Involvement of Secondary School Teachers in Action Research:

The Case of Misrak Goh Secondary School

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ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

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ABSTRACT

The principal purpose of this study was to understand the involvement of high school teachers in educational action research in Misrak Goh. The study further investigates the major impediment faced by teachers to undertake research activities. To realize these objectives, data were collected from Misrak Goh secondary school teachers, school director and kirkos- sub city education officer through in depth interview, observation and document analysis. The participants were purposively selected based on their roles, responsibilities, exposure to research works and cooperativeness. The participants were interviewed using open-ended; semi-structured and structured questions in conversational style. As is true for most qualitative case studies, the data were presented in narrative forms based on the participants' understanding and interpretation in addition to my own reflective analysis. The findings revealed that the status of research activities was marginal. Only finger counted teachers were participated in research works. Most teachers were de-motivated to involve in research endeavors due to absence of any form of incentive from the school and mainly due to the discontinuation of teachers' promotion (career structure). This was due to the fact that participation in research was one of the performance evaluation criteria of teachers to be promoted. Hence, the issue being mentioned would come true when teachers are encouraged, motivated to involve in a scientific ways of alleviating problems. Accordingly, provision of due attention from concerned bodies such as policy makers, and other shall come into effect so as to curb the problem.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my late father, Mekebib Wolde Senbet, who continues to guide me with his courageous spirit.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

AAU-Addis Ababa University

AED-Academic for Educational Development

IDI-In Depth Interview

MOE-Ministry of Education

NETP- The New Education and Training Policy.

TGE- Transitional Government of Ethiopia.

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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

This chapter consists of background of the study, statement of the problem, basic research questions, objectives of the study, significance of the study, delimitation of the study, limitation of the study and definition of terms.

1.1 Background

Now a day, there is a global understanding that education should be viewed in line with the improvement of the main elements in its process, namely lives of learners, quality of teachers, contents, methods, and fulfilment of societal needs as well as economic conditions of a particulate country (Firdisa, 2000:44).

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

Action research can be defined as applied form of educational research commonly done by practitioners (teachers) at the classroom and school level in order to improve teaching practice. Justification for the need to conduct action research by school teachers have been given by many foreign and local scholars. According to these scholars, action research can be conducted to attain three main objectives or goal: to improve teaching practice, to improve the practitioner (teachers) and to improve the practice setting (Elliot, 1988).

With regard to the first goal of action research, that is improving educational practices, Corey and Mannion (1994) stated that one major reason for teachers' involvement in action research in the need for continual professional development or renewal through reflection on and evaluation of practices, and the importance of linking theory with practices by testing ideas in their classrooms. Adane (2000) has mentioned that teachers' engagement in research activities would enable them become participants in the process of planning and improving an educational system rather than being a mere part of the machine; and also they will have a multiple effect on their students. Another writer, Yalew (2000) has noted that teachers by virtue of their important positions in the education system are required to participate in educational research to improve the teaching learning quality and quantity. Similarly, Yeshimebet (2000) said that the teacher is taken as the first person that undertakes the research activities and utilizes its result to improve his/her teaching skills and experiences for enriching the teaching learning processes. Hussen (2000) also raises that as teachers become familiar with educational research, they can daily

improve their techniques and methods of instruction and evaluate results in a scientific manner. Added to this, Schmuck (1997) has remarked that action research offers a means for changing from current teaching practices towards better practices. In brief, engaging in action research enhances the quality of instruction, and research results generated by teachers can form the basis for updating content of the subject matter, methods of teaching and techniques of evaluation.

Regarding the second objective of action research that is improving the practitioners understanding, authorities in the area put forth their rationales for advocating teachers' involvement in action research. For example, Corey (1953) has pin pointed that teachers can make better decisions and can become more successful practitioners if they conduct educational action research in their classrooms. Lehtinen (1990) posited that when a teacher does regular job, there is every possibility for researching educational problem and acquire more knowledge and understanding. By the same token, Degarge (1999) has described that undertaking educational research teachers understand in one way through which teachers understand the deductive process at the macro and micro levels. Schmuck (1997) stated that conducting action research in the classroom helps teachers becomes more autonomous and improve their own professional judgment and decisions. In this connection, Schmuck (1997) has also expanded that action research fosters individual (teacher's) freedom when the process increases or enhances every one's opportunity to search for and to choose voluntarily among alternative actions, enhancing social equality or social well-being among participants. Accordingly, teachers are not the dependents, of innovators or supervisors. Thus, it is possible to say that by doing action research; teachers can liberate themselves from the dictates of educational authorities and can decide for themselves on what to do and how to do. Hopkins (1993) further indicated that it is possible to attain a capacity for autonomous professional self-development through systematic self-study; through the study of the work of other teachers and through the testing of ideas or concepts by classroom research procedure. One basic reason for conducting action research by teachers, as stated by Burton and Micckan (1992), has been the need for continual renewal, or development through reflection on and evaluation of practices.

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

nutshell, engagement in action research ensures that teachers are able to change or transform the setting in which they work.

In the Ethiopian context, all the three goals of action research are reflected in the current educational and training policy (NETP) and its directives. That is, at present, the NETP of the country has accentuated the importance of research and related competencies, such as problem solving and creative thinking. In line with this, the policy's document states "research of practical societal impact will be given priority and the necessary steps will also be taken to facilitate the coordinated efforts of all those concerned" (TGE, 1994:27). According to the policy, research that can solve practical societal problems is given priority.

Besides, the MOE has developed TDP (Teacher Development Program) in 2002 as a new scheme in teacher preparation and development and to encourage research practices in the schools, the TDP policy document (2003) stated that school teachers should participate in research programs to alleviate educational problems in the classroom/in the schools.

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

1.2 Statement of the problem

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

Action research enables educators to inquire, to observe, to collect data, and to dialogue during the school day. "It is a form of self-reflective inquiry that is now being used in school-based curriculum development, professional development, school improvement schemes, and so on, and, as such, it actively involves teachers as participants in their own educational process" (McNiff, 1997). Reflective practitioners critically assess their actions in order to change their practices. The inclusion of teacher research and reflective teaching into our educational programs is one option that should be considered when looking at the larger schema of education planning. The results of teachers engaging in the processes of action research and reflective teaching place educators in a more able position to critically influence the future of teaching and learning. Today's educators cannot afford to ignore their invaluable role in leading society through the challenges of present and future educational trends. Research literatures show that action research can serve many purposes: it is one way through which teachers improve the quality of their practice and profession, acquire

more knowledge and skills, make independent judgment, improve their techniques and methods of instruction, raise their understanding of the educative process and get personal promotion.

In the same vein, the current Ethiopian educational policy directives emphatically stressed the importance of action research at school and class room level. According to the policy documents (MOE, 2002), teachers at all school levels are required to engage in action research activities. More specifically, apart from teaching-learning processes or activities, school teachers are expected to conduct practical study and research to support and strengthen the teaching-learning process and examine the curriculum and give suggestions to improve it (MOE, 2002).

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

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

Academic for educational development has indicated that school teachers, apart from their responsibility of teaching, teachers are expected to conduct action research in order to solve the day to day practical problems of education. This is a professional requirement for all teachers at all levels. Moreover, teachers are obliged to conduct action research for their professional growth and development, and promotion to the next professional career is based on teaching and research out comes (AED, 2006).

At high school and preparatory schools, there is high expectation that teachers can do action research to solve actual classroom problems. However, there is no evidence that indicates the extent to which teachers conduct action research to solve real educational problems in classrooms/schools (MOE, 2002).

Since schools are known to be the primary beneficiaries from action research, it is expected that they provide teachers with sufficient support. Nevertheless, evidence is required as to the extent to which such support has been given to teachers, the type of support made available, and the reactions of teachers with the support given so that others may learn from useful experiences (MOE, 2002).

As clearly indicated, teachers are expected to conduct action research, but involvement in action research undoubtedly requires adequate knowledge and skills that are to be acquired through training and practice. It is not yet documented or researched to what extent school teachers feel that the knowledge and skills they acquired at universities helped them to involve in action research in actual classrooms, and to improve school situations. Thus, I had a need to document the knowledge and skills of school teachers in utilizing action research for improving the teaching-learning process and then develop along the career structures.

In line with this understanding, it has become significant and necessary to examine to what extent secondary school teachers of Misrak Goh are involved in educational action research.

1.3 Basic Research Questions

The study was conducted to address the following basic research questions:-

1. What is the attitude of Secondary School teachers towards conducting educational action research?

2. What is the states/degree of high school teachers' involvement in educational action research?

3. What factors influence the engagement of high school teachers in educational action research?

4. How can action research be promoted among Secondary School teachers in the immediate future?

1.4 Objectives of the study

1.4.1   General Objective

➤ Assessing the involvement of Misrak Goh Secondary School teachers' involvement in educational research.

1.4.2   Specific Objectives

The study aims at particular objectives:-

➤ Assessing the current status of secondary school teachers' involvement in conducting educational action research in the school;

➤ Identifying the level of competence of secondary school teachers to conduct educational action research in the school;

> ➤ Assessing the attitude of teachers towards conducting educational action research;

> ➤ Identifying the major factors that affect (positively or negatively) teachers engagement in educational action research in the school.

1.5 Significance of the study

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

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

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

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

1.6 Delimitation of the study

The need for conducting educational action research is of paramount importance and may require wide coverage at the various levels of educational system. However, the scope of the study was delimited to Misrak Goh secondary school out of five secondary and preparatory schools found in kirkos sub-city, Addis Ababa.

The school was founded in 1945 E.C. It started offering high school education in 1999 E.C, being one of the pioneer schools in the sub-city. There were 51 teachers in the school and supported or administered by one school director and two deputy directors.

1.7 Limitation of the study

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

This case study is limited to teachers in only one high school, one sub-city and one city, the research participants in the study were not randomly selected, but were selected because of their of their participation in educational action research, experience and responsibility. Additionally, it is difficult to generalize the findings of this study, because of a limited non random sample in a single school.

1.8 Operational Definitions

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

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

Educational action research: a reflection and an inquiry conducted by educators who want to improve their own practices. It is practitioners' (teachers') research which uses to assess their day to day activity (Zubber-Skirret, 1997).

Educational research: a systematic attempt to gain a better understanding of the educational process, generally with a view to improve its efficiency (Derbessa, 2000).

Professional development: actual change or progress in the status of employees (teachers) within an organization (school) as a result a good performance and it is also one of the motivating factors (Silver, 1983).

Career structure: is a change in the structure of teaching profession that provides teachers to advance or progress (from one rank to the next) in their profession (Merriam, 1988).

Reflection: thinking about one's own behaviours, or practice or actions in the past, or the present, or the future. It is a problem solving activity by thinking through (Schumuck, 1997).

Reflective practice: the thinking that integrates reflection with action research in problem solving to achieve continuous improvement (Schmuck, 1997).

Reflection-in-Action: entails thinking critically about one's own actions/practices while they are ongoing (Donald Schon, 1983).

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

<center>**Chapter two**</center>

<center>**Review of Related Literature**</center>

In this section, I have made an attempt to review the scholarly literature pertaining to my study. I have utilized the review of the scholarly literature as source of a data or as a source of results of other prior studies, or existing theories or assumptions about action research, of strategies or methods for my study, and indeed, I used it to relate my study to the large on-going discussions in the literatures about educational action research.

2.1 The concept of Action Research

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

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

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

Carr and Kemmis (1991; 162) defines action research as follow:

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

Generally speaking, action research in the field of education has been commonly defined as a form of self- reflective inquiry undertaken by practitioners (i.e. teachers) to improve their practices (i.e. the teachers learning process), their understanding,

and the social situations that is the school system. When we say action research, it encompasses three elements are present, the process can not to be called action research (Elliot, 1988).

2.2 Purpose of Action Research

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

Zuber-Skerritt (1993) stated that the aims of action research are 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. For Kemmis (2001: 92), action research aimed at critical reconstruction of the work place (practice), the workers (the practitioners) and the work place (the practice setting). Action research as stated by Stuart (1991: 150), tries to keep problem solving in close touché with reality at every stage. It is concerned with the immediate problem here and now in the local setting.

Furthermore, Elliot (1988) enumerates the following purposes of action research in school; action research in schools investigates human actions and social situation s 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.

All the descriptions above imply that action research has been used often in the field of education for the purpose of improving practices (teaching- learning processes) as well as improving the practitioner (teacher) and the practice setting (schools). The action research is the interest in the improvement of the educational practices in which he/she is engaged. He/she undertakes research in order to find out how to do his/her job better (Elliot, 1988).

2.3 Historical Development of Action Research

Action research emerged as a distinct line of inquiry notably by after the end of Second World War. Practitioners have presented action research as an alternative to overcome the limitations posted by positivism, often giving the impression that

action research and positivism and contradictory research movements (Elliot, 1991; kemmis, 1990; Schumuck, 1997).

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

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

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

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

AS reviewed by Zeichner (2001: 273-276), there are five major traditional of educational action research that have exerted influence (in conjunction with local factors) on the development of action research in the education system of many countries.

First, there is the action research tradition in USA that developed directly out of the work of Kurt Lewin and was bought into US schools by Stephen Corey and others at the Horace Mann-Lincoln institute at Columba University. Secondly, there is the British 'teacher-as-researcher movement' that evolved in the 1960s and 1970s out of the curriculum reform work of British teachers and the support provided by several academics, such as Lawrence Stenhouse and John Elliot. Thirdly, there is the Australian participatory action research movement, supported by the work of Stephen Kemmis and Robin McTaggart at Deakin University and other Australian academics. Fourthly, there is contemporary teacher research movement in North America that has developed since the 1980s primarily by teachers (often with the

support of their university colleagues and subject matter associations). Finally, there is the recent growth of self-study research by college and university educators who requires into their own practice as teachers and educators. Zeichner has also remarked that educational action research has also been influenced by the traditions of participatory research which developed in Africa, Latin America and Asia with oppressed groups and later was adapted to community–wide research in North America.

2.4 Models of Action Research

Three primary models of action research define the steps similarly. These models of action research incorporate a process of five steps. While the models have a variety of differences, they share the steps of data collection and analysis, and taking action on an identified focus. As noted in Table 1, the Sagor Model, Kemmis and McTaggert Model, and Calhoun Model each are a unique variation of a five-step process.

Table 1
Five Step of Action Research Processes (Kemmis and McTaggart ,1990)

5 step process	Sagor Model	Kemmis and Mc Tagger Model	Calhoun Model
Step 1	Problem Formulation	Planning	Selecting the area of Focus
Step 2	Data Collection	Acting	Collecting Data
Step 3	Data Analysis	Observation	Organizing Data
Step 4	Reporting of Result	Reflecting	Analyzing and Interpreting Data
Step 5	Action Planning	Re-Planning	Taking Action

Although each of the above models uses different words, in essence, they each include using data to act or react to a defined problem or area of concern. According to the above models, action research can be summarized as a spiralling process that facilitates planning, acting, collecting data, observing, reflecting, analysing, reacting, and evaluating in a manner that is systematic but flexible in nature. These spiralling cycles of query identification, observation, organized data collection, reflection, analysis, data driven action and problem redefinition identify action research.

The Sagor Model. Richard Sagor is an Assistant Professor of Education at Washington State University. Sagor (1992) suggested that the collaborative action research process has five sequential steps: (a) problem formulation, (b) data collection,(c) data analysis, (d) reporting of results, and (e) action planning. Researchers identify the issues to be studied in the first step. During data collection, the individuals involved in the collection process devise a plan for collecting and assembling three sets of different data. This allows the researchers to compare and contrast the independent sets of data. Sagor believed that data collection is the heart of the five-step process. It is the data that enable the teacher to look at the issue

through different lenses. Next the data are analysed. "If data collection is the heart of the research process, then data analysis is its soul" (Sagor, 1992, p. 11). It is during this step that the researchers look for trends or patterns and draw conclusions. During the fourth step, the researchers communicate their results. It is here that the education profession can benefit and learn the most. "Thus, it is imperative that teams of action researchers find as many appropriate forums as possible to share what they are learning about teaching and learning" (p. 11). The last step is action planning. After completing the action research process, action plans are used to readdress the original problem and to improve schooling practices.

The Kemmis and McTaggart Model.Stephen Kemmis is a professor at Deakin University in Geelong, Australia. Robin McTaggart is the Pro-Vice-Chancellor of Staff Development and Student Affairs at James Cook University in North Queensland, Australia. Kemmis and McTaggart (1990) developed a five-step process of educational action research. Their five spiralling steps were (a) planning, (b) acting, (c) observing, (d) reflecting, and (e) re-planning. Educational researchers use the first step to plan how they will change or how they will address a specific issue of concern. In the first step, the researchers develop their research question(s). The researchers implement the second step to take action and experiment with ways that may lead to solutions. The third step, observing, is important for data collection. It is during this step that the researchers record specific elements for a series of lessons. This allows the researchers to look for trends. The fourth step, reflecting, is used to reflect on the plan, action, and observations.

After this guided reflection, the educational researchers re-plan and revise the original plan according to the data, and then continue through the spiral of acting, observing and reflecting. The process of action research is an intentional, results-aligned investigation that is group or personally owned and directed. Kemmis & McTaggart (1990) stated that the uniting of the terms action and research signifies the primary features of action research. Action research is a systematic research process for teachers to use to take action on ideas in practice, to broaden knowledge and improve the processes of instruction, teaching, and learning.

The Calhoun Model. Emily Calhoun is the Director of Phoenix Alliance, which provides long-term support to school districts, state agencies, and regional agencies that are committed to improving student achievement through investing in staff learning at the school level. Calhoun has been a teacher at both the elementary and high school levels. Calhoun (1994) viewed action research as a vehicle to facilitate change through shared decision making within a school setting. Calhoun's process includes five sequential phases: (a) selecting the area of focus, (b) collecting data, (c) organizing data, (d) analysing and interpreting data, and (e) taking action.

Calhoun (1994) stated that engaging in action research involves progressing through steps of inquiry: choosing a focus area, collecting and analysing data, studying professional literature, best practices, and taking action. She also emphasized the importance of teachers studying and researching the professional literature that

targets their area of focus. This critical reading provides the teacher researcher with a foundation and framework for further study.

2.5 Reflective Practices in Action Research

Action research is a form of staff development that encourages and develops the skills of educators to become more reflective practitioners, more methodical problem solvers, and more thoughtful decision makers (Sparks and Simmons, 1989). Sagor (2000) believed that an important purpose for action research was "building the reflective practitioner" (p. 7). He explained that "when reflections on the findings from each day's work inform the next day's instruction, teachers can't help develop greater mastery of the art and science of teaching" (p. 7).

In addition, Danielson and McGreal (2000), Kemmis and McTaggert (1990), McNiff (1997), and Schon (1983, 1987) focused on the importance of teachers critically reflecting on their practice. Each asserted that teacher introspection and on-going discussion about their own practice were very important. The process of action research provides a structured, disciplined approach to reflecting about the teaching and learning process. Danielson and McGreal (2000) stated, "Few activities are more powerful for professional learning than reflection on practice" (p. 24).

Likewise, Schon (1983, 1987) referred to the thinking practices that occurred while in the midst of teaching as reflection in action. He described this reflection inaction as thinking about what one is doing while one is doing it. Reflection on action evokes thinking critically about one's actions after they have occurred. This type of reflection helps us gain a deeper understanding of what we already know. More recently, Danielson and McGreal (2000) elaborated on the importance of reflection for professional growth and stated, "The very act of reflection, it appears, is a highly productive vehicle for professional learning" (p. 48).

2.6 Methods of Data Collection in Action Research

Action research requires a planned method for gathering data. The most popular ways to collect data are interview, observations, focus group discussion (FGD), questioner and document analyses (Schuck, 1997; 52-56; Degarge, 1999: 42-45; Marriam, 1988:71-118).

Interviews are conversation in which interviewer poses questions to interviewees. Observation involves attentively watching and systematically recording what is seen and heard. Focus group Discussions (FGD) is an informal yet discussion In which a small number of participants are asked to discuss a particular topic in the presence of an interviewer or a facilitate. Questioners are printed lists e.g. of integrative or declarative statements that individuals respond to in writing. Documents are public records, press clippings, and private journals and diaries.

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

2.7 Strength and Limitation of Action Research

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

2.7.1 Strength of Action Research

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

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

> Action research promotes a critical research in to teaching accountability; self- evaluation and professionalism, which all of these are important goals anywhere in the world. Action research may provide a practical solution to these problems of achieving these goals. Through systematic investigation, teachers can become more professional, more interested in a holistic way. This, in turn, can lead to greater job satisfaction, better academic Programs improvement of student learning and practitioners' insight and contributions to the advancement of knowledge in education.

From the aforementioned descriptions, it is clear that action research helps educators, primarily to solve practical educational problems and moreover, it can help teachers to be collaborators in tacking educational problems. Specifically, it can help teachers to collaborate on the revision of the curriculum, improve their work environment, professionalize teaching and suggest for the development and revision of educational policy (AED/MOE, 2006: 24-25).

2.7.2 Limitations of Action Research

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

2.8 The Status of Action Research in Ethiopia

In Ethiopia, as I have mentioned earlier in the introduction section, the current education and training policy and the education sector strategy document of 1994.With specific reference to research and development, instruction methods and evaluation techniques shall be encouraged and assisted. It expresses the need to integrate and coordinate the teaching-learning process with research, and facilitate the participation of teachers and researchers in getting the necessary experience.

From the above description, it is clear that one of the major concerns or the focus of the educational policy in meeting the challenges of teaching-learning process and tackle the problem of quality in education is by facilitating conditions to conduct research in classroom and school situation. In this regard, it is expected that school teachers can conduct research for improving the teaching-learning process, the curriculum as well as their professional competence (MOE, 2006).

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

An examination of the aforementioned studies show that they were conducted at tertiary levels as M.A. theses (Aster,2004; Abrahum,2004; Yibeltal, 2006); as journal article (e.g.Seyoum,1998; Hussen,2000; Yalew,2000; Yeshimebet,2000; Teklehaimanot,2000; Amare,2000) as a national document for educational development (e.g. AED/MOE,2006); and a regional document for educational development (e.g. Firdissa, 2000).

From the above studies, only very few studies (e.g. Aster, 2004; the AED/MOE, Yibeltal, 2006) deal with action research, of which the first two studies aimed at assessing the states of action research in schools, while the latter has attempted assess the states of action research in schools.

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

Furthermore, the AED/MOE (2006), in its study, which aimed to explore how action research in primary schools is carried out in Ethiopia, found out nine major findings (pp, 110-115): the knowledge (training and skills) of teachers in action research are not adequate; teachers do not practice action research as much as expected, that is, there was less effort of doing action research among teachers in schools; collaborating in doing action research was encouraging among teachers but more collaboration took place in urban schools than rural schools; both inside and outside school factors were motivating factors for those teachers who do action research; factors inside and outside impede doing action research used or applied the procedure of traditional-descriptive research to do action research; support provided by schools and authorities for teachers who did action research seems inadequate or insignificant in many schools, against the basic assumption of action research; schools do not use the results of findings of action research in real life situations; most of the students do not have an idea about research conducted in their schools.

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

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

According to the major findings of these studies, the states of educational research in the Ethiopian secondary schools has suffered from the following problems or constrains: inadequacy of research skills (i.e. low expertise and lack of experience in research activities); lack of imagination, lack of financial and material resources in the schools; lack of confidence work over loud (which leaves little or no time for teachers to conduct educational action research); lack of motivation and of interest; administrative problems; absence of government policy with regard to academic freedom; failure in coordinating efforts among education authorities in research activities.

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

2.9 Factors Affecting Teachers' Involvement in Action Research

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

2.9.1 Personal/Internal Factors

Action research is part of teachers' professional development, and as such it requires teachers' reflection "on" and "in" action. The capacity to reflect (which is one of action research attributes) can be affected by individual (personal) factors as knowledge and/or skill level, self-confidence, esteem, attitude and interest in research, inquisitive mind, perseverance or discipline, and training pattern. That is, the inputs that are often expected from the individual researcher need to constitute some or all of the above attributes. This means that if all of the above attributes are not available, teachers could not undertake educational action research (MOE, 2002).

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

Similarly Good (in Seyoum, 1999) argued that having an inquisitive mind could be quite an asset in research. It is often said that research favours the one who is curious about problems as opposed to the one who takes everything for granted or one who is blind to problems. Furthermore, by its very nature, research activity calls for the disciplined mind, a mind that is tenacious and unwavering. That is why success in research is often attributed to the individual to the individual researcher's perseverance.

Moreover, other educators, for example, Elliot (1991) have emphasized that it would be virtually impossible to think of carrying out research activity without the individual being equipped with basic research skill. Basically, the only way to acquire

competence in research is by doing it, but before research can put into practice some skills must be acquired. Therefore, the need for competency in research methods becomes indispensable to the individual teachers.

At the same time, it should be noted that having some or all of the above attributes does not necessarily guarantee the individual to effectively engage in research activity because teachers' capacity to reflect on their practice can also be affected by institutional or environmental and situational factors (Elliot, 1991).

2.9.2 External Factors

Those can be grouped in to institutional, environmental and situational factors.

2.9.2.1 Institutional/Environment Factors

It is believed that reflective practice and action research are more effective in those environment that promote the culture of inquiry for teachers. In other words, it becomes clear that some or all of the above personal attributes one has in research practice do not by themselves take one anywhere unless other essential conditions for research are facilitated (Seyoum, 1998:).

Among the basic essentials that are needed to carryout research activity are obviously financial resources which are in short supply (as such, the existence of research sponsoring institutions becomes indispensableo, the availability of research facilities (ranging from office space to sophisticated pieces of research equipment), The provision of material and psychological incentives, the creation of publishing outlets (such as journals, magazines, newsletters).

Putting in simple ward, institutional inputs include such things as provision of research funds, facilities, time, incentives and publishing out lets. Besides, the nature of state and school policy on continuous professional development of teachers, administrative problems can be regarded as impeding factors to initiate action research and exercise reflectivity. In general, an action research, to do effective job, should be guaranteed with all sorts of favourable conditions, such as economic, social, political as well as cultural security (Seyoum, 1998).

2.9.2.2 Situational Factors

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

In conclusion, it could be said that research activity in classroom and schools situation in a function of the integration of the various personal (internal) and institutional (external) inputs. That is, without inputs from the two major factors, it would be hard to effectively engage in research activities (Seyoum, 1998).

CHAPTER THREE
DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

3.1 Methodological Approach

We are not adequately benefiting from the emerging trends in educational practice because, "process can be neither understood nor measured with the rational or experimental research models" (Caine and Caine, 1994). Therefore, Caine and Caine elaborated, "We urgently need more qualitative measures in education"

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

3.2 Research Design and Procedures

This study has applied the *exploratory case study approach*. Since it intended to investigate a single educational issue (i.e. the statues of action research) in a single research setting (Misrak Goh Secondary School), Case study approach appeared appropriate to be utilized.

This study was carried out in three stages. The first stage, which was the preparatory stage, involves proposal development, writing of review of related literatures, development of methods of data collection and strategies of data analysis. The second phase was preliminary assessment (i.e. creating rapport with the teachers and directors within the school and the sub-city education officers), employment of methods or techniques of data collection, data transcription, data coding, data categorization, analysis and interpretational. The third stage, draft reporting, finalization of the draft and publication of the final research report were accomplished one after the other (Seyoum, 1998).

3.3 Source of data and selection of research participants

The main data source for the study were ten teachers, one director, one sub city-education expert, documentary sources (e.g. time table, school's strategic plan, and previous research papers produced by the teachers), and I myself.

Since school teachers are required to demonstrate in action research practice for professional development and to improve interactional process, (MOE, 2002:35), I

had felt that getting their reaction is helpful. Therefore, I have selected ten teachers out of 51 teachers.

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

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

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

3.4 Sampling technique and Sampling

In this study, *Purposive Sampling Technique* was employed for the selection of key informants because this sampling technique increases the reliability and validity of the data. The informants were selected depending on their relevance to the study being conducted, that is, the criteria used to select informants were their experience, competence, roles, concerns, responsibilities, qualification and cooperativeness or willingness to participate in the study.

3.5 Data Collection Procedures

Typically in this study research, strategies for data collection include semi-structured interviewing, observation and document analysis. The use of different data sources helps the researcher to "validate and crosscheck findings" (Patton, 1990, p.244). The methods were developed in such a way that they maximize the possibility of generating answers to the basic research questions.

3.5.1 Planning and conducting the interview

At the very start, I established a rapport with the research setting (i.e. with the working teachers, directors and sub-city education administration bodies), though I had had previous acquaintance with most of them. Then, interview protocols were prepared to undertake the interview, and for recording information. And I have

discussed them orally with the research participants regarding their consent and anonymity, the confidentiality of the information and other related ethical issues.

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

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

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

3.5.2 Planning and conducting an observation

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

3.5.3 Document Assessment

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

3.6 Triangulation

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

3.7 Method of Data Analysis

The data collected from case study were analyzed on ongoing basis using single-case analysis strategy where I attempted to make a comprehensive analysis of the case. The use of a single-case analysis gave me the opportunity for the in-depth understanding of the issues in the study. I have also applied interpretational analysis,

or categorizing analysis where, first, I coded and organized the data into four major categories or themes in order to compare and contrast them and to look for connections or correspondence among categories or themes of the data. Moreover, I have utilized reflective analysis by using my own experiences, personal judgment or concepts and reflection to assess the case understudy, and to draw conclusions.

Towards this line, I have developed categories or themes based on the basic research questions, and on the basis of the assembled data themselves. The category I developed were: The trends of teachers' involvement in action research, major factors that influences teachers' engagement in action research and the future trends of teachers/ engagement in action research used as a recommendation in the final chapter.

3.8 Ethical Consideration

Denzin and Lincoln (1994), Merriam (19880) and Creswell (1994/2003), have remarked that in qualitative research full attention should be given for moral and ethical principles issues. Therefore, I have given a particular consideration to ethical principles developed by these scholars, particularly regarding ensuring informal consent and assent, developing confidentiality, maintaining anonymity and other related ethical issues. Accordingly, I prepared and proposed a set of ethical principle or research protocol for my research and informed the participants throughout my study. Furthermore, all the research participants were renamed (T1, T2, T3, T4 --------- -T12) so as to protect their identity.

3.9 My Role as a Researcher

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

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

This part of the research tries to analyze and discuss the data collected from teachers, school director and sub-city education officer to seek appropriate answers for the basic research questions raised.

One of the issues highly emphasised by the education policy and its directives is teachers' research practices for promotion and enhancing the quality of teaching-learning process. In line with this, the educational policy directives has designed and put into play advancement or promotion and a career ladder schedule for teachers to initiate them to increase their capabilities and responsibilities (Yalew, 2000).

Thus, a seven-tiered scheme had also been developed and teachers working at all working at all school level have been evaluated and such evaluation would enable an individual teachers to grow from a beginner teacher (Jemari Memihir) to a lead teacher ("Kefetgh Meri Memihir"). Accordingly, as teachers do progress from one level or rank to the next, their salary increases, and their esteem in the society grows, and they would became increasingly respected figures in the school as well as in the community (Yalew,2000).

Career structure in this context defined as a change in the structure of teaching profession that provides teachers to advance and progress in their profession. Major purpose of career structure is:

➢ To enhance the motivation, interest and diligence of teachers
➢ Attract good entrants to the teaching profession
➢ Encouraging the development of the teaching profession and;
➢ To enhance the quality of the teaching-learning process. (Yalew, 2000).

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

In the same vein, at grassroots level, the schools in its so-called mission statement (SPM, 1996-1998:3) have spelt out the need to conduct educational action research by stating:

> *At this level of education, the school commits itself to provide its learners with quality instructional process that is assisted by (integrated with) research practices…..*

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

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

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

Therefore, the present study has attempted to explore what looks like the trends of secondary school teachers' involvement in action research. Besides, it tried to identify major factors that had adversely affected the teachers to engage in action research; and collect different suggestions that may help to improve the teachers' perception in action research in the immediate future. In this chapter, thus, the data generated from different sources analysed thematically and discussed vis-a-vis to the three major categories and their sub-categories that were created based on the basic research questions. The data are presented in narrative forms. I have also shown my own interpretation and understanding of the issues in addition to the research participants' own interpretation and understandings.

4.1 The trend of teachers' involvement in Action Research

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

4.1.1 The extent of teachers' involvement:

Low status or Infant stage of teachers' involvement in action research

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

In this connection, for example, one of my informants (T4) expounded that:

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

<div align="center">Date: - T4, January 21/2013</div>

This view implies that action research practices were not common and popular among teachers of Misrak Goh Secondary School.

Similarly, another informant (T2) explained the research conditions of the teachers by saying:-

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

<div align="center">Date:-T2, January 14/2013</div>

Still another teacher informant (T12) expressed his regret for his failure to do any research by uttering:

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

<div align="center">Date: - T12, February 18/2013</div>

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

The idea of T12 (i.e. the absence of involvement in research activities) were shared by T1. He said:-

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

> *Date: - T12, February 18/2013*

The trend of teachers' involvement in educational action research, according to one informant (T8), has shown certain improvements:

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

> *Date: - T8, February 4/2013*

According to the view of T8, the involvement of those summers- in- service trainees in research activity can be counted as an indicator of a positive trend of teachers' participation in educational action research since the last five years.

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

As such, it is possible to say that there was a thin line or a weak nexus between action research and the teaching practices. That is, the teachers of the school showed less effort and appeared reluctant to understand and reflect on their everyday practical

problems in the school and classrooms, and, thus, one cannot talk of their involvement in educational action research since the research claimed to have done was so minimal.

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

As such, it is possible to conclude that teachers of Misrak Goh Secondary Schools didn't participate in educational action research as much as expected, and that the status of their engagement in action research is at its very stage of development.

4.1.2 Major research issues addressed by teachers in their research papers.

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

This study has found out that teachers who claimed to have involved in educational action research gave more emphasis on teaching methodology and contents' relevance of subject matter materials in their research papers. With regarded to the specific issues or problems addressed in few research papers, one of my informants (T8), described his views as follows:

> *I witnessed that those teachers who have done research usually focussed on issues as teaching methodology (of language, natural science, social science,...............etc.); evaluation of curricular materials (content relevance); students disciplinary problems encountered them in the classrooms even though they were intended to improve school's practices.*

> *Date: - T8, February 4/2013*

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

4.1.3 Research methods utilized by the teachers

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

The document analyses I have made on twelve research papers suggests that the overwhelming number of the teachers who have conducted research used the traditional descriptive design. That is, the traditional descriptive research procedure that includes identification of the problems, background, purpose (objective), significance, basic research questions, quantitative data, statistical analysis techniques and provisions of conclusion, summary and recommendations was commonly employed by all teachers. The case study approach observed to be the most popular type of descriptive design to the teachers (Seyoum, 1998).

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

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

4.1.4 Purpose for which teachers undertook Action Research

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

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

Nevertheless, the result of the study has demonstrated that the primary motives of the teachers in conducting research were to attain personal benefits rather than to improve the quality of practices and actions within the school. In other word, the teacher's engagement in educational action research was highly incentive-oriented. In line with this idea, for instance, one of the informants, (T8) described the teachers' objectives as follows:

> *Majority of the teachers have conducted research primarily to partially fulfil their courses requirement. Other than for this, there were teachers who had done research for promotion purposes. Therefore, teachers in most cases were externally pushed to engage in research activities.*

> *Date: - T8, February 4/2013*

Likewise, another research participant, T10, reported:

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

> *Date: - T10, February 11/2013*

The above description of the informants, particularly the view of T8, (the views that were commonly shared by almost all the research participants) show that the prime concern for which the teachers conduct research were in order to partially fulfil their course requirements. Apart from this, the findings of the study have also duplicated that some of the teachers used to conduct research every three or four years either to

get promotion from one rank to the next on the career structure's ladder, or to solve somehow, the problems they encountered in the teaching-learning process, but really.

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

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

4.2 Factors that influence teachers to involve in Action Research.

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

4.2.1 Internal (personal) factors that influence teachers to do Action Research

As described in chapter two of this study, action research requires teachers' reflection "on" and "in" action. The capacity to reflect, however; can be affected by plenty of individual (personal) factors, such as knowledge and/or skill level, attitude towards research, interest in research, inquisitive mind, perseverance or discipline, self-confidence, esteem, and perception (Seyoum, 1998: 7-9; Yalew, 2000: 257-260; AED/MOE, 2006: 36-39). This implies that if all or some of the above attribute are not available, teachers could not undertake educational action research up to the required standards, or qualities.

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

4.2.1.1 Teachers have lacked the skill/ knowledge of Action Research

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

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

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

Nevertheless, as the findings of this study demonstrated most of high school teachers have lacked the required skills and knowledge of the techniques of educational action research that could allow them to involve in it. Indeed, the results of the study have shown that almost all of the informants who participated in the study (except T10) have unanimously agreed on the importance of knowledge, or competence in action research as prerequisite for involving in it. As regards the problem with the teachers' research knowledge, one of the informants (T8) reported:

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

> *Date: - T8, February 8/2013*

Similarly, another research participant (T2) described his complaints with regard to lack of competence in research skill and problem with the mode of prior training as follows:

> *We are obligated to do research under the conditions we have lacked research skill and knowledge. Some of the teachers even did not take any training at all and have no idea. On the other hand, the training we had taken on research methodology at university*

was not adequately and not promising to do research, because it was given to us through distance courses and as a result, we have very little awareness or orientation about it. It could not enable as to initiate research works in the school.

Date: -T2, January 14/2013

According to the views of these informants (whose views represent the views held by the majority of the research participants); lack of quality and adequate prior training or shortage of knowledge on educational action research was a prominent obstacle to involve in it. Because, other factors such as teachers' perception, interest and commitment are guided by the level of teachers' knowledge on action research. As they explained, the problem is not equal magnitude for all high school teachers rather it is severe for those veteran teachers who were trained in the pre-1994 (i.e. the socialist) education system, which gives very limited orientation about basic research methodology.

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

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

4.2.1.2 Teachers have lacked interest in Action Research.

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

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

In this study, it become evident that most of the informants have associated the teachers' interest in educational action research with motivation or incentives, level of research skill/knowledge and level of qualification. According to the data, one teacher found to have low interest to participate in research owning to various reasons. These includes lack of competence in research skills and absence of incentives or rewards (e.g. the cases of the career structure), lack of self-confidence due to lack of adequate research know-how and problems associated with their academic background (i.e. a considerable number of teachers had advanced to their first degree either from certificate level, or from diploma level; and still others with no training on research methodology). For instance, one of my informants (T3) said:

> *I and other teachers have low level of interest in research for the main reason that we have very little training on educational research techniques, which we had acquired through distance courses. Beside, lack of adequate knowledge made many of us less confident to involve in research activities.*

> *Data: - T3, January 21/2013*

Added to the above description, another informant (T2) has reported:

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

> *Date: - T2, January 14/2013*

The other informants (T4, T5, T6 and T10) held the same opinion. According to them, many of the teachers used to related interest in doing research with promotion or rewards, that is, they claimed that they are not interested in research because there is no promotion reward expected of conducting research. This could imply that, teachers need something from outside to engage in research.

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

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

4.2.1.3 Teachers held unfavourable attitude towards research

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

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

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

Nonetheless, most of the informants of my study have reported that the teachers' as well as their appraisers did not consider research practices as part of the teaching activity. For instance, one of the research participants (T5) described the situation as follows:

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

Date: -T5, January 28/2013

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

Furthermore, there is a misconception as regards research activities. In this connection, one of the informants (T9) said:

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

Date: -T9, February 11/2013

Still there was another indication to the teachers' negative attitude towards the teaching profession itself. One informant (T8) reported:

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

Date: - T8, February 4/2013

Another informant (T6) associated the teacher's negative attitude to the initial placement. He explained:

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

Date: - T6, January 28/2013

The unfavourable attitudes and misconceptions held seem to have emanated partly from shortage of research knowledge; lack of exposure to research, particularly from lack of proper conceptualization of action research. This study has founded out that the majority of the participants (ten out of twelve) could not properly conceptualize

action research. Only two of the research informants who are currently pursuing summer course (T3 and T8), have had little exposure to action research.

In confirmation of the presence of the problem of conceptualization of action research, T6, expounded:

> *Most of the teachers and the appraisers have no idea about action research. We have not properly conceptualized it. Really, we are not clear with the difference between educational research and action research.*

> *Date: - T6, January 28/2013*

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

4.2.1.4 Teachers Lacked Curiosity

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

In the discussions I made so far, it become clear that most of the teachers could not do action research though there were multitudes of educational problems within the school that need to be investigated. This entails that the research seemed to appear reluctant or less curious to understand and reflect on their practical problems within their classes or the school. And one may say that they have been merely engaged in their teaching task; executing what was prescribed in the curriculum materials. This idea is evidenced by the utterances made by one of the informants (T12):

> *We have failed to carry out research activities alongside without teaching commitments. In fact, there were and are lots of issues accumulated in our minds that need to be researched. But all teachers had focused their entire attention to their teaching task; they claim that accomplishing the teaching task (the chalk and talk) is more than enough to get the bread.*

> Date: - T12, February 18/2013

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

4.2.1.5 Teachers' lacked individual Self-Effort to learn about Action Research.

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

In this regard, for example, one of the informants (T10) describes the teacher's situation as follow:

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

> *Date: - T10, February 11/2013*

Almost the entire research participant (except T7) gave a similar exposition with T10 regarding the teachers individual self-effort to understand action research.

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

4.2.2. External factors that obstruct teachers to do Action Research.

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

As informed by research participants, particularly by teachers, lack of training or knowledge on action research on the parts of both teachers and appraisers, lack of incentives or motivation, lack of facility at school (e.g. poor library and internet

facilities), lack of significant support from educational administration bodies, high work load or shortage of time, inconsistency of performance evaluation criteria, absence of research coordinating unit or advisory team, lack of feedback on research done. Problem of utilization and documentation of research out comes were main external problems that obstruct action research practices among teachers.

4.2.2.1. Lack of training (knowledge) on Action Research

Action research knowledge and skill of the teachers and the appraisers have been treated as important requirement in the study. The finding of the study reveals that only two research participants (T3 and T8) have taken little training on action research through distance courses as a part of summer-in-service training. On the contrary, the overwhelming majority of the informants did not have knowledge or training on action research, or did not take research methodology courses adequately. Explaining the training pattern, one informant (T2) said:

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

> *Date: -T2, January 14/2013*

In confirmation of the above ideas, T7 further explained:

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

> *Date: - T7, February 4/2013*

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

Regarding training of the appraisers (i.e. the school and the woreda education officers), the study has indicated that there was not satisfactory training given to them. For example, one of the research participants (T8) described the situation as follows:

> One of the major problems was that those experts at sub-city office were designated to evaluate research papers without having proper knowledge of research. Surprisingly, you cannot find or see any expert who is capable of evaluating research works and of giving feedbacks. This has been a very serious problem.

Data: - T8, February 4/2013

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

4.2.2.2 Absence of motivation/ incentives

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

In relation to this idea, all the teacher participants uniformly mentioned that general incentive for those teachers who involves in educational action research are weak or almost absent and do not attract the teachers to involve in research activities.

Regarding this situation, the informant, T2, reported:

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

Date: -T2, January 14/2013

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

4.2.2.3 Lack of facilities at the school

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

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

In this connection, (T6) reported the situation as follows:

> *The school library is ill-equipped. There is no as such worthwhile reference material in the library that could help us to undertake research. This was remained as one of the critical problem in the school.*

> *Date: -T6, January 28/2013*

Add to this, another informant (T1) expressed his complaint to lack of library facilities as follows:

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

> *Date: - T1, January 14/2013*

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

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

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

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

4.2.2.4 Lack of significant support from the school and sub-city education officers.

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 (MOE/AED, 2006).

However, the findings of this study reveal that the support provided for the teachers who claimed to have done research seems negligible in the school as well as the wereda level. Discussion with the research participants indicated that for very few teachers, the support given was in form of stationery and secretarial services. For the reset teachers, there was no support from anybody. One of the participants (T6) expressed the situation as follow:

Institutional environment was not conducive to do research. The school and the wereda/Sub-city were so active only in ordering us to do research and other duties but they gave no support worth mentioned. Besides, the follow-up was so minimal.

Date: - T6, January 28/2013

In the same vein, another participant (T8), explained:

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

Date: - T8, February 4/2013

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

Besides, the overwhelming majority of the research participants uniformly disclosed the absence of any advisory team which could organize, facilitate and evaluate research works done by the teachers. One research participant (T3) expounded:

In the school and even at the woreda or sub-city level, there is no an accountable body or unit that could have taken responsibilities to coordinate/facilitate research activities and disseminate research out comes.

Date: -T3, January 21/2013

As explained by all informants of the study, office environment is inconvenience (even absence) for teachers' participation in action research.

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

4.2.2.5 High work load/shortage of time

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

The data obtained from most of the research participants as well as my observation and document assessment have revealed that high teaching load (e.g. 12-20 periods per week),was one of the major factors, which negatively affects the teachers' involvement in educational action research. As informed by the research participants and the document analysis indicated, the teachers teaching load varies from one subject to another, or varies from one teacher to another due to shortage or the small number of teachers in the school, due to the very nature of the subject taught, teaching through plasma TV and teachers' additional duties, such as taking part in the co-curricular activities, working as a deportment head. The research participants had two main positions regarding the teachers' teaching load. A sizeable number or informants (T4, T5, T6, T7, T8, T9, and T12) said that the teaching load was high. On the other hand, two of the informants (T10 and T11) refuted the presence of the problem of heavy teaching load and shortage of time for all the teachers.

In this connection, T4 expounded his view as follows:

> *Most of the teachers are over loaded. Beside we do teaching through plasma TV, which dictates the entire schedule of the school. The situation has left as with little time to participate in research activity.*

> *Date: - T4, January 21/2013*

Similarly, another informant (T7) also described the condition of heavily teaching load in the school as:-

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

> *Date: - T7, February 4/2013*

Refuting the above views, other participant (T10) reacted as follows:-

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

> *Date*: - T10, February 11/2013

The above rival descriptions have their own implications. The first two views (T4 and T7) are shared by a considerable number of informants and entail that teachers were highly loaded with the teaching (and non-teaching) activities, and so that they were less likely to conduct research, that is, they are less likely to undertake studies and when they are in such situations they will not give research a priority.

The opposing view (T10 and T11) on the other hand reveals that the time pressure was not too sever to hinder the teacher to undertake research if they were genuinely interested and truly enthusiastic. Accordingly, the teachers have lacked endurance (one of the attributes required in research activity) to face hardships encountering them.

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

From the document analysis and the observation, I have noticed that the teachers have had teaching loads that range from 8 periods to 25 periods per week. Accordingly, the problem of heavy workload differs from one teacher to another, or from one subject to another. And, therefore, those teachers with low teaching load could have participated in action research if they were truly enthusiastic for it.

4.2.2.6 Which of the factors have been more sever in obstructing teachers to do action research?

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

The finding is quite revealing, almost all participants (11 out of 12) unanimously reported that the absence of institutional inputs (the external factors) cited so far have had more adverse effect than the absence of personal inputs (the internal factors did in obstructing the teachers to carry out research in the school. In line with this view, for instance, the participant T1 expounded his views as follows:

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

<div align="center">

Date: -T1, January 14/2013

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Contrary the above dominant view, other informant (T10) expressed his rival view as:

> *For me, internal factors (personal problems) such as lack of interest, of initiation, of commitment of endurance .... are more influential than the external problems in impacting one's involvement. That is to say, if there is individual's self-initiation, deep interest, and endurance to challenges facing one can do something   through   not   up to the required standard, or amount.*

<div align="center">

Date: - T10, January 11/2013

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

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

4.3 Future trends: Future hopes and direction of teachers' involvement in action research.

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

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

- Arranging training on educational research methodology in general and on educational action research in particular in order to boost the capacity of teachers and the appraisers.
- Improving the school facilities such as library, laboratory, internet room, etc......
- Attempting to improve and enhance the support system both at the school and sub-city level.
- Establishing mechanisms of motivation or incentive provision so as to change the teachers' unfavourable attitude towards educational research.
- The school administration should do everything possible to lighten heavy teaching loads of those teachers who in research activities.
- Encouraging teachers to participate on curriculum development at grassroots level so as to increase their belongingness and commitments.
- Individual teachers need to strive to improve or up-grade their research skill through self-effort and commitments.
- Establishing mechanisms of doing research on collaborative basis.

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

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this part of the paper, I have attempted to present summary, some concluding remarks recommendation and forwarded implications according to the major results of study. I have also developed the following four major themes: low status or the infant stage of teachers' involvement in action research; extrinsic motivation as a driving force to involve in research activity; research activity as a function of the integration of both personal inputs /internal factors/ and institutional inputs /external factors/, and interventions against the impediments as future hopes and directions of teachers' involvement in action research.

5.1 Summary

The fundamental purpose of this study was to investigate to what extent do high school teachers with particular reference to Misrak Goh were involved in educational action research. It was also directed to look into the major problems that influence teachers from research undertaking with an intension of forwarding possible solutions which would help to alleviate the problem. To this effect, the study was made to focus on answering the following basic research questions:-

1. What is the attitude of Misrak Goh secondary school teachers towards conducting educational action research?

2. What is the states/degree of high school teachers' involvement in educational action research?

3. What factors influence the engagement of high school teachers in educational action research?

4. How can action research be promoted among Secondary School teachers in the immediate future?

To find out answers for these basic questions qualitative research method and Case study research design were used by using interview, observation and document analysis as a methods of data collection instruments.

The total number of teachers in the school is fifty one were twelve is selected as a sample for the study.

Finally the data obtained using instruments like interview, observation and document analysis were analysed on ongoing basis using single case analysis strategy were I attempt to make comprehensive analysis of the case.

5.2 Conclusions

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

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

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

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

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

The close examination of research methodology used by teachers have revealed that all the teachers who carried out research used the traditional descriptive method of research that implies less effort, less cost and less time. The descriptive case study approach governed all of the research papers. Seen from this perspective, the claim

that the post-positivistic research approach, which includes action research as its variant, was common and popular among teachers of Misrak Goh secondary school.

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

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

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

Beside, a personal (internal) factors included lack of interest and initiation in research due to lack of incentives, lack of confidence due to lack of competence in research skills and knowledge, lack of proper conceptualization of action research and perceiving action research as a complex process, or as a difficult and tough subject, and absence of the teachers' self effort and commitments to update their prior training and failure to learn from one another.

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

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

5.3 Recommendations

In light of the major findings and conclusion of the study, it seems reasonable to suggest the recommendation to improve teachers' involvement in educational action research in Misrak Goh Secondary School in particular and any other high school in general:-

➢ Most of the teachers in the school are not allowed with the necessary research knowledge and skill. Since it would be unrealistic to expect teachers without research skill to engage in research activity. Kirkos sub-city education office as well as Addis Ababa education office ought to organize in service-training, workshops or seminars in a sustained fashion in order to provide training and to up-grade teachers' research skills and make them familiar with educational research.

➢ Universities and colleges should revise their research curricula in such a way that they encourage students' participation rather than making 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 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, data analysis techniques and interpretation.

➢ Teachers who are not acquainted with research methodology should up-grade their knowledge by reading different research books and research journals, instead of expecting formal training.

➢ Research endeavours by teachers should be encouraged. Top management at school, woreda as well as sub-city education office need to understand the function and importance of educational action research in building a body of knowledge that informs the practice of education and they shall arrange financial, material and moral incentives for teachers for their effective efforts to do research works.

➢ In order to promote research activity in the school, it is advisable to organize educational research coordinating body at woreda, sub-city as well as regional level and get professional support and direction from these bodies. (I.e. research section at all levels needs to be established and filled with appropriate man power).

5.4 Implication for Practice

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

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

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Appendix A

Research participant's profile

	Research participant's name	sex	Qualification	Total service years	Rank of level in the career structure	Total teaching load	Date of interviewing
1	T1	F	B.A	7 (In Teaching)	Teacher	20	January, 14/2013
2	T2	M	B.A	27(In Teaching and Educational Administration)	Asso. Lead Teacher	16	January, 14/2013
3	T3	M	B.A	15 (In Teaching and Educational Administration)	Senor Teacher	20	January, 21/2013
4	T4	M	B.ED	16 (In Teaching and Educational Administration)	Senor Teacher	20	January, 21/2013
5	T5	M	B.ED	9 (In Teaching and Educational Administration)	Teacher	15	January, 28/2013
6	T6	M	B.ED	15 (In Teaching and Educational Administration)	Senor Teacher	12	January, 28/2013
7	T7	M	B,ED	31 (Teaching)	Asso.Leader Teacher	20	February, 4/2013
8	T8	M	M.A	19 (Teaching)	Senior Teacher	20	February, 4/2013
9	T9	M	B.A	22(Teaching)	-------	------	February, 11/2013
10	T10	M	B.ED	24(Teaching)	-------	------	February, 11/2013
11	T11	F	B.ED	14(Teaching)	Senor Teacher	18	February, 18/2013
12	T12	M	B.ED	19(Teaching)	Senior Teacher	20	February, 18/2013

Interview Guide

Part one

Teacher's Interview

General Information about Research Participant

Research participant code: _____

Qualification: _____

Sex: _____

Total teaching years: _____

Subject teach: _____

Teaching load per week: _____

Basic research questions:

- ➢ What is the trend of secondary school teachers involvement in action research from past to present?

- ➢ What types of educational issues were addressed in the research papers? For what purposes the researcher's undertook the research?

- ➢ How can action research be further popularized and promote among secondary school teachers in the immediate future?

- ➢ What factors affected teachers engaged in action research?

General information

The purpose of this interview is to collect relevant data or information from teachers about their action research practices and, indeed, about their involvement in educational action research and hindering their engagement in research activities. To this end, your cooperation in taking part in this interview as a paramount importance for the study. Since your response will be keep confidentially, please feel free to answer all questions or provide your opinion frankly as much as possible.

Thank you in advance

Questions

1. How much are you involved in action research?
2. What specific research did you do?
   - How many? Can you show me?
   - On what issues?
   - How you did it? (Or using which procedure/method)?

3. Why did you conduct action research? Or for what purpose you had undertaken action research?

4. What factors (i.e. personal, institutional or environmental, etc.) you think facilitated your involvement in action research?

5. Why you didn't/don't undertake action research? (What factors hinder you to undertake action research?

6. How do you conceptualize/understand educational research in general and action research in particular?

7. What is your perception or opinion about the education sector strategy and the current evaluation system which demand action Research work for teachers' professional development?

8. How do you evaluate your competence in Research Practice?

   ➢ Have you ever taken any research methodology courses? Was the training you had taken at college/university level adequate to conduct research in your professional career?

   ➢ If you hadn't taken the course, how could you manage to conduct action research or to solve practical problems in your classroom and/or school?

➢ Have you ever participated in any in any in-service training, seminar or workshop to update your research skill? What is your view about?

9. Many school teachers may that think that their primary task is teaching and that any research activity should interfere in their primary task what would you say to them?

10. What concrete/ practical steps or actions needed to be initiated in the near future to overcome the revealing constraints and improve your involvement in action research?

Interview Guide

Part two

School principal's Interview

General Information about Research Participant

Research participant code: _____

Sex: _____

Qualification: _____

Teaching experience: _____

Administration experience: _____

Position: _____

Basic research questions:

- ➢ What is the trend of secondary school teachers involvement in action research from past to present?

- ➢ What types of educational issues were addressed in the research papers? For what purposes the researcher's undertook the research?

- ➢ How can action research be further popularized and promote among secondary school teachers in the immediate future?

- ➢ What factors affected teachers engaged in action research?

General information

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

<div align="center">Thank you in advance</div>

Questions

1. How is the action research statue of teachers in your school? Or how do you evaluate the trends of action research practices by teachers in your school?

2. How do you conceptualize or understand educational research, especially action research?

3. What is your view /opinion about the education sector strategy and the current evaluation system of teachers' performance which demands research practices by teachers' for their professional development?

4. Many teachers might think that their primary task is teaching and refrain themselves for research practices. So what would you say to them?

5. How do you evaluate the research conditions of your school (in facilitating teachers' involvement in educational action research)?

6. Why teachers in your school didn't \/don't conduct action research? Or from your perspective, what are/were the main problems that obstructed teachers to undertake educational action research?

7. What concrete action can you suggest to alleviate the constraints help teachers improve their involvement in action research in the near future?

Interview Guide

Part three

Sub-city Education officers Interview

General Information about Research Participant

Research participant code: _____

Qualification: _____

Sex: _____

Teaching experience: _____

Administration experience: _____

Position: _____

Basic research questions:

➢ What is the trend of secondary school teachers involvement in action research from past to present?

➢ What types of educational issues were addressed in the research papers? For what purposes the researcher's undertook the research?

➢ How can action research be further popularized and promote among secondary school teachers in the immediate future?

➢ What factors affected teachers engaged in action research?

The main purpose of this interview is to get valid information about the opinion of officials working at sub-city education officers on teacher's involvement in educational action research. The officials are expected to play an important role in the effort being done today to enhance teacher's involvement in action research. That is why I wanted to ask you some questions. Please answer the questions below by sharing your experience and opinion. The information I get from you will be used only for research purpose, and it will be confidentially and will not affect any body in any way.

<div align="center">Thank you in advance</div>

Questions

1. How do you evaluate the action research states of teachers of from past to present? How do you see the past present trends of action research practices by teachers?

   - Did/do they conduct action research? How? On what issue? For what purpose? If not conducted, why?
   - How do you evaluate teachers' competence (knowledge and skills, perception, interest, motivation, etc.....) in conducting educational action research?

2. How do you conceptualize/understand educational research, especially action research?
   - What merits or benefits as well as limitations can you see in it?

3. What is your view about the new education training policy, the education sector strategy and the current evaluation system of teachers' performance that demand research work (school based studies) for professional development? What it would be like?

4. What procedures you were/are employing to evaluate the status or nature of action research processes and outcomes that have been produced by teachers?

5. How do you evaluate the support given by you (the office) for teachers who take part in action research practices?
   - How much material and financial support and other facilities were given for the teachers?

- Have you /your office/ ever organized and conducted an in-service training, workshops or seminars to upgrade the teacher's research competence?

6. Why teachers, you think, didn't/don't undertake action research? (What personal and organizational/environmental factors hindered teacher's involvement in action research?)

7. What concrete steps/actions should be initiated in the near future to get involved more teachers in research works?
    - What you and your office need to do to alleviate the revealing problems and to popularize and disseminate action research practices in the immediate future?