English Language Teachers' Knowledge, Use, and Perceived Effectiveness of Action Research for Professional Development

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ABSTRACT
In light of evolving pedagogical frameworks and increasing challenges in English Language Teaching (ELT), effective professional development is essential for teachers striving to enhance their practices. Action research is a pivotal strategy for teachers' professional development, fostering an adaptive learning environment through reflective pedagogy. While teachers have implemented action research, its engagement among secondary-level English language teachers remains underexplored, particularly regarding their knowledge, use, and perceptions of its role in professional growth. The study aimed to identify secondary-level English language teachers' knowledge, use, and perceived effectiveness of action research as a tool for professional development. The research employed a quantitative survey approach, focusing on English language teachers in private and public schools in Nepal, with a particular emphasis on those in the Sunsari district. A sample of 200 teachers was selected using a simple random sampling strategy, and a structured questionnaire was administered online via Google Forms. The collected data were analyzed using a bivariate analysis approach with SPSS. A chi-square test was conducted to assess the association between the variables, while Phi was employed to determine the significance of these relationships. The study examined the association between independent variables (such as sex, level of teaching, type of school, and academic qualification) and dependent variables (including use of action research, knowledge of action research, and perceived effectiveness of action research). The findings indicated no significant statistical association between the independent and dependent variables. However, the study concluded that the majority of teachers perceived action research as valuable for problem-solving, increasing professional confidence, promoting career advancement, fostering transformative agency, and enhancing teacher collaboration. It suggests that teachers could benefit from more effectively integrating action research into their teaching practices for professional development and transformation.

Keywords: action research, effectiveness, professional development, survey

INTRODUCTION

Teacher Professional Development (TPD) systematically enhances educators' skills, knowledge, and attitudes regarding teaching and learning processes. This initiative aims to align educators with contemporary technological advancements and pedagogical frameworks, ultimately leading to improved educational outcomes. Moreover, it is defined as the formal or informal learning activities that develop one's skills, knowledge, and expertise while exploring one's teaching systematically for effective classroom organization and learning outcomes (Fullan, 1995; Rauteda, 2023).

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English Language Teaching (ELT) is becoming more challenging with the development of science, technology, and the current pedagogical shifts. In this regard, Sadeghi and Richards (2021) state that ELT has witnessed several changes, such as the nature of language, the nature of language learning, the reexamination of the roles of the learners and teachers, and the nature of teaching itself. For this reason, teaching English to speakers of other languages has become a difficult task. Hence, TPD can be an important solution to get the remedial practices of these issues. Moreover, English teachers must prepare themselves to tackle problems such as diversity, inclusion, and social justice.

Action research is one of the strategies that help teachers cope with the problems that arise in their work. It is considered a form of research where the teachers learn to improve their practice (Shanks et al., 2012). It is not just about teaching but is a more systematic and collaborative process that fosters shared experiences between pre-service and in-service teachers, enriching the professional development process and meeting the needs of both groups (Ridwan & Athena, 2023). Moreover, it has been viewed as a problem-solving approach that can help teachers handle the obstacles that occur in their actions. In this regard, Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) argue that action research is primarily oriented toward the solution of the problem but also poses issues and questions about teaching. In a similar vein, action research is taken as a tool for the teachers to tackle the problems in the class and enhance the teaching and learning process (Saeb et al., 2021).

Action research is a cyclic process where the teachers plan, act, observe, and reflect on the practices they have done (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988). In that way, it is also taken as a process of reflection which is significant to improve one's teaching practices. Supporting the argument, Peralta-Castro and Mayoral-Valdivia (2018) state that action research is a way of looking at one's practice and taking action to change and improve. It is further seen as a method to generate "meaning and understanding in problematic social situations and improve the quality of human interactions and practices within those situations" (Burns, 2005, p.57). Moreover, researchers (Burns, 1999; Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988; Schon, 1987) take action research as a collective, evaluative, and reflective inquiry that always seeks transformation, change, improvement, and the solution of the problems. Mills (2003) defines action research as "an invitation to learn, a means to tackle tough questions that face us individually, and collectively as teachers" (p.5). Consequently, action research is a reflective practice usually in the form of research that helps teachers to find the remedy of their classroom problems, and practices, leads them towards self-transformation, and empowerment, and helps them in their professional development.

Participation in action research has been proven to enhance the professional development of teachers by promoting a culture of continuous improvement and lifelong learning. Teachers who took part in action research reported increased job satisfaction and a greater sense of professional fulfillment as they witnessed tangible improvements in their teaching practices and student outcomes (Allwright, 2019; Day, 1999). It supports studying the teaching practice and taking action when they are doing what is called 'reflection in action' (Schon, 1983). Teachers explore the current issues relevant to their course and professional practice and search for solutions. Moreover, action research is taken as one of the pedagogical competencies of teachers (Shakhaweti, 2014) that they may utilize to cater to students' unique desires and aid in analyzing educational methods to accommodate the learners' diversity and learning styles (Shanks et al., 2012).

The act of teaching is incredibly multifaceted, yet the majority of teachers have minimal opportunities to explore common challenges and potential solutions or exchange fresh pedagogical ideas with their fellow educators (Danielson & McGreal, 2000). Crucially, the changing nature of society, technological advancements, and the dynamics of language teaching have made the job more challenging for language teachers. Due to this reason, language teachers require continuing professional development to meet the various demands of learners in a rapidly changing society (Rauteda, 2024). Hence, action research could be the

strategy that allows teachers to face those changes in education, society, and pedagogy. Presenting action research as a process of identifying the problem and exploring solutions, Zeichner (2003) talks about the importance of action research for teachers and says that action research enables teachers to develop more student-centered approaches, resulting in active students' participation and learning outcomes.

Action research, which originated in the 1930s, has garnered significant application across multiple professional fields, particularly within education (McNiff, 2009). In the context of language education, there has been a notable shift toward learner-centered curriculum development, emphasizing classroom-based research and the role of the teacher as a reflective practitioner (Farrell, 2022). These elements have contributed to the rising popularity of action research in this domain (Burns, 2010).

The process of action research is characterized by inquiries aimed at addressing issues identified through careful observations and reflective practices of educators (Hei & David, 2017). This approach employs a self-reflective, critical, and systematic methodology to explore and analyze one's teaching environments (Hei & David, 2017; Peralta-Castro & Mayoral-Valdivia, 2018). Empirical studies indicate that educators engage in action research as a means of professional development, highlighting its significance for empowering both learners and teachers.

It is crucial to address challenges that emerge during the teaching and learning process. To enhance teaching strategies, learning outcomes, and overall professional growth, educators are encouraged to reflect on their practice at three critical stages: before, during, and after the action (Schon, 1987). Furthermore, the implementation of action research serves to critically evaluate instructional practices, foster self-awareness, and provide a deeper understanding of effective teaching methodologies (Zeichner & Listor, 2013).

Action research has been implemented by teachers in government schools in Nepal. Each year, it is mandatory for teachers to conduct action research, although they may choose to carry out additional research based on their specific needs and the challenges they encounter in their classrooms. According to the Teacher Service Commission (TSC) Rules, 2057 (Government of Nepal, 2000), action research is one of the criteria for teacher promotion, allocated five marks (TSC Rules, Chapter-4, No. 28, Gha, 2). Despite its mandatory status, some teachers do not take action research seriously. Engaging in this practice is essential for professional growth, as it empowers educators and enhances their confidence and autonomy (Johnson, 2021).

A review of the existing literature reveals that teachers engage in action research as a means of self-empowerment, enhancing student learning, facilitating positive changes within their educational environments, and addressing challenges that arise during their teaching practices. Moreover, the discourse emphasizes that action research is widely embraced by teachers who regard it as an essential tool for transformation. This approach holds particular significance for English language instructors in contexts such as Nepal, where the diverse classroom environment presents notable management challenges. While action research has been implemented by teachers, the involvement of secondary-level English language teachers in such research—specifically regarding their objectives, the extent of its application, and their views on its role in professional development—remains insufficiently explored concerning its implications for their professional lives. Thus, this research gap has motivated me to conduct a survey aimed at identifying secondary-level English teachers' knowledge, uses, and the perceived effectiveness of action research for professional development. Hence, the study answered the following research questions:

1. What are the uses and knowledge of English language teachers of action research for their professional development?
2. How do English language teachers perceive the effectiveness of action for their professional development?

Literature review

Action research and professional development

TPD encompasses a range of strategies, including training sessions, workshops, conferences, journaling, and action research. Action research is characterized by its iterative process of planning, action, observation, and reflection (Lewin, 1946). Moreover, action research serves as a reflective practice that encourages educators to critically examine their teaching activities, identifying both strengths and weaknesses and improving the weaknesses (Farrell, 2019). According to Rauteda (2024), English language teachers engage in a reflective process before, during, and after their actions to enhance their professional growth.

The significance of action research as a reflective tool is widely recognized as it enables teachers to evaluate their instructional methods and promotes continuous improvement in their pedagogy. Allwright (2019) and Tindowen et al. (2019) found that teachers typically take action research as a crucial instrument for improving instructional delivery and achieving favorable learning outcomes. This perspective aligns with the findings of Prudente and Aguja (2018), who reported that teachers in the Philippines acknowledge the role of action research in their professional development, highlighting a positive relationship between teachers' attitudes and their involvement in research activities. Moreover, McNiff (2017) discusses the significance of action research and says that when teachers engage in action research collectively, it fosters a sense of community and shared responsibility. Such a collaborative environment encourages the exchange of ideas and strategies, leading to innovative solutions that might not emerge in isolation. Such collective efforts are particularly beneficial in addressing complex educational challenges (Farrell, 2019).

Action research reshapes the role of teachers and brings transformation in their practices through transformative teacher agency. It takes teachers as change agents who can explore the relevant practices in the context and apply them in their teaching, and is grounded in the ethos that teachers can be both practitioners and researchers, facilitating a deeper understanding of their pedagogical practices and enhancing their efficacy in the classroom (Tindowen et al., 2019). Sagor (2018) discusses how action research empowers teachers to become active agents of change, leading to personalized and contextual improvements in teaching methodologies. It not only improves teaching practices but also contributes to the teachers' ongoing professional growth. Moreover, action research is known for driving sustainable change in education. Focusing on practical problems and involving teachers in the research process ensures that the outcomes are relevant and applicable. A study by Allwright (2019) illustrates that action research leads to long-term improvements in teaching practices, as teachers are more invested in the outcomes. Further, Meesuk et al. (2020) state that action research is beneficial in diverse educational environments, enabling teachers to tailor improvements in pedagogy to the unique contexts and student needs they encounter. Additionally, teachers' engagement in action research significantly impacts teachers' problem-solving skills and their professional growth (Pham et al., 2021). Thus, action research is crucial in the field of language teaching as the field is very diverse.

Despite its recognized benefits, many in-service English language teachers are not fully aware of the comprehensive benefits that action research offers for their professional development (Han, 2017). Tindowen et al. (2019) state that teachers struggle with the methodological aspects of conducting action research, which can hinder their effectiveness and confidence. Additionally, Wahlgren and Aarkrog (2020) argue that the practical application of action research often falls short due to a lack of institutional support. The ideas by Tindowen et al. (2019) and Wahlgren and Aarkrog (2020) further suggest that action research plays a crucial role in TPD by increasing their confidence, enhancing problem-solving skills, and improving teaching practices. However, teachers are not getting sufficient support from their institutions and opportunities to apply the research they conducted. Consequently, the literature reveals an urgent call for enhancing institutional support to address barriers that teachers face in conducting action research. Moreover, the literature appeals for targeted training and support

that can enhance teachers' perceptions and attitudes toward action research, as Vanderlinde and van Braak (2010) pointed out that teachers' perceptions of the relevance and applicability of research to their teaching contexts significantly influence their attitudes toward professional development.

Action research in language teaching

Engaging in action research allows reflective practitioners to enhance their language-teaching skills and methodologies (Curry et al., 2009). The perceived efficacy of action research in improving educational outcomes is a pivotal element influencing its adoption among English language teachers. Moreover, action research can yield enhanced instructional strategies and greater student engagement. Puspitasari et al. (2021) state that teachers who participated in action research can improve their pedagogical practices and increase their students' learning outcomes. Moreover, Farrell (2019) found that language teachers developed innovative strategies to address diverse student needs, such as differentiated instruction and culturally responsive teaching through action research projects.

Action research also plays a crucial role in the professional development of language teachers. By engaging in action research, language teachers can reflect on their teaching practices. In this regard, Farrell (2015) presented a reflective model for English language teachers through which teachers can reflect on Philosophy (Teachers' own past experiences, backgrounds, and previous lives), Principles (teachers' beliefs and assumptions on teaching), Theory (teachers' choice of theory), Practice (examining the connection between teachers philosophy, theory, and principles), and Beyond practice (reflecting on moral, political, social, emotional and ethical issues). In that way, teachers can see themselves and conduct action research, which makes them reflective practitioners and assists them in solving classroom problems and growing professionally.

Action research has emerged as a critical method for enhancing language teaching and learning, particularly in contexts such as English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The primary strength of action research is its capacity to foster teacher reflection. Supporting the argument, Hernández and Mejía (2022) demonstrate that action research allows teachers to implement interventions tailored to student needs, particularly in managing foreign language anxiety, which is a significant barrier to effective language learning. Moreover, action research improves confidence, pedagogical competence, classroom management, and lesson planning skills. May-Melendez et al. (2019) emphasize that action research supports teachers in evaluating their teaching practice and enhancing the learning experience of the students. Furthermore, the sustainability of action research as a tool for professional development is critical for achieving lasting impacts. Puspitasari et al. (2021) underscore the significance of recognizing the motivating factors that encourage teachers to persist in their action research endeavors, which can lead to sustained enhancements in their professional competencies. This focus on sustainability is vital as it ensures that the advantages of action research persist beyond initial implementations, thereby cultivating a culture of continuous improvement within educational environments.

Consequently, action research emerges as a remedial model for teachers that aims to enhance their professional development and the learners' achievement. Through its cyclical nature of planning, action, observation, and reflection, it enables teachers to engage critically with their teaching. By adopting a collaborative approach, addressing inherent challenges, and facilitating ongoing support, the action research can significantly contribute to the quality of language instruction and ultimately improve student learning outcomes.

METHOD

The researcher used a survey design to accomplish this study. Hence, the survey is a research design that involves data collection through standardized questionnaires or interviews from a sample that represents a large population (Groves et al., 2009). Moreover, it is a

predominant descriptive method employed in educational research (Cohen et al., 2017) and is primarily used to obtain a snapshot of conditions, attitudes, and events at a single point in time (Creswell, 2015). In the context of research studies in ELT, survey research serves an important function of investigating correlation and probable causal links. One of the purposes of conducting survey research in the field of ELT is to collect data from a large population and to generalize findings across diverse teaching environments and educational contexts (Pandey, 2024; Rauteda, 2025). Therefore, I used a survey to identify the teachers' uses and knowledge of action research, evaluating its perceived effectiveness for professional development. As the survey explores attitudes and perceived effectiveness and collects data from a large population, the design is appropriate for the issue.

The population of the study were English language teachers teaching at both basic and secondary levels, and the private and public schools of Sunsari district. Using a simple random sampling strategy, the researcher selected 200 teachers as the sample. A questionnaire was used as a data collection tool which was administered online. The collected data was analyzed using SPSS. The data was further interpreted using the bivariate approach of analysis where the chi-square and phi test were done. Demographic information (sex, school type, level of teaching, and academic qualification) was used as independent variables and the use of action research, knowledge of action research, and perceived effectiveness were used as dependent variables. The analyzed data were statistically tabulated and descriptively analyzed.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The obtained data was analyzed using SPSS. The following results have been identified, statistically presented, and descriptively analyzed.

Table 1. Frequencies and percentage of demographic and research variables

Variables	Category	Frequency (n)	%
Sex	Male	106	53
	Female	94	47
Level of Teaching	Basic	74	37
	Secondary	126	63
School Type	Private	79	39.5
	Public	121	60.5
Academic Qualicifation	Bachelors	89	44.5
	Masters	111	55.5
Total		200	100

The table presents the demographic characteristics of the participants involved in the study. In terms of sex, the sample is comprised of 53% male and 47% female teachers, indicating a modest male majority among the teaching staff. Regarding the level of teaching, 37% of the participants are engaged in teaching at the basic level, while a more substantial 63% operate within the secondary level, highlighting a predominance of secondary school teachers in the sample. Concerning the type of school, 39.5% of the respondents are affiliated with private schools, in contrast to 60.5% from public schools, thus revealing a greater representation from public educational settings. Furthermore, an analysis of academic qualifications reveals that 44.5% of the teachers possess a Bachelor's degree, whereas 55.5% hold a Master's degree, suggesting an overall sample characterized by a high level of educational attainment, with a pronounced proportion of Master's degree holders. Collectively, these demographic characteristics establish a multifaceted context that is instrumental in comprehending teachers' knowledge, use, and perceived effectiveness of action research as a tool for professional development.

Table 2. English teachers' knowledge of action research in terms of sex, level of teaching, academic qualification, and type of school

Variable	Knowledge of Action Research	Very High	High	Moderate	Low	Very Low	Total	χ^2	p-value
Sex	Male	40 (37.7%)	36 (34.0%)	7 (6.6%)	11 (10.4%)	12 (11.3%)	106	0.667	0.955
	Female	31 (33.0%)	36 (38.3%)	7 (7.4%)	9 (9.6%)	11 (11.7%)	94		
	Total	71 (35.5%)	72 (36.0%)	14 (7.0%)	20 (10.0%)	23 (11.5%)	200		
Level of Teaching	Basic	29 (39.2%)	22 (29.7%)	6 (8.1%)	6 (8.1%)	11 (14.9%)	74	3.516	0.475
	Secondary	42 (33.3%)	50 (39.7%)	8 (6.3%)	14 (11.1%)	12 (9.5%)	126		
	Total	71 (35.5%)	72 (36.0%)	14 (7.0%)	20 (10.0%)	23 (11.5%)	200		
School Type	Private	28 (35.4%)	29 (36.7%)	5 (6.3%)	7 (8.9%)	10 (12.7%)	79	0.424	0.980
	Public	43 (35.5%)	43 (35.5%)	9 (7.4%)	13 (10.7%)	13 (10.7%)	121		
	Total	71 (35.5%)	72 (36.0%)	14 (7.0%)	20 (10.0%)	23 (11.5%)	200		
Academic Qualification	Bachelors	29 (32.6%)	35 (39.3%)	7 (7.9%)	9 (10.1%)	9 (10.1%)	89	1.319	0.858
	Masters	42 (37.8%)	37 (33.3%)	7 (6.3%)	11 (9.9%)	14 (12.6%)	111		
	Total	71 (35.5%)	72 (36.0%)	14 (7.0%)	20 (10.0%)	23 (11.5%)	200		

The table presents the distribution of teachers' knowledge on action research across sex, level of teaching, school type, and academic qualification, categorized into five levels: very high, high, moderate, low, and very low. Among males (n=106), 37.7% reported very high knowledge and 34.0% high knowledge, while among females (n=94), 33.0% had very high knowledge and 38.3% high knowledge, indicating balanced levels across genders. Regarding the level of teaching, basic-level teachers (n=74) had a higher proportion with very high knowledge (39.2%) compared to secondary-level teachers (33.3%), though the latter had more in the high-knowledge category (39.7% and 29.7%). Moderate and low knowledge levels were consistent across both groups, but a notable 14.9% of basic-level teachers fell into the very low category compared to 9.5% of secondary teachers. School type revealed minimal differences, with private school teachers (n=79) and public school teachers (n=121) showing nearly identical distributions in very high (35.4% and 35.5%, respectively) and high knowledge levels (36.7% and 35.5%). Lastly, teachers with Master's degrees (n=111) showed a slightly higher proportion with very high knowledge (37.8%) compared to Bachelor's degree holders (32.6%), while the latter had more in the high knowledge category (39.3% and 33.3%). Across all variables, knowledge of action research was generally balanced, with only slight variations observed based on demographic and professional characteristics.

Chi-square (χ^2) tests revealed no significant relationships between teachers' knowledge of action research and the variables examined. For sex, χ^2 (4, N = 200) = 0.667, p = .955; for level of teaching, χ^2 (4, N = 200) = 3.516, p = .475; for school type, χ^2 (4, N = 200) = 0.424, p = .980; and for academic qualification, χ^2 (4, N = 200) = 1.319, p = .858. In all cases, p-values exceeded the 0.05 threshold, indicating no statistically significant associations. These results suggest that demographic and professional factors do not significantly influence teachers' knowledge of action research.

Table 3. Use of action research in teaching in terms of sex, level of teaching, school type, and academic qualification

Variable	Category	Yes	No	Total	χ^2	p-value
Sex	Male	56 (52.8%)	50 (47.2%)	106	0.254	0.615
	Female	53 (56.4%)	41 (43.6%)	94		
Total		109 (54.5%)	91 (45.5%)	200		
Level of Teaching	Basic	38 (51.4%)	36 (48.6%)	74	0.470	0.493
	Secondary	71 (56.3%)	55 (43.7%)	126		
Total		109 (54.5%)	91 (45.5%)	200		
School Type	Private	42 (53.2%)	37 (46.8%)	79	0.094	0.759
	Public	67 (55.4%)	54 (44.6%)	121		
Total		109 (54.5%)	91 (45.5%)	200		
Academic Qualification	Bachelors	44 (49.4%)	45 (50.6%)	89	1.657	0.198
	Masters	65 (58.6%)	46 (41.4%)	111		
Total		109 (54.5%)	91 (45.5%)	200		

The relationship between demographic and professional variables and the utilization of action research in teaching was investigated using chi-square analyses. The findings indicate that there are no statistically significant associations between these variables and the practice of action research. In terms of sex, male teachers (n = 106) exhibited a marginally higher participation rate in action research ("Yes": 56=52.8%) compared to their female counterparts (n = 94; "Yes": 53=56.4%). However, the chi-square test ($\chi^2 = 0.254$, $p = 0.615$) indicates that these observed differences lack statistical significance. Similarly, the teaching level did not demonstrate a meaningful relationship with the use of action research. Both basic-level teachers (n = 74) and secondary-level teachers (n = 126) reported analogous engagement levels, with (38=51.4%) basic-level teachers and (71=56.3%) secondary-level teachers indicating the use of action research. The chi-square test ($\chi^2 = 0.470$, $p = 0.493$) corroborates the absence of statistical significance in this context. Regarding school type, teachers from private schools (n = 79) and public schools (n = 121) reported comparable levels of action research engagement. Specifically, 42 private school teachers (53.2%) responded "Yes," compared to 67 public school teachers (55.4%). The chi-square analysis ($\chi^2 = 0.094$, $p = 0.759$) revealed no significant difference between the two groups. Finally, academic qualifications did not show a significant relationship with the use of action research either. Teachers holding Bachelor's degrees (n = 89) and those with Master's degrees (n = 111) demonstrated similar participation levels, with (44=49.4%) and (65=58.6%), respectively, indicating "Yes." The chi-square test ($\chi^2 = 1.657$, $p = 0.198$) further validates the absence of a significant relationship.

Table 4. Teachers' perceived effectiveness in terms of sex, level of leaching, school type, and academic qualification

Variable	Category	For Problem Solving	Increase Professional Confidence	Help in Promotion	For Transformative Agency	For Teacher Collaboration	Total	χ^2	p-value
Sex	Male	21 (19.8%)	28 (26.4%)	21 (19.8%)	18 (17.0%)	18 (17.0%)	106	1.287	0.864
	Female	16 (17.0%)	28 (29.8%)	19 (20.2%)	19 (20.2%)	12 (12.8%)	94		

Level of Teaching	Basic	12 (16.2%)	28 (37.8%)	14 (18.9%)	13 (17.6%)	7 (9.5%)	74	6.919	0.14
	Second-ary	25 (19.8%)	28 (22.2%)	26 (20.6%)	24 (19.0%)	23 (18.3%)	126		
School Type	Private	19 (24.1%)	19 (24.1%)	18 (22.8%)	12 (15.2%)	11 (13.9%)	79	4.283	0.369
	Public	18 (14.9%)	37 (30.6%)	22 (18.2%)	25 (20.7%)	19 (15.7%)	121		
Academic Qualification	Bachelors	10 (11.2%)	23 (25.8%)	19 (21.3%)	20 (22.5%)	17 (19.1%)	89	8.152	0.086
	Masters	27 (24.3%)	33 (29.7%)	21 (18.9%)	17 (15.3%)	13 (11.7%)	111		

The table illustrates the distribution of responses based on sex, level of teaching, school type, and academic qualification concerning teachers' perceptions of the benefits of action research in areas such as problem-solving, professional confidence, promotion, transformative agency, and teacher collaboration. Specifically, 19.8% of male and 17.0% of female respondents believed that action research is beneficial for problem-solving. Similarly, 19.8% of male and 20.2% of female respondents indicated that action research contributed to their promotion. Additionally, 17.0% of male and 12.8% of female teachers perceived action research as instrumental in fostering teacher collaboration among colleagues. Furthermore, 29.8% of female respondents reported that action research enhanced their professional confidence, compared to 26.4% of male respondents. In terms of transformative agency, 17.0% of male and 20.2% of female respondents acknowledged the role of action research in creating a transformative agency among teachers. The chi-square test for sex yielded a value of $\chi^2 = 1.287$ with a p-value of 0.864, indicating no significant relationship between sex and the perceived benefits of action research.

Regarding the level of teaching, basic-level teachers exhibited a higher percentage (37.8%) for the category "Increase Professional Confidence" compared to secondary-level teachers (22.2%). Conversely, 19.8% of secondary-level teachers and 16.2% of basic-level teachers identified action research as significant for problem-solving. Additionally, 18.9% of basic-level and 20.6% of secondary-level teachers perceived action research as beneficial for promotion. Similarly, 17.6% of basic-level and 19.0% of secondary-level teachers recognized the value of action research in fostering transformative agency. For teacher collaboration, 9.5% of basic-level and 18.3% of secondary-level teachers reported positive perceptions. The Chi-square test for teaching level resulted in $\chi^2 = 6.919$ with a p-value of 0.14, indicating that the level of teaching does not significantly influence the perceived benefits of action research.

Concerning school type, private school teachers had a higher proportion (24.1%) who selected "For Problem Solving," whereas public school teachers showed a stronger inclination toward "Increase Professional Confidence" (30.6%). The chi-square test for school type yielded $\chi^2 = 4.283$ with a p-value of 0.369, indicating no significant relationship between school type and the perceived benefits of action research. Finally, academic qualification revealed notable variations, with teachers holding a master's degree reporting higher percentages for "For Problem-Solving" (24.3%) and "Increase Professional Confidence" (29.7%) compared to those with a bachelor's degree. The chi-square test for academic qualification resulted in $\chi^2 = 8.152$ with a p-value of 0.086, suggesting a borderline lack of significance in the influence of academic qualification on teachers' perceptions of the benefits of action research. Overall, the data suggest no statistically significant differences across these variables, indicating that teachers' perceptions of the benefits of action research remain relatively consistent regardless of sex, teaching level, school type, or academic qualification.

Discussion

The study found that the majority of teachers perceive action research as valuable, yet there were no significant statistical associations between the independent and dependent variables. The study revealed that action research serves as a valuable tool for teachers in addressing problem-solving, fostering professional development, enhancing collegiality, promoting transformative agency, and contributing to career advancement. Additionally, it was

observed that teachers possess an understanding of action research and actively integrate it into their teaching and learning practices. The current body of research suggests that action research is a powerful tool for supporting the professional development of teachers (Rauteda, 2024; Rumiantsev et al., 2023; Van, 2020; Vula & Saqipi, 2015). By promoting an inquiry-focused method, action research provides educators with improved pedagogical knowledge and abilities while also offering valuable insights into their teaching practices (Allwright, 2019; Rumiantsev et al., 2023). In addition, it enhances self-efficacy, fosters reflective practice, and assists teachers in developing their unique educational theories (Farrell, 2019; Zajic et al., 2021). The established effectiveness of action research in professional development is well-documented. Research studies indicate that incorporating action research into teachers' daily practices fosters a culture of ongoing improvement in teaching methods (Van, 2020; Vula & Saqipi, 2015; Wahlgren & Aarkrog, 2020). Not only does this approach allow educators to investigate and apply various teaching methods but also improves their professional skills and instructional effectiveness (Tindowen et al., 2019; Zajic et al., 2021). The use of action research has been confirmed as a transformative method for altering teaching practices (Sagor, 2018).

The study discloses that English language teachers in Nepal conduct action research for both the solution of classroom problems and promotion, but it empowers them and grows them professionally. The study further revealed that the teachers perceived action research positively which is applicable in their professional lives. This study explored the Nepalese English language teachers' knowledge, use, and perceived effectiveness of action research. The study concluded that the majority of the teachers are familiar with action research, and use it in teaching purposefully. While many teachers recognize the value of engaging in action research for their professional development, the literature also points out the various obstacles they face (Van, 2020). Importantly, those who engage in action research develop an inquiry-driven approach, confront classroom issues head-on, and broaden their reflections to include wider research insights rather than just their own experiences (Vula & Saqipi, 2015; Zajic et al., 2021). Nevertheless, previous research studies suggest that the pressures of grading and delivering content may take precedence over the importance of ongoing professional learning (Kijkuakul, 2019). As a result, there is an urgent need for school leaders and professional organizations to offer adequate support for action research-focused professional development to alleviate this problem (Wahlgren & Aarkrog, 2020).

Regarding teachers' awareness of action research, the reviewed studies indicate that most educators recognize the significant benefits of engaging in action research for their professional growth despite various challenges and difficulties (Van, 2020). Teachers who participate in action research cultivate a more inquiry-based approach, becoming increasingly involved in solving classroom challenges and utilizing research outcomes beyond their own experiences to thoughtfully evaluate and improve their teaching methods (Rauteda, 2024; Vula & Saqipi, 2015; Zajic et al., 2021). However, some research indicates that teachers may not always place a high priority on professional development due to a strong emphasis on grading assignments and covering content in many educational environments (Kijkuakul, 2019). To address this issue, scholars highlight the crucial role of school leaders and professional organizations in proactively enabling and supporting professional development opportunities centered on action research for teachers (Jaipal & Figg, 2011).

Consequently, the reviewed literature articulates compelling evidence supporting the view that action research is perceived as a highly effective instrument for enhancing TPD. It fosters improvements in pedagogical knowledge, reflective practices, and overall teaching competency. The documented prevalence of action research within professional development paradigms indicates that educators generally recognize its importance despite confronting various barriers. The study suggests that the teachers would better conduct action research to enhance their performance, teaching competence, confidence, and problem-solving skills and to employ transformative agency for change. Conducting action research makes an individual a reflective practitioner who can transform one's action and influence the whole system. The

study recommends that stakeholders, such as schools, administrators, policymakers, and trainers, support teachers in conducting action research and applying it properly. Continuous support and facilitation from school leaders and professional organizations are essential for the widespread adoption of action-research-based professional development.

CONCLUSION

This study explored English language teachers' knowledge, use, and perceived effectiveness of action research as a tool for professional development. The objective was to assess how these teachers understand and implement action research, particularly amidst the increasing challenges faced in ELT, and evaluate the perceived effectiveness of action research in teaching, learning, and professional development. A quantitative survey was employed to gather data from 200 teachers across private and public schools in the Sunsari district. This was executed through a structured online questionnaire, and the data were analyzed using SPSS, specifically employing bivariate analysis and chi-square tests.

The findings revealed no significant statistical associations between independent variables and dependent variables. Despite the lack of statistically significant relationships, the results indicated that the majority of teachers recognized the value of action research. They perceived it as a significant resource for problem-solving, enhancing professional confidence, fostering career advancement, promoting transformative agency, and facilitating teacher collaboration.

The study implies that while teachers value action research, there may be barriers to its effective integration into their professional practices. Professional development programs would better focus on equipping teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge to utilize action research. Furthermore, fostering a collaborative culture among educators could enhance the practical application of action research in classrooms, ultimately leading to improved teaching practices and learning outcomes. Continued emphasis on the importance of action research in professional development can contribute to addressing the complexities and challenges within ELT, empowering teachers to adapt and thrive in their educational roles.

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