

## **ACTION RESEARCH BY MONGOLIAN TEACHERS**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The study question: Action research is a productive means for improving lesson teaching and shows effective impacts on teaching/learning process and results. However, it is observed that teachers don't apply the effective means for their teaching practice. This study has been undertaken in order to reveal how teachers apply it in the professional practice. The study aims to determine the implementation of action research, future attitude and measures to be taken for current teaching practice of teachers.

### **OBJECTIVES**

- \*Design research methods as an interview and a questionnaire
- \*Collect data, make quantitative and qualitative analysis & interpretation
- \*Determine methods for intensifying the implementation of action research

### **SCOPE**

52 professional teachers were involved. The teachers teach subjects as Mongolian language & literature, English language, mathematics, physics, history and social sciences, biology, geography, drawing, technology and music. Some teachers teach at the elementary level and preschool education level.

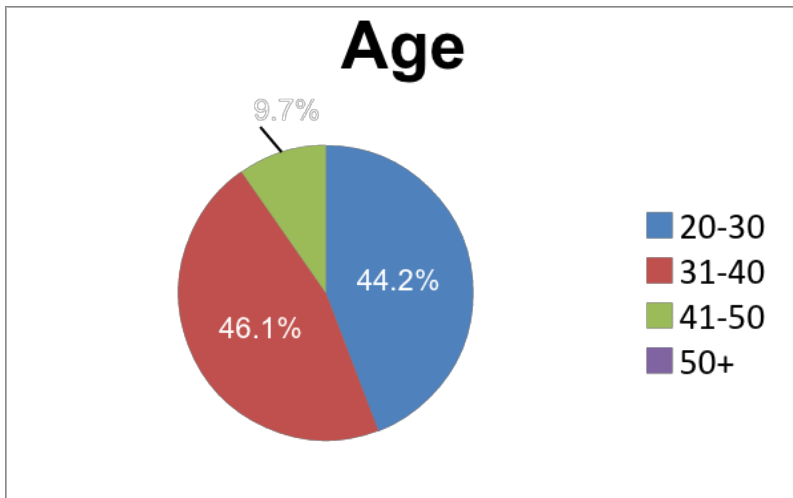
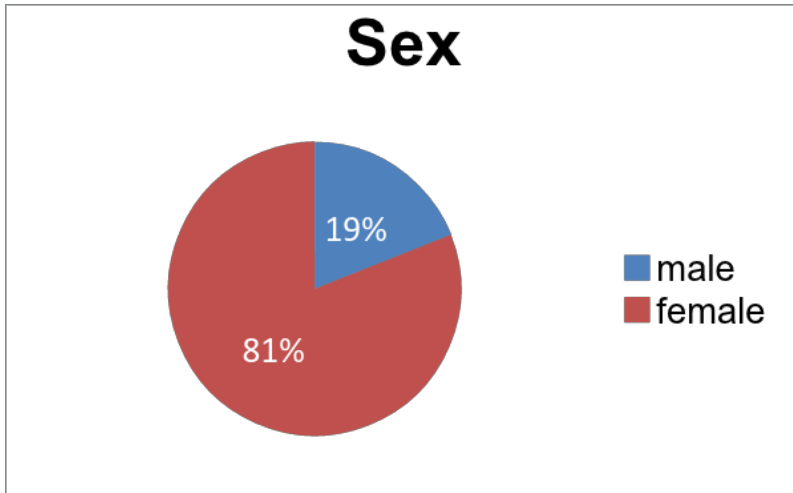
### **TOOLS**

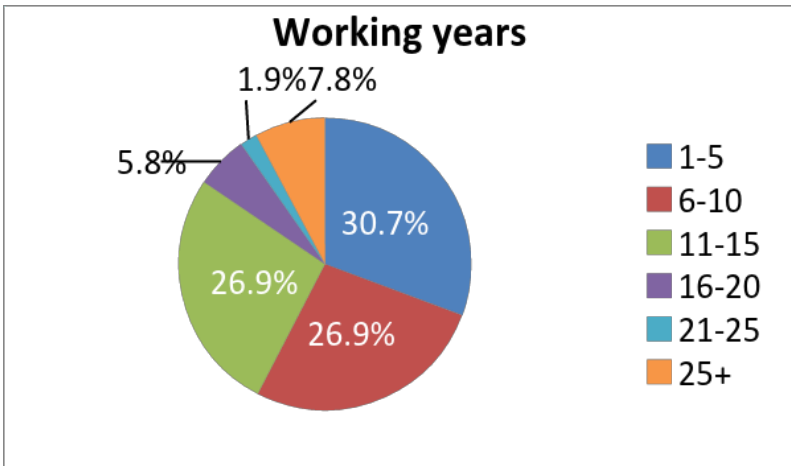
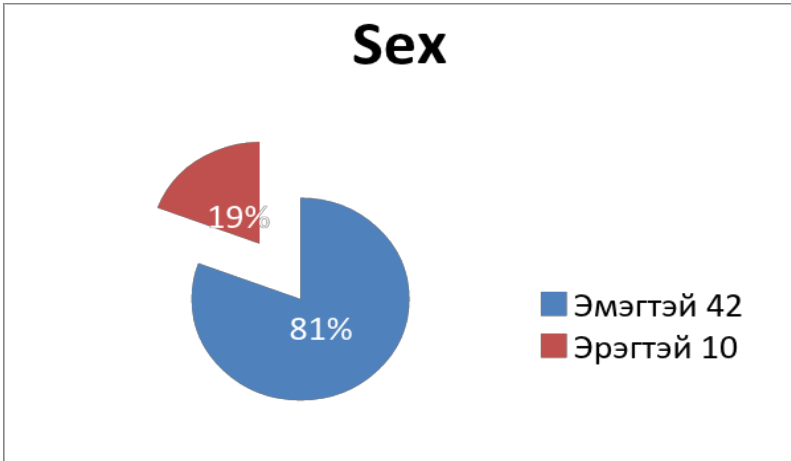
Questionnaire & group interview

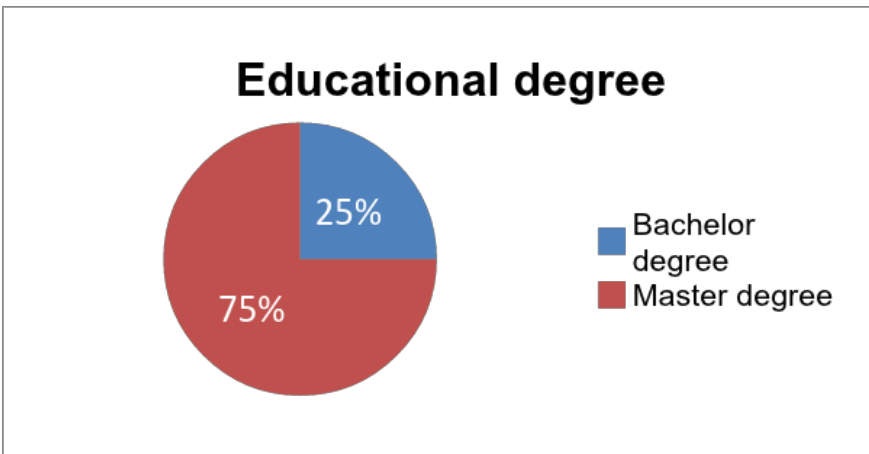
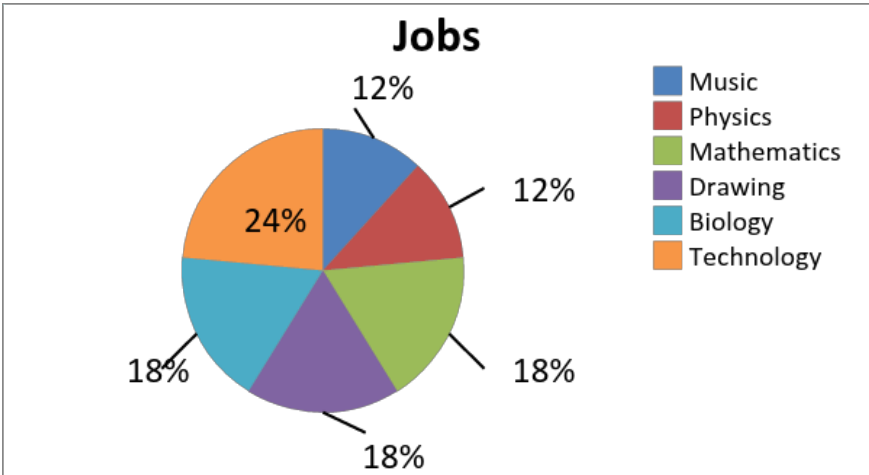
### **PARTICIPANTS IN THE STUDY**

- \*Teaching years: 30,7% teaching for 1-5 years, 26,9% teaching for 6-10 years, 26,9% teaching for 11-15, 5,7% teaching for 16-20 years, 1,9% teaching for 21-25 years and 7,6% teaching for over 25 years.
- \*80,7% are female & 19,3% are male.
- \*Professional degrees: 53,8% teachers don't have professional degrees, 44,3,9% teachers are methodologist degree, 8,8% teachers are 'leading degree'.
- \*As for educational degrees, 75% with bachelor degrees and 25% with master degrees.

\*Teaching subjects: 15,3% are English teachers, 13,4% are preschool teachers, 11,5% are primary teachers, 9,6% are teachers of Mongolian language & literature, 9,6% are teachers of history and social sciences, 7,6% are technology teachers, 5,7% are biology teachers, 5,7% are drawing teachers, 5,7% are mathematics teachers, 3,8% are physical teachers & 3,8% are teachers of music.

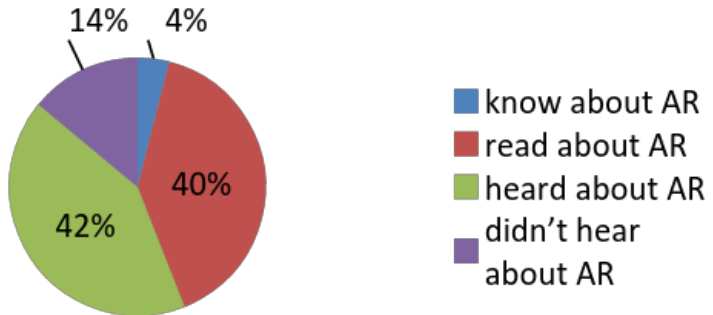






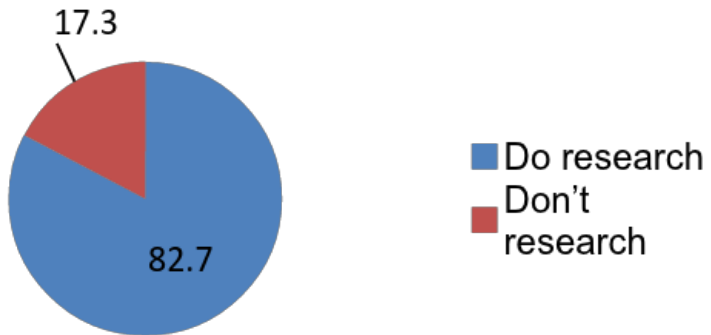
## Questionnaire

### 1. What level is your knowledge & understanding on action research?



86% out of all teachers had some knowledge and understanding on action research but 14% of all teachers did not hear about action research.

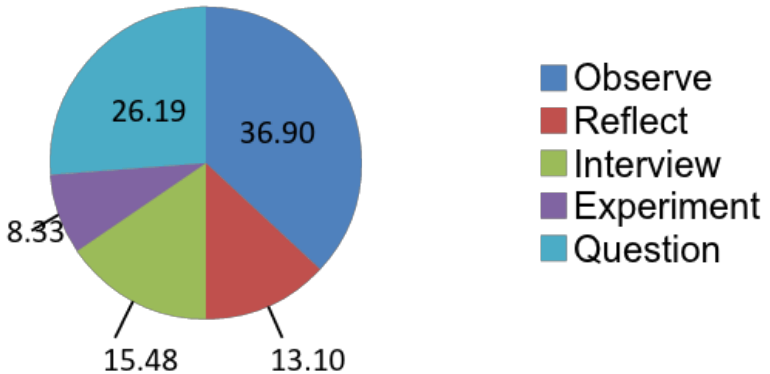
### 2. Do you do action research on your teaching and learning process of pupils?



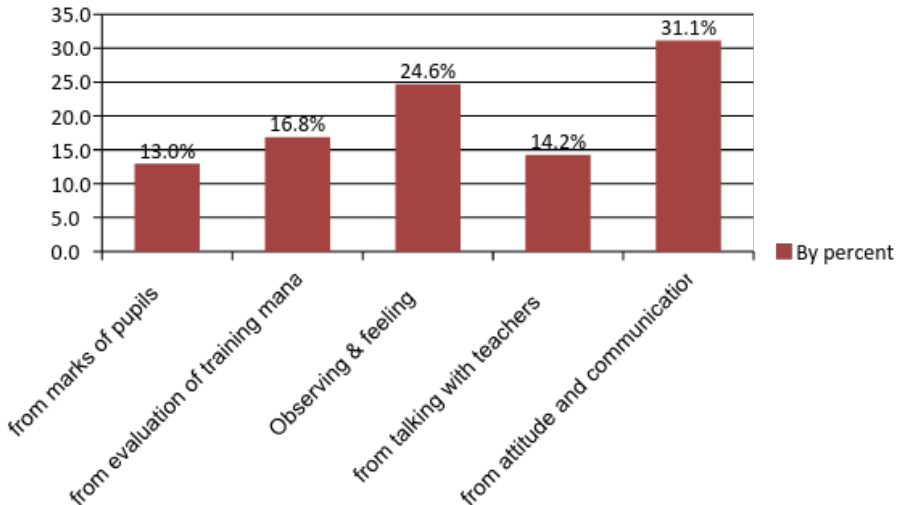
Most participants did action research on teaching and learning process. Only 17, 3% of teachers did not do action research.

The research methods of teachers who did action research were observation and questionnaire and a few teachers used the experiment method.

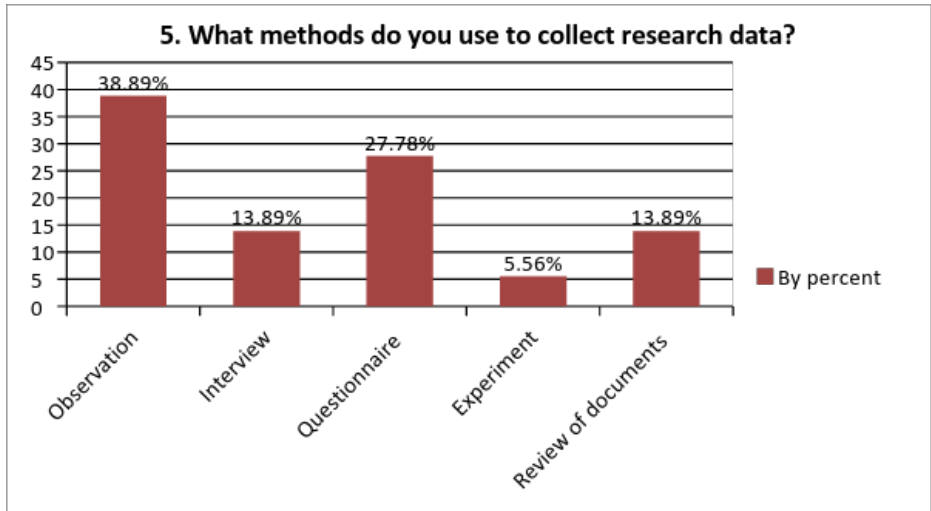
### 3. How do you do action research?



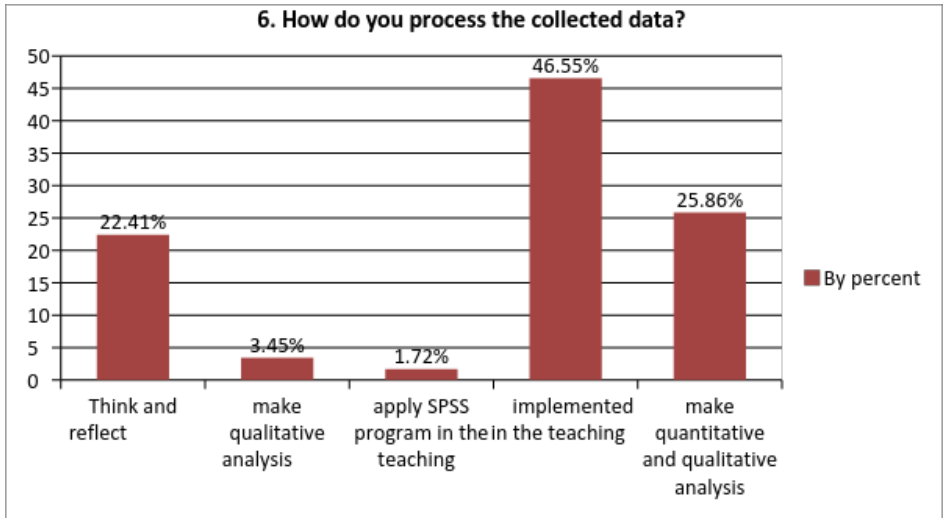
### 4. How do you reveal problems in your teaching practice?



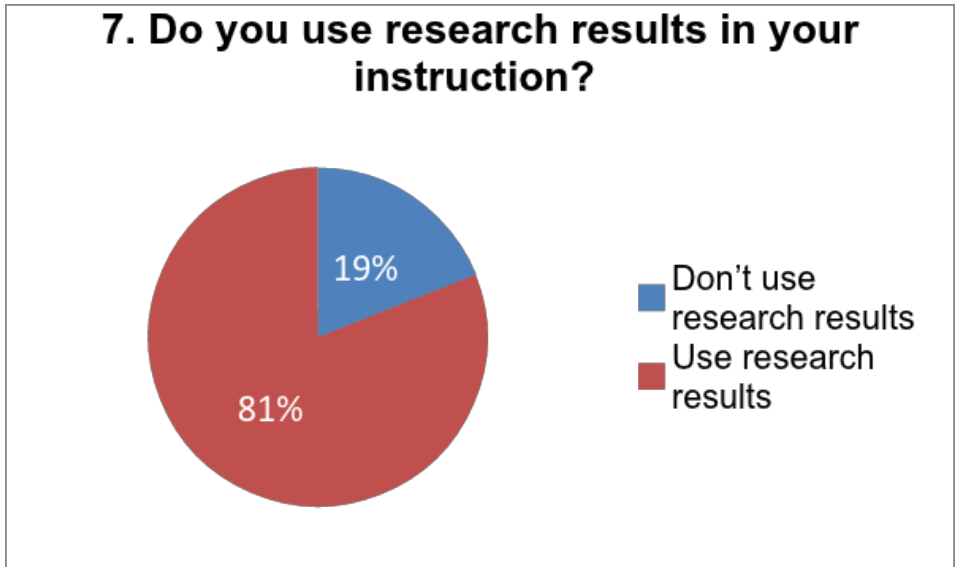
Teachers revealed problems in their teaching practice from attitude and communication of pupils, from evaluation of training manager and external evaluation, from talking with teachers and from marks of pupils.



Mostly, teachers used observation and questionnaire to collect data. They used the methods as the review of documents and interviews. Their use of experiment was less. Teachers did not use the experiment method that is main action for action research and they did not combine teaching / learning with research.



As for processing collected data, teachers involved said that they applied main ideas in the teaching, made quantitative and qualitative analysis, and thought and reflected.





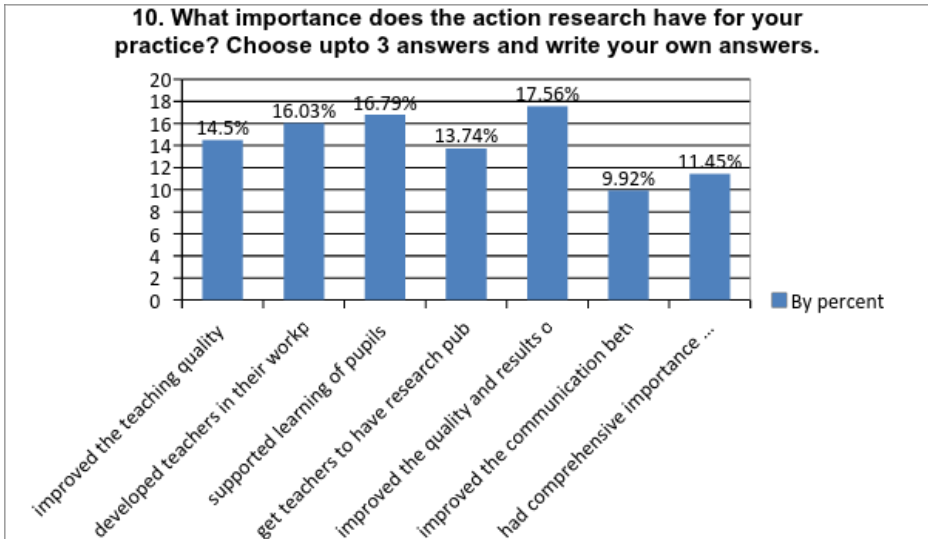
## **8. What problems do you face for your action research? Write your problems:**

\*41 teachers answered the open questions.

- 10 teachers said - don't know research methods.
- 7 teachers – they are not well informed about theory on action research.
- 5 teachers – teachers have high working load.
- 3 teachers – teachers don't work together
- 3 teachers – the time allocated is limited.
- 3 teachers – they are not informed about action research.
- 2 teachers – there is less supply of sources as books and magazines.
- 2 teachers – there is not appropriate environment for doing action research.
- 2 teachers – the number of pupils is too high.
- 1 teacher – teachers don't have skills of foreign languages.
- 1 teacher – pupils don't like to be studied. They wondered.
- 1 teacher – it is difficult to work due to the research plan.
- 1 teacher – teachers don't pay attention on what they observed and who they interviewed.

## **9. What support and help do you need to do action research? Write! 36 teachers answered the open questions.**

- 10 teachers – to organize workshops on action research
- 9 teachers – to organize meetings on suggestions and sharing experiences
- 6 teachers – to implement joint projects
- 5 teachers – books, manuals, resource materials
- 2 teachers – financial and economic support
- 1 teacher – reduce the work load
- 1 teacher – learn a foreign language
- 1 teacher – attach research documents to teacher's notebook
- 1 teacher – involve parents of pupils into research



Mostly, teachers answered that action research improved the quality and results of instruction, supported learning of pupils, developed teachers in their workplace, improved the teaching quality and get teachers to have research publications. In addition, teachers answered that each pupils become successful and teachers can make analysis on their own teaching and determine appropriate future plans.

**Summary from questionnaire:**

Most of the teachers have good knowledge on action research and its importance and do action research using traditional methods.

They reveal problems from attitude and communication of pupils and management evaluation and use observation and questionnaire for research.

Teachers don't know about research methods and have low level of knowledge and skills on action research. In this case, they use the experiment method relatively less and this shows that they can't do action research correctly.

Teachers need to know about the experiment method, how to process, implement and calculate its criteria and results

It is necessary that workshops and meetings should be organized to inform about action research, to share experiences and suggestions. Joint projects should be conducted and books, manuals and related training materials should be distributed sufficiently.

## **INTERVIEW RESEARCH**

Target groups: Group interview was conducted in November, 2013. It involved 6 teachers who have teaching experiences for over 5 years in the center of Gobi-Altai western province and teach Mongolian language and literature, English language, History and Social sciences and Technology.

### **Notes from the interview:**

#### ***1. Do you use action research in your teaching practice?***

Action research is a research done in our everyday actions. This kind of research is used for studying pupils of classes in which teachers teach subjects and which teachers manage, communicate with parents and caretakers and being involved in school and colleague activities. There isn't any work without research. Situation identification research is done before planning any actions and for making analysis and concluding about any actions done. We can't imagine teacher's work without research.

I do research for every lesson I teach. After I design examination materials I do research to know that pupils understand this grammar or not. If they don't, I understand I need to change how to teach.

... Primary and secondary teachers do research and process the results consistently when they work.

It is common that teachers understand that doing research is bigger and is not done at the workplace.

Some teachers said that it is difficult to do research, there are many problems to face and working load is high. I try to do research. I have taught for 20 years and do research in my own every year. When I reflect the final results of my work, it is effective for me. However, school management don't pay attention to considering and evaluating the final research results of teachers. Teachers do research when they work but they don't understand that what they do is a research and they continue to work. It is difficult to evaluate the research final results. Research meetings for teachers are held every year. I am a teacher of history and social sciences. Research meetings are held before

Olympiads every year. I choose a specific topic, experiment it and take part in competitions much. But this work is left on papers and isn't distributed to others. Sometime I think that it's sorry that I spend a lot of time for the work and this work doesn't have much importance. Mostly, I am not interested in what to do.

**Conclusion:** Some teachers relate action research to their own everyday practice, do research while teaching and make presentations on the research results in teachers' competitions on teaching/learning. However, their research works need to be evaluated realistically.

***2. You think that your research is not supported. In this case, how do you improve the research support?***

While doing research, I have good ideas on teaching and I think that if I carry out the teaching methods idea, the results will be effective. When I do research on evaluating pupils, it seems that it is effective to improve my teaching. But this work is left to only me. My school has above 100 teachers. The school organizes the competition on presentations of teaching/learning successfully. All teachers of teaching groups make presentations. 20-25 teachers take part in the competition and work much to be selected. The selected teachers from the subject specific teaching groups take part in the competition between other subject teaching groups. If a teacher takes the first place at the school, he/she will go to the provincial level. If a teacher takes the first place in the province, he/she will take part in the state level. But it is sorry that other teachers who take part in all level competitions successfully are left. Last year, I made a presentation on 'Implications into formative assessment's motivating pupils'. The research says that teachers evaluate only knowledge of pupils. This is not good. Both teachers and pupils feel it. The factors as pupils' notebooks, attendance and participation and speaking and writing skills are important for formative assessment. I introduced the formative assessment of speaking and writing skills of pupils after I studied my experiences for 7-8 years. Teachers give exams and assess the examination materials. They do nothing other than it. Teachers and pupils can feel the real and fair assessment and this can be shown from their satisfaction. I took the second place in the provincial level. My idea about formative assessment is introduce at my school. I thought that I didn't do that is useless. Now, the assessment for 12 year education is going to be carried out in a new way. I thought that if my presentation took the first place, I would go to the state level and my teachers would hear about my idea

on formative assessment. It seems that what I did myself is expensive to me and it didn't lose its nature. Now, I have ideas on doing action research about new formative assessment for 12 year education comparing old research results to the new ones, research results of one subject to other subject.

I try to do research to my level. However, the school doesn't pay attention to supporting young teachers and improving their research skills. So young teachers don't want to learn to do research. Also teachers who take part in any actions actively and teachers who don't take part in actions have same salary so some teachers think that they should spend their time to other effective works. But our goal is to get pupils to learn better. This is what we have to do at schools.

Today, many teachers do action research. They spend much time and labour to do research but the attitude and importance given to research is low. The situation shows that teachers who do action research are not supported with incentives and salary etc. Also other educational organisations don't use the research results and don't give any importance to it. ... But the research should be appropriate to our specific environment and culture and should use papers less. ... There should be consideration about classroom that is 1000 km away from Ulaanbaatar and thinking difference.

Rural teachers do action research but they don't know the names and terms about it. There are various problems to do action research. For example: we are asked to do research about situation analysis about pupils every semester. Teachers of drawing and technology teach for one hour every week. They teach about 5600 pupils and it is impossible to make situation analysis for every pupil.

... teachers make many assessments as .... They spend much time for it. About it I don't know what and how to do it. I think that there are differences between environments and other factors.

We do research much. Teachers of teaching groups did research on one lesson teaching. We divided what we do research on. There were 20 teachers. One of them observed motivation, other observed the aim and objectives, other warm-up, other teaching methods, other working on the board and other learning the content, etc. Other teacher observed pupils. One teacher for one pupil. For example: every teacher chose from the factors as making analysis on giving

assignments and assessment and content learning and taught a lesson with research.

Doing action research is important. Teachers shared their experiences and results and discussed about advantages and disadvantages. Teachers get ideas from what they talk and discuss and improve their teaching.

**Conclusion:** The research results are revealed and carried out in teachers' work and teaching. However, There are not good/enough support and encouragement for doing research. Then some young teachers are not motivated to do research.

### ***3. Which topic or direction do you use in action research?/***

I am a teacher of history and social sciences. I taught a lesson with assessment on 'What impacts do the subject of history and social sciences to develop skills'. This year, I taught a lesson on 'assessment of each pupil with their participation'.

I made a presentation on 'Methods/Ways of developing every child'. Some teachers at our school carried out ideas I suggested in my research. The research aims to reveal the reasons why children go back from others and what ways teachers should use to solve the problem.

The project 'One teacher one club' was carried out at our school. Every teacher organizes one of the clubs and extra-curricular activities. One research on talents of 2000 pupils were conducted. ... there is a need to change the attitude and thinking of parents.

The content of subjects of foreign languages asks pupils to know grammar not speak. For me, it is better to develop speaking skills at secondary level. I have done a research about this topic. My research shows that teaching grammar a lot demotivated pupils. I assessed listening and reading skills. I tried to know what pupils want to learn in foreign language lessons. Also I did a research on pronunciation and reading comprehension. I made a presentation on what I am interested in.

Teachers of Mongolian languages develop 4 skills of languages: speaking, reading, listening and writing.

I have studied about how many children with high language intelligence there are in 6<sup>th</sup> grade, how many children can write poems, and who can write a text.

Some pupils are good at speaking but they are not good at writing. Some pupils are good at speaking and writing with good organizations. Pupils whom I studied have skills of spelling correctly, organizing writing correctly, good reading comprehension and drawing about what they read in stories etc. When I assessed the four skills separately, the levels of children are various. When I studied pupils with low academic level, it seems that they have unopened talent and interests.

**Conclusion:** Teachers do specific research on their own specific jobs/teaching.

#### ***4. Could you explain your action research general process?***

Teachers observe pupils every day. Teachers are usually busy to do research. During observation we reveal a lot of things. For example: pupils don't like to talk and study and don't communicate well with their classmates. After observation I meet pupils individually to talk about the reasons. This situation is a big research that doesn't use a paper and a pen. I use friends of pupils in question to collect data. I also talked with their parents to get data about their children. As pupils advance from lower grade to upper grade they have communication problems with the parents. In this, I usually observe pupils.

**Conclusion:** Teachers don't talk about such steps as clarifying the question, planning the action, acting, observing, reflecting and conceptualizing. This situation reaches a conclusion that they don't do research/don't implement the steps.

#### ***5. Which experience did you collect after your action research?***

First, I propose the question. Then I determine the aim. To reach the aim, I determined objectives. I try to answer the questions as how the question is studied before and how about theory and practice. I need to collect much data and read a lot. When I became a teacher first time, I asked pupils to write a text (composition) about their mother. I read about one heart-breaking composition which was written by one pupil without a mother. Then I thought that I didn't know about the pupils and chose wrong topic. Teachers should collect much data about their classmates and decide what to do next. I also try to know about the question I studied comparing countries and make quantitative and qualitative analysis. **Conclusion:** Teachers don't talk clearly about their experiences on the action research they have done.

## ***6. Which advice about action research will you give to young generation teachers?***

Determine the aim of what you will study and work hard to reach your goal.

Review the literature and sources that were studied before. Then determine new aspects of your study.

Start from simple problems. Consider others' experiences.

Your work and teaching is a research. But we don't process our data and think of the results. In this case, organize what you teach and do.

Don't think that doing research is a big thing. It starts from simple work.

We don't think and reflect what we do for many years. This is a mistake for us. Every teacher should take notes every day about what she/he do and observe. This data will be useful after long time. We don't need to look after our data from far away, just look for the place where you work. Be organized and accurate. For example: teachers work with classes and pupils a lot every day. But we don't have any photos and notes about them.

**Conclusion:** The suggestions of the teachers are general and they don't give specific suggestions about the nature, content, steps and process of action research.

## ***7. Could you talk about importance of action research?***

There will be importance in your research if you set the aim and objectives and work hard. Also you should plan the results expected. When you have suggestions from your research, you should experiment them in your teaching or work. You should continue. Again new problem and do research and again suggestions.

Before you hold the meeting for parents, do research. Doing research can be your experiences and also it can be a tool for improving your work. By doing research, you can improve your work and teaching. Action research can be a gate to success.

You will spend a lot of time to do good research. Then you will know a lot from the research. You need to do two big works at the same time: teaching and doing research. Doing action research is effective for you.



Doing research is important and useful. It shows useful results. If you do research consistently, you will see its importance in your work.

### **Interview conclusion:**

Teachers believe that it impossible to teach without action research. They know the importance of doing action research. Teacher use the word 'research' more than 'action research'. When they about their research process, they don't talk about the steps of action research as determining problems, planning the actions, observing actions and reflecting actions, etc. This shows that they don't implement these steps. It is shown that research is done in traditional ways as observation, reflection, studying pupils through other pupils, reviewing literature etc. Teachers don't talk about the specific experiences collected through action research and their suggestions is not consistent with the nature, content, steps and process of action research.

### **GENERAL CONCLUSION**

Teachers believe that teaching is not possible without action research and they are informed about action research and its importance. They do research in traditional ways as observation, reflection, studying pupils through other pupils, reviewing literature etc. The problems facing teachers are that they don't have sound knowledge and abilities on action research and they do experiments relatively less. This shows that they don't do action research with theoretical foundation and systematically. It is suggested that the subject 'Action research' should be included in the curriculum on teacher training instruction and get students at pre-service teacher training to train the skills of doing action research. It is necessary for school directors and managers to initiate and organize works such as encouraging researcher-teachers, introducing what they have done to others, giving chances to share the experiences and raising their reputation etc. For this: it is possible to make discussion on research, run research magazines and publish their research findings/articles in the magazines and introduce the results through the website and blog etc

\*It is necessary to hold workshops and training sessions, discussions and suggestions, carry out joint projects and distribute books, manuals and other training materials sufficiently.

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