

**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY  
FACULTY OF LANGUAGE STUDIES  
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(GRADUATE PROGRAM)**

**ACTION RESEARCH PRACTICES OF ELT TEACHERS: THE  
CASE OF CHANCHO ABA GEDA PREPARATORY SCHOOL IN  
NORTH SHOA ZONE, OROMIA REGION**

**BY**

**ALEMTSEHAY TEKA**



**June, 2011  
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## List of Abbreviations Used

ELT	English Language Teaching
MOE	Ministry of Education
TESO	Teacher Education System Overhaul
ETP	The Education and Training Policy
CAGPS	Chancho AbaGada Preparatory School
EDO	Education District Office
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
BA	Bachelor of Arts
B Ed	Bachelor of Education
IER	Institute of Educational Research

## **Abstract**

The major purpose of this study was to assess the action research practices of ELT teachers from the past to the present (1996 E.C. – 2003 E.C.) in CAGPS. The study further aimed to assess factors that hinder ELT teachers to conduct action research and to come up with suggestions for future improvements of ELT teachers in conducting action research. To achieve these purposes, a qualitative research method and a case study research design were employed. The data were collected through interviews, observation and document analysis. The interviews were held with nine ELT teachers, the school principal and the expert at the EDO. These participants of the study were selected through purposive sampling. After conducting the interviews, observation was carried out. The researcher observed the internet room, the library, and in and around the offices. The document analysis was also used to assess the documents such as the ELT teachers' personal profiles, letters, and minutes. Finally the data obtained were analyzed qualitatively on the basis of their themes or topics.

This study found out that the action research practices of ELT teachers in CAGPS were very low or so limited. The study showed that there was a weak relationship between teaching and action research practices. At the same time, the study has established that both the personal and environmental factors considerably hindered the ELT teachers in conducting action research.

For future improvements of the ELT teachers' engagement in action research, arrangements and provision of trainings on action research, improving school facilities and enhancing the support system, introducing the culture of action research, improving the incentives, and doing action research on collaborative basis are the major points suggested by the research participants as the dimensions that need intervention.

# CHAPTER ONE

## ***1.1 Background of the Study***

Different types of research approaches or methods could be employed to study different kinds of educational problems. Recently, however, one particular research approach that has been found to be quite amenable and appropriate to bring improvement in the practice of the teaching- learning process is known as action research. Confirming this idea, Best and Kahn (1994) stated that if most classroom teachers are to be involved in research activity, it will probably be in the area of action research which may be made for the purpose of improving local classroom practices.

Action research can be defined as an applied form of educational research commonly done by practitioners (that is, teachers) at the classroom and school level in order to improve teaching-learning practices. Justification for the need to conduct action research by school teachers has been given by many scholars such as Burton (1992) and Schmuck (1997). According to these scholars, action research can be conducted to attain three main objectives or goals: to improve practice (the teaching-learning process), to improve the practitioner (the teacher) and to improve the practice setting (i.e. the school).

With regard to the first goal of action research, that is improving educational practices; Burton (1992) stated that one major reason for teachers' involvement in action research is the need for continual professional development or renewal through reflection on and evaluation of practices, and the importance of linking theory to practice by testing ideas in their classrooms. Similarly, Schmuck (1997) remarked that action research offers a means for changing from current practices toward better practices. In brief, engagement in action research enhances the quality of instruction, and research results generated by teachers can form the basis for

updating contents of the subject matter, methods of teaching and techniques of evaluation.

Regarding the second objective of action research, that is, improving the practitioners' understanding, educators in the area forwarded their rationales for advocating teachers' involvement in action research. For example, Corey (1953) pinpointed that teachers can make better decisions and can become more successful practitioners if they conduct educational action research in their classrooms.

Stenhouse (1975) stated that conducting action research in the classroom helps teachers to become more autonomous and to improve their own professional judgment and decisions. In this connection, Schmuck (1997) also emphasized that action research fosters individual teacher's freedom when the process facilitates everyone's opportunity to search for and to choose voluntarily among alternative actions and enhances social equality, or social well-being among participants.

Concerning the third goal of action research, that is the improvement of the setting or the school environment, scholars such as Mc Niff (2002) stated that true action research involves fundamental transformation of the school culture. Furthermore, Schmuck (1997) suggested that to actualize democratic participation in bureaucratic and hierarchical educational social systems, teachers (as well as students and administrators) should initiate action research in their classrooms and schools daily, weekly and monthly.

In the Ethiopian context, all the three goals of action research are reflected in the current educational policy and its directives. According to the policy, research that can solve practical societal problems is given priority.

Besides, the Ministry of Education (MOE) has developed Teacher Education System Overhaul (TESO) program in 2002 as a new scheme in teacher preparation and development to encourage research practice in schools. The TESO Policy document

(2003) stated that school teachers should participate in research programs to lessen educational problems in the classrooms / schools. All these show that research has got a crucial place in our education/ school system. Therefore, in the light of such new developments that encourage the culture of research in the school system, it seems a sound justification to examine the status of action research practices of teachers in Ethiopian preparatory schools.

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

Research literature shows that action research can serve many purposes: it is one way through which teachers improves the quality of their practice and profession, acquire more knowledge and skills, improve their techniques and methods of instruction, raise their understanding of the educative process and achieve personal progress and professional rise.

Educational action research is the process of examining educational problems and proposing scientific and immediate solutions. Action research in language classroom, especially, in foreign language classrooms, plays an important role in lessening problems related to different elements of the language classrooms. For example, it enables the language teacher to identify factors that hinder language instruction.

In Ethiopia, problems related to education are many in number and it is very common to hear about the deterioration of its quality. In order to solve this problem, research based information is currently demanded more than ever before.

As Seyoum (1998) stated, research activities in the school enhance and enrich the teaching – learning process thereby contributing to the improvement of the quality of education. However, it may not be true that research activities up to now in Ethiopian preparatory schools are commonly undertaken by teachers in tackling the

problems that obscure the quality of education although they as professionals and key role players of the system and the ones who would be concerned with the problem. As a result, the degree and scope of educational problems are increasing from time to time and the quality of education is deteriorating (ibid).

In the current Ethiopian Education and Training Policy (ETP), the importance of education research has been appropriately recognized. According to the policy documents of MOE (2002), teachers at preparatory school level are required to conduct educational research, but no promising step is observed in facilitating conditions to conduct educational research at this level. Rather our educators are observed trying to solve every problem by trial and error and personal experience. Obviously, common sense and trial and error alone cannot provide reliable information for action and change. Evidence supported by research findings is highly needed, and is becoming a timely question in our country as elsewhere in the world (Ibid).

The concern of this study is, therefore, to assess the past and present (1996 E.C. - 2003E.C.) action research practices of ELT teachers and to give suggestions for the improvement of ELT teachers' participation in action research in Chancho Aba Geda Preparatory School (CAGPS) in North Shoa Zone, Oromia Regional State.

Having this in view, the researcher raised the following leading questions to be answered at the end of the research.

1. Do ELT teachers involve themselves in action research?
2. What is the status of action research in the aforementioned school?
3. What are the possible factors that hinder ELT teachers to conduct action research?
4. What future steps should be initiated in order to promote and develop their involvement in conducting action research?

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

#### **1.3.1 General objective**

The general objective of the study was to assess the status of action research practices of ELT teachers (1996E.C. - 2003E.C.) in teaching English as a foreign language with reference to the school selected for this purpose.

#### **1.3.2 Specific Objectives**

The specific objectives of this study are:

- To assess the involvement of ELT teachers in carrying out action research;
- To examine the status of action research in the selected school;
- To assess the possible factors that hinder ELT teachers in conducting action research; and
- To provide suggestions for actions that would help to promote action research activities among the ELT teachers in the preparatory school.

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

Carrying out educational research is expected to be an important part of teachers' teaching roles and functions in their professional careers. If the teachers fail to conduct research at their schools, it would mean that there is something wrong in understanding their duties. Such a problem is prevailing in the high schools in Ethiopia. Therefore, this study is expected to have the following significance:

1. It contributes to identify basic factors/ problems that hinder research activities at CAGPS.
2. It provides some alternative suggestions to promote teachers' participation in research undertakings.
3. It may create awareness and thereby motivate teachers to conduct action research.

### ***1.5 Scope of the Study***

The need for conducting action research is of paramount importance and may require a wider coverage at the various levels of the educational system. However, this study was delimited to assess the status of action research practices of ELT teachers and factors affecting ELT teachers in conducting action research. In addition to this, since it was very difficult for the researcher to carry out action research having a wider scope, he was obliged to limit his study to CAGPS in North Shoa, Oromia Region to make the study manageable. This school was deliberately chosen for the study because the researcher was working in the school and his stay there had helped him to see the seriousness of the problem.

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

It is impossible to be certain that the study can be free of limitations. This study then has the following limitation.

The personal and environmental factors that hindered action research practices in CAGPS of North Shoa Zone, Oromia Region cannot be a typical generalization of the whole country because there may be differences in variables, the degree of influence of the factors, conditional and environmental variations from region to region outside the study area. However, the recommendations can be used within the region and other parts of the country having comparable or similar context.

## **1.7 Definition of terms/ phrases**

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

**Educational action research-** is a reflective and an inquiry conducted by educators who want to improve their own practices. It is practitioners' (teachers') research which uses to assess their day-to-day activities (Zubber, Skirrett :1993).

**Career structure-** is a change in the structure of teaching profession that provides teachers to progress (from one rank to the next) in their profession. It is a six tiered scheme that provides teachers (working at all school) level with good performances, to grow from a beginner teacher to a lead teacher.

**Case-** is a single bounded system, or an instance of a class of phenomena (Merriam : 1988).

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

**Preparatory school-** according to the New Education Training Policy, it is an educational level / the second cycle of secondary school which provides education in two years duration for students of grades 11 and 12.

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

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

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

**Reflective Practice-** is a thinking that integrates reflection with action research in problem solving to achieve continuous improvement (Schumuck : 1997).

**Acton research practices-** It refers to the level of ELT teachers' action research knowledge and actual involvement in conducting action research to bring change in their specific classroom environments.

**Status** – refers to the position of something with respect to other things.

**Factors-** Circumstances contributing to a result.

**Research setting-** the chosen and fixed environment in which the research is conducted.

## CHAPTER TWO

### 2. Review Related Literature

#### *2.1 Historical Over view of Action Research*

Authors such as Kemmis and Mc Taggart (1988), Zuber-Skerritt (1992), Hotler and Schwartz- Barcott (1993) stated that action research was originated by Kurt Lewin, the American Psychologist. According to Mckernan (1988, cited in Mckernan, 1999), action research had not evolved for long in the history of research. It has come into existence only some decades ago which refers back to the scientific investigations in education. Mckernan (1988) stated that there is evidence of the use of action research by a number of social reformists prior to Lewin, such as Collier in 1945, Lippitt and Radke in 1946 and Corey in 1953.

Despite the unclear origins of action research, Kurt Lewin in the mid 1940s constructed a theory of action research, which described action research as "proceeding in a spiral of steps, each of which is composed of planning, action and the evaluation of the result of action" (Kemmis and Mc Taggart ,1982:8).According to Mckernan(1999), Lewin argued that in order to understand and change certain social practices, social scientists had to include practitioners from the real social world in all phases of inquiry. This construction of action research theory by Lewin made action research a method of acceptable inquiry.

The origin of action research practice in different disciplines has a historical background. Action research was first induced as a methodology in educational action research in 1950s (Corey: 1953). It has gained acceptance mainly with the teacher quality improvement. At the same time, many leaders in the field attempted to redefine teaching as practice- centered inquiry to redefine teachers as researchers (Grossman: 2005). In response to this movement, pre-service teacher education

methodology courses and experiences in both undergraduate and graduate professional programs helped teachers revealing that new teachers are able to study and analyze classroom practice or plan for action or change (Prince, 2001).

## **2.2 The Concept of Action Research**

Many scholars with different focuses have defined action research differently at different times. For instance, Corey (1953:6) defined action research as “the process by which practitioners attempt to study their own problems scientifically in order to guide, correct and evaluate their decisions and actions”. This definition is a comprehensive one in that it tells the ‘what’, ‘how’ and ‘why’ of the method. The practitioners here are the researchers who are actually involved in the activity. The practitioners in action research are expected to approach the problems they face in a scientific way so that the findings obtained could be applicable to similar problems in other working situations.

Action research is focused on immediate application, not on the development of theory or general application. It has placed its emphasis on a problem here and now in a local setting. Its findings are to be evaluated in terms of local applicability and not by universal validity (Best and Kahn: 2003).

According to Elliott (1991), action research is defined as the study of social situation with a view to improving the quality of action within it; and as a means of demonstrating the steps one has taken to improve practice in classrooms and schools; as one mode of professional development.

Furthermore, Cohen and Manion (1994) stated that action research is a small scale intervention in the functioning of the real world and a close examination of the effect of such intervention. This means that action research in education is a small- scale practice of the practitioner (i.e. the teacher). Unlike traditional research, which requires government interference for aspects of frameworks and resources, it focuses

only on a particular problem (on a small scale) that the practitioner with or without external intervention can act for immediate solution. The researcher- teacher critically intervenes in the functioning of the real world (his practice) and closely evaluates the change brought through his intervention.

McNiff(1988:118) considered action research as “a process in which participants examine their own educational practice systematically and carefully using the techniques of research”.

It is based on the following assumptions:

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

This definition was also supported by Nunan (1992:78) who clearly indicated that “action research is a collective endeavor undertaken by teachers and practitioners themselves to be self –able or help one another in solving educational problems”. Its ultimate purpose is finding practical solutions to immediate problems. Thus, teachers are expected to undertake action research that helps them to bring about educational improvement with deep understanding, evaluating and performance which are also issues of action research.

Generally speaking, all the above definitions have one point in common in that all of them take action research as a systematic (scientific) method designed either for improving or changing one's practice.

### **2.3 The Rationale for Involving ELT Teachers in Action Research**

According to Kemmis and Mc Taggart (1982), action research is meant to be conducted at the natural setting of the problem, and solutions have to be sought and implemented in the context. The action researches conducted in ELT classrooms are to investigate the difficulties ELT teachers and students face in their classrooms; to link the gap between theory and practice and to help in the improvement of the curriculum. According to *the Education and Training Policy*(ETP:2002) there seems to be a gap in the Ethiopian preparatory schools between what the theory says about ELT classroom practice and what ELT teachers actually practice in their classroom. This gap has to be narrowed by the findings of action research.

In Verster (2005:3) the reasons for ELT teachers doing action research are listed as follows. It:

- helps them to notice what they and their students really do, rather than what they think they do;
- helps to get feedback as to the success or failure of what they are doing;
- assists them to shape teaching and learning according to their learners and their settings;
- helps them to be able to justify the teaching and learning choices they make;
- helps them to increase their knowledge of learning and teaching and become responsible for teaching;

- helps them 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 it
- helps to make sure that they don't become bored with teaching.

Zuber-Skerritt (1992:15) emphasized that action research in preparatory education has enormous roles such as "making teachers more professional, more interested in their teaching career, and more motivated to integrate their teaching with research". According to Skerritt, all these would, in turn, lead to greater job-satisfaction, better academic programs, and improvement of students' learning, develop practitioners' insights, and contribute to the betterment of knowledge in preparatory school education.

#### ***2.4 The Role of Action Research in Teachers' Professional Development***

Stenhouse(1975,in Edge and Richards ,1993) indicated that teachers are one of the most critical of all schooling imputes. They are constantly searching by themselves questions like; what am I doing? Am I doing it right? Are my students really learning anything? Are they learning what I want them to learn? But, they need to improve or develop a capacity what Stenhouse (1975) called 'autonomous professional self – development'.

In order to enhance the quality of education in preparatory schools, teachers need to be more involved in curriculum development and evaluation through action research (Hopkins: 1993).

Elliott (1991) indicated action research is intended to support teachers in coping with challenges and problems of practice and carrying through innovations in a reflective way. Action research has also broadened the knowledge and professional competency. According to Elliott, teachers are reflective. They reflect the knowledge

they gain from their research works to colleagues, students, parents and the community. By doing this, they show their contribution to their profession and to the school improvement. Profession is a big deal. The work of individuals alone may not bring satisfactory result for the development of a profession. To this reason, for many educators, research is found to make a significant contribution to improving professional practice. Therefore, encouraging teachers to practice action researches is most recommendable for the teachers' professional development, to benefit the school and to improve the quality of education as a whole.

It is clearly stated that practicing action research in preparatory schools has wider and fundamental benefits particularly for teachers' professional development (such as developing skills, knowledge, attitudes, providing new information etc., in improving career development and promoting the teacher from one stage to the next). Its benefits to the over all education system enhances the community of that particular setting as well as the global world. Therefore, giving special emphasis to the practicality of action research at school levels may help to develop education systems (Ibid).

### ***2.5 The Beliefs and Attitudes of ELT Teachers towards Action Research***

Different scholars believe that teaching needs to be integrated with research conducted at the classroom level. For instance, Hardley (n.d.) suggested that teachers have perceived the term 'research' as an activity which is carried out by researchers from other fields. He added that teachers are unwilling or unable to undertake action research due to factors such as shortage of time, lack of research background and lack of experience. Moreover, Nunan (1992) seems to support Hardley's argument by stating that most teachers who are interested in researching into their teaching and learning fail to do so, because they are either unable to do so for practical reasons or unwilling for personal problems to carry out action research.

Haward and Sharp(1983:6, citing Bell,1993:2), tried to explain the existing misconception about the concept of research among many people who think that research is something which can be undertaken only by usually gifted persons. Bell argued that:

Most people associate the word ' research' with activities which are substantially removed from day-to-day life and which are pursued by outstanding gifted persons with unusual level of commitment. There is ,of course, a good deal of truth in this view point, but we would argue that the pursuit is not restricted to this type of person and indeed can prove to be a stimulating and satisfying experience for many people with a trained and enquiring mind.

In line with this, Beasley and Riordan(1981, cited in Nunan,1990)) stated that teachers and students rarely participate in doing action research; hence, teachers' knowledge of the classroom has been neglected and teachers themselves do not read and employ action research to shape and inform their methods of teaching. Besides, he argues that teachers are suspicious of the relevance of action research and little has been known how teachers perceive and undertake action research. As a result of such teachers' perception, Hardley (n.d.) revealed the existing gap between research and teaching in general, and action research in particular.

Mckernan(1999) also argued that teachers, in general, are very much resistant to do action research due to many reasons. Classroom teachers resist and misunderstand the relevance of action research because their attitudes and expectations seem to come from teachers' initial outlook of the inadequacies of other research types.

Despite these misconceptions of the teachers about the value of action research in teaching, Mc Niff (1988: xviii) defended the application of action research as "an opportunity for teachers to become uniquely involved in their own practice, to

professionalize themselves, and to give logical justification for what they are doing.” The researcher, then, believes that action research may be of help to classroom teachers to examine and build up their classroom practices on justifiable grounds.

## **2.6 The Purposes of Action Research**

The efforts of an educational investigator who is engaged in action research have different primary purposes. According to Schmuck (1997) action research aimed to study a real school situation with a view to improving one’s own professional judgment and to giving insight into how better to achieve the desirable educational goals. Action research offers a means for changing from current practices toward better practice.

Zuber – Skerritt (1993) stated that the aims of action research are to improve the practice of learning, teaching and management in a systematic way and make changes to the environment and effective future development. Similarly, for Kemmis and McTaggart (2001:92), “action research aims at a critical reconstruction of the work (practice), the worker ( the practitioner) and the work place ( the practice setting)”.

Furthermore, Elliott (1988:69) enumerated the following purposes of action research in school:

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

All the descriptions cited above imply that action research has been used often in the field of education for the purpose of improving practices (teaching – learning

processes) as well as improving the practitioners (teachers) and the practice setting (schools). The action researcher is interested in the improvement of the educational practices in which he/she is engaged. He/she undertakes research in order to find out how to do his/her job better.

## **2.7 Types or Modes of Action Research**

There are different types of action research depending on their purposes. Grundy (1982: 353), as cited in Kemmis and Mc Taggart, (1988) discussed three modes of action research: technical, practical and emancipatory. Following are descriptions of these three forms of action research.

### **2.7.1 Technical Action Research**

According to Holter and Schwartz-Barrcott(1993),the goal of this type of action research is the testing of an intervention based on a pre-specified theoretical framework. The researcher questions whether the selected intervention can be applied in a practical setting. The researcher acts as an outside expert who aims to gain the practitioner's interest in the research and agrees to assist in the implementation of the intervention (Kemmis and Mc Taggart: 1988).

### **2.7.2 Practical Action Research**

This type of action research involves the researcher and practitioner coming together in order to identify potential problems, underlying causes and possible solutions or interventions. The researcher encourages participation and self -reflection of the practitioner ( Kemmis and Mc Taggart:1988).

In line with this idea, Sagor (2000) stated that the goal of practical action research aims at understanding teaching practice and solving immediate problems. It aims towards generating understanding, and focuses on human interpretation, interactive communication, deliberation, negotiation and detailed description.

### **2.7.3 Emancipatory Action Research**

This type of action research, according to Kemmis and Mc Taggart (1988), involved all participants equally with no hierarchy existing between the researcher and practitioner. The researcher aims to reduce the distance between the actual problems identified by the practitioner and the theory used to explain and resolve the problems. The researcher also facilitates reflective discussion with the practitioner to identify fundamental problems and assumptions. This assists the researcher to become a collaborative member of the group.

Another scholar, Grundy (1982) also suggested that it is through the development of analysis that the mediation of theory and practice is possible. Emancipated strategic action research follows from the disposition of critical intent. Critical intent is the disposition which motivates action and interaction at all stages of emancipatory action research and is particularly important in the development of the theoretical perspective which informs and underpins a project.

Hopkins (1996) stated that the central purpose of critical theory is emancipation, which enables people to take control and direction over their own lives.

Generally action research of all the modes above is an alternative social science research approach which aims to link theory and practice involving practical problems for practitioners in the field.

### **2.8 Approaches of Action Research**

There are different ways or approaches to conduct action research under different circumstances. Ferrance (2000:5) noted that action research follows three approaches. They are presented separately as follows:

### **2.8.1 Individual Action Research Approach**

As Ferrance (2000) stated individual teacher research (approach) focuses on a single issue in the classroom. The teacher may be seeking solutions to problems of classroom management, instructional strategies, use of materials, or students' learning. Teachers may have support of their supervisor or principal. The problem is one that the teacher believes is apparent in his or her classroom and one that can be addressed on an individual basis. One of the drawbacks of individual research is that it may not be shared with others unless the teacher chooses to present findings at a school meeting, make a formal presentation at a work shop, or submit written material to a journal, or news letter.

### **2.8.2 Collaborative Action Research Approach**

Ferrance (2000) noted that collaborative action research (approach) may include as few as two teachers or a group of several teachers and other interested in addressing a classroom or department issue. This issue may involve one classroom or a common problem shared by many classrooms. These teachers may be supported by individuals outside their schools, such as a university, educational service agency, *kebele* or Regional Education Bureau or community partner.

### **2.8.3 School or District –Wide Action Research Approach**

In assuming school-wide research, Ferrance (2000) believed that this approach focuses on issues common to all. Teams of staff from the school work together to narrow the question, gather and analyze data, and decide on a plan of action. An example of action research for a school wide approach could be to examine the students' test scores to identify areas that need improvement, and then determine a plan of action to improve their performance. Team work and individual contributions to the whole are very important, and it may be that problem points arise as the team strives to develop a process and make commitments to each other.

Further, Ferrance (2000:5) stated District- wide research is “far more complex and utilizes more resources, but the rewards can be great”. Issues can be organizational, community based, performance- based or processes for decision making. A district may be chosen to address a problem common to several schools or one of organizational management.

## **2.9 Action Research-Steps and Processes**

The steps or procedures of action research are more flexible as compared to other inquires. Though the flexibility of the process looks reasonable, there seems to be a variation among scholars in discussing action research processes or steps both in depth and focus (O' Brien: 1998).

Moreover, in line with this idea, Elliott (1991) and Schmack (1997) described the process or steps of action research in the following pattern in one way or another: *reflection* (i.e reviewing one's own practice), *identification of a problem* (i.e. diagnosing a problem); *action planning* (i.e. the consideration of alternative courses of action to solve the problem identified); *action taking* (i.e. implementing the plan according to the schedule); *observing* (i.e. using different methods, collecting data to see the effect of the action taken, or the careful recording of the actions and accumulation of evidence to determine if the desired goal has been achieved or not); *reflecting* (i.e. re-assessing the problem by studying the outcomes or the findings); and *trying new practice* (i.e. implementing the next action step).

Mills (2007, cited in Mertler( 2009: 4-5) presented the basic process and steps in conducting action research as follows:

1. Identifying an area of focus
2. Collecting data
3. Analyzing and interpreting the data; and
4. Developing a plan of action

The present researcher believes that the variation of action research steps from one scholar to the other, both in depth and focus does not seem to be much important to

the practitioner (teacher-researcher) as long as the teacher- researcher follows some systematic procedures in undertaking action researcher. He/she should not worry about and be restricted to any of the action research steps if he/she wants to do so. That is, the steps should be flexible and not rigid.

### **2.10 The Fundamental Characteristics of Action Research**

There are a number of characteristics which distinguish action research from other forms of research. For instance, Mckernan (1988:155) listed four important features of action research for a clear explanation against fundamental or traditional definition of research:

1. Action research assists participants in gaining and increasing their own understanding of personally experienced educational or curriculum problem.
2. Action research as opposed to fundamental research focuses on problems of immediate concern.
3. Action research is geared toward practical short- term solutions thus; it is a form of operational or applied research.
4. Action research encourages (though it does not have to be collaborative) collaboration of a number of participants on an equal footing. This is for equality simply in engaging of participants' in a cooperative partnership, not research enterprise.

Furthermore, according to Cohen and Manion (1994: 192 – 193), and Schmuck (1997: 29-31), the main features of action research are being situational, collaborative, cyclic, participatory, self-evaluative, critical, qualitative, empowering and relaxed approach . These features may be briefly explained as follows:

#### **1. Situational (On the- Spot Procedure)**

Cohen and Manion (1994) considered this feature as the first necessary condition for conducting action research. Situational 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. Such action research is conducted to solve immediate problems encountered in the process of action in a specific situation. Besides this, this aspect primarily differentiates the method from the traditional one.

## 2. Action Research is a Collaborative Endeavor

Advocates of action research believe that little is done when the effort is made on an individual basis. Teams of researchers and practitioners need to work together with their diverse experiences that are put together to bring a refined effort. Researchers from outside the situation and other personnel collaborate with the main actor, the teacher, in the endeavor being made to improve an educational practice.

## 3. It is Cyclic

Similar steps tend to recur in similar sequences. Each cycle demands a critical selection, which results in understanding which, in turn, helps the researcher to plan for the next step. Each cycle involves a complete process or steps of the research targeted 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 a specific problem. Planning, acting, observation and reflection are the main steps that action research follows.

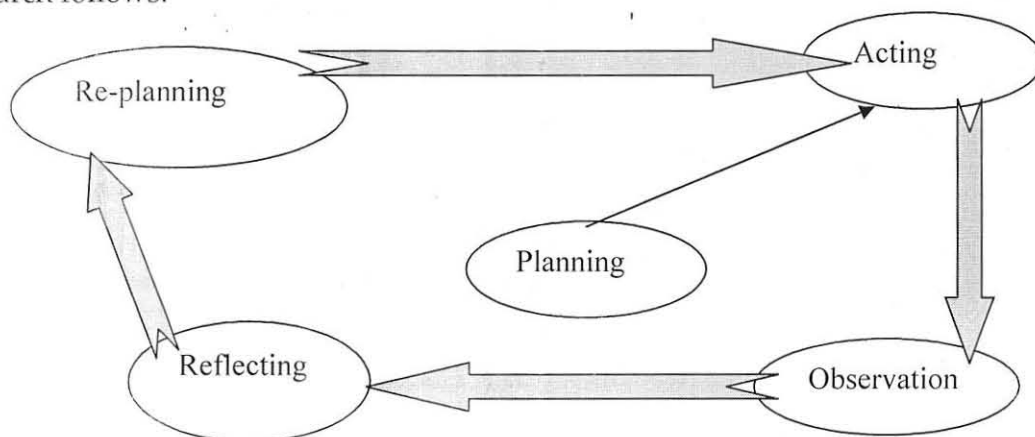


Fig. 1 The steps of action research

#### **4. Participatory**

Action researchers are coworkers collecting data with and for people who identified a real problem. They are not outside – disinterested experts conducting inquiries on subjects e.g. they are teachers, students, and administrators in collaboration. Thus, the people affected by the problem are made to involve in the research.

#### **5. It is Flexible and Adaptable (Self – Evaluative)**

All what are carried out in the research process are continuously and actively evaluated within the on- going situation and allow the method to have flexibility and adaptability. Changes are made if necessary both in the implementation and on- the - spot process. Its cyclic nature makes action research self -reflective and evaluative.

#### **6. Critical**

Participants not only search together for practical improvements in their educational situation, but they also act as self-critical change agents (e.g. Teachers asking students for feedback about the strength and weaknesses of their teaching methods.

#### **7. Chiefly Qualitative**

This is the quality that makes action research more responsive and participatory. Action research chiefly relies on observation and behavioral data. In most cases it does not involve quantitative statistics. Researchers communicate with words and not with numbers. Data are easily collected, shared, discussed, recorded in some way, evaluated and acted upon and this continuous sequence of events forms the basis of review of progress.

#### **8. Empowering**

All participants can affect and contribute equally to the inquiry i.e. teachers with students, or administrators with teachers, cooperate as equals as in the research process.

## **9. Relaxed View of Scientific Approach**

Action research is more of interpersonal than methodological. The method doesn't follow the scientific method strictly. The researchers possibly use agreed upon procedures they think effective, for this it is said to be relaxed for it empowers the participants to use mutually acceptable ethical frameworks rather than those imposed externally. In relation to this trait, action research is criticized as it :

- has got situational and a specific objectives rather than general ones.
- uses restricted samples rather than representative ones
- has little or no control over interdependent variables; and
- comes out with findings limited to a particular situation only.

This is true but it doesn't mean that action research is completely separated from the scientific method. These points mentioned above indicate to what extent the practitioners are not strongly addressed to the traditional research methods for they are not convenient to yield immediate solutions to the problem. They may not need to follow time consuming procedural frameworks, which at the same time do not let the researcher, intervene unless the process is completed.

### ***2.11 Factors Affecting ELT Teachers in Conducting Action Research***

Undertaking action research and its effectiveness could be influenced by a number of factors. These factors or inputs can be considered under two broad categories: internal (personal), and external. The latter can also be grouped into environmental or institutional and situational factors (Seyoum: 1998; Yalaw:2000) Some of the factors are discussed below.

#### **2.11.1 Personal / Internal Factors**

According to MOE (2006), action research is a part of teachers' professional development, and as such it requires teachers' reflection 'on' and 'in' action. The capacity to reflect ( which is one of action research attributes ) can be affected by

individual (personal) factors such as knowledge and skills level, self-confidence, esteem, attitude and interest in research, inquisitive mind, perseverance or discipline, and training pattern. That is, the inputs that are often expected from the individual researcher need to constitute some or all of the above attributes. This means that if all of the above attributes are not available, teachers could not undertake educational action research.

An examination of action research literature reveals, the importance of personal interest in research activity is highly emphasized. For instance, scholars such as Jones (1990, cited in Seyoum, 1998) regard it as the major driving force behind research. This is indeed true, because interest in research activity is not something that can be imposed from outside, it comes from within the individual.

Further, Elliott (1991) emphasized that it would be nearly impossible to think of carrying out research activity without the individual being equipped with basic research skills. Basically, the only way to acquire competence in research is by doing it, but before research can be put into practice, some skills must be acquired.

### **2.11.2 External Factors**

These can be grouped into institutional and situational factors as explained below:

#### **2.11.2.1 Institutional / Environmental Factors**

Burns (1999) expressed that reflective practice and action research are more effective in those environment that promote the culture of inquiry for teachers. In other words, it becomes clear that some or all of the above personal attributes one has in research practice do not by themselves take one any where unless other essential conditions for research are facilitated.

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

facilities (ranging from office space to sophisticated pieces of research equipment), the provision of material and psychological incentives, the creation of publishing outlets (such as journals, magazines, news letters (Burns: 1999).

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

#### **2.11.2.2 Situational Factors**

Burns (1999) also described apart from the above two factors ( personal, and institutional (environmental), action research practice can be affected by situational constraints as work over load ( which leaves little or no time for teachers to conduct research), innovation, phase of development and so on. In connection with this Wallace(1998) confirmed that research is a time – consuming activity, and consequently, teachers need to be provided with adequate time in order to be able to engage in research activity. “This implies that if a researcher’s time is taken from him/her, he or she will remain sterile.”

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

#### **2.12 Disseminating Action Research Works**

According to Marczyk et al (2005), once teachers/ researchers produce their research works, their task becomes dissemination. This is because of no matter how professionally sound it is, research works which remains in the hands of the

researcher themselves is not contributing to knowledge. Any one seems to agree that it would certainly do little good if a researcher who discovered something important decided to keep those results quiet.

Imagine how different the world would be if Thomas Edison had invented the light bulb, but then decided not to tell any one about his invention. What if, Bill Gates had decided to keep his computer technology all to him? (Marczyk,et al; 2005:264).

This clearly, then, indicates that sharing the results of action research studies or results is important.

### ***2.13 Ways of Disseminating Action Research Results***

Marczyk et al (2005) indicated that there are numerous options available for those researchers who desire to share the results of their studies with others. From books to journals to internet, today's society offers many effective and efficient outlets for the dissemination of research study results. In line with this, Derebssa (2000) explained that research findings are disseminated on international, national and local based conferences/ seminars and publication of proceedings and journals. The format for presentations differs from conference to conference; most conferences offer some combinations of the following presentation formats: poster presentations, oral presentations, and symposiums. A poster presentation as the name indicates, involves presenting the results of a research study in a poster format. For beginning researchers mainly conference is a preferred presentation format. An oral presentation involves speaking about the research results for a specified amount of time. A symposium is a collection of related oral presentations that are presented as a group.

## **2.14 Local Research Works**

Cherie (2003) conducted a research on English Language Teachers' Involvement in Action Research at Kotebe, Nazareth and Awasa college of Teacher Education and he found that

- teachers' involvement in action research was insignificant;
- teachers had positive attitude towards conducting action research;
- lack of research skill and understanding the role of research as the most serious problems for teachers to conduct action research; and
- teachers emphasized relevant and adequate research courses to be given to them to enhance their research skills.

Aster (2004) also conducted a research to assess Factors That Affect Teachers, Teaching at Upper Primary Schools in Sidama Zone, to Carry out Action Research and she arrived at the following results:

- teachers had very little conscious effort to carry out action research;
- teachers' level of research competence was low;
- the availability of resources like books, journals, incentives and finance was limited;
- research courses which teachers have taken were not helpful to teachers to equip them with research skills; and
- teachers had shortage of time to conduct action research.

Similarly Rukia (2007) in her masters thesis conducted on Effects of Action Research on Female EFL Teachers' Professional Development and has come up with the following findings;

- the teachers felt that action research brings opportunity especially for female teachers who have other responsibilities at home and in the surroundings;
- action research has brought many changes on the teachers' method of teaching, perception and practice; and

- as a result of the action research involvement the teachers have become reflective practitioners.

Yibeltal (2006) conducted a research to assess Factors That Affect Teachers to Carry out Action Research (at Ambo General Secondary School) and he found heavy work load, poor library facilities, poor research culture, lack of incentives, lack of finance, and administration problems as the main factors affecting teachers' involvement in conducting action research.

To summarize, though the importance of preparatory school teachers involvement in action research activities in their fields of study was given due recognition in different documents and proclamations of the MOE, practically, the action research practices in the preparatory schools of the country seems to be low. Having these theoretical assumptions, it is wise to ask a question "What is the status of action research practices of ELT teachers in CAGPS?" An attempt is being made on the current study so as to provide information about the action research practices of ELT teachers in their actual teaching in CAGPS.

## CHAPTER THREE

### 3. Research Design and Methodology

#### ***3.1 Research Design***

In this research, a qualitative case study was adopted to examine issues related to action research with specific reference to ELT teachers in CAGPS. This was because it allows the researcher to concentrate on a specific instance and to identify the various interrelated processes at work.

The present study is a case study. "A case study is an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single entity, phenomenon, or social unit" (Merriam 1988, cited in, Nunan 1992:20).

#### ***3.2 An Over view of the Research Setting: CAGPS***

The study was conducted at Chancho Aba Geda Preparatory School which is located in North Shoa Zone, Oromia Region. This school is located at Chancho town, in Sululta Woreda which is located at a distance of about 40 Kilometers north of Addis Ababa. The school was founded in 1988 E.C. and started offering the preparatory education in 1997 E.C. being one of the pioneer schools in the zone.

There were 24 teachers who taught in the school. Nineteen of the teachers were male and the remaining five were female teachers. All of these teachers have the first degree of qualification. The current year total number of students was 1050. Of these 641 were male and 409 were female students.

The school was purposely chosen for the fact that the researcher has been serving there for ten years as an English teacher and has awareness that the majority of ELT teachers did not carryout action research. This motivated the researcher's interest in and access to the research setting and the research participants. Besides, the researcher's past experience in the school gave him an opportunity to study the problem under study.

### ***3.3 Subjects of the Study and Sampling***

The main subjects of this study were nine English teachers teaching at CAGPS.. The nine ELT teachers were being selected using the purposive (comprehensive) sampling technique, because it is believed that these participants were possible sources to generate the necessary data from many perspectives. Their number was also manageable enough.

All the nine ELT teachers were B.A or B.Ed holders in qualification and except one ELT teacher, the remaining were male ELT teachers. They taught grades 11 and 12. With regard to their working experience four ELT teachers have served for twenty years and above while three ELT teachers lie in the range of seven to eleven years of teaching experience and the remaining two ELT teachers have below five years of experience in teaching language.

Moreover, by using purposive sampling, the school director and one expert from the (EDO) were included in the study for the purpose of getting more information. This is because the school administrators are responsible for facilitating conditions for teachers to conduct action research and the EDO expert has the responsibility to supervise and coordinate school-based action research.

### ***3.4 Data Collection Instruments***

The selection and use of data gathering instruments in a given research depends on certain factors like the nature of the subject matter of the research, the nature of subjects of the study and the availability of resources such as time and finance. Hence, taking into account such factors, the researcher used a semi-structured interview, observation and document analysis to gather the data necessary for this research study.

### **3.4.1 Interview**

In qualitative case studies, interview is the major source of qualitative data needed for understanding the phenomenon under study (Merriam: 1988).

In this research study, in-depth interviews were conducted on one-to-one basis using semi-structured questions to get detailed information from the informants about the overall past and present status of action research in CAGPS. Besides, the researcher prepared in advance interview guidelines to direct the discussion and to conduct the interview. All the interviews were conducted in Amharic which is the official language of Ethiopia. Then the data were recorded and translated into English for analysis and interpretation.

### **3.4.2 Observation**

In this study, the researcher conducted unstructured observation with particular emphasis on the research setting (i.e. what the school's environment and facilities look like). He intended to generate practical data on the school's library organization and availability of reading materials (e.g. research literatures), and on the school's staff and computer rooms. This helped him to collect, natural data about action research practices of ELT teachers in CAGPS.

### **3.4.3 Document Analysis**

Document analysis is one of the data collecting instruments of qualitative case studies (Best and Kahn, 1994; Merriam, 1988). The researcher of this study prepared a checklist before hand and assessed the documents in the school (the ELT teachers' personal profiles, letters, minutes, time-tables and so on.) As a result, assessing ELT teachers' profiles helped him to find out if ELT teachers had participated in action research. Assessing the letters helped him to examine the relationship between the school and EDO and the degree of emphasis given to action research, while the minutes at school level revealed the attention given to the issue and the extent to which ELT teachers were encouraged to carry out action research.

### **3.5 Data Analysis**

The researcher analyzed the data which were gathered from the research participants, in a qualitative way. For this study, the responses obtained were categorized into major themes or topics based on their similarity. That is, the data obtained through different instruments were not analyzed for each individual case. Instead, the researcher grouped the information or data into themes or headings according to their similarities and analyzed them accordingly.

### **3.6 Procedures of the Study**

The data collection process was started by conducting semi-structured interviews using interview guidelines with the nine ELT teachers followed by the school director and then the expert from the EDO. The interviews were conducted in their working places and offices. The time of interviewing was when they had convenient time or they were free of duty. During the interviews a tape recorder was utilized to record the whole interaction and this was believed to help capture full information of the situation.

An observation is a major means of collecting data in case study research which gives a first hand account of the situation under study. The researcher observed the library and computer facilities in particular, and the school environment in general in CAGPS .During the observation a note book was used to take down notes.

Document analysis was selected as a substantial and supplementary method in this study. The researcher prepared a checklist to consult or assess the documents about the issue under study. Then he assessed the personal profiles, letters, and minutes and action research outcomes (research papers) done by the ELT teachers of the school. The researcher carried a note book to record the important information obtained from the documents. Finally the data collected from the three instruments were triangulated for the purpose of presentation and interpretation.

### **3.7 Standards of Quality and Verification, and Ethical Considerations**

According to Creswell (1998, cited in Yalaw ,2000), the terms 'standards' and 'verification' are used in qualitative research to construct the positivistic terms 'validity', 'objectivity' and 'reliability'.

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

#### **3.7.1 Triangulation**

In this study, the researcher has adopted data triangulation, that is, the use of a variety of data sources, such as human sources, document sources and observation notes. Utilization of these data sources was fundamental in verifying the convergence and divergence of views and interpretations regarding the issue under study, and helped him to secure an in-depth understanding of it.

#### **3.7.2 Ethical Considerations**

Merriam (1988) pointed out that in qualitative research full attention should be given for moral and ethical issues. Therefore, the researcher has given a particular consideration to ethical principles developed by this scholar, particularly regarding ensuring informed consent and assent, developing confidentiality, maintaining anonymity, and other related ethical issues. Accordingly, the researcher prepared and proposed a set of ethical principles (or research protocol) for the research and informed the participants before data collection was started. And he adhered to the ethical principles indicated in Appendix A (Adapted from Merriam: 1988) throughout his study.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### 4. Data Analysis and Interpretation

In this chapter the qualitative data have been presented and analyzed. The data were generated through interviews, document analysis and observation. The interviews were with nine ELT teachers at CAGPS; with the school principal; and with EDO expert. The data from the interviews, document analysis and observation have been combined. In presenting and analyzing the data, coding has been briefly utilized for the ELT teachers. Therefore, the codes (P<sub>1</sub>, P<sub>2</sub>, P<sub>3</sub> .... P<sub>9</sub>) stand for the nine ELT teacher- participants at CAGPS. The data have also been classified under three major themes. These are the trends of action research practices from the past to the present; factors that hinder ELT teachers in action research practices; and future measures to be taken to promote action research.

#### 4.1 Characteristics of the participants

In the interview, nine ELT teachers of the selected school were interviewed to provide information on their background which includes their sex, qualification, and service years in teaching and teaching load per week. Accordingly the background information of the participants is presented in the following table.

Table. 1: Background of the Participant Teachers

S.No	Research participants name	Sex	Qualification	Service years in teaching	Teaching load per week
1	P <sub>1</sub>	M	B.Ed.	4	16
2	P <sub>2</sub>	M	B.Ed.	7	16
3	P <sub>3</sub>	F	B.A	11	15
4	P <sub>4</sub>	M	B.Ed.	20	12
5	P <sub>5</sub>	M	B.Ed.	22	16
6	P <sub>6</sub>	M	B.Ed.	10	15
7	P <sub>7</sub>	M	B. Ed.	4	20
8	P <sub>8</sub>	M	B.A.	24	16
9	P <sub>9</sub>	M	B.A.	26	12

As indicated in the above table, the participants of this study were nine ELT teachers. From these 8(88.89%) of the participants were males while 1( 11.11 %) of

the participants was a female. This figure shows a great difference in sex between male and female ELT teachers in which males are about nine times greater than females. Of course, this gap in sex among ELT teachers did not have any influential impact on the result of this study unless another study on gender is conducted in future.

The participants' information about their qualifications indicates that all of them 9(100%) are B.A. or B.Ed. graduates. The selected preparatory school seems to have attained the goal of the educational policy of the country concerning trained man power, which states that preparatory school students should be taught by graduates.

With regard to their teaching service years 4(44.44%) of participants have served for 20 years and above while 3(33.33%) of the participants lie in the range of 7 to 11 years of teaching, and the remaining 2(22.22%) of the participants have below 5 years of experience in teaching language. Therefore, from the information given above, it is possible to suggest that most of the ELT teachers in the preparatory school have long teaching experience and could actively involve in conducting action research.

The teaching load of ELT teachers per week indicates the time they may have to conduct action research. According to the teaching load as shown in the above table, 1(11.11%) of the participants has 20 periods of teaching load per week and another 4 (44.44%) have 16 periods each per week. Similarly, another 2(22.22%) of the participants have 15 periods each teaching load per week and the remaining 2(22.22%) teachers have 12 periods each per week. This shows that the teachers work load is not as such so heavy that it would hinder them to take up other responsibilities.

## **4.2 The Trends of Preparatory School ELT Teachers' Action Research Practices from the Past to the Present (from 1996 E.C. to 2003 E.C.)**

Under this major category, the researcher has discussed the extent to which the teachers involved in action research; major research issues addressed by the teachers in their research works; and the purposes for which the teachers conducted educational action research.

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

The participants of this study described the extent to which the preparatory school ELT teachers involved in action research from the past to the present. The result of this study has demonstrated that the action research practices of the majority of the ELT teachers were very low, or very limited. The majority of the research participants have uniformly reported that, in general terms, the effort made by the ELT teachers to do action research was almost nonexistent.

In this connection, for example one of the participants (P4) described the past – present research practices in the school as follows:

*Teachers' participation to do research is a rare case in our school for the main reason that it was usually associated with writing of senior essays for a partial fulfillment of course requirement and with the career structure that is promotion. Therefore, I can say that involvement in research activities is very low, or insignificant. Most of the teachers have distanced themselves from any research effort, and as a result, one could not come across any exemplary research work that initiates you or a model teacher who could prompt you to engage in action research (7/ 4/2011 morning).*

This view implies that action research practices were not common and popular among the preparatory ELT teachers of CAGPS.

Similarly, another participant (P2) explained the research conditions of the ELT teachers by uttering:

*Frankly speaking, every individual teacher knows that he/she must do research. Nevertheless, the attempt made to involve in action research activities proved to be very low, or so limited. We often think about doing research, but we have lacked commitment and courage to make it a reality (7/4/2011 morning).*

Still another participant (P9) expressed his regret over his failure to do any research by stating:

*I have taught for the last twenty – six solid years in the school and had many practical problems (in my mind) that need to be researched. However, I have done nothing worth mentioning until now. As a result, I regret and feel ashamed of my weakness. I am embarrassed for not doing any research (7/4/2011 after noon).*

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

The ideas of (P9) (i.e. the absence of involvement in research activities) were shared by (P1). He said:

*I had never been involved in any form of research activity till now, that is, since I graduated. I dare to say that my participation in research was almost little. Now I have an intention to carry out one research study in the near future. That is currently I am pursuing my first research project that seeks to evaluate curriculum material (7/4/2011 after noon).*

The trend of the teachers' involvement in action research, according to one participant (P6), has shown certain improvements:

*For me, the teachers' effort to participate in research activities is encouraging as compared to the past many years. For instance within the last five years I have seen some teachers engaging themselves in conducting action research. Hence, these days there are better attempts and attentions, and improvements in the teacher's involvement in different action research activities even though it is not satisfactory (11/4/2011 morning).*

According to the view of (P<sub>6</sub>), the involvement of those teachers in action research practices can be counted as an indicator of a positive trend of teachers' participation in action research for the last five years.

Documents were analyzed to cross-check the responses obtained through interviews with regard to their action research practices. Based on this, the researcher used the check list (see appendix E) and went through the personal profiles of the ELT teachers in the school. That was to see if there are any evidences that would show ELT teachers' action practices. Thus, out of the nine ELT teachers, three of them conducted action research and the other six had not conducted any action research as a professional practice at their school.

The topics of their action research were in one way or another related to the teachers' subject area or the whole education system. The topics were:

- Misbehaved students of Grade 12
- Why are girls weak in speaking skills in English?
- Evaluation of the content relevance of grade eleven English lessons

Regarding the overall content of the action research papers all have the following procedures: research questions, method, analysis and conclusion.

Thus, the document review proved that a very limited number of ELT teachers participated in action research.

In general, it is evident from the interviews and document analysis that the extent to which the preparatory school ELT teachers' participation in action research was found to be very low or very minimal. As described by the majority of the informants, it appears that most of the ELT teachers separated themselves engaging in action research practices even though they are required to do action research at school level. This implies that despite the fact that most of the teachers are veterans who have had longer teaching services, experiences, and who most likely can do

research, they have simply confined themselves to their teaching tasks and have marginalized research practices.

As such, it is possible to say that there was a weak relationship between action research and the teaching practices. That is, the ELT teachers showed less effort and appeared reluctant to understand and reflect on their every day practical problems in the school.

Besides, the teachers' low level in action research practices also indicates that the school itself couldn't materialize the "research-based" instructional process as emphasized in its 'mission statement'. Hence, the school's mission regarding research practice was found to be less practical.

Therefore, it is possible to conclude that the ELT teachers in the school did not participate in action research as much as expected, and that the status of their engagement in action research is at its very early stages of development.

#### **4.2.2 Major Research Issues Addressed by the ELT teachers in Their Research Works**

According to Cohen and Mannion (1994), the possibilities in which teachers can get involved in research activities in school context are varied and vast. For instance, the following can be possible issues for action research in schools life: teaching methods, students' enrollment figures by sex and age, learning strategies, evaluation procedures, patterns of student and teacher attendance, dropouts, repeaters, students' disciplinary problems, teaching loads, hidden versus formal curriculum, and school- community relations. As such, when ever teachers seek to do an investigation within their schools; there are so many issues or plenty of problems cropping up in their day-to-day practices.

This study has found out that those teachers who claimed to have been involved in action research placed more emphasis on teaching methods and contents, relevance of subject matter and materials in their research papers.

With regard to the specific issues or problems addressed i.e. the few research papers, one of the participants (p8) described his views as follows:

*I witnessed that those teachers who have done action research usually focused on issues like teaching methodology, evaluation of curricular materials (content relevance); students' disciplinary problems, and so on. In general, they usually used to address problems encountered by them in the classrooms even though they were not intended to improve school's practices (11/4/2011 morning).*

Furthermore, the document analysis that the researcher has made confirms the truthfulness of this view. That is, investigation into teaching methodology and evaluation of curricular materials were among the major contents, or issues that the teachers often tried to address in their action research practices. In addition to these major concerns, issues such as students' disciplinary problems, causes of drop\_ outs, causes of repeaters were additional (minor) concerns of the ELT teachers. This implies that, most of the issues the teachers tried to investigate were more or less related to the practical problems they encountered in the class and the way teaching methodology was applied, though they were not motivated to improve the teaching – learning processes within the school.

#### **4.2.3 Purposes for Which the ELT Teachers Carry out Action Research**

With regard to the purposes of carrying out action research the interviewees have reported that the primary motives of the teachers in conducting action research were to attain personal benefits rather than to improve the quality of practices and actions within the school. In other words, the preparatory school ELT teachers' engagement in action research was highly incentive – oriented. In line with this idea, for instance, one of the participants, (P<sub>5</sub>) described the teachers' objectives as follows:

*The majority of the ELT teachers have conducted research primarily to partially fulfill their course requirement while they were at colleges. Other than for this there were teachers who had done research for promotional purposes. Therefore, teachers, in most cases, were externally pushed to engage in research activities (11/4/2011 morning).*

Like wise, one participant- interviewee (P<sub>3</sub>) indicated:

*Most often, teachers who were participating in in-service trainings were observed involving in research practices. The only exceptions were just two or three years ago, that a few teachers attempted to do research on the practical problems they encountered in their classes (11/4/2011 afternoon).*

The above descriptions of the informants, particularly the views of (P<sub>5</sub>) (i.e. the view that were commonly shared by almost all the research participants) show that the prime concern for which the teachers conducted research were in order to partially fulfill their course requirements. Apart from this, the findings of this study have also shown that some of the teachers used to conduct research every three or four years either to get promotion from one rank to the next higher one on the career ladder, or to solve somehow, the problems they encountered in the teaching –learning process, but this was also rare.

In addition to what was reported by the research participants so far, in the school, the researcher observed that the course requirements and the career structure's criteria to a greater extent and performance evaluation to a lesser extent were motivating factors for which the teachers involved in research activities.

The fact that the course requirement and the career structure, served as initiating factors implies, that much of the teachers' research accomplishment was predominantly of benefit-oriented. It is, after all, naive to think that the teachers would do action research primarily for solving instructional problems, or improving the school practices.

### **4.3 Factors That Hinder ELT Teachers in Action Research Practices**

From the previous discussions, it is clear that the preparatory ELT teachers did not engage in action research to the extent expected. In this section, the researcher has discussed the informants' responses on the factors that obstructed the teachers to involve in action research. The factors, in a broader sense, are categorized as personal and environmental ones.

#### **4.3.1 Personal Factors that Hinder the Preparatory School ELT Teachers to do Action Research**

As described in chapter two of this study, action research requires teachers' reflection "on" and "in" action. The capacity to reflect however can be affected by plenty of personal factors, such as knowledge and/or skill level, interest, commitment qualification and experience. This implies that if all or some of the above attributes prevail, the teachers could not carry out action research up to the required standards, or quality.

##### **4.3.1.1 ELT Teachers Lack of Knowledge and Skills of Action Research**

Generally to engage in any activities, including action research the acquisition of basic knowledge and skills about the activity seem very important. These skills and competencies acquired through formal trainings of different exposures (such as seminars, workshops) and on- the-job training or in the course of conducting research can be developed further.

In line with this issue the researcher presented the following discussions based on the interview. The results of this study have shown that almost all of the informants who participated in the study have unanimously agreed on the importance of knowledge in action research as a prerequisite for getting involved in it. As regards

the problem with the teachers' action research knowledge one of the informants (P<sub>5</sub>) replied to the question on the issue:

*Most of the experienced teachers have lacked the basic research skill, partly for the reason that they were trained and graduated in the pre-1994 educational systems that did not provide room for action research activity in the pre-service training, and afterwards, they could not get any opportunity to get training on action research methodology. As a result, they have distanced themselves from any form of research activity (13/4/2011 morning).*

Similarly, another research participant (P<sub>4</sub>) expressed his complaints with regard to lack of competence in action research skills and problems in the mode of prior trainings as follows:

*We are obliged to do action research under the conditions we have lacked research knowledge and skills. Some of the teachers even did not take any trainings we had taken on action research course at university which was not adequate and not promising to do action research, because it was given to us through distance courses and, as a result, we have very little awareness or orientation about it. It could not enable us to initiate research works in the school (13/4/2011 morning).*

The responses of the interview conducted with the school principal also support the aforementioned idea. He said as follows:

It is difficult to say surely all teachers have the awareness, knowledge and skills of research. Moreover, there are also other administrative factors (like lack of trainings, lack of creating awareness) on our side that limits to update the knowledge of teachers to practice research according to their judgments. Only a few teachers who passed those challenges, and contributed some research works are said to have knowledge and skills.

Similarly document analysis was conducted to assess how much focus was given to action research in discussions that took place in curriculum committee meetings. The documents were the minutes of the curriculum committee, because any academic issue is raised, discussed and recorded in the minutes of the curriculum committee

in the school. The researcher then surveyed the minutes of the past three years because those years were moments when the issues of action research, student-centered teaching, and continuous assessment and the like were raised as hot issues to play a role in the country. The researcher found out that, the committee had seven or eight meetings in a year. In four of the seven or eight meetings the issues of action research was in the agenda. According to the evidences in the minutes, the curriculum committee reported that teachers do not have the necessary skills to conduct action research and, that is why they do not have interest in practicing. The committee suggested that ways should be sought to equip them with the necessary skills. This indicted that action research was raised in meetings but it seemed that due attention was not given to its practicality.

Thus, it is evident from the preceding interviews and document analysis that most of the preparatory school teachers have lacked the required and skill of action research that could motivate them to involve in it.

#### **4.3.1.2 Lack of Interest and Commitment to Do Action Research**

It became evident that most of the participants have associated the teachers' interest and commitment in action research with motivation (or incentives), level of research knowledge /skills and level of qualification. According to one participant-interviewee, the preparatory school ELT teachers were found to have low interest to participant in research owing to various reasons. These include lack of competency in research skills and absence of incentives or rewards and lack of adequate research know – how. For instance, one of the participant-interviewee (P7) said:

*I and other teachers have low level of interest in research for the main reason that we have very little trainings on action research skills, which we had acquired through distance course. Besides, lack of adequate knowledge made many of us less confident to involve in research activities (13/4/2011 it afternoon).*

In addition to the above description, another participant (P<sub>2</sub>) indicated:

*Many teachers do not have real interest and commitment in carrying out action research because of the absence of incentives, or rewards, which could not permit them to involve in research practices confidently. As a result, they are poor in their research activities (14/4/2011 morning).*

The other informants (P<sub>3</sub>, P<sub>5</sub>, P<sub>6</sub> and P<sub>8</sub>) also expressed a similar opinion:

*Several of the ELT teachers used to relate interest in doing research with promotion, or rewards, that is, they claimed that they are not interested in research because there is no promotion or rewards expected from conducting research. This could imply that, teachers need something from outside e.g. from the school and district education office) to engage in research (4/4/2011 morning).*

Nevertheless, the school principal argued that the ELT teachers in his school have weak interest to engage in action research. This weak interest has strong relation to their own problems than institutional problems. He further explained that ELT teachers' minimal knowledge and different perception on action research lead to weak interest, commitment, and competence in it. Other wise the school has provided some support through seminars and workshops to encourage them in doing action research.

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

#### **4.3.1.3 Teachers' Level of Qualification**

The Chancho preparatory school has ELT teachers with first degree qualification. The present investigator has attempted to asses the contribution of ELT teachers'

qualification level to their action practices. In relation to teachers' qualification level, one participant of the interviewees (P<sub>9</sub>) indicated:

*As far as I understand ELT teachers who have better educational status could have better research experience than those having less educational status (14/4/2011 after noon).*

Other participants (P<sub>1</sub>, P<sub>4</sub> and P<sub>6</sub>) also replied similarly to the question on the issue, as follows:

*Teachers who have a high level of qualification may have a positive impact because qualification could enhance research skills and confidence in doing research. In other words, qualification is a potential indicator for research practices. To this regard the more qualified the teacher is the more potentially to be involved in action research practices (15/4/2011 morning).*

Generally, this shows that there is a direct relationship between one's level of qualification and the extent of involvement in action research practices.

#### **4.3.1.4 Teachers' Years of Teaching Experience**

Experience in teaching is one of the basic factors to facilitate or hinder teachers' teaching effectiveness in general and their research activities in particular. The present researcher has attempted to assess the impact of ELT teachers' teaching experience on their participation in action research. Concerning this (P<sub>8</sub>) expressed his views as follows:

*Teachers with long service years in the school, including myself, should have to be models and advisors to young and newly employed teachers. But this has not frequently been observed in our school (15/4/2011 morning).*

Another participant (P<sub>5</sub>) also said:

*When I obtained my first degree, I thought that I would conduct research, but due to the reasons that I don't know clearly, I couldn't do any meaningful research in the last 22 years. Moreover my strong interest has declined through time. The probable reasons for this are poor research culture and absence of role models and advisors in the school (15/4/2011 afternoon).*

However, the remaining participants of the interview (P<sub>3</sub> and P<sub>4</sub>) argued strongly in a different manner and expressed their ideas as follows:

*When teachers' years of teaching experience increased, they tended to improve their knowledge and skill in conducting action research (15/4/2011 afternoon).*

Generally, the findings indicated those years of teaching experience of teachers, does not have a unique positive or negative contribution to their engagement in action research. Rather, it has either positive or negative contributions to conducting action research.

### **4.3.2 Environmental Factors that Hinder ELT Teachers to do Action Research**

#### **4.3.2.1 Administration Procedures**

The view of different participants in the interview about the role of the administration processes of the school of ELT teachers' engagement in action research is presented as below:

One participant at the school (P<sub>2</sub>) indicated:

*There are inefficient and ineffective administration processes in the school. The problems in administration procedures increased when some one goes from the bottom (departmental level) to the top (principals level) (18/4/2011 morning).*

Similarly another participant (P<sub>6</sub>) explained:

*The principals of the school know that the importance of research activity is only for the sake of talking in a formal meeting. But they do not believe in its importance internally. For them it is a matter of formality rather than a commitment to help and encourage the teachers to do research and then to develop research habits in the school (18/4/2011 morning).*

In addition to this, two participants in the interview, (P<sub>4</sub> and P<sub>8</sub>) described the situation as follows:

*The institutional environment was not conducive to do research. The school principals and the district office expert were so active only in ordering us to do research and other duties but they gave no technical support worth mentioning. Besides, the follow-up was minimal (18/4/2011 after noon).*

The school principal shared the above views that the support provided for those who attempted research activity has been inadequate because such support was primarily confined to stationary material services. Besides, he described that there is no coordinating body which could organize, facilitate and evaluate research works done by the ELT teachers.

Likewise the expert at the EDO indicated that there was no relevant support given to the teachers. Surprisingly, there was no coordinating body that was designated (at school and *woreda* level) to organize, coordinate or facilitate research activities supposed to be carried out by the teachers.

An attempt was also made to consult the documents (the letters written to /from the school). Consequently, the data obtained from the correspondences the school made with the education office at *woreda* level revealed that less attention was given to the concern of action research. This is because there were a few letters written from the education office to the school and vice versa in relation to action research. However many of the letters written were about student-centered teaching, continuous assessment, disciplinary issues and the like.

This implied that the education office at *woreda* level and the school administration played a little role in fostering action research activities and encouraging the ELT teachers for the research.

From the above descriptions of interviews and document analysis it became evident that the support given to the teachers was almost nonexistent or insignificant. Therefore, it seems that teachers' action research practices might not be seen as part of their duties, and hence, the support system of the school and the EDO needs further attention for improvement.

#### **4.3.2.2 Lack of Library Facilities**

The library facilities refer to all physical means or materials that facilitate the engagement of ELT teachers in action research. To establish whether the status of library facilities affects their involvement in action research or not, the participants of the interview were asked about the status of library facilities which according to them is in a poor condition at the preparatory school. P<sub>1</sub> and P<sub>7</sub> for example, said:

*There are no such worth while reference materials in the library which could enable you to conduct research. Hence, in the school one of the critical problems of conducting action research is lack of reference books. Apart from this, research papers carried out in this context, would suffer from lack of quality and poor standards of research (18/4/2011 afternoon).*

Similarly, three participants, (P<sub>3</sub>, P<sub>4</sub> and P<sub>9</sub>) in the interview, expressed their views about their school library facilities as follows:

*Our school library facilities are insufficiently equipped to do action research. In other words, there were not any research methodology books and journals in particular, rather than' subject area references that are important for academic purposes (19/4/2011 afternoon).*

In relation to the above issue, the school principal and the expert at EDO expressed their views that the school library lacks relevant reference materials and literature that help to conduct research. Both of them added also the only service the library has been rendering is that the teachers can borrow and utilize subject area reference materials.

In the observation the researcher observed that the school had one library and one bookstore, teachers could borrow any materials from the library and bookstore simply by signing in a certain proforma. There were two female employees who had been working in the school library. The library was open from 8:00 am to 1:00pm. It had no room for teachers to sit and read. In relation to the library collection, reference materials regarding research methodology, Journals, etc were almost nonexistent.

From the above interviews and observations the status of library facilities at the school indicated that lack of relevant research references was a problem which hinders ELT teachers' involvement in action research practices.

#### **4.3.2.3 Lack of Internet and Computer Facilities**

The availability and utilization of institutional inputs, such as computer, internet, and other related facilities have become critical variables to enhance teachers' involvement in action research practices.

In connection with this, three participants of the interview (P<sub>7</sub>, P<sub>8</sub> and P<sub>9</sub>) pointed out their views as follows:

*Though our school has an internet room, the internet and computer of the school were almost inaccessible and poorly organized (20/4/2011 morning).*

Regarding this issue the school principal shared the ideas of the above participants (P<sub>7</sub>, P<sub>8</sub>, P<sub>9</sub>). He said that the computer and internet access of the school is in a bad position.

The researcher has also observed that the internet room rarely gives computer services. However, the service delivering centers within the school had no internet connection.

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

#### **4.3.2.4 Lack of Incentives**

Incentives or rewards in any form are advantageous which are well recognized by the school authorities as encouraging factors. It includes a range of approaches: teacher's professional promotion, cash payment as honorarium, providing more funds, payment to quality research works and so on.

In connection with incentives (P<sub>1</sub>) reported:

*The absence of any form of incentives either from the school administration or the District Education Office was among the major problems that discouraged us to take initiatives to involve in carrying out action research (20/4/2011 morning).*

Similarly another participant of the interview (P<sub>8</sub>) at the school expressed the case as follows:

*As far as I know there was no incentive of any kind that teachers get in return for their research activities except professional promotion which is the only incentive provided to all teachers in our school (20/4/2011 afternoon).*

To counter-check, an interview was held with the school principal regarding this issue. He said that the enhancement of the support of teachers to do research is not only for personal gains of the teachers but also for more institutional and social gain. Therefore, their engagement in research has to be regarded as part and parcel of their duties. To this effect, they have to be encouraged not necessarily in terms of financial support, but by creating conducive working conditions.

The above descriptions indicate that in the absence of rewards or incentives, the opportunity of doing action research could be a rare case. However, it is possible to

argue that teachers as professionals should not engage in research activities merely to attain personal promotion or to get rewards as they have responsibilities to improve and enhance the teaching – learning process through professional development activities. Though this being the case, still most of the informants have capitalized on the provision of financial, material and psychological incentives from the educational administration bodies so as to initiate teachers' involvement in action research practices. Therefore, the provision of incentives in one way or another should be given due attention.

#### **4.3.2.5 Access to Disseminate Action Research Results**

Dissemination of research results is very important if the results of action research are to be put to actual use. An important component of a supportive research climate is the existence of ways of disseminating research findings. The dissemination ways include verbal communications of action research results at events like seminars, workshops, conferences and symposia and publications in books and bulletins.

So any researchers have to think about their research result dissemination at least when they attempt to begin research activities.

In line with this the researcher evaluated the impact of access to information dissemination on ELT teachers in the preparatory school.

One of the participants (P<sub>3</sub>) expressed his views:

*In our school there is not any means of disseminating research findings. There are a few ELT teachers who conducted action research on certain issues, but they didn't disseminate it to their staff members. This is because the culture of disseminating research findings has not yet developed (21/4/2011 morning).*

Similarly, another participant (P<sub>8</sub>) replied the question on the issue as follows:

*To tell you frankly, so far there was no dissemination of the findings of action research to the intended audience. In other words, there was no trend of disseminating research works to the targeted audience through seminars, written reports, etc., at the school level (21/4/2011 after noon).*

To counter-check the responses of the teachers, the researcher interviewed the school principal. Accordingly, he assured that organization of workshops, seminars etc., is very important in disseminating research out comes, but in our school disseminating of research results was totally neglected.

The above descriptions implied that lack of proper dissemination of action research outcomes was considered as a great problem by the ELT teachers in action research in the preparatory school.

#### **4.4 Future Measures to be taken to Promote Action Research**

The researcher of this study has attempted to gather suggestions from the participants of the interviews for the future improvement of teachers' involvement in action research. All of them agreed on the opinion that if some concrete steps or measures are taken to solve some of the constraints, there may be a better future to teachers' involvement in action research in the school.

In line with this issue, for instance five participants (P<sub>1</sub>, P<sub>2</sub>, P<sub>4</sub>, P<sub>6</sub> and P<sub>8</sub>) suggested their views as follows:

*Since teachers' knowledge (orientation) in educational research is basic for other factors which have a role in educational research such as interest, commitment and competence in research, orienting us into action research through different mechanisms such as short term trainings, workshops, conferences etc., is a very important activity. Moreover, improving the school facilities (such as the library, the internet room, etc.) and conducting research in groups will help us to improve the quality of the research results, and to encourage teachers who have no knowledge about action research, (20/4/2011 afternoon).*

Other four participants (P<sub>3</sub>, P<sub>5</sub>, P<sub>7</sub> and P<sub>9</sub>) at the school indicated the following suggestions:

*Incentives for teacher – researchers have a strong role to govern other variables such as interest, commitment, perception, etc. Therefore, the responsible bodies have to allocate appropriate incentives/ rewards for the teacher -researchers (21/4/2011 morning).*

In connection with this, the school principal and the expert at EDO recommended that individual teachers need to do their best to improve (up-grade) their research knowledge and skill through self-effort and commitment and should establish mechanisms of doing research on a collaborative basis. Both of them also suggested that arranging trainings or seminars or workshops in order to boost the capacity (research competence) of the teachers would be advantageous.

The above suggestions indicated that variations appeared in prioritization of strategies among the ELT teachers of the school. This was probably due to the complex nature of the problems which hamper the development of educational research. Therefore it is important to diversify strategies which will help to approach the problem from different angles.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### 5. Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter represents the summary and conclusions of the study. It also presents the possible recommendations forwarded by the researcher, which are hoped to avoid and/or at least minimize the problems revealed in the study and promote research activity in CAGPS.

#### 5.1 Summary

The major purpose of this study was to assess the past and present action research practices of ELT teachers of CAGPS in North Shoa Zone, Oromia Region. It was also directed to look into some factors affecting ELT teachers in conducting action research with an intention of forwarding possible solutions which would help to alleviate the problem. To this effect, the study was made to focus on answering the basic questions raised in chapter one (1.2, page5).

The study employed a qualitative method of educational research particularly a case study design was used. To find out answers for the basic research questions, interviews, observation and document analysis were utilized to collect the relevant data for the investigation. The interview was employed as the main instrument of data collection. The interview was designed for ELT teachers in the selected school, the school principal and the expert at the DEO. The total number of ELT teachers in this study was nine. As these ELT teachers were small in number and manageable to conduct a case study, the researcher selected all of them using purposive sampling technique as the participants of the interview. In addition to this, an observation and document analysis were used for triangulation. Finally, the data obtained were categorized into major themes or topics based on their similarities and were

analyzed accordingly. According to the results of the data analysis, the major conclusions of the study were the following.

## **5.2 Conclusions**

This study has found out that the extent to which the preparatory school teachers involved in action research practices was very low or was very minimal. The findings depicted that an insignificant number of ELT teachers had been engaged in action research. This implies that the ELT teachers, made less effort than expected to understand and reflect on their every day problems in the school. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that there was a weak relationship between research and teaching. Since these teachers did not give equal emphasis to both tasks, their engagement in action research is at the very early stage of development in the school.

The specific research issues / topics carried out by the ELT teachers were related to teaching methods or techniques, curricular issues, causes of students' disciplinary problems, causes of dropouts and causes of repeaters. This implies that the teachers preferred to give more emphasis to the issues directly related to frequently perceived problems hampering the students' learning in a broader sense.

With regard to the purposes for which the teachers carry out action research, the results have demonstrated that only a very few teachers undertook action research for promotional purposes. This implies that involvement in action research was highly incentive oriented and those teachers who claimed to have conducted action research were externally motivated.

The findings of this study have indicated both personal and external factors considerably impeded the sample ELT teachers' action research practices. The results of this study demonstrated that personal factors that hampered ELT teachers

in conducting action research include lack of knowledge/skill, lack of interest and commitment in research i.e. lack of incentives, and absence of self-effort to update their prior trainings and failure to learn from one another. Besides lack of qualification and experience were other factors that hinder research undertakings.

It became evident that research competence (i.e. knowledge or skill in action research) interest and commitment and qualification were interwoven variables as personal factors. They either reinforce one another, or hamper one another.

Teachers' years of experience and their participation in action research have an inverse relation. This is because when they serve for a long time in the school they may engage in family and external societal affairs, and experience has either positive or negative impact on conducting action research.

In addition, the external factors that hinder the ELT teachers in doing action research were found to be administration procedures, lack of facilities at the school (especially, library, internet and computer facilities); lack of incentives and lack of access to disseminate action research results were interrelated or interconnected elements that they can facilitate one another when available, and hamper one another when they are not available.

To improve the future trends of action research practices of ELT teachers in CAGPS the participants of the interview suggested the following points. The first point was that more awareness-raising opportunities such as trainings, workshops, seminars and school facilities (like library and internet services) have to be improved. Second, the preparatory school has to encourage a habit of group research among the ELT teachers. Third, the concerned bodies and stake holders have to allocate appropriate incentives or rewards for the researchers.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study and conclusions drawn, the following recommendations have been forwarded to get ELT teachers involved more teachers in action research for enhancing quality of education.

As indicated in the findings of this study, the problems of teachers encountered while doing action research were many and diverse. To help reduce these problems and to get involved more teachers in action research, the following recommendations are forwarded:

1. Unlimited effort should be exerted to introduce and develop action research culture in the preparatory school by the ELT teachers and responsible bodies.
2. It is important that long-term and short-term trainings, seminars, work shops and discussion forums should be arranged to promote the ELT teachers' knowledge and skills of action research in CAGPS.
3. The preparatory school principal should organize the teachers based on their departments so as to popularize and promote action research in the school. This could develop the spirit of collaborative work and encourage for the development of action research culture.
4. Teachers and the relevant stakeholders should establish a mechanism of disseminating research results. This could be done through organizing research seminars and conferences; making copies of teachers' research works available in the libraries and providing some time to presentation of the research works in different teachers' meetings.
5. It is recommended that preparatory schools should be given due attention and provided at least the relevant facilities such as, library and internet services.

6. Action research endeavor by teachers should be encouraged. This should be done by providing incentives, rewards and honorarium to the teachers for their effective effort to do action research. Thus, the ELT teachers could be motivated to conduct action research.
7. Future hopes and directions of the teachers' involvement in action research looks promising if the major obstacles the teachers encountered are avoided if not minimized. Therefore, in order to initiate and facilitate the ELT teachers' action research practices, the points suggested by the participants of research should be seriously considered for a positive intervention by the concerned bodies.

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**Appendix – A**  
**Addis Ababa University**  
**Institute of Language Studies**  
**Department of Foreign Languages and Literature**  
**(Graduate program)**

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

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

1. Participation in the research is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw from the research at any time.
2. Information given to me (by your will) will be treated as belonging to you, and it can be used only with your permission.
3. Interpretations, observations and documentary analysis made by me will be treated as belonging to me.
4. I will seek your consent or permission to create or use audio records. You have the right to edit or change them, as you are invited to listen to the taped-information.
5. I will securely store data or information given to me. Full anonymity of your identity and confidentiality of the information you share with me will be maintained.

**Appendix – B**  
**Addis Ababa University**  
**Institute of Language Studies**  
**Department of Foreign Languages and Literature**  
**(Graduate program)**

**An Interview Guideline Presented to ELT Teachers**

**Purpose:** To collect valid information / data/ for the study entitled: “Action Research Practices of ELT Teachers in their Actual Teaching”. The opinions of ELT teachers are believed to contribute much to this study. In this regard, your cooperation to offer relevant and honest information is highly important for the success of this study. The data will be used only for research purpose. The data obtained from you will be kept confidential and will not affect anybody in any way. Hence, please feel free to offer your opinion frankly as much as possible.

**Thank you for your kind cooperation!**

**Part – I Personal data**

1. School \_\_\_\_\_
2. Department \_\_\_\_\_
3. Sex \_\_\_\_\_
4. Experience in teaching \_\_\_\_\_
  - 1) Under 5 years                      2) 5-10 years    3) 11 –16 years
  - 4) Above 16 years
5. Qualification \_\_\_\_\_
6. Regular teaching load per week \_\_\_\_\_

**Questions**

**Part – 2**

7. How do you understand research in general and action research in particular?
- 8: How much are you involved in action research?
  - 8.1 How many studies did you conduct?
  - 8.2 If so, on what issues?

9. Why did/do you conduct action research? Or for what purposes did/do you conduct action research?
10. How do you evaluate the trends of ELT teachers' practices in action research in your school from the past to the present (1996 E.C. \_2003E.C.)
  - 10.1 What do you think your main reason for involvement? Or for not involving?
  - 10.2 Are there any other reasons you would like to add?

### **Part 3 Factors That Hinder ELT Teachers in Action Research Practices**

#### **i) Personal Factors**

11. How do you evaluate the role of ELT teachers' knowledge and skill in action research practices? Give reasons for your evaluation.
  - 11.1 Have you ever attended any research methodology courses? Was the training you had taken at college/ university level adequate to conduct action research in your professional career?
  - 11.2 If not, how could you manage to conduct action research or to solve practical problems in your classrooms and/or schools?
12. Lack of individual interest in and commitment to action research are viewed by some ELT teachers as the most important hindering factors. Do you agree? If so, why?
13. How do you see ELT teachers' level of qualification and their involvement in action research? Why?
14. Do you think the role of your experience can affect your involvement in action research activities? Why?

#### **ii) Environmental Factors**

15. How do you evaluate the school administration procedures in facilitating or hindering ELT teachers' engagement activity in action research? Why?
16. What is the contribution of your school library facilities (including adequacy, relevance and level of organization) towards your action research involvement? Why?
17. How do you see the role of computer, internet access and other electronic facilities for ELT teachers' action research practices? why?
18. How do you evaluate the role of incentives for the researchers to facilitate or hinder ELT teachers' participation in action research? Why?

19. How do you evaluate the nature and types of access to disseminate action research results in your school?

19.1 Do you disseminate your action research results at events like seminar, symposia and workshop, etc. to your staff members?

19.2 What other forms of dissemination are used?

20. What do you suggest to improve ELT teachers' involvement in action research in the near future?

20.1 in terms of skills and knowledge

20.3 in terms of creating conducive environment

20.2 in terms of facilities

20.4 any other suggestion

**Appendix – C**  
**Addis Ababa University**  
**Institute of Language Studies**  
**Department of Foreign Languages and Literature**  
**(Graduate program)**

**An Interview Guideline Presented to the School Principal**

**Purpose:** The main purpose of this interview is to collect valid information from the school principal about ELT teachers' action research practices. My objective is to come up with suggestions that would contribute to enhance ELT teachers' practices in action research at school level. The data (information) you give will be used only for research purpose and will be kept confidential and will not affect anybody in any way. Hence, please feel free to offer your opinion frankly as much as possible.

**Thank you in advance for your cooperation!**

**Questions:**

1. How do you evaluate the past and present (1996 E.C.\_2003 E.C.) trends of action research practices, particularly by ELT teachers in your school?
2. How do you perceive the purpose of action research?
3. How do you evaluate the role of teachers' knowledge and skill in action research?  
Give reasons.
4. How do you see the role of interest towards ELT teachers' participation in action research activities? Why?
5. Does the school administration provide ELT teachers with facilities (like references, writing materials, comfortable working places etc., to conduct action research?
6. What incentives and/or rewards are provided to ELT teachers who contribute to research ?
7. Do teachers have the opportunity to use internet services, computer and printer for research purpose?

8. Does your school organize seminars, workshops and conferences or in-service research training on action research issues? Or for what purposes are such occasions organized?
9. From your perspective, what are / were the main problems/ factors that hindered ELT teachers to conduct action research? (Would you list them please?)
10. What do you suggest to solve the constraints and to help ELT teachers to improve their involvement in action research in the near future?

## **Appendix - D**

**Addis Ababa University**

**Institute of Language Studies**

**Department of Foreign Languages and Literature**

**(Graduate program)**

### **An Interview Guide line Presented to the Expert at District Education Office**

**Purpose:** The main purpose of this interview is to draw valid information about the ELT teachers' involvement in action research practices at Chanco Preparatory School. You are expected to play an important role in the effort being done today to enhance teachers' involvement in action research. That is why I wanted to ask you some questions. The data (information) you give will be used only for research purpose and will be kept confidential and will not affect any body in any way. Hence, please feel free to offer your opinion frankly as much as possible.

**Thank you in advance for your cooperation!**

1. How do you evaluate the action research status of teachers in general and ELT teachers in-particular at Chanco Preparatory School from past to present? (1996E.C.\_2003 E.C.)?
  - 1.1 How do you evaluate ELT teachers' competence (knowledge and skill, interest, commitment, etc) in conducting educational action research?
2. How do you understand action research?
  - 2.1 What benefits as well as limitations can you see in conducting such research?
3. Have you ever initiated and encouraged preparatory school teachers in general to conduct action research in their school?
4. How do you evaluate the support given by you (your office) for preparatory school teachers in general and ELT teachers in particular to undertake action research practices.

- 4.1 How much material and financial support and other facilities were/are given for the teachers?
- 4.2 Have you (your office) ever organized an in-service training, (workshops or seminars) to upgrade the teachers' research competence?
- 4.3 Is there research work coordinating unit in the office? If any, how does it function?
5. What factors/ problems prevent Chanco Aba Geda Preparatory School teachers in general and ELT teachers in particular from conducting action research?
  - 5.1 Would you elaborate them please?
6. To improve secondary school teachers' involvement in general and ELT teachers in particular in action research for the future, what do you suggest?
  - 6.1 What does your office need to do to solve the existing problems and to popularize and disseminate action research practices in the near future?

## Appendix - E

### A Checklist for Document Analysis

A) **Purpose:** to observe teachers' personal profiles at school level in relation to action research

1. How many ELT teachers did conduct action research? \_\_\_\_\_
2. How many action research studies did each ELT teacher conduct?  
Teacher 1 \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher 5 \_\_\_\_\_  
Teacher 2 \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher 6 \_\_\_\_\_  
Teacher 3 \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher 7 \_\_\_\_\_  
Teacher 4 \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher 8 \_\_\_\_\_

3. What were the areas treated?

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B) **Purpose:** to observe the correspondences the school made with District Education Office in relation to action research.

1. Are there correspondences from the District Education Office and the school in relation to action research?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

2. If 'yes' how often \_\_\_\_\_

3. Do the letters from District Education Office suggest about the importance of action research to teachers' professional development and students' learning?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

4. Do the contents in the letters encourage teachers to participate in action research activities?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

C) **Purpose:** to observe the minutes of the curriculum committee meetings at school level in relation to action research.

1. Are there occasions when the issue of action research was raised as an agenda in the curriculum committee meetings?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

2. If 'yes' how often? \_\_\_\_\_

3. What were the issues raised in relation to action research?

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4. What were the suggestions / decisions made? \_\_\_\_\_

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## Declaration

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my original work and all sources of materials used for this study have been duly acknowledged.

Name: Alemtsehay Teka

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Name: Prof. A. Subba Rao

Signature: A Subba Rao

Date: 22-06-2011