

# Action Research: Research Skills as a Major Challenge for EFL Teachers

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## Abstract:

*Action research has gained popularity in recent years (Negi, 2016). Insufficient research skills remain a significant barrier to teachers conducting action research. Negi (2016) and Mehrani (2017) highlight the challenges teachers face in incorporating action research into their professional practice.*

Action research has become increasingly trendy in recent years due to its emphasis on reflective practice and direct application in classroom settings (Negi, 2016). However, as Burns (2019) points out, one of the primary obstacles that hinders teachers from effectively engaging in action research is inadequate research skills. This paper identifies research skills as a major challenge in conducting action research. It also explores possible solutions based on two studies by Negi (2016) and Mehrani (2017).

The first study conducted by Negi (2016) examined the perceptions, practices and problems of secondary school EFL teachers in Nepal while conducting action research. In terms of methodology, the study used a survey with 46 EFL teachers in 46 secondary schools in Baitadi district. The questionnaire included both closed and open questions. The study found that most teachers are familiar with the basic concept of action research. However, they do not conduct action research to improve their teaching practices. The main reasons for this problem is the lack of research skills, practice and support. To promote research skills in the classroom,

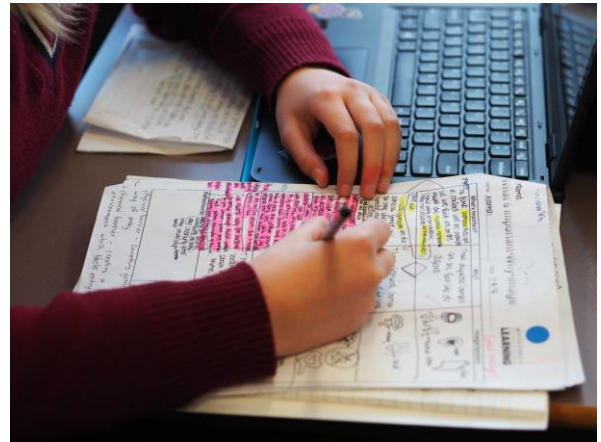
teachers can reflect on their teaching by considering straightforward questions such as: What went well in your class? What are the areas that you need to improve the next time? How can you do better next time? Secondly, informal group discussions with colleagues should be promoted to address classroom challenges, rather than expecting teachers to produce detailed reports. Finally, teachers should be encouraged to combine teaching and research activities together.

Similarly, Mehrani (2017) identified a lack of research skills as a significant obstacle for teachers and proposed strategies to address it. Mehrani examined this issue through a narrative study with 68 Iranian teachers. Specifically, 22% of the study participants demonstrated a lack of experience in technical aspects of research, such as data analysis and data collection. Additionally, the participants reported difficulties in utilizing research tools like SPSS, and found data analysis to be particularly challenging. Furthermore, teachers expressed that due to their limited research skills, they were unable to identify reliable research papers as examples. The finding of this study has

practical implications for enhancing teachers' research skills. For instance, group training sessions and individual meetings can provide teachers with general information on conducting research. In addition, individualized support can promptly address teachers' specific needs (Çelik & Dikilitaş, 2015). These implications should be encouraged to carry out as a professional development strategy.

In conclusion, the studies by Negi (2016) and Mehrani (2017) highlight inadequate research skills as a significant barrier to teachers' engagement in action research. Teachers can be guided to action research through a brief reflective practice. This involves identifying challenges in their own classrooms, implementing an intervention, observing its effectiveness, and determining the next steps. Additionally, teachers can explore solutions by engaging in informal conversations with colleagues. They should also receive training in research methods and be encouraged to integrate research into their teaching. However, the small sample size of 46 participants in Negi's study restricts the

generalizability of its results, hence, a larger number would enhance the validity and reliability of the findings across a wider population.



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