

Primary School Teachers Involvement in Action and its Implication for Quality Education

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Abstract

As teachers are being viewed as critical agents of educational change, they should be at the forefront in alleviating educational problems. This is because, when teachers engaged with and in research and making pedagogical decision informed by sound research evidence, this will have a beneficial effect on both teaching and learning and enhance the quality of education. The purpose of this study was to investigate the status of primary school teachers' involvement in and with action research in Bahir Dar town. To realize this, a descriptive survey method was employed. Data were collected from teachers who were selected from four primary schools of the City administration. A total of 100 primary school teachers were selected through systematic random sampling technique. To gather data from these sources, questionnaire was used. The data obtained from teachers via questionnaire were analyzed by descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage mean, and Chi-Square). The research results revealed that teachers' involvement in action research activities was so limited. Only a few teachers have been engaged in research. And significant number of teachers in the primary schools of the town does not have the basic knowledge and skills to be engaged in research activities. This problem has an adverse implication for the quality of education.

Keywords: Action research, research engagement, quality education

Introduction

Presently, research is considered to be a prominent key which is essential to the opening of new doors in education (Courtney, 1965). It is clear that teaching learning process becomes effective, up to date and successful, only if it is supported by research (Anwaruddin, 2015). If research is undertaken on the context of those who are expected to make use of the findings, the likelihood of its implementation is greater (Nisbet and Nisbet, 1985).

For many years teachers were considered as consumers of knowledge, and not able to produce or assess the knowledge they may select for use (Angelides, Evangelou and Leigh, 2005). Recently, however, there is a drive to engage classroom teachers more fully both with and in educational research and thus to make teaching an evidence-based profession (Rose, 2002; Borg, 2007; Borg, 2010; Borg and Liu, 2012). Some scholars support the argument that teachers should also be researchers that investigate their practice through action research for the purpose of improvement (Stenhouse, 1975; Hopkins, 1993; Hammersley, 1993). As teachers are the ones who really know the history and background of their pupils and the classroom activities taking place there, they are the best researchers of their own classrooms. When engaged in research, they critically reflect on their skills and problematic situations and improve their practice and resolve problem situations (Hopkins, 1993). Having realized its significance for educational improvement, school-based action research has been given special attention in the Ethiopian education policy directives (MOE, 2002). According to the policy documents, teachers at all levels are required to engage in action research activities. More specifically, as part of the teaching-learning processes, school teachers are expected to conduct

action research practically to support and strengthen the teaching- learning process and examine the curriculum and give suggestions to improve it (MOE, 2002).

As Stenhouse (1975) states, if teachers develop the research spirit, not only will they develop professionally, but they will also become more autonomous. Therefore, teachers should be at the forefront of educational research (Stenhouse, 1981) to be active meaning makers in their own professional practice. By selecting area of concern for themselves from their field of study and by exploring these issues, they would be best placed to understand and resolve their own real curriculum and pedagogical problems. When teachers engaged with and in research and making pedagogical decision informed by sound research evidence, this will have a beneficial effect on both teaching and learning (Sachs, 1997; Casanova, 1989; Hargreaves, 2001; Borg, 2007; Gao, Barkhuizen and Chow, 2010). Improved attitude, improved teaching style, increase desire to stay current, sharpening perception, stimulating discussion and increased understanding of self are often the result of teachers' involvement in research (Henson, 1995 cited in Thompson, Bakken and Clark, 2001). Teachers who have been involved in research may become reflective, more critical and analytical in their teaching and more open and committed to professional development (Oja and Pine, 1989; Henson, 1996; Keyes, 2000; Rust, 2009). When this improvement in attitudes, beliefs, instructional strategies and learning opportunities obtains, then the assumption is that quality education would be the resultant outcome. It is generally accepted that more informed use of and involvement in research by teachers can enhance the quality of education (Borg, 2007; Volk, 2009; O'Connor, Greene, and Anderson, 2006).

Statement of the Problem

In Ethiopia, problems related to education are many in number and it is very common to hear about the deterioration of its quality. In order to reduce/ alleviate these problems teachers' engagement in action research plays a pivotal role. As Seyoum (1998) stated, research activities in the school enhance and enrich the teaching-learning process thereby contributing to the improvement of the quality of education.

If teachers conduct action research, they would not be prepared to accept blindly the problems they face from day to day practices, instead they reflect upon them and search for solution and improvement. They are committed to building on their strength and to overcoming their weakness. They wish to experiment with new ideas and strategies, rather than letting their practice petrify (Altricher, Posch and Somekh, 1993, p.5).

However, it may not be true that research activities to-date in our primary schools are commonly undertaken by teachers in tackling the problems that obscure and jeopardize the quality of education (Mulugeta, 2017), although they as professionals and key role players of the system are the one who would be concerned with the problem. As Hancock (1997), stated "they shy away from seeing themselves as researchers and they are reluctant to write about their teaching practice." Many teachers have the perception that research in teaching is an esoteric activity having little to do with their practical concern and regarded the creation of knowledge base for teaching as belonging to the domain of university academic researchers (Lassonde, Galman and Kosnik, 2009; Pritchard and Bonne, 2007). Teachers primarily saw their responsibility as implementing what researchers told them was valid in their classroom. As a result, most research into classrooms is still conducted by researchers from outside the classroom situation. "A quick trawl through a few recent journals shows that university researchers are the authors of nearly all of the articles, including those that investigate school classrooms" (Todd, 2010, p.PAGE NUMBER).

In addition, promising step is not observed in facilitating conditions to help teachers conduct action research. Rather primary school teachers are observed trying to solve every problem by trial and error and personal experience. Obviously, commonsense and trial and error alone cannot provide reliable information for action. As a result, the degree and scope of educational problems are swelling from time to time and the quality of education is deteriorating. The purpose of this study was, therefore, to investigate the extent of primary school teachers' involvement in action research and its implication for quality education.

Research questions

The study sought to answer the following research questions:

- How is the competence of primary school teachers for conducting action research (Are they equipped with the necessary action research knowledge and skills?)
- To what extent are primary school teachers involved in doing action research to solve problems

in the teaching- learning process?

- What are the major factors that hinder primary school teachers from undertaking action research?

Objectives of the study

The objectives of this study are:

- Identifying the level of competence of primary school teachers to conduct action research in their schools
- Assessing the current status of primary school teachers' involvement in conducting action research in Bahir Dar town.
- Identifying the major factors that enable or hinder these primary school teachers from research undertaking

Methods

The aim of this study was to investigate the current status of primary school teachers' involvement in action research in Bahir Dar town. It was also the purpose of this study to survey some of the factors that hinder teachers' involvement in action research. To realize this, a descriptive survey method was used. This method was selected for the very reason that it helps the researcher to obtain pertinent and precise information concerning the status of phenomena and whenever possible, to draw valid general conclusions from the facts discovered (Koul, 1984, p.402).

Based on this general approach, the following procedures were employed in the collection and analysis of the necessary data.

Subject of the study

Since teachers are expected to engage in research activity, it is assumed that it would be quite appropriate to get relevant data directly from the sources. Due to this fact, the subjects of this study were primary school teachers of Bahir Dar town. Currently, there are 15 primary schools in Bahir Dar town. Among these, four schools (Dill Chibo, Shimbit, Meskrem 16 and Yekatit 23 primary schools) were selected by using simple random sampling technique.

The total number of teachers in the sample schools was 250 and 100 were selected using systematic random sampling. In addition to this, principals from each school, two supervisors were also included in the study in order to get additional information about the status of teachers' involvement in action research and problems that hampered them from conducting action research.

Data gathering instrument

To secure pertinent information for this study, structured questionnaire was developed as the main instrument for collecting the needed data. Questionnaire was preferred because it is the most appropriate means to involve large size sample population to gather the necessary information within a given period. The questionnaire was both close-ended and open-ended. Close-ended item was used for the very reason that it provides a greater uniformity of responses, and to make it easier to be processed. In addition, when questions are close-ended, respondents will be able to select from a list of answers provided to them (Babbie, 1983, p.1939).

On the other hand, the major purpose of the open-ended item was to give opportunity to teachers to express their feelings, perceptions, problems and intentions related to action research without restriction. This enabled the researcher to get detail information about the activities, problems, and future of teachers to involve themselves in educational research. The questionnaire consisted of items regarding teachers' general background information, their attitude towards action research, their training in action research, about the availability of budget for research, time adequacy to undertake research, material and moral support provided for teacher researchers. First, the researcher developed this questionnaire in English based on the review of related literature and then translated it into Amharic to avoid any problem that may encroach upon the response of teachers because of language difficulties.

In order to have the data which have clearly interpretable meanings in some sort of quantitative sense, the researcher constructed the close-ended questionnaire item in the form of yes-no (multiple choice item), and in the form likert-scale with the level of agreement on five point rating scales ranging from

"strongly agree" to "strongly disagree" with the assigned value which run through five to one respectively.

Data analysis

The questionnaire was first collected, tallied and tabulated. Thereafter, the interpretation was made with the help of percentage, mean score and chi-square. Because of the descriptive nature of the study, percentage and mean score value were used to analyze the scores obtained through close ended questionnaire. The responses for open-ended questions summarized and analyzed descriptively.

Results

This part of the research tries to analyze and discuss the data collected from teachers to seek appropriate answers for the basic questions raised in the statement of the problem. To this effect, 100 copies of questionnaire were distributed to teachers in four primary schools of Bahir Dar Town. Out of these questionnaires 90 were returned. But only 88 were analyzed. The remaining two copies were found to be incomplete to give the required information.

This chapter comprises two parts. The first part presents the characteristics of the sample population involved in the study. Thus, the profile of the study group was discussed in terms of sex, age, qualification, years of services (experience) and the number of periods they teach per week. Part two of this chapter deals with the analysis and interpretation of the findings of the study.

Table 1: *Characteristics of the respondents*

		Respondent Teachers in the sample schools							
Characteristics	Alternatives	Dil Chibo		Meskerem 16		Shinbit		Yekatit 23	
		No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Teaching Experience (In year)	A. 1-10	2	8	2	8	4	16	1	4
	B. 11-20	6	24	-	-	3	12	-	-
	C. 21-30	10	40	9	36	3	12	5	20
	D. 31-40	7	28	8	32	13	52	16	68
	E. Above 40	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Teaching Load (period/week)	A. < 10	-	-	-	-	1	4	-	-
	B. 10-15	4	16	3	12	1	4	1	4
	C. 16-20	5	20	4	16	3	12	8	32
	D. 21-25	7	28	3	12	9	40	6	28
	E. 26-30	9	36	9	36	9	36	7	28
	F. Above 30	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Age	A. 22-30	3	12	2	8	4	16	1	4
	B. 31-40	3	12	1	4	3	12	-	-
	C. 41-50	10	40	9	36	7	28	8	32
	D. 51-60	9	3	7	28	9	36	13	56

As table 1 here in above revealed, age wise, overwhelming majority of the respondent teachers (88%) are 41-60 years old. Concerning years of service, almost half of the respondents have already served for more than 30 years. One can infer that most of the teachers served for many years & they are at the verge of retiring age. It is obvious that working the same job for longer years has potential to make teachers burnout and give up interests in conducting different activities in the area; hence, the intention to improve instructional conditions through action research, most likely to be reduced.

With respect to teaching load, most of the teachers in the sample schools have a teaching load between 21-30 period/week. From the above data, one can conclude that most teachers are neither over loaded nor under loaded rather they are in a moderate position. From this, it is not difficult to infer that teachers in these schools have time to conduct action research. Hence, workload is less likely among the potential factors that hinder teachers' from conducting action research.

Table 2: *Teachers knowledge and skills about action research*

Items	Responses		Chi-square
	Frequency	Percent	
Have you ever taken action research course?			
a. Yes	48	54.54	$\chi^2 = 1.71$ P > 0.05
b. No	40	45.46	
Total	88	100	
If you have taken, is the training you have taken adequate to conduct research in your professional career?			
a. Yes	31	64.58	$\chi^2 = 4.08$ P < 0.05
b. No	17	35.42	
Total	48	100	
If your response to question number one is "No" how do you manage to conduct action research in your school?			
a) By asking colleagues who have research experience	22	55	$\chi^2 = 6.7$ P < 0.05
b) By trial and error.	18	45	
c) By reading action research books.	-	-	
Total	40	100	
Have you ever participated in any seminar, workshop or formal training to update your research skills?			
a. Yes	14	15.90	$\chi^2 = 48.76$ P < 0.05
b. No	74	75.10	
Total	88	100	
Do you feel confident about your research skill in action research?			
a. Yes	25	28.41	$\chi^2 = 13.76$ P < 0.05
b. No	63	71.59	
Total	88	100	

The importance of research knowledge and skill to enable teachers undertake action research is unquestionable. Accordingly, respondents were asked whether they have taken action research course or not. As it is clearly stated in table 2, 54.54%(48) of teachers assured that they have taken the course and the remaining 45.46% (40) of the teachers admitted that they have not taken such a course.

The chi-square test for significance indicated that the number of teachers with no research course training is not less than those teachers who have taken (i.e. the calculated χ^2 value 1.71 is less than the critical value 3.841 and the proportional difference between the two groups was found to be not significant.

As it is well known, any one before deciding to perform any activity, he/she has to make sure whether he/she is armed with the necessary skill or not. As revealed on the table above, almost half of the teachers in the primary schools of sample schools do not have the knowledge and skill as to how action research is conducted. If teachers are not introduced to action research during initial teacher training, chances are they will never be involved in it (Kincheloe, 2003)

Elliot (1991) and Shaeffer and Nkinyangi (1983, p.15) noted that it would be virtually impossible to think of carrying out research without the individual being equipped with basic research skills. That is, for a researcher to conduct a study should at least have the ABC of research methodology. Without being armed with a proper weapon and without a proper knowledge to determine which problems to tackle, it is hardly possible for one to undertake research on its kind. The result of this study therefore indicated that significant number of teachers is not in a position to conduct action research in order to alleviate the problem they face in the teaching learning process.

The respondents (teachers) were further asked, if the training they have taken was adequate to conduct action research in their professional career. 35.42% (17) of the teachers who have taken

training responded that it was not adequate to enable them undertake research in their classrooms or schools. 64.58% (31) of the teachers reported that it was adequate to carry out action research.

Initial training is undoubtedly essential in equipping teachers with the necessary skills in action research. However, as indicated above, a sizable percentage of teachers in these schools have not taken research methodology course. Even from those teachers who took the training, sizable number of teachers was not equipped with adequate research skill and knowledge.

Teachers who haven't taken research methodology course were also asked how they could manage to conduct action research in their school. From 40 respondents who replied that they have not ever taken training in action research, 55.XX% (22) and 45.XX%(18) of the total respondent confirmed that they could manage to conduct research in education by asking friends (colleagues) and by reading research books respectively.

The subjects of this study were also asked whether they have participated in seminar, workshop or in-service training. It was found out that only 15.90% (14) of the respondent teachers had the chance to participate in workshop or seminar. The majority of the teachers 75.10% (74) were not participated in a workshop or a seminar. As revealed on table 2, teachers who did not participate in seminar or workshop were greater in number than those who had got opportunity to participate. This is tested using chi-square and found to be significant as $\chi^2 = 48.76$ $p < 0.05$.

Table 3: *Teachers' attitude towards action research*

Teachers attitude towards action research	N ^o	%	Chi-square = χ^2
Favorable	81	92.05	72.42, P<0.05
Unfavorable	7	7.95	
Total	84	100.00	

In order to see the distribution of respondents in favorable and unfavorable attitudinal directions, teachers were dichotomized. The dichotomy was based on the mean attitude score of the respondents as determined from their response to the items of general attitude in the questionnaire. As the distribution reveals in the table above, among the total respondents, 92.05% of them have shown a favorable reaction, while the remaining 7.95% had unfavorable opinion in educational research. The above findings revealed that the attitude of teachers was a promising state for involvement in conducting action research. The chi-square test for significance of proportional difference between the two groups was found to be significant, $p < 0.05$. This is an indication that the respondents were predominantly favoring educational research.

Table 4: *Availability of necessary resources and supports*

Items	Alternatives	Respondents in	
		No.	%
Is there some form of incentive given to teachers conducting action research in your school?	A. Yes	23	26.13
	B. No	65	73.86
	Total	88	100
Do you have enough time to conduct action research?	A. Yes	40	44.45
	B. No	48	55.56
	Total	89	100
Are there adequate reference materials & documents that support you to conduct action research in your school?	A. Yes	13	14.77
	B. No	75	85.23
	Total	89	100
Is there research coordinating centre in your school?	A. Yes	9	10.23
	B. No	79	89.77
	Total	89	100
Does the school principal reduce teaching load for teachers who conduct action research?	A. Yes	5	5.68
	B. No	83	94.4
	Total	89	100

Teachers were asked whether adequate reference materials & documents are available in their schools (item 15). Accordingly, majority 85.XX% (76) of the respondent teachers reported that reference materials and documents that help them to undertake action research were not available at their schools. Only 14.6X% (13) of the respondent teachers affirmed the availability of reference materials in their schools.

In order to be effectively engaged in research activity, a researcher needs to be provided with material and/or psychological incentives. Considering this teachers were asked if there was some form of incentives for researching in their schools. Majority (73.8%) of the respondents responded that incentives were not given for those teachers who were engaged in action research though they were few in number. Teachers who excel in their action research work, and who really solved problems in their classrooms should be recognized, and those taking part in research task need unique attention compared to non-participant teachers.

According to Taye (1993) absence of incentives is a problem well recognized by most researchers but still receiving only a heap of sympathy. Everybody at least in principle accepts that research is a worth encouraging activity. But, there is no as such significant incentive that researchers get in return. Failure to provide incentives may keep teacher researchers aloof from participating in research. If this situation is allowed to continue indefinitely, no doubt, research in schools will be stopped at all.

Regarding availability of time for research, 44.45% (40) of the teachers responded that they have enough time to be engaged in research work. The rest 55.65% (48) of the teachers, however, responded that they have no enough time to be engaged in research work. As shown in the above table, significant number of teachers replied, "I have enough time to be engaged in research".

In addition, teachers were also asked whether school principals lighten workload for teachers who undertake research. As shown in table above, 94.4% (83) of the teachers replied that school principals do not do so. If teachers are highly loaded with teaching and non-teaching activities, they are less likely to engage in research since research by nature is a time taking activity.

The availability and accessibility of up-to-date research literature such as books, professional journals, research reviews, research reports etc are indispensable for any research activity. These reference materials acquaint teacher researchers with the state of the art of the problems he/she is investigating. These materials enlighten teacher researchers with the current findings and theories that relate to his/her research work and guide them to the area that are not explored yet. In this connection, teachers were asked whether adequate reference materials and documents are available in their schools. Accordingly, majority (85%) of the respondent teachers reported that reference materials, guidelines and documents that help them to undertake action research are not available at their schools.

Table 5: *Teachers interest to conduct action research*

Teachers who are interested	82(93.18%)
Teachers who are not interested	6(6.82%)
Total	88(100%)

Whether or not individuals have interest in research is quite a crucial matter in order to engage in research activities. Accordingly, respondent teachers in this study were asked to indicate their interest towards conducting Action research. Surprisingly, the finding indicates that 92.18% (78) of the teachers have interest to conduct action research. Only 6.82% (6) of the teachers were not interested to conduct action research. Since an effective research would grow out of the expressed interest and needs of the persons involved in it, this finding is indeed an encouraging one.

Table 6: *Teachers' Involvement in Action Research*

Teachers involved in action research	18 (20.45%)
Teachers not involved in action research	70(79.55%)
Total	88(100)

If we are serious about enhancing the quality of education at our schools, teachers need to be more, not less involved in action research. Regarding this, teachers were asked if they have ever conducted a research in their career. Accordingly, from the total of 88 teachers included in this study, majority of

them 79.55% (70) have reported that they have never been involved in action research. Only 20.45% of teachers were involved in action research.

Table 7: The major factors that hindered Teachers from doing action research and their degree of influence

Items	Teachers Response	
	Mean = X	Rank
Lack of knowledge about action research	2.96	5
Lack of experience in how to do educational research	4.38	3
Lack of material for research	3.25	4
Lack of confidence	1.60	8
Lack of motivation and interests	2.21	7
Work overload which leaves little time or no time for conducting research	2.42	6
Lack of support from concerned authorities in terms of finance and moral	4.47	2
Lack of conducive environment that encourages teachers to undertake action research	4.6	1

As the review of the different research studies indicated, teachers' involvement in educational research activities can be influenced by different constraints. To evaluate the degree of hindrance by different factors and to assess their impacts on research involvement of teachers, the response of teachers was elicited. Table 7 shows the result.

In an attempt to investigate the factors that inhibit teachers from undertaking action research, respondents were asked to rate the degree of seriousness of the factors in a five-point likert-scale. Based on the responses obtained the weighted mean of each item is calculated and ranked to make the data meaningful. Accordingly, lack of conducive environment that encourage teachers to undertake action research ranked first, lack of support from concerned authorities in terms of finance and moral second, lack of experience in how to do educational research third, lack of material for research fourth, lack of knowledge about research fifth, work overload sixth, lack of motivation and interest seventh and lack of confidence last.

From the data above, one can conclude that the most serious impediments to conduct educational research in the sample schools were lack of conducive environment for research, lack of support from concerned authorities in terms of finance and moral and lack experience in how to do educational research.

It is interesting to note that a close examination of responses of the teachers to lack of confident, lack of motivation and interest, heavy teaching load and lack of knowledge about research reveals that these are the least influencing factors which make teachers not to conduct educational research at their schools. At the same time, it is to be recalled that a good percentage of the teachers were reported to have admitted that they neither have the research competence nor the experience. Therefore, it appears that the teachers found it hard to accept that the current absence of research activities at schools is due to their lack of confidence, lack of motivation and interest, work overload and lack of knowledge and skills in research. This, however, does not mean that these factors have no influence at all. As can be observed from the table, though it is relatively lower, all of these factors also have some degree of influence. What table above clearly depicts is that, those factors rated high are serious impediments, which need immediate attention, if an attempt is to be made to promote educational research in primary schools.

Discussion

Teachers in schools, beyond their teaching assignments, are expected to conduct action research to solve their day-to-day workplace problems with the assumption that they are the most nearest individuals to educational problems (Befekadu, 2014). For this to happen, teachers' knowledge of educational research is a prerequisite (Solomon and Assefa, 2014; Abdinasir, 2000). As Hine (2013), Elliot (1991) and Shaeffer and Nkinyangi (1983) noted, it would be impossible to think of carrying out research without the individual being equipped with basic research skills. For a researcher to conduct a study should at least have the ABC of research methodology. Without being armed with a proper weapon and without a proper knowledge to determine which problems to tackle, it is hardly possible for one to undertake research on its kind. The result of this study, however, found out that a significant number of teachers in the study area do not have adequate knowledge and skills to undertaking action research, since 44.56% (36) of respondent teachers have not taken action research course at higher education institution.

Even from those teachers who took the training, sizable number of teachers was not equipped with adequate research skill and knowledge. From teachers who had taken research methodology course 35.42% of them assured that the training they have taken was not adequate enough to enable them undertake action research. The reason they mentioned for this was that the research course offered in higher institution was highly theory ridden and did not provide them with sufficient experience. Similar findings were obtained by Yalew (2000); USAID (2006); Biruk (2014); Mulugeta (2017) and Solomon and Assefa (2014) in studies conducted on primary and secondary school teachers of different areas in Ethiopia. As these studies revealed, significant number of teachers in the concerned studies reported that the training they took in higher education institutes was not adequate enough to enable them undertake research independently.

Teachers' attitude towards research activities is major driving force behind engagement into educational research. It is essential for teacher researchers to become familiar with and develop an appreciation of the nature of research process itself; and ultimately change their attitude and behavior before conducting any piece of research. In this regard, 92.05 % of primary school teachers under this study had a positive attitude towards conducting educational research. Research conducted by Hussien (2000) on Dessie secondary school teachers also came up with similar result.

Teachers' interest towards educational research has a great role to their real engagement into the educational research activities (Solomon & Assefa, 2014). Whether or not individuals have interest in research is quite a crucial matter in order to engage in research activities. Accordingly, respondent teachers in this study were asked to indicate their interest towards conducting educational research. Surprisingly, the finding indicated that almost all of the respondent teachers 93.18% (82) have interest towards conducting educational research. This finding seem to be consistent with Seyoum's (1998) study in that, majority of the teachers in his study were interested to conduct educational research. Since an effective research would grow out of the expressed interest and needs of the persons involved in it, this finding is indeed an encouraging one.

Majority of the teachers participated in this study have also reported that in primary schools of Bahir Dar town, there is no reference materials (up-to-date research books, research journals) that acquaint them with the know-how of research undertaking. Besides majority of the respondents claimed that no incentives or encouragement was given at all for teachers who were engaged in research activity.

According to Firdissa (2016), practicing action research and sustaining the quality of teaching demands empowerment and commitment of the frontline implementers, the teaching staffs. The findings, nonetheless, proved that the teachers' classroom decisions and actions were rarely informed by findings and /or evidences as most of the teachers did not consistently do action research. As the result of this study demonstrated, teachers' involvement in research activities was so limited. Only a few teachers 20.45% of teachers have been engaged in action research. 79.55% of the teachers in these schools have not been involved in action research.

Different research works undertaken by Daniel (2010); Mulugeta (2012); Yibeltal (2006), Yalew (2000); USAID (2006), and Hussie (2000) indicated that teachers in Ethiopian schools (teaching at different levels) are not properly conducting action research. Most teachers irrespective of whether or not they had training have not done action research. This implies that teachers show less effort to understand and reflect on their everyday problems in schools. As this study reveals, lack of conducive working environment that encourage teachers to undertake educational research, lack of support from

concerned authorities, lack of experience in how to do educational research and lack of material for research were the bottlenecks for primary school teachers' involvement in action research.

Recommendations

Almost half of the teachers in sample schools are not armed with necessary research knowledge and skill. Since it would be unrealistic to expect teachers without research skill to engage in research activity, in-service training, workshops, or seminars ought to organize in a sustained fashion in order to equip them with the necessary knowledge and skills and to up-grade teachers' research skills and make them familiar with action research. Besides, universities and colleges should revise their curricula in such a way that they encourage students' participation rather than making them passive listeners during classes and facilitate rote memorization which has less effect on learners in carrying out research activities. Instead of focusing only on theories and principles of research which have little importance to do research, it is better to emphasize on the more practical aspects of research such as developing and validating data collection instruments, selecting samples and data analysis techniques and interpretation. In addition to this, by establish university/college-school linkage, teacher training universities and colleges should empower teachers by giving need-based and tailor-made on-the-job training in action research.

Lack of conducive research climate has substantially affected educational research work in the schools. Therefore, it is important that top management and decision makers should create favorable conditions for research by allocating fund for teachers' research, by organizing and equipping school libraries with adequate recent reference books and research journals, and by providing sufficient stationary for teacher researchers. In addition, research endeavors by teachers should be encouraged. Top management need to understand the functions and outcomes of educational research in building a body of knowledge that informs the practice of education. And therefore, they should arrange financial, material and moral incentives for teacher for their effective efforts to do research work.

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