

The Contribution of Teachers' Perception, Interest, Teaching Experience and Field of Specialization to Educational Research Practices: *Bahir Dar University in Focus*

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Abstract: This study investigated the effects of teachers' perception, interest, years of teaching experience and field of specialization on their educational research practices. The subjects of the study were 103 (101 male and 2 female) MA/MSc and PhD qualified teachers. Questionnaires were used to gather information about those factors that may have positive or negative inputs on teachers' educational research practices. Interview was also used to crystallize the information obtained through questionnaire. Both quantitative and qualitative techniques were used to analyze the data. The information obtained through interview was analyzed qualitatively. The results of interview data agreed with the results of the quantitative analysis: teachers with positive interest and perception have good participation in educational research practices. On the other hand, the data showed that teachers with longer years of teaching experience are less engaged in educational research practices than less experienced teachers. But the contribution of teaching experience has a negative impact on teachers to participate in educational research. Teachers specialized in education were found to be in a better position to do educational research. The study revealed that language, social science and natural science stream teachers were almost similar in their involvement in educational research.

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Introduction

Background of the Study

Research is a valuable mechanism to check whether today's "truth" works for tomorrow. It seems apparent that research activity and its result serve as a source of new knowledge, change and improvement through examining the existing "truth". In relation to this, Masson and Bramble (1997) stated that in modern science, there is no permanent truth. For these researchers, any truth has to be challenged through various investigations for further verification. Therefore, research is a process, which mainly stands to search the contemporary truth. In other words, amendments of the theories or developments of new theories (knowledge) in modern science may be realized through research practices. In addition, research fosters technological, social, psychological and intellectual development (Wiersma, 1995).

Research activities may begin with some form of curiosity about a certain phenomenon that probably reflects the status and quality of life at that time. For instance, in the earlier times, people were very interested about phenomena such as weather, climate and soil conditions, which have relations in maintaining their food supplies (Masson and Bramble, 1997).

Likewise, when a complex industrialized society started to look for educated individuals to operate its machines and institutions, educational research started to emerge (Mitchell, 1985). Mitchell further explained that when educated people were demanded by the society, education became an issue of discussion, and educators started to question and find answers about educational problems. That was, therefore, an initiation point for the introduction of educational research. As a result, different organizations, which were

responsible for educational research activities, like the National Society for the Study of Education, the American Educational Research Association, the Journal of Educational Psychology were established in the years 1900-1910 (Koul, 1984).

Although more than 40 years have elapsed since the educational research practices started, educational research is still at its embryonic stage in Ethiopia (Amare, 2000; Temechegn, 2002, Temesgen, 1999). However, there are attempts to improve educational research practices of educators. It is possible to mention the Ethiopian Journal of education (EJE) as an example because its contribution to the development of educational research is undeniable (Amare, 2000; Derebssa, 2000).

Though there may be an overlap in the focal points of educational research and other research streams, educational research has its own main concern. "The content areas of educational research can be classified as: educational psychology, philosophy of education, sociology of education, educational administration, educational measurement, curriculum construction and the teaching process" (Hammersley, 2002). Habtamu (2000) also revealed that the main concern of educational research is an educational phenomenon such as the objective of education, the curricula, the teaching-learning process, the students, the teachers and administrative issues. In short, all issues related to the basic components of education (teachers, students, curricular aspects, media and the overall physical and administrative setup of the schools) can be assessed through educational research.

Any interested organization can participate in educational research practices. However, there are institutions such as educational research institutions, universities and schools that are more appropriate and responsible to engage themselves in educational

research. (Garnet and Holmes, 1995; Neuman and Lindsay, 1998). Of these institutions, the focus of this study was a higher education institution. Therefore, the study was intended to examine the relationship between some characteristics of university teachers and their involvement in educational research.

Most of the universities around the world help to improve the qualities and quantities of research activities (Humadi, 1989). Research and teaching have been traditionally recognized as principal functions of higher education (Garnnet and Holmes, 1995). In general, it seems apparent that a higher education institution is one of the most important institutions that consider research, searching for truth, as its prominent assignment. In relation to this Rossister (1993) contended that a university is an institution that unites people who are professionally dedicated to the quest and transmission of truth in scientific terms. This is achieved through research.

The educational systems of Ethiopia in general and higher education institutions in particular have tried their best to encourage research activities. In the Imperial regime, the Geez maxim, "kulu amenkiru wozesenaye atsenu" used to appear as a motto on the seal of the former Haile Selasie I University, today's Addis Ababa University (Seyoum, 1998:1). Roughly it means "inquire into everything possible; retain all that is good" (1998:1). This Geez maxim, on the seal of the former Haile Selasie I University, implied that one of the main objectives to establish the first university in the country is to research or inquire different issues. The Dergue government also advocated that scientific research and investigations, besides teaching, be one of the major tasks of the universities (Commission for Higher Education, 1978).

At present, the New Education and Training Policy of the country has emphasized the importance of research and related competencies

such as problem solving and creative thinking. One of the specific objectives in the education policy of the Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE) (1994a) stated: "to make education, training and research appropriately integrated with development by focusing on research" (p, 9). The policy further explained that overall schooling in general and higher learning in particular should gear their training towards research and development. Similarly, one of the objectives in the Education Sector Strategy of the TGE, also strengthens this fact. It states that to promote a higher education of good quality and relevance, focusing on research and development is a very important strategy (TGE, 1994b).

Universities' legislation also encourages teachers' involvement in research. For instance, according to the Bahir Dar University's legislation, academic staff members in teaching faculties are expected to devote their time to research. Moreover, to encourage teachers to be engaged in research, the legislation has put different benefits (promotion, reduction of load and some financial support) for the teacher-researchers (BDU, 2000).

However, teachers' perception of and interest and practices in educational research do not seem to be satisfactory. Therefore, there are discrepancies between what is expected from higher learning institution teachers to do and what they actually have done so far or are doing. Supporting this, Adane (2000:154) states that "the research involvement of instructors of the college was found to be low." Moreover, higher education institutions in Ethiopia are neither sufficiently equipped nor are they ready for the development of research in education (Derebssa, 2000). He further explained that even if there are research units/services in different higher institutions and regional educational offices to initiate and promote educational research, except the Institute of Educational Research (IER),

educational research activities in many of the higher educational institutes are generally weak.

In his work, which assesses the training of secondary school teacher education in Ethiopia, Teklehaimanot (2000) concluded that even though it is one of their prominent duties, the educational research involvement of teacher trainers is not satisfactory. Similarly, Derebssa (2004) also assured that more is expected from higher institutions including Addis Ababa University in their involvement in educational research.

The gap between what is intended by the Education and Training Policy of the country and what is actually going on in higher institution research practices in general and educational research practices in particular served as a vantage point for this study. Many authors from abroad and local (Hummadi, 1989; Rossister, 1993; Adane, 2000; Teklehaimanot, 2000; Derebssa, 2000) believed that higher education teacher trainers should recognize educational research as one of their basic assignments in the institution. But higher institution teachers' participation in educational research is very weak (Adane, 2000; Derebssa, 2000; Teklehaimanot, 2000; Amara, 2004). So, the incompatibility of the theoretical beliefs (what is explained in the literature) and the actual practices of educational research by teachers of higher education served as a second impetus to conduct this study.

Some of the investigations (Taye, 1993; Seyoum, 1998; Adane, 2000; Amara, 2004) around this problem have highly focused on examining the influences of various institutional variables (administration procedures, work load, incentives, etc) on teachers' research activities. Personal variables (lack of knowledge, interest, perception, etc in research activities) were found to be stronger to hinder educational research practices (ERP) of teachers than institutional

factors (shortage of stationeries, underutilization of research outcomes and shortage of dissemination accesses, etc). Probably, the reason for this is that even though institutional factors have certain contribution to make people participate or not participate in educational research, the individual researcher's devotion, courage, commitment, etc are crucially basic to engage them in research. In support of this Seyoum (1998) revealed that interest (and then participation) in educational research activity is not something that can be imposed on or generated from one. It comes from within the individual researcher.

However, it seems true that there are few or no investigations which attempt to make an in-depth evaluation of the impacts of personal factors (individual teacher's perception, interest, competence, specialization and teaching experience) on the involvements of teachers in educational research. Therefore, this study aimed at filling this gap.

With this in mind, some teacher – related variables (see below) that were assumed to have theoretical and empirical effects on educational research practices have been identified and included in the study.

Field of specialization: the nature of teachers' specialization has its own effect on their involvement in educational research. Arrends (1994) stated that though workshops, seminars, conferences and the like have contributions to influence and guide teachers' teaching and research activity, most teacher activities have been influenced and governed by their knowledge, skill and attitude which were developed through training when they specialized in certain level of qualifications. In the current study, related subjects (departments) were merged together and categorized into four main fields of studies: language, natural sciences, social sciences and education.

Perception: This variable plays a great role to facilitate or hinder an individuals' activity. Perception of an individual refers to the way any event in the world and the world itself looks, sounds, feels, tastes, or smells by him/her (Morgan et al., 1996). Therefore, it seems apparent that teachers' perception in educational research has an important role in determining either positively or negatively their engagement in educational research.

Interest: Interest towards (in) something is basic to develop commitment and then competence in participating in certain activities including educational research activities. Jones cited in Seyoum (1998), stated that interest is the major driving force behind research. This is indeed true, according to Seyoum (1998), " ... because interest in research activity is not something that can be imposed from without unless it comes from within the individual" (p. 7). Therefore, analyzing teachers' interest in educational research seems very important (Mayer and Sutton, 1996).

Years of Teaching Experience: This variable signified the contributions of teachers' years of teaching experience in their engagement in educational research. It is one of the basic factors to facilitate or hinder teachers' teaching effectiveness in general and their research activities in particular. These days the effects of years of teaching experience on various teachers' activities are controversial issues. For instance, Johnston (1994) concluded that " the value of teaching experience in teachers' activities (teaching, researching, etc.,) seems to be accepted almost in blind faith" (p. 199). This implies that there is a general assumption that when a teacher gets more experience, he or she will be effective in his or her work including research activities. On the other hand, Duke (1990) summarized that years of teaching experience, by itself is not a guarantee for effective teaching and research activities.

Statement of the Problem

Traditionally, it is believed that research is an activity carried out by people in higher education in order to acquire a research degree, or in order to fulfill a contract made with different research organizations (Kincheloe, 1991). But the curriculum movement in the 1960s and early 1970s introduced the idea that teachers could be involved in researching the issues around and in their classrooms (Mitchell, 1985). To enhance the teaching process, to test the assumptions of educational theory in practice, and/or to evaluate and implement the whole school practices, teachers' participation in educational research is highly recommended (Hopkins, 2002).

Teachers of any level, primary to higher institution, have a good opportunity to seek solutions for different educational problems. They are true practitioners who face the real problems in the education system in general and in classrooms in particular. Lehtinen (1990) mentioned that when a teacher does his/her regular job, there is every possibility for researching educational problems and acquiring more knowledge and understanding.

Higher education teachers in general and teacher training institution in particular are expected more to participate in educational research. Rossister (1993) indicated that teacher educators, in order to provide proper help to their trainees, must themselves be educational researchers. Another writer Adane (2000) reported that trainers of teachers have to believe in the inseparable connection between teaching and educational research in teacher training institutions. Researchers like Taye (1993), Derebssa (2000) and Neumann and Lindsay (1988) also agreed with the idea that there should be a strong relationship between teaching in higher learning institutes and educational research activities.

Moreover, it is natural that anyone has to evaluate his work. Therefore, a teacher expects to evaluate his work (teaching) process through educational research. In this line, Kincheloe (1991) stated that if we are pushing teachers towards participation in educational research, we are in a position to evaluate the teaching-learning process and then defeat a bad teaching. However, it seems generally accepted that educational research practice of teachers is less satisfactory (Adane, 2000; Deribssa, 2000; Teklehaimanot, 2000).

The low participation of teachers' in educational research may be attributed to various personal and institutional variables (Amera, 2004). However, this study was designed to explore the effect of higher institution teachers' field of specialization, perception, interest and years of teaching experience on the participation of teachers in educational research.

This study was, therefore, designed to answer the following basic question.

1. Are there significant intercorrelations among teachers' perception, interest, years of teaching experience, and educational research practices?
2. Are there differences among teachers' perceptions, interests, and years of teaching experiences in their power to influence educational research activities? If so, which of them makes significant independent contributions?
3. Are there differences among the various fields of specialized teachers' activities in educational research? If so, which types of specialization(s) is (are) in favor of educational research practices?

The objectives of the study were:

1. Exploring relationship among teachers' perception, interest, years of teaching experience, and educational research practices.
2. Examining the independent contribution of perception, interest, years of teaching experience to educational research practices.
3. Identifying the differences among the various fields of specialized teachers' activities in educational research.

The study delimited itself to exploring the contribution of some teacher-related factors to teachers' educational research practices in Bahir Dar University.

University teachers, officers and other concerned bodies will be benefited from the study. Therefore, it may help to:

1. Show the relationship among teacher's perception, interest, years of teaching experience and educational research practices.
2. Make clear the independent contribution of predictor variables on criterion variables
3. Indicate necessary alternatives to amend research-related plans, decisions and implementations.

Definition of Key Terms

Perception: the way teachers understand educational research practices.

Interest: an internal feeling that pushes teachers towards commitment and participation in educational research.

Field of specialization: incorporates biology, chemistry, mathematics and physics departments as natural science; Amharic and English departments as language; geography and history departments as social sciences, and pedagogical science department as education. This classification is in line with the classification of Aggarwal (1982).

Years of Teaching Experience: of experience in teaching after the teachers obtained MA/MSc training because it has been believed that this training is basic to involve any kind of research including educational research.

Educational research Practices: involvements and activities that help to investigate differences, relations, causes, effects and solutions to any education-related problems.

Method

Participants

The study was conducted in Bahir Dar University Education Faculty (BDUEF). Teachers who teach in BDUEF were the major focus of this study. All teachers are responsible to get involved in educational research but, education faculty teachers are expected to show more involvement. This perhaps is because:

1. Most of the education faculty teachers were exposed to educational issues during their training.
2. Education Faculty teachers are engaged in teaching the would-be teachers who face many educational problems after their graduation.

All teachers 112 (2 female and 110 male) who have a second degree and above were considered as the subjects of this study. This is because MA/MSc and PhD qualified teachers are full fledged academic staff member of the faculty; and they also have satisfactory exposure to research activities.

The questionnaire was distributed to all of them. However, 9 teachers did not return it. As a result, 103 (2 female and 101 male) teachers completed & returned the questionnaire. With regard to their fields of specialization, 24 were from Education, 26 were from Language, 32 were from Natural Science and the remaining 21 were from Social Science. The experiences of the subjects range from 1 to 25 years of teaching.

Informants who participated in the interview were selected based on their experience in the institution, involvement in educational research, engagement in different academic office posts in the university as well as in the faculty, and then fields of specialization. These characteristics are very important to get rich and valuable information about institutional and personal practices of educational research. By taking these into consideration, six informants (I₁, I₂...and I₆) were selected and interviewed.

Data Collection Instruments

In this study two data gathering instruments i.e., questionnaire and interview were used.

The Questionnaire: The questionnaire was a composition of two parts. The first part of the questionnaire had 4 open – ended items, which helped to collect data about teachers' years of teaching experience, field of specialization and other personal information. The

second part consisted of closed ended items, which were classified into three variables: perception, interest and practices in educational research. There were 28 items in this part. The items were constructed by the researcher on the basis of theoretical as well as empirical grounds (Seyoum, 1998; Adane, 2000; Temesgen 1999) about teachers' involvement in educational research.

After developing the questionnaire, the researcher gave it to three experts in the area to examine the accuracy and appropriateness of the items to collect information about the problem under study. Based on the comments of the experts, revisions were made and some items on which agreement could not be reached were discarded. Finally, 24 items were retained for the research purpose. However, after the data had been gathered, it was learned that two further items were problematic. This means that 22 items were utilized for this study. The item analysis was computed by using Cronbach alpha. The reliability coefficients of perception items of the questionnaire (7 items), interest items of the questionnaire (5 items) and Educational Research Practice (ERP) items of the questionnaire (10 items) were 0.81, 0.79 and 0.86, respectively.

In the questionnaire, the items were randomly distributed to minimize the possibility of response set. The response format used ranged from strongly disagree, to strongly agree. In scoring, 1 point was assigned to a "strongly disagree" response, 2 to a "disagree", response, 3 to an "agree" response and 4 to a "strongly agree" response. Since all the subjects were MA/MAS and PHD holding teachers, the questionnaire was prepared in English.

Interview: To crystallize the data obtained through questionnaire, interview was conducted with research and publication officers, deans and some teachers. Seven semi-structured questions were used for data gathering during the interview. When the respondents were

reluctant to respond or when they tended to divert the direction of a question, attempts were made to persuade and lead them back to the topic in order to obtain information relevant to the study.

Variables: The predictor variables of the study were field of specialization, perception, interest and years of teaching experience. These variables were seen against educational research variables.

Data Analyses Strategy: Correlations, multiple regressions, one-way ANOVA and Post Hoc Tests were used to analyze the data. Correlations were employed to examine the relationships among the variables. Multiple regression analyses were used to see the independent contribution of teachers' perception, interest and teaching experience to educational research practices.

One-way ANOVA was employed to see whether there are mean differences in teachers' educational research practices across the various field of specialization. To identify a mean or means that significantly differ, Post Hoc Test was conducted. Variables' means and standard deviations were also reported. Data collected through interview was analyzed qualitatively. The level of significance was set at 0.05.

Results and Discussion

Results

The main goal of the investigation was to know the independent contribution of perceptions, interests and years of teaching experiences to educational research practices. Moreover, the study also took interest in identifying the differences in educational research practices of teachers as the function of their fields of specialization.

The means, standard deviations and correlations for perception, interest, years of teaching experience and practice in educational research were computed to identify teacher related factors that contribute to their participation in educational research. As shown in Table 1, there was a statistically significant positive relationship between teachers' practices and perception ($r = 0.64$), practices and interest ($r = 0.65$), perception and interest ($r = 0.70$) in educational research. Teachers with higher perception and interest in educational research were more likely to practice educational research than those with low perception and interest. On the other hand, teachers' years of teaching experience had a negative relationship with their educational research practices ($r = -0.41$). That is, teachers who have higher years of teaching experience tended to involve themselves in educational research lower than those with low years of teaching experience.

Table 1: Means, Standard Deviations and Interrelationship of Variables

Variables	Mean	SD	Correlation coefficients			
			PER	INT	EXP	ERP
Perception (PER)	20.81	4.22	1.00			
Interest (INT)	10.90	2.59	0.70*	1.00		
Experience (EXP)	8.09	5.93	-0.47	-0.49	1.00	
Educ. Research Prac.(ERP)	22.35	4.38	0.64*	0.65*	-0.41	1.00

* $P < 0.05$

To know the contributions of the predictor variables (perceptions, interests, and years of teaching experiences) to the criterion variable, regression analysis was utilized. The regression analysis results in Table 2 indicate that perception and interest in educational research had a significant contribution to the subjects' involvement in

educational research ($R^2 = 0.49$, $F=31.558$). But the impact of years of teaching experience on educational research involvement was found to be negative. That is, the more experienced in teaching the teachers were, the lower their educational research practice was. Furthermore, the direct effects of the variable on educational research practices were determined using path coefficients. The effects on educational research practices of perception ($B = 0.37$, $t = 3.46$, $P < 0.01$), and interest ($B = 0.62$, $t = 3.55$, $P < 0.01$), were statistically significant. This implies that the more teachers were interested in educational research, the more they perceived the practices positively. On the other hand, the effect of teaching experience on educational research practices ($B = -0.04$, $t = -0.71$, $P < 0.48$) was not statistically significant (Table 2).

The independent contribution of interest to the total variance of performance was found to be 23.74%. This is 48.55% of the total R^2 , which was 0.49. This means the composite contribution of interest, perception and teaching experience to the variance of educational research practices was 48.9%.

Table 2: Regression Statistics of Perception, Interest and Experience of Educational Research Practices

Independent variables	R^2	F	Regression coefficient	t- statistic
Perception	0.49	31.56	0.37	3.46*
Interest			0.62	3.55*
Experience			-0.04	-0.70

* $P < 0.01$

Of this, the sole contribution of interest was 23.74% and the contribution of perception to the total variance of educational research practice was 22.72%. This was 46.55% of the total R^2 . But the

contribution of teaching experience to the variance of educational research practices was low. Its independent contribution to the total variance of educational research practices was 2.43%.

The other intent of the study was to compare the mean scores of education, language, natural science and social science specialized teachers in educational research practices. To attain this, means and standard deviation were computed and results were presented (Table 3). An examination of the mean scores presented in Table 3 reveals that there seem to be differences in the mean scores of the educational research practices among education (26.50), language (22.35), natural science (21.19) and social science (19.48) specialized teachers.

Table 3: Means and Standard Deviations of Teachers' Educational Research Practices as the Function of their Field of Specialization.

Variables	Number	Mean	Standard Deviations
Education	24	26.50	4.08
Language	26	22.35	3.33
Natural Science	32	21.19	3.58
Social Science	21	19.48	2.96
Total	103	22.26	4.28

One way ANOVA was employed to test the significant differences of educational research practices among education, language, natural science and social science specialized teachers.

Table 4 indicates that teachers' field of specializations have statistically significant differences in their educational research practices ($F = 16.98$, $df = 3$; $P < 0.05$).

Table 4: One Way ANOVA Summary Table for Teachers' Educational Research Practices as the Function of their Field of Specialization.

Source of Variation		Sum of squares	df	F
Field of specialization	Between Groups	633.96	3	16.98*
	With in Groups	1231.96	99	
Total		1865.92	102	

* $p < 0.01$

To test for significance differences among the means of the four fields of specializations, post Hoc Test was utilized. As indicated in Table 5, teachers who specialized in education areas were in a better position to engage in educational research practices than other teachers who specialized in language, natural science and social science areas.

Table 5: Post Hoc Mean Comparison Values for Educational Practices of Teachers as the Function of their Field of Specialization.

Group	Q-calculated
Education Vs Language	4.58*
Education Vs Natural Science	5.31*
Education Vs Social Science	7.02*
Language Vs Natural Science	0.74
Language Vs Social Science	2.45
Natural Science Vs Social Science	1.71

$P^* < 0.05$

However, there is no statistically significant difference in educational research practices among language, natural science and social science specialized teachers (Table 5).

Discussion

The main concerns of this study were: to investigate the effects of perception, interest and teaching experience on teachers' educational research practices; to compare the relationship between perception, interest, teaching experience and educational research practices; and to examine differences in teachers' educational research practices among various fields of specializations (language, education, natural science and social science).

As could be seen from Table 1 the correlation analyses indicated that there were significant relationship between perception, interest, and educational research practices. The independent contribution of teachers' interest (23.74%) and perception (22.73%) of educational research practices of teachers was 45.46% (Table 2). The information collected through interview also agrees with this result.

All the informants who participated in the interview responded that both perception and interest have a power to push or pull the individual to/from certain activities. One of the informants, I₅, explained that most teachers (particularly natural and social science teachers) perception of educational research is just a reflection of their perception of the pedagogical aspects of education that assumes pedagogical issues are not important to improve their teaching – learning activities. Concerning interest, most of the interviewees revealed that interest in educational research could govern perception and commitment in educational research. Two informants, I₃ and I₂ further explained this as: "kelib kalekesu eniba ayigedim" (8/01/2005 and 10/01/2005). Roughly, this is translated as "if there is an interest from the inside, every thing can be achieved or attained."

This finding may indicate that teachers carry out educational research better when they have positive perception about and interest in educational research. Positive perception and interest are the sources of hard work (commitment). This implies that strong interest and perception, even without satisfactory knowledge in education, serve as a pushing factor to read more and then to do educational research in a better manner. Weak interest and perception, even with satisfactory training in education, leads to the opposite chain of activities, less reading about education and then less practice in educational research. That is why some teachers who are not qualified in education, contribute competent educational research products (articles). On the contrary, there are teachers who are qualified in education but do not produce even a single educational research work (article) (Amera, 2004). In conclusion, perceiving educational research positively may lead to the development of one's interest in it. This is a fertile ground to work hard for the improvement of educational research practices. This implies that the result of the study, direct relationship among perception, interest and educational research practices, seems justifiable.

The relationships between years of teaching experience and other variables (perception, interest and educational research practices) were negative (Table 1). Moreover, years of teaching experience's independent contributions to educational research practices were low (Table 2). That is, the more teachers are experienced in teaching, the less they do educational research.

The results of the interview also agreed with this finding. For instance, I₁ had to say: teachers with long service years, including myself, should have been models and advisors to young and newly employed teachers. This, I₁ said, however, has not been observed. Contrary to expectation, fresh teachers who received their master's degree are involved in research activities more often than the more experienced

teachers (08/01/2005, morning). Another informant, I₄ also explained his experience as follows:

When I obtained my second degree from AAU, I thought I would produce two or three articles in a year. But I couldn't do any meaningful work in the last 13 years. My interest has declined through time. Probable reasons are poor research culture, workload, absence of models and advisors (12/01/2004, morning).

The possible reasons, according to most of the informants' response, for the inverse relationship between years of teaching experience and educational research practices seem to be the following.

1. When teachers stay for a long time, they may engage in family affairs. They give more time to think about their children, wife, house construction, house furniture and the like.
2. When they serve for many years, they may involve themselves in different social responsibilities in side and/ or out side their institutions.
3. A long time gap of teachers' training for a certain qualification may lead them to forget important skills in research. These reasons are almost similar with the explanations in Duke (1990).

The finding of the study also depicts that except those teachers who were trained in education areas, all of the teachers from other departments seem to be found at a similar level of involvement in educational research. This finding confirms popular expectation-teachers with background training in education are more involved in educational research than teachers from other fields of study. This is because they may have better awareness, perception and interest in

education and related issues from their training, than other teachers who specialized in language, social science and natural science.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study was designed to investigate the effects of perception, interest and years of teaching experience on educational research practices. It also aimed at examining the differences in educational research practices among the four fields of specializations.

Based on the analysis, the following were the conclusions:

1. As correlation statistics indicated, there were significant relationships among perception, interest and educational research practices. However, the relationships between years of teaching experience and other variables were negative.
2. The regression analysis results showed that the contributions of perception and interest to educational research practices were significant ($R^2 = 0.49$). But the contribution of years of teaching experience was found to be low. According to this study the independent contribution of interest to the total R^2 was 48.55% , followed by perception, which was 46.46% of the total R^2
3. One-way ANOVA results revealed that there were significant differences among teachers' educational research practices ($F=16.98$, $df = 3$; $P < 0.05$) as the functions of their fields of specializations. However, post HoC mean comparison results indicated that there were no significant differences in language, natural science and social science teachers' educational research practices. Teachers who specialized in education fields were more involved in educational research practices than others who

specialized in language, natural science and social science fields.

In light of the findings, the following recommendations could be made.

1. The result of this study showed that there were relations among interest, perception and educational research practices. Therefore, university officers in general and research-related officers in particular could increase teachers' interest and perception by rewarding and encouraging teachers often with sufficient material incentives and pedagogical orientations. This is because knowing about pedagogical issues maximizes teachers' involvement in educational research.
2. Seminars, workshops, short term trainings, etc in educational issues such as teaching – learning processes, teachers' and students' behavior and over all school environments have to be given to teachers, particularly to teachers who have long years of teaching experience and who specialized in language, natural science and social science areas. The result of the present study shows weaknesses in these teachers' educational research practices.
3. Teachers themselves should recognize educational research as one of their basic tasks. They have to develop interest, perception, commitment and competence in educational research. This is because teachers' strong personal belief in doing educational research has a power to break other barriers like lack of knowledge, incentives and materials.

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