AJOLD

African Journal of Leadership and Development

2024, Vol. 9 No. 1, 58-72

DOI: https://doi.org/10.63990/2024ajoldvol9iss1pp58-72

Instructors' Utilization of Action Research to Enhance Instruction in Research Universities of Ethiopia

Amdework Brhane Araya[1]

Abstract

The objective of the study was to examine the practice of using action research by instructors in research universities of Ethiopia as a means to enhance their instruction. To conduct the study, a concurrent embedded mixed research design was used. Data were collected from384 instructors' selected using simple random sampling to fill the questionnaire. Furthermore, four department heads and one research coordinator were chosen for interviews using purposive sampling technique. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics including frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation and the qualitative data was analyzed thematically. The finding of the study reveals that instructors' level of awareness concerning action research was good however; instructors' use of action research to enhance instruction was very low. Among the challenges that hinder instructors engagement in action research to enhance instruction was Lack of time due to heavy load, Limited funding and emphasizing teaching over research was ranked as 1st 2nd 3rd respectively. Finally, recommendations were proposed to enhance instructors' involvement in action research for the purpose of enhancing instruction.

Key words: Action research, enhancement, instruction, engagement, instructors

1. Introduction

The development of a nation depends on the presence of educated individuals who have access to quality education, serving as the linchpin for societal transformation across various spheres (Lamsal, 2015). Quality education plays a crucial role in developing competent individuals who can effectively leverage technology to achieve the nation's objectives. This necessitates competent teachers capable of fulfilling their roles efficiently. The Ministry of Education of Ethiopia (MOE, 2005) emphasizes that a high-caliber teacher is indispensable for ensuring quality education since the primary arena for the teaching-learning process is within the classroom. In the absence of capable teachers, effective curriculum implementation becomes challenging, impeding the achievement of quality education standards.

Effective curriculum implementation necessitates teachers possessing the requisite competencies encompassing knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Wan, 2005). Continuous professional development is a widely adopted strategy to enhance these competencies, involving

[1]Trainer, training institute, Ethiopian Civil Service University, email: amdework.brhane@ecsu.edu.et
ISSN 2519-5255(print) ISSN 2957-9104(online)
This is an open access article licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

an ongoing process of enhancing one's expertise, skills, and attitudes (Bolam & Weindling, 2006). Action research serves as a notable model in continuous professional development, providing educators and educational leaders with a structured method to systematically address challenges within schools. Within the realm of education, action research plays a vital role in bridging theory with practical application, enhancing educational practices, empowering teachers, and fostering professional development (Mertler, 2009)

In Ethiopia's education system, action research is a relatively recent but highly esteemed concept recognized for its capacity to elevate the teaching profession and emphasize teachers as professionals. The systematic inclusion of action research within teacher training programs started with the inception of the Higher Diploma Program (HDP) in 2003, which emphasized hands-on training for higher education educators in Ethiopia. This one-year initiative was designed for participants to engage in two-hour discussion classes twice weekly, conduct classroom observations, and visit organizations for up to two weeks. To graduate, participants are required to finalize an action research assignment aimed at enhancing a facet of their institution and methodologies (MOE, 2006).

Higher education instructors are required to engage in small-scale research projects, such as action research, in addition to their teaching responsibilities. This is because they are seen as individuals most closely situated to the challenges and issues that arise in the educational setting and are expected to address them through research (Mertler, 2024; Elliot, 1981)

The significant role of knowledge in enhancing economic competitiveness and societal well-being is now widely acknowledged. This recognition has heightened focus on the involvement of universities in generating, applying, and sharing knowledge (Foray, 2004Moreover, according to Castells (2001) and Nokkala (2007, universities serve two primary purposes: generating knowledge and preparing a competent workforce through various endeavors like research, education, and community engagement.

Research involves systematic activities aimed at seeking knowledge and solutions to problems (Gray, Mills & Airasia, 2009). Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) are mandated to integrate research activities into their strategic goals aiming to ensure a strong research-teaching nexus (Hazelkorn, 2005). Instructors in research universities are specifically expected to actively engage in research and utilize the findings from their research endeavors (Dufera, 2000). Such universities distinguish themselves through a pronounced emphasis on research activities (Gin, et al. 2021).

Instructors in higher education are encouraged to analyze their own teaching methods and consider their practices as the foundation for developing their individual theories of practice (Whitehead, 2003). Action research is a type of inquiry that allows educators to examine and assess their everyday teaching and learning processes within university settings. It is an empowering and effective form of professional inquiry as it involves teachers conducting their own investigations into their teaching practices and making improvements based on their findings (Johnson, 2014). Educational action research, characterized by its practitioner-driven

nature, focuses on solving immediate issues faced by teachers, thereby bridging the gap between theory and practice (McNiff & Whitehead, 2011).

Based on the above idea, it is possible to infer that action research is a valuable approach to enhance instruction in higher education and ensure quality education. In Ethiopia, a country with a population of around 120 million people, there are 46 universities categorized into three groups based on their missions. Among these, the ministry of education recognizes Addis Ababa, Gondar, Bahir Dar, Mekelle, Jimma, Hawassa, Arba Minch, Ethiopian Civil Service University, and Haramaya Universities as research-focused institutions for conducting research. However, very few studies have been conducted in this area. For instance, Firdissa (2015) investigated the action research strategies utilized by English as a foreign language educators in two Ethiopian public universities, offering insights for personal and professional enhancement, Rukya (2016) investigated the professional development of female teachers using action research techniques and Kasim (2020) conducted action research to improve the teaching methods for first-year natural science students enrolled in the weekend program at Bule Hora University.

However, it is essential to recognize that these studies mainly address specific areas such as language teaching, female teacher development, and science education, highlighting the importance of a wider research focus. To enhance understanding, studies should encompass diverse disciplines. Moreover, while the previous studies concentrated on non-research universities, this research centers on research universities that prioritize research as a fundamental aspect of their mission, distinguishing them from institutions that may emphasize teaching or vocational training. To address this gap, the researcher initiated a study to examine the degree to which instructors use action research to enhance their instruction in research universities in Ethiopia. In doing so, it assess the practice of using action research by instructors in research universities of Ethiopia as a means to enhance their instruction. More specifically, the study aims to: a) assess the instructors' level of awareness regarding the use of action research as a means of improving instruction in Ethiopian research universities; b) assess the extent to which instructors use action research to improve instruction in Ethiopian research universities; and c) assess the challenges of using action research to improve instruction in Ethiopian research universities.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Definition of Action Research

Action research is a methodological approach characterized by disciplined inquiry conducted by and for those implementing the action (Reason & Bradbury, 2008). It involves systematic reflection, investigation, and analysis that integrates theory and practice to drive positive change within specific contexts. Practitioners engage in a cyclical process of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting to enhance practice and instigate beneficial transformations (Stringer, 2007; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2014).

This participatory form of research accentuates practitioners' active involvement in the research process and collaboration with peers to generate knowledge and facilitate change (Kindon, Pain

& Kesby, 2007). Action research emphasizes the harmonization of theory and practice, fostering the development of practical wisdom and professional knowledge (McNiff, 2002; Elliott, 1991). Conducted in real-world settings like classrooms or organizations, action research targets specific issues to enhance professional practices (Stringer, 2007; McNiff, 2002), leveraging practitioners' unique insights for meaningful research and practical solutions (Herr & Anderson, 2015). Educational action research, characterized by its practitioner-driven nature, focuses on solving immediate issues faced by teachers, thereby bridging the gap between theory and practice (McNiff & Whitehead, 2011). Studies have shown that action research helps teachers become more confident in their instructional strategies. According to Mertler (2017), action research empowers teachers to take ownership of their professional development, resulting in more effective teaching and improved student achievement.

It can be deduced that action research, a methodological approach, integrates theory and practice for positive change through reflective inquiry and practitioner involvement. It emphasizes collaboration, fostering practical wisdom and professional knowledge in real-world settings like classrooms. By targeting specific issues, it aids teachers in developing confidence in instructional strategies, empowering them for effective teaching and enhanced student achievement.

2.2 Characteristics of Action Research

Action research is a distinct approach to inquiry and problem-solving, characterized by several key features such as: a) **Collaboration and Participation**: Emphasizes active involvement and collaboration among practitioners, researchers, and stakeholders throughout the research process, fostering collective problem-solving and knowledge generation (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2014; McNiff, 2002). b) **Practical Relevance and Contextual Focus**: Grounded in real-world settings like classrooms or organizations, focusing on addressing specific issues and improving practices while ensuring research findings are relevant and applicable to the specific context (Stringer, 2007; Herr & Anderson, 2015). c) **Reflective Process**: Critical for fostering self-awareness, learning, and improvement, reflection plays a pivotal role in action research (Öcal, 2018). d) **Integration of Theory and Practice**: Strives to connect theory and practice by combining theoretical understanding with practical implementation, fostering the cultivation of practical insights grounded in established theories and literature (McNiff, 2002; Elliott, 1991). e) **Cyclical Nature:** It adheres to a cyclical method involving planning, implementation, observation, and reflection, utilizing repetitive cycles of action and reflection to guide and enhance subsequent actions (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2014). And f) **Spiral Progression**: Characterized by its continuous and iterative nature, involving multiple cycles of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. Each cycle builds on the previous one to enhance understanding and improve subsequent actions (Dustman, Kohan, & Stringer, 2014).

3. Research Design

This research employed a concurrent embedded mixed research design to examine to what extent instructors use action research to enhance their instruction in research universities of Ethiopia. A concurrent embedded mixed research design combines qualitative and quantitative data collection, with one method playing a primary role while the other supports it. Both types of data are gathered simultaneously during the research process (Creswell & Clark, 2018). This design is chosen to explore the practice of using action research by instructors in research universities in Ethiopia as a way to enhance their instruction. According to Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004), concurrent embedded mixed research design is effective in providing a holistic understanding of complex educational phenomena by integrating qualitative and quantitative data.

3.1 Sample and Sampling Technique

In this study, a multistage sampling technique was utilized, comprising two stages. Initially, the selection process involved choosing universities, followed by the selection of instructors and leaders In Ethiopia, there are nine research universities, and from these, two universities were selected using simple random sampling. Specifically, Haramaya and Hawassa universities were chosen through a simple random sampling method. Subsequently, individual units were selected using a systematic random sampling method. The sampling frame was obtained from the human resources offices of the universities. The researcher then sorted the list of instructors alphabetically in Microsoft Excel. Finally, respondents were systematically selected by choosing every nth participant from the list.

3.2 Data Collection Instruments

Questionnaires were employed as the main data-gathering instrument, and interviews were used as a supporting data collection method. The researcher utilized questionnaires as the primary data collection tool, incorporating a five-point Likert scale and a mix of open-ended and closed-ended questions. The questionnaire, consisting of six sections and 41 items, was distributed to 384 instructors. To ensure the validity of the items, the questionnaires were distributed to individuals with research experience and language proficiency. Feedback from these experts was then gathered and incorporated into the revised questionnaire.

3.3 Methods of Data Analysis

The data collected through questionnaires and classroom observations were processed and analyzed using descriptive statistics in the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 24. Descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation were employed for analysis.

On the other hand, the qualitative data gathered through field interviews were structured and analyzed thematically. General patterns and main themes were created and reviewed in response to research questions. Finally, the text was analyzed and interpreted using qualitative data analysis software, NVivo 11.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1: Instructors Level of Awareness Regarding Action Research

4.1.1 The Contribution of Training to Raising Instructors' Level of Awareness

4.1 Instructors View Regarding the Contribution of Training

No	Statements	No	%
1	How do you evaluate the contribution of the course you took during your university studies regarding action research in helping you conduct action research?		
	Very High	9	3.3
	High	16	8.3
	Fair	43	23.8
	Low	61	33.3
	Very low	55	30.5
2	How do you evaluate the contribution of the workshops and seminaries you participated in regarding action research in helping you to conduct action research?"		
	Very high	30	11.6
	High	77	30.5
	Fair	105	41.7
	Low	37	13.6
	Very low	4	1.6

Source: Survey data (2023)

Respondents who took courses on action research during their university studies evaluated the contribution of the courses. According to the responses, majority of the instructors 116(63.8%) of the instructors rated it as low, 43(23.8%) of the instructors rated is a moderate while 25(11.6%) of the instructors rated its contribution was low.

Active involvement of instructors in training related to action research is crucial for acquainting them with the principles of this research methodology. Respondents who had participate in training evaluated the contribution of the training they had attended. According to the response of the instructors, 107(42.1%) of the instructors reported that the contribution of the training was high, 105(41.7%) of the instructors reported that the contribution of the training was fair and 41(15.2%) of the instructors reported that the contribution of the training was low. This suggests that there is a range of opinions among the instructors regarding the effectiveness or impact of the training they received.

The qualitative results from interviews with research coordinators and department head confirmed the quantitative findings. Some of the responses from these interviews regarding the level of awareness included the following:

> *"The university organizes HDP program for instructors aimed at fostering awareness concerning action research"*

4.1.2 Instructors Level of Knowledge Regarding Action Research

Table 4.2: Instructors Views Regarding Their Level of Knowledge Concerning Action Research

No	Statements	Instructors	
		Mean	**Std.**
1	Teaching is problematic and needs classroom oriented investigation.	4.11	.92
2	Action research is research conducted by instructors into their own teaching context.	4.07	.81
3	Instructors role is both to undertake research and teach	4.08	.88
	Grand mean	**4.08**	**.87**

Source: Survey data (2023)

Table 4.2 demonstrates that the mean value for the statement “Teaching presents challenges and requires classroom-oriented inquiry” was (M=4.11). This indicates that instructors had a good understanding of action research. The table also shows that the mean value for the statement “Action research is research conducted by instructors into their own teaching context” was (M=4.07), suggesting that instructors perceive teaching as a complex task that necessitates investigation within the classroom. Additionally, the third item in the table indicates that the mean value for the statement 'Instructors' role is both to undertake research and teach' was (M=4.08), demonstrating that instructors acknowledge the importance of examining their teaching practices to enhance their instruction.

The results in the table show that the grand mean for all three statements combined was (M=4.08) with a standard deviation of (St.d=0.87). This suggests that instructors have a relatively strong level of knowledge and understanding regarding action research, which could facilitate their engagement in the endeavor. The relatively low standard deviation for the grand mean indicates a moderate level of agreement among the instructors in their overall comprehension of action research. This aligns with the notion that teacher awareness of action research is essential for effective educational inquiries and is crucial for driving positive changes through collaborative action research (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2014).

4.1.3 Instructors Competency to Conduct Action research

Table 4.3 Instructors’ view concerning their competency to conduct action research

No	Statement	Mean	Std.
1	I understand the process and methodology involved in conducting action research.	3.81	1.01
2	I have skill for doing action research	3.29	1.06
3	I have high interest in doing action research	3.27	1.06
4	I do not feel confident in my action research competence	3.17	1.06
	Grand mean	**3.38**	**1.04**

Source: Survey data (2023)

The results in Table 4.3 indicate that the mean value for the statement I understand the process and methodology involved in conducting action research was (M=3.81), suggesting that instructors had a moderate understanding of the process and methodology of conducting action research. Similarly, the mean value for the statement "I have the skill for doing action research" was (M=3.29), indicating that instructors perceived themselves to possess a moderate level of skill in conducting action research.

In Table 4.3, the third item reveals that the mean value for the statement "I have high interest in doing action research" was (M=3.17), suggesting that instructors had a moderate level of interest in conducting action research. Additionally, the fourth item in this table shows that the mean value for the statement "I do not feel confident in my action research competence" was (M=3.38), indicating that instructors had a moderate level of confidence in their action research competence.

The grand mean value in this table for instructors' perception regarding their competency to conduct action research was (M=3.38), suggesting that instructors perceived themselves as having a relatively high level of efficacy in carrying out action research effectively. The standard deviation value of (St.d=1.04) indicates variation in individual responses. Furthermore, the results of the interviews confirm that instructors felt confident in their action research skills and competence because they conducted action research projects to meet the requirements of the HDP. This aligns with the concept that teachers with high efficacy levels are typically more motivated, engaged, and committed to their profession (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2014). These teachers are likely to embrace innovative teaching approaches, set high expectations for their students, and actively seek solutions to address learning challenges (Glackin & Hohenstein, 2018)

4.1.4 Instructors Level of Knowledge Concerning Benefits of Action Research

Table 4.4 Instructors view concerning benefits of action research

No	Statement	Mean	Std.
1	Action research is one of the most important tools for reflective teaching.	4.21	.87
2	Action research is an effective approach to solve problems related to teaching leaning process.	4.10	.92
3	I view action research as an essential tool for enhancing my instructional effectiveness.	4.02	.91
4	Action research enhances instructors ' research skills.	4.07	.89
5	Action research provides a platform for instructors to share best practices and collaborate on innovative teaching methods	3.43	1.12
6	Action research is a tool for developing instructors' professional competencies.	3.37	1.12
	Grand mean	**3.86**	**0.97**

Source: Survey data (2023)

The data in Table 4.4 show that the mean value for the statement “Action research is a crucial tool for reflective teaching" was (M=4.21) .This indicates that instructors view action research as a highly important tool for reflective teaching. The same table also reveals that the mean value for the statement “Action research is an effective approach to solve problems related to teaching leaning process” was (M=4.1). This indicates that instructors view action research as an effective approach for problem-solving in the teaching-learning process.

Table 4.4 item 3,reveals that the mean value for the statement “I view action research as an essential tool for enhancing my instructional effectiveness” was (M=4.02). This indicates that instructors consider action research as an essential tool for improving their instructional effectiveness. Moreover, the fourth item in this table shows that the mean value for the statement “Action research enhances instructors ' research skills” was (M=4.07). This indicates that instructors view action research as a means to enhance their research skills.

In the same table item 5, reveals that the mean value for the statement “Action research provides a platform for instructors to share best practices and collaborate on innovative teaching methods” was (M=3.43) . This indicates that instructors acknowledge that action research can provide a platform for sharing best practices and fostering collaboration among instructors. Moreover item 8, shows that the mean value for the statement Action research is a tool for developing instructors’ professional competencies was (M=3.37). This indicates that instructors consider action research as a tool for developing their professional competencies.

The result in this table shows that the grand mean value for instructors’ views regarding the benefits of action research was (M=3.86), indicating that instructors perceive several benefits associated with action research. The standard deviation value of (Std. = 0.97) suggests that there was variation in individual responses. This aligns with the concept that action research serves as a valuable tool for teachers to solve classroom problems (Wiersma, 2000), improve teachers' research skills by involving them in practical research activities, and foster reflective practice (Somekh, 2006). Additionally, it provides educators with the opportunity to enhance their teaching methods and professional skills through structured inquiry and reflective practices (Ferrance, 2000).

4.2 Instructors level of use of Action Research

4.2.1 Instructors level of use of Action Research to Professional Development

Table: 4.5 Instructors view regarding the use of action research to professional development

No	**Statement**	**Mean**	**Std.**
1	Action research is an integral part of my professional development as an instructor.	2.47	1.23
2	I have presented or published the results of action research projects related to instruction.	2.37	1.04
	Grand mean	**2.55**	**1.13**

Source: Survey data (2023)

The result in table 4.5 reveals that the mean value for the statement the statement “Action research is an integral part of my professional development as an instructor” was (M=2.74). This indicates that action research was not considered a crucial aspect of their professional advancement. The same table also reveals that the mean value for the statement “I have presented or published the results of action research projects related to instruction” was (M=2.37). This indicates that instructors had a relatively low level of involvement in presenting or publishing the results of their action research projects related to instruction. The result in this table shows the grand mean value for instructors’ view concerning the use of action research to professional development was (M=2.55). This reveals that level of utilization of action research for their professional development was low. The standard deviation value of (Std. = 1.13) indicates that there was diversity in individual responses, highlighting variability among participants. This contradicts the notion that action research is crucial for teachers' professional development, as it involves a hands-on investigation into teachers' practices and their students' learning experiences in the classroom (Feldman, & Minstrel, 2000; Ferrance, 2000; Yigit & Bagceci, 2017).

4.2.2 Instructors Level of Use of Action Research to Enhance Instruction

Table 4.6 Teachers View regarding their use of action research to enhance instruction

No	**Statement**	**Mean**	**Std.**
1	I strive to bring improvement to classroom practice	2.61	1.26
2	I collaborate with colleagues and peers on action research projects aimed at improving instruction.	2.19	1.06
3	I allocate dedicated time and resources for conducting action research in my instruction.	2.36	1.13
4	Action research has significantly influenced the development of my instructional materials.	2.42	1.17
5	Action research has enabled me to make instructional decisions based on evidence and data.	2.39	1.15
	Grand mean	**2.39**	**1.15**

Source: Survey data (2023)

As indicated in Table 4.6, the result for item “1 shows that the mean value for the statement 'I strive to bring improvement to classroom practice'” was (M=2.61). This indicates that instructors had a moderate level of motivation and effort to enhance their classroom practice. The same table also reveals that the mean value for the statement “I collaborate with colleagues and peers on action research projects aimed at improving instruction” was (M=2.19). This indicates that instructors had relatively lower level of collaboration with colleagues and peers on action research projects for instructional improvement.

Table 4.6 item, 3 shows that the mean value for the statement “I allocate dedicated time and resources for conducting action research in my instruction” was (M=2.36). This indicates that instructors allocate a moderate level of dedicated time and resources for conducting action research in their instruction. Similarly item 4, reveals that the mean value for the statement

“Action research has significantly influenced the development of my instructional materials” was (M=2.42). This indicates that instructors perceive action research to have a moderate level of influence on the development of their instructional materials. Moreover item 5, shows that the mean value for the statement “Action research has enabled me to make instructional decisions based on evidence and data” was (M=2.39). This indicates that instructors perceive action research to enable them to make instructional decisions based on evidence and data to a moderate extent.

The result in this table shows that the grand mean value for instructors' view regarding the use of action research to enhance instruction was (M = 2.39). This indicates that instructors were not using action research to enhance instruction. The finding contradicts with Johnson's idea, According to Johnson (2014), action research is an empowering and effective form of professional inquiry as it involves teachers conducting their own investigations into their teaching practices and making improvements based on their findings.

4.2.3 Frequency of engagement in conducting action research

Table 4.7 Instructors view regarding their frequency of engagement in conducting action research

No	Statements	No	%
1	How often do you engage in action research to improve classroom practice?		
	Frequently	4	1.0
	Sometime	29	7.6
	Rarely	142	37.0
2	Never	209	54.4
	How often do you apply action research findings to modify and improve your instructional methods?		
	Frequently	9	2.3
	Sometime	26	6.8
	Rarely	90	23.4
	Never	259	67.4

Source: Survey data (2023)

In Table 4.7, item 1, it is revealed that the majority of instructors (54.4%) reported never engaging in action research to enhance classroom practices. Furthermore, 142 instructors (37%) indicated rare engagement in action research for this purpose, while 29 (7.6%) and 15 (4%) reported occasional and frequent engagement in action research, respectively, to improve classroom practices. The same table also answers the question of how often instructors apply action research findings to modify and improve your instructional methods. According to the response, the majority 259(67.4%) of the instructors reported that they never use action research findings to modify and improve your instructional methods. 90 (23.4%) of the instructors also reported that they use action research findings to modify and improve your instructional methods rarely, whereas 26(6.8%) and 9(2.3%) of the instructors reported that they use action research

findings to modify and improve your instructional methods some times and frequently respectively.

The interview held with the body concerned also confirmed that instructors were not using action research to enhance their instruction. Instructors did not carry out action research, except for the higher diploma program (HDP) requirement.

4.3 Challenges for Conducting Action Research

Table: 4.8 Instructors view regarding the challenge for conducting action research

No	Item	Mean	St.d
1	Lack of time due to heavy load	3.39	1.26
2	Limited funding	3.30	1.11
3	Emphasizing teaching over research	3.26	1.10
4	Lack of understanding of action research	2.94	1.26
5	Limited institutional support	3.09	1.38
6	Lack of motivation	3.18	1.21
7	Lack of awareness about the contribution of action research for quality of instruction	2.85	1.40
8	The absence of research culture in the school	2.90	1.45

Source: Survey data (2023)

The above table (4.8) indicates that among the eight factors that affect instructors engagement in conducting action research. Lack of time due to heavy load stand 1st with mean score (Mean= 3.39), Limited funding stand 2nd with mean score (Mean= 3.3) and emphasizing teaching over research stand 3rd with a mean score (Mean= 3.26) on the contrary Lack of awareness about the contribution of action research for quality of instruction with the list mean score (Mean= 2.85) is less than the ideal mean implying that instructors' awareness about the contribution of action research for quality of instruction was not a major barrier for the utilizing action research to enhance instruction.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

The findings of the study showed that the level of instructors' awareness concerning the concept of action research was good. Instructors also felt that they had good competency to conduct action research, and they perceive that action research has many benefits to enhance instruction. However, the use of action research by instructors to enhance instruction was very low. Among the challenges that hinder instructors from conducting action research to enhance instruction, lack of time due to heavy workload, limited funding, and emphasizing teaching over research were ranked as 1st, 2nd, and 3rd, respectively

5.2 Recommendations

From the findings presented above, the following recommendations are forwarded:

- Increase awareness and training: Provide workshops and professional development opportunities to enhance instructors' understanding of action research.
- Promote the value of action research: Emphasize its benefits and practical applications for instructional improvement.
- Foster collaboration: Encourage sharing of action research findings and best practices among instructors.
- Address time and resource constraints: Allocate adequate time and resources for action research, providing support and incentives.
- Integrate action research into professional development plans: Make it a core component of instructors' growth and evaluation.
- Establish supportive policies and leadership: Develop policies that prioritize action research and provide guidance and resources.

References

Bolam, R., & Weindling, D. (2006). *Synthesis of research and evaluation projects concerned with capacity building through teachers' professional development*. London: General Teaching Council for England.

Bradbury, H. (Ed.). (2015). *The SAGE handbook of action research*. Sage.

Creswell, J. W., & Clark, V. L. (2018). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Dufera, D. (2000). Factors influencing research undertaking in the Institution of Educational Research (IER). In *IER proceeding on current issues of education*.

Dustman, E. L., Kohan, M. B., & Stringer, E. T. (2014). Starting small and building out with Ernie Stringer: Personal insights into action research and educational change. *Action Research, 12*(4), 426-443. https://doi.org/10.1177/1476750314542587

Elliot, J. (1991). *Action research for educational change*. Philadelphia: Open University Press.

Feldman, A., & Minstrel, J. (2000). Action research as a research methodology for study of teaching and learning science. In R. E. Lesh & A. E. Kelly (Eds.), *Handbook of research design in mathematics and science education* (pp. 429–455). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Ferrance, E. (2000). Themes in education: Action research. Brown University: Educational Alliance.

Firdissa, J. (2010). *Action research practices in teaching English as a foreign language in Ethiopian universities: Implications for quality language teaching* (Doctoral dissertation, Addis Ababa University).

Foray, D. (2004). *Economics of knowledge*. MIT Press.

Gin, L. E., Clark, C. E., Elliott, D. B., Roderick, T. B., Scott, R. A., Arellano, D., & Brownell, S. E. (2021). An exploration across institution types of undergraduate life sciences student decisions to stay in or leave an academic-year research experience. *CBE—Life Sciences Education, 20*(3), ar47. https://doi.org/10.1187/cbe.20-11-0245

Gray, L. G. E., Mills, G. E., & Airasian, P. W. (2009). *Educational research: Competencies for analysis and applications* (3rd ed.). New Jersey: Pearson.

Glackin, M., & Hohenstein, J. (2018). Teachers' self-efficacy: Progressing qualitative analysis. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education, 41*(3), 271-290. https://doi.org/10.1080/1743727X.2017.1408992

Hazelkorn, E. (2005). Developing research in new institutions: University research management. *OECD Publishing*. Paris, France.

Herr, K., & Anderson, G. L. (2015). *The action research dissertation: A guide for students and faculty*. Sage Publications.

Johnson, B. (2014). Action research: An overview. In B. Johnson (Ed.), *Educational research: Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed approaches* (pp. 571-597). SAGE Publications.

Johnson, R. B., & Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2004). Mixed methods research: A research paradigm whose time has come. *Educational Researcher, 33*(7), 14-26. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X033007014

Kassim, R. (2020). Action research on improving the method of teaching weekend program students in the case of natural science first-year students, Bule Hora University. *Education Journal, 9*(5), 127-131. https://doi.org/10.11648/j.edu.20200905.11

Kemmis, S., & McTaggart, R. (2014). *The action research planner: Doing critical participatory action research*. Springer.

Kindon, S., Pain, R., & Kesby, M. (2007). *Participatory action research approaches and methods: Connecting people, participation and place*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Lamsal, H. P. (2015). *Education for all: 2000-2015: Achievements and challenges*. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

McNiff, J., & Whitehead, J. (2011). *All you need to know about action research*. Sage Publications.

McNiff, J. (2002). *Action research for professional development: Concise advice for new action researchers*. Retrieved from http://philseflsupport.com/why_ar.htm

Mertler, C. A. (2009). *Action research: Teachers as researchers in the classroom*. London: SAGE Publications.

Mertler, C. A. (2024). *Action research: Improving schools and empowering educators*. Sage Publications.

Ministry of Education (MoE). (2005). *Ethiopian education sector development program: A policy document for education sector review (ESDP): ESDP III (2005/6–2010/11).*

Ministry of Education (MoE). (2006). *Higher diploma for teacher educators: A training portfolio.*

Nokkala, T. (2007). The Bologna process and the role of higher education: Discursive construction of the European higher education area. In J. Enders & B. Jongbloed (Eds.), *Public-private dynamics in higher education: Expectations, developments and outcomes* (pp. 221-246). https://doi.org/10.1515/9783839407523-009

Öcal, S. D. (2018). Action research as a tool for reflection in teacher education. In *Fostering reflective teaching practice in pre-service education* (pp. 190-204). IGI Global.

Rukya, H. (2016). Female teachers' professional development through action research practice. *Journal of Education and Practice, 7*(22), 6-18.

Skaalvik, E. M., & Skaalvik, S. (2014). Teacher self-efficacy and perceived autonomy: Relations with teacher engagement, job satisfaction, and emotional exhaustion. *Psychological Reports, 114*(1), 68-77. https://doi.org/10.2466/04.10.PR0.114k15w2

Somekh, B. (2006). *Action research: A methodology for change and development*. Maidenhead, Berks, UK: Open University Press.

Stringer, E. T. (2007). *Action research* (3rd ed.). Sage Publications.
Wan, Z. (2005). Teacher attitudes, knowledge and practices: A review of literature. *International Journal of Special Education, 20*(2), 35-49.
Whitehead, J. (2003). Creating our living educational theories in teaching and learning to care: Using multimedia to communicate the meanings and influence of our embodied educational values. *Teaching Today for Tomorrow, 19*, 17–20.
Wiersma, W. (2000). *Research methods in education* (7th ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
Yigit, C., & Bagceci, B. (2017). Teachers' opinions regarding the usage of action research in professional development. *Journal of Education and Training Studies*, *5*(2), 243-252. https://doi.org/10.11114/jets.v5i2.2001