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Primary School Teachers & Action Research: Propensity & Challenges

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Abstract
To enhance the quality of education, teachers are encouraged to develop their profession through different mechanisms among which reflective practice & undertaking research to generate evidence for their professional development are mentioned. Thus, the purpose of the study was to investigate the extent of Bahir Dar town primary school teachers' involvement in action research. To realize this, mixed methods research design (triangulation) was employed as to allege pragmatic philosophical framework. Data were collected from primary & secondary sources & two-staged cluster sampling method was used to select representatives from the sources. Accordingly, 4 primary schools were selected by simple random sampling among 15 primary schools in Bahir Dar town. Then, 100 teachers & 4 principals were selected through simple random sampling through & comprehensive sampling respectively. Besides, 8 action research reports were selected through simple random sampling from the sampled schools. Questionnaire & interview were employed for teachers & principals respectively. Finally, the quantitative & qualitative data were analyzed through descriptive statistics & summative content analysis respectively. The analyzed data disclosed that most of Bahir Dar town primary school teachers' involvement in action research is below expectation though they have positive attitude towards its benefit considering conducting action research as their responsibility. Lack of financial support, lack of encouragement & morale, lack of practical training, lack of motivation, lack of theoretical knowledge & lack of confidence have been identified as major hindrances. Lack of continuous, updated & adequate training, absence of follow up & deficiency of stationary materials were also found as additional problems. Therefore, if the educational attempts are to produce functionally literate human power by developing sense of being a change agent, the observed barriers has to be minimized; if not omitted, by taking immediate actions in collaboration with educational expertise & concerned stakeholders.
Keywords: Primary school, action research, quality education, teacher' attitude

Introduction

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, & fulfillment of societal needs as well as economic condition of a particular country (Firdisa, 2000). To realize this endeavor, research has a pivotal role to development and it aims at making the education sector grow its function effectively and improve the educational practices. Presently, research is considered to be a prominent key which is essential to the opening of new doors in education (Courtney, 1965).

Especially, if research is undertaken on the context of those who are expected to make use of the findings, the likelihood of its implementation is greater (Nisbet & Nisbet, 1985). Some scholars support the argument that teachers should investigate their practice through action research for the purpose of improvement (Stenhouse, 1975; Hopkins, 1993).

From the above discussion, one can understand that action research plays a significant role in pointing out the strong & weak sides of curricula, instructional process, & in evaluating the attainment of educational objectives towards improving the system. Thus, there is high demand to engage classroom teachers in different kinds of educational research to make teaching meaning full & to empower the practitioners in their profession. Besides, action research takes place in a context of discovery & invention as opposed to a context of verification. Discovery & invention, the main business of human science, have little to do with experimental designs. What one does to discover & invent a new way of teaching or a different approach to assessment, for example, is a completely separate activity from the strict procedures of classical experimental design.

By its nature, educational research is demanding & complex. Commenting on its difficulty, Wiersma (1995) posited that educational research is a difficult task to be carried out by elementary & secondary school teachers.

According to Seyoum (1998), lack of incentive, lack of financial resources, teaching load & lack of opportunity to participate in seminar were the major constraints that hinder teachers from research activity in Ethiopian context. Regardless of those impediments that obstruct them from conducting educational research, teachers by virtue of their important position in the educational system are required to participate in educational research to improve quality & quantity of the t-learning process. Moreover, as part of educational research, action research cannot be limited due to the presence of the above factors because it can be at ease for teachers who are willing & have intention to conduct it being at their work place.

In addition, teachers are obliged to conduct action research for their professional growth, & also the promotion to the next professional career is based on teaching & research outcomes. McNiff (2002) also found that there is a need for practice-based research on the teacher's practice, as carried out by the teacher themselves.

Hence, action research can be appropriately built-in education if teachers able to conduct & use the findings to solve practical educational problems. In turn, this will direct them to be collaborators & creative in tackling small scale educational problems. Therefore, the teachers' skill & knowledge on how to conduct action research & how to solve problems in their real context need to be upgraded.

In our country, Ethiopia, problems related to education are many in number & it is very common to hear about the deterioration of its quality. In this regard, the Ethiopian Education & Training policy states that, "our education is entangled with complex problem of relevance, quality, accessibility & equity" (TGE 1994). In order to alleviate these problems, the Education & training policy proposed nine strategies. Among these, nexus between education, training, research & development is one. To facilitate the implementation of this policy the government issued education sector strategy document that expresses the need to integrate & coordinate the teaching/ learning process with research, & facilitate the participation of teachers in classroom research.

As Seyoum (1998) stated, research activities in a school enhance & enrich the t-learning process thereby contributing to the improvement of the quality of education. Teachers are the best researchers of their own classrooms because they are the ones who really know the history & background of their pupils & the classroom activities taking place there (Stenhouse, 1975). Moreover, Johnson (2011) indicated that action research is an effective tool to solve educational problems that do not have easy answers. According to him, student behavior, curriculum & school improvement plans are some of the problems that action research can solve.

This implies that action research also be used to evaluate program effectiveness to enhance student learning & it is a model that promotes inquiry, reflection of practice, & analysis of data. Thus, teachers are expected to conduct locally contextualized research which can lead them to solve practical problems at its small scale. Though common sense & trial & error alone cannot provide reliable information for action, our educators are observed trying to solve problems in such way. As Hancock (1997) said, teachers shy away from seeing themselves as researchers & they are reluctant to write about their teaching practice, & promising step is not observed in facilitating conditions to conduct educational research at this level.

Based on the observation on action research conducted by some primary school teachers & from their information, the researchers identified that although teachers are key role players in the system & the ones who would be concerned with the educational problems, they do action research mainly for the sake of fulfilling the requirement rather than gearing towards solving classroom problems.

In short, though, evidences supported by research findings are highly needed & are becoming timely questions in our country, the researchers in our primary schools are not considerably tackling problems there. Hence, this study is initiated to examine the practice of teachers in conducting action research & to investigate the problems they face to do research in their context. To achieve this aim, the following research questions were formulated.

1. To what extent are primary school teachers involved in doing action' research to solve problems in the t-learning process?
2. What are the major factors that hinder primary school teachers from undertaking action research?
3. What is the attitude of primary school teachers towards action research in securing quality in education?
4. How much primary school teachers consider action research as their responsibility?

2. Research Design & Methodology

2.1. Research Design

The concern of the study was to assess the involvement of Bahir Dar town primary school teachers in action research. To this effect, research design that mirrors the philosophical framework & method of the study needs to be determined based on the type of research questions the researcher seeks to address, the type of research objectives & the size of population (Johnson & Christensen, 2004). Accordingly, mixed methods research design particularly triangulation was employed. Consequently, different data gathering techniques (quantitative & qualitative techniques) were used to collect ample information to triangulate & to elaborate the data.

From this, it is clear to imply that the philosophical framework the study holds is pragmatic orientation, which permits flexible way of data collection & analysis to address the research questions.

2.2. Method of the Study

Based on the selected research design, descriptive survey method was suitable & applied in the study. As Creswell & Plano Clark (2007) indicated, method of the study deals with techniques of sample selection, data collection, analysis & validation in the study process. Accordingly, the detail of these themes described in the following sections.

2.3. Sources of the Study

As the study dealt with the status of teachers' engagement in action research, assumed that it could be quite appropriate to get relevant data primarily from teachers, principals & cluster supervisors as primary sources. To get comprehensive & pertinent information, the researchers also made use of action research reports as secondary source.

2.4. Population, Sampling Techniques & Procedures, & Sample Size

The population of the study was 15 government primary schools in Bahir Dar town cumulating 528 teachers. To select sample of the study, probability & non-probability sampling methods were employed. Two-staged cluster sampling method was used to select sample of the study. Among the total number of schools, four primary schools: Dil Chibo, Meskerem 16, Shinbit & Yekatit 23 were selected through simple random sampling (lottery) method. The total number of teachers in the sampled schools was 181. The researchers decided to take 25 teachers from each sampled school on the assumption of getting data, at least from half of the teachers in the sampled schools. Hence, 100 teachers were selected through simple random sampling (random number table) method.

Besides, 4 principals & 2 cluster supervisors were taken through comprehensive sampling purposely by considering them as focal individuals' & important informant on the studied issue. Also, among 29 action research reports of the year 2013, in the sampled schools, 8 reports were selected through simple random sampling (lottery) method. The following table shows the detail sample figure.

Table 1: Sampled Schools, their Population & Sample Size

No	Sampled Schools	School Population								Total sample size							
		Teachers & Principals								Teachers & Principals							
		F		M		Principal		Total		F		M		Principal		Total	
		No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
1	Dil Chibo	12	6.5	24	13	1	0.54	**37**	**20**	8	4.3	17	9.2	1	0.54	**26**	14
2	Meskerem 16	30	16	17	9	1	0.54	**48**	**25.9**	15	8	10	5.4	1	0.54	**26**	14
3	Shinbit	36	19.5	21	11.4	1	0.54	**58**	**31.4**	14	7.6	11	5.9	1	0.54	**26**	14
4	Yekatit 23	30	16	11	5.9	1	0.54	**42**	**22.7**	16	8.6	9	4.8	1	0.54	**26**	14
Total		**108**	**58**	**73**	**39.3**	**4**	**2.8**	**185**	**100**	**53**	**28.5**	**47**	**25.3**	**4**	**2.8**	**104**	**56**

As EMIS (2011) indicated, the numbers of female & male teachers at primary schools of Ethiopia are 114,687 & 193, 599 respectively. However, as it is indicated in table 1, most (58%) of the teachers in the sampled schools are females. Also in each of these schools, except in Dilchibo primary school (most of the teachers are males), most of the teachers are females. This might be an amazing finding considering the prevalent imbalance in schooling of Ethiopia between males & females.

Therefore, it might appear promising as the country is working to increase the number of female teachers at every educational level. In line with this, ESDP IV (2010) stated that achieving increased number of female teachers' at all educational levels is one of the county's targets.

2.5. Data Collection Instruments

The instruments employed in the study were questionnaire as. It was preferred as there were more questions to be addressed & more respondents to participate & the questionnaire items were prepared by the researchers based on the research questions & reviewed literatures. In addition, interview & document analysis were used.

2.5.1. Questionnaire

The items of the questionnaire were designed to collect data about Bahir Dar town Primary school teachers' action research practice. The major contents of the questionnaire were on the extent of teachers' involvement in action research to solve educational problems, presence of supportive &/or conducive environment, & hindrances to undertake action research. Besides, it tried to see teachers' attitude towards its benefit to improve the quality of education & their attitude towards their responsibility to conduct action research.

2.5.2. Interview

This study also employed an interview as data gathering tool in order to get additional information & elaboration from school principals & it was administered personally. Interview was undertaken on one-to-one basis with the researchers asking questions & filling in the responses in their note books.

2.5.3. Document inventory

Finally, samples of selected action research reports of the school teachers were collected & procedures & interventions taken were analyzed to determine the quality of the research done by school teachers. Furthermore, it was used to see the quality of the teachers' expertise of doing action research.

2.6. Validation procedure of Data Gathering Instrument

The questionnaire was prepared collaboratively by the researchers in English language on the bases of review of related literature. It was given to three senior staffs that have good research experiences for evaluation in the faculty of education & behavioral sciences in order to sifting out the difficult, vague & ambiguous items & concepts. Hence, refinement was made on four items of the instruments according to constructive suggestion & hints that were obtained from the evaluators. Then after, it was translated to Amharic language to avoid any problem that may encroach upon the response of teachers because of language difficulties; the medium of instruction is Amharic in Amhara regional state from grade 1-4. Back translation was made for the collected data by the researchers with the help of other professionals in language area.

2.7. Data Analysis Methods & Procedures

Both quantitative & qualitative methods were used to analyze the data. The collected data through close-ended items of the questionnaire were organized, tabulated, tallied, & counted.

Five levels likert scale (very high, high, undecided, low & very low) was used to measure degree of hindering factors that hamper teachers from conducting action research. For each hindering factor, the number/percentage of respondents in accordance with the indicated degree of influence was calculated & tabulated. The data were demonstrated by using bar graph & discussed focusing on the mode.

Similarly, five levels likert scale was used to measure the attitude of teachers towards its purpose & towards their responsibility to conduct action research. The data on attitude were coded by assigning a numerical value to each of the scale (strongly agree=5, agree=4, undecided=3, disagree=2, & strongly disagree=1). Accordingly, the obtained data were tabulated by calculating the total number of respondents in line with the indicated degree of agreement. And, the data were presented with line graphs for easy comparison.

Moreover, actual mean was calculated for each item & to see the overall position of teachers regarding their responsibility & purpose of action research. Finally, comparison was held against the expected mean (3) in the scale.

The data obtained through interview, open-ended items of the questionnaire & document inventory were stated qualitatively (narratives & quotations were the main ways to illustrate the results) to supplement & enrich information gained through close-ended items of the questionnaire.

Generally, descriptive statistics, mainly percentages & mean were employed as appropriate to the collected data. In addition, findings were also demonstrated using tables, bar graphs & line graphs for their convenience to summarize & to compare.

Whenever relevant, results from quantitative & qualitative methods supplemented each other in the analysis.

3. Data Presentation

In this part, data that were collected from research participants through different instruments were presented & analyzed. As it was made clear above, the data collected were both quantitative & qualitative. The quantitative data obtained through close-ended items of the questionnaire (raw data, percentage & mean) were presented by a descriptive statistical table & different graphic representation. The qualitative data obtained from open-ended items of the questionnaire & interviews were presented in narration. Accordingly, data obtained from different sources were presented & analyzed in the following pages.

Table 2: Questionnaire Return Rate

No	Target schools	Administered questionnaires						Returned questionnaires							
		F		M		Total		F		M		Total			
		No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%		
1	Dil Chibo	8		17		**25**		8		17		25	25		
2	Meskerem 16	15		10		**25**		12		7		19	19		
3	Shinbit	14		11		**25**		13		10		23	23		
4	Yekatit 23	16		9		**25**		15		7		22	22		
Total		**53**		**47**		**100**		**49**		**41**		**89**	**89**		

As table 2 indicates, among 100 administered questionnaires, the returned questionnaires from the four sampled school teachers were 89, which shows only 11% of the administered questionnaires were lost. Thus, it is possible to get the intended data from the returned questionnaires without significant impact from the lost ones.

Table 3: Background Information of Sample Teachers

No	Characteristics	Alternatives	Respondent Teachers in the sample schools							
			Dil Chibo		Meskerem 16		Shinbit		Yekatit 23	
			No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
1	Teaching Experience (In year)	A. 1-10	2	8	2	8	4	16	1	4
		B. 11-20	6	24	-	-	3	12	-	-
		C. 21-30	10	40	9	36	3	12	5	20
		D. 31-40	7	28	8	32	13	52	16	68
		E. Above 40	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
		Total	**25**	**100**	**19**	**76**	**23**	**92**	**22**	**88**
2	Teaching Load (period/week)	A. < 10	-	-	-	-	1	4	-	-
		B. 10-15	4	16	3	12	1	4	1	4
		C. 16-20	5	20	4	16	3	12	8	32
		D. 21-25	7	28	3	12	9	40	6	28
		E. 26-30	9	36	9	36	9	36	7	28
		F. Above 30	-	-	-		-	-	-	-
		Total	**25**	**100**	**19**	**76**	**23**	**92**	**22**	**92**
3	Extra-Load (hr/Week)	A. 0-2	13	52	12	48	9	36	11	48
		B. 3-4	11	44	6	24	2	8	3	12
		C. 5-6	1	4	-	-	2	8	-	-
		D. Above 6	-	-	1	4	10	40	8	32
		Total	**25**	**100**	**19**	**76**	**23**	**92**	**22**	**88**
4	Age	A. 22-30	3	12	2	8	4	16	1	4
		B. 31-40	3	12	1	4	3	12	-	-
		C. 41-50	10	40	9	36	7	28	8	32
		D. 51-60	9	36	7	28	9	36	13	56
		Total	**25**	**100**	**19**	**76**	**23**	**92**	**2**	**88**

Age wise, overwhelming majority of the respondent teachers (88%) are 41-60 years old. The extreme is observed at Yekatit 23 primary school, where 56% of them are between the age of 51 & 60.

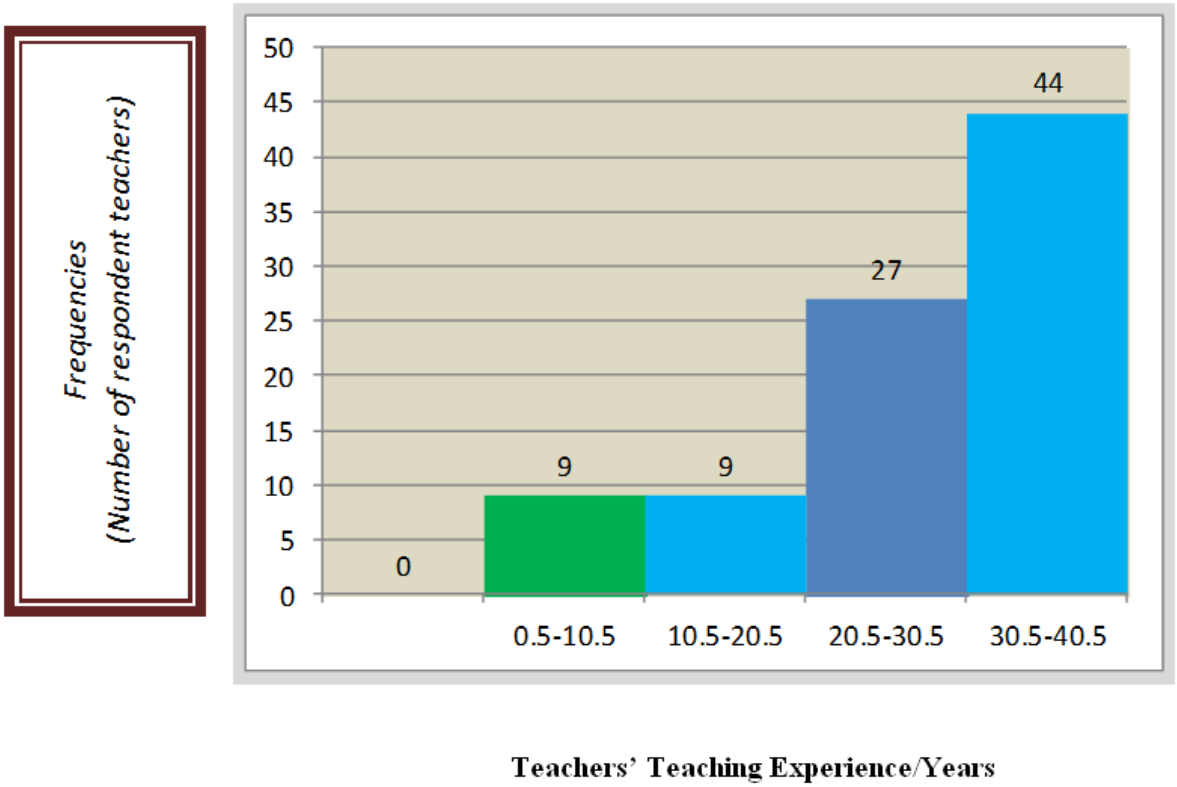

Figure 1: Graphic Representation of Teachers' Teaching Experience

As figure 1shows, most of the teachers have been engaged in a teaching; almost half of the respondents have already served for more than30 years.

From table 2 &figure1, one can infer that most of the teachers served for many years & they are at the verge of retiring age. It is obvious that working the same job for longer years has potential to make teachers burn out & give up interests in conducting different activities in the area; hence, the intention to improve instructional conditions through action research, most likely to be reduced. Supporting this idea,

Given how stressful teaching is, many teachers find that after a year or two in the classroom, each day is very much like the next, & there are few opportunities for doing new & interesting things. One of the main sources of rebellion against test-centred pedagogy is its re-utilisation. Differentiated instruction & personalization are two movements that recognize teachers need to be in a creative mind-set to be most energized (Teacher burnout).

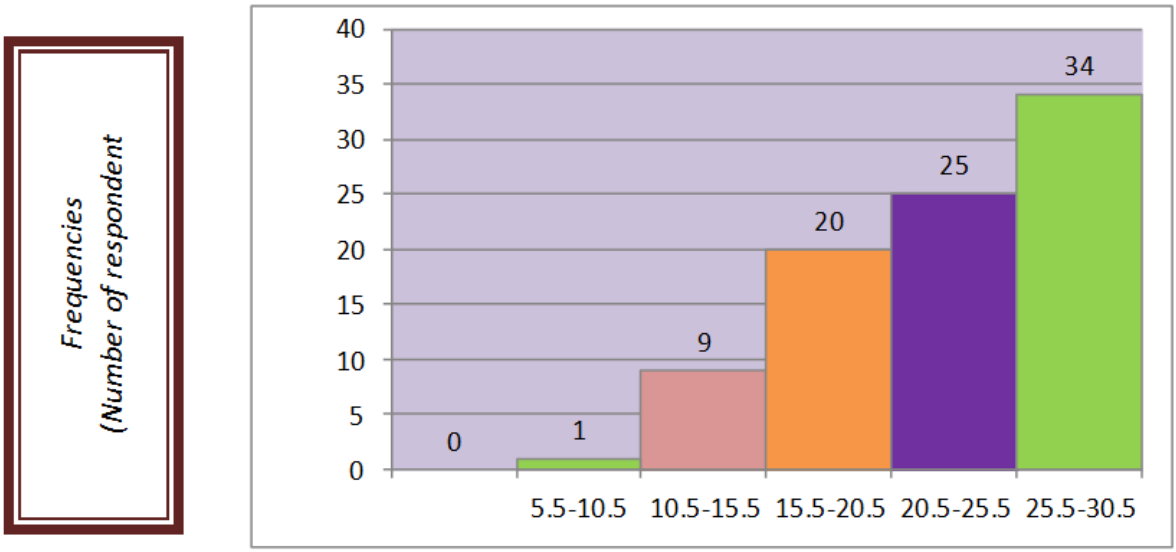

Figure 2: Graphic Representation of Teachers' Teaching Load

While the teaching load of most of the teachers in the sampled schools laid at 21-30 period/week, at Yekatit 23 primary school, most of them have teaching load ranging from 16-20hrs/week. The length of time that most of the teachers spent in all schools except shinbit primary school, where 40% of the them spent more than 6hrs/week in the school, spent maximum of 2hrs/week in their work place doing extra tasks.

Moreover, since the maximum time that teachers spent in instruction is only20 hrs/week & most of them spent maximum of 2hrs/week doing extra tasks, one can conclude that most teachers in the sample primary schools are neither over loaded nor under loaded. Rather they are in a moderate position. From this, it is not difficult to infer that teachers in these schools have time to conduct action research. Hence, work load is less likely among the potential factors that hinder teachers' from conducting action research.

Table 4: Educational Qualification of teachers in sample schools

	Sample schools	Educational qualification						
		Degree		Diploma		TTI (Certificate)		Total
		F	M	F	M	F	M	No
1	Dil Chibo	-	-	11	22	1	2	36
2	Meskerem 16	1	-	17	16	12	1	47
3	Shinbit	-	-	25	14	11	7	57
4	Yekatit	-	-	23	11	7	-	41
	Total	1	0	76	63	31	10	181

The educational qualification of the respondent teachers is observed as most of them are diploma holders. In line with this, (ESDP IV, 2010) stated that 100% of the teachers at all levels have been academically qualified (G1-4 with diploma cluster, G5-8, with diploma linear, G9-12 with first degree), motivated & ethically fit.

Table 5: Teacher's status of conducting action research

No	Items	Alternatives	Respondents in	
			No	**%**
1	Have you ever taken training on action research?	A. Yes	83	93.3
		B. No	6	6.7
		Total	**89**	**100**
2.	If your response for question number 1 is yes, is the training adequate to conduct action research?	A. Yes	30	36.1
		B. No	53	63.9
		Total	83	**100**
4	If you have not taken training on how to conduct action research, how do you manage research work in your school?	A. By consulting experience teachers	2	33.3
		B. By trial & error	-	-
		C. Reading books	-	-
		D. No A.R.	4	66.7
		Total	**6**	**100**
6	Have you ever conducted action research in your career?	A. Yes	53	59.6
		B. No	36	40.4
		Total	**89**	**100**

The importance of research knowledge & skill to enable teachers undertake educational research is unquestionable. If teachers conduct educational action research, they would not be prepared to accept blindly the problems they face from day to day practices, instead they reflect upon them & search for solution & improvement. They are committed to building on their strength & to overcoming their weakness. They wish to experiment with new ideas & strategies, rather than letting their practice petrify (Altricher, Posch & Somekh, 1993).

In this view, 93.3% (83) of the respondent teachers assured that they have taken training & the remaining 6.7% (6) negate the above response respondents indicated (Table 5, item1). Besides, 63.9% (53) of the teachers who have taken training responded that it was not adequate to enable them undertake research in their classrooms/schools (table 5, item 2). In line with this, the respondents frequently listed that incompetent trainers: forgettable training; emphasis on mere theoretical knowledge in the pre-service program, assignment of very short time for training, lack of continuity, improper timing of training in in-service programs & lack of support from principals & others, absence of reading materials as reasons for the inadequacy of the trainings (item 3).

With this point, OECD (1974) in Anteneh (1998:22) reported that many teachers felt incapable of doing research in that the quality of training given to teachers was not adequate. This means, lack of research skills can frustrate teachers from engaging themselves in research work. As the result, this study revealed most of the primary school teachers in this town were not equipped with adequate research knowledge & skills. Hence, they were not confident in their skills & knowledge to conduct research.

Elliot (1991) & Shaeffer & Nkinyangi (1983) noted that it would be virtually impossible to think of carrying out research without the individual being equipped with adequate research skill. Without being armed with a proper weapon & without a proper knowledge to determine which problems to tackle, it is hardly possible for one to undertake research on its kind. The result of this study, therefore, indicated that large number of primary school teachers in Bahir Dar Town is not in a position to conduct studies in order to alleviate the problem they face in the t-learning process.

Moreover, teachers who haven't taken training on action research were also asked how they could manage to conduct research in their school (item 4). Most of those who had no training on action research, refrained themselves from conducting action research. Least of them confirmed that they could manage to conduct action research in the classroom by consulting their colleagues who have the knowhow of the issue.

Furthermore, if all are serious about enhancing the quality of education at our schools, teachers need to be more, not less involved in action research. Regarding this teachers were asked if they have ever conducted a research in their career (item 6). Accordingly, 40.1% (36) of the teacher participated in this study responded that they have never been involved in action research yet. But, teachers who have been involved in research may become reflective, more critical & analytical in their teaching & more open & committed to professional development (Oja & Pine, 1989; Henson, 1996). In turn, reflective thinking gives power to the individual to see his/her own learning & thinking processes reflect the limitation & potency & search for proper adjustment strategies for observed limitations, & further strengthen the strong sides (Ersozlu & Arslan, 2009).

From the above data, it is possible to conclude that not only teachers who did not have training on action research, but also those who had already training also could not conduct an action research; at least 30 or 36.1% of those who had training on action research did not conduct action research yet. Thus, only giving training on

action research is not grantee to teachers to practice unless it is adequate to the extent that it can make them to be knowledgeable & skilful in the area.

Also, the school principals indicated that primary school teachers are not in a good status in conducting action research. In most of the schools, the status of teachers' involvement in action research is below the expectation.

The interview response obtained from principals about teachers' involvement in action research was narrated as follows.

- *As P1 of Primary School "A", teacher's involvement in action research was inadequate; only very few of them conducted action research in this year.*
- *P2 of Primary School "B" reported that though teachers in that school have enough action research knowledge & skill, only 2 teachers were engaged in action research in the year 2012/2013.*
- *P3 of Primary School "C" reported that though it is difficult to say teachers' status in action research involvement is very good, the teachers are in a good beginning. For instance, in the beginning of this academic year 10 teachers submitted their proposal & 6 of them have finalized their investigation & reported the result.*
- *Lastly, as P4 indicated that teachers in primary school "D" were seen highly engaged in action research compared to others. In this academic year, almost all teachers developed their research proposal & many of them were finalizing their study.*

Based on the information gained in the above paragraphs, the level of the primary school teachers in their status of participation in action research work can be sequentially put from the better to the worst from School D, to school B.

As the review of the different research studies indicated, teachers' involvement in action research activities can be influenced by different constraints (Hankock, 1997; Johnston, 1994 & Seyoum, 1998). To evaluate the degree of such hindrances & to assess their impacts on teachers' involvement in research, the response of Bahir Dar town primary school teachers was elicited in table 3 as follows.

Table 6: Possible Factors that Hindered Teachers from Doing Action Research & their Influence Level

No	Possible Hindering Factors	Respondents level of influence											
		VH in		H in		UD in		L in		VL in		Total in	
		No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
A	Lack of basic or theoretical knowledge about Action research	30	33.7	20	22.5	12	13.5	17	19.1	10	11.2	89	100
B	Lack of practical training/ experience in how to do Action research	41	46.1	14	15.7	8	9	25	28.1	1	1.1	89	100
C	Lack of reading & other material	32	36	12	13.5	5	5.6	27	30.3	13	14.6	89	100
D	Lack of confidence	38	42.7	8	9	9	10.1	24	27	10	11.2	89	100
E	Lack of motivation & interest	37	41.6	14	15.7	14	15.7	22	24.7	2	2.2	89	99.9
F	Work over-load which leaves little time or no time for conducting research	15	16.9	15	16.9	6	6.7	23	25.8	30	33.7	89	100
G	Lack of financial support from concerned authorities for work shop & seminars	**39**	43.8	**22**	24.7	**8**	**9**	**15**	16.9	**5**	**5.6**	89	100
H	Lack of conducive environment that encourages to undertake research/ morale support	30	33.7	27	30.3	4	4.5	21	23.6	7	7.9	89	100

Table 6 shows as most of the respondents replied that all the listed possible hindering factors, except work load, are potential hindrances on the teachers' engagement to conduct action research. More than half of the respondents have indicated that the status of work load in protecting teachers from conducting action research is very low.

According to 61 or 68.5% of the respondents, among the stated hindering factors, the potential one is absence of financial support from concerned authorities for workshop & seminar. As 57 or 64% of the respondents indicated, the problem that took the leading role next to the aforementioned one is absence of conducive environment/morale support that encourages teachers to undertake action research. As third major hindering factor,

lack of experience in how to do action research was mentioned by most (55 or 61.8%) of the respondents.
Besides, the respondents in answering open-ended item-1 of the questionnaire added that lack of continuous, updated & adequate support in terms of training & workshop on how to conduct action research & absence of follow up, & deficiency of stationary materials as hindering factors.
To add some, unavailability of previously done research materials, lack of showing values for the previously done studies were mentioned as reasons that protect teachers from conducting action research.
From the above data, one can conclude that the most serious impediments to conduct action research were lack of support from concerned authorities in terms of finance & morale, lack of conducive environment for research & lack of experience in how to do action research. In line with these findings, Hankock (1997) & Seyoum (1998:14) disclosed that teachers' professional status, teachers' working conditions & teachers' confidence, teachers' lack of strong orientation to practice, lack of necessary research skills are some of the factors that hinder teachers from engaging in educational research.
Generally, it is possible to say that the existing situation in Bahir Dar town primary schools is not promising for the teachers to play their role in solving practical problems by designing intervention & acting accordingly. Though the levels of the problems vary from individual to individual, all require immediate action by giving more emphasis on the major ones.
Concerning factors that hamper teachers from conducting action research in the primary schools, authors append that situational constraints such as teachers' work load, knowledge, skill, & self-confidence can be some of them (MoE & AED, 2006). Here, it is interesting to note that heavy teaching load was revealed as least influencing factor which made teachers not to conduct action research at their schools.
The graph below can clearly show major & minor obstacle to teachers' action research work.

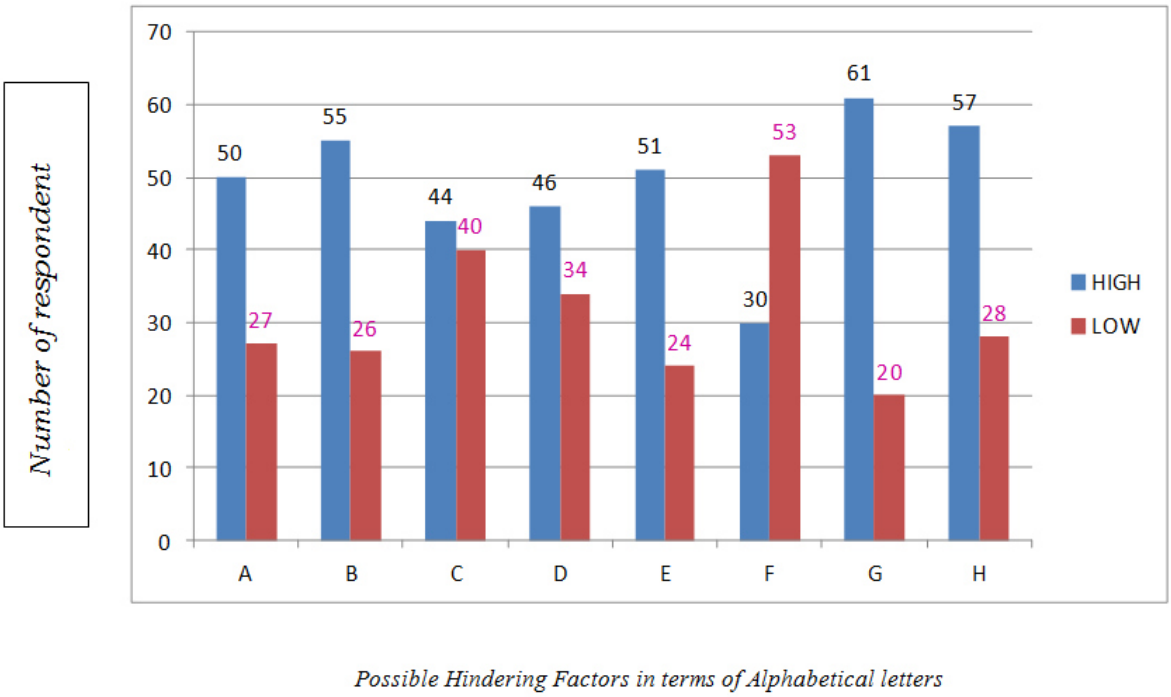

Figure 3: Graphic Representation of Hindering Factors' Levels

From the above graphic representation, based on the number of respondent teachers, G, H, B, E, A, D, C & F were sequenced from the most obstacle to the least ones to teachers' action research work in the schools.
As to the explanation of principals, it is unlikely to say teachers in the schools have adequate knowledge & skills since they have gap in action research basics though Yekatit 23 denied the presence of this gap. As a result, these schools have planned to provide training in future to fill the observed gap.
From this, one can understand developing teachers' skill & filling the teachers' gap of basic or theoretical knowledge on action research is assignment to be done. This can be done by preparing alternative training opportunities like workshop & seminaries with strong follow up which can be offered to them offsite as well as in-site as to initiate them to be problem solver in their school. Of course, this can be realized if responsible bodies can give attention & the expected support for teachers in a way that teachers can get reference books, educational documents & other stationary materials. Moreover, tackling the above problems will possibly improve teachers' confidence level towards conducting action research.

Table 7: Teachers' plan, interest, confidence & effort made regarding action research

No	Items	Alternatives	Respondents in	
			No	%
8	Do you have a plan to conduct action research in the future?	A. Yes	79	88.8
		B. No	10	11.2
		Total	**89**	**100**
9	Are you confident enough by the skill that you have regarding action research?	A. Yes	38	42.7
		B. No	51	57.3
		Total	**89**	**100**
10	If your response for question no 9 is no, what do you think of the possible influ-ential reason?	A. Inadequacy of research courses given at higher education	10	19.6
		B. Absence of workshops, conference & seminars regarding action re-search	14	27.5
		C. Lack of research knowledge & skill	23	45.1
		D. All are reasons	4	7.8
		Total	**51**	**100**
11	Do you consistently read different books, journals, magazines about action research?	A. Yes	26	29.2
		B. No	63	70.8
		Total	**89**	**100**
18	Are you interested to conduct action research in your school?	A. Yes	73	82
		B. No	16	18
		Total	**89**	**100**

Teachers were asked if they have plans or intentions to conduct research in the future (item 8). The responses seem to be promising if taken for granted as they appear. It was found out from their responses that 88.8% (79) of the teachers planned or intended to undertake research. It was only 11.2% (10) of the teachers that have no plans to undertake research. This big gap between the two groups makes safe to generalize that many teachers plan to conduct research.

Teachers were asked whether they feel confident about their skill in action research or not. From the total subject, only 42.7% of teachers replied that they were confident about the knowledge & skill they have in action research. Whereas most of respondents 57.3% replied that they were not confident. Aligned to the above idea, teachers who are not confident in their knowledge & skills in action research pointed out the possible reasons. Accordingly, 45.1%(23), 27.5%(14) & 19.6%(10) of the respondent replied that lack of research knowledge & skill, absence of workshops, conference & seminars & inadequacy of research courses given at higher institutions were the possible reasons for their lack of confidence respectively.

Hence, one can infer that not only teachers who did not plan to conduct action research, but also those who planned lack confidence in their knowledge & skill to do action research. Besides, it is possible to realize that though most of the teachers lack basic knowledge & skill (see the above graph), most of them have a future plan to solve educational problems observed in their schools through action research.

The most apparent fact about research is the need for financial resources. Research budget remains a useful & indispensable input to conduct research work. In this regard, respondents were asked whether there is a research budget allocated in their school or not (item 12). Majority 88 %(79) of the respondents in this study replied that no budget was allocated in their school for the purpose of research undertaking.

In line with this, all interviewee replied that there is no any budget allocation for teachers to conduct action research but the schools by themselves tried to provide stationary material support though it is insufficient. If they are interested to conduct, they should cover all the expenses by themselves.

All the interviewee (school principals) also agreed that budget for teachers' research was not allocated. Most of the principals said "let alone budget for research, even schools didn't get adequate amount of budget for stationery."

In this regard, Lucio & McNeil (1979) noted that school research cannot be mounted without money. Hence, unless budget is allocated, it is difficult for the teachers to undertake action research at their schools & without budget allocation it is also difficult to expect research output from teachers.

In order to be effectively engaged in research activity, a researcher also needs to be provided with material &/or psychological incentives. Considering this, teachers were asked if there was some form of incentives for researching in their schools (item 13). 49 or 55% of the respondents responded that incentives were not given for those teachers who were engaged in action research.

Table 8: Availability of Necessary Resources & Supports

No	Items	Alternatives	Respondents in	
			N0	%
12	Is there budget allocated for conducting action research in your school?	A. Yes	10	11.2
		B. No	79	88.8
		Total	**89**	**100**
13	Is there some form of incentive given to teachers conducting action research in your school?	A. Yes	23	25.8
		B. No	66	74.2
		Total	**89**	**100**
14	Do you have enough time to conduct action research?	A. Yes	40	44.9
		B. No	**49**	**55.1**
		Total	**89**	**100**
15	Are there adequate reference materials & documents that support you to conduct action research in your school?	A. Yes	13	14.6
		B. No	76	85.4
		Total	**89**	**100**
16	Is there research coordinating centre in your school?	A. Yes	9	10.1
		B. No	80	89.9
		Total	**89**	**100**
17	Does the school principal reduce teaching load for teachers who conduct action research?	A. Yes	5	5.6
		B. No	84	94.4
		Total	**89**	**100**

As the interviewee expressed, training on basics of action research & stationary materials like papers, are given as an incentive for teachers, who conduct action research. In reality, these supports are given for all teachers in the schools not only for those who engaged in action research work. Therefore, 66 or 74.2% of the respondent teachers taught the above mentioned elements are incentives as it facilitates the practice.

However, teachers who excel in their action research work & who really solved problems in their classrooms required to be recognized & those taking part in research task need unique attention compared to non participant teachers. It is in this sense that 23 or 25.8% of the respondents teachers said there is no incentive. Regarding this, an incentive is any factor (financial or non-financial) that provides a motive for a particular course of action, or counts as a reason for preferring one to the other.

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

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

The principals' interview also revealed the scarcity of reference material, research journals, & research manuals. They added "only single research training manual which is even limited in its copy is available in the library." Besides, they mentioned that teachers face difficulty to get model action research works. This may be one of the reasons for the teachers being deficient in having consistent reading on the issue as most (63 or 70.8%) of the respondents replied on item 11.

Furthermore, (Item 16) 80 or 89.9% of the respondents have answered that there is no research coordinating centre in their schools. Additionally, though the stakeholders believe in its necessity, there is no a research coordinating unit in all schools. It is the supervisor & CPD program coordinator, & science & technology club leader are playing a great role in coordinating research activities in the schools.

From the above information we can underst& that the responses of the interview conceded with what most of respondent teacher revealed. Therefore, it is imaginary to expect teachers who lack the necessary skill & experience, with inadequate reading materials, & where their libraries are unequipped & not well organized to conduct research. As a result, it is possible to say the school environment is not favorable for teachers to undertake research work.

Table 9: Attitude of Teachers towards the Benefits of Doing Action Research

No	Items	Scale of Responses					Actual Mean $\bar{x}$
		SA (5)	A (4)	UD (3)	DA (2)	SDA (1)	
1	Action research contributes immense in solving practical educational problems	25	40	6	10	8	331/89=3.7
2	The profits of Action research outweigh its contribution to education quality improvement	40	34	6	4	5	367/89=4
5	Teachers' research involvement should be one criterion of promotion	9	10	13	28	29	209/89=2.3
7	Action Research should be given attention as academic subjects	31	36	9	8	5	347/89=3.9
8	Action Research is not a time wasting activity	37	34	7	4	7	357/89=4
11	Classroom oriented investigation is needed Since teaching is a problematic activity.	27	49	3	6	4	356/89=4
13	Action research can contribute for the improvement of the quality of teachers	37	36	7	5	4	364/89=4.1

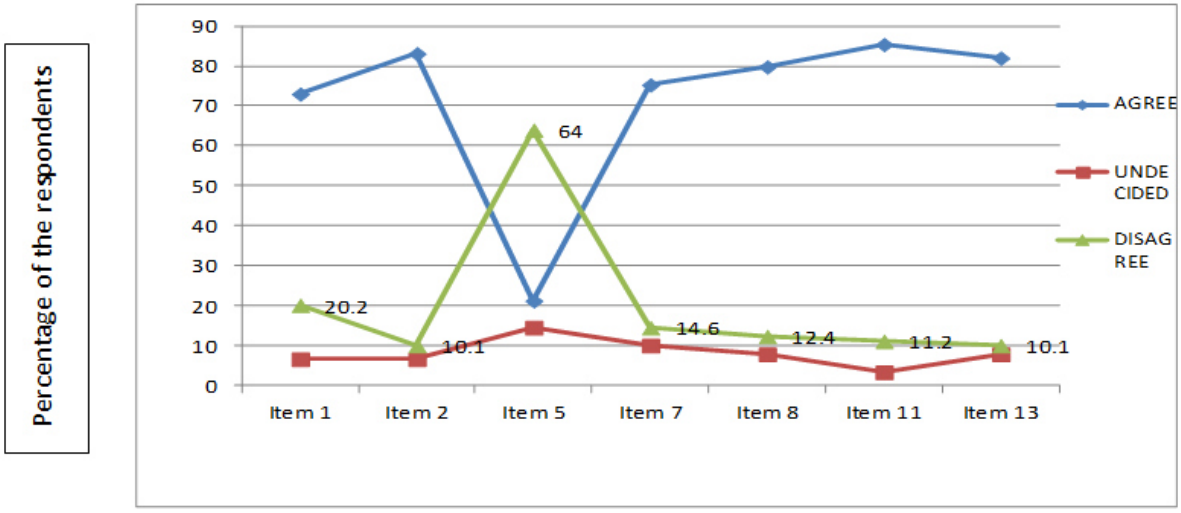

Figure 4: Graphic representation of Teachers' Attitude towards the Benefits of Action Research

As it is possible to see from both table 9 & figure 4, most of the respondent indicated their agreement towards the benefits of action research; except item five, more than 70% of the respondents have positive attitude towards the mentioned purposes of action research.

In here, most or 64% of the respondents disagreed with item five which stats the purpose of conducting action research as criterion for teachers' promotion. Related to this, the teachers stated that better to teach teachers & facilitate the environment through which they can get education to conduct action research than making it one criterion to see performance. Supporting this, improved attitude, improved teaching style, & increased desire to stay current, sharpening perception, stimulating discussion & increased understanding of self as better teacher are often the result of teachers' involvement in educational research (Henson, 1995 cited in Levin & Rock, 2003). So, it is possible to say that action research involvement has beneficial effect both on teaching & learning (Sachs, 1997; Casanova, 1989; Borg, 2007; Gao, Barkhuizen & Chow,2010).

From this, one can understand that teachers have no problem whether action research can be used as criterion for promotion purpose or not. Rather, they underlined the issue of availing all the necessary materials & other supports that can help them in their way of conducting action research. Especially, making their environment smooth is more important if the point is to make teachers problem solver & critical thinkers.

Supporting what was demonstrated on the graph, the mean for each item measuring teachers' attitude towards purpose/benefit of action research is above the average point (3) except item 5. Hence, the teachers' attitude can be articulated positive, since the minimum average value & overall mean of the items is 3.7.

Furthermore, if teachers are forced to do action research with the absence of important inputs, they may quit after conducting one action research. However, if the environment is conducive promotion could be goal that can motivate teachers to conduct action research.

Table 10: Attitude of Teachers on their Responsibility of doing Action Research

No	Items	Scale of Responses					Actual Mean
		SA(5)	A(4)	UD(3)	DA (2)	SDA(1)	X
3	Teachers should study educational problems & seek solutions	59	25	2	1	2	405/89=4.6
4	Teachers involvement in action research has to be an usual activity	50	29	4	3	3	387/89=4.3
6	Research (Action) is not solely the task of trained professional researcher & thus does not concern teachers	32	34	8	6	9	341/89=3.8
9	In order to improve their profession, teachers should conduct action research	28	42	5	8	6	345/89=3.9
10	Besides, the limited resource & skills teachers may possess, they can conduct Action research in their own level.	10	62	6	9	2	336/89=3.8
12	Research has to be conducted not only in higher educational institutions, but also in primary & secondary schools	48	27	2	8	4	374/89=4.1

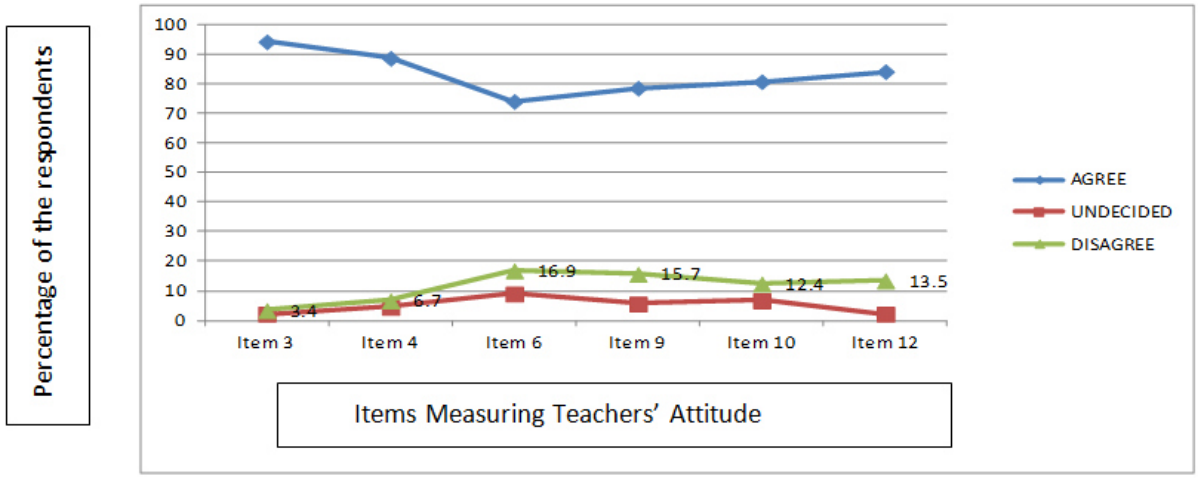

Figure 5: Graphic representation of Teachers' Attitude on their responsibility of doing action research

Based on the figure displayed in table 10& figure 6, most of the respondent teachers indicated their agreement towards conducting Action research as their responsibility; more than 74% of the respondents revealed that they are responsible to conduct action research to solve school problems. The frequency of teachers' agreement ranges from 74.2%-94.4% from item 6 - item 3 respectively.

Maintaining what was mentioned in the above paragraph, the mean of all items measuring teachers' attitude towards their responsibility to conduct action research is 4.1, which is by far beyond the average point (3). Besides, the minimum mean value of the items is 3.8.

Regarding this affair, Lassonde, Galman & Kosnik (2009) stated that teachers primarily saw their responsibility as implementing what researchers told them. They did not think about problematizing their experiences or classroom observations to learn more about their student, their context & their teaching practice. Opposite to this theory, since teachers have no hesitation to take action research work as their responsibility, it is possible to conclude that they have positive attitude & feel responsible.

4. Summary, Conclusion & Recommendations

4.1. Summary

The collected quantitative & qualitative data were analyzed through descriptive statistics & summative content analysis respectively. In addition, findings were demonstrated using tables & different graphs in order to create convenience for summary. As a result of the collected data, the following major findings were obtained.

1. In most of the primary schools, the status of teachers' involvement in action research is below the expectation. Among teachers participated in the study, 40.1% (36) of them have never been involved in action research yet. Based on the above information & which was gained from the primary school

principals' interview, the status of the teachers in conducting action research by 2013 can be sequentially put from the better to the worst status from School D, to school B.

2. As more than 51% of the respondents replied, major/ potential hindrances for teachers' engagement to conduct action research were lack of financial support for workshop & seminar, lack of conducive environment/encouragement & morale, lack of practical training/experience, lack of motivation, lack of theoretical knowledge & lack of confidence. Besides, lack of continuous, updated & adequate training, absence of follow up, deficiency of stationary materials & unavailability of previously done research materials were mentioned by informants as reasons that protected teachers from doing action research. Finally, it is interesting to note that heavy work load was revealed by more than half (53%) of the respondent teachers as the least influencing factor in making them not to conduct action research.
3. Teachers have positive attitude towards the benefits of action research since the mean value of items measuring teachers' attitude towards purposefulness of action research is 3.7. Also, the minimum mean value for the individual item is 3.7 except item five (action research as criterion for promotion) for which 2.3 mean value was calculated. In other words, Most of the respondent, more than 70% of them, indicated their agreement towards the mentioned benefits of action research.
4. Most of the respondent teachers, more than 74% of them have indicated that they have positive attitude towards conducting action research as their own responsibility to solve school problems. In other saying, the mean value of the items as measure of teachers' attitude towards their responsibility to conduct action research is 4.1. Also, the minimum mean value for the individual items is 3.8 which is beyond the expected mean i.e. 3. Assuring this, 88.8% (79) of the respondent teachers including 57.3% of those who replied that they lack confidence about action research, have disclosed that they have intention to undertake it in future.

4.2. Conclusion

It is common understanding that teachers are responsible persons to solve their school as well as classroom problems by planning mechanisms appropriate to the specific context. Coinciding with this intention, Most of Bahir Dar town primary school teachers have positive attitude towards the importance of action research & consider they are responsible for the success of their schools. In contrast, however, the involvement of most of these primary school teachers in action research is below the expectation because of lack of stationary material, lack of readings, lack of morale support, & absence of continuous, updated & adequate professional support.

Generally, such problems make a school atmosphere unfavorable & in such condition, expecting teachers to be problem solver seems imaginary since they could not critically analyze their contexts. In turn, students who are taught by these teachers in such schools are unlikely to be all rounded & it will be normal for them to struggle with countless academic & environmental problems that depreciate them from achieving to the maximum of their potential. Therefore, if the educational attempts are to produce functionally literate human power by developing sense of change agent, the observed barriers has to be minimized; if not omitted by taking immediate actions in collaboration with educational expertise & concerned stakeholders.

4.3. Recommendations

Based on the major findings of the study & conclusion drawn, the following recommendations were suggested to all concerned bodies to give due attention to involve primary school teachers in action research for its contribution for quality education.

1. The study vividly indicated that large numbers of primary school teachers in Bahir Dar Town are not in a position to conduct action research in order to alleviate the problem they face in the t-learning process. Thus, it is possible to say that primary school teachers' involvement in conducting action research is not up to the expectation. Therefore, all concerned bodies such as Amhara regional education bureau, woreda education expertise, Bahir Dar University, cluster supervisors & the school principals have to cooperate & play their own role to upgrade primary school teachers' status of action research involvement to the expectation in the following ways.
    1.1. 68.5% (61) of the respondent teachers attributed lack of financial support for workshop & seminar as among the major hindrances for them not to conduct action research. Thus, the regional education bureau has to give due consideration for primary school teachers' professional demand by conducting need assessment concerning their limitation as to allocate the necessary budget that can facilitate circumstance in which teachers can be qualified.
    1.2. While 85%(76) of the respondent teachers reported absence of reference materials & documents on action, 49.5% (44) of the them leveled as they are highly hindering factors for them not to conduct action research. Therefore, Woreda education authorities in collaboration with regional education bureau has to assure quality of the school libraries as to include adequate reference materials such as books, educational documents, policy, curricula & different manuals, previously done model action research proposals & reports on action research. Also, 80 or 89.9% of the respondents showed the absence of research coordinating centre/unit in their schools which lined-

up with the response of school principals. Accordingly, the authority needs to establish research coordinating unit at woreda & school level to prepare seminar for teachers' research work.

1.3. As more than 56% of the respondents replied, among the major/ potential hindrances for teachers not to conduct action research is lack of updated, adequate & continuous theoretical & practical training in the area. In short, only giving training are not grantee teachers to practice unless it is adequate to the extent that it leads them to be practitioner. Proving this, 36.1% (30) of respondents who had training on action research disclosed that they could not conduct action research yet. Thus, Bahir Dar University, especially Educational & Behavioral Sciences Faculty has to plan continuous training sessions & workshops to fill the teachers' professional gap. Particularly, teachers in the faculty have to contribute for the professional development of the primary school teachers by giving continuous practical training & follow up/feed back through conducting design research.

1.4. It is known, though an instructional setting is free from both physical & intellectual barriers, unless psychological barriers are omitted/minimized, teachers cannot perform what is expected of them. Along with this concern, 64% (57) of the respondent teachers exposed that lack of conducive environment/encouragement & morale supports were among highly hindering factor for them not to conduct action research. As a result, school principals & cluster supervisors have to create favourable condition in the schools by giving psychological support in terms of Verbal encouragement, positive expectation towards teachers' attempt in conducting action research & interaction.

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