

ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY  
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
INSTITUTE OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

ACTION RESEARCH PRACTICES, CHALLENGES AND  
PROSPECTS: THE CASE OF BOLE PREPARATORY SCHOOL

BY: SAMUEL BIRATU

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ETHIOPIA

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AAU

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**APPROVED BY BOARD OF EXAMINERS:**

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## **Abstract**

*The purpose of this study was to investigate the practices and challenges of conducting action research at Bole Preparatory Secondary School. Mixed method was employed in this study. Questionnaire was used to collect data from teachers. To complement the information obtained through questionnaire, interviews were held with the principal and the Deputy Principal of Bole preparatory School. To analyze quantitative data, descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation), were used. The questionnaire was pilot tested and administered to 15 teachers at Lem Secondary School in Addis Ababa. The results of the study suggested that, the practices of action research by Bole preparatory School's teachers is very low, even though the level of knowledge and skills of the teachers in the School was sufficient, their involvement in practicing action research was very low, school management's role in encouraging teachers to conduct action research was insufficient such as incentives, pay rise, etc., the study also indicated that there are shortages of training, seminars and workshops regarding action research; insufficient budget, insufficient reference materials and library services and etc that hindered the teachers from conducting the research. Therefore, to solve these problems and enhance the level of practice of action research it has been recommended that the school management in cooperation with Sub-City and City Administration Education Bureaus should try to overcome the aforementioned problems.*

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## Chapter One

### 1. Introduction

This chapter deals with background, statement of the problem, research questions, Objectives, delimitations, limitations, significance of the study and organization of the study.

#### 1.1. Background of the study

Research can help to generate new knowledge and solves actual problems. Action research is one of the systematic methods of research that practitioners are empowered to question the guidelines and methods of instructions, which enables them to take authoritative and practical solutions towards existing problems. There are different definitions for action research. Action research is a process in which participants examine their own educational practice systematically and carefully, using the techniques of research (Watts, 1985:118). Another definition of action research views it as a form of 'self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own social or educational practices, their understanding of these practices and the situations in which the practices are carried out (Carr and Kemmis, 1986:162). Action research empowers practitioners to reflect on their practices being data driven in their daily actions and in how they interpret their successes and failures. The linking of the term action and research highlights the essential feature of the approach: trying out ideas in practice as a means of improvement and increasing knowledge of the practices and contexts of the practitioners.

By practicing action research, teachers may gain a better perspective into their own teaching and students' learning because the changes made in instruction are based on teachers own research (Johnson, 1995). Hence, action research allows teachers the opportunity to shape and refine their

own teaching and to build on their own successes. Action research can also improve the teaching and learning process by reinforcing, modifying, or changing perceptions based on both formal and informal data and non-systematic observations. Teachers who participate in action research effectively promote their own personal growth, improve on practices that enhance student learning, and help advance the teaching profession. Moreover, action research is a powerful and useful model for practitioner research because: research can be set within a specific context or situation; researchers can be participants – they don't have to be distant and detached from the situation; action research involves continuous evaluation and modifications can be made as the project progresses; there are opportunities for theory to emerge from the research rather than always follow a previously formulated theory; the study can lead to open-ended outcomes; through action research, the researcher can bring a story to life (Koshy, 2005).

By implication, there is no action without research and there is no research without action (Verma and Mallick, 1999, cited in Daniel and Firdissa: 2009:23). Action research aims to contribute both to practical concerns of people in immediate problematic situations and to further the goals of social science simultaneously (Hopkins, 2002: 28). Thus there is a dual commitment in action research to study a system research and concurrently to collaborate with members of the system in changing it in what is together regarded as desirable direction. This stresses the importance of co-learning as the primary aspect of the research process (O'Brien, 1998).

The Ethiopian Education Policy directives address the importance of action research at school and classroom levels. Furthermore the policy states that, teachers at all levels are required to engage in action research as part of the teaching-learning processes. Accordingly teachers are expected to conduct action research practically to support and strengthen the teaching- learning process (MOE, 2002, cited by Biruk 2013).

Since teachers and educators are the once who actually engage in day to day teaching activities, they can easily identify the problems that are eminent and frequent. Rather than reporting to higher officials, they can give solutions to some problems by doing action research.

However during my preliminary investigation in Bole Sub City Secondary Schools teachers are not actually engaged in action research in their day to day activities. This gap initiated and motivated the researcher to investigate the extent to which action research is practiced in preparatory schools. Therefore, this paper will investigate the practice of action research, its benefits and challenges in Bole Preparatory School.

## **1.2. Statement of the problem**

Teachers at different school levels perform their day to day tasks according to their lesson plan and the requirements of the curriculum that are provided by regional education bureaus and/or Ministry of Education. With respect to action research one may ask different questions like, the educational background of teachers to perform action research, the willingness or readiness of teachers to perform action research, the schools' policy and follow up to remind and encourage teachers to perform action research, whether experiences are shared among colleagues, because this minimizes duplication of efforts also by sharing findings the overall quality of teaching and learning be enhanced.

A great frustration for adult educators is the fact that practice problems seldom seem to bear much resemblance to the problems and issues addressed by the professional researchers in higher education institutions. Action research directly fills these gaps because it is an approach to research that is designed to be carried out by practitioners in the actual practice setting. Action research is an approach that allows practitioners to both improve their practice and better

understand the nature of that practice (Quigley and Kuhn, 1997:24). In this regard teachers and educators at high school level need to understand such issues and be able to identify problems that are seen in every day class room activities. And by conducting an action research give proper solution to these problems. Even if some schools or some teachers do perform action research, its prospects and challenges need to be identified in order to further use them in the future courses.

In practice the participation of teachers in conducting action research was not at the expected level by the package of quality of education components which are School Improvement Program (SIP) and Teachers Development Program (TDP) of Ministry of Education of Ethiopia, that noted effective continuous professional development to be conducted, that is team teaching and undertaking action research together (MoE, 2009).

Moreover, studies indicate that the involvement of teachers in conducting action research is very low. For instance, Azeb (2012) noted that the secondary schools under study made insufficient participation of action research. In addition, there is any systematic attempt made to study the conditions under which high school teachers to do action research. Also Biruk (2013) concluded that the practice of action research at Sululta Secondary School was very low. Also Tadele(2013) concluded that The current status of secondary school teachers' practice in action research was low. The data gathered from the respondents, interviewees, document and participants of FGD indicated that the current status of teachers' practice in action research was in low status.

Solomon (2013) who conducted research at Misrak Goah Secondary School concluded that “the study has founded out that the extent to which the teachers involved in educational action research was very low, or was so limited. The findings depicted that insignificant number of

teachers had been engaged in educational action research. The majority of the teachers did not conduct action research hitherto”.

Accordingly, a preliminary study by the researcher at Bole Preparatory School indicated that the level of action research performed by the teachers is very low. This initiated and motivated the researcher to conduct this study and the researcher tries to investigate the extent to which action research is being practiced, the extent to which the school supports teachers in conducting action research? What are the prospects of doing action research for the future? And what are the challenges faced while conducting action research by taking Bole Preparatory School under study.

### **1.3. Research questions**

The following research questions are developed to investigate the practice of action research, and its prospects and challenges at Bole preparatory School.

1. Do teachers at Bole preparatory school engage in conducting action research?
2. How does the school encourage teachers to implement action research? (Training, books and other materials)
3. Do the teachers in Bole Preparatory Secondary School have the necessary knowledge and skill to conduct action research?
4. Do teachers share their findings and experiences with other teachers?
5. What challenges do these researchers (teachers) face when conducting action research?
6. What can be done to improve the practice of action research in Bole Preparatory secondary schools in the future?

## **1.4. Objectives**

### **1.4.1. General objective**

The main objective of this study is to investigate the extent to which action research is practiced in Bole preparatory School.

### **1.4.2. Specific objective**

The specific objectives of this study are to investigate the following research questions:-

1. To investigate the extent to which action research at Bole preparatory school is conducted
2. To identify the extent to which the school supports teachers in conducting action research.
3. To assess the extent to which the knowledge and skills of Bole Preparatory and Secondary school teachers in conducting action research
4. To assess whether experiences were shared by teachers after conducting action research.
5. To identify the challenges faced in practicing action research
6. To identify what should be done to improve the current situation

## **1.5. Significance of the Study**

Action research gives another option to teachers and educators to identify problems and give solutions to those problems simultaneously at classroom level based on scientific methods. Thus the finding of this study is significant to:-

- ❖ It gives insight about the status of action research to others who want to further study in the area.
- ❖ Provide teachers and school principals the knowledge and skill in conduction action research as part of their day to day teaching activity.
- ❖ Provide possible feedback and recommendations for Sub-city and City educational bureaus to develop strategies to enhance the level of the practice of action research at Preparatory School level.

## **1.6. Delimitation of the study**

Due to time and resource constraints of the researcher and proximity, the scope of the study focused on the practices of action researches its challenges and prospects at Bole preparatory school. And also what are the problems that are faced by implementing action research. The study assesses to what extent schools and teachers apply action research in their day to day teaching and learning activities in Bole preparatory school. Teacher's knowledge and their experiences towards action research are also included in the study.

## **1.7. Limitations of the study**

This study applied both interview and questionnaire in the process of collecting data. The interview was conducted with the principal and the deputy principal at Bole preparatory school. Since the researcher was self sponsor and engaged in office work, there was financial and time constraint to collect data from a larger area and different Schools. Accordingly, the research is conducted only at Bole preparatory school.

## **1.8. Organization of the Study**

This study is divided into five chapters. The first Chapter consists of introduction, statement of the problem, research question, and objective of the study, limitations, delimitations and significance of the study. The analysis of documents from the existing literature both theoretical as well as conceptual framework will be on Chapter two. And the study methodology will be presented in Chapter three. In Chapter four analysis and discussion of the key findings will be presented, while Chapter five draws the major conclusions and makes the recommendations of the study.



## Chapter Two

### 2. Review of Related Literature

#### 2.1. History of Action Research

There are different views about the origin of Action research. Some writers take it back to fourth century BC (384-322 BC) the works of Aristotle and John Dewey (1859-1952) as the founders of action research; others take regard Kurt Lewin(1890-1947) as an originator of action research. However, the credit of using the action research in education goes to Stephen Corey and others at Teachers College of Columbia University in 1949. However, it is difficult to trace a definitive history of action research, as many of those involved may not have been associated with academic publishing (Brydon-Miller et al., 2007). The idea of using research in a “natural” setting to change the way that the researcher interacts with the setting can be traced back to Kurt Lewin a social psychologist and educator whose work on ‘action research’ was developed throughout the the 1940’s in the United States (Ferrance, 2000). O’Brien (1998) indicated that Eric Trist, another major contributor to the field was a social psychiatrist whose group at the Tavistock institute of Human relations in London engaged in applied social research, where he developed action research by using it in a large-scale, multi organizational problem. Both Lewin and Trist applied their research to systemic change in and between organizations. They emphasized direct professional - client collaboration and affirmed the role of group relations as basis for problem-solving. Both were avid proponents of the principle that decisions are *best* implemented by those who help make them (O’Brien, 1998). The conventional way of writing the history of action research is divide it into two stages. The first of these covers the period between the 1920s and 1950s and is intended to show how action research originated in the United States from the 1920s onwards. There was a growing interest in the application of

scientific methods to the study of social and educational problems. The most cited figure of this period is Kurt Lewin who was generally attributed with introducing the phrase action research to describe a form of inquiry that would enable the significantly established laws of social life to be tried and tested in practice. The second stage in the historical evolution of action research invariably takes as its starting point the revival of interest that occurred in the context of educational and curriculum research in the UK in the early 1970s. The reasons that have been given for this revival include a growing conviction of the irrelevance of conventional educational research to the practical concerns of teachers and schools (Carr, 2006).

## **2.2. Definition of Action Research**

As mentioned in Chapter one action research is defined differently and is difficult to give a comprehensive definition of the term action research because many scholars with different focuses have defined action research in different ways. For the purpose of this study, a brief review of some relevant definitions is presented. Carr and Kemmis (1986:162) defined “action research is a form self reflective enquiry undertaken by participants, teachers, students, parents in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own social or educational practices; their understanding of these practices; and the situations where these practices are carried out”. This definition indicates that Action Research participates stakeholders such as; teachers, students and even parents in the process of conducting the research. The other tradition views action research as “the systematic collection of information that is designed to bring about social change allowing practitioners to martial evidence or data to expose unjust practices environmental dangers and recommend action for change (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992:223). This definition focused on the social aspect of action research.

In traditional sense action research is considered as simple and routine activities of teachers in their class rooms. Current development, nonetheless, show that it “is not the usual that teachers do when thinking about teaching”, it is planned, more systematic and more collaborative (Mertler, 2009:19). In this sense action research is a deliberate and systematic endeavor by the self in to the self. The word ‘self’ may mean individual or collective self. Both individual and collective selves, nonetheless have symbolic relationships. This is because, action research inevitably involves “working with other people to discuss, plan, test, retry and ensure validity and so on”(Wisker, 2008:231), the level of individual empowerment and efforts are central for its success (Firdissa, 2010). Here from inception to the acquiring of results action research involves discussion and collaboration with other stakeholders such as; colleagues, department heads and even with school principals.

Usually, action research is undertaken in a school setting. It is a reflective process that allows for inquiry and discussion. Often action research is a collaborative activity among colleagues searching for solutions to everyday, real problems experienced in schools, or looking for ways to improve instruction and increase student achievement. Rather than dealing with the theoretical, action research allows practitioners to address those concerns that are closest to them, ones over which they can exhibit some influence and make change.

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

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

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

Action research is a process in which participants examine their own educational practice systematically and carefully, using the techniques of research. It is based on the following assumptions:

- Teachers and principals work best on problems they have identified for themselves
  - Teachers and principals become more effective when encouraged to examine and assesses their own work and then consider ways of working differently
  - Teachers and principals help each other by working collaboratively
  - Working with colleagues helps teachers and principals in their professional development
- (Watts, 1985:118)

Although there are many types of research that may be undertaken, action research specifically refers to a disciplined inquiry done by a teacher with the intent that the research will inform and change his or her practices in the future. This research is carried out within the context of the

teacher's environment—that is, with the students and at the school in which the teacher works—on questions that deal with educational matters at hand (Ferrance, 2000:1)

Action research is a process in which teachers investigate teaching and learning to improve their own and their students learning. It is teacher initiated classroom investigation which seeks the teacher's understanding of classroom teaching and learning and to bring change in classroom practice. The process that the teacher goes through to achieve these themes is a spiral action research cycle consisting of four major phases: planning, acting, observing and reflecting (Zuber-skerrit 1991:2 cited in Daniel and Firdissa, 2009:9).

What separates this type of research from general professional practices, consulting, or daily problem-solving is the emphasis on scientific study, which is to say the researcher studies the problem systematically and ensures the intervention is informed by theoretical considerations. Much of the researcher's time is spent on refining the methodological tools to suit the exigencies of the situation, and on collecting, analyzing, and presenting data on an ongoing, cyclical basis.

Several attributes separate action research from other types of research. Primary is its focus on turning the people involved into researchers, too - people learn best, and more willingly apply what they have learned, when they do it themselves. It also has a social dimension - the research takes place in real-world situations, and aims to solve real problems. Finally, the initiating researcher, unlike in other disciplines, makes no attempt to remain objective, but openly acknowledges their bias to the other participant.

Generally in all the above definitions action research is described as a systematic way of inquiry for the purpose of improving teaching and learning practices by solving immediate and pertinent problems that teachers face in their everyday activities by improving or changing current practices. It is also action based not a theoretical research that is conducted for further

investigation rather it is doing the research and simultaneously implementing and solving the existing problems. Moreover, it is a process in which teachers systematically investigate instructional practices and techniques in order to improve their teaching.

### **2.3. Purpose of action Research**

According to Elliot (1988), the purposes of action research in schools is to investigate human actions and social situations which are experienced by teachers ; the aim of action research is to deeper teachers 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. Also Zuber-Skerritt (1993) explained that the aim of action research is to improve the practices of learning, teaching and management in a systematic way and if warranted, to suggest and make changes to the environment and effective future development.

According to Cohen and Manion (1994), the purpose of action research in school and classroom fall broadly into five categories:

- 1) It is a means of remedying problems diagnosed in specific situation or of improving in some way a given set of circumstances;
- 2) It is a means of in-service training there by equipping the teacher with new skills and methods, sharpening his analytical powers and heightening his self-awareness;
- 3) It is a means of injecting additional or innovatory approaches to teaching and learning into an ongoing system which normally inhibits innovation and change;

4) It is a means of improving the normally poor communications between the practitioner (teacher) and the academic researcher and of remedying the failure of traditional research to give clear prescriptions; and

5) Although lacking the rigor of true scientific research it is a means of providing a preferable alternative to the more subjective impressionistic approach to problem solving in the classroom.

promotes the selection of research questions that are personally meaningful

Encourages teacher-researchers to be active learners

Increases willingness to accept research findings for use in teaching

encourages more critical and responsive consumers of research

Increases teachers' knowledge about situations and contexts

Facilitates defense of pedagogic actions

Strengthens connection between pure and applied research

Increases commitment to goals they have formulated themselves rather than those imposed on them

Increases opportunity to gain knowledge and skill in research methodology and applications

#### **2.4. Importance of Action Research**

Mertler discusses the four broad but vitally important ways in which action research can be used successfully in educational settings: to effectively connect theory to practice, to improve educational practice, to empower teachers, and as a means for promoting professional growth (Mertler, 2009:21).

### **2.4.1. Connecting Theory to Practice**

Action research helps to narrow down or avoid the gap between (language) theory and practice following a series of steps in which an idea or focus of the study has been identified followed by reconnaissance (observation) and data collection; reflection; and construction of a plan for the overall research work (Firdissa, 2010:47). Since action research is conducted in a class room, both the practice and formulating a theory goes simultaneously. This helps teachers to deal with current problems rather than only focusing on traditional teachings.

Research is often used to develop theories that eventually help determine best practices in education (Johnson, 2008 cited in Crage A. Mertler, 2009:20). These practices are then used to help teachers develop effective learning experiences for their students. This unidirectional flow of information, in the specific form of research findings, from researchers to practitioners often breaks dawn (Johnson, 2008). Frequently, there exists a gap between what is learned by researchers, who conduct and report their research on educational topics and practicing classroom teachers.

Action research provides one possible solution to bridging this gap by creating a two way flow of information. Research findings offered from research can still be used to inform best practices and to better understand what is happening in class rooms. Simultaneously, data collected and analyzed by practicing teachers in their own classrooms can be to inform theories and research related to best practices (Mertler, 2009:21). As explained above every teacher can try to solve problems around his/her school surrounding rather than just reflecting what is in the lesson plan only.



### **2.4.2. Improvement of Education Practice**

In the traditional teaching practices the teacher always speaks and students listen, only one way of communication prevails. The teacher does not involve himself in improving the current problems that he is encountered during his day to day activities. But the practice of action research improves this situation. Scholars stress on the involvement of teachers in teaching practices in critical ways. For example, (Parsons and Brown, 2002 cited in Mertler, 2009:21) states that, “The main focus of action research is the improvement of class room practice. When teachers are reflective and critical of their own practice, they use the information they collect and phenomena they observe as a means of facilitating informed, practical decision making. The clear strength of action research is that it is reflective and collaborative and that it can ultimately lead to improvements in educational practice.”

### **2.4.3. Teacher Empowerment-Teacher as Decision Maker**

When teachers collect their own data in order to assist in making decisions about their own students and classrooms-a teacher as decision maker-they become empowered. Teachers are allowed-even encouraged- to take risks and make changes their instructional practice whenever and wherever they believe it to be appropriate (Johnson, 2008 cited by Mertler, 2009:21). By conducting action research teachers become problem solvers, researchers and decision makers. Supportive environment empowers teachers to revisit and to challenge their self-concept, particularly those who view themselves as pawns and dependent on external forces and underestimate their potential contribution, empowerment, and autonomy. It thus, invites them for:-

- a) Exploring possibilities for action
- b) Enhancing their self-image as originators, and

c) Developing strategies geared to improve their situations and to enhance change in some aspect of their classrooms with subsequent monitoring of the effects of the change (Firdissa 2010:49).

#### **2.4.4. Professional Growth**

Teachers can self educate and enhance their professional capacity by performing action research indirectly while they try solve classroom and school problems. Action research has been shown to serve as a means of improving teachers' problem solving skills and their attitude toward professional development and school change, as well as increasing their confidence and professional self-esteem (Parsons and Brown, 2002 cited by Mertler, 2009:22). Furthermore, action research affirms the professionalism of teaching by giving teachers a real voice in their own professional development, as opposed to being told by someone else that a specific goal or topic is what is needed by every teacher in the building or district (Schmuck, 1997 cited by Mertler, 2009:22). Thus by conducting action research can improve professionally by developing their knowledge and skill and also build confidence to engage in to research and problem solving activities in the future.

#### **2.5. What is Not Action Research?**

Action research is not what usually comes to our mind when we hear the word "research". Action research is not a library project where we learn more about a topic that interests us. It is not problem-solving in the sense of trying to find out what is wrong, but rather quest for knowledge about how to improve. Action research is not about doing research on or about people, or finding all available information on a topic looking for the correct answers. It involves people working to improve their skills, techniques, and strategies. Action research is *not* about

learning why we do certain things, but rather how we can do things better. It is about how we can change our Instruction to impact students (Ferrance, 2000:3).

## **2.6. Types of Action Research**

According to O'Brien (2001 cited by Daniel and Firdessa, 2009:78-80) by the mid-1970s, the field had evolved, revealing 4 main 'streams' that had emerged: traditional, contextual (action learning), radical, and educational action research.

### **2.6.1. Traditional Action Research**

Traditional action research stemmed from Lewin's work within organizations and encompasses the concepts and practices of Field Theory, Group Dynamics, T-Groups, and the Clinical Model. The growing importance of labor-management relations led to the application of action research in the areas of Organization Development, Quality of Working Life (QWL), Socio-technical systems (e.g., Information Systems), and Organizational Democracy. Technical action research is based on experience and observation, and is positivist, also predictive, and tries to control human situations through rules based on empirical laws. The purpose of this research is to discover the laws underlying reality (Grundy, 1982) and to improve the effectiveness of educational and managerial practice (Zuber-Skerritt, 1996).

### **2.6.2. Contextual Action Research (Action Learning)**

Contextual Action Research, also sometimes referred to as Action Learning, is an approach derived from Trist's work on relations between organizations. It is contextual, insofar as it entails reconstituting the structural relations among actors in a social environment; domain-based, in that it tries to involve all affected parties and stakeholders; holographic, as each participant understands the working of the whole; and it stresses that participants act as project

designers and co-researchers. The concept of organizational ecology and the use of search conferences come out of contextual action research, which is more of a liberal philosophy, with social transformation occurring by consensus and normative incrementalism.

Zeichner (2007) indicated that contextual action research refers to the conditions under which action research is conducted. For instance, educators conduct action research alone as individuals, as part of small collaborative groups or in school faculty groups involving everyone in a particular school. When research is done in the context of a group, the groups have varied according to their size, the basis for their formation, and whether they have an external facilitator or not

### **2.6.3. Radical Action Research**

The Radical stream, which has its roots in Marxian ‘dialectical materialism’ and the praxis orientations of Antonio Gramsci, has a strong focus on emancipation and the overcoming of power imbalances. Participatory Action Research, often found in liberationist movements and international development circles, and Feminist action research both strive for social transformation via an advocacy process to strengthen peripheral groups in society (Daniel and Firdessa, 2009:80)

### **2.6.4. Educational Action Research**

A fourth stream, that of educational action research, has its foundations in the writings of John Dewey, the great American educational philosopher of the 1920s and 30s, who believed that professional educators should become involved in community problem-solving. Its practitioners, not surprisingly, operate mainly out of educational institutions, and focus on development of curriculum, professional development, and applying learning in a social context. It is often the case that university-based action researchers work with primary and secondary school teachers

and students on community projects. Tripp (2005) noted that, educational action research is principally a strategy for the development of teachers as researchers so that they can use their research to improve their teaching and thus their students' learning, but even within educational Action research distinct varieties have emerged.

On the other hand (Ferrance, 2000:3) divide educational action research in to four types, Individual teacher research, collaborative action research, school-wide action research and District-wide action research.

#### *A. Individual teacher research*

Individual teacher research usually focuses on a single issue in the classroom. The teacher may be seeking solutions to problems of classroom management, instructional strategies, use of materials, or student learning. Teachers may have support of their supervisor or principal, an instructor for a course they are taking, or parents. The problem is one that the teacher believes is evident in his or her classroom and one that can be addressed on an individual basis. The research may then be such that the teacher collects data or may involve looking at student participation. One of the drawbacks of individual research is that it may not be shared with others unless the teacher chooses to present findings at a faculty meeting, make a formal presentation at a conference, or submit written material to a listserv, journal, or newsletter. It is possible for several teachers to be working concurrently on the same problem with no knowledge of the work of others.

#### *B. Collaborative action research*

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

### *C. School-wide research*

School-wide research focuses on issues common to all. For example, a school may have a concern about the lack of parental involvement in activities, and is looking for a way to reach more parents to involve them in meaningful ways. Or, the school may be looking to address its organizational and decision-making structures. Teams of staff from the school work together to narrow the question, gather and analyze the data, and decide on a plan of action. An example of action research for a school could be to examine their state test scores to identify areas that need improvement, and then determine a plan of action to improve student performance. Team work and individual contributions to the whole are very important, and it may be that problem points arise as the team strives to develop a process and make commitment to each other. When these obstacles are overcome, there will be a sense of ownership and accomplishment in the results that come from this school-wide effort.

### *D. District-wide research*

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

Table 1: Types of action research

	Individual	Teacher	Research	Collaborative
Focus	Single classroom issue	Single classroom or several classrooms with common issue	School issue, problem, or area of collective interest	District issue Organizational structures
Possible support needed	Coach/mentor Access to technology Assistance with data organization and analysis	Substitute teachers Release time Close link with administrators	School commitment Leadership Communication External partners	District commitment Facilitator Recorder Communication External partners
Potential Impact	Curriculum Instruction Assessment	Curriculum Instruction Assessment Policy	Potential to impact school restructuring and change Policy Parent involvement Evaluation of program	Allocation of resources Professional development activities Organizational policy
Side Effects	Practice informed by data Information not always shared	Improved collegiality Formation of Partnerships	Improved collegiality, collaboration, and communication, team building disagreement on process	Improved collegiality, collaboration, and communication Team building Disagreements on process Shared vision

Source: Ferrance, 2000:6

## 2.7. Characteristics of action research

Action research is characterized as a zigzag and demanding practice. This is because there are times when practitioners move back and forth seeking adjustments, as it does not begin with a fixed hypothesis or questions. It therefore, follows the development process of identifying an idea, seeing how it goes, and continually checking whether it is in line with what the

practitioner(s) wish (es) it to happen. Equally, the scope of action research may be broad or narrow; the issue may be general or specific (Firdissa, 2010:52).

Action research is situational- it is concerned with diagnosing a problem in a specific context and attempting to solve it in that context. It is usually collaborative-team of teachers and practitioners work together. It is participatory -team members themselves take part directly or indirectly in implanting the research. It is self-evaluative-modifications continuously evaluated within the ongoing situation, the ultimate objective being to improve practice in some way or other (Cohen and Manion, 1994).

Action research differs from most other forms of research because it aims to find and correct problems of practice, it is designed, conducted, and interpreted by the teacher researcher, and it is value-based rather than value-neutral in approaching a study (Gay and Airasian 2000:603 cited by Firdissa, 2010: 54). This implies that action research is characterized as participatory and collaborative practice, usually empowering practitioners who have a stake in the action to have a real say to reflect on their practices being data driven in their daily action and in how they interpret their successes and failures, and ensure that what it does and how it does it are relevant for all concerned (Firdissa, 2010: 54).

Through, systematic investigation, teachers can become more professional, more interested in pedagogical and other aspects of the school and more motivated to integrate their research and teaching interests in a holistic way. This in turn, can lead to greater job satisfaction, better academic programmers', improvement of student learning and practitioners' insights and contributions to the advancement of knowledge in education. Elliot (1988) provides the following characteristics of action research in schools.



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

Similarly, Institute for Curriculum Development and Research (ICDR, 1999) identified the following characteristics of action research conducted in the classroom. Action research is essentially on- the- spot procedure designed to deal with a concrete problem located in an immediate situation. It deals with providing feedback to bring about lasting benefit to a going process. Its findings are applied immediately. It is directed to the environment of practice in schools, which of course requires a change of attitude and behavior on the part of teachers. It is flexible and adaptable. Its objective is situational and specific. Its sample is restricted and unrepresentative. According to the above literature, action research is different from the other kinds of research in that it deals with concrete and immediate school problems directing to the improvement of practice. Moreover, it is specific, practical, flexible, and adaptable and depends on an empirical data.

## **2.8. Steps in Action research**

Within all the definitions of action research, there are four basic themes: empowerment of participants, collaboration through participation, acquisition of knowledge, and social change.

According to Ferrance (2000), these routines are loosely guided by movement through five phases of inquiry;

- a. Identification of problem area
- b. Collection and organization of data
- c. Interpretation of data
- d. Action based on data
- e. Reflection

The action research process is a cyclical on which includes planning, action, observing, and evaluating the effects of action. At first, this can seem a neat, highly ordered view of the process, but it must be remembered that some stages can overlap, and throughout the process runs a thread of reflection on the part the researcher. However, it is useful to conceptualize the action research process in the following way:

- Identify an area for investigation and a need for change
- Carry out change (action)
- Look at effects of changes (research)
- Re plan/adjust changes (action)
- Repeat
- Make a constant effort to link reflection and practice (Clair Taylor, Min Wilkie and Judith Baser, 2006: 6)

In addition, Johnson (2011) indicated that there are no universal order steps in action research. You might find yourself skipping steps, rearranging their order, or repeating some steps more than once. However, the steps in conducting action researches are as follows:

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

You might to take one of the three approaches in doing alternative review. The first approach is to do the review of the literature before you begin collecting data. Besides setting your study in theoretical context, the literature might also be used to help formulate your questions, refine a pedagogical method to be studied or give you ideas for collecting data. The second approach is to review the literature as you report the data and make your conclusions. The literature is related to each of your concluding point. The third approach is not to do a review of the literature at all. Many short action research projects do not include these elements. As you can see, you have a certain amount of freedom in organizing your action research projects. The responsibility is on you; however, to create a credible and coherent report linking your study to theories and previous research is one way to do this.

- c) Make a plan for data collection. In traditional research this is known as methodology.

What data are you going to study? How are you going to collect the data? How often will you collect data? Action research is not impressionistic. Nor it is a brochure supporting a systematic observation; therefore, data collection must be focused and the elements of data collection must be determined before the research begins.

- d) Begin to collect and analyze data. After you have identified at least two kinds of data, you begin the data collection process. As you collect your data, analyze them by looking for themes, categories or patterns that emerge. This analysis will influence further data collection by helping you to know what to look for.
- e) If necessary, allow the question or problem to change as you collect data. Action research is dynamic, ever-changing process. As a human you cannot help but be influenced by the data you collect. It is very common, therefore, to change a particular teaching strategy, the sources of data, or even the focus of the study as you are collecting data. This is acceptable as long as you let the reader know what you did and why you did it. That is, in writing your report takes the reader along with you in all phases of your action research.
- f) Analyze and organize the data. Hopefully you have been analyzing and organizing the data as you have been collecting them, thus, step 6 should be the final step of an ongoing process. In analyzing your data, you need to establish how many total things were recorded, how many categories or kinds of things are in each category. This is a quick view of analytic induction.
- g) Report the data. Present the fact or findings. This presentation includes an overview with detailed descriptions and illustrative samples of important events, activities and responses or patterns present in the data. In this section of your report you take the role of journalist or

anthropologist by describing what you saw and providing examples that demonstrate your perceptions.

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

## **2.9. Factors Affecting Teachers from conducting Action Research**

Action research can improve the teaching and learning process by solving eminent problems in the classroom as well as in the school. Though, there are different factors that constrain teachers in conducting action research. These factors can be problem related with lack of in-service training, lack of knowledge and skills, lack of attitude and interest, shortage of materials or resources and financial problems.

Watson and Maddison (2005) cited in Daniel and Firdissa (2009) indicated that many of the constraints are attributable to the contexts in which teachers work. The contexts in which teachers work have an important influence on teaching. Different teaching setting involves teachers in kinds of different roles. Consequently, some constraints are rooted in the cause/effect of current weaknesses in the context of institutional self-study. Constraints can be grouped under

the headings of; People (dissatisfaction, resistance, insufficient training and limited opportunity and time to practice), System (mismatch between internal and external need, lack of clear roles/responsibilities), Materials, data-related problems such as incomplete and inconsistent information and Resource (competing demands on time, full market analysis which is costly).

Burns (1999) classified the factors that affect teachers from conducting action research into three as ranked by his research subjects in three countries, lack of time, lack of resources, school organizational features, and Inadequacies of research skills are the most frequently ranked research constraints among participants. Obtaining consent, language of research, pressure of student examinations, and disapproval of the principals are the second serious problems, which seem to hamper teachers' undertaking of action research. That is followed by human factors such as disapproval of the colleagues, misconception of the role of the teacher; professional factors and student's disapproval are another factor that hinders teachers' involvement in action research. Identified as fourth set of factors are- heavy workload, limited support, anxiety in sharing classroom practices, suspicious of the usefulness of action research, and timetable pressures are also found to hamper teachers' involvement in action research. Gemechu (2006) also stated that teachers have shortage of the necessary inputs to conduct action research like, current literatures adequate budget, time access to internet, computers, and printers.

Elliott (1999) stated the factors that discourage or affect teachers from conducting action research are under-funding of staff development, inflexible staff contracts, high staff workload, an absence of research contracts course development and teaching over research, limited access to library and internet, funding methodologies that do not reward research a competitive culture that discourages collaborative research. Hence, these factors can be presented in detail as follows:

### **2.9.1. Problems related to resources**

In terms of resources the major factors that affect teachers from conducting action research are lack of time, lack of finance, resources materials, according to Elliott (1999).

#### *A. Lack of time*

Teachers who find great difficulty incorporating in to their busy daily routine, time together formally group to discuss professional issues (Johnston, 1994) always raise shortage of time as a barrier. Obviously, research is time taking. The researcher has to rise and deal with so many issues, for example, teaching learning methods, materials, different relationships, students achievement, and so on. Not all these issues can be attained over night, but need careful investigation on the part of the researcher. Therefore, to attain intended objectives, the researchers should be provided with ample time. Otherwise, the quality of these advocates of action research attempt to distinguish it from empirical research approaches and suggests that naturalistic form of data collection.

#### *B. Lack of research funds and material resources*

Underfunding of schools that have resulted from the continued decline of the economy of most countries of eastern and southern African regions, research activity in these institutions has tended to suffer disproportionately (Mwaria and Wamahiu, 1995). In addition to these, supplementary reading materials, and stationary were effective for participation of teachers in conducting action research at school. If these materials are not available in their schools, teachers are involuntary to conduct action research to solve their school problems, which affect teaching-learning process. Therefore, availability of materials has high contribution for teachers to conduct action research. For Kaul (1998) a researcher has to be critical reader so that he will be acquainted with the necessary knowledge and skills. Reading materials written by professionals that will direct the researcher to problems that deserve the study and will recommend methods to

conduct research. Besides, reports of research results journals, newspapers, written on one field, etc. may recommend problems that need to be acquired what procedures followed when studying a problem.

#### *C. Problems related to technical support*

Elliott (1999) Technical support is very necessary especially during the early stage of action research. Support for teachers who do educational action research in general and action research in particular could be in different forms organizational support, financial support, training on action research and facilitating in different activities of action research Lack of training. Similarly, Seyoum (1998) also stated lack of in-service training, like work shop, seminars, conferences are the major factors affecting the application of action research in secondary schools. The limitation in learning research skills in pre-service teacher's education programs makes teachers handicapped to conduct action research unless in- service trainings are frequently arranged. The skills and training acquired could differ from individual to individual as far as action research is concerned. This clearly indicates that appropriate experience and knowledge are necessary in conducting research.

#### *D. Lack of organizational and leadership support*

In order to improve the teaching and learning process through action research, support from the school leadership is very vital. The support expected from organization and school leadership may update teacher's knowledge and skill, giving feedback and facilitating necessary research conditions. Seyoum (1998) indicated that institutional inputs should be sufficiently provided so that the research activity can be carried out effectively. Also (MOE/AED, 2006) states that "During this stage of action research in schools, teachers need support of various kinds. Support for teachers who do educational action research could be in different forms: technical support, material support and participating or facilitating in different activities of the research."



*E. Lack of effective coordinating body for action research and relevant data*

Coordinating body for research activities is very necessary. It is important to note that what researcher can do depends on the existence of reliable information and strong research networks that create collaboration with all concerned bodies including policy makers, educational officials and schools. Seyoum (1998), here also emphasized that integration of both personal and institutional inputs are necessary in research activities.

*F. The dichotomy of theory and practice*

Separating theory and practice in education is one of the factors that refrain teachers from participating in practical inquiry and classroom based research (Kwan 1993). There is a common belief among the practitioners that it is the theorists that who do the theorizing and the teachers who teach (do the practice). This misunderstanding defines teaching and research as separate activities.

*G. Lack of interest*

(Merriam, 1988; Creswell, 1994) reveals that interest is the major driving force behind research. This is indeed true, because interest in research activity is not something that is imposed from without unless it comes from within the individual. Seyoum(1998) Success will be achieved when the initiation comes from the individual researcher himself or herself, one must suggest doing depending on the area of interest, to explore intrinsically with some passion. It is only at this time that people will have more concern for their society and attempt to pursue significant goals rather than being selfish. In addition, carrying out action research needs people, who are visionary, have the potential to analyze things in different perspectives and ready to respond and challenge without any hesitation.

### *H. Motivational factors*

Seyoum (1998) reveals that in the absence of psychological and material benefits, the opportunity of undertaking research is a rare case. Accordingly, psychological achievements like recognition, public support, satisfaction due to the results achieved are needed. People also have motives of financial and material incentives for their engagement in action research activities.

### **2.10. Action Research in Ethiopia**

Action research in a coordinated effort and deliberative manner in teaching education programs has come with the launching of Higher Diploma Program (HDP) in 2003 at all higher education institutions in Ethiopia(HEIS). The program has a handbook/portfolio, prepared at national level to maintain standards. The handbook contains information and procedures required for its delivery and completion. The contents and activities in the hand book have been categorized under four interactive modules (Firdissa, 2010:39).

- Module 1. The reflective teacher educator
- Module 2. Developing active learning
- Module 3. Improving assessment
- Module 4. Action research making a difference

Over all, the program is delivered through school placemen, lesson observations, and feedback and working on the four modules each of which is divided in two sessions using active learning and continuous assessment (Ibid.).

The participation of teachers in school based action research can enhance quality of education by solving real classroom and school problems. By conducting action research teachers can

collaborate on curriculum revision, improve their work environment, professionalize teaching and suggest ideas for the development and revision of educational policy (MoE, 2006). Yibeltal (2006), in his study focused at action research in Ambo General Secondary School concluded that the status of action research activities was marginal due to teachers' lack of motivation that resulted from interruption of promotion in the career structure, teachers' lack of interest and negative attitude, and teachers' lack of commitments, inadequate facilities, lack of research knowledge and experiences, lack of financial support and others.

Also, research findings in Ethiopian Secondary Schools (e.g. Seyoum, 1998; Abraham 2004; Yalew 2000; Azeb 2012; Biruk, 2013; Slomon 2013; Tadele 2013) indicated that the status of teacher's involvement in research activities in secondary schools was very limited. Assefa (2014) concluded that "The findings of this study depicted that the involvement of teachers and principals in doing action research was minimal".

### **2.11. Conceptual Framework of the Study**

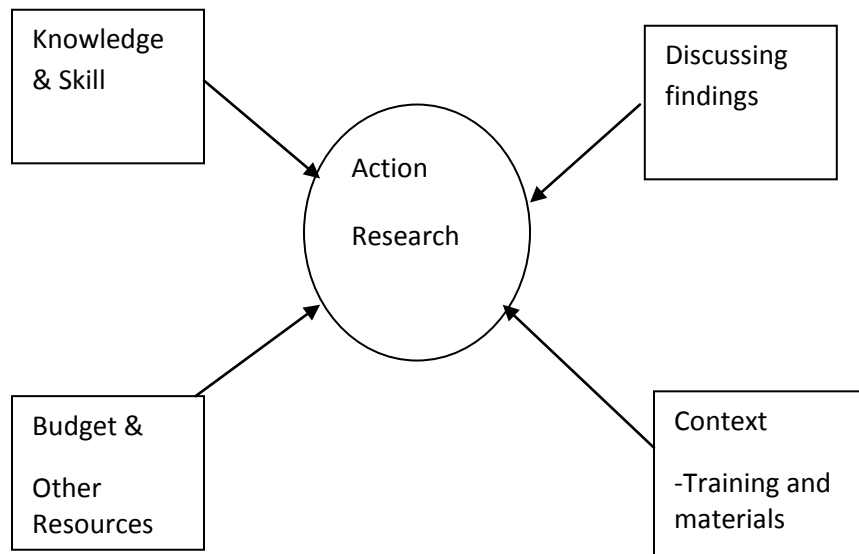
The conceptual model below in Figure 1 was developed after reviewing literatures in the area of action research. In order to conduct action research, it is crucial to have interest in the part of teachers' adequate knowledge and skills, budget (time, financial and other resources) and context (availability of trainings, principals' support).

In addition, so as to perform any activity, it is quite necessary to have the overall knowledge about it. Because knowledge is the understanding or acquaintance that an individual's gain through learning or experience. On the other hand, even though knowledge is very important, it is necessary to have the skills in order to accomplish a desired activity successfully. Skill is the

ability to carry out something effectively. Therefore, teachers are required to have knowledge and skills to engage in doing action research.

In addition to the above ideas, adequate budget, time and other resources like up to dated reference materials with sufficient library service plays an important role in undertaking research successfully and efficiently. Generally, the absence of these factors will refrain teachers' actual involvement in action research and the status of action research in a given context.

Figure 1: Conceptual model of the study



From the above figure, we can see that, if the necessary inputs like adequate budget, sufficient training and materials, are available teachers knowledge and skill will develop. Hence, by discussing developments among teachers continuously, action research can be practiced.

## **Chapter Three**

### **3. Research Design and Methodology**

This chapter presents the research methodology, the research site, the sources of data, the study population, the sample size and sampling technique, the procedures of data collection, the data gathering tools and methods of data analysis.

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

This study used mixed approach that is both quantitative and qualitative methods were applied. According to Creswell (2009), the time-intensive nature of analyzing both text and numeric data and incorporate elements of both qualitative and quantitative approaches/combines or associates both qualitative and quantitative forms characteristics of this paradigm. Creswell (2009), also states that one advantage of mixed methods is opportunity to employ both open and closed-ended questions as well as multiple forms of data collection possibilities. Hence, embedded concurrent design was used. According to Creswell (2009), the concurrent embedded strategy of mixed methods can be identified by its uses of one data collection phase, during which both quantitative and qualitative data are collected simultaneously. Additionally, the approach has a primary method that guides the project and a secondary data base that provides a supporting role in the procedures. Therefore, in this study, the qualitative results were embedded or nested to the quantitative results.

#### **3.2. Sampling technique and Participants**

The subjects or participants in this study were teachers of Bole preparatory School. The total number of teachers is one hundred thirty eight; among them the researcher selected randomly fifty of the teachers as participants which are 36 % of the total population.

### **3.3. Sources of Data**

The primary sources of data used in this study are questionnaire that is filled by the teachers and interview with the principal and deputy principal of Bole Preparatory School. And also the as secondary sources of data documents such as action researches conducted by the teachers, group work papers performed by students that were later basis for action researches and research papers used as teaching materials that are prepared by teachers based on students needs.

### **3.4. Data collection instruments**

To collect the necessary data from the participant's questionnaire and interview were used and documents were reviewed.

#### **3.4.1. Questionnaire**

A Questionnaire is a very commonly and widely used type of instrument in educational research. It is used to acquire information or data from the opinion and attitude of individuals and/or groups about particular situations, events or practices etc. Questionnaires are relatively quick and efficient way of obtaining large amount of information from large sample of people. Data can be collected relatively Quigley because the researcher would not be present when the questionnaires were completed. This is useful for large populations when interviews would be impractical (McLeod, 2014).

Hence, the questionnaire was developed after review of related literatures for research topic. Some of the items of the questionnaires are yes or no questions followed by open ended items to investigate the practice of action research in the study area. The second twenty one closed ended items are prepared in five likert scales valued: strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), undecided (3), agree (4) and strongly agree (5) to explore teachers 'views/opinions regarding action research. The next five closed ended items were prepared in five likert scale to investigate the level of the

school principals' encouragement to teachers in order to undertake action research. The other part of the questionnaire consists of eight closed ended items to investigate the factors that hinder/enable teachers in undertaking action research. The last part consists of two open ended items to assess the major factors that encourage or discourage teachers and the means of improving the current conditions in conducting action research in Bole preparatory School.

### **3.4.2. Interviews**

Open ended interview usually begins with a big question and proceeds in funnel shaped - beginning with large questions working down to details Informant typically seeks cues from the interviewer about what is expected during the interview ...not just the content of the discussion, but also the length of response, depth of detail and formality of language. Although a researcher's explanations can set some of the frame, the first few questions are powerful tools for helping the informants construct their responses (Brenner, 2006:362). The strength of semi-structured interviews tends to be one of the most favored by educational researchers as it allows respondents to express themselves at some length, but offers enough shape to prevent aimless rambling and help researchers to get themes and topics which may not have been anticipated while designing the interview (Burns, 1999). In general nine questions are administered for interview purpose. These questions are derived based on literature review and also research questions.

The researcher also used semi structured interviews to acquire additional information that will strengthen the data obtained through questionnaire. Nine items were administered to the principal and deputy principal of Bole preparatory school about the practice of action research, its prospects and the challenges that prevail. The interview questions was developed after review of related literatures for research topic

### **3.4.3. Document analysis**

Document analysis is a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents both printed and electronic (computer based and internet-transmitted) material. Like other analytical methods in qualitative research, document analysis requires that data be examined and interpreted in order to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge (Glenn, 2009). The researcher examined documents such as action researches conducted by teachers and group work papers by students, research materials prepared by teachers based on students needs ( on specific subject areas) at Bole preparatory School that are relevant to the study.

### **3.5. Validity and Reliability of Instruments**

The researcher validated the instruments by inviting peers and also university teachers (two from each group) and up on the recommendations given three items (two from yes or no questions and one from level of support provided by the school) was corrected and submitted to the advisor. The advisor also evaluated and commented on the weaknesses and grammatical errors of the items.

Moreover, the questionnaire was tried out in small-scale study by using 12 teachers at Lem preparatory School which is the nearer school to Bole Preparatory School. Piloting the instrument helped to clarify ambiguous items also it is one of the best mechanisms of improving the items for data collection procedures. The total number of participants in the pilot study was 12 teachers. After the questionnaire was administered to them, the participants were asked for criticisms. Hence, modification was made on five items (two of them were from the practice of action research items and the rest were from factors that hinder or enable teachers in undertaking action research). Finally, one item was rejected from perception instruments because of its similarity with other items. Out of 40 items administered for pilot testing, 35 items were selected



based on their reliabilities. The total reliability of the instruments was tested by Cronbach's alpha method by using 'SPSS IBM software 20 version' and the computed reliability of the instrument was 0.778. Thus, the instrument was found valuable to collect the data for the main study (Johnson and Christensen, 2012).

### **3.6. Procedures of Data Collection**

The researcher used questionnaire, interview, and document analysis to acquire sufficient data for the purpose of the study. At the first step meeting was arranged with principal and deputy principal of the school and was explained the purpose of the study and also arranged the necessary conditions to distribute the questionnaires to the teachers. After agreeing the appropriate time and conditions the questionnaire is administered to fifty (50) teachers.

While the teachers were responding to the questionnaire the researcher administered the interview with the school's principal and deputy principal and also referred documents available to review the schools experience in the practice of action research.

### **3.7. Methods of Data Analysis**

The quantitative data obtained through questionnaire is analyzed using SPSS 20.0 (IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences). The means and standard deviation scores were computed for each attribution. Parametric techniques such as t-test at  $\alpha=0.5$  confidence interval were used to investigate Action Research Practices, Challenges and Prospects. On the other hand, the interviews, and the document analysis results were nested to the quantitative finding in order to support and strengthen it. Also, the qualitative data results were used as the means of triangulation purposes.

## Chapter Four

### 4. Presentation and Analysis of Data

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

A total of 35 items were used to investigate Action Research Practices, Challenges and Prospects at Bole Preparatory School. Among these, 21 likert type items were applied by calculating mean scores on the scale. To achieve this, numerical scores were assigned to five response options given to each item on the scale. For positively stated items, the score values were assigned as follows: Strongly Agree = 5, Agree=4, Neutral = 3, Disagree = 2 and Strongly Disagree =1. However, for the negatively stated items, the scoring was reversed and scores assigned as follows: Strongly Agree = 1, Agree=2, Neutral= 3, Disagree = 4 and Strongly Disagree =5. The data is then entered into SPSS data editor for analyses. A numerical value of 3 was considered as an assumed mean to see whether there is significance difference in responses among respondents. A mean score of below 3 was treated as negative, 3 was treated as neutral while above 3 is treated as positive. Among the distributed 50 questionnaires 44 were returned. The results of the likert scales, yes or no questions, multiple response questions and label questions were transformed into aggregate scores to form a score of each participant,

#### 4.1. General Characteristics of Respondents

The participants of the study were characterized in terms of their service years, age, sex, total number of periods per week and their educational levels.

A total of 50 teachers were selected and questionnaires were distributed and 88% (39 male and 5 female) (see Table 2 & Table 3) have completed and returned.

Out of the fifty questionnaires distributed forty four are completed and returned.

**Table 2: Teachers by Sex**

Sex	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Male	39	88.6	88.6	88.6
Valid female	5	11.4	11.4	100.0
Total	44	100.0	100.0	

As can be seen from Table 2, thirty nine that is 88.6% of them are male teachers while five are female teachers which are 11.4%. This shows that the number of female teachers is very low and is highly dominated by male teachers.

**Table 3: The total number of periods teaching per week**

No. of Periods	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid ≤10	2	4.5	4.5	4.5
Valid 11-15	19	43.2	43.2	47.7
Valid ≥16	23	52.3	52.3	100.0
Total	44	100.0	100.0	

The variation in the number of periods is due to the number of teachers who teaches less than or equal to ten periods was very low (only two teachers, since they were occupied with administrative work).

As shown in Table: 3 only two teachers are engaged in less than ten periods per week (4.5%). Nineteen teachers have between eleven and fifteen classes per week. Twenty three teachers have above sixteen periods per week that is 52.3 % of the respondents teach more than 16 periods per week. This shows that above 50% of the teachers have more than sixteen classes per week. This also indicates work load on teachers that could refrain them from practicing action research. Burns (1999) identified as fourth set of factors are- heavy workload also Elliott (1999) stated

that one of the factors that discourage or affect teachers from conducting action research is high staff workload. The principal of the school also believe that the majority of the teachers have work load and this in turn affects the practice of action research.

**Table 4: Service year**

Service Year	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
0-5	10	22.7	22.7	22.7
6-10	16	36.4	36.4	59.1
11-15	5	11.4	11.4	70.5
16-20	5	11.4	11.4	81.8
>20	8	18.2	18.2	100.0
Total	44	100.0	100.0	

The service year of the teachers is summarized in table: 4. Ten teachers have less than six years of experience while Sixteen teachers have a service year of between six year to ten year which is the highest category that is 36.4 % and only five teachers have eleven to fifteen years of service while five teachers have sixteen to twenty years of service which is 11.4 % each. Eight teachers have more than twenty years of experience. Here we can say that, the majority of the teachers have sufficient experience to conduct action research in addition to their educational qualification.

**Table 5: Teachers qualification**

Qualification	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Bachelor of Arts	10	22.7	22.7	22.7
Bachelor of Science	7	15.9	15.9	38.6
Bachelor of Education	20	45.5	45.5	84.1
Master of Arts	5	11.4	11.4	95.5
Master of Sciences	2	4.5	4.5	100.0
Total	44	100.0	100.0	

As shown in Table: 5 majority of the teachers are first degree holders that are Bachelor of Art, Science and education which are 74.1 % of the total respondents. Only seven of them have master’s degree which is 15.9 %. Hence, the teachers possess sufficient qualification to conduct action research since teachers have thought in colleges and universities about how to conduct research in general and also action research in particular. Action research in a coordinated effort and deliberative manner in teaching education programs has come with the launching of Higher Diploma Program (HDP) in 2003 at all higher education institutions in Ethiopia(HEIS)(Firdissa 2010). Also the principal of the School suggested that all the teachers are capable of conducting action research since they are either BA or MA degree graduates.

#### 4.2. The Practice of Action Research

By practicing action research in class rooms, teachers can solve problems in the teaching and learning process and also can improve current traditional ways of teaching. In this regard teacher’s involvement in implementing action research in class rooms is very important. Hence the researcher investigated about actual practices and involvement of teachers in conducting action research in Bole Preparatory School.

**Table 6: Experience in conducting action research (at least once)**

Responses	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
yes	22	50.0	50.0	50.0
Valid no	22	50.0	50.0	100.0
Total	44	100.0	100.0	

Here out of the forty four respondents twenty two of them had performed action research that is 50 % and the other 50 % didn’t have any experience on action research before.

**Table 7: conducting action research**

Question	Multiple Responses	Responses	Percent of Cases
		N	
why did you conduct action research	a)To answer questions that arise in class rooms	11	50%
	b)For career development	10	45.45%
	c)To solve existing problems in the school	14	63.63%
	d)To develop research skill	5	22.72%
	e)Because you are asked to do	4	18.18%

As shown in the above Table teachers asked why they conduct action research out of the 22 respondents 50% of them conduct action research to answer questions that arise in the class room and 45.45% of the teachers responded to develop their career and experience while 63.63% of them answered to solve existing problems in the school. 22.72% of the teachers replied they conduct action research to develop their research skill whereas 18.18% teachers do it because they are asked to do so. So, except the four teachers that needs instructions, the other 20 teachers that is 81.82 % percent perform action research for reasons like problems that arise in class room, solve existing problems (general problems of the school, district, town or country), personal reasons like developing individual skills about research or developing carrier.

**Table8: Did you have training on action research?**

Responses	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
yes	32	72.7	72.7	72.7
Valid no	12	27.3	27.3	27.3
Total	44	100.0	100.0	100.0

Elliott (1999) Technical support very necessary especially during the early stage of action research. Support for teachers who do educational action research in general and action research in particular could be in different forms organizational support, financial support, training on action research and facilitating in different activities of action research Lack of training. Similarly, Seyoum (1998) also stated lack of in-service training, like work shop, seminars, conferences are the major factors affecting the application of action research in secondary schools.

Hence majority of the respondents that is 72.7 % of the forty four teachers have participated in trainings about action research that is facilitated by the school and twelve teachers that is 27.3 % didn't get training. This shows that majority of the teachers are facilitated with trainings. But the remaining twelve teachers need to have the necessary training in order to properly apply action research in their day to day teaching activities. But in their responses in open ended questions, the teachers indicated that they lack training and seminars towards of action research. However, the school's principal indicated that the school under CPD (continued development) program had provided training in collaboration with Cottebe teachers training College once in 2008 E.C, though the teachers consider this not enough.

**Table 9: Does the School provide environment for the teachers in sharing of experiences and findings of action research?**

Responses	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Yes	26	59.1	60.5	60.5
Valid No	17	38.6	39.5	100.0
Total	43	97.7	100.0	
Missing 9	1	2.3		
Total	44	100.0		

Seyoum (1998) emphasized that integration of both personal and institutional inputs are necessary in research activities. Hence twenty six teachers that are 59 % believes that there is sufficient environment that teachers share their experience about the findings they acquire by conducting action research while seventeen teachers that are 38.6% think the school doesn't facilitate such environment. One teacher didn't respond. Here also in open ended questions the teachers responded that the school did not facilitate the environment to share experiences gained by teachers towards action research. The principal responded that in 2007 E.C the school evaluated the twenty four action researches conducted by the teachers and out of the twenty four three were selected and the three teachers presented their paper for the whole school (for the teachers and principals) at the end of the year. But in 2008 E.C they couldn't facilitate this even once like the other year. So the medium of communication can be said at low level.

**Table10: Provision of Research materials**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	20	45.5	45.5	45.5
Valid No	24	54.5	54.5	100.0
Total	44	100.0	100.0	

Kaul (1998) a researcher has to be critical reader so that he will be acquainted with the necessary knowledge and skills. Reading materials written by professionals that will direct the researcher to problems that deserve the study and will recommend methods to conduct research. Besides, reports of research results journals, newspapers, written on one field, etc. may recommend problems that need to be acquired what procedures followed when studying a problem.

Here twenty teachers indicated that the school facilitates different materials like books, journals, research findings etc. that help to conduct action research, while 24 teachers that is 54.5 %



responded that such facilities are not provided by the school. Nevertheless, the teachers in open ended questions indicated that there is lack of these materials. The principals indicated that the schools' library is well equipped in terms of books but admitted that there is lack of journals and research materials. But the school provides internet service to any teacher who wants to engage in research activities.

#### **4.3. Teachers' knowledge and skill in implementing and practice of action research**

Burns (1999) stated Inadequacies of research skills is one of the most frequently ranked research constraints among participants. Also Kaul (1998) indicated that a researcher has to be critical reader so that he will be acquainted with the necessary knowledge and skills. As discussed in chapter two different scholars indicated that the practice of action research in class room situations can improve quality of teaching and learning process and also enables teachers and learners in identifying problems and also solving them by conducting of action research. This also enhances the participation of teachers and students in problem solving activities in the class room and develops their skill to work with other people cooperatively. In order to accomplish all these aspects teacher's knowledge and understanding of action research is very important. In this regard the researcher tried to grasp teacher's knowledge and understanding towards action research.

**Table 11: Teachers’ knowledge and attitude in the practice of action research**

Questions	Test Value = 3					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
1. The practice of action research in a class room by teachers is necessary to improve the teaching and learning process in general.	4.724	43	.000	.977	.56	1.39
2. Teachers can practice action research in class rooms just to improve their knowledge.	2.146	43	.038	.455	.03	.88
3. It is impossible to conduct action research in a class room.	2.177	43	.035	.477	.04	.92
4. The practice of action research in other hand can develop the teachers’ skills and knowledge towards research.	4.576	43	.000	.841	.47	1.21
5. Action research can develop interpersonal relations with other teachers.	4.439	43	.000	.841	.46	1.22
6. The practice of action research can further expand teacher’s role in the overall process of teaching and learning.	5.364	43	.000	.955	.60	1.31
7. There are so many problems so that it is difficult to practice action research.	1.680	43	.100	.341	-.07	.75

Burns (1999) stated Inadequacies of research skills is one of the most frequently ranked research constraints among participants. Also Kaul (1998) indicated that a researcher has to be critical reader so that he will be acquainted with the necessary knowledge and skills. With 95 % ( $\alpha=0.05$ ) confidence interval and assumed mean ( $X=3.00$ ), all the mean differences lie above the test value. This means the respondents have a positive attitude towards the inputs or questions under study. For example if we take question number one the mean difference is ( $X=3.977$ ) which is above the assumed mean ( $X=3$ ), this implies that the teachers support the statement that “the practice of action research in a class room by teachers is necessary to improve the teaching and learning process in general”. Also the teachers believe that they conduct action research to improve their knowledge and skill ( $X=3.455$ ). The teachers were asked if it is possible to conduct action research in the class room and they agreed that it is possible ( $X=3.477$ ) also they supported the statement that ‘the practice of action research in other hand can develop the teacher’s skills and knowledge’ and ‘inter personal communications’ (both  $X=3.841$ ). The respondents also agreed that the practice of action research can further expand teacher’s role in the overall process of teaching and learning ( $X=3.955$ ). Although the teachers indicated that there are so many problems so that it is difficult to practice action research ( $X=3.341$ ).

Therefore, from the result that is shown from the above table the teachers underlined the importance of action research to improve the teaching learning process by improving knowledge, skill, and interpersonal relationship and also improve teacher’s role in the overall teaching and learning process even though there are so many problems which hampers teachers from conducting action research. The teachers also supported this in their response to open ended questions.

#### **4.4. The level of support provided by the school to teachers**

To undertake action research teachers need to have the knowledge and skill. Reference materials, trainings and other inputs that are necessary to perform action research have to be provided by the school. In this respect the researcher tried to get how much the school supports teachers in conducting action research. Burns (1999) classified the factors that affect teachers from conducting action research into three as ranked by his research subjects in three countries, lack of time, lack of resources, school organizational features, and Inadequacies of research skills are the most frequently ranked research constraints among participants. Also (Mwaria and Wamahiu, 1995) stated that underfunding of schools that have resulted from the continued decline of the economy of most countries of eastern and southern African regions, research activity in these institutions has tended to suffer disproportionately. In addition to these, supplementary reading materials, and stationary were effective for participation of teachers in conducting action research at school.

**Table 12: level of support provided by the school to teachers**

Questions	Test Value = 3					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
1. The school does not arrange the necessary trainings to teachers.	5.456	43	.000	.955	.60	1.31
2. The school does not facilitate different teaching materials such as books, journals, research papers, etc. to teachers that assist to conduct action research	1.337	43	.188	.273	-.14	.68
3. The school does not have a system that enables teachers to share experiences gained by conducting action research	3.279	43	.002	.568	.22	.92
4. The school have not a system that enables teachers to undertake action research in coordination with other teachers/departments	2.698	43	.010	.500	.13	.87
5. The school allocate sufficient budget to support teachers conduct action research	-1.120	43	.269	-.250	-.70	.20

With 95 % ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) confidence interval and assumed mean ( $X=3.00$ ), out of the five questions presented to the teachers the mean value for the four questions is above the test value. That is the teachers agree that the school does not encourages teachers by arranging different trainings

(3.955), and also the school doesn't provides teaching materials, books, journals that helps teachers in conducting action research (3.273). The teachers also indicated that there is no suitable environment that that support them to communicate and share their experiences that they acquire by performing action research (3.568) and the respondents agree that the school doesn't facilitate a system in which teachers conduct action research in a coordinated manner (3.500) also the teachers believe that there is lack of adequate budget to conduct action research (2.75). In terms of trainings the teacher's responses vary from the one when they were asked in the yes and no questions (See Table 8). But here in the likert scale and open ended questions they indicated that there is lack if training and seminars.

Hence, as clearly shown in the above table, the teachers clearly indicated that the level of support they get from the school is very low to conduct action research. The principals however explained that the school had provided training once also materials like books and internet service, printing paper and printing services are available. But they agreed that budgets are not allocated to research activities.

#### **4.5. Factors that encourages or limits teachers in conducting action research**

Schools can encourage teachers to undertake action research by providing different incentives such as pay rise, promotion, trainings etc. But the absence of these incentives may discourage teachers from conducting action research. In this respect the researcher tried to assess how the school encourages teachers towards performing action research by providing different incentives.

**Table 13: One-Sample Test**

Questions	Test Value = 3					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
1. There is a shortage of seminar on research activities	3.609	43	.001	.682	.30	1.06
2. The school facilitates training on action research	-.658	43	.514	-.136	-.55	.28
3. Teachers lack the necessary knowledge and skill to conduct action research	.606	43	.547	.114	-.26	.49
4. The school allocates budget to undertake action research	-2.478	43	.017	-.500	-.91	-.09
5. Reference materials such as journals; research Books, research reports and etc. are abundant in the school.	1.316	43	.195	.250	-.13	.63
6. The school have a coordinated system that supports teachers in conducting action research	-2.201	43	.033	-.432	-.83	-.04
7. Teachers are busy of other teaching activities so that they are unable to conduct action Research	3.458	43	.001	.682	.28	1.08
8. Those teachers who undertake action research are not encouraged by incentives such as promotion, pay rise etc.	1.361	43	.181	.295	-.14	.73

With 95 % ( $\alpha= 0.05$ ) confidence interval and assumed mean ( $X=3.00$ ), the respondents indicated that there is lack of seminars towards action research ( $X=3.682$ ) also they also believe that there is lack of trainings towards action research ( $X=2.864$ ). Consequently they were asked about their knowledge and skill about action research and agreed that they lack these skills and knowledge ( $X=3.114$ ). The respondents agreed that reference materials such as journals; research Books, research reports and etc. are abundant in the school ( $X=3.250$ ). The teachers responded that the school does not allocate the necessary budget to perform action research ( $X=2.5$ ) and also they indicated that there exists lack of communication between teachers to share their experience and findings towards action research ( $X=2.568$ ). The teachers also responded that they are busy of other teaching activities so that they are unable to conduct action research ( $X=3.682$ ), also they indicated that those teachers who undertake action research are not encouraged by incentives such as promotion, pay rise etc. which hampers teachers from conducting action research ( $X=3.295$ ).

From the above tables and answers from the open ended questions and also from the responses of the principal and deputy principal of the school, they identified that there is shortage of trainings and seminars towards action research. Lack of sufficient budget is also refrained them from conducting action research, and the other problem that discourages them is that the level of communication with other teachers and departments towards their experiences is very low. They also insisted that teachers are very busy of their day to day teaching activities so that it is difficult for them to conduct action research. They also believe that they lack the necessary skills and knowledge that are fundamental in conducting action research. But they agreed that the availability of different reference materials such as books, journals, research reports etc. and also the school provide incentives such as pay rise, promotion etc. for those who perform such



researches. Different scholars in the discussion section (review of literatures in chapter two), for example Elliot (1999), Burns (1999), Seyoum (1998), Firdissa (2010), Kaul (1998), Mwaria and Wamahiu (1995), indicated that the fulfillment of the above factors is very important for the application of action research in schools.

From the responses of the teachers the factors that encourage or initiate teachers to undertake action research can be student's problem in the class room, other concurrent problems that the teacher faces in the teaching learning process. Teacher's motive is another reason that could initiate them to conduct action research. Teachers may also do action research to find problems that affect the teaching and learning process. They also stated that it could be done to solve the problems of the school that hinders the teaching and learning practices. Also teacher may conduct action research to stimulate student's interest on the subject matter and at the end improve the results of the students. In this regard the skill and knowledge of teachers will be enhanced at the same time. Incentives like pay rise; promotion etc. can be factors that motivate teachers to engage in action research. Also, by the intention of the school management or the department, teachers may conduct action research. All the above factors may encourage or initiate teachers to perform action research (positive side).

On the other hand, even though in whatever way and level teachers are motivated and determined they are to conduct action research, there exist different problems that discourage them from performing it. These factors could be lack of trainings and seminars about action research or research in general. This is reflected by lack of knowledge and skill about towards action research which in other words is a discouraging factor. Lack of reference materials like books, research reports, journals etc. and also lack of internet facilities also prohibits teachers from conduction action research. The teachers also stressed that they are very busy on their day

to day teaching activities so that it is difficult for them to engage in action research in their classrooms. Lack of budget is also been very much stressed by the teachers. Other factors like, lack of interest by some teachers, teachers and students willingness, moral support by departments and the school management coordination and suitable environment are mentioned by the teachers as a discouraging factors. Also policy issues are also forwarded that can be mandatory for teachers to perform action research at a certain time interval by fulfilling the necessary inputs.

Furthermore, in addition to the responses of the teachers to the questionnaires the school's principal and deputy principal were asked about the practice of action research in Bole preparatory school incorporating the issues stressed in the questionnaire. They responded that, the school encourages teachers to conduct action research and is one of the parameters in evaluating teachers for promotion. Reference materials like books are available in the school's library, where as they indicated that journals, research materials are not available in the school. The principal also indicated that the school is planning to give incentives for the teachers who conduct action researches and are selected by the committee that are believed very good. They also responded that even though the school once selected three best action research papers and let the teachers present their paper to the whole school, this medium of communication between teachers should be done frequently and in a coordinated way. But in terms of budget the principals agreed with the teachers that there is lack of budget for research activities. In regard to training and seminar the principals indicated that the school had arranged training once this year and will continue availing training programs in the future as much as possible. In terms of number of periods, according to the Sub City Education Bureau the maximum number of periods in a week for a teacher should be between eighteen to twenty two periods according to the

principal of the school. Hence, about 52.3 % of the teachers were engaged with more than sixteen periods per week which indicates that teachers' work load is evident.

Different scholars in their research papers indicated similar factors that restrict teachers from conducting action research. For instance Firdissa (2007) stated that those challenges that affect teachers from conducting action are time constraints that arise from teaching loads and committee and other curricular works, lack of financial or material support, unavailability of rewarding /motivating system and shortages of research facilities. Similarly Gemechu (2006) explained that teachers have shortage of the necessary inputs to conduct action research like, current literatures adequate budget, time access to internet, computers, and printers.

On what to be done to improve the current situation regarding action research, both the teachers and the schools principals agreed that, successive training should be given to the teachers in order to develop teacher's skill and knowledge and also adequate budget should be allocated to help the teachers in conducting action research. Furthermore, teachers work load has to be minimized in order to give time for the teachers to do the research. Hence, availing reference materials such as books, research reports, journals etc. and also providing incentives such as pay rise, promotion etc. to those who performed the research are factors that will support and motivate the teachers to perform action research. Also they suggested that to install a coordinated system throughout the school so that teachers share their experiences and learn from each other and also reduce duplication of efforts.

## Chapter Five

### 5. Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

#### 5.1. Summary

The purpose of this study was to investigate the practices, challenges and prospects in conducting action research in Bole Preparatory School. Hence, it focused on issues related to the practice of action research, the understanding level and actual involvement of teachers in conducting action research, the school principal's support to teachers, the knowledge and skills of teachers, and the challenges or prospects that teachers are encountered with in conducting action research in Bole Preparatory School. The participants in this study were teachers and principals of Bole Preparatory School.

Mixed approach (quantitative and qualitative), in which sequential explanatory strategy is used. To this end, both quantitative and qualitative data have been gathered through Questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, document analysis. The questionnaires have been administered to 50 Bole Preparatory School teachers and out of 50 questionnaires distributed 44 were returned to the researcher. Semi-structured interviews were held with the principal and the deputy principal.

Furthermore, SPSS is used for the quantitative data analysis and different tables describing the questions through percentages, means, and frequencies are presented and analyzed. The qualitative data were also been analyzed thoroughly through narratives. Consequently the following findings were obtained.

1. The practice of action research at Bole Preparatory School has been at a low level due to different factors. Teachers were not involved in action research at a level that is expected from them. The data found through questionnaires shows that half of the teachers stated that they have conducted action research. But from the document analysis, open ended questions and the results

from the interview, they indicated that they are not performing action research in their day to day teaching activities. Whereas the principals of the school indicated in the interview that action research is being conducted by the teachers, for example twenty four papers were conducted in 2007 E.C and nineteen are done in 2008 E.C. But as the researcher reviewed these papers, some had raised very interesting issues and current problems in the school the quality of the papers is still questionable.

2. The understanding and knowledge of the teachers about the practice of action research is very good as can be seen from the responses of the teachers. They agreed that the practice of action research improves the teaching and learning process. Also it can develop teacher's skill and knowledge, interpersonal communication skills of both the teachers and students. They indicated that the teachers' role in the overall teaching and learning process can be enhanced. But they emphasized that even though it is important to practice and implement action research, it is very difficult to perform it due to different factors, such as lack of time, lack of materials, lack of budget etc.

3. Teachers indicated that the level of support provided by the school had been very low. They agreed that the school didn't not encourages teachers by arranging different trainings (3.955), and also the school didn't provides teaching materials, books, journals that help teachers in conducting action research (3.273). They also indicated that there is no suitable environment that support them to communicate and share their experiences that they acquire by performing action research (3.568) and the respondents agreed that the school didn't have a system in which teachers conduct action research in a coordinated manner (3.500), furthermore the teachers emphasized that there is lack of adequate budget to conduct action research (2.75). Whereas, the principals of the school had emphasized that the schools has a very equipped library and also had

internet service but admitted that the lack of research papers, journals and accommodation of budget for research activities. And also the principal indicated that the school had arranged once training under CPD program. Also medium of communication in terms of experience and finding sharing is done once at the end of 2007 E.C.

4. The teachers also indicated the factors (discouraging factors) that have affected them from conducting action research are lack of training (which the teachers emphasized in open ended questions and likert scale questions) which has an adverse effect on the teacher's knowledge and skill towards action research, lack of budget and poor level of communication between teachers and departments, teacher's work load by their day to day teaching activities, lack of incentives such as promotion and pay rise.

5. Based on the responses of both the teachers and the principals it can be summarized that, to improve the practice of teachers in conducting action research, trainings and seminars on action research should be given. Availing reference materials and providing convenient environment for teachers to share their experiences and also allocating sufficient budget that is necessary to carry out action research in the school are the main factors to be fulfilled. In addition, incentives like pay raise promotions etc for those who have conducted action research in order to motivate them for further accomplishments.

## **5.2. Conclusions**

The practice of action research can improve the teaching and learning process and also solve current problems practically that teachers are encountered with in the class room. Hence, this study discussed the practices and challenges in conducting action research In Bole Preparatory School. Based on the major findings presented in chapter four, the following conclusions are draw.

The practice of action research in Bole preparatory School was very low due to the lack of adequate trainings and seminars, inadequate reference material (books, journals, research reports etc), lack of budget etc. The low level of teacher's knowledge and skills is also another major factor which affects them from practicing the research. But the participants indicated that the necessity of action research in improving the teaching and learning process though their actual practice was found very low. Moreover, poor level of communication between teachers and departments, teachers work load in their day to day teaching activities, lack of incentives that motivates teachers for further achievements, lack of a coordinated system in the school are the other factors that affect teachers negatively from conducting action research. The level of support by school was inadequate in facilitating the necessary conditions to the teachers in order to conduct action research. This was also another factor that influences the practice of action research adversely.

Other researchers for example, Azeb (2012) draw similar conclusion. She indicated that “action research was not developed and it did not have any continuation practice in the schools, un supportiveness school leaders and poor participation of conducting and implementation of action research schools, and any incentive and encouragement schemes for those who did action researches were observed weaknesses in the school. In addition, scarce of finance and available of time for conducting action research and poor capacity of teachers and tendency of teachers were challenges observed in the schools”. Similarly Assefa (2014) concluded that “the main problems for carrying out action research in CGAAPS include overload in teaching and other committee activities, lack of incentives, lack of research facilities, lack of financial support, lack of required knowledge and skill of action research, lack of reading materials in schools. Hence,

in all the three research findings the practice of action research is limited for the same reasons stated in their findings”.

### **5.3. Recommendations**

This study tried to investigate the practice of action research and what are the factors that encourage and also the problems that hinders teachers from conducting action research in Bole Preparatory school. The participants in the study agreed the importance of the practice of action research in improving the teaching and learning process, indicated several factors that affect its practice negatively (discouraging factors). Hence, to improve these factors and the practice of action research, the following issues should be addressed.

1. The understanding of the teachers towards the practice of action research is very good but practically the practice of action research by the teachers is very low. One reason is that lack of trainings and seminars. Teacher’s skills and knowledge can be developed through successive trainings. So, the school administration together with-Sub city and city education Bureaus should facilitate these trainings and seminars. This can be done by assessing the teacher’s needs, in what area do the teachers need the trainings and in collaboration with universities as the school once done it (according to the principal).

2. Also availing different reference materials, like books, journals, research findings etc, can help teachers develop their knowledge. And also teachers work load should be minimized so that they could engage with research activities. The school administration with the help of Sub-city and city Education Bureaus should avail the necessary materials. Such materials can be availed with the help of higher institutions, universities and also by availing internet service in department level (as it is now located at principals bureau area only).



3. Allocation of adequate budget is also another factor that could improve the practice of action research. By discussing the budget constraint with Sub-city and city Education Bureaus the school administration should solve the problem. This budget can be allocated to the teachers that perform research activities, according to their proposal and also forming a committee that can assess the proposal and also allocate the budget.

4. To enhance the performance of teachers' in conducting action research, the school teachers, the school principals, and the Sub city Administration Education officers should work together so as to improve the level of teachers' engagement in conducting action research. This could result in improving the current scenario and also continually solve problems that hinder the application of action research in the school.

5. Finally, as indicated above the study is only performed in a single school (Bole Preparatory School) and small number of teachers, the researcher believes that it necessary and important that the study is conducted at a larger population at different schools and areas so that the findings could be conclusive.

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## **Appendix I: Questionnaire to be filled in by teachers**

The purpose of this questionnaire is to collect valid information about the status of action research and its challenges in Bole preparatory School.

The questionnaire contains five parts. Part one is about demographic information of respondents; part two is about the practice of action research and teachers perception in conducting action research and part three deals with about principal's involvement. Part four contains items related to factors that hinder or enable teachers to conduct action research and the last part is about the ways of improving the current conditions concerning action research.

The researcher believes that, your responses are vital in determining the success of this study. Hence, you are kindly requested to fill the questionnaire completely and honestly. The information you give will be kept strictly confidential.

Thank you for your kind cooperation!

### *General Instructions:*

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

### **Part One: Demographic information**

1. Sex: Male  Female
2. Your Service Years in teaching \_\_\_\_\_
3. The total number of periods you are currently teaching per week \_\_\_\_\_
4. Your Educational Qualification: BA  B.Sc  B.Ed  M.A  M.Sc



Other/Please specify \_\_\_\_\_

## Part Two: The practice of action research

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

1. Do you have any experience in conducting action research in your school?

Yes  No

2. If your answer for question number “1” is “Yes” why did you conduct action research? You can use more than one alternative below.

a) To answer questions that arise in the class room?

b) For carrier development

c) To solve existing problems in the school

d) To develop research skills

e) Because you are asked to do

Others, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

3. If your answer for question number “1” is “No” why?

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4. Do you have any training about action research that is facilitated by the school?

Yes  No

5. If your answer for question number “4” is “Yes” How many times did you take the training?

Once  two times  Three times  More than three

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

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7. If your answer for question number “4” is “Yes” how did these trainings helped you in conducting action research and improve the teaching and learning process?

Very good  Good  Low  None

8. Does the school facilitate for teachers to communicate with other teachers about their findings and experiences in conducting action research?

Yes  No

9. Does the school provide teachers with necessary and sufficient materials such as books, journals, research findings etc. to conduct action research?

Yes  No

Direction II: Below are items to assess your understanding about action research. Read each statement carefully and indicate your choice by putting “X” in one of the five alternatives (use the following key :) Strongly agree (5), agree (4), Undecided (3), Disagree (2), and strongly disagree (1)

## 2 Teachers’ knowledge and understanding in implementing and practice of action research

No.	Questions	5	4	3	2	1
2.1.	The practice of action research in a class room by teachers is necessary to improve the teaching and learning process in general.					
2.2.	Teachers can practice action research in class rooms just to					

	improve their knowledge.					
2.3.	It is impossible to conduct action research in a class room.					
2.4.	The practice of action research in other hand can develop the teachers' skills and knowledge towards research.					
2.5.	Action research can develop interpersonal relations with other teachers.					
2.6.	The practice of action research can further expand teacher's role in the overall process of teaching and learning.					
2.7.	There are so many problems so that it is difficult and impossible to practice action research.					

### Part three: The schools' role

Direction: The following are statements regarding the schools role in the practice of action research, please rate your level of agreement using the following key:

Strongly agree (5), agree (4), Undecided (3), Disagree (2), and strongly disagree (1)

### 3. The level of support provided by the school to teachers

No.	Questions	5	4	3	2	1
3.1.	The school does not arrange the necessary trainings to teachers.					
3.2.	The school does not facilitates different teaching materials such as books, journals, research papers, etc to teachers that assist to conduct					

	action research					
3.3.	The school does not have a system that enables teachers to share experiences gained by conducting action research					
3.4.	The school does not have a system that enables teachers to undertake action research in coordination with other teachers					
3.5.	The school allocate sufficient budget to support teachers conduct action research					

**Part four: Factors that encourages or limits teachers in/f conducting action research**

Direction: Indicate your levels of agreement with the items related to the factors that hinder or enable teachers to conduct action research in the school. Use the following key: Strongly agree (5), Agree (4), Undecided (3), Disagree (2), strongly disagree (1)

**4. Factors that encourages or limits teachers in conducting action research**

No.	Questions	5	4	3	2	1
4.1.	There is a shortage of seminar on research activities					
4.2.	The school does not facilitate training on action research					
4.3.	Teachers lack the necessary knowledge and skill to conduct action research					
4.4.	The school does not allocate budget to undertake action research					
4.5.	Reference materials such as journals; research Books, research reports and etc. are abundant in the school.					
4.6.	The school does not have a coordinated system that supports					

	teachers in conducting action research					
4.7.	Teachers are busy of other teaching activities so that they are unable to conduct action Research					
4.8.	Those teachers who undertake action research could be encouraged by incentives such as promotion, pay rise etc.					

**Part five: How to improve current situation**

1.1. What are the major factors that encourage or discourage teachers to conduct action research at your school?

Encourages:-

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Challenges:-

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1.2. How could the current situations in relation with the practice of action research in Bole preparatory school be improved?

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## **Appendix II: Interview**

Interview guideline to collect information from the principal of Bole preparatory School

Questions:-

1. How do you explain the current practice of action research at your school?
2. Do you think that teachers in your school have the required knowledge and skills that are Necessary to conduct action research?
3. How do you encourage or support teachers to conduct action research?
4. Do you have a system that enables teachers to share findings and also undertake action research together?
5. Are there sufficient reference materials (books, research journals etc.) and other relevant materials that assist teachers in conducting action research?
6. What are the major factors that encourage or discourage teachers to conduct action research in your school? Are there any attempts made to overcome the problems?
7. Do you think that the teaching load allows teachers to conduct action research?
8. How do you think the current situations be improved in the practice and implementation of action research?