

The Practices and Challenges in Conducting Action Research: The case
of Sululta Secondary School

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Abstract

The Practice and Challenges in Conducting Action Research: The case of Sululta Secondary School.

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Addis Ababa University, 2013

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the practices and challenges of conducting action research in Sululta Secondary School and identify the major factors that hinder/enable teachers in conducting action research. The research method employed in this study was mixed method approaches (QUAN + qual), which is embedded in concurrent type of mixed method. Both primary and secondary sources of data were used. The primary data sources were teachers, principals and town administration education officers. The school documents were used as a secondary data source. The questionnaires were pilot tested and administered to 15 teachers. About 97% of the questionnaires were properly filled and returned. In addition to this, interview, focus group discussion and document analysis were made to collect the necessary information. Results obtained were analyzed by using descriptive statistics and narratives. The results of the study revealed that a) the practices of Sululta Secondary School teachers in conducting action research were very low, b) the knowledge and skills of teachers in the study area were sufficient but their involvement in undertaking action research were insufficient, c) the role of school management in encouraging teachers to conduct action research were insufficient, d) the major factors that hinder teachers to conduct action research in the study area are shortages of training, seminars and workshops regarding research activities, insufficient budget, insufficient reference materials and library services and etc. e) the major factors that enable some teachers to conduct action research were their professional commitment to support their teaching learning process with research. Thus, to alleviate these problems, it was recommended that the school management in cooperation with town administration education Bureau and Oromia Regional Education Bureau should arrange the means of improving the involvements of teachers in conducting action research by allocating adequate budget and providing an in-service trainings, workshops, seminars and experience sharing programs regarding research.

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Dedication

This thesis work is dedicated to my father Ato Haile Erba who was passed away in 1991 in E.C.

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Acronyms

AcR- Action Research

AED- Academy for Educational Development

ETP- Education and Training Policy

FGD- Focus Group Discussion

IER- Institute of Educational Research

MOE- Ministry of Education

PAR- Participatory Action Research

qual- qualitative

Quan- Quantitative

SSS- Sululta Secondary School

SPSS- Statistical Package for Social Science

TGE- Transitional Government of Ethiopia

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the background of the study, statement of the problem, basic research questions of the study, objectives of the study, significance of the study, delimitations of the study, limitations of the study, operational definitions of terms and organization of the study.

1.1. Background of the Study

Research is about generating new understanding and solves the actual problems in a given areas. Action research is one of the systematic methods of research in solving problems or making practice better. It aims at immediate application of theory and placed its emphasis on the solution of a problem in a local setting. Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) indicated that action research is deliberate, solution-oriented investigation that is group or personally owned and conducted. It is characterized by spiraling cycles of problem identification, systematic data collection, data-driven action taken, analysis and reflection, and finally problem redefinition. The linking of the terms "action" and "research" highlights the essential features of this method: trying out ideas in practice as a means of increasing knowledge about or improving curriculum, teaching, and learning.

Additionally, action research allows teachers the opportunities to identify changes they need to make in their teaching practices by providing them with the framework to build their own classroom projects. In many cases, when teachers design their own action research projects, they use a systematic approach to determine answers to instructional questions. This type of implemented professional development is powerful because, it is ongoing, interactive, and systemic.

In line with the above ideas Ferrence (2000) indicated that action research is carried out within the context of the teacher's environment; with students, at the school where the teacher works, on questions that deal with educational matters at hand. In conducting action research teachers begin a cycle of posing questions, gathering baseline data,

reflection and a determining course of action or intervention, followed up by critical evaluation of effectiveness. A teacher may work alone or with other teachers to collaborate on a problem, with a goal of improving their own skills, techniques and strategies, and student learning. Action Research is not necessarily about understanding why we do things, but more about how we can do things better and changing instruction's impact on student learning. It is done by the teacher with the intent that the research will inform and change his or her practices in the future.

Action Research is also an approach to professional development in which teachers systematically reflect on their work and make changes in their practice. Critically looking at one's own methods promotes self reflection and self evaluation and may challenge preconceived beliefs about best practices. This is especially powerful when combined with data or evidence directly associated with the activity being investigated. Professional growth occurs when practitioners permit prior practice to be evaluated, providing opportunity for adopting new and more effective strategies.

Furthermore, action research provides a chance to practitioners to evaluate themselves in schools in an informal manner. It is conducted to investigate what effects their teaching have on students' learning, how they could work better with teachers, and how can they work to change the whole school for the better.

In line with the above ideas, Johnson (1995) noted that by doing their own action research, teachers may gain a better perspective into their own teaching and students' learning because the changes made in instruction are based on a teachers own research. Therefore, action research allows teachers the opportunity to shape and refine their own teaching and to build on their own successes. To this end, action research can improve the teaching and learning process by reinforcing, modifying, or changing perceptions based on both formal and informal data and non-systematic observations. Teachers who participate in action research effectively promote their own personal growth, improve on practices that enhance student learning, and help advance the teaching profession.

Supporting the above ideas, scholars such as Carr & Kemmis, and Brown & Jones (2001) cited in Daniel and Firdissa (2009) indicated that action research is a form of collaborative or self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants (teachers, students and directors) in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own social or educational practice, their understanding of these practices and the situations or institutions in which the practices are carried out.

Additionally, according to Koshy (2005), action research is a powerful and useful model for practitioner research because: research can be set within a specific context or situation; researchers can be participants – they don't have to be distant and detached from the situation; action research involves continuous evaluation and modifications can be made as the project progresses; there are opportunities for theory to emerge from the research rather than always follow a previously formulated theory; the study can lead to open-ended outcomes; through action research, the researcher can bring a story to life.

Action research helps researchers to improve quality of action in their activities of teaching and learning process. At the same time, it encourages the practitioner to undertake inquiry in a systematic manner to bring improvement in the quality of their performance and improve the quality of school as well.

Moreover, Hopkins (2002) indicated that the purpose of carrying out action research as follows. He maintains that when teachers are engaged in classroom research, they can be said to be engaged in educational theorizing, because they are reflecting systematically and critically on practice.

In line with the above ideas, the Ethiopian Education Policy directives emphatically stressed the importance of action research at school and classroom levels. According to the policy documents, teachers at all levels are required to engage in action research activities. More specifically, as part of the teaching-learning processes, school teachers are expected to conduct action research practically to support and strengthen the teaching- learning process (MOE, 2002).

Therefore, in the light of such new improvement that encourage the culture of problem solving in the school by conducting action research, it is very essential to study the current practices and challenges in the context of secondary schools.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

As specifically indicated so far, research literature shows that action research can be conducted to improve the practices of teaching and learning process, the practitioners or teachers and to improve the practice of the school. Action research is to study a real school situation with a view to improve the quality of actions and results in it.

In line with this, the Ethiopian Education and Training Policy has expressed the importance of research and related competencies such as problem solving, creative thinking and all rounded personality development of citizens. The ETP (TGE, 1994) indicated that emphasis is given to appropriately integrate education, training and research with development. It also emphasized the need to integrate and coordinate teaching with research and development. According to ETP any improvement and change in evaluation techniques, method of teaching and curriculum shall be assisted with research activities. Moreover, the policy underlines that education can be promoted and be in a better standard when it is supported by research (TGE, 1994).

AED (2006) also indicated that school teachers, apart from their responsibility of teaching 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.

However, studies show that there is still problem of teacher's involvement in conducting action research. For instance, Yibeltal (2007) noted that teachers who are the key role players in education are distant themselves from involvement in action research.

Similarly, in a study conducted in Oromia Region Kibre (2009) cited in Yohannes (2011) found that:

The gap between teachers involvement in conducting educational research activity was hindered due to some factors such as lack of suitable strategies for educational research undertaking and implementation; lack of research facilities, incentives and research findings; as well as organized research dissemination mechanism; and adequate educational professional research who carryout quality research in education. (P.3)

As a school teacher, the researcher experienced the problems related with conducting action research though there are no empirical evidences or previous studies that demonstrate the gap between what is expected and the actual involvement of teachers' in action research particularly in Sululta Secondary School. Therefore, the researcher believes that it is necessary to examine the extent of teacher's involvement in action research. In addition, the study tried to identify the major factors which may hinder or enable the proper implementations of action research in Sululta Secondary School. To this end the study is designed to answer the following basic research questions:-

1. What is the status of action research in Sululta Secondary School?
2. What is the perception and actual involvement of teachers in action research?
3. Does the school management support teachers in conducting action research?
4. Do the teachers in Sululta Secondary School have the necessary knowledge and skill to conduct action research?
5. What are the major factors that either hinder or enable the practice of action research in Sululta Secondary School?
6. What can be done to improve the current condition concerning the practice of action research in Sululta Secondary School?

1.3. Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to investigate the practices and challenges in conducting action research in Sululta Secondary School. More specifically, the study is intended to:

- assess the status of action research in Sululta Secondary School.

- identify the extent of teacher's engagement in action research.
- assess the support of school management to teachers in conducting action research
- examine the perceptions of teachers towards action research.
- identify the major factors that either hinder or enable teachers to conduct action research

1.4. Significance of the Study

The study aimed to investigate the levels of teacher's engagement in action research and try to identify factors that hinder/enable teachers in conducting action research. Therefore, the study is significant to:

- provide information about the status of action research in Sululta Secondary School to all educational stakeholders of the Town and the Region.
- extend teachers awareness about the importance of action research.
- provide possible recommendations: hence, school principals and Town Administration Education Officers may develop different strategies in order to raise the involvement of teachers in action research.

1.5. Delimitation of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the practice and challenges in conducting action research in Sululta Secondary School. Accordingly, the temporal aspect of the study was from 2001-2005 E.C. In addition, the study focused on the status of action research, teachers' perception towards action research, the knowledge and skills of teachers in undertaking action research and the major factors that hinder or enable teachers in conducting action research.

1.6. Limitations of the Study

This research was not without limitations because of some obstacles. Accordingly, it is difficult to generalize the findings of the study to other Secondary Schools since it is

conducted in one Secondary School. In addition, though different strategies were employed in order to minimize the responses bias, the situational impact or social bias could have led teachers, principals and Town Administration Education Bureau participants to respond in a manner different from their true feelings. In spite of these limitations, the researcher has made every possible effort to overcome the limitations and complete the study successfully.

1.7. Operational Definitions of key terms

Action research:- is the process in which practitioners study their problems systematically and scientifically in order to guide, correct and evaluate their decisions and actions.

Challenge:- constraints that inhibit teachers practitioners from caring out action research.

Practice:- the actual participation of teachers in research activities practically in secondary school

1.8. Organization of the Study

The study is divided into five chapters. The first chapter presents the introduction which encompasses: background of the study, statement of the problem, objective of the study, significance of the study, delimitation of the study, limitation of the study and operational definition of the terms. The second chapter deals with the review of related literature. The third chapter deals with methodology and procedures of the study. The fourth chapter deals with data analysis, discussion and interpretation. The last chapter provides summary of the findings, conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter highlights the different concepts and definitions of action research, rationales for doing action research, characteristics of action research, types of action research, processes of action research, teachers' perception towards action research, the role of action research, the constraints to do action research and conceptual model of the study.

2.1. The Concept and Definitions of Action Research

Action research is known by many other names, including participatory action research, collaborative inquiry, emancipatory research, action learning, reflection on practice, exploratory teaching, teacher self evaluation, teacher research, self understanding, analysis of practice, practitioner research, 'reflective teaching movement' and a model of reflection on practice, and contextual action research. Daniel and Firdissa (2009) noted that even though the usage of the term 'action research' varies with time, place and setting, many of its meanings focus on the enhancement of classroom practice.

Furthermore, Daniel and Firdissa (2009) indicated that the term action research has begun to be conceived as a practical way of looking at one's own work; that is, as one would like it to be. Practitioners do action research; because it is often referred to as practitioner based research. Action research involves practitioners in thinking about and reflecting on their work. In addition to this, they indicated that action research is a process in which teachers investigate teaching and learning to improve their own and their students learning. It is teacher-initiated classroom investigation which seeks teachers understanding of classroom teaching and learning and to bring change in the classroom practice.

Moreover, Steele (2007) argues that the most appropriate method to explore how to improve one's teaching practices and to improve quality learning outcomes for learners was through action research. Educational action research engages, extends and transforms

the self-understandings of practitioners by involving them in the research process. According to the above ideas, action research is a tool that is used to help teachers and educators discover strategies to improve teaching practice. It allows teachers to become the practitioners and provides opportunities for them to be learners by improving instructional practices.

Additionally, according to Philips (2004) action research is the reflexive process by which educators systematically study their problems in order to guide, correct and evaluate their decisions and actions regarding the improvement of teaching and learning in their individual professional context. It is also a process in which an individual changes the way of thinking and express his/her ideals through active learning. Also it is a way of understanding ourselves in our day to day activities seriously in the teaching learning process.

Kukari and Honan (2010) noted that action research is based on an understanding that teachers will learn from researching into their own practices more effectively than learning through other forms of research. They also describe that teachers engage simultaneously in workplace practice and research practice, through working reflectively and analytically. The aims of action research in educational contexts are always to improve teaching practice.

Supporting the above ideas, according to Hewitt and Little (2005), action research is a continuous and reflective process where educators make instructional decisions in their classrooms based on student needs reflected by classroom data. Within the action research process, educators study student learning related to their own teaching. It is a process that allows educators to learn about their own instructional practices and to continue to monitor improved student learning.

Similarly, Borgia and Schuler (1996) defines action research as a process, one in which teachers systematically reflect on their practice and make changes to their instruction based on careful analysis of student results. This is to mean that action research is a form of self-reflective inquiry undertaken by participants in educational setting for the purpose of understanding their practice and solve immediate problematic situation.

Moreover, Mills (2003) defines action research as it is any systematic inquiry conducted by teacher researchers, administrators and other stakeholders to gather information about the ways that their particular school operates how they teach and how well their students learn. The information is gathered with the goals of gaining insight, developing reflective practice, effecting positive changes in the school environment and on educational practices in general, and improving student outcomes. This implies that action research is conducted by teachers, for teachers and other stakeholders as well as it is small scale, contextualized, localized, and aimed at discovering, developing, or monitoring changes to practice.

On the other hand, Carr and Kemmis (1986) noted that action research is a form self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants, teachers, students, parents in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own social or educational practices; their understanding of these practices; and the situations where these practices are carried out. From this point of view, it is possible to understand that in any activities of action research every stakeholders of the school could participate to enhance teaching learning process.

Generally, all the above concepts and definitions have got one point in common in that all of them take action research as a systematic method designed either for improving or changing one's practice. Furthermore, in all above definitions of action research, the one purpose they have in commons is that improving teaching learning process by solving problems practically and developing the practice of it. Moreover, it is a process in which teachers systematically investigate instructional practices and techniques in order to improve their teaching.

2.2. Rationales for Doing Action Research

There are a number of educational arguments to justify why teachers do action research. The arguments provide a very strong rationale for teacher research with the central theme of the key role that teachers can play in the promotion of teaching as a professional

enterprise. Vester cited in Daniel and Firdissa (2009) noted that seven points in an attempt to answer the question: 'why should teachers do action research?'

- To help them notice what they and their students really do, rather than what they think they do;
- To get feedback as to the success or failure of what they are doing;
- To help them tailor teaching and learning to their learners and their settings;
- To enable them justify the teaching and learning choices they make;
- To increase their knowledge of learning and teaching and become authorities on teaching;
- To become less dependent on decisions made by people who are far away from their learning and teaching sites, people like textbook writers and school administrators; and
- To ensure that they don't become bored with teaching. (2009:15).

To sum up, all these things help teachers to create a supportive environment for students' learning; where by improving the quality of education. Therefore, the researcher believes that action research may be help teachers to examine and build up their classroom practices, develop understanding of their teaching and their students learning.

According to Noffke (1997) there are three different motivations for educators who conduct action research. Firstly, there is the motivation to better understand and improve one's practice and/or the contexts in which one works. Secondly, the motivation to produce knowledge that will be useful to other educators. Finally, there is the motivation to contribute to greater equity and democracy. All educators who conduct action research are interested in improving their own practice. In addition, some of these are also interested in sharing their learning with others and/or in contribution to social reconstruction.

On the other hand, scholars such as Gilles, Wilson, and Elias (2010) indicated that action research empowered teachers to examine their own beliefs, explore their own understandings of practice, foster critical reflection, and develop decision making

capabilities that enhanced their teaching and enabled them to assume control over their respective situation in the classroom. According to Gilles et al. (2010), action research strengthened a professional learning community because it placed emphasis on student learning and collaboration and reflection on pedagogical practices among teachers.

In addition, according to Ferrance (2000), action research can be worthwhile pursuit for educators for five reasons. These are; focus on school issues, form of teacher professional development, collegial interaction, potential to impact school change, reflection on own practice and improved communication. The author further tried to elaborate each of the benefits as follows:

2.2.1 Action Research Focus on school issue, problem, or area of collective interest

Research done with the teacher's students, in a setting with which the teacher is familiar helps to confer relevance and validity to a disciplined study. Often academic research is seen as disconnected from the daily lives of educators. While this might not always be true, it can be very helpful to teachers to pick up threads suggested in academic circle and weave them into their own classroom. It is also comforting for parents, or education administrators outside of the school, to know that a teacher is not just blindly following what the latest study seems to suggest, but is transforming the knowledge into something meaningful.

2.2.2 Action Research is a Form of Teacher Professional Development

Action Research is intended to provide teachers a professional development opportunity to investigate one or more problem areas related to student learning, research and learn about best practices associated with the issue, implement proposed solutions, interventions or innovations, and evaluate their effectiveness.

On the other hand, research and reflection allow teachers to grow and gain confidence in their work. Action research projects influence thinking skills, sense of efficiency, willingness to share and communicate, and attitudes towards the process of change.

Through action research, teachers learn about themselves, their students, their colleagues, and can determine ways to continually improve. Additionally, according to Sadruddin (2012), action research is an effective plan for the professional development of teachers. It helps practitioners to improve their teaching skills.

Moreover, Kukari and Honan (2010) noted that teacher professional development is strengthened by the view that in order to improve teacher quality, teachers should be required to upgrade their teacher education qualifications through in-service programs offered by teachers colleges and universities, including attending in-service activities and conducting action research at school and classroom levels.

Similarly, Sukmayadi et al. (2011) indicated that the most important aspect of action research is that the process enhances teachers' professional development through the fostering of their capability as professional knowledge makers, rather than simply as professional knowledge users.

Therefore, the researcher believes that conducting action research can lead teachers to develop their profession of teaching learning process and improve their knowledge and skills in undertaking research.

2.2.3 Action Research Develop Collegial Interaction

Action research in pairs or by team of teachers allows time to talk with others about teaching and teaching strategies. By working on these teams, teachers must describe their own teaching styles and strategies and share their thoughts with others. Through these discussions with colleagues they develop stronger relationships. As the practice of action research becomes part of the school culture, we see increased sharing and collaboration across departments, disciplines, grade levels, and schools. As a team teachers examined various instructional strategies, learning activities, and curricular materials used in the classroom.

According to Kemmis (1993), action research offers ways in which people can improve social life through research on the here and now, but also in relation to wider social structures and processes - as people whose interconnections constitute the wider webs of interaction which structure social life in discourses, in work, and in the organizational and interpersonal relationships in which we recognize relations of power.

Therefore, through these discussions with colleagues they develop stronger relationships. As the practice of action research becomes part of the school culture, we see increased sharing and collaboration across departments, disciplines, grade levels, and schools. Generally, teachers can develop their colleague's interaction by conducting action research on specific problems at the school or classroom levels so as to improve their practices.

2.2.4 Action Research Serve as Potential to Impact School

As teachers get into action research, they are more up to look at questions that address school and district concerns rather than questions that affect the individual teacher. This process creates new patterns of collegiality, communication and sharing. Contributions to the body of knowledge about teaching and learning may also result. Development of priorities for school wide planning and assessment efforts arise from inquiry with potential to motivate change for improvement's sake.

2.2.5 Action Research Uses to Reflect on Own Practice

Opportunities for teachers to evaluate themselves in schools are often few, and usually happen only in an informal manner. Action research can serve as an opportunity to really take a look at one's own teaching in a structured manner. While the focus of action research is usually the students, educators can also investigate what effect their teaching having on their students, how they could work better with other teachers, or ways of changing the whole school for the better.

According to Hong and Lawrence (2011), reflection or self-study is a powerful way to know about the self in research and practice as well as to unpack the very self in teaching practice. On the other hand, it has been described as a way of thinking about a problematic situation that needs to be resolved.

Additionally, according to Bell and Aldridge (2011) reflection has been described as a way of thinking about a problematic situation that needs to be resolved. In this respect, reflection provides the opportunity for teachers to be aware that a problem exists.

To sum up, one of the most important aspects of this type of research is the action that practitioners take to change what is happening in their workplaces setting. Also, action research can be a very powerful tool enabling practitioners not only to solve practical problems, but also to reflect on their understanding of how to develop practice.

2.2.6 Action Research helps to Improved Communication

Teamwork within the school or district brings individuals together for shared purpose. This is to mean that educators participated in conducting action research become more flexible in their thinking and more open to new ideas. On the other hand, they are positive changes in patterns of collegiality, communication and networking.

Generally, the researcher believes that the reason why teachers do action research is so as to look at their activities in teaching learning process and strengthen their abilities in decision making process. In other words, through action research teachers investigate their own practices and work places in order to make beneficial changes, and systematically analyze their own teaching and their students' performance. Therefore, teachers should be engaged in systematic classroom research based research so as to improve their practices and their students' academic achievements.

2.3. Characteristics of Action Research

Many scholars outline the characteristics of action research based on their views in different contexts. For instance McNiff, Lomex and Whitehead (1996); Cohen and Manion (1994); the International Encyclopedia of Education (1994) and Nunan (1992) cited in Gebeyew (2007) are amongst those who have presented the detailed features of action research. From these, Cohen and Manion (1994) have the following to say about the basic features of action research.

Action research is situational – it is concerned with diagnosing a problem in a specific context and attempting to solve it in that context; it is usually ... collaborative – team of teachers and practitioners work together ... it is participatory – team members themselves take part directly or indirectly in implementing the research; and it is self-evaluative-modifications are continuously evaluated within the ongoing situation, the ultimate objectives being to improve practice in some way or other. (P.27)

On the other hand, from Carr and Kemmis (1983) definitions, Mc Donough (1997) cited in Tran Thai Thu Hien (2009), proposes four characteristics of pure action research as it is participant-driven and reflective, collaborative, that leads to change and the improvement of practice not just knowledge in itself and context-specific. Action research is usually implemented in a specific classroom by a particular teacher or group of teachers who work together or in collaboration with students to pursue a change or improvement in their teaching and learning issues.

Although many of the scholars mentioned these features in some way in their description of action research, the definition given by Cohen and Manion (1994), is adopted. These include its nature of being situational, collaborative, participatory, empirical, cyclical and relaxed approach to research methods. These features are elaborated as a following:

2.3.1 Action research is situational (on-the-spot procedure)

This is refers to the methods concern of diagnosing a problem encountered in a specific on – the – spot situation and attempting to solve it. It is this quality that enables the method to be responsive. It responds to the emergent needs of the situation. This is to mean that ideally, the step-by-step process is constantly monitored over varying periods of time and by a variety of mechanisms (questionnaires, diaries, interviews and case studies, for example) so that the ensuing feedback may be translated into modifications, adjustment, directional changes, redefinitions, as necessary, so as to bring about lasting benefit to the ongoing process itself rather than to some future occasion.

Cohen and Manion (1994) consider this feature as the first necessary condition for conducting action research. The research is conducted to solve immediate problems encountered in the process of action in a specific situation. Beside, this is the aspect that primary differentiates the method from the traditional one.

2.3.3 Action research is cyclic

Similar steps tend to come back in similar sequences. Each cycle demands a critical reflection, which in turn helps the researcher plan for the next step. Each cycle involves a complete process or steps of the research target at tackling a specific problem. Each cycle begins with planning and ends with reflection. Every cycle has to come out with a possible solution for specific problem planning, acting, observation and reflections are the main steps that action research follows.

2.3.4 Participatory action research

According to Kemmis and McTaggart (2000), participatory action research (PAR) is a process in which all individuals in a group try to get a handle on the ways in which their knowledge shapes their sense of identity and agency and to reflect critically on how their current knowledge frames and constraints their action. It engages people in examining their knowledge (understandings, skills, and values) and interpretive categories (the ways in which they interpret themselves and their action in the social and material world).

In other words, participatory action research is a method of conducting research that involves researchers and the constituency of the research as equal partners in all phases of the research and it requires an understanding and respect for the unique perspectives and resources that each team member brings to the effort.

Similarly, according to Turnbull, Friesen and Ramirez (1998), Participatory action research is a process whereby the researchers and stakeholders or those who potentially benefit from research results collaborate in the design and conduct of all phases (e.g., specification of questions, design, data collection, data analysis, dissemination, and utilization) of the research process.

Moreover, Sarri and Sarri (1992) indicated that participatory action research emphasizes participation and collaboration where researchers and participants are co-learner in the research change process.

2.4. Types of Action Research

According to Yasmeeen (2008), many researchers have discussed different types of action research. For instance, Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) describes it as Technical, Practical (participatory) and Emancipatory. Supporting this, Holter and Schwartz-Barcott (1993) explained three types of action research: Technical collaborative, mutual collaborative and enhancement approach. While McKernan (1991) lists three modes of action research (AcR): Scientific - technical, Practical – deliberative and Critical – emancipatory. Emily (1993) describes three other modes: Teacher researcher, Collaborative research and School-wide action research.

Even though, different scholars classify action research differently based on their perspectives, almost all modes are more or less interchangeable with its similar basic objectives. For instance; O'Brien (2001) cited in Daniel and Firdissa (2009) indicated that by the mid-1970s the types of action research can be categorized into four main streams: traditional, contextual, radical and educational action research. This categorization can be elaborated as follows:

2.4.1 Traditional Action Research

Traditional action research stemmed from Lewin's work within organization and encompasses the concepts and practices of Field Theory, Group Dynamics, T-Groups, and the Clinical Model. This traditional approach tends toward the conservative, generally maintaining the status quo regarding organizational power structures.

2.4.2 Contextual Action Research.

Contextual action research which is also sometimes referred to as Action Learning is an approach derived from Trist's work on relations between organizations. It is contextual, insofar as it entails reconstructing the structural relations among actors in a social environment. It is domain-based in that it involves all affected stakeholders. It is holographic, as each participant understands the working of the whole; and it stresses that participant's act as project designers and co-researchers.

2.5. Processes of Action Research

Daniel and Firdissa (2009) noted that action research follows the process of systematic learning in a practical context so as to make two things clear. First, action is based on evidence (rather than habit, intuition, or custom and practice). Second, action research should be directed to a specified problem or focus following cyclical steps each of which involves reflection, description, analysis and evaluation.

In addition, Johnson (2002) indicated that there are no universal order steps in action research. You might find yourself skipping steps, rearranging their order, or repeating some steps more than once. Therefore, the steps of action researches are as follows:

1. **Identify a problem or research topic.** The first step is to decide what to study. What are you curious about? What piques your interest? Ask a question, identify a problem or define an area of interest for exploration. Find something that intrigues you, something you would really like to examine in depth. In other words, it is deciding to what issue or topic in the school setting needs to be researched.
2. **Set the problem or research topic in a theoretical context.** This means doing a review of the literature. Look in professional journals, books, and web sources to see what others have found out or have to say about your research topic. Relating your research topic to current theories gives you more credibility and provides a theoretical context for your findings. Also, this enables you to link theory and practice by connecting what you find in the literature to what is happening in your classroom.

You might take one of the three approaches in doing literature review. The first approach is to do the review of the literature before you begin collecting data. Besides setting your study in theoretical context, the literature might also be used to help formulate your questions, refine a pedagogical method to be studied or give you ideas for collecting data. The second approach is to review the literature as you report the data and make your conclusions. The literature is related to each of your concluding point. The third approach is not to do a review of the literature at all. Many short action research projects do not include these elements.

As you can see, you have a certain amount of freedom in organizing your action research projects. The responsibility is on you; however, to create a credible and coherent report linking your study to theories and previous research is one way to do this.

3. **Make a plan for data collection.** In traditional research this is known as methodology. What data are you going to study? How are you going to collect the data? How often will you collect data? Action research is not impressionistic. Nor it is a brochure supporting a particular teaching methodology. Rather, action research is a systematic observation; therefore, data collection must be focused and the elements of data collection must be determined before the research begins.
4. **Begin to collect and analyze data.** After you have identified at least two kinds of data, you begin the data collection process. As you collect your data, analyze them by looking for themes, categories or patterns that emerge. This analysis will influence further data collection by helping you to know what to look for.
5. **If necessary, allow the question or problem to change as you collect data.** Action research is dynamic, ever-changing process. As a human you cannot help but be influenced by the data you collect. It is very common, therefore, to change a particular teaching strategy, the sources of data, or even the focus of the study as you are collecting data. This is acceptable as long as you let the reader know what you did and why you did it. That is, in writing your report takes the reader along with you in all phases of your action research.
6. **Analyze and organize the data.** Hopefully you have been analyzing and organizing the data as you have been collecting them, thus, step 6 should be the final step of an ongoing process. In analyzing your data, you need to establish how many total things were recorded, how many categories or kinds of things are in each category. This is a quick view of analytic induction.
7. **Report the data.** Present the fact or findings. This presentation includes an overview with detailed descriptions and illustrative samples of important events, activities and responses or patterns present in the data. In this section of your report you take the role of journalist or anthropologist by describing what you saw and providing examples that demonstrate your perceptions.

8. **Make your conclusions and recommendations.** The next step is to interpret the data or tell the reader what they mean. Based on the data, what can you conclude? What do you recommend based on your conclusions? You then answer your research question, provide answers for a problem, or make suggestions based on your news understanding. Also, as stated in step 2, some action researchers do a review of literature at this point to set their conclusions in theoretical context.
9. **Create a plan of action.** This is where you put the action in action research. Based on your conclusions and recommendations, what will you do? You create a plan of action. And as you implement your plan of action, you assess what is happening or how effective it is; thus the action research cycle continues.

2.6. Teachers Perception towards Action Research

According to Bell (1993), the word research is associated with activities which are substantially removed from day-to-day life and which are pursued by outstanding gifted persons with unusual level of commitment. However, teaching learning process needs to integrate with research conducted at the classroom level, most people think 'research' as something that can be undertaken only by naturally gifted persons as it is believed by scholars.

Beasley and Riodson (1981) cited in Gebeyew (2007) indicted that teachers and students rarely participate in doing action research; hence, teachers' knowledge of the classroom has been neglected, teachers themselves do not read and employ action research to shape and inform their methods of teaching. Moreover they argued that teachers are suspicious of the relevance of action research and little has been known how teachers perceive and undertaken action research.

Additionally, the majority of teachers perceived research activity as carried out by the researchers from other fields. In line with this, Nunan (1992) indicated that most teachers do not undertake action research due to constraints such as shortage of time, lack of research background and lack of experience. Therefore, the attitudes of teachers in

conducting action research is failed because of they are unable to conduct due to personal problems.

Even though, action research plays a great role in improving teachers practice in research activities, provide solutions their face in teaching learning process and use students learning, teachers are not participated in conducting action research because of above mentioned problems.

2.7. The Role of Action Research

Action research is likely to improve teaching learning process, contributes to teacher's professional development, and increases the levels of teacher's participation in cooperative working with and for those affected by the problems. And also teachers of every school levels has to know their ways of teaching and their students learning in the classroom in order to reduce the problem that influence students on their achievements.

In line with this, Demircioglu (2008) noted that through action research activities, participants aim to examine their own educational practice and their work place systematically and carefully so as to make beneficial changes, and systematically analyze their own teaching and their students' performance.

According to Ferrence (2000), action research is used for various purposes: school based curriculum development, professional development, systems planning, school restructuring, and as an evaluative tool. Action research is a more practical and user-friendly than research defined in traditional senses.

Additionally, action research is conducted for one main purpose: to improve teaching and learning. Action research is expected to facilitate learning process, disseminate the results of the research and contribute to teachers to participate in the way that partners are working with and for those affected by the problems for the way in which the problem is tackled. The teachers also as an action researcher should understand the nature and level of students so as to maintain the necessary balance between the external causes that affect structure and control by affecting students' freedom to be autonomous in their learning activities.

Moreover, according to Sukmayadi (2011) the aim of an action researcher is to bring about development in his or her practice by analyzing existing practice and identifying elements for change. The process is founded on the gathering of evidence on which to make informed rather than intuitive judgments and decisions. Perhaps the most important aspect of action research is that the process enhances teachers' professional development through the fostering of their capability as professional knowledge makers, rather than simply as professional knowledge users.

In order to achieve the intended curriculum objectives, every stakeholders of the schools; principals, teachers, supervisors are expected to conduct action research for the sake of solving problems in their day to day activities practically. In line with this, Hopkins (2003) noted that when the curriculum is being applied, teachers will gain knowledge about the effects of their practice and thus making the school as follows:

- Possible and attractive as a centre of research;
- Increase the bondage and interaction among staff members;
- Reduce a belief which is often articulated that it is only trained and qualified staff but not the practitioners do educational research;
- Bring about changes in principles or teachers professional skills and roles;
- Increase feeling of self-worth and confidence; increase awareness about classroom issues;
- Serves as a means of in-service training and
- Thereby equipping teachers and principals with new skills and methods and sharpening their analytical power and heightening their self awareness.

From the above ideas, it is possible to understand that action research plays a great role in solving teachers, students and school related problems practically and improving the practices of teachers in conducting educational action research so as to provide good teaching and learning environments. Further, it is significant to develop teacher's competencies in solving problem they face in their day to day activities in the classroom particularly and school as the whole.

2.8. Constraints to do Action Research

Conducting action researches are the most important activities to bring changes and improvements in teaching learning process. However, it is expected while conducting it, constraints become difficulty for teacher practitioners so as to perform things easily. For instance, from the constraints that affect those teachers in conducting action research, problem related with lack of in-service training, lack of knowledge and skills, lack of attitude and interest, shortage of materials or resources and financial problems plays a great role in affecting teacher practitioners in schools.

In line with this, different research result reported that research knowledge and skills of secondary school teacher was found insignificance Ashenafi, (2007) and Gebeyew, (2007). Similarly, the report exposed that teachers do not understand the ways of conducting action research and the interest to practice in the process which is extremely influence the involvement of teachers in research activities.

Additionally, Mc kerman (1996) and Seyoum (1998) cited in Dereje (2011) indicated that there are many factors that hinder secondary school teacher in conducting action research at school or classroom level. Among these constraints, institutional and other teacher related problems could be mentioned. School organizational features, lack of time and lack of resources are of the school related problems.

Similarly, Dame (2011) found that time pressure due to teaching and administrative work load, lack of teacher professional development standards, inadequate support systems, lack of commitment on the teacher educators, lack of adequate resource, inadequate awareness about action research, and inadequate incentives available for teacher-researchers as the most severe constraints that faced the teacher educators to properly undertake action research in his study areas.

Additionally, Yohannis (2011) indicated that lack of sufficient research skills, lack of resource materials, and support from educational systems as a serious problem that hinder secondary school teachers not to involve in educational research activities. On the other hand, Watson and Maddison, (2005) cited in Daniel and Firdissa (2009), indicated that

many of the constraints are attributable to the contexts in which teachers work. The contexts in which teachers work have an important influence on teaching. Different teaching setting involves teachers in kinds of different roles. Consequently, some constraints are rooted in the cause/effect of current weaknesses in the context of institutional self-study. Constraints can be grouped under the headings of; People (dissatisfaction, resistance, insufficient training and limited opportunity and time to practice), System (mismatch between internal and external need, lack of clear roles/responsibilities), Materials, data-related problems such as incomplete and inconsistent information and Resource (competing demands on time, full market analysis which is costly).

Similarly, Burns (1999) classified constraints of teachers in conducting action research into three: as lack of time, lack of resources, school organizational features and inadequacies of research skills are the most frequently ranked research constraints among participants.

On the other hand, Johnson (2011) noted that five challenges of conducting action research that some educators face in schools.

1. Time is the biggest concern because the researcher must find the time to develop a plan of action and then move through the action research steps. It is important to remember that an action research project should not be considered an add-on to what is already being done in schools. Instead, it should be an integral part of what takes place every day in schools.
2. Lack of resources can also be a challenge when planning action research. The researcher needs to be innovative, optimistic and dedicated to overcome this challenge.
3. Difficulty of formulating the research question is a challenge that researchers face in the early stages of action research.
4. Resistance to change can impact any action research project. Support from school and school district personnel is fundamental for the researcher. It may be important to

emphasize how conducting action research will benefit the professional practice of the researcher, school, students, teachers, and the district.

5. Ethical considerations must be taken into account. Most action research projects involve human subjects therefore the district, parents, teachers, and students must be fully aware of the goals and the expectations of the research.

To sum up, even though constraints are classified differently according to different scholars, they affect negatively the involvement of teachers in conducting action research in the context where they are working.

2.9. Conceptual Model of the Study

The conceptual model below in Figure 1 was developed after reviewing literatures in the area of action research. In order to conduct action research, it is crucial to have interest in the part of teachers, adequate knowledge and skill, budget (time, financial and other resources) and context (availability of trainings, principals' support, Town Education officers' involvement). In this context interest is defined as the feeling that teachers have when they want to perform or undertake action research. It is also the major motivating force to carry out action research activities.

In addition, so as to perform any activity, it is quiet necessary to have the overall knowledge about the activity to complete it very well. Because knowledge is the understanding or acquaintance that an individual's gain through learning or experience. On the other hand, even though the knowledge of any activity is very important, it is necessary to have the skills in order to accomplish a desired activity successfully. Skill is the ability to carry out something effectively. Therefore, teachers are required to have knowledge and skills to engage in doing action research activity.

In addition to the above ideas, adequate budget, time and other resources like up to dated reference materials with sufficient library service plays an important role in undertaking research activity successfully and efficiently. Hence, in order to undertake action research

and solve the actual teaching learning problems, teachers' needs adequate budget and time.

Generally, the absence of one of these factors is believed to retard teachers' actual involvement in action research and the status of action research in a given context.



Figure 1: Conceptual model of the study

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter deals with the study design, methods, subjects/participants, data collection instruments, validity and reliabilities of the questionnaires, procedures of data collection and procedures of data analysis.

3.1. Study Design

In this study, a mixed method approach (QUAN+ qual) embedded concurrent design was used. According to Creswel (2009), the concurrent embedded strategy of mixed methods can be identified by its uses of one data collection phase, during which both quantitative and qualitative data are collected simultaneously. Additionally, the approach has a primary method that guides the project and a secondary data base that provides a supporting role in the procedures. Therefore, in this study, the qualitative results were embedded or nested to the quantitative results.

3.2. Subjects /Participants/

The participants in the study include all teachers of Sululta Secondary School. Since the total number of teachers was 34 and that is manageable, the researcher used all teachers of Sululta Secondary School. Additionally, the school principal and deputy principal, Town Administration Education Officer (head) and one supervisor were included as primary source of data. Moreover, to triangulate the data, the researcher also used document mining as a secondary source of data.

3.3. Data Collection instruments

In order to achieve the objectives of the study, data collection instruments such as questionnaire, semi structured interview, focus group discussion and document analysis were employed.

3.3.1. Questionnaire

Questionnaire is widely used in educational research to obtain information about certain conditions and practices to inquire into opinions and attitudes of individuals and groups. According to Best and Khan (1993), questionnaire enables to secure factual information about opinions and views and also appropriate instrument to obtain a variety of opinions with a relatively short period of time.

Therefore, it was developed after intensive review of related literatures for research topic. Both closed-ended and open-ended questionnaires were employed in this study. Most of the questionnaire was closed ended, while some questionnaire items were open-ended in order to give a chance for respondents to express their views, ideas and opinions using their own words. The first eight items were yes/no questions with supported in open ended items to investigate the practice of action research in the study area. The second eight closed ended items were prepared in five likert scales valued: strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), undecided (3), agree (4) and strongly agree (5) to explore teachers' views/opinions regarding action research. The next six closed ended items were prepared in five likert scale to investigate the levels of the school principals' encouragement to teachers in order to undertake action research. The other part of the questionnaire consists of fourteen closed ended items to investigate the factors that hinder/enable teachers in undertaking action research. The last part of the questionnaires consists of two open ended items to assess the major factors that hinder/enable teachers and the means of improving the current conditions in conducting action research in Sululta Secondary School.

Then, the questionnaire was administered to all teachers of Sululta Secondary School. From the questionnaires administered to all Sululta Secondary School teachers, 33 (97%) was returned but 1 (3%) questionnaire were not returned to the researcher.

3.3.2. Interview

Marczyk, DeMatteo and Festinger (2005) noted that interviews are a relatively common ways of collecting data in research. Similarly, Burns (1999) noted that the strength of

semi-structured interviews tends to be one of the most favored by educational researchers as it allows respondents to express themselves at some length, but offers enough shape to prevent aimless rambling and help researchers to get themes and topics which may not have been anticipated while designing the interview.

Therefore, so as to get additional information and strengthen the data obtained via questionnaires, the researcher administered semi-structured interview to school principal, deputy principal, town administration education officer (head) and supervisor regarding the practices of action research and the factors that affect teachers not to undertake action research in the study areas.

3.3.3. Focus group discussion

Lindlof and Tayler (2002) noted that group discussion produces data insights that would be less accessible without interaction found in a group setting-listening to others verbalized experiences stimulates memories, ideas and experiences in participants.

Additionally, focus group discussion helps to understand issues and reach consensus with participants through discussion. It serves as a means of the validating statements and views. Hence, the researcher was employed this instrument to gather information from eight department heads of school teachers in order to identify the practices, attitudes and factors that hinder/enable teachers towards conducting action research.

3.3.4. Document analysis

Lincoln and Guba (1985) supports that the use of document analysis readily available and stable sources of data. Therefore, in order to see the levels of action research conducted in the study area, the researcher consulted and examined the documents such as numbers of conducted action research, by department members.

3.4. Validity and Reliability of the Instruments

The researcher validated the instruments that were developed for data collection at first started with wide-ranging of review of the literature. Then, the researcher invited two

colleagues and two teachers who are teaching at different universities so as to sift out unclear items and correct items with ambiguities. Depending up on the comments and criticisms on the strength and weaknesses of the items gained from the above people, the researcher made modifications and submitted to the advisor. Then, the advisor also evaluated and commented on the items with weaknesses of concepts and grammatical errors.

Subsequently, the instrument was tried out in small-scale study by using 15 teachers at Chanco Abba Geda Secondary School which is 17 km far away from Sululta Town approximately. Because, piloting the instrument is very important in order to filter out ambiguous items and concepts. It is also one of the best mechanisms of improving the items for data collection procedures.

The total number of participants in the small-scale study was 15 teachers. After the questionnaire was administered to them, some participants were asked for criticisms. Hence, modification was made on seven items (three of them were from opinion items and the rest were from factors that hinder or enable teachers in undertaking action research). Finally, one item was rejected from perception instruments because of its similarities with other items. Out of 32 items administered for pilot testing, 31 items were selected based on their reliabilities.

The total reliability of the instruments was tested by cronbach's alpha method by using 'SPSS software 19 version' and the computed reliability of the instrument was 0.778. Thus, the instrument was found valuable to collect the data for the main study (Yalew, 2005).

3.5. Procedures of Data Collection

In order to obtain adequate data on the practice and challenges in conducting action research, the investigator used questionnaire, interview, focus group discussion and document analysis. The first step towards collecting the necessary data was making face to face contacts with school principals in order to introduce the purpose of investigation and facilitating conditions for the data collection activities.

Next, the investigator with school principals were arranged the time and place to make contact the respondents. Accordingly, the distributions of the questionnaires, the interview schedule and the focus group discussion programs were fixed on which an agreement was made.

Then, the questionnaire papers were distributed to all teachers of Sululta Secondary School to fill and collect the questionnaire accordingly. After distributing 34 questionnaires to all teachers of the study area, the researcher stayed for about two weeks in order to collect the distributed questionnaires from respondents.

Simultaneously, the researcher carried out the interviews with school principal and deputy principal, and town administration education officers (the head and supervisor) while the questionnaire was returned from the study participants. In line with this, the FGD's (focus group discussions) were also held with eight school department heads in teachers' staff for 30 minutes. At the same time, the researcher consulted the school documents to see the practice of action research in the study area.

From 34 questionnaires administered to all Sululta Secondary School, 33 (97%) of the questionnaires were filled and returned back to the researcher.

3.6. Methods of Data Analysis

The data collected from the above mentioned participants were analyzed through quantitative approach, statistically using descriptive statistics such as frequency distribution, percentages, grand mean, mean and the qualitative approach (narrative description of data) embedded to the quantitative findings.

On the other hand, in order to answer all basic research questions, descriptive statistics were employed. Here, the five likert scales were converted into three for the sake of convenience to deal with. Accordingly, the first two scales (strongly disagree + disagree) were grouped together to disagree. In the same way, the last two (strongly agree + agree) were grouped together into agree. The intermediate scale (undecided) was taken as it is.

Additionally, the interviews, FGD's and the document analysis result were nested to the quantitative finding in order to support and strengthen it. Also, the qualitative data results were used as the means of triangulation purposes.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

This chapter deals with presentation, analysis and interpretation of the data collected from the participants of the study.

4.1. General Characteristics of Respondents

The participants of the study were characterized in terms of their Sex, Age, Year of service, the total number of periods they are currently teaching per week and their current educational levels. Thus, 34 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to all Sululta Secondary teachers. Out of these, 33 questionnaires were completed and returned.

Table1. Summary of teachers' background

Categories	Characteristics	N	%
Sex	Male	28	84.8
	Female	5	15.2
Age	20-25	4	12.1
	26-30	10	30.3
	31-35	3	9.1
	36-40	6	18.2
	>41	10	30.3
Service year in teaching	beginner and junior teachers (1-5 years)	9	27.3
	fully registered and senior teachers (6-13 years)	8	24.2
	associate lead and lead teachers (>14 years)	16	48.5
Total numbers of periods they are currently teaching per week	1-5	-	-
	6-10	7	21.2
	11-15	14	42.4
	16-20	12	36.4
	>21	-	-
Your educational levels	Diploma	1	3.1
	BA, BSc, Bed	31	93.9
	MA, MSc	1	3.1

Note: N= numbers of participants, BA= Bachelor of Science, Bed= Bachelor of education, MA= Masters of Arts and MSc= Masters of Science

The results in Table 1 show that majority of the respondents (84.8%) are males. With regard to the respondents' age, majority of them are full within the age range of 26-30 and above 41. This implies that majority of respondents (60.6%) are at their active participation age group.

As far as the teaching experience of the respondents, majority of them are associate and lead teachers. Regarding the total numbers of periods that teachers currently teach in the study area, majority of the respondents (42.4%) are teaching between 11-15 periods per week. This implies that their total numbers of periods that they are currently teach is average and it is not an influential factors to undertake action research relatively with other factors in the study area.

Concerning the respondents' current levels of education, the majority of respondent teachers 31(93.3%) are first degree holders. This implies that majority of respondents are well qualified to teach in Secondary School.

4.2. The Status of Action Research

There is wide spread agreement that action research is one of the mechanisms in solving the classroom teaching learning problems and improve the current practice. This could be possible through the actual involvement of teachers in undertaking action research at school levels. In line with this, the researcher asks different questions about the actual involvements of teachers in conducting action research.

Table 2 Summary of teachers' response on the status of action research

Items		F	%
1. Have you ever conducted action research in your school?	yes	17	51.5
	No	16	48.5
4. Have you taken any in-service training programs over the past 5 years on action research?	yes	11	33.3
	No	22	66.7
8. Are there any reference materials (books, journals, research findings and etc) that enable you to improve your knowledge and skills in conducting action research?	yes	7	21.2
	No	26	78.8

Note: f= numbers of responses

Table 2 shows that the actual involvements of teachers in conducting action research in the study areas. Hence, the respondents were asked their levels of engagement in undertaking action research in the questionnaire item number 1. As a result, the majority respondents (51.5%) conducted action research. Based on item 1, the purpose of those teachers who conducted action research was shown on item 2 (Appendix 'A'). Hence, majority of the respondents (30.3%) were conducted action research in order to solve the classroom teaching learning problems. While, of the rest of the respondents undertook action research for the sake of improving the results of their students by their subjects, identifying factors that hesitate students not to do home works or exercises given by their teachers and upgrading their educational levels.

Additionally, on item 3(Appendix 'A') describes that the reasons that prevent teachers to conduct action research in the study area. Therefore, 48.5% of the respondents were affected by the following factors. From these participants some of the respondents were affected because of lack of reference materials, lack of time, lack of trainings on the issues of action research, lack of encouragement from principals and concerned body and lack of interest. Furthermore, from open ended items it was found that some respondents believes as they were not expected to do action research since they are at the last stages of their career structures.

As it can be seen from Table 2 (item 4), the respondents were asked whether the training is given or not within the past five years concerning action research. As a result, majority of the respondents (66.7%) did no obtained an in-service training concerning action research over the past five years. This implies that majority of the respondents involvements in action research were affected with the shortages of trainings on action research activities.

For the item (4) the frequency of in-service training given for those respondents shown on item 5 (Appendix 'A') for those respondents who obtain training. Hence, majority of the respondents (24.2%) were given an in-service training for one times within the past five years. On the other hand, item 6 on (Appendix 'A') shows that the reason why the majority respondents may not obtain in-service trainings. Therefore, it is because of lack

of emphasis given to teachers from town administrations and lack of cooperation between school management and town administration education officers in facilitating conditions to teachers of the study area.

Item 7 (Appendix 'A') represents that the extent to which the knowledge and skills of the respondents improved for those respondents who took an in-service. That means majority of the respondents (24.2%) from those teachers who get trainings were agreed that as an in-service training may improve the levels of their knowledge and skills to the high level.

As shown in Table 2 item 8, majority of respondents (78.7%) were disagreed with the existence of reference materials that enable them so as to improve their knowledge and skills in undertaking action research in the study area. This implies that the existence of insufficient reference materials in the school affect negatively the status of action research.

4.3. The Perceptions of Teachers towards Undertaking Action Research

Action research is likely to improve teaching learning process. It contributes to teacher's professional development, and increases the levels of teacher's participation in cooperative working with and for those affected by the problems. And also teachers of every school levels have to know their ways of teaching and their students learning in the classroom in order to reduce the problems that influence students on their achievements.

Morgan et al. (1996, cited in Amera 2005) noted that perception of an individual refers to the way any event in the world and the world itself looks like, sounds, feels, tastes or smell by him/her. Also, it plays a great role in facilitating or hindering an individual's activity. Hence, the researcher tried to request respondents whether their attitudes are positive or not regarding action research in the study area.

Table 3 Summary of teachers' perceptions towards action research

No	Items	Scales						Mean
		D		UD		A		
		f	%	f	%	f	%	
2.1	Teachers should conduct action research to improve their knowledge and skills	2	6.1	1	3	30	90.9	4.33
2.2	Teachers should conduct action research to solve teaching learning problems	0	0	2	6.1	31	64	4.39
2.3	The contribution of action research is high to solve the actual classroom problems	3	9.1	5	15.2	25	75.7	4.00
2.4	Action research plays a great role in improving teachers practice in research activities	0	0	2	6.1	31	94	4.42
2.5	Action research contributes a lot in improving the practice of teaching learning process	2	6.1	1	3	30	90.9	4.21
2.6	Teachers should develop collegial interaction through conducting action research	3	9.1	7	21.2	23	69.7	3.84
2.7	Action research can expand teachers role in teaching	1	3	6	18.2	26	78.8	4.00
2.8	Teachers should conduct action research although there are challenges and constraints in schools	5	15.2	4	12.1	23	69.7	3.69

Note: f= numbers of responses, D= Disagree, UD= Undecided and A= Agree

As presented in Table 3 item (2.1), the perceptions of teachers on conducting action research to improve their knowledge and skills. As a result majority of the respondents (90.9%) were agreed with the idea of conducting action research in order to improve their knowledge and skills. This implies that even though some respondents were disagreed and undecided on the issues teachers should conduct action research so as to improve their knowledge and skills, the majority respondents were agreed or believed as teachers should conduct action research in order to improve their knowledge and skills. But it is expected that all respondents have to agree with the ideas; because through practice the improvement may come.

In proportion to the above description, the calculated mean values of item (2.1) showed 4.33. This implies that the tendencies of majority respondents were very high in agreement that the teachers should conduct action research in order to improve their knowledge and skills.

On the other hand, as indicated on item (2.2 and 2.6), the aggregate percentages of majority of the respondents (81.85%) were agreed with teachers should conduct action research in order to solve the actual teaching learning problems and develop collegial interaction in the study area. This indicated that teachers believed that to solve the actual teaching and learning problems through conducting action research. But some teacher's participants of the study need to have consciousness about the issues as action research develops interactions between teachers in solving the actual classroom problems.

In line with this, the aggregate computed mean values of the above items shows 4.11. This score implies that the majority of respondents believed that teachers should conduct action research to solve the teaching learning problems and develop collegial interaction in the study area.

Concerning the contributions of action research, respondents were kindly asked on items (2.3, 2.4, 2.5, and 2.7). Therefore, majority of aggregate percentages of the respondents (84.87%) were agreed with the contributions of action research is high to solve the actual classroom problems, plays a great role in improving teachers practice in research activities, contributes a lot in improving the practice of teaching learning process and expand teachers' role in teaching. This implies that although the high numbers of the participants were agreed with the ideas above stated, still some teachers' have lack of clear understanding or awareness about the role of action research so as to be agreeing with. If awareness on the role of action research may provided to teachers, they may improve their involvement in undertaking it.

In proportion to the above descriptions, the calculated aggregate mean values of items (2.3, 2.4, 2.5 and 2.7) were 4.11. Hence, this indicated that the majority of respondents were highly in agreement with the contributions of action research in solving the actual classroom problems and improving the teaching learning process.

The data in Table 3 item 2.8; represents that (72.7%) of the respondents were agreed with the ideas teachers should conduct action research although there are challenges and constraints in the study area. This is to mean that 27.3% of the participants' of the study

may not perceive action research in a good manner, to undertake action research with resisting challenges and constraints in the study area. Therefore, since the majority participants were agreed with resisting challenges and constraints to conduct action research, participants with disagreeing responses have to change their perception regarding action research by exercising it. In line with this, the calculated mean values of item 2.8 shows 3.69.

Generally, the calculated grand mean values of the above items depict that 4.11. This score shows that even though some participants were disagreed and ambivalent to decide whether conducting action research improves the knowledge and skills of teachers in research activities, improves the teaching learning process, solve the actual classroom problems and develop collegial interaction or not, the tendencies of majority participants were highly in agreement with the above described ideas. In other words, even though teachers perceive action research in a good manner, their involvement in conducting action research was limited because of the existence of constraints in the study area.

Corresponding to the above ideas, the interviews and FGD's responses also shows similar responses with the responses collected by the questionnaire. For instance, one of the discussants said that "I personally believe that by conducting action research the teaching learning problems in the classroom can be solved". This implies that respondents were perceive action research positively as it solves teaching and learning problems, and improve the classroom conditions.

4.4. The Levels of Principal Encouragement to Teachers

Ferrance (2000) noted that principals help their teachers by working collaboratively and it helps in their professional development. One way to begin modeling the realities of change within professional practice is to utilize action research. In line with the above descriptions, Fullan (2001, cited in Johnson 2011) indicated that the school administrators' role has become more overwhelming, more multifaceted, and more fulfilling for those who learn to guide change. In order to keep up with the needs of student learning and issues in a school building, school administrators must be the models

for change. School administrators must be the driving force and role models that begin the movement for change or facilitate the movement within their schools. By using the process of Action Research the school administrator not only models the importance of learning and assessing personal practice.

Similarly, according to the education policy directive MOE (2002), the school principals and deputy principals are charged with the tasks or responsibilities of facilitating conditions for teachers to enable them engage in action research which could help improve the teaching-learning processes and other school practices.

Therefore, teachers in the study area were kindly requested the levels of their principal encouragement in conducting action research in Table 4 below.

Table 4 Summary of teachers' responses on principal's encouragement in undertaking action research

No	Items	Scales						Mean
		D		UD		A		
		f	%	f	%	f	%	
3.1	My school principal encourages teachers through arranging research training	24	66.6	8	24.3	3	9.1	2.30
3.2	My school principal encourages teachers through allocating budget to conduct action research	26	78.8	6	18.2	1	3	1.78
3.3	My school principal encourages teachers to undertake action research cooperatively	16	48.5	6	18.2	11	33.3	2.72
3.4	My principal support teachers through establishing action research club in the school	18	54.5	8	24.3	7	21.2	2.54
3.5	My principal encourages teachers by providing recognition to conduct action research activities	16	48.5	9	27.2	8	24.3	2.72
3.6	My principal support teachers through providing reference materials for their research activities	23	59.7	6	18.2	4	12.1	2.30

Respondents were asked their levels of agreement on the issues of principal encouragement by arranging research training on item (3.1) in the study area. Thus, majority of the respondents (66.6%) were disagreed on the issues of principal encouragement through arranging research training in the study area. This implies that the school principals are not supporting teachers by providing them training so as to refresh their knowledge regarding action research activities.

Regarding item (3.2) in Table 4, majority of the respondents (78.8%) were disagreed with the ideas of principal encouragement through allocating budget in Sululta Secondary School. Also, respondents were asked whether their principals encourage them to undertake action research cooperatively or not on item (3.3) in Table 4. Therefore, majority of the respondents (48.5%) were disagreed with the issues of principal encouragement to undertake action research cooperatively in the study area. In addition, respondents were asked with the issues of their principal encourage them through establishing action research club on item (3.4) in Table 4. Therefore, majority of the respondents (54.6%) were disagreed with the ideas of principal encouragement through establishing action research club in the study area.

Concerning item (3.5) in Table 4 majority of the respondents (48.5%) were agreed with the issues of principal support through providing recognition to conducted action research work in the study area. While the rest of the participants of the study were agreed and ambivalent to decide with principal encouragement by recognizing conducted action research activities. On the other hand, on item (3.6) Table 4 respondents were asked their levels of agreement on principal encouragement by providing reference materials. Thus, majority of the respondents (69.7%) were disagreed with the ideas of principal encouragement through providing reference materials for their research activities in the study area. This indicated that the overall insufficient principals' encouragement to teachers in order to undertake action research in the study area.

In general, the computed grand mean values of the respondents regarding principals' encouragement to undertake action research is 2.39. This score implies that the tendencies of majority participants were highly disagreed with principal encouragement in facilitating condition to teachers so as to conduct action research and support their teaching and learning with problem solving culture in the study area. Therefore, this problem leads the involvement of teachers in action research to become very low.

Furthermore, in proportion to the above ideas, the data obtained through FGD was also similar with the questionnaire responses. For instance, one of the discussants said that "Frankly speaking, our school principals do not support teachers sufficiently in order to

improve our involvement in action research.” Therefore, this may affect the status of action research negatively.

4.5. The Major Factors that Hinder Teachers in Undertaking Action Research

There are different factors that hinder teachers in conducting action research. So as to improve the levels of teachers’ involvement, identifying the factors that hinder teachers in conducting action research plays a significant role. Therefore, the researcher tried to request teachers about the major factors that hinder them to conduct action research.

Table 5 Summary of teachers’ responses on factors that hinder or enable teachers in undertaking action research

NO	Items	Scales						Mean
		D		UD		A		
		f	%	f	%	f	%	
4.1	There is a shortage of training and seminar on research activities	-	-	-	-	33	100	
4.2	I do not feel confident in undertaking action research due to lack of research knowledge and skills	14	42.4	7	21.2	12	36.4	2.90
4.3	There is insufficient budget in the school to undertake action research	2	6.1	3	9.1	28	84.8	4.18
4.4	There is lack of moral support from principals	7	21.2	7	21.2	19	57.6	3.39
4.5	There is negative attitude of teachers towards undertaking action research	12	36.4	11	33.3	10	30.3	3.00
4.6	Teachers lack interest to conduct action research	8	24.2	6	18.2	19	57.6	3.45
4.7	There is insufficient reference materials (journals, research books, research reports and etc.) in the library	1	3	3	9.1	29	87.9	4.15
4.8	The library service in the school is insufficient to undertake action research	3	9.1	3	9.1	27	81.8	3.96
4.9	There is lack of recognitions to conducted research activities	11	33.3	7	21.2	15	45.5	3.24
4.10	Teaching load affects the practice of action research	13	39.3	6	18.2	15	45.5	3.27
4.11	Teachers lack enough time to carry out action research in the school	12	36.3	6	18.2	15	45.5	3.21
4.12	There is lack of clear role of teachers in the school to conduct action research	5	15.1	7	21.2	21	63.7	3.63
4.13	There is lack of complete data/information to undertake research activities	7	21.2	3	9.1	23	69.7	3.63
4.14	I am not encouraged to carryout action research due to lack of incentives	10	30.3	3	9.1	20	60.6	3.60
4.15	Teachers involvement in action research should be one criterion of promotion	6	18.2	6	18.2	21	63.6	3.54

The data in Table 5 item (4.1) depicts that all participants or (100%) of the study participants were agreed with the ideas on of the shortages of training and seminar on research activities in the study area. This implies that teachers are affected negatively due

to the shortages of trainings and seminars to conduct action research. However, if an in-service trainings and seminars are given to teachers in the study area, they may improve their levels of involvement in conducting action research.

Concerning item (4.2) in Table 5 majority of the respondents (42.4%) were disagreed with the ideas on the issues they are not feel confident in undertaking action research due to lack of research knowledge and skills. This implies that respondents (57.6%) who have hesitated to decide and agreed with the above ideas need support from the concerned educational stake holders in order to improve their knowledge and skills in conducting action research.

On the other hand, respondents were asked about the school budget on items (4.3) in Table 5. Therefore, majority of the participants of the study (84.9%) were agreed as they have been affected with the insufficient budget in the school to undertake action research. This shows that even though some respondents hesitated to decide and disagreed with the existence of insufficient budget, majority of the participants of the study were agreed or believed that there are shortages of budget to undertake action research in the study area. Adequate budget plays a paramount role in conducting quality research for quality teaching learning process. But, the existence of inadequate budget in the study area, leads the practices of action research to low levels.

As regards to item (4.4) in Table 5, majority of the respondents (57.6%) were agreed with the issues on lack of moral support from principals in the study area. This implies that even though some participants were disagreed with the ideas explained above, participants who have hesitated to decide and agreed with above described issues are still have need of encouragement from the school principals morally. Because, encouraging teachers to conduct action research may improve their involvement and when the involvement of teachers become improved in action research, the teaching learning process in the classrooms may supported with problem solving cultures. Then, this culture of solving problems may improve teachers' knowledge and skills in undertaking research and improve the students' academic achievements.

Also, on item (4.5) in Table 5 respondents were asked about their attitude towards undertaking action research. Thus, (36.3%) of the respondents were disagreed with the issues of the existence of teachers' negative attitude towards undertaking action research. But, 33.3% and 30.3% of the participants were ambivalent to decide and agreed with the existence of negative attitudes of teachers in undertaking action research respectively. This implies that although great number participants were disagreed with the existence of negative attitudes of teachers in undertaking action research, their actual involvement were very low.

The data in Table 5 item (4.6) represents that (57.6%) of the participants of the study were agreed with ideas of teachers lack interest to undertake action research in the study area. This indicated that since majority of respondents were lack interests, their involvement in undertaking action research may reduced in the study area.

On items (4.7 and 4.8) it has been found that majority of the respondents aggregate percentages (84.8%) were agreed with the ideas as there are insufficient library service and reference materials in the library. This implies that the majority of participants were affected negatively as a result of the insufficient library service and up to dated reference materials to undertake action research in the study area. In other words, the place where there is a problems' of inadequate and up to dated reference materials with inadequate library service, it is difficult to expect more from teachers to conduct action research. Because, reference materials help teachers to energize the knowledge they have before and develop their understanding regarding their research activities.

The data in Table 5 item (4.9) depicts that majority of the respondents (45.5%) were agreed with the issues as there is lack of recognitions to conduct research activities in the study area. This implies that even though 33.3% of participants were disagreed with the existence of lack of recognitions to conducted research activities, the majority of participants' tendencies were highly in agreement with the ideas above described. Thus, it is possible to say that the recognition given by school principals were not adequate in initiating teachers to conduct action research. In other words, because of the values are not given from the concerned body for who conducted action research, teachers' are de-

motivated to undertake it. But, if the activities of action research acknowledged by the concerned body or by all stakeholders of the schools, teachers in carrying out action research may boost their involvement.

On item (4.10 and 4.11), it has been observed that majority of the participants' aggregate percentages (48.6%) were agreed with the ideas of teaching loads and lack of enough time affecting teachers' practices to carry out action research. This implies that majority of the respondents were affected negatively with teaching loads and lack of time to undertake action research in the study area. In other words, since adequate time is the major requirements in conducting research activities, because of extra curricular activities and teaching loads their involvement in undertaking action research were became very low. But, if the loads of teachers may be reduced their involvement may be improved.

As regards to item (4.12) majority of the participants of the study (63.7%) were agreed with the existence of lack of clear roles of teachers to conduct action research in the study area. This implies that even though 15.1% of the participants of the study were disagreed on there is lack of clear role of teachers in the school in undertaking action research; the majority participants were agreed as the problems exist in the study area. On the other hand, the majority participant understandings were not good enough about their role in the school in addition to teaching and learning process. Therefore, this factor influences teachers' levels of involvement in conducting action research. But, if teachers may be aware enough about their role in the school in addition to teaching learning process, they may improve their involvement in undertaking action research.

On the other hand, respondents of the study were asked about the existence of complete information on item (4.13) in Table 5. As a result, majority of the respondents (69.7%) were agreed with issues as there is lack of complete information to undertake research activities in the study area. This implies that even though 21.2% of the participants of the study were disagreed with the above described issues, the majority of participants were agreed with the existence of lack of complete information to undertake research activities in the study area. Therefore, since the majority of participants were agreed with the

existence of the shortage of complete information, their practices of conducting action research may become low.

Additionally, respondents were asked whether incentive are there or not to undertake action research on item (4.14) in Table 5. Consequently, majority of the respondents (60.6%) were agreed with the issue as they are not encouraged to carry out action research due to lack of incentives in the study area. This shows that because of the majority of participants were agreed with the ideas above explained, the levels of teachers involvement in conducting action research may affected negatively in the study area. Incentives are the most motivated factors to undertake action research.

Generally, the calculated grand mean values of the above items depict that 3.56. This score indicated that majority of the participants' tendencies are approaching to agreement highly with the existence of different constraints that affect them to conduct action research in the study area. That means, due lack of trainings and workshops, insufficient budget, lack of interest, inadequate library service and reference materials, lack of time and lack of incentives, majority of the participants were not involved in conducting action research in the study area.

On the other hand, so as to identify the factors that enable teachers in conducting action research (AcR), the researcher request that the motivated factors that enable them to undertake action research. Therefore, the data in Table 5 item (4.15) depicts that majority of the respondents (63.6%) were agreed with the ideas as teachers involvement in action research should be one criterion of promotion in the study area. This implies that even though 18.2% of the respondents were disagree and undecided whether teachers involvement should be one criterion of promotion or not, the majority of participants tendencies were in agreement highly as the involvement of action research should be one criterion of promotion in the study area. This criterion leads teachers to practice action research so as to improve their educational levels and solve the actual teaching and learning problems of the schools.

From open-ended items, similar factors that hinder teachers in conducting action research have been found with questionnaires responses. For instance, lack of in-service trainings, lack of reference materials (research books, research reports and journals), lack of giving attentions to teachers from town administrations, lack of interest to undertake action research, lack of support from school principals (morally and financially), de-motivated school conditions, lack of recognitions, absence of research findings, lack of directing the staff to carry out action research, absence of internet service and over burdens of teachers with extra curricula activities were the factors that hinder teachers negatively to conduct action research.

Additionally, from interviews held with school principals and town administration education officers (head and supervisor) it has been observed that the environmental conditions, lack of trainings and seminars to teachers, teachers interest regarding action research, lack of support from school management, lack of incentives, lack of computer and lack of current reference materials for their research activities were the factors that hinder teachers to conduct action research in the study area.

In line with this, from FGD's held with department heads of the study area, similar constraints has been found with the questionnaires responses. For instance, lack of trainings and seminars regarding research activities, lack of incentives, lack of reference materials, absence of internet service, the educational policy gap between less and highly experienced teachers and the problems of finances are the factors that hinder teachers to conduct action research.

There is also evidence that shows similar factors that hinder teachers to conduct action research in other areas. For instance, Gemechu (2006) found that the scarcity of budget, sources of current literature, time, and lack of internet service and computer printers as the factors that hinder teachers to conduct action research.

Similarly, Yibeltal (2006) also indicated that the heavy work load, lack of research funds, poor library facilities, administration problems, lack of incentives and lack of

recognitions as the major factors that hinder teachers to conduct action research in his study areas.

Additionally, Tadesse (2007) also found that as secondary school teachers are affected with lack of time and resources like finance, reference books, journals, periodicals, news papers, unpublished materials and stationery so as to conduct action research. Furthermore, Asrat (2007) also found that the involvement of teachers (instructors) in educational research was affected negatively due to inadequate arrangement of events (such as seminars, workshops, and team research) and lack of proper publication outlet for the promotion of research activities.

Additionally, Firdissa (2007) and Dame (2011) found that the challenge that affects teachers in conducting action was time constraints due to teaching loads and committee and other curricular works, lack of financial or material support, unavailability of rewarding/motivating system and shortages of research facilities.

On the other hand, the data analysis on item (4.15) depicts that majority of the respondents (63.6%) were agreed with the issues as teachers involvement in action research should be one criterion of promotion. This implies that even though 18.2% of the respondents were disagree and undecided whether teachers involvement should be one criterion of promotion or not, the majority of participants tendencies were in agreement highly as the involvement of action research should be one criterion of promotion in the study area. This criterion leads teachers to practice action research so as to improve their educational levels and solve the actual teaching and learning problems of the schools.

Additionally, for those teachers who undertake action research, the major factors that enable them in undertaking action research have been found so as to support their classroom teaching learning process with systematic, scientific and problem solving methods.

Furthermore, on open ended item (1.2) it has been suggested that things to be done to improve the current conditions regarding the practices of action research in Sululta

Secondary School. For instance, so as to improve the involvements of teachers in conducting action research, adequate trainings and seminars on research and capacity building activities on methodologies of action research, reference materials and experience sharing programs should be arranged and given to teachers through school cooperation with town administration education office. Additionally, they suggested that the school should also plan to encourage/initiate teachers to prepare in-staff training, providing awards to teachers who undertake action research and facilitate necessary conditions regarding action research activities.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Summary

The main objective of the study was to investigate the practices and challenges in conducting action research in Sululta Secondary School. Therefore, this study was intended to investigate issues related with the status of action research, the perception and actual involvement of teachers in conducting action research, the school management support to teachers, the knowledge and skills of teachers, and the major factors that either hinder or enable teachers in conducting action research in Sululta Secondary School.

The participants used in this study were teachers, principal, deputy principal of Sululta Secondary School and Town Education Officers (the head and supervisor).

The mixed approach (QUAN + qual) which is embedded concurrent strategies have been employed. To this end, both quantitative and qualitative data have been gathered through questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and document analysis. The questionnaires have been administered to all 34 Sululta Secondary School teachers. Out of 34 questionnaires distributed to all teachers of the study area, 33 (97%) were returned to the researcher. Semi-structured interviews were held with principal, deputy principal and town administration education officers (the head and supervisor). Moreover, FGD (focus group discussions) has been also held with department heads of the study area.

In line with this, quantitatively descriptive methods of data analysis like count frequency, percentages and mean have been employed so as to answer the research questions of the study. The qualitative data have been also analyzed through narratives. Hence, the following findings were obtained.

The status of action research in Sululta Secondary School

The status of action research in Sululta Secondary School has been found at the lower stages because of the existence of different factors that hinder teachers negatively to conduct action research. Teachers were not involved in conducting action research as it has been expected from them. The data found through questionnaires shows half of teachers' were conducted action research while the document analysis shows a small numbers of conducted action research work.

The perceptions and actual involvement of teachers in action research

From the calculated grand mean values about teachers' perceptions, it has been observed that (4.11). This score shows that the majority of teachers perception is highly in agreement with the importance of action research as it improves the knowledge and skills of teachers in research activities, improves the teaching learning process, solve the actual classroom problems and develops collegial interaction. Even though teachers in the study area were perceived action research in a good manner, their actual involvements seen through document analysis were very low in undertaking action research.

The School Principals support to teachers in conducting action research

The computed grand mean values of the participants regarding principals' encouragement to undertake action research were (2.53). This score indicated that the tendencies of majority participants were highly disagreed with principal encouragement in facilitating condition to teachers in order to conduct action research in the study area. Therefore, lack of encouragement and support from principals may be one reason for low involvements of teachers in conducting action research.

The knowledge and skills Sululta Secondary School teachers to conduct action research

Concerning the knowledge and skills of Sululta Secondary School teachers, it has been found that the majority of participants (42.4%) were disagreed with the ideas as they were not feeling confident in undertaking action research due to lack of research knowledge and skills. However, majority respondents (57.6%) who have hesitated to

decide and agreed with the above ideas as they need support from the concerned educational stake holders in order to improve their knowledge and skills in conducting action research.

This indicated that the majority of participants have the problems of knowledge and skill to undertake action research in order to improve their actual involvement in conducting action research. On the other hand, teachers in the study area have insufficient knowledge and skills in undertaking action research. Therefore, this may be one of the factors that reduce the involvement of teachers in conducting action research.

The major factors that hinder/enables the practice of action research

The major factors that hinder the practices of action research in Sululta Secondary Schools are explained based on their percentage responses. In line with this, 100%, 87.8%, 84.9%, 81%, 69.7%, 63.7%, and 60.6% of the participants were affect teachers negatively with the existence of inadequate training and seminars on research activities, insufficient reference materials (journals, research books and research reports) in the library, insufficient budget in the school, insufficient library service in the school, lack of complete information to undertake action research, lack of clear roles of teachers in the school and lack of incentives to conduct action research respectively.

On the other hand, the majority participants (63.6%) were enabled with the ideas as teachers' involvement in action research should be one criterion of promotion in the study area. Additionally, the majority of participants' commitment to provide good teaching through using systematic and scientific methods in problem solving were some of the major factors that enable teachers to conduct action research.

Ways of improving the current conditions concerning the practice of action research

In order to improve the involvements of teachers in conducting action research, the majority of participants of the study suggested that adequate trainings and seminars on research and capacity building activities on methodologies of action research, reference materials and experience sharing programs should be arranged and given to teachers through school cooperation with town administration education office in the study area.

Furthermore, the school should plan to encourage/initiate teachers to prepare in-staff training, providing awards to teachers who undertake action research and facilitate necessary conditions regarding action research.

5.2. Conclusions

Action research is the way of solving problems practically and improves teaching and learning process. It is also a tool that is used to help teachers and educators discover strategies to improve teaching practice and allow teachers to become the practitioners and provide opportunities for them to be learners by improving instructional practices. Therefore, this study discussed the practices and challenges in conducting action research in Sululta Secondary School. Based on the major findings presented, the following conclusions have been made.

The status of action research in Sululta Secondary School was very low due to the following factors. For instance, the shortages of adequate trainings and seminars on research activities and inadequate reference materials were some of the major factors that hinder teachers negatively to improve the practices of action research. On the other hand, teachers in the study area were perceived action research positively. Though the perceptions of teachers were positive, their actual involvements were yet very low.

Moreover, the existence of inadequate trainings and seminars, insufficient reference materials, lack of clear data/information and lack of incentives to conduct action research were the major factors that affect the involvement of teachers in action research. On the other hand, some of the motivating factors that initiate teachers to conduct action research were the existence of criterion of promotion through conducting action research and their internal feeling to provide good teaching learning process.

Additionally, the support of school principals was not adequate in facilitating conditions to teachers in order to undertake action research in Sululta Secondary School. This may be one of the factors that influence the status of action research negatively in the study area. Moreover, so as to undertake action research effectively and efficiently, a teacher has to have sufficient knowledge and skills. But, the knowledge and skills of teachers in

conducting action research were insufficient. Therefore, this may also negatively affect teachers' involvement in action research.

5.3. Recommendations

The findings of this investigation are believed to have some implications for practices. These implications may show the area of intervention to improve the practices of Sululta Secondary School in conducting action research.

1. In order to improve the practices of action research, it is necessary to take measures to solve the factors that hinder teachers in conducting action research in Sululta Secondary School. Therefore, it is better if the school management in cooperation with Town Administration Education Office and Oromia Regional Education Bureau arrange and search the means of providing in-service trainings, workshops and seminars for the sake of updating their knowledge and skills in research activities;
2. Action research is a systematic and scientific mechanism of solving classroom problems practically. So as to solve problems practically, adequate budgets has to be needed. Therefore, it is recommended that if the school management in cooperation with Town Administration Education Office and Oromia Regional Education Bureau may allocate adequate budget for research activities to support teaching learning process with classroom research activities. In addition to this, it is better if the school management in cooperation with town education office may improve the service provision of the library by providing adequate library service with adequate reference materials in order to increase the involvement of teachers in action research.
3. The shortage of principals' encouragement was one of the factors, which negatively affect the practices of action research in the study area. Therefore, so as to improve teachers' involvements in conducting action research, the principals has to encourage and support teachers by providing incentives such as giving recognitions as a role model and opportunities to participate in conference to

present their research activities, promoting teachers, and establishing research committee members.

4. Generally, so as to improve teachers' involvement in conducting action research, it is recommended that the school teachers, the school principals, and the Town Administration Education officers are expected to develop the habit of working together and discuss about the current conditions of action research in their schools. Hence, it may be possible to come up with the means of improving teachers' involvement in carrying out action research.
5. Finally, since this study was conducted in one school and small number of population, the researcher believes that it is important to undertake further study by using wide population in many schools in the future in that study area.

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Appendices

Appendix "A"

ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

INSTITUTE OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

Questionnaire

Questionnaire to be fulfilled by Sululta Secondary School teachers

The purpose of this questionnaire is to collect valid information about the status of action research and its challenges in Sululta Secondary School. The questionnaire contains five parts. Part one is about demographic information of respondents; part two is about the practice of action research and teachers perception in conducting action research and part three deals with about principal encouragement. Part four contains items related to factors that hinder or enable teachers to conduct action research and the last part is about the ways of improving the current conditions concerning action research. The researcher believes that, your responses are vital in determining the success of this study. Hence, you are kindly requested to fill the questionnaire completely and honestly. The information you give will be kept strictly confidential.

Thank you for your kind cooperation!

General Instructions:

- Please, do not write your name on any page of the questionnaire.
- Give your answers for items requiring completion by writing and put "√" mark for items requiring selection.

Part One: Demographic information

1. Sex: Male ☐ Female ☐
2. Age _____
3. Your Service Years in teaching _____
4. The total number of periods you are currently teaching per week _____

5. Your Educational Qualification: BA ☐ B.Sc ☐ **B.Ed** ☐ M.A ☐ M.Sc ☐

Other/Please specify _____

Part Two: The practice of action research

Direction I: The following items are about your training on action research. Indicate your agreement by using "X" mark in the corresponding box.

1. Have you ever conducted action research in your school? Yes ☐ No ☐
2. If your answer for question number "1" is "Yes" for what purpose did you conduct action research? You can use more than one alternative below.

To solve problems in teaching learning process ☐

To improve your research skills and knowledge ☐

To solve problems in the school ☐

To get promotion in the career structure ☐

Others, please specify _____

3. If your answer for question number "1" is "No" what do you think the major factors that hinder you to conduct action research?

4. Have you taken any in-service training (workshop and seminar) programs over the past 5 years on action research?

Yes ☐

No ☐

5. If your answer for question number "4" is "Yes" what is the frequency of the training?

Once ☐

Two times ☐

Three times ☐

More than
three ☐

6. If your answer for question number "4" is "NO" what do you think the reasons?

7. If you have taken training, to what extent does it improve your knowledge and skills in conducting action research?

High ☐

Medium ☐

Low ☐

8. Are there any reference materials (books, journals, research findings and etc.) that enable you to improve your knowledge and skills conducting action research?

Yes ☐

No ☐

Direction II: Below are items to assess your perception about action research. Read each statement carefully and indicate your choice by putting "X" in one of the five alternatives (use the following key :)

Strongly agree (SA), Agree (A), undecided (UD), Disagree (D), strongly disagree (SD)

2	Teachers perception	SD	D	UD	A	SA
2.1	Teachers should conduct action research to improve their knowledge and skills					
2.2	Teachers should conduct action research to solve teaching learning problems					
2.3	The contribution of action research is low to solve the actual classroom problems					
2.4	Action research plays a great role in improving teachers practice in research activities					
2.5	Action research contributes a lot in improving the practice of teaching and learning process					
2.6	Teachers should develop collegial interaction through conducting action research					
2.7	Action research can expand teachers role in teaching					
2.8	Teachers should conduct action research although there are challenges and constraints in schools.					

Part three: Principal Encouragement

Direction: Based on the issues listed below please rate your level of agreement regarding school principal's support in undertaking action research. Use the following key:

Strongly agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (UD), Disagree (D), strongly disagree (SD)

3	The level of support provided by school principal to teachers	SD	D	UD	A	SA
3.1	My school principal encourages teachers through arranging research training in my school					
3.2	My school principal encourages teachers through allocating budget to conduct action research					
3.3	My school principal encourages teachers to undertake action research cooperatively					
3.4	My principal supports teachers through establishing action research club in the school					
3.5	My principal encourages teacher by providing recognition to conduct action research activities					
3.6	My principal supports teachers through providing reference materials for their research activities					

Part four: Factors that hinder or enable teachers in conducting action research

Direction: Indicate your levels of agreement with the items related to the factors that hinder or enable teachers to conduct action research in the school. Use the following key:

Strongly agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (UD), Disagree (D), Strongly disagree (SD)

4	Factors that hinder or enable teachers in conducting action research	SD	D	UD	A	SA
4.1	There is a shortage of training and seminar on research activities					
4.2	I do not feel confident in undertaking action research due to lack of research knowledge and skill					
4.3	There is insufficient budget in the school to undertake action research					
4.4	There is lack of moral support from principals					
4.5	There is negative attitude of teachers towards undertaking action research					
4.6	Teachers lack interest to conduct action research					
4.7	There is insufficient reference materials (journals, research books, research reports and etc.) in the library					
4.8	The library service in the school is insufficient to undertake action research					
4.9	There is lack of recognitions to conducted research activities					
4.10	Teaching load affects the practice of action research					
4.11	Teachers lack enough time to carry out action research in the school					
4.12	There is lack of clear role of teachers in the school to conduct action research					
4.13	There is lack of complete data/information to undertake research activities					
4.14	I am not encouraged to carryout action research due to lack of incentives					
4.15	Teachers involvement in action research should be one criterion of promotion					

Part five: Ways of improving the current conditions

1.1.What are the major factors that hinder or enable teachers to conduct action research in your school?

Enables:-

Barriers:-

1.2.What do you think should be done to improve the current conditions concerning the practice of action research in Sululta secondary school?

Appendix "B"

Interview guideline to collect information from principal and deputy principal of Sululta Secondary School

Questions:

1. How do you see the status of action research in your school?
2. Do you think that teachers in your school have the required knowledge and skills necessarily to conduct action research? If no, why?
3. How do you see the conditions of your school in facilitating teacher's involvement in action research?
4. How do you see teacher's attitude/perceptions towards action research in your school? How do you see the interests of teachers in undertaking action research?
5. Are there sufficient references materials like: books, research journals or other relevant materials that help teachers to conduct action research?
6. In your opinion what are the major factors that either hinder or enable teachers to conduct action research in your school? Are there any attempts made to overcome problems that related to involvement of teachers in action research?
7. Do you think that the teaching load allows teachers to conduct action research?
8. Does the Town Education Office facilitates research based training or workshops that help teachers to carry out action research? If not, Why?
9. What are your suggestions to overcome the problems that hinder teachers to conduct action research and improve the current conditions in your school? In what way?

Thank you for your kind cooperation!

Appendix "C"

Interview guideline to collect information from Town Education Head and Supervisor

Questions:

1. How do you evaluate the status of action research practices in Sululta secondary school?
2. Do you think that conducting action research have advantages to improve teaching and learning process? In what way?
3. Is there any support given by your office to Sululta secondary school teachers to conduct action research?
4. If teachers do not conduct action research do you think the major factors that hinder teachers to conduct action research?
5. In what mechanisms does your office overcome the problems of teachers in undertaking action research?
6. Does your office have planned to help teachers in undertaking action research? In what way?

Thank you for your cooperation!

Appendix "D"

Questions for the department heads of Sululta secondary school which will participate in the Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

Below are the questions which focus to the practices and challenges of conducting action research in Sululta secondary school. Therefore, please give your explanations genuinely about your school conditions towards action research.

Thank you for your cooperation!

1. How do you see the status of action research in Sululta Secondary School?
2. How do you evaluate the attitudes of teachers towards conducting action research in your school?
3. How do you evaluate the engagement of the principals in facilitating and undertaking action research?
4. What are the major factors that hinder or enable teachers to conduct action research?
5. What should be done overcome the current problem and improve the practices of action research in your school?

Declaration

I, the under signed, announce that this thesis work is my original work and is not presented in any other University. Also, all the sources of information used for the thesis have been dully acknowledged.

Name: Biruk Haile

Signature 

Date July 04/2013

Confirmed by: _____

Signature _____

Date _____