, it is evident from the discussions that the extent to which the preparatory teachers participated in education action research found to be very low or so minimal. As described by the majority of the informants (eleven out of twelve), it appears that most of the Preparatory teachers alienated themselves from engaging in research activities even though they are required to do action research at class and school levels. This implies that despite the fact that most of the teachers are veterans who have had longer teaching service, experiences, and who most likely to do research, they have simply confined themselves to their teaching tasks while they have marginalized research practices.

As such, it is possible to say that there was a thin line or a weak nexus between action research and the teaching practices. That is, the preparatory teachers showed less effort and appeared reluctant to understand and reflect on their every day practical problems in the school and classrooms, and, thus, one cannot talk of their involvement in educational action research since the research claimed to have done was so minimal.

Besides, the teachers' low level involvement in action (educational) research activities also entails that the school itself couldn't materialize the "research-based" instructional process it accentuated in its 'mission statement'. Hence, the school's 'mission' regarding research practice found to be ambitious and abortive.

As such, it is possible to conclude that the preparatory teachers in the school did not participate in educational action research as much as expected, and that the status of their engagement in action research is at its very early stage of development.

#### **4.1.2. Major Research Issues Addressed by the Teachers in Their Research Papers**

Action research is concerned with diagnosing a problem in a specific context and attempting to solve it in that context. According to scholars in the field (e.g. Cohen and Mannion, 1989), the possibilities in which teachers can get involved in research activities in school context are varied and vast. For instance, the following can be possible issues for research in schools life: *teaching methods, students' enrollment figures by sex and age, learning strategies, evaluation procedures, patterns of student and teacher attendance, dropouts, repeaters, students' disciplinary problems, teaching-loads, hidden versus formal curriculum, and school-community relations*. As such, whenever teachers aspire to do an investigation within their schools/classrooms, there are so many issues or plenty of problems available in their day-to-day practices.

This study has found out that those teachers who claimed to have involved in action (educational) research gave more emphasis on teaching methods and contents' relevance of subject matter materials in their research papers. With regard to the specific issues or problems addressed

in the few research papers, one of my informants (P<sub>8</sub>), described his views as follows:

*I witnessed that those teachers who have done research usually focused on issues as teaching methodology (of language, of natural science, of social science, etc.); evaluation of curricular materials (content relevance); students' disciplinary problems, and so on. In general, they usually used to address problems encountered them in the classrooms even though they were not intended to improve school's practices (09/08/99).*

Further more, my past experience in the school and the document analysis I have made confirm the truthfulness of this view, that is, investigation into teaching methodology and evaluation of curricular materials were among the major contents, or issues the teachers often tried to address in their research papers. In addition to these major concerns, issues as school facilities, students' disciplinary problems, causes of dropouts, causes of repeaters were additional (minor) concerns of the teachers. This implies that, most of the issues the teachers tried to investigate more or less related to the practical problems they encountered in the class and the way teaching methodology applied, though they were not inspired to improve the teaching-learning processes within the school.

#### **4.1.3. Research Method Utilized by the Teachers**

Various types of research methodologies can be employed to study different kinds of educational problems, as supported by (Seyoum, 1998: 6). As Amare (2000: 35) noted, research designs determine the depth, rigor, and amount of controls researchers require during their investigation. He further explained that there were four major research designs: Experimental, Descriptive, Historical and Developmental designs.

The document analysis I have made on twelve research papers suggests that the overwhelming number of the teachers who have conducted research used the traditional descriptive design. That is, *the traditional*

*descriptive research* procedure that includes *identification of the problems, background, purpose (objective), significance, basic research questions, quantitative data, statistical analysis techniques and provisions of conclusion, summary, and of recommendations* was commonly employed by all teachers. The *case study approach* observed to be the most popular type of descriptive design to the teachers.

This suggests that all teachers who claimed to have carried out research have paid little, or no attention to other research designs. This might be attributed partly to their background, that is, their mode of prior training and their experience in utilizing educational research, and partly to their preference to pursue, or resort to the research design that requires less resources and facilities

Besides, my document assessment of the type of data collection instruments utilized by the teachers has revealed that all the teachers commonly used close-ended questionnaires that asked for information, and also utilized observation and the oppinionnaires (i.e. asking questions that require answer in the form of opinions) but rarely.

#### **4.1.4. Purposes for which the Teachers Undertook Research**

The efforts of an investigator who is engaged in action (educational) research may have different primary purposes. As stated by the AED/MOE (2006: 68), the purposes for which educational action research has been carried out by the teachers may indicate the type of prevailing problems in schools as well as the level of understanding of teachers concerning educational action research. It further indicated that the action researcher (i.e. the teacher) is interested in the improvement of the educational practices in which he/she engaged.

Similarly, Schmuck (1997: 28) has posited that the action researcher's purpose is to study a real school situation with a view to improve the quality of actions and results within it.

Nevertheless, the result of this study has demonstrated that the primary motives of the teachers in conducting research were to attain personal benefits rather than to improve the quality of practices and actions within the school. In other word, the preparatory teachers' engagement in educational research was highly incentive-oriented. In line with this idea, for instance, one of my informants, (P<sub>8</sub>) described the teachers' objectives as follows:

*Majority of the teachers have conducted research primarily to partially fulfill their course requirement. Other than for this, there were teachers who had done research for promotional purposes. Therefore, teachers, in most cases, were externally pushed to engage in research activities (09/08/99).*

Likewise, another research participant, P<sub>10</sub>, reported:

*Most often, teachers who were pursuing summer courses observed involving in research practices. The only exceptions were, just before seven and eight years ago, that few teachers attempted to do research on the practical problems they encountered in their classes (10/08/99).*

The above descriptions of the informants, particularly the views of P<sub>8</sub>, (the views that were commonly shared by almost all the research participants) show that the prime concern for which the teachers conducted research were in order to partially fulfill their course requirements. Apart from this, the findings of this study have also depicted that some of the teachers used to conduct research every three or four years either to get promotion from one rank to the next on the career structure's ladder, or to solve somehow, the problems they encountered in the teaching-earning process, but rarely.

In addition to what was reported by the research participants so far, from my past experiential understanding and observation in the school, I have noticed that the course requirements and the career structure's criteria to a greater extent, and performance evaluation to a lesser extent were motivating factors for which the teachers involved in research activities.

The fact that the course requirement and the career structure served as initiating factors imply how much the teachers' research accomplishments were predominantly of extrinsic and benefit-oriented. It is, after all, naïve to think that the teachers would do educational action research primarily for solving instructional problems, or for improving the school practices.

#### **4.2. Factors that Impeded the Preparatory Teachers to Involve in Action Research**

From the previous discussion, it was made clear that the Preparatory teachers did not engage in action research to the extent expected. In this part, I have discussed the informants' responses on the factors that obstructed the teachers to involve in action research. The factors, in a broader sense, are categorized as *internal* (personal) and *external* to the individual.

##### **4.2.1. Internal (Personal) Factors that Obstructed the Preparatory Teachers to Do Action Research**

As described in chapter two of this study, action research requires teachers' *reflection "on" and "in" action*. The capacity to reflect, however; can be affected by plenty of individual (personal) factors, such as knowledge and/or skill level, attitude towards research, interest in research, inquisitive mind, perseverance or discipline, self-confidence, esteem, and perception (Seyoum, 1998: 7-9; Yalaw, 2000: 257-260; AED/MOE, 2006: 36-39). This implies that if all or some of the above

attributes are not available, teachers could not undertake (educational) action research up to the required standards, or qualities.

The findings of this study reveal that lack of personal competencies in action research skill, lack of endurance to problems encountered, lack of interest in research and teaching, unfavorable attitude towards research and criteria for promotion, absence of self-effort and commitment to learn about action research, low academic qualification were major personal factors (problems) that obstructed the Preparatory teachers to carry out educational action research. These impediments have been given due attention in the discussions of this chapter.

#### ***4.2.1.1 The Preparatory Teachers have lacked the skill/***

##### ***Knowledge of Action Research***

Any given task (be it simple or complex) requires certain basic skill and/or knowledge of how to accomplish it. Therefore, it undoubtedly accepted that school teachers' knowledge and skill in (educational) action research is very important, or crucial to involve in it. That is to say, the knowledge (skill) which usually develops through different exposures (e.g. training, workshops, practice) serves as a base line to promote both the quality and quantity of action research.

In this connection, scholars, such as Elliot (1991: 69) has noted that it would be virtually impossible to think of carrying out research activity without the individual being equipped with basic research skill.

Moreover, Weirisma (1986) has remarked that it is increasingly important for educational professionals to be knowledgeable and skillful about educational research. Accordingly, before attempting to do, or practice research, some skills must be acquired.

Nevertheless, as the findings of this study demonstrated, most of Preparatory teachers have lacked the required skills and/or knowledge of the techniques of (educational) action research that could allow them to involve in it. In deed, the results of the study have shown that almost all of the informants who participated in the study (except P<sub>10</sub>) have unanimously agreed on the importance of knowledge, or competence in action research as prerequisite for involving in it. As regards the problem with the teachers' research knowledge, one of the informants (P<sub>8</sub>) reported:

*Most of the veteran teachers have lacked the basic research skill, partly for the reason that they were trained and graduated in the pre-1994 educational systems that did not provide room for research activity in the pre-service training, and after wards, they could not get a single opportunity to training on research methodology. As a result, they have distanced themselves from any form of research activity (09/08/99).*

Similarly, another research participant (P<sub>2</sub>) described his complaints with regard to lack of competence in research skill and problem with the mode of prior training as follows:

*We are obliged to do research under the conditions we have lacked research skill and knowledge. Some of teachers even did not take any training at all and have no idea. On the other hand, the training we had taken on research methodology at university was not adequate and not promising to do research, because it was given to us through distance course and as a result, we have very little awareness or orientation about it. It could not enable us to initiate research works in the school (20/07/99).*

According to the views of these informants (whose views represent the views held by the majority of the research participants); lack of quality and adequate prior training or shortage of knowledge on educational action research was a prominent obstacle to involve in it. Because, other factors such as teachers' perception interest and commitment are guided by the level of teachers' knowledge on action research. As they explained, the problem is not equal magnitude for all preparatory teachers rather it is

severe for those veteran teachers who were trained in the pre- 1994 (i.e. the socialist) education system, which gives very limited orientation about basic research methodology.

Moreover, it was found out that shortage of research skill consequently turned the teachers to be less confident to involve in action research. As such, the need for competency in educational action research methodology becomes indispensable to the individual teacher. That is prior knowledge/skill of educational research methodology in general, and of action research in particular is essential element for engagement in the practice but not end by it self.

As such, the basic question that needs to be raised can be *how educational practitioners, particularly school teachers and their appraisers, support or use, or participate in( educational) action research if they receive so inadequate training, or if they lack adequate research know-how?*

#### **4.2.1.2. The Teachers have Lacked Interest Action Research**

An investigation of research literatures, (Merriam, 1988; Creswell, 1994/2003; Seyoum, 1998) reveals that interest is the major driving force behind research. This is indeed true, because interest in research activity is not something that is imposed from without unless it comes from within the individual (Seyoum, 1988: 7). He further warned that without interest it would be very hard to imagine that one could engage in productive research work. This entails teachers' interest in or enthusiasm for educational action research has a considerable role to engage in it.

Though scholars in the field of educational research accentuate the indispensability of interest to boost up individual's inspiration to participate in research works, one can argue that it is hardly possible to put forth a single factor as a determinant of research endeavor.

In this study, it became evident that most of the informants have associated the teachers' interest in educational action research with motivation (or incentives), level of research skill/knowledge, and level of qualification. According to the research results, the preparatory teachers found to have low interest to participate in research owing to various reasons. These include lack of competency in research skills and absence of incentives or rewards (e.g. the cease of the career structure as of 2001), lack of self-confidence due to lack of adequate research know-how and problem associated with their academic background (i.e. a considerable number of teachers had advanced to their first degree either from certificate level, or from diploma level; and still others with no training on research methodology). For instance, one of my informants (P<sub>3</sub>) said:

*I and other teachers have low level of interest in research for the main reason that we have very little training on educational research techniques, which we had acquired through distance course. Besides, lack of adequate knowledge made many of us less confident to involve in research activities (20/07/99).*

Added to the above description, another informant (P<sub>2</sub>) has reported:

*Many teachers do not have real interest and initiation in research activity because of the absence of incentives, or rewards, and due to their lower academic qualification, which could not permit them to involve in research practices confidently. As a result, they are poor in their research activities (20/07/99)*

The other informants (P<sub>4</sub>, P<sub>5</sub>, P<sub>6</sub> and P<sub>10</sub>) held the same opinion. According to them, many of the teachers used to related interest in doing research with promotion, or rewards, that is, they claimed that they are not interested in research because there is no promotion or rewards expected of conducting research. This could imply that, teachers need something from outside (e.g. from the school and woreda education administrations) to engage in research.

Therefore, it appears that the research participants, particularly the informant-teachers, have admitted that the small-scale nature of the accomplishments of research activities by the teachers was due to the problems mentioned above. With this regard, however; one can contend that absence of incentives, or promotion may influence the teachers' efforts but cannot determine, or curtail their initiation and interest so long as they are professionals who are required to take more and more responsibilities to improve the teaching learning process. That is to say, the need for a teacher to be a researcher goes beyond gaining personal benefits or rewards.

In general, from the data, it can be concluded (though it is difficult to generalize for all) that teachers who have better knowledge and perception about educational action research tend to have better interest and commitment in it while teachers who have less knowledge or orientation tend to have less interest and commitment in it. As such, it appears that knowledge, skills, perception, interest and commitment in (educational) action research are intertwined variables as personal factors.

#### ***4.2.1.3. The Teachers Held Unfavorable Attitude towards Research***

It seems apparent that teachers' perception about or attitudes towards educational action research has an important role in influencing (either positively or negatively) their involvement.

In line with this, Cohen and Mannion (1995: 192) have remarked that for teachers to develop positive attitude towards research and ultimately involve in educational research, they need to understand the very nature of research and appreciate its attributes. Improvement of practice through research, in the context of the school, achieved only if teachers are able to change their behavior and attitude.

Accordingly, it becomes essential for teacher- researchers to become familiar with and develop an appreciation of the nature of the research process itself, and ultimately change their attitude and behavior before conducting any piece of research. This is because usually better orientation, interest and attitude in educational research led to better engagement in action research.

Nonetheless, most of the informants of my study have reported that the teachers' as well as their appraisers did not consider research practice as part of the teaching activity. For instance, one of the research participants (P<sub>5</sub>) described the situation as follows:

*Undertaking research activity not considered, as one of the duties of the teachers to improve their classroom practices rather it perceived as something associated with career structure (promotion) and even it perceived as a menace to the teachers' fate in the career structure scheme. That is, particularly some educational administration bodies have an assumption that teachers do research for the sake of their advantages-to get promotion or financial incentives (26/07/99).*

He further explained that for them it is a matter of formality (i.e. to fulfill promotion criteria) rather than commitment to help improve school practices and develop research habits in the school.

Furthermore, there is a misconception as regards research activities. In this connection, one of the informants (P<sub>9</sub>) said:

*A significant number of teachers were perceiving research into educational problems as a complex task; as a cumbersome process, that is, something difficult to accomplish in the existing reality (unachievable within their scope), which was merely put into play as major criteria to appraise teachers without. Most of the teachers held the idea that their main duty is teaching and used to teach to earn the Bread. And think that any research activity should not interfere with their teaching task. Besides, I feel that most of the teachers not like the teaching career itself and they too do not like to engage in research activities (09/08/99)*

Still there was another indication to the teachers' negative attitude towards the teaching profession itself. One informant (P<sub>8</sub>) reported:

*A sizeable number of the teachers even are not happy with their teaching career. They used to complain it as a career without incentives or benefits. This unfavorable attitude too turned against research. They give less value for the teaching profession and for educational research practices too (09/08/99).*

Another informant (P<sub>6</sub>) associated the teacher's negative attitude to the initial placement. He explained:

*I think, majority of the teachers are not happy to be teachers for the main reasons that they did not join the teaching profession with their own choices and indeed the salary is not attractive! For me, the roots of this problem went back to the initial placement of the would-be teachers (26/07/99).*

The unfavorable attitudes and misconceptions held seem to have emanated partly from shortage of research knowledge; lack of exposure to research, particularly from lack of proper conceptualization of action research. This study has found out that the majority of the participants (ten out of twelve) could not properly conceptualize action research. Only two of the research informants who are currently pursuing summer course (P<sub>3</sub> and P<sub>8</sub>), have had little exposure to action research.

In confirmation of the presence of the problem of conceptualization of action research, P<sub>6</sub>, expounded:

*Most of the teachers (and even the appraisers) have no idea about action research. We have not properly conceptualized it. Really, we are not clear with the difference between educational research and action research (26/07/99).*

In this line, one may say that the need for learning about and understanding and doing educational action research becomes intrinsic and is of the matter of attitude.

#### **4.2.1.4. The Teachers Lacked Curiosity**

As stated by Good (1963), cited in Seyoum (1998: 7), having an inquisitive mind could be quite an asset in research. It is often said that research favors the one who is curious about problems as opposed to the one who takes everything for granted or one who is blind to problems.

In the discussions I made so far, it became clear that most of the preparatory teachers could not do action research though there were multitudes of educational problems within the school that need to be investigated. This entails that the teachers seemed to appear reluctant or less curious to understand and reflect on their practical problems within their classes or the school. And one may say that they have been merely engaged in their teaching task; executing what was prescribed in the curricular materials. This idea is evidenced by the utterances made by one of the informants (P<sub>12</sub>) as follows:

*We have failed to carry out research activities along side with our teaching commitments. In fact, there were and are lots of issues (accumulated in our minds) that need to be researched. But all teachers had focused their entire attention to their teaching task; they claim that accomplishing the teaching task (the chalk and talk) is more than enough to get the bread (12/08/99).*

The above view demonstrates that the preparatory teachers were merely serving the curricular materials while they held themselves back to reflect 'on' and 'in' their classroom practices.

#### **4.2.1.5. The Teachers' Lacked Individual Self-Effort to Learn about Action Research**

It is essential for school teachers to become familiar with the current educational issues in general, and with the current trends of school-based studies (i.e. action research) in particular. Nonetheless, the findings of this study reveal that there was hardly worthy individual effort made by the preparatory teachers to improve (update) their prior training, or to

acquaint themselves to contemporary educational research methodology, particularly to the techniques of action research.

In this regard, for example, one of my informants (P<sub>10</sub>) described the teachers' situation as follow:

*I can say that most of the teachers do not strive to improve their research skill, meaning that they did not show significant efforts to update themselves on individual basis. For me, the teachers did not strive to acquaint themselves to the contemporary research trends, particularly to the techniques of action research through their own self- effort and initiation such as independent reading. They simply engaged in their teaching commitments (10/08/99).*

Almost all of the research participants (except P<sub>7</sub>) gave a similar exposition with p<sub>10</sub> regarding the teachers' individual self effort to understand action research.

In general, the present study understood that the teachers did not make worthy individual self-effort to update themselves through informal systems of learning about action research (e.g. through individual reading on research literatures, accessing and learning from internet and authorities).

#### **4.2.2. External Factors that Obstructed Preparatory Teachers to do Action Research**

Teachers' personal initiation and interest could be negatively influenced by external factors, such as lack of training on how to do action research, lack of school facilities, lack of incentives, high workload, lack of feedback on research done, insignificant support provided by the school, and colleagues and others in the work environment as supported by (MOE/AED, 2006: 105-106). As such, it becomes evident that reflective practice and action research are more effective in those environments that can promote the culture of inquiry for teachers.

As informed by the research participants ,particularly by the teachers, lack of training or knowledge on action research on the parts of both the teachers and the appraisers, lack of incentives(motivation), lack of facilities at school (e.g. poor library and internet facilities), lack of significant support from education administration bodies, high work load (shortage of time), inconsistency of performance evaluation criteria, absence of research coordinating unit or advisory team, lack of feedback on research done, absence of transparency, problem of utilization and documentation of research outcomes, discontinuation of career structure since 2001 were the main external problems that obstructed action research practices among the teachers.

#### **4.2.21 Lack of Training (Knowledge) on Action Research**

Action research knowledge and skills of the teachers and the appraisers have been treated as important requirements in this study. The finding of this study reveals that only two research participants (P<sub>3</sub> and P<sub>8</sub>) have taken little training on action research through distance course as a part of summer-in-service training. On the contrary, the overwhelming majority of the informants did not have knowledge or training on action research, or did not take research methodology course adequately. Explaining the training pattern, one informant (P<sub>2</sub>) said:

*The course I had taken (educational research) at university was not satisfactory and could not enable me to do research confidently. My prior-training (at distance) has contributed very little to me. Therefore, my research competence must be upgraded through training so as to take the initiative to engage in research activities (20/07/99).*

In confirmation of the above idea, p<sub>7</sub> further explained:

*Most of the teachers, including me, had taken a sort of prior training on research methodology. However; we could not conduct research confidently. This was mainly because it was given to us as a distance course and was insufficient to permit us to involve in research (27/07/99).*

From the above description it becomes clear that the preparatory teachers have less confidence in doing action (educational) research as a result of the inadequate training provided and of absence of training on action research at all. This signifies that there is more than half way to go to develop the skills of the teachers in action (educational) research through training (or seminars, or workshops). That is to say, since training is presumed as an important input to improve instructional practices, it becomes imperative to training those teachers who have had prior training as well as those teachers who have not.

Regarding training of the appraisers (i.e. the school and the woreda education administration bodies), the study has indicated that there was not satisfactory training given to them. For examples one of the research participants (P<sub>8</sub>) described the situation as follows:

*One of the major problems was that those experts at woreda office were designated to evaluate research papers without having proper knowledge of research. Surprisingly, you cannot find or see any expert who is capable of evaluating research works and of giving feedbacks. This has been a very serious problem (09/08/99).*

From these perspectives, the need to improve the quality and relevance of training programs to both the appraisees and the appraisers seems quite obvious. Because lack of know-how (training) on action research may lead to the perception that action research is too complex and cumbersome task and it also becomes difficult for school teachers and their appraisers to distinguish action research techniques from that of traditional research procedures or techniques. Furthermore, it becomes apparent that attempting to do action research without prior training (research skill and knowledge) might have other quality influences or problems on the outcomes of the research undertaken.

#### **4.2.2.2. Absence of Motivation/Incentives**

As indicated here and there, the career structure scheme has been considered as a solution in the short-range strategy to boost the morale of teachers, which results in a status improvement and consequently a salary increase for teachers.

In relation to this idea, all the research participants uniformly mentioned that generally incentives for those teachers who involve in educational action research are weak (or absent) and do not attract the teachers to involve in research activities.

Regarding this situation, the informant, P<sub>2</sub>, reported:

*The absence of any form of incentive from both the school administration and the woreda education office, and the discontinuation of career structure (promotion) were among the major problems that discouraged the teachers to take initiatives to involve in research activities. After all, most of the teachers held the idea "why should we bother if there are no incentives" (20/07/99).*

The above descriptions entail that in the absence of rewards or incentives, the opportunity of doing research could be a rare case. Nonetheless, it is possible to argue that teachers as professionals should not engage in research activities merely to attain personal promotion or to get rewards as they have responsibilities to improve and enhance the teaching-learning process through professional development activities. Though this being the case, still most of the informants have capitalized on the provision of financial, material, and psychological incentives from the educational administration bodies so as to initiate teachers' involvement in educational action research activities. Therefore, the provision of incentives in one form or another seems to be given due consideration.

#### **4.2.2.3 Lack of Facilities at the School**

The availability and utilization of institutional inputs, such as relevant educational literature (research books, journals, and manuals), libraries, model research papers or reports, equipments, and internet, office facilities, and other facilities have become critical variables to enhance teachers' involvement in educational action research. As suggested by Seyoum (1998: 7), those institutional inputs should be sufficiently provided so that the research activity can be carried out effectively.

However, from my observation and the informants' report, I have noticed that there was poor facility within the school. With regard to the school library, it was ill equipped: relevant educational literature, research journals, and model research reports are inexistent; no single research paper produced by the teachers was documented or kept in the library, the reading section reserved for the teachers it self was not sufficient and was furnished with inadequate chairs and tables. Regarding the internet service, it was almost inaccessible and poorly organized. In relation to the library collection, all research participants' reply was almost uniform. They reported that the library is ill-equipped; particularly it has no single research literature.

In this connection, (P<sub>6</sub>) reported the situation as follow:

*The school's library is ill equipped.... There are no as such worthwhile reference materials in the library that could help us to undertake research. This has remained as one of the critical problems in the school (126/07/99).*

Add to this, another informant (P<sub>1</sub>) expressed his complaint to lack of library facilities as follows:

*The library has lacked the needed reading or reference materials, such as research literatures, and documented research papers. In such a situation, it is unfair to compel us to do research and expect something from us (19/07/99).*

Regarding access to internet, though the school has an internet room, the informants said that the internet and computer access of the school are not in a better position due to some political and other situational factors.

The school administration shares the idea of the above informants, by saying that the library facility is insufficiently equipped to permit research works, and that the only service it has been rendering is that the teachers can borrow and utilize subject area reference books.

The observations of this study are also in tune with the informant's explanation. It depicts that the internet room rarely gives services owing to reservations made by higher bodies. Moreover, the service rendering centers within the school has no internet connection.

From the above perspectives, one can say that research papers or activities carried out in such a poor context might suffer from lack of quality and poor standards.

#### ***4.2.2.4 Lack of Significant Support from the School and the Woreda Education Office***

During this early stage of action research in schools, teachers need support of various kinds. Support for teachers who do educational action research could be in different forms: technical support, material support and participating or facilitating in different activities of the research (MOE /AED, 2006).

However, the findings of this study reveal that the support provided for the preparatory teachers who claimed to have done research seems negligible in the school as well as at the woreda level. Discussions with the research participants indicated that for very few teachers, the support given was in forms of stationery and secretarial services. For the rest teachers, there

was no support from any body. One of the participants (p<sub>6</sub>) expressed the situation as follow:

*Institutional environment was not conducive to do research. The school and the woreda were so active only in ordering us to do research and other duties but they gave no support worth mentioning. Besides, the follow-up was so minimal (26/07/99).*

In the same vein, another participant (P<sub>8</sub>), explained:

*As far as I know, no relevant support was given to the teachers. Surprisingly, there was no any unit or body that was designated (at school and woreda level) to organize; coordinate or facilitate research activities supposed to be carried out by the teachers (09/08/99).*

The school administration shared the above views that the support rendered for those who attempted research activity has been inadequate because such support was predominantly confined to stationery and secretarial services and duplicating services. It was further reported that more than providing stationery materials to research works, it has been hardly possible to allocate research funds (financial support) due to lack of budget.

Besides, the overwhelming majority of the research participants uniformly disclosed the absence of any advisory team which could organize, facilitate and evaluate research works done by the teachers. One research participant (p<sub>3</sub>) expounded:

*In the school and even at the woreda level, there is no an accountable body or unit that could have taken responsibilities to coordinate/facilitate research activities and to disseminate research outcomes (20/07/99).*

As explained by all informants of this study, office environment is inconvenient (even absent) for teachers' participation in action research. The old department offices were dismantled, and all teachers use the staff room as an office. The observation of this study also assured this fact.

From the above descriptions it becomes evident that the support given to the teachers was almost inexistent or insignificant. Therefore, it seems that teachers' involvement in (educational) action research might not be seen as part of their duties, and hence, the support system of the school and the woreda education office needs further attention for improvement.

#### ***4.2.2.5 High Workload/Shortage of Time***

Writing about the indispensability of time for research activity, Cannon (1945), cited in Seyoum (1998: 9) has posited that research is a time-consuming activity, and as such, teachers need to be provided with adequate time in order to be able engage in research activity. But if his/her time is taken from him/her, he/she will remain sterile. Accordingly, over-burdened teachers could not have enough time to afford to research work.

The data obtained from most of the research participants as well as my observation and document assessment have revealed that high teaching load (e.g. 24-30 periods per week) , see Appendix-E , was one of the major factors, which negatively affected the teachers' involvement in (educational) action research. As informed by the research participants and the document analysis indicated, the teachers' teaching load varies from one subject to another, or varies from one teacher to another due to shortage or the small number of teachers in the school, due to the very nature of the subject taught, teaching through plasma TV and teachers' additional duties, such as taking part in the co-curricular activities, working as unit leaders. The research participants had two main positions regarding the teachers' teaching load. A sizeable number of informants (P<sub>4</sub>, P<sub>5</sub>, P<sub>6</sub>, P<sub>7</sub>, P<sub>8</sub>, P<sub>9</sub>, P<sub>12</sub>) said that the teaching load was high. On the other hand, two of the informants (P<sub>10</sub> and P<sub>11</sub>) refuted the presence of problem of heavy teaching load and shortage of time for all the teachers.

In this connection, P<sub>4</sub> expounded his view as follows:

*Most of the teachers are overloaded – teaching at both shifts. Besides we do teaching through plasma TV, which dictates the entire schedule of the school. This situation has left us with little time to participate in research activity (24/07/99).*

Similarly, another informant (P<sub>7</sub>) also described the condition of heavily teaching load in the school as:

*The teaching load is an exhausting and tiresome for most of us. For instance, I have been teaching 24 periods per week. This consumes most of my time, and poses shortage of time and makes the situation inconvenient (27/07/99).*

Refuting the above views, other participant (P<sub>10</sub>) reacted as follows:

*I do not agree with the idea that the teachers' teaching load is heavy and obstructed them to carry out research. When compared to other schools, the teaching load here is fair and the teachers could have participated if they were willing to spare their free time and made commitments from the bottom of their heart (10/08/99).*

The above rival descriptions have their own implications. The first two views (p<sub>4</sub> and p<sub>7</sub>) are shared by a considerable number of the informants and entail that the teachers were highly loaded with teaching (and non-teaching) activities, and so that they were less likely to conduct research). So, busier teacher will not have such time to conduct research, that is, they are less likely to undertake studies and when they are in such situations they will not give research a priority.

The opposing view (p<sub>10</sub> and p<sub>11</sub>) on the other hand reveals that the time pressure was not too severe to hinder the teacher to undertake research if they were genuinely interested and truly enthusiastic. Accordingly, the teachers have lacked endurance (one of the attributes required in research activity) to face hardships encountering them.

As such, it suggests that teachers as professionals need to have the courage and determination to pursue research work in spite of the difficulties and hazards that may be involved.

From the document analysis and the observation, I have noticed that the Preparatory teachers have had teaching loads that range from 8 periods to 30 periods per week. Accordingly, the problem of heavy workload differs from one teacher to another, or from one subject to another. And, therefore, those teachers with low teaching loads could have participated in action research if they were truly enthusiastic for it.

#### **4.2.2.6 Which of the Factors have been more Severe in Obstructing the Teachers to do Action Research?**

During the interview, the research participants have provided their views on whether the internal factors had obstructed the Preparatory teachers more than the external factors did to them, or the vice-versa.

The finding is quite revealing. Almost all participants (11 out of 12) unanimously reported that the absence of the institutional inputs( the external factors)cited so far have had more adverse effect than the absence of personal inputs (the internal factors) did in obstructing the teachers to carry out research in the school. In line with this view, for instance, the participant P<sub>1</sub> expounded his views as follows:

*In my opinion, the external factors are so many. Undoubtedly, influences of the external problems have been more obstructive than the personal problems were. If you are entangled by multitudes of external problems, you can do nothing, you can move nowhere no matter you have personal interest and knowledge (19/07/99).*

Contrary to the above dominant view, other informant (P<sub>10</sub>) expressed his rival view as:

*For me, internal factors (personal problems) such as lack of interest, of initiation, of commitment, of endurance.... are more*

*influential than the external problems in impacting one's involvement. That is to say, if there is individual's self-initiation, deep interest, and endurance to challenges facing, one can do something though not up to the required standard, or amount (10/08/99).*

From the above rival explanations or views, it became evident that the absence or presence of both the institutional inputs and of the personal inputs can considerably or equally affect the extent to which teachers involve in educational action research.

As such, this study has found out that the absence or lack of both the institutional inputs and of the personal inputs has worked considerably against the preparatory teachers to take the initiative to engage in educational action research. Therefore, one can contend that both external and internal factors are important or crucial elements to initiate and carryout educational action research in school or classroom, and working in both directions as the main engine for moving educational action research forward becomes significant. That is why research activity is conceived as a function of the integration of both personal and institutional inputs; without inputs from the two, it would be hard to effectively engage in research activities.

#### ***4.3. Future Trends: The Need to Intervene Against the Impediments as Future Hopes and Direction of the Teachers' Involvement in Action Research***

This study has attempted to gather suggestions from its informants for the future improvements of Preparatory teachers' involvement in action research. All of them held the opinion that if some concrete steps or actions will be taken to alleviate some of the constraints, there may be a better future to teachers' involvement in action research in the school.

In this connection, they suggested the following major points as the dimensions that need intervention:

- First, arranging training (or seminars, or workshops) on educational research methodology in general and on educational action research in particular in order to boost the capacity(research competence) of the teachers and the appraisers;
- Second, improving the school facilities (such as, the library, the laboratory, internet room, etc);
- Third, attempting to improve and enhance the support system both at the school and the woreda level;
- Fourth, establishing mechanisms of motivation(incentive) provision so as to change the teachers' unfavorable attitude towards educational research;
- Fifth, establishing advisory team(research coordinating unit) at school and woreda levels;
- Sixth, the school administration should do every thing possible to lighten heavy teaching loads of those teachers who participate in research activities,
- Seventh, refining (revising) some of the 'unworkable' criteria for performance evaluation and promotion in order to make them consistent (sustainable) projects.
- Eighth, encouraging teachers to participate on curriculum development at grassroots level so as to increase their belongingness and commitments.
- Ninth, individual teachers need to strive to improve (up-grade) their research skill through self-effort and commitments.
- Tenth, establishing mechanisms of doing research on collaborative basis.

The suggestions proposed seem to provide immediate responses to the constraints, which have persisted so long in the research setting.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **5. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS**

In this part of the paper, I have attempted to present some concluding remarks and forwarded implications according to the major results of the study. I have also developed the following four major themes: low status or the infant stage of Preparatory teacher's involvement in a action research (or a weak nexus between action research and the teaching task); extrinsic motivation as a deriving force to involve in research activity; research activity as a function of the integration of both personal inputs ( internal factors) and institutional inputs (external factors), and interventions against the impediments as future hopes and directions of teachers' involvement in action research. I have put forth the conclusions under each theme.

#### **5.1 Conclusions**

It was repeatedly indicated here and there that teachers' participation in educational action research activities has been one of the criteria for professional development (promotion). Indeed, it also claimed that research activities in school enhance and enrich the teaching-learning process, thereby contributing to the improvement of quality of education.

Further more, at grass root level, the school accentuated action research to be conducted by its teachers at classroom levels and within the school in order to get promotion and enhance educational quality.

This being the case, however; this study has found out that the extent to which the preparatory teachers involved in educational action research was very low, or was so limited. The findings depicted that insignificant number of preparatory teachers had been engaged in educational action research. The majority of the teachers did not conduct action research

hitherto. This implies that the teachers made less and less effort than expected to understand and reflect on their every day problems in the school or the classrooms. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that there was a thin line or a weak nexus between research and teaching. Since the teachers did not give equal emphasis to both tasks, their engagement in action research is at very early stage of development in the school; and this needs attention by the concerned body.

With regard to the purposes for which the teachers used their research, the results have demonstrated that finger-counted teachers undertook research mainly as partial fulfillment of their first degree, and for promotional purposes. This implies that involvement in educational action research was highly incentive-oriented and those teachers who claimed to have conducted educational research were usually externally motivated.

The findings of the study have also suggested that differences prevailed that those teachers who had better knowledge or training on educational research methodology have better attempt or engagement in research activities than those who did not take any research training or those with less knowledge on it ,particularly the most veteran teachers. This implies that training has contributing role to the participation of the teachers in educational action research though not an end by itself. Inversely, teacher's lack of knowledge and of skill has a negative influence to participate in action research.

The close examination of research methodology used by the teachers have revealed that all the teachers who carried out research used the traditional descriptive method of research that implies less effort, less cost and less time. The descriptive Case Study approach governed all of the research papers. Seen from this perspective, the claim that the post-positivistic research methodology has been employed in the school seems to lack credibility. In other words, the post-positivistic research approach,

which includes action research as its variant, was not common and popular among the Preparatory teachers of GSPS.

As regards the specific research carried out by the teachers, it can be inferred that most of the issue or the topics the teachers tried to investigate were related to teaching methods or techniques, curricular issues, school facilities, causes of student's disciplinary problems, causes of student's dropout and causes of repeaters. This implies that the teachers preferred to give more and more emphasis to the issues directly related to subject areas they taught in particular, and to the most frequently perceived issues hampering the students' learning in a broader sense.

Action research is a joint venture between individual teachers' inputs and institutional (i.e. school) inputs. In this study, both the external factors (i.e. the lack of institutional inputs) and the internal factors (i.e. lack of personal inputs) considerably impeded the teachers to involve in action research.

The major impediments of conducting educational action research were found to be the external factors (i.e. the absence of institutional inputs), which constitute lack of adequate and quality training, lack of facilities at the school (especially, lack of research literature), lack of support from the school administration and other concerned education administration bodies, work over load and shortage of time, and lack of incentives (e.g. lack of material and moral support from the higher bodies). These external (institutional) factors are so highly interrelated or interconnected elements that they can facilitate one another when present, and hamper one another when absent.

Besides, personal (internal) factors include lack of interest and initiation in research due to lack of incentives, lack of confidence due to lack of

competence in research skills and knowledge, lack of proper conceptualization of action research and perceiving action research as a complex process, or as a difficult and tough subject, and absence of the teachers' self-effort and commitments to update their prior training and failure to learn from one another.

It became evident that research competence (i.e. knowledge or skill in action research), interest, perception, attitude and commitment in action research are interwoven variables as personal inputs. They either reinforce one another, or hamper one another. More over, teachers' interest, initiation and commitment are unequivocally influenced by external factors.

All these entail, without inputs from the two (i.e. the individual teacher and the concerned institution (or the school), it would be hard and cumbersome to effectively engage in action research activities.

## **5.2 Implications for Practice**

The findings of this study are believed to have some implications for practice. These implications might show area of intervention to improve the extent of Preparatory teachers' involvement in action research in near future.

As such, future hopes and directions of the teachers' involvement in (educational) action research looks promising provided that those stumbling-blocks or major obstacles the teachers encountered are ameliorated, if not avoided. Therefore, in order to initiate and facilitate the teachers' participation in action research in the immediate future, the points suggested by the research participants could be worthy of consideration and need the intervention of the concerned bodies.

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## APPENDIX -A

### 1. The Researcher's Motives and Intentions and the Inquiry's

#### Purpose

Thank you for accepting to participate in my research project: "***Involvement of Preparatory School Teachers in Educational Action Research.***" My intention is to undertake research (as a requirement for MA qualification at Addis Ababa University) with your cooperation for a better understanding of issues surrounding the problem being studied.

Currently, the idea(task) of undertaking educational research (Action research) by school teachers has been becoming a challenging and neglected endeavor though the task was stipulated by the education policy of 1994 (i.e. the NETP) and the Education Sector Strategy of our country. Through this research, I want to explore the extent to which preparatory teachers [at Gelemso Secondary and Preparatory School] involved in educational action research at classrooms level and school level, and understand major factors that facilitated/hindered the teachers' engagement in research work. In this line, data will be collected through *interviews* with you, in addition to *observation* and *related documents*.

The information you share with me will be secured confidentially and your personal identity will be kept anonymous. Pseudonyms or fictitious names will be used in case names are needed in the research report. There are no known risks and discomfort associated with this study. The anticipated benefits associated with this inquiry are the discussion results that may be helpful to improve educational practices, understandings and situations in the research setting being studied. I would be happy to share the result/findings with you after the research is completed. I assure you once again that your name will not be associated with the research findings in any way, and your identity as a participant will be known to me only.

## **2. Ethical Principles and Procedures for the Research**

The following framework consists of my ethical principles and procedures. I am willing to discuss them with you in pursuit of an agreed upon and amended framework. Do not hesitate to ask any questions about the study before or during your participation.

1. Participation in the research is voluntary.
2. Information given to me [by your will] will be treated as belonging to you, and it can be used only with your permission.
3. Interpretations, observations and documentary analysis made by me will be treated as belonging to me. Whenever implicated in such interpretations and observations and documentary analysis, you will be invited to comment upon their fairness, accuracy and relevance.
4. I will seek your consent or permission to create or use audio-records. You have the right to edit or change them, as you are invited to listen to the taped-information. Copies of transcripts will also be shown to you for checking for correct transcription.
5. I will securely store data or information given to me.
6. Full anonymity of your identity and confidentiality of the information you share with me will be maintained.
7. Except for the purposes of professional collaboration in the project, no data arising from interviews will be disclosed in any form to third parties without your explicit and prior consent. Where data are shared for the purposes of professional collaboration, these protocols and procedures apply to all those involved in that collaboration.

(Adapted from Merriam, 1988).

**THANK YOU**  
**ASHENAFI TSEGAYE (Researcher)**

## **APPENDEX-B**

### **An Interview Schedule/Guideline to Gather Information from Teachers at Gelemso Preparatory School (GPPS)**

The purpose of this interview is to collect relevant data or information from GPPS teachers about their involvement in educational action research and, indeed, about factors facilitating and/or hindering their engagement in research activities, that is school-based studies, as of 1995 G.C. To this end, your cooperation in taking part in this interview is a paramount importance for the study. Since your responses will be kept confidential, please feel free to answer all questions or provide your opinion frankly as much as possible.

*Thank you in advance*

### **Questions**

1. How much are you involved in Action research?
2. What specific research did you do?
  - How many? Can you show me?
  - On what issues?
  - How you did it? (Or using which procedure/method)?
3. Why did you conduct action research?
  - Or for what purposes you undertaken action research?
4. What factors (i.e. personal, institutional or environmental, etc) you think facilitated your involvement in action research from past to present (1995 - 2007)?
5. Why you didn't/don't undertake action research? (or what factors hindered you to undertake action research in the period under discussion?).
6. How do you conceptualize/understand educational research in general and action research in particular?

7. What is your perception or opinion about the NETP, the Education Sector Strategy and the current evaluation systems which demand research work for teachers' professional development?
8. How do you evaluate your competence in research practice?
  - Have you ever taken any research methodology courses? Was the training you had taken at college/university level adequate to conduct research in your professional career?
  - If you hadn't taken the course, how could you managed to conduct action research or to solve practical problems in your classrooms and/or school?
  - Have you ever participated in any in-service training, seminar or workshop to update your research skill? What is your view about?
9. Many school teachers may think that their primary task is teaching and that any research activity shouldn't interfere in their primary task. What would you say to them?
10. What concrete/practical steps or actions need to be initiated in the near future to overcome the revealing constraints and improve your involvement in action research?
11. What is your qualification? How much is your service years in both teaching and other related career? How much periods you teach per week currently?

## **APPENDIX-C**

### **An Interview Schedule/guideline to collect Information from Principals in Gelemso Preparatory School**

The main purpose of this interview is to get valid information from school principals about preparatory teachers' involvement in educational action research. My objective is to come up with suggestions for action that would contribute to the effort that will be done in the future to enhance teachers' involvement in action research at school level. In this regard, you will play an important role. That is why I am initiated to ask you some questions. Please answer the questions that I am going to ask you by sharing your experience and opinion. The data (the information you give) will be used only for research purpose and will be confidential and will not affect anybody in any way.

*Thank you for your kind cooperation*

#### **Questions:**

1. How is the research [action research] status of preparatory teachers in your school? Or how do you evaluate the past-present (1995-2007) trends of action research practices by preparatory teachers in your school?
2. How do you conceptualize (understand) educational research, especially action research?
3. What is your view/opinion about the NETP (or the Education Sector Strategy and the current evaluation systems of teachers' performances) which demands research practice by teachers for their professional development?
4. Many teachers might think that their primary task is teaching and may refrain themselves from research practices. So, what would you say to them?

5. How do you evaluate the research conditions of your school [in facilitating teachers' involvement in action research]?
6. Why preparatory teachers in your school didn't/don't conduct action research? (or, from your perspective, what are/were the main problems that obstructed teachers to undertake action research)?
7. What concrete action can you suggest to alleviate the constraints and help preparatory teachers improve their involvement in action research in the near future?

## **APPENDIX-D**

### **An Interview Guideline/Schedule to Gather Information (Data) from Officials Working at Habro Woreda Education Office**

The main purpose of this interview is to get valid information about the opinion of officials (Experts and Committee members for teachers' promotion in the career structure) working at woreda education office on preparatory teachers' involvement in educational action research. The officials are expected to play an important role in the effort being done today to enhance teachers' involvement in action research. That is why I wanted to ask you some questions. Please answer the questions below by sharing your experience and opinion. The information I get from you will be used only for research purpose, and it will be confidential and will not affect any body in any way.

*Thank you for your cooperation*

#### **Questions:**

1. How do you evaluate the action research status of preparatory teachers at GPPS from past to present (1995-2007)? Or how do you see the past-present trends of action research practices by preparatory teachers?
  - Did/do they conduct action research? How? On what issues? For what purpose? If not conducted, why?
  - How do you evaluate preparatory teachers' competence (knowledge and skills, perception, interest, motivation, etc) in conducting educational action research?
2. How do you conceptualize/understand education research, especially action research?
  - What merits or benefits as well as limitations can you see in it?

3. What is your view about the NETP, the Education sector Strategy and the current evaluation system of teachers' performance that demand research work (school-based studies) for professional development? What it would be like?
4. What procedures you were/are employing to evaluate the status or nature of action research process and outcomes that have been produced by preparatory teachers?
5. How do you evaluate the support given by you (by the office) for preparatory teachers who take part in action research practices?
  - How much material and financial support and other facilities were given for the teachers?
  - Have you/you're office/ever organized and conducted an in-service training, workshops or seminars to upgrade the teachers' research competence?
  - Is there a research work coordinating unit in the office? If any, how it functions?
6. Why Preparatory teachers, you think, didn't/don't undertake action research? (What personal and organizational/ environmental factors hindered the teachers' involvement in action research?).
7. What concrete steps/actions should be initiated in the near future to get involved more teachers in research works?
  - What you and your office need to do to alleviate the revealing problems and to popularize and disseminate action research practices in the immediate future?