

**ORIGINAL ARTICLE**

**The Status of Action Research Conducted in Government  
Secondary Schools of Addis Ababa**

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*Abstract*

*The main purpose of this study was to examine the current status of action research conducted by teachers in government secondary schools of Addis Ababa. A descriptive survey design was used to conduct the study. Data for the study was collected from 281 sample respondents drawn from three general secondary and two preparatory schools in five sub-cities in the capital using a questionnaire. Simple percentages, average mean ratings, t-tests and one-way ANOVA were used to analyze the data. Finally, the study disclosed that the current status of action research conducted in government secondary schools was found to be very low i.e. 0.26 per teacher. The study further unveiled different factors that hamper teachers from conducting action research. Finally it was concluded that teachers' action research in government secondary schools was a function of both schools' and teachers' related problems. Hence, policy makers must pay due attention to strategies aimed at improving these bottlenecks so as to enhance teachers' engagement in action research in government secondary schools.*

**INTRODUCTION**

Research is any systematic action geared towards searching for knowledge and solutions for problems (Gray, Mills & Airasia, 2009). Research assists us to search for viable solutions in a systematic manner. Similarly, educational research strives to solve problems encountered in the field of education (Gray, Mills & Airasian, 2009).

Nisbet & Nisbet (1985) further explain that educational research shapes educators' perceptions, provides them with concepts to use in thinking about the work they do, and creates an agenda of concern. These statements clearly indicate the role of research and that of educational research as a process of solving problems and creation of knowledge in ones field of study.

*Key words: teachers' research, educational research.*

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Teachers in schools, besides their teaching assignments, are expected to conduct small-scale studies, action research, to solve their day-to-day work place problems with the assumption that they are the most nearest individuals to educational problems (Elliot, 1981; Halsey, 1972; Bogdan & Biklens, 1982). Action research is a form of enquiry that enables teachers to investigate and evaluate their day –to-day teaching and learning process in schools. It is a powerful and liberating form of professional enquiry since teachers themselves investigate their own practice as they find ways of living more fully in the direction of their educational values.

Historically action research began with the works of John Collier in the 1930s and Kurt Lewin in the 1940s. Particularly, the latter believed that people would be more motivated about their work if they are involved in decision-making about how the workplace was run. In the 1950s action research was taken up in education, specifically by the teaching profession by Stephen Corey who became influential in America. Although action research went into decline in America during the late 1950s ,it did, however, begin to take hold in Britain, mainly through the influence of Lawrence Stenhouse (1975), who was working in contexts of teacher education and advocated a view of teachers as highly competent professionals who should be in charge of their own practice. He maintained that professional education involves the commitment to systematic questioning of one's own teaching as a basis for development. Lawrence Stenhouse's ideas were further developed by a group of action researchers John Elliott who developed an interpretive approach and Jack Whitehead who came up with the idea of a self-study perspective. According to the latter, teachers should both study their own practice and regard their practice as the grounds for the

generation of their own personal theories of practice (Whitehead 2003). Teachers then make their theories available for public critique and testing. Action research, therefore, should be seen as not simply about problem solving, but about learning and creating knowledge that can contribute to personal and social wellbeing. In the 1980s, Jack Whitehead's work was complemented by the work of Jean McNiff, who developed the idea of the generative transformational nature of evolutionary processes.

In general terms, action research became known as a form of practical research that legitimated teachers' attempts to understand their work from their own point of view. Instead of learning about the disciplines and applying theory to themselves, teachers are encouraged to explore what they are doing and propose ways of improving it. In this way, the practical wisdom of teachers could be awarded greater status, as well as their professional standing widely accepted as a form of professional learning. It is the responsibility of teachers to hold themselves accountable for their potential influence in the learning of others.

Conducting action research would allow teachers to observe one's work directly (Cummings, 1985). According to Elliot (1983), educational action research is essentially teacher-based characterized by an absence of a division of labor between practitioners and researchers. Teachers are expected to contribute to our knowledge (Kinchole, 1991).

The main purpose of action research in schools is to provide teacher-researchers with a method for solving everyday problems in their own settings or environments (Gray, Mills & Airasian, 2009 and Nisbet & Nisbet, 1985). Hence, action research by teachers enables them to

be in a position to think scientifically and fruitfully about their work. One of the arguments in favor of teacher action research is that, if research is undertaken on the context of those who are expected to make use of the findings, the likelihood of implementation is higher.

The main aim of teachers' action research as opposed to much traditional or fundamental research is solving the immediate and pressing day-to-day problems of teachers in schools. According to Mitchell (1985), teaching and action research have direct relationships where action research transforms the teaching and learning experience and teaching provides a cost effective way of testing for implementation and applicability of action research. Teaching that is not informed by action research tends to be more routine than involving creativity and reflection of the teacher. Thus, action research is one of the means by which teachers reflect on their work with their students in their schools.

Teachers teaching in secondary schools can generate rich, illuminating, and important insights into the nature of teaching and learning (Shaeffer & Nkingyangni, 1983; Peter, 1985; Hitchcock & Manion, 1995). Improving practices through action research in schools can be achieved only if teachers are able to change their behavior and attitude (Cohen & Manion, 1995). To enhance the quality of education in secondary schools, teachers need to be more involved in curriculum development and evaluation through action research (Hopkins, 1993).

There are different benefits from action research conducted by secondary school teachers. Some of these benefits listed by Hummadi (1989: 29) are:

*To make learning more objective and realistic to*

*students by increasing stimulation and motivation to learning, to increase the power and sensitivity to perception and greater capacity to observe, and to enable teachers to meet new intellectual challenges and prevents them from becoming stagnant and complacent.*

This statement clearly indicates the potential benefits gained from conducting action research by teachers teaching in secondary schools. It is in this ground that teachers, particularly secondary school teachers, are encouraged to conduct action research in Ethiopia. As it is clearly put in the Education and Training Policy of the (1994), every attempt will be made to promote and encourage teachers to conduct action research that enables them to solve the problems they face daily in their schools. Moreover, carrying out action research in schools is considered as one of the requirements for teachers' career promotion in Ethiopia.

According to Mckerman (1996:42), "teaching is a profession, and that we can no longer continue to view schools and teachers as mere distributors of knowledge. Schools and teachers are producers of knowledge". The author further notes that knowledge is created when scholars and researchers are pressing back the frontiers of the subject. In this regard, one may ask then, what sorts of conditions are required to turn schools into a centre for research? There are different barriers to secondary school teachers to engage in action research. Some of these hindrances are related to institutional, while others are related to teachers themselves. According to Mckerman (1996), lack of time, lack of resources and school organizational features are some of those related to schools. On top of this, calling up on teachers to conduct action research requires

two essential conditions: teachers should understand and possess research skills, which generate data, and the findings should inform teachers in such a manner as to compel them to take action research (Mckernan, 1996). These problems are more related to teachers themselves. This study is thus designed to examine the current status of action research carried out by teachers in government secondary schools of Addis Ababa.

### **Statement of the Problem**

As it is stated above, action research is highly encouraged by the government to be conducted in schools. However, efforts made to understand its status and challenges to action research in secondary schools through research is very limited in Ethiopia. Few studies, for instance, Adane (2000), Yalew (2000), Hussien (2000), Seyoum (1998) and Teshome (2006) have tried to investigate factors that affect teachers to conduct research at different levels. The main focus of Adane's study was to identify these factors on university instructors at Bahirdar University, while that of Yalew's and Hussien's studies were to identify factors that hinder teachers to conduct research in elementary and secondary schools of Gojam and Dessie respectively. Similarly, the study by Seyoum (1998) was conducted on senior high school teachers' engagement in traditional research in Addis Ababa. On top of this, a study by Teshome (2006) focused on action research conducted by teachers in primary schools of Ethiopia. Yet these studies were research efforts made to understand teachers' involvement in traditional research in general and were not specific to action research in schools except that of Teshome that focused on action research but with specific attention to teachers in primary schools. On top of this, the studies were conducted long years ago

where attention given for teachers action research was very low to be considered as a criteria for teachers' career promotions in secondary schools. Hence, this study tries to fill in this gap.

Besides different rationales for teachers' engagement in action research and its potential benefits to solve practical teaching-learning problems encountered in schools, examining the current status of action research conducted by secondary school teachers, and identifying the challenges encountered to conduct action research via research is crucial. This study, thus, raises the following basic questions to guide the study:

1. What is the current status of action research conducted in government secondary schools of Addis Ababa?
2. What is the perception of teachers toward action research in government secondary schools of Addis Ababa?
3. Is there any significant difference in teachers' perceptions towards conducting action research in government secondary schools of Addis Ababa?
4. What are the different factors that hinder teachers to conduct action research in government secondary schools of Addis Ababa?

### **Scope of the Study**

This study is delimited to government secondary schools found in Addis Ababa. Besides, the study is delimited to secondary school teachers' perception toward conducting action research on teachers teaching in government secondary schools for the 2010/11 academic year and do not include other teachers beyond that.

### **Significances of the Study**

Conducting action research in schools particularly in government secondary schools is supported by education policy and encouraged by decision makers at different levels in Ethiopia. As a result, knowledge gained from this research on the current status and challenges behind teachers' involvement in action research in secondary schools assist policy and decision makers to make appropriate measures and actions. Besides, the findings from the study assist school principals in government secondary schools to realize the current problems of engaging teachers to conduct action research and create conducive environment for those teachers interested to solve their problems through action research.

### **Operational Definition**

**Action research** in this study refers to a small scale study conducted by teachers in government secondary schools.

**Status** refers to the average number of small scale educational projects or studies conducted by secondary school teachers as reported in the questionnaire by sample respondents.

**Teachers' Attitude** refers to the average mean ratings of sample respondents toward action research using the items in the questionnaire.

## **RESEARCH DESIGN AND**

### **METHODOLOGY**

The main purpose of this study was to examine the current status of action research conducted by teachers in secondary schools. To achieve this purpose, a descriptive survey design was used so as to unveil the current situation. Principals, vice principals, unit leaders,

department heads, and teachers teaching in government secondary schools were the main data sources of the study.

### **Sampling Procedures**

Out of the total 31 government secondary schools during the time of this study in the capital, the study included three general secondary and two preparatory schools were selected and included using stratified random and simple random sampling technique i.e. all the secondary schools were first grouped into general and preparatory schools where three general secondary and two preparatory schools were randomly selected using proportionate random sampling techniques to represent all secondary schools in Addis Ababa. Compared with the total number of schools in the city, the number of sample schools included in the study represents all the schools and the findings in the study are also generalizable to the population of the study. On top of this, out of the total number of teachers teaching in these sample schools, a total of 321 respondents (260 M & 61 F) were selected and included in this study with the help of stratified random, simple random and availability samplings where teachers in the sample schools were first stratified into two based on their sexes. Then, sample male teachers were selected using proportionate simple random sampling from the list while all female teachers teaching in the sample schools during data collection were included using availability sampling to increase their representations in the study as their number was found to be very low compared to their male counterparts using dis-proportionate random sampling. Availability sampling techniques were also used to select sample principals and vice principals in the sample secondary schools included in the study.

**Data Gathering Tools**

A self developed questionnaire was used as the main data gathering tool in the study since it enables to gather data from a large group of people within a short period of time. A questionnaire consisting of both close and open ended questions were set and distributed to collect data from sample respondents. A questionnaire consisting of five different parts: personal background of respondents, the status of teachers' involvement in action research, teachers' perception of action research, teachers' related factors and institutional problems affecting teachers to conduct action research were designed and distributed to collect the necessary data for the study. The first and second parts of the questionnaire contained more of multiple choice and open ended items, whereas questions in the remaining three parts were prepared using a five point Likert-scale where respondents indicated their degree of agreement from strongly agree (5) to strongly dis-agree (1) for each item. Part three mainly dealt with teachers' attitude on action research and eight questions were included, while part four included 10 items on teachers' related factors affecting their engagement in action research in secondary schools while part five consisted of 12 items on school/institutional problems. The items were prepared in a similar manner with questions in part three using a five point Likert scale.

The content validity of the items in the questionnaire were examined by senior staff or colleagues and proved to be valid. The internal consistency reliability of the items in the questionnaire was determined in this study using Cronbach's alpha ( $r$ ) and found to be 0.73, 0.69 and 0.81 for the items in parts 3, 4, and 5 respectively and found to be reliable.

**Data Analysis**

The data collected in this study was quantitative in its nature. Thus, simple percentages, t-tests and one way ANOVA

(Analysis of Variance) were used in the analysis. Accordingly, simple percentages were used to analyze data on personal background of respondents and the status of action research in secondary schools. On top of this, t-tests and ANOVA were used to analyze data on teachers' perceptions on action research where t-tests were used to examine if there were significant mean differences between respondents based on their sex for all questions in parts three to five as it is more appropriate to detect if there is significant mean differences between two group of respondents. Similarly, one way ANOVA was used to analyze data to examine if there were significant mean differences between respondents using their fields of specialization (which was categorized in to three) for this study since it is more useful to detect if there were significant mean differences between two or more groups.

**RESULTS**

Out of the total 321 questionnaires distributed to collect data for the study, 281 (87.5 %) were returned and used in the data analysis. The information collected from these questionnaires were presented and analyzed as follows. The majority 81.1 % of respondents were males while the remaining 18.9 % were females. As it is well known, the number of female teachers teaching in secondary schools is still very low. As it was discussed in the sampling section, disproportionate random sampling was used to include all female teachers found in sample schools during data collection to increase their representation in the study; otherwise the number of female teachers would have been below what is presented above. The majority 48.4 % of these respondents was found to be from the Natural Sciences followed by Social Studies 30.2 % and the Languages 21.1% in their specializations. Furthermore, 95 % of the respondents were found to have first

degrees and the remaining 5 % had their second degrees (MA/MSc). This shows that almost all sample respondents had a minimum qualification to teach in secondary schools. Besides, they are expected to conduct small-scale studies such as action research as they have already written their theses, senior essays or projects before their graduations from universities. Most of the sample respondents (87.5 %) were found to be teachers in their positions followed by department heads (8.2 %), and the remaining few respondents were principals, vice principals and unit leaders in the sample schools. The service years of the respondents range from one year to forty years with the average mean service years of 9.6 and a standard deviation of 10.23.

**The Status of Action Research  
Conducted by Teachers in Government  
Secondary Schools**

Respondents of this study indicated the status of action research in government secondary schools through their responses to different questions presented in the questionnaire. As data in Table 1 below shows, the majority 89.7% of the respondents replied that they have received training programmes on methods of conducting action research. Furthermore, about 57.3 % of these respondents stated that university courses on action research

was the main source of their training followed by seminars and workshops for 22.4 %, and different short-term training programmes for 10 % of them. Very few of sample respondents indicated multiple responses, which are not presented in the table.

Data presented in Table 1 below further shows the extent of teachers' engagement in action research in secondary schools. Out of the total respondents stated that they have some training on methods of conducting action research, the majority 78.3 % of them have never conducted action research in their respective schools, while only 21.7 % of them said to conduct action research. This implies that although teachers in secondary schools have some skills to conduct action research, their participation was very low. On top of this, teachers who replied that they've conducted action research were asked to report the number of action research projects completed and reported so far. Accordingly, a total of 74 action research outputs were reported to be completed and submitted. If one compares the number of research outputs with sample teachers included in the study, on average 0.26 action research reports were conducted per secondary school teacher. This indicates that the status of action research conducted in government secondary schools of Addis Ababa was very low.

**Table 1:** The Status of Action Research Conducted in Government Secondary Schools

<i>Item</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>%</i>
Have you received any training program on action research/research methodology?		
▪ Yes	252	9.7
▪ No	27	9.6
▪ Missing	2	0.7
▪ Total	281	100
If yes for the above question, the training you received was_____		
• During university/college study	161	57.3
• Short-term on the job training	28	10.0
• From seminars, workshops, etc	60	22.4
• Missing	3	10.3
• Total	252	100
Have you ever been involved/conducted action research in your school?		
• Yes	55	19.57
• No	199	70.82
• No response	27	9.61
• Total	281	100

### Teachers' Perceptions of Action Research in Government Secondary Schools

As the mean ratings of respondents for items in part three of the questionnaire on their attitudes toward action research in Table 2a below indicates, the role of action research to solve teachers' day to-day problems encountered in schools was highly recognized. For instance, teachers rated very high (4.15) on the average out of

five for the first item that states, "I prefer to conduct action research to solve my day to day teaching-learning problems". A t-test was used to examine if there was significant differences between the two sexes of respondents and the result shows significant differences at alpha 0.05. Besides, a one-way ANOVA was carried out to see if there were significant mean differences in the ratings of different groups of respondents based on their areas

of specializations. The result showed significant differences between them for the item with a standard deviation of 0.97 and F-value of 2.94 at alpha 0.05. This shows some variations in the mean ratings of these different groups while the overall mean ratings were found to be very high which further implies that respondents have a positive attitude to conduct action research in secondary schools.

**Table 2a:** Respondents’ Perceptions of Action Research vs Fields of Specialization

<b>Field of study</b>		<b>3.1</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>3.3</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>3.7</b>	<b>3.8</b>
social studies	Mean	4.3571	1.6667	2.1928	2.3976	4.1310	2.2857	4.5476	4.3929
	N	84	84	83	83	84	84	84	84
	Std. Deviation	.72216	.96109	1.44372	1.24880	1.00336	1.30404	.66595	.69452
language	Mean	4.0690	1.8448	2.0862	2.0526	4.0000	2.5517	4.3621	4.2586
	N	58	58	58	57	58	58	58	58
	Std. Deviation	1.05734	1.07282	1.27437	1.12474	1.09224	1.30010	.85221	.84936
natural sciences	Mean	4.0511	1.7956	2.2774	2.2409	4.0662	2.4818	4.3942	4.3869
	N	137	137	137	137	136	137	137	137
	Std. Deviation	1.04545	1.07196	1.35977	1.23387	.94440	1.27822	.67907	.73011
<b>Total</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>4.1470</b>	<b>1.7670</b>	<b>2.2122</b>	<b>2.2491</b>	<b>4.0719</b>	<b>2.4373</b>	<b>4.4337</b>	<b>4.3620</b>
	<b>N</b>	<b>279</b>	<b>279</b>	<b>278</b>	<b>277</b>	<b>278</b>	<b>279</b>	<b>279</b>	<b>279</b>
	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>.96890</b>	<b>1.03857</b>	<b>1.36548</b>	<b>1.21853</b>	<b>.99196</b>	<b>1.29005</b>	<b>.71601</b>	<b>.74534</b>

(Numbers 3.1- 3.8 in the table refer to items presented in the questionnaire and are indicated in Table 2b below)

Similarly, the ratings of teachers for the items: “teachers should be engaged both in teaching and action research in order to effectively disseminate research findings”, “teachers should study educational problems and seek solutions” and “teachers can improve their methods of teaching if they involve in action research” were all rated on average 4.07,4.43, and 4.36 respectively. The ratings show respondents’ agreement on the contributions of action research in secondary schools. In a similar vein, teachers rated below an average for the

remaining items that presented the negative role of conducting action research by teachers in the questionnaire. They rated the items: “action research should not be the concern of secondary school teachers”, “engagement in action research blocks the way to effective teaching”, “action research has to be left to those who have specific training in educational research”, and “action research contributes little in solving practical educational problems in schools” 1.77, 2.21, 2.25 and 2.44 respectively on average out of five.

**Table 2b:** A t-test Result of Respondents' Perceptions of Action Research in Government Secondary Schools

Items	Test Value = 0					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
	8.07	280	.000	.187	.143	.23
I prefer to conduct action research to solve my day to day teaching-learning problems	71.70	279	.000	4.15	4.04	4.26
Action research should not be the concern of secondary school teachers	28.22	279	.000	1.78	1.65	1.90
Engagement in action research blocks the way to effective teaching	27.128	278	.000	2.22	2.05	2.38
Action research has to be left to those who have specific training in educational research	30.685	277	.000	2.26	2.11	2.40
Teachers should be engaged both in teaching and action research in order to effectively disseminate research findings	68.482	278	.000	4.07	3.95	4.19
Action research contributes little in solving practical educational problems in schools	31.534	279	.000	2.43	2.28	2.58
Teachers should study educational problems and seek solutions	103.733	279	.000	4.44	4.35	4.52
Teachers can improve their methods of teaching if they involve in action research	94.452	279	.000	4.35	4.26	4.44

In addition, the t-test results in table 2b above indicate significant mean differences between the different groups of respondents based on their sexes at 0.05 alpha for all items. This implies that both groups of respondents rated each item slightly different but the average mean ratings for the different items were below the average. This implies that the two groups of respondents rejected the negative

statements given on the role of action research in secondary schools. The one-way ANOVA results in Table 2c below further indicated statistically no significant differences for the majority of the items except for items 3.1. and 3.4 between the three groups of respondents based on their fields of the study at alpha 0.05. This shows similarities in the ratings of sample respondents to the items.

**Table 2c:** A one way ANOVA Result of Respondents’ Perceptions of Action Research

Items		df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
I prefer to conduct action research to solve my day to day teaching-learning problems	Between Groups	3	4.90	5.47	.001
	Within Groups	275	.896		
	Total	278			
Action research should not be the concern of secondary school teachers	Between Groups	3	1.07	1.94	.124
	Within Groups	275	2.07		
	Total	278			
Engagement in action research blocks the way to effective teaching	Between Groups	3	1.06	.57	.638
	Within Groups	274	1.87		
	Total	277			
Action research has to be left to those who have specific training in educational research	Between Groups	3	2.39	1.62	.186
	Within Groups	273	1.48		
	Total	276			
Teachers should be engaged both in teaching and action research in order to effectively disseminate research findings	Between Groups	3	3.36	3.50	.016
	Within Groups	274	.958		
	Total	277			
Action research contributes little in solving practical educational problems in schools	Between Groups	3	1.76	1.06	.367
	Within Groups	275	1.66		
	Total	278			
Teachers should study educational problems and seek solutions	Between Groups	3	.66	1.29	.280
	Within Groups	275	.511		
	Total	278			
Teachers can improve their methods of teaching if they involve in action research	Between Groups	3	.388	.70	.555
	Within Groups	275	.557		
	Total	278			

**Factors Affecting Teachers’ to Conduct Action Research in Government Secondary Schools**

Different factors hinder teachers to conduct small-scale studies in schools. In this study these factors were grouped in to institutional (schools) and teachers’ related problems.

**Table 3a:** School Related Factors Affecting Teachers to Conduct Action Research

		Report									
Field of study		4.1	4.2	4.3	4.4	4.5	4.6	4.7	4.8	4.9	4.10
Social Studies	Mean	3.80	3.88	3.69	3.76	4.14	4.06	2.84	3.51	4.21	4.17
	N	85	85	83	85	85	85	85	85	85	85
	Std. Deviation	1.20	1.17	1.14	1.12	1.06	1.09	1.31	1.29	1.06	.87
Languages	Mean	4.16	3.95	3.50	3.86	4.21	3.95	2.79	3.21	4.10	4.08
	N	58	58	58	58	58	58	58	57	58	58
	Std. Deviation	.894	.907	1.06	.96	.77	1.16	1.10	1.35	1.02	1.06
Natural Sciences	Mean	4.14	3.99	3.71	3.93	3.99	4.16	3.04	3.38	3.89	3.91
	N	137	136	137	137	137	136	137	137	137	137
	Std. Deviation	.95	1.08	1.14	1.02	1.13	1.01	1.21	1.19	.99	1.14
<b>Total</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>4.04</b>	<b>3.95</b>	<b>3.66</b>	<b>3.87</b>	<b>4.08</b>	<b>4.09</b>	<b>2.93</b>	<b>3.38</b>	<b>4.03</b>	<b>4.02</b>
	<b>N</b>	<b>280</b>	<b>279</b>	<b>278</b>	<b>280</b>	<b>280</b>	<b>279</b>	<b>280</b>	<b>279</b>	<b>280</b>	<b>280</b>
	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>1.03</b>	<b>1.07</b>	<b>1.12</b>	<b>1.04</b>	<b>1.04</b>	<b>1.07</b>	<b>1.22</b>	<b>1.26</b>	<b>1.03</b>	<b>1.05</b>

(Numbers 4.1 – 4.10 in the table refers to items presented in the questionnaire and indicated in Table b below)

Sample respondents included in this study were asked to rate items related to these problems in the questionnaire distributed during data collection for the study. A total of ten school related problems that were assumed to affect teachers to conduct action were rated. As the average mean results for each item given by respondents presented in Table 3a above show, all of them were rated above average (2.5 out of five). A critical look at the items in the first category of factors reveals that, five of them were rated above 4.00 out of five. Accordingly, lack of incentives for teachers engagement in action research was highly rated ( 4.09); followed by lack of financial and material support from schools to conduct action research with an average mean value of 4.08; heavy teaching loads and other co-curricular activities in the schools 4.04; absence of research culture and suitable institutional and academic environment in schools rated 4.03; and lack of conducive working environment that encourages teachers to undertake action research in schools rated 4.02. The remaining items from this group were rated as follows. For instance, lack of reference materials such as books, journals, research

proceedings, etc. rated 3.95; lack of coordinating body/unit for action research in schools was rated 3.87; lack of experienced teachers who can also advise novice/ beginner teachers' involvement in action research rated 3.39; and finally negative attitude of some teachers and staff toward conducting action research rated 2.93, which is the least from this category. As one can infer from these ratings, all of the items were rated above average, which implies that they were considered as hindrances to conduct action research in government secondary schools of Addis Ababa. Further examinations of the t-test presented in Table 3b in the table below shows significant mean differences between male and female respondents showing some variations in their mean ratings. On the other hand, the one way ANOVA result given in Table 3c below for each item reveal no significant mean differences between different groups of respondents of the study at alpha 0.05 for all items. This implies the similarity between the mean ratings of sample respondents of the study based on their fields of study.

**Table 3b:** A t-Test Result of School Related Factors Affecting Teachers to Conduct Action Research

Items	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
	8.068	280	.000	.18861
Heavy teaching loads and other co-curricular activities in the school	65.746	280	.000	4.04270
Lack of reference materials such as books, journals, research proceedings, etc.	61.592	279	.000	3.95000
Lack of the necessary data in schools	54.350	278	.000	3.66308
Lack of coordinating body/unit for action research in schools	62.559	280	.000	3.87189
Lack of financial and material support from schools to conduct action research	65.730	280	.000	4.08541
Lack of incentives for teachers engagement in action research	64.016	279	.000	4.08929
Negative attitude of some teachers and staff toward conducting action research	40.336	280	.000	2.93594
Lack of experienced teachers who can also advise novice/beginner teachers' involvement in action research	45.168	279	.000	3.39286
Absence of research culture and suitable institutional and academic environment in schools	65.648	279	.000	4.03214
In general, lack of conducive working environment that encourages teachers to undertake action research in schools	64.244	280	.000	4.02491

*(Numbers 4.1 – 4.10 in the table refers to items presented in the questionnaire and indicated in Table 3b)*

**Table 3c:** A one- way ANOVA Result of School Related Factors Affecting Teachers to Conduct Action research

	<b>Sum of Squares</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Mean Square</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
Between Groups	6.999	2	3.500	3.348	.037
Within Groups	289.568	277	1.045		
Total	296.568	279			
Between Groups	.555	2	.277	.239	.787
Within Groups	319.639	276	1.158		
Total	320.194	278			
Between Groups	1.859	2	.930	.733	.481
Within Groups	348.677	275	1.268		
Total	350.536	277			
Between Groups	1.511	2	.756	.701	.497
Within Groups	298.599	277	1.078		
Total	300.111	279			
Between Groups	2.295	2	1.147	1.057	.349
Within Groups	300.816	277	1.086		
Total	303.111	279			
Between Groups	1.944	2	.972	.849	.429
Within Groups	315.992	276	1.145		
Total	317.935	278			
Between Groups	3.444	2	1.722	1.157	.316
Within Groups	412.266	277	1.488		
Total	415.711	279			
Between Groups	2.976	2	1.488	.944	.390
Within Groups	435.217	276	1.577		
Total	438.194	278			
Between Groups	5.786	2	2.893	2.773	.064
Within Groups	288.925	277	1.043		
Total	294.711	279			
Between Groups	3.842	2	1.921	1.750	.176
Within Groups	304.030	277	1.098		
<b>Total</b>	<b>307.871</b>	<b>279</b>			

The second group of factors, teachers' related problems consisted of 12 different items. As the overall mean ratings presented in Table 4a below shows, the highest mean rating of 3.77 for lack of motivation and interest in action research, followed by lack of courage that any findings will have little or no relevance and credit with a mean rating of 3.47; lack of experiences on how to do action research rated 3.32; to be indifferent about action research and life in general rated 3.28; lack of interest in dealing with educational problems in schools because of one's area of specialization rated 3.09; perceiving action research as mystical or considering action research as a tough and difficult activity to deal with rated 3.04; while the remaining items rated from 2.76 to 2.96.

Further examination of a t-test for these items show significant mean differences between the ratings of the two groups of respondents at alpha 0.05. This indicates some differences in the mean ratings between male and female teachers in secondary schools. The one way ANOVA result for each item shown in Table 4b in the Table below shows no significant mean differences for all items, except for the last item where slight difference was observed between the different groups of respondents of the study at 0.05 alpha. This implies the closeness in the mean ratings of respondents of the study. Hence, since the average mean ratings for all items was again found to be above the average, they were considered as major teachers' related hindrances to conduct action research in secondary schools by sample respondents of the study.

**Table 4a:** Teachers' Related Factors Affecting Teachers' Action Research

Field of study		5.1	5.2	5.3	5.4	5.5	5.6	5.7	5.8	5.9	5.10	5.11	5.12
social studies	Mean	3.2588	3.2824	2.7647	2.9176	3.9167	3.2738	3.5176	3.1647	3.1176	2.9529	3.0824	3.0471
	N	85	85	85	85	84	84	85	85	85	85	85	85
	Std. Deviation	1.23590	1.22097	1.30609	1.24606	1.16379	1.10149	1.24031	1.13229	1.19932	1.25267	1.38196	1.28087
languages	Mean	3.1379	3.3966	2.9655	2.9138	3.8103	3.1379	3.4310	3.0690	3.0517	2.8070	2.9138	2.5862
	N	58	58	58	58	58	58	58	58	58	57	58	58
	Std. Deviation	1.17650	1.19853	1.18419	1.20357	1.06716	1.20595	1.15640	1.24057	1.17611	1.20176	1.30161	1.21445
natural sciences	Mean	3.2117	3.3139	2.9635	2.9265	3.6715	3.3507	3.4599	3.0584	2.9926	2.8102	2.9051	2.6496
	N	137	137	137	136	137	134	137	137	136	137	137	137
	Std. Deviation	1.29155	1.21723	1.26263	1.13941	1.09215	.96758	1.08475	1.18052	1.06456	1.10834	1.22404	1.22229
Total	Mean	3.2107	3.3214	2.9036	2.9211	3.7742	3.2826	3.4714	3.0929	3.0430	2.8530	2.9607	2.7571
	N	280	280	280	279	279	276	280	280	279	279	280	280
	Std. Deviation	1.24803	1.21087	1.25923	1.18179	1.11041	1.06166	1.14499	1.17560	1.12762	1.17065	1.28761	1.24935

(Numbers 5.1 – 5.12 in the table refers to items presented in the questionnaire and listed in Table 4b below)

**Table 4b:** A one-way ANOVA Result of Teachers’ Related Factors Affecting Teachers’ Action Research

Items		Sum of Square s	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Lack of Knowledge and skills in action research	Between Groups	.50	2	.252	.161	.851
	Within Groups	434.06	277	1.567		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>434.56</b>	<b>279</b>			
Lack of Experience on how to conduct action research	Between Groups	.46	2	.232	.158	.854
	Within Groups	408.60	277	1.475		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>409.07</b>	<b>279</b>			
Lack of self-confidence to conduct action research	Between Groups	2.35	2	1.177	.741	.478
	Within Groups	440.04	277	1.589		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>442.39</b>	<b>279</b>			
Fear of rejection of one’s work because of low quality of the work	Between Groups	.008	2	.004	.003	.997
	Within Groups	388.25	276	1.407		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>388.26</b>	<b>278</b>			
Lack of motivation and interest in action research	Between Groups	3.22	2	1.612	1.311	.271
	Within Groups	339.54	276	1.230		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>342.77</b>	<b>278</b>			
To be indifferent about action research and life in general	Between Groups	1.84	2	.921	.816	.443
	Within Groups	308.11	273	1.129		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>309.95</b>	<b>275</b>			
Lack of courage that any findings will have little or no relevance and credit	Between Groups	.295	2	.147	.112	.894
	Within Groups	365.47	277	1.319		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>365.77</b>	<b>279</b>			

Lack of interest in dealing with educational problems in schools because of one's area of specialization	Between Groups	.635	2	.317	.228	.796
	Within Groups	384.95	277	1.390		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>385.58</b>	<b>279</b>			
Perceiving action research as mystical or considering action research as a tough and difficult activity to deal with	Between Groups	.823	2	.411	.322	.725
	Within Groups	352.66	276	1.278		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>353.48</b>	<b>278</b>			
Perceiving oneself as incapable of conducting action research	Between Groups	1.22	2	.610	.443	.642
	Within Groups	379.75	276	1.376		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>380.97</b>	<b>278</b>			
Lack of reading habits	Between Groups	1.80	2	.904	.544	.581
	Within Groups	460.75	277	1.663		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>462.56</b>	<b>279</b>			
Problem of language to write and disseminate action research reports/results	Between Groups	10.42	2	5.211	3.396	.035
	Within Groups	425.06	277	1.535		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>435.48</b>	<b>279</b>			

## DISCUSSIONS

The main purpose of this study was to examine the current status of action research, see teachers' perceptions toward action research, and finally identify barriers to conduct action research in government

secondary schools of Addis Ababa. The analysis and interpretations of data discussed above indicated the following major findings:

Teachers teaching in government secondary schools were found to have the

necessary orientation and capacity to conduct small scale studies in their respective secondary schools and solve their problems. Although teachers teaching in secondary schools were found to have the basic skills, experiences and qualifications to conduct small-scale studies in schools, their involvement was found to be very low. The study further disclosed that the current status of action research in secondary schools was found to be very low where only 0.26 of action research projects on average were reported to be conducted per teacher for the last ten or more academic years in government secondary schools. The finding from this study confirms that of Teshome's (2006) finding on primary school teachers' engagement on action research that states teachers do not practice action research as much as expected.

In addition to teachers' qualifications and trainings in action research, their attitudes and perceptions toward the contributions of action research to solve the daily school problems is equally important to facilitate teachers' engagement and involvement in action research. In this study it was found out that teachers teaching in government secondary schools were found to have positive attitudes toward action research as proved from the data presented in the study.

Finally the results of the current study unveiled that both school and teachers related problems were barriers to teachers engagement in action research in government secondary schools of Addis Ababa. These problems were also identified as hindrances to carryout research undertakings at different levels by teachers in primary, secondary school teachers, and instructors teaching in universities in Ethiopia by different researchers such as Seyoum (1998),

Hussien (2000), Adane (2000), Yalew (2000) and Teshome (2006).

## **CONCLUSIONS**

From the findings of the study it is concluded that if teachers are provided with the necessary support and assistance that facilitates their engagement in action research, there is a fertile ground to make government secondary schools in Addis Ababa as sources of knowledge from the findings of teachers' action research. Seen from this angle, therefore, it is concluded that although there are favorable policy initiatives to promote secondary school teachers conduct action research, there is a wider gap between what the government intends to achieve through action research in its secondary schools and what is going on regarding action research conducted at grassroots level in government secondary schools of Addis Ababa.

In addition, based on the findings from, the present study, it is possible to conclude that the presence of qualified teachers with the basic skills needed to conduct action research coupled with positive attitudes toward action research and appreciations of the roles of action research to solve the daily classroom problems encountered in their workplaces, a lot could be done to utilize secondary school teachers and enhances their participation in action research and thereby solve the different educational problems in which our education system is currently engulfed in secondary schools.

Finally, it is concluded in this study that the current low status of action research in government secondary schools of Addis Ababa was found to be a function of school and teachers' related problems listed above than teachers' attitudes or perceptions toward action research. Thus, policy

makers must give due attention to any strategy or action that aimed at improving these barriers to promote teachers' participation in action research and make our schools centers of knowledge in the future.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions arrived at the following recommendations were forwarded.

As it was vividly discussed in the findings of the study both school and teachers related factors were the bottlenecks for secondary school teachers' involvement in action research. Hence, the Addis Ababa Education Bureau and the respective government secondary schools in the capital ought to:

Provide special incentives either in the form of money or material and provide teachers with the necessary materials such as stationery, photocopy services for duplicating journals, etc. for teachers engaged in action research.

Reduce the daily and weekly teaching loads for teachers engaged in action research and other co-curricular activities as part of their teaching loads or assignments in their respective schools.

Create conducive institutional and academic environment in secondary schools by organizing annual conferences, seminars, experience sharing and trainings for teachers focusing on action research so as to initiate and promote teachers engagement in action research.

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