



Action Research as a Strategy for Improving Teachers' Pedagogical Skills

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Abstract: In contemporary educational contexts, teachers face increasing demands to address diverse learner needs, integrate technology, and meet rigorous accountability standards. Conventional professional development programs often fail to provide sustained, context specific support, creating a gap between theory and practice. This study explored the potential of action research as a transformative framework for empowering teachers, enhancing pedagogical practices, and improving student outcomes. Employing an explanatory sequential mixed method design, data were collected from 15 teachers at Pakshikha Central School, Bhutan, using survey, semi-structured interview, and research diary. Quantitative findings indicated a high overall orientation toward action research ($M = 3.85$, $SD = 0.87$), with teachers reporting improved lesson design, adaptive teaching strategies, and diversified assessment practices. Qualitative analysis revealed that teacher-led inquiry fostered reflective practice, professional confidence, and collaborative knowledge building, while positively impacting student engagement, participation, and academic performance. Despite these benefits, participants identified significant barriers, including workload constraints, limited methodological training, and insufficient resources, which constrained sustained implementation. The study underscores that action research not only enhances instructional effectiveness and reflective pedagogy but also cultivates professional learning communities and teacher agency. For action research to achieve its full potential, systemic support, dedicated time, and capacity building initiatives are essential. These findings contribute empirical evidence to the discourse on teacher centered inquiry, demonstrating its role in bridging theory and practice, fostering professional growth, and promoting inclusive, student centered learning environments.

Index Terms - Teacher Empowerment, Reflective Practice, Instructional Improvement, Student Engagement, Evidence Based Pedagogy, Classroom Innovation.

I. INTRODUCTION

In an evolving educational backdrop of rapid changes, teachers are undergoing mounting pressure to meet diverse learners' needs, technological advancements, and rigorous accountability standards. The pre-service strategies learned at colleges and conventional professional development programs at the schools are not able to address the subtle challenges of individual classroom needs.

To address these needs, action research may be a transformative alternative, which will empower teachers to systematically investigate and refine their teaching practices through iterative, self-directed inquiry. Engaging themselves in such a reflective process will help teachers transit to proactive agents of change, fostering a culture of continuous improvement in their practices. In light of this, action research can help bridge the gap between theory and practice, enabling teachers to identify classroom-specific issues, design targeted interventions, and assess outcomes through data-driven reflection. In this way, it can not only enhance pedagogical innovation but also cultivate collaboration among peers, fostering shared accountability and collective growth. Moreover, when teachers critically evaluate their methods, they have the opportunity to develop deeper insights into student learning dynamics, leading to more responsive and inclusive instructional strategies.

This study explored how empowering teachers through action research can revitalize pedagogical practices and elevate student outcomes. By examining the symbiotic relationship between teacher-led inquiry and academic achievement, the research underscored the potential of action research to transform educators into reflective practitioners, ultimately fostering environments where both teaching and learning thrive. The findings also aimed to advocate systemic support structures that will prioritize teachers' autonomy, professional collaboration, and evidence-based decision making in education.

CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

The research is set within the shift towards teacher empowerment and evidence-based practice, aiming to explore how engaging in action research enables teachers to develop deeper insights into student learning dynamics. By fostering a reflective approach to teaching, educators can identify effective strategies and areas for improvement, leading to more responsive and inclusive instructional practices. As Crawford (2022) notes, "An action research model demonstrates its practicality for teachers to engage in critically reflective practice and provide an evidence base for their work". The study examined the symbiotic relationship between teacher-led inquiry and enhanced academic achievement, noting that such reflective practice is crucial for revitalizing pedagogy.

Through systematic investigation, teachers can address specific challenges within their classrooms, leading to improved student outcomes. As highlighted by the Teachers Institute (2023), "Action research is a reflective and systematic process that teachers use to improve their teaching methods". Furthermore, the findings aim to advocate for the development of systemic support structures that prioritize teachers to foster professional collaboration, and institutionalize evidence-based decision making within schools. Such an environment empowers educators to take ownership of their professional growth, collaborate with peers, and make informed decisions that enhance teaching and learning. Ultimately, this research seeks to contribute to

the creation of environments where both teaching and learning can thrive, ensuring that educators are equipped with the tools and support necessary to foster student success.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Despite the critical role teacher play in student achievement, they are often seen only as an implementer of curriculum and policies rather than as agents of instructional innovation. The present day classroom presents complex challenges, including increasing student diversity, the integration of technology, and pressure to meet standards. Conventional models of professional development, typically characterized by short term, top down, and generic workshops, have proven insufficient in equipping educators to address these multifaceted, context-specific issues within their own classrooms (Liston & Zeichner, 1991). This disconnect creates a permeating gap between educational theory and classroom practice, leaving teachers without the tools or agency to develop tailored solutions to their immediate pedagogical problems.

Consequently, many teachers experience a sense of dis-empowerment and stagnation, unable to systematically investigate the effectiveness of their methods or adapt their practices based on concrete evidence from their own students. This lack of avenues not only hinder professional growth and job satisfaction but also potentially limit student engagement and academic outcomes. Without a structured mechanism for self directed inquiry and reflection, teachers may resort to trial and error or adhere to outdated methods, missing opportunities for meaningful, data-driven improvement.

Therefore, a significant problem exists: there is a critical need for effective, sustainable, and teacher-centered strategies that empower educators to diagnose classroom challenges, innovate their pedagogical practices, and directly contribute to enhanced student learning. This study seeks to investigate this problem and find out how action research as a transformative framework for empowering teachers, enhancing their pedagogical practices, and ultimately improve student outcomes.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The research on Action Research as a Tool for Enhancing Teachers' Pedagogical Practices holds substantial importance for multiple stakeholders in education system. Its significance is enunciated through its potential contributions to professional practice, student learning, educational policy, and the broader body of academic knowledge.

The study holds significant value for practicing teachers and school administrators for transforming professional development from a passive and often disconnected activity into an active, empowering process. Such empowerment not only enhances professional efficacy but also contributes to greater engagement and promote a collaborative culture for shared inquiry and collegial support, moving teaching staff away from isolated practices toward a community of practice that prioritizes collective growth. It also provide a practical, replicable tools for continuous, improvement that directly respond to the diverse and evolving needs of students, ensuring that professional learning remains meaningful and impactful. By enhancing pedagogical practices through classroom-based inquiry, the study will demonstrate how teacher-led action research fosters differentiated, inclusive, and responsive instruction that addresses diverse learning needs while improving student engagement and achievement.

At the policy and leadership level, the study contributes by providing empirical evidence to inform systemic reforms that allocate time, resources, and structural support for sustained teacher inquiry. It will also promote evidence based decision-making in education, positioning teachers as central contributors to knowledge creation and instructional improvement that contribute to the existing literature by providing contemporary empirical evidence on action research.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The following are the three key objectives aimed to achieve from the study

- a. To assess the impact of action research on teachers' pedagogical practices and student learning outcomes.
- b. To examine how engagement in action research contributes to teachers' professional growth.
- c. To examine teachers' perceptions and challenges in carrying out action research.

RESEARCH QUESTION

“In what ways can action research empower teachers to improve their pedagogical practices?”

Sub - Questions

1. How does action research influence teachers' instructional strategies, classroom management, and reflective teaching practices?
2. How does teacher-led action research impact student learning and engagement?
3. What are teachers' perceptions of action research as a tool for improving classroom practices?
4. What challenges do teachers face when integrating action research into their professional practice?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Education is widely acknowledged as a pivotal driver of a nation's economic growth, social advancement, and overall development. The quality of teaching and learning within an educational system plays a decisive role in shaping the future prosperity of a country. As Othman and Yee (2015) argue, the effectiveness of teaching and learning experiences is central to ensuring that education fulfills its role in human capital development. Thus, educators carry the responsibility of not only imparting knowledge but also ensuring that pedagogical strategies remain relevant, effective, and responsive to the diverse needs of their students. This responsibility underscores the importance of continuous professional reflection and innovation in teaching practices.

One approach that has gained considerable attention in this context is action research. The term has been conceptualized in various ways across the literature. Avison et al. (1999) describe action research as an iterative and collaborative process involving cycles of problem diagnosis, intervention, and reflective learning. This cycle not only addresses immediate issues within practice but also contributes to the generation of knowledge that informs future actions. Similarly, Corey (1953), one of the pioneers in educational research, views action research as a systematic process through which practitioners study their own practices to identify and solve every day professional challenges. Both perspectives emphasize that action research is not merely about producing theoretical knowledge, but about improving practice in real-world contexts.

Adding further shade, Richards and Farrell (2005) distinguish between the concepts of “research” and “action.” According to them, research involves systematic investigation and data collection aimed at generating explanations for classroom challenges, while action refers to the intentional interventions teachers implement to address those challenges. This distinction, cited in Said Rashid Al-Abri (2019), highlights the dual nature of action research: it is simultaneously an inquiry into practice and a mechanism for change. In other words, action research bridges the gap between theory and practice, positioning teachers not just as implementers of external knowledge but as active agents in generating and applying knowledge to improve educational outcomes.

Tripp (2005) extends this discussion by framing action research as one among several forms of action inquiry, a broader concept referring to cycles of practice and inquiry aimed at improvement. Within this framework, practitioners continuously oscillate between action—intervening in the field of practice and inquiry, systematically reflecting on the effects of those interventions. The cyclical nature ensures that professional learning is ongoing, iterative, and context-specific. Similarly, Mitchell et al. (2009) emphasize that teachers engaging in action research are not only examining their practices but also interrogating the underlying theories of learning and instruction that inform those practices. This reflective dimension allows educators to align their pedagogical approaches with both theoretical frameworks and the lived realities of their students.

Scholars Kemmis and McTaggart (2007) have also highlighted the transformative potential of action research, arguing that it enables teachers to become critical practitioners who challenge assumptions, experiment with strategies, and adapt to changing educational contexts. Moreover, because action research is conducted within the authentic setting of classrooms, it ensures the relevance and relevance of its findings, directly benefiting students. For this reason, it is often considered both a professional development tool and a means of enhancing student learning.

Recognizing its powerful influence on teaching and learning, numerous scholars have emphasized the critical role of action research in teacher professional development. Othman and Chia (2014) contend that action research provides teachers with systematic opportunities to critically examine their own classroom practices, enabling them to identify both strengths and weaknesses in their instructional approaches. Through such reflection, teachers are better positioned to adapt their methods in ways that directly address student learning needs, thereby enhancing instructional effectiveness. In the same vein, Cunningham (2011) highlights the contribution of action research to the cultivation of professional learning communities. When teachers collaboratively engage in inquiry, they not only share experiences and strategies but also build leadership capacity. As Al-Mahdi (2019) observes, these communities foster deeper professional understanding, promote reflective practice, and create a culture of collegial collaboration, ultimately strengthening schools’ collective capacity for improvement.

Beyond its immediate role in problem-solving, action research has been associated with broader pedagogical and institutional benefits. Crookes (1993) argues that action research encourages teachers to move beyond classroom-level concerns and critically engage with wider educational issues. This perspective is reinforced by Gebhard (2005), who emphasizes that action research provides an essential

platform for dialogue about pedagogical beliefs, challenges, and innovations. By placing classroom inquiry within larger educational debates, action research helps teachers expand their awareness of teaching practices and educational dynamics, thereby nurturing both professional growth and institutional development. In this sense, action research is not merely a tool for refining individual instructional practices but also a means of cultivating collective responsibility for educational advancement.

It also underscores the transformative nature of action research in empowering teachers as agents of change. By engaging in cycles of inquiry and reflection, teachers develop a stronger sense of professional autonomy and agency. As Kemmis and McTaggart (2007) observe, action research not only enables teachers to improve their teaching but also encourages them to critically challenge assumptions and test innovative strategies in their classrooms. This process leads to the development of reflective practitioners who continuously adapt their approaches to meet evolving student needs. Such empowerment is crucial in the 21st-century educational context, where teaching is no longer limited to content delivery but extends to fostering creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and lifelong learning skills.

Despite its potential, however, action research faces considerable barriers in practice. Dornyei (2007) and Norton (2007), as cited in Condrat (2021), point out that teachers often lack the time and research knowledge required to effectively engage in inquiry based practices. These constraints are exacerbated by systemic factors such as heavy workloads and administrative responsibilities (Othman, 2015), which leave little room for sustained reflection and research activity. Slutsky et al. (2005) further highlight the lack of collaborative structures within many schools, noting that teachers frequently work in isolation, which undermines opportunities for joint inquiry and shared professional learning. In addition, insufficient administrative support often diminishes teachers' motivation to undertake action research, as their efforts are not always recognized or institutionalized. Collectively, these barriers illustrate the gap between the theoretical promise of action research and the practical realities teachers face in their daily professional lives.

These challenges have become more pressing in the context of the paradigm shift from teacher-centered to student centered learning. Contemporary educational reforms increasingly emphasize the need for differentiated instruction, learner autonomy, and the integration of digital technologies in teaching and learning. As Condrat (2021) notes, teachers today are required to take on multifaceted roles not only as instructors but also as facilitators, mentors, curriculum designers, and collaborators. Such demands necessitate continuous adaptation and reflection, making action research an indispensable tool for navigating these evolving expectations. By engaging in inquiry, teachers can systematically test new strategies, evaluate their effectiveness, and refine their practices in response to student needs and contextual challenges.

Moreover, action research contributes to teacher empowerment by positioning educators as knowledge creators rather than passive recipients of externally produced research. This shift in orientation has significant implications for educational practice. When teachers engage in action research, they not only enhance their pedagogical competence but also contribute to the broader body of professional knowledge. As Zeichner (2003) argues, this democratization of knowledge production challenges the traditional divide

between researchers and practitioners, fostering more relevant and context-sensitive forms of educational improvement.

In conclusion, the literature strongly supports the value of action research as a catalyst for professional development, reflective practice, and educational transformation. It enables teachers to identify strengths and weaknesses in their pedagogy, fosters professional learning communities, and encourages critical engagement with broader educational issues. At the same time, significant barrier including time constraints, heavy workloads, lack of institutional support, and limited collaboration, continue to hinder its widespread implementation. Addressing these challenges is vital if action research is to realize its potential in empowering teachers to enhance pedagogical practices, adapt to 21st century educational demands, and contribute to the collective advancement of education.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Approach and Design

The study adopted a mixed methods, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to gain a comprehensive understanding of teachers' perceptions, practices, and challenges related to action research. Action research was chosen because it enables practitioners to critically examine their own practices in order to improve pedagogy and student learning outcomes (Burns, 2010; McNiff, 2017). The design was cyclical, iterative, and participatory, ensuring that teachers were not merely subjects but active agents in the research process. The intent was to generate context specific insights into professional learning while fostering sustainable classroom improvement.

The research design used for this study was an explanatory sequential mixed method. In an explanatory sequential mixed method design, the researcher first conducts quantitative research, analyzes the results and then builds on the results to explain them in more detail with qualitative research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Quantitative research is supported by the questionnaires to test the attitude of the participants. The qualitative research is supported by semi structured interview questions for the participants.

Data Collection Tools

According to Simplilearn (2022), data collection is the process of gathering, measuring, and analyzing accurate data from a variety of relevant sources to find answers to research problems, answer questions, evaluate outcomes, and forecast trends and probabilities. In this study, the researcher has deployed survey questionnaire tools for collecting quantitative data. Additionally, the researcher also used interviews and research diary for the collection of qualitative data.

Survey Questionnaire

A survey questionnaire is a type of research tool used to gather data from participants and consists of several questions and other prompts. Surveys can assess educational initiatives and supply information to curriculum designers and other influential decision-makers (Creswell, 2014). Thus, quantitative information was gathered from teachers via a survey questionnaire to gain a comprehensive understanding of teachers' perceptions, practices, and challenges related to action research. The survey form was created and distributed to the teachers in the Telegram group.

Each item in the questionnaire was rated on a 5-point scale that ranged from “Strongly agree” to “Strongly disagree.” The items were coded from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree). The Likert scale is an evaluation scale used to assess perceptions, attitudes, or actions that allow one to quickly operationalize character qualities or perceptions (Bhandari, 2020). The participants’ ratings on the agreement and frequency were grouped into distinct levels employing Pimentel’s criteria for survey data. Pimentel (2019) suggested that each grouping needs to maintain an interval width of 0.79. For clarity, the mean scores of the agreement were interpreted in terms of the ranking as reflected in the Table 3.1.

Table 3.1

Criteria for Interpreting the Means of the Perception Level

Likert-Scale	Likert Scale interval	Level of Interpretation	Level of Agreement
1	1.00 – 1.79	Very low	Strongly Disagree
2	1.80 – 2.59	Low	Disagree
3	2.60 – 3.39	Moderate	Neutral
4	3.40 – 4.19	High	Agree
5	4.20- 5.00	Very High	Strongly Agree

Note. Adapted from Pimentel (2019, p.188).

Interview

Interviews can gather a wide variety of responses from the discussion, and they can be conducted individually or in a group. Interviews can be structured, semi-structured, and unstructured. For the study, a semi-structured interview method was used. A semi-structured interview is a data collection method that relies on asking questions within a predetermined thematic framework. However, the questions are not set in order or in phrasing (George, 2022). Moreover, this type of interview allows the researcher to respond quickly to issues highlighted by participants, ask probing questions, and allow participants to talk about matters that are significant to them.

The face-to-face interview was conducted for approximately 30 minutes with five teachers in Pakshikha Central School in Chhukha Dzongkhag. The interview was audio-recorded, transcribed using Turbo transcribe, and analyzed by thematic analysis using colour coding.

Research Diary

A research diary were maintained throughout the study to systematically record all significant observations, reflections, and insights that emerge during the entire data collection phase. This tool allows the researcher to capture real time experiences, contextual details, and reflective notes, providing a rich source of qualitative data. The diary were compliment interviews and observations by documenting ongoing developments, challenges, and informal interactions that mere not be captured through structured instruments. Maintaining a research diary ensures continuous reflection, enhances data accuracy, and contributes to the triangulation of findings, thereby strengthening the overall rigor and reliability of the study.

Sample and Sampling

The study adopted purposive sampling, a type of non-probability sampling. The method is appropriate because it ensures that those most relevant to the research objectives, teachers who have carried out action research either in the past or carrying out in the current year are included in the study. Purposive sampling allows for targeted data collection, capturing detailed perceptions and insights specific to the observation practices within this context.

The study involved a total of 15 teacher participants from Pakshikha Central School from Chhukha Dzongkhag. The teachers with relevant experience ensures that the data collected will be rich, meaningful, and directly aligned with the study's objectives of exploring how action research empowers teachers and enhances pedagogical practices.

Reliability and Validity of Data Collection Tools

Reliability is a crucial need for any research. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), reliability is concerned with consistency and repetition. To ensure the validity of the research instruments, the survey questionnaire and semi-structured interview guide were reviewed by experts in educational research and research methodology. Pilot testing were conducted with a small group of teachers outside the study sample to confirm that questions are clear, relevant, and effectively capture the intended information (see Table 3.2). The research diary were systematically maintained to record observations, reflections, and contextual details accurately. Triangulation of data from interviews, surveys, and diary entries were further enhance validity by validating findings across multiple sources.

Table 3.2

Reliability Statistics of the Survey Questionnaire (Teachers)

Sl.No	Survey Questionnaires	Conbach's alpha
1	Teacher Survey Questionnaires (Overall)	0.941

For reliability, standardized procedures were followed. The survey used a consistent five-point Likert scale, and interviews adhere to the same semi-structured protocol to ensure uniformity in questioning. Transcriptions and coding of qualitative data were cross-checked and repeated patterns were verified across sources, ensuring consistent, trustworthy, and dependable results throughout the study.

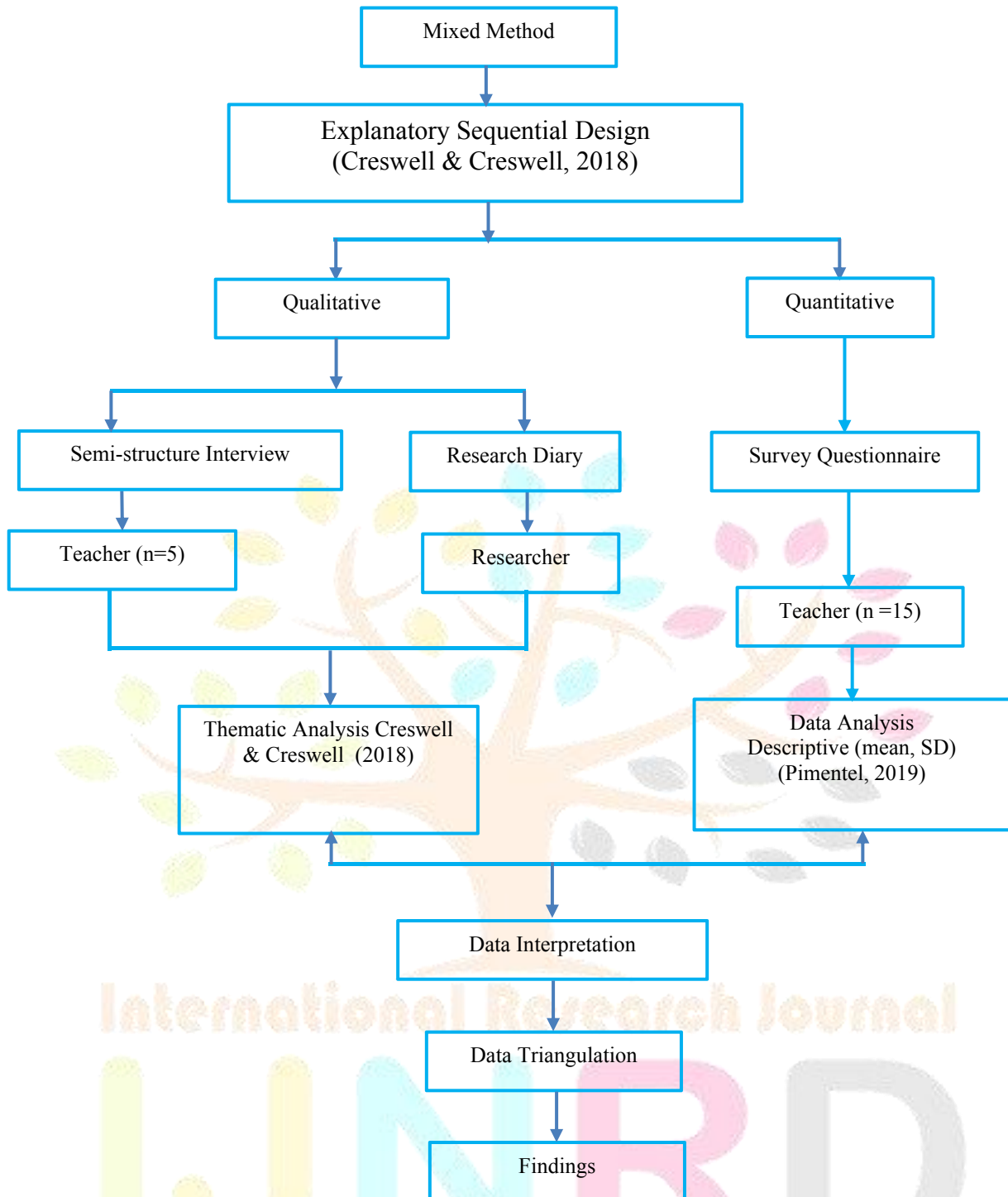


Figure 3.1

Sample and sampling plan

Data Analysis

The qualitative data from interviews and research diary entries were transcribed and examined using thematic analysis following Creswell and Creswell (2018) framework, to capture teachers' experiences with action research. The researcher were systematically code the data, identifying recurring patterns, significant ideas, and emerging concepts. These codes were grouped into categories to reveal key themes, including teachers' understanding, challenges faced, and implementation strategies for action research following . To ensure accuracy and reliability, triangulation were conducted by comparing insights from diary entries with

interview responses. This process allows for verification of findings and provides a comprehensive, credible understanding of how teachers engage with and apply action research in their professional practice.

The quantitative data obtained from the survey, which utilized a five-point Likert scale, were analyzed following Pimentel (2019) statistical methods to examine teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and engagement with action research. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were calculated to provide a clear summary of trends and overall patterns within the participants' responses. This analysis allowed the researcher to identify common levels of understanding, motivation, and implementation practices among the teachers. Furthermore, the quantitative findings were compared and integrated with qualitative themes derived from interviews and research diary entries. The triangulation of data ensures that the study provides comprehensive, convergent insights into how action research influences pedagogical practices and professional development.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues are an integral aspects of research that needs to remain at the forefront of the researchers. Voluntary informed consent are obtained from colleagues clearly explaining the research's purpose, methods, and their right to withdraw without consequences. Participation remains non-coercive, ensuring transparency about potential impacts on teaching and learning processes.

All collected data such as surveys, observations, or student outcomes were stored securely in password protected digital systems or locked physical storage, accessible only to the research team. Confidentiality are prioritized by anonymizing data, identifiable details are removed and replaced with pseudonyms in reports to protect participant identities.

Integrity were upheld by strictly using data to reflect findings, avoiding manipulation or selective presentation to fit desired outcomes. Any limitations, such as contextual constraints or methodological challenges, were acknowledged for credibility.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. How does action research influence teachers' instructional strategies, classroom management, and reflective teaching practices?

Survey results demonstrated that action research significantly enhanced teachers' instructional strategies (see Table 4.1). Teachers agreed that it improved lesson design ($M = 3.93$, $SD = 0.70$), adaptability to diverse learner needs ($M = 3.80$, $SD = 0.78$), and encouraged the use of varied assessment tools ($M = 4.07$, $SD = 0.80$). Interview data further revealed adaptive approaches: Teacher 1 employed group discussions to address low participation, Teacher 2 transitioned from reward based strategies to structured oral presentations, and Teacher 3 integrated peer teaching to simplify complex scientific concepts. Collectively, these examples underscore the iterative, problem solving character of action research in shaping instructional practice.

Table 4.1

Teacher survey questionnaires on instructional strategies, classroom management, and reflective teaching practices

Sl.No	Item	N	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1	I have a clear understanding of the action research process (plan, act, observe, reflect).	15	4.07	.458	High
2	Action research help me identify specific problems in my teaching practices.	15	4.00	.535	High
3	I believe action research is relevant to my professional development as a teacher.	15	4.27	.799	Very High
4	Conducting action research has helped me design more effective lesson	15	3.93	.704	High
5	Action research enabled me to adapt my teaching to meet diverse student needs.	15	3.80	.775	High
6	My classroom engagement strategies have improved because of insights gained from action research	15	3.67	.900	High
7	Action research has prompted me to use a wider variety of assessment tools	15	4.07	.799	High
8	Action research enhanced the quality of student learning outcomes	15	3.93	.884	High
9	Action research has improved my confidence as a teacher	15	3.67	1.175	High
10	Action research has made me a more reflective and critical thinker about my own teaching	15	4.07	.799	High
11	Action research is a practical and effective tool for creating positive change in the classroom.	15	4.07	.884	High
12	I find action research manageable within my teaching workload.	15	2.60	1.549	Moderate
13	I am motivated to continue conducting action research in the future	15	3.47	1.125	High
14	I would strongly recommend action research to other educators as a powerful tool for professional growth.	15	3.73	.884	Moderate
15	My school administration supports teachers in carrying out action research	15	4.40	.910	Very High
	Total	15	3.85	.87	High

Scale: 1.00 – 1.79 (Very low); 1.80 – 2.59 (Low); 2.60 – 3.39 (Moderate); 3.40 – 4.19 (High); 4.20- 5.00 (Very high). Adapted from Pimentel (2019, p.188)

These findings illustrate that action research supports teachers in refining pedagogy through cycles of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. Teachers reported becoming more reflective practitioners ($M = 4.07$, $SD = 0.80$), indicating that action research promotes professional inquiry into classroom dynamics. Reflection also extended to classroom management, where teachers adapted strategies to maintain student involvement and participation.

The results converge with prior research emphasizing that action research encourages reflective teaching and classroom innovation (Burns, 2010; Koshy, 2020). Studies in Bhutan similarly highlight that teachers use action research to diagnose classroom challenges and redesign pedagogy responsively (Rabgay & Kidman, 2023). McNiff (2017) argues that such reflective practice transforms teaching from routine activity into evidence-informed decision-making. Thus, both data and literature confirm that action research is instrumental in fostering adaptive instructional strategies, reflective teaching, and effective classroom management.

2. How does teacher-led action research impact student learning and engagement?

Teachers strongly agreed that action research enhanced student learning outcomes ($M = 3.93$, $SD = 0.88$) and classroom engagement strategies ($M = 3.67$, $SD = 0.90$) (see Table 4.1). Interviews provided concrete illustrations: Teacher 1 observed greater participation and confidence, Teacher 2 reported improved vocabulary and fluency, while Teacher 3 noted higher curiosity and attentiveness in biology lessons.

These findings suggest that when teachers adapt instruction through inquiry, students benefit from more inclusive, engaging, and interactive classrooms. By implementing strategies such as peer teaching and structured speaking activities, students developed both academic and affective competencies. This reflects the notion that teacher inquiry directly influences student engagement through responsive pedagogy.

Research consistently demonstrates that action research positively impacts student outcomes. Ross et al. (2014) showed that teacher led inquiry enhances student motivation and achievement by aligning pedagogy to learner needs. In Bhutan, Wangdi (2021) reported that students in classrooms where teachers engaged in action research exhibited higher participation and better comprehension. Such alignment between the present findings and global studies reinforces that action research improves student engagement, academic achievement, and overall classroom climate.

3. What are teachers' perceptions of action research as a tool for improving classroom practices?

Survey findings (see Table 4.1) revealed a high overall orientation toward action research ($M = 3.85$, $SD = 0.87$). Teachers valued its problem solving potential ($M = 4.00$, $SD = 0.54$), relevance to professional growth ($M = 4.27$, $SD = 0.80$), and capacity to create positive change in classrooms ($M = 4.07$, $SD = 0.88$). Interviews affirmed this perspective, as teachers emphasized its role in refining teaching, strengthening professional identity, and contributing to collective knowledge. Teacher 2, for instance, described how action research enhanced her confidence as a language teacher.

These results highlight that teachers see action research not only as a theoretical process but as a practical and empowering tool for improving classroom practice. Teachers linked it with professional confidence and long term relevance, suggesting that it bridges classroom challenges with sustainable solutions.

These findings are consistent with Somekh's (2006) assertion that action research empowers teachers as agents of change. Similar results in Bhutan (Dhendup et al., 2021) affirm that teachers regard action research as an effective approach to address classroom challenges and foster professional development. Globally, scholars argue that teacher perceptions of action research as meaningful and practice-oriented are central to its success (Elliott, 2015; Burns, 2010). The data thus confirm that teachers perceive action research as both relevant and transformative in improving pedagogy.

4. What challenges do teachers face when integrating action research into their professional practice?

Despite positive perceptions, feasibility emerged as a barrier (see Table 4.1). The item “I find action research manageable within my workload” scored low ($M = 2.60$, $SD = 1.55$). Interviews revealed similar concerns: Teacher 1 noted workload constraints, Teacher 2 struggled with student seriousness and peer collaboration, and Teacher 3 pointed to limited resource access and methodological difficulties. Participants also criticized the short, three day Ministry workshops as inadequate for developing expertise.

These findings indicate that while teachers value action research, structural barriers such as time, workload, training, and resources hinder consistent implementation. Teachers’ cautious endorsement of recommending action research to peers ($M = 3.73$, $SD = 0.88$) further suggests ambivalence due to these challenges.

Barriers identified in this study mirror those in international contexts. Teachers often struggle with competing demands and lack of institutional support (Elliott, 2015; Koshy, 2020). In Bhutan, Rabgay and Kidman (2023) found that resource shortages and insufficient methodological training limited teachers’ action research efforts. Dhendup et al. (2021) similarly emphasized the need for extended professional development. The consistency between present findings and literature underscores that systemic support time allocation, workload reduction, and long-term training is vital for embedding action research in practice.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study demonstrates that action research is a powerful catalyst for enhancing teachers’ instructional strategies, classroom management, and reflective practice. Survey and interview data revealed that teachers refined lesson design, adapted instruction to diverse learner needs, and employed varied assessment strategies. Examples such as group discussions, structured oral presentations, and peer teaching highlight the iterative, problem solving nature of action research, enabling teachers to continually improve pedagogy through cycles of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. These findings align with prior research emphasizing that action research fosters reflective teaching and transforms routine practice into evidence-informed decision-making (Burns, 2010; Koshy, 2020; McNiff, 2017).

Teacher-led inquiry also positively influenced student learning and engagement. Teachers reported higher participation, confidence, curiosity, and academic performance, particularly in language and science lessons. Such outcomes suggest that responsive, inquiry-based teaching directly benefits student engagement and classroom climate, corroborating both global and Bhutanese studies (Ross et al., 2014; Wangdi, 2021).

Participants perceived action research as highly relevant to professional growth, problem-solving, and classroom improvement. Engagement in inquiry enhanced teachers’ confidence, professional identity, and collaborative knowledge-building, consistent with Somekh (2006) and Elliott (2015). However, challenges including workload pressures, limited resources, brief training workshops, and methodological difficulties constrained sustained implementation, mirroring findings in both local and international contexts (Dhendup et al., 2021; Rabgay & Kidman, 2023).

To maximize impact, schools and policymakers should allocate dedicated time, provide ongoing methodological training, ensure resource availability, foster collaborative professional cultures, and recognize teacher engagement in inquiry. In conclusion, action research is a transformative tool for professional development and instructional improvement, with its sustained effectiveness dependent on systemic support, capacity-building, and an enabling environment that bridges reflective practice with student learning outcomes.

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