Teachers' perceptions, practices and challenges of active learning strategies utilisation at secondary schools in Ethiopia

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate teachers' perceptions, practices and challenges of active learning strategies utilisation at secondary schools in Ethiopia. Its specific purposes were to examine the perception of teachers towards active learning strategies utilisation, to explore whether active learning strategies utilisation are being practiced by teachers or not and to identify factors that hinder teachers in implementing active learning strategies in secondary schools. To conduct this study, descriptive survey design was employed. A total of 109 teachers participated in the study through systematic sampling technique. The study was complemented by the mixed method approach that employed both qualitative and quantitative data collection tools, such as observation checklists, questionnaires and interviews. The quantitative data were analysed using frequency, percentage, mean value, grand mean and mean ranking, and the qualitative data were analysed by organising, summarising and interpreting narrative description. The findings of the study reported that most of the respondents perceived active learning strategies positively. In spite of their good perceptions, their practices of active learning strategies were low. The major factors affecting the effective implementation of active learning strategies were large class size, students' lack of interest, shortage of time, teachers' lack of commitment, students' beliefs and perceptions and diversity of student interest, which were among the most influential factors hindering its implementation. Finally, it is recommended that responsible bodies should reorganise the conditions and facilitate necessary inputs for the implementation of active learning strategies.

Keywords: Active learning, challenges, perceptions, practices, secondary schools, strategies, utilisation.

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1. Introduction

Education in any country is aimed at bringing intended learning outcomes up on learners. In schools, the purpose of education is realised at various levels ranging from a single topic of instruction at a subject level in a given grade. The learners' capacity in solving problems prepares them for membership in a modern community. Education has an immense impact on the society. It trains the human mind to think and take the right action and decision. It is a process that transmits experience and new findings over the years (Ministry of Education, 1994).

In order to develop skills, knowledge and appropriate behaviour on the part of the learner, education should be promoted. To impart education to students, different methods and strategies should be applicable into the classroom context. Methods are ways of imparting different concepts and skills to learners. There are different methods in the process of teaching and learning. These methods are centred around the teacher for any activity that is performed in imparting the lesson; as stated by Farrant (1980), the teacher knows best. In addition, the traditional teacher-centred approach allows teachers to play their roles in transferring facts, opinions, rules and other important things to the students directly. The main theme of this approach is what is taught rather than what the student has learnt.

However, the main objective of education is to enable learners to develop knowledge, skills and attitudes that are achieved through different methods. At different times, different methods of learning have been investigated and have remained dominant for a certain period of time, such as teacher-centred methods (Bethel, 2011).

Aggarwal (2006) stated that education enables us to lead a better life in this dynamic world. In this respect, education has passed through continuous change. Due to the number of weaknesses with the traditional teacher-centred approach, active learning method was identified and supported by many scholars to be used in the classroom. According to the constructivists' learning theory, active learning is also known as discovery learning. Learning begins with the experience of the student. Moreover, the constructivists' learning theory is based on the principle that through their involvement in various activities, students discover their own way of learning. According to Snowman and Biehler (2000), constructivism is based on the idea that meaningful learning occurs when people actively try to make sense of the world. This strategy does not put students aside with doing nothing, but allows them to engage actively in the process of teaching and learning. It does not mean that teachers are automatically out of the process instead they facilitate and guide the student with the target teaching and learning. This method assumes that learners play an active role in the teaching–learning process rather than being passive. Friedman (2006) stated that to survive in a new, globally competitive world, today's children will need creativity, problem-solving abilities and a passion for learning, a dedicated work ethic and lifelong learning opportunities. Students can develop these abilities through instruction based on best practice teaching strategies.

Therefore, the researchers with this information were sustained to conduct a research which focuses on the investigation of secondary school teachers' perception, practice and challenges in active learning strategies utilisation in Yilmana district's secondary school.

The education and training policy (Ministry of Education, 1994) and the existing curriculum of Ethiopia call for active learning. The curriculum reforms initiated imply a shift from passive learning to more active education (Lue, 2000). There have been continuous revisions in the instructional approaches to offer quality training and make the active learning practical.

Girma (2013) and Ayele (2014) conducted their thesis on the same issue and their findings revealed that active learning failed to be practiced in schools due to scarcity of time to cover the portion, students' attention on exam-oriented topics and lack of adequate materials. However, none of their studies were actually intended to investigate teachers' perceptions, practices and challenges

encountered on the implementation of active learning strategies in secondary schools and there is no investigation which is done before in the selected district.

In order to achieve the objective of the study, the following objectives were designed:

➢ To examine the perception of teachers towards active learning strategies utilisation.
➢ To explore whether active learning strategies utilisation are being practiced by teachers or not in secondary schools.
➢ To identify factors that hinder teachers in implementing active learning strategies in secondary schools.

1.1. Research question

In line with the above-mentioned objectives of the study, the following research questions were developed:

1. What are the perceptions of teachers towards active learning strategies in secondary schools?
2. To what extent the active learning strategy is implemented in secondary schools?
3. What are the major challenges encountered in practicing active learning strategies?

2. Methods

The descriptive survey research method was employed to carry out the present study. Thus, the mixed method of the research was organised by including the characteristics, features or facts about the given population. To make the obtained data more feasible and preferable, to investigate the current situation of perceptions, practices and challenges of teachers in implementing active learning strategies in secondary schools, the researchers used the mixed approach.

2.1. Source of data

Primary sources of data were used in the study. Yilmana district's secondary school teachers, principals, vice principals and supervisors were used as the primary sources of data in the study.

2.2. Sample size and sampling techniques

The target populations of the study are secondary school teachers, principals, vice principals and supervisors. Accordingly, in Yilmana district's educational office there were 109 (87 male and 22 female) teachers. A total of 109 secondary schools teachers were included, out of the five schools. Five principals, five vice principals and two supervisors from the schools were included in interview. With regard to determining the composition of the sample, proportional sampling technique was used to select the number of participants from the proposed study of the sample school. First, purposive sampling technique was used to select the district. Second, comprehensive sampling technique was used to select schools. Third, proportional sampling technique was used to select the number of teacher participants from the sample schools, and then systematic random sampling technique was used to select teachers in each school. With regard to principals, vice principals and supervisors, the comprehensive sampling technique was used.

2.3. Data gathering instrument

To obtain data from teachers, principals, vice principals and supervisors, a questionnaire and interviews were used.

2.3.1. Questionnaire

The questionnaire was one of the instruments developed based on the reviewed literature to collect relevant data from teachers to answer basic questions raised. The questionnaire was employed to collect data from teachers. The questionnaire items consist of both close-ended and open-ended items, designed in the English language. Based on the information obtained from the literature, the researchers prepared open-ended and closed-ended questions.

2.3.2. Interview

Interviews were one of the data gathering instruments used to collect information. Supporting this idea, Best and Kahan (1989) stated that an interview is the major way in which a qualitative evaluator seeks to understand the perceptions of people. A semi-structured interview was designed to gather qualitative data from school principals, vice principals and supervisors because semi-structured interview items have the advantage of flexibility in which new questions could be forwarded during the interview based on the responses of the interviewee. The interview guide question set for all group of respondents had one part which targeted to obtain information related to the basic research questions, and the researchers needed their opinions in case of strengthening the responses on the questionnaire part. In addition, the data obtained through interviews with five school principals (male), five vice principals (male) and two supervisors (male) had the advantage to identify what had been performed in the classroom. Moreover, it helps the researchers to crosscheck or triangulate the data obtained from the questionnaire's response items.

2.4. Data gathering procedure

The researchers adopted three steps in collecting data for the study. First, the relevant literature was reviewed to get adequate information on the topic. Second, objectives and research question were designed to show the direction of the study. Third, data gathering tools were developed. In the process of data collection for the study, the researchers used a procedure. The questionnaire was prepared in the English language and the interviews with principals, vice principals and supervisors were conducted in the selected schools.

2.5. Methods of data analysis

The descriptive survey method, with both quantitative and qualitative data analyses, was used in order to answer the research questions and to attain the objectives. The quantitative data were collected, coded, tabulated, analysed, described and interpreted in a manner that supported the finding obtained from the study. First, the data were gathered through the close-ended questionnaire part I (Perceptions of teachers in implementing active learning strategies in classrooms) by using a five-point Likert scale (strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree and strongly disagree). Thus, the data processing and analysis were employed by the Statistical Package for Social Science, version 20, computer manual to analyse the quantitative data. Then, the qualitative data were gathered through interviews and the open-ended questionnaire analysis was done by organising, summarising and interpreting narrative description.

3. Results

3.1. Characteristics of the respondents

Table 1 shows that 109 teachers were included in the study. With regard to their sex, 79.8% of the teachers were male, while the remaining 21.2% of them were female. Compared to male teachers, the number of female teachers in secondary schools was low. With respect to educational background or qualification, 85.3% and 14.7% of them were first-degree and second-degree holders in academic subjects, respectively.

Table 1. Teachers' sex, qualification and average number of students per class

No.	Variables	Characteristics	(Frequency = 109) Teachers' response	
			Frequency	Percent (%)
1	Sex			
		Male	87	79.8
		Female	22	20.2
		Total	109	100
2	Qualification	Degree	93	85.3
		Master	16	14.7
3	Average number of students per class	41–50	1	20
		61–70	4	80

With regard to the average number of students per class, 20% of the classes were occupied with 41–50 students on average. The majority 80% of the classes were occupied with 61–70 students.

3.2. Presentation and analysis of data obtained through questionnaire

In analysing the perceptions of teachers' on active learning strategies, a questionnaire entitled 'perceptions of teachers in implementing active learning strategies in classrooms, practice of active leaning strategies and factors affecting the implementation of active learning strategies' served as the primary source of information.

Table 2. Perceptions of teachers in implementing active learning in classrooms

Items	1 = S. Disagree		2 = Disagree		3 = Undecided		4 = Agree		5 = S.Agree		(∑vxf)	X = ∑VxfN
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
1	–	–	3	2.8	1	0.9	30	27.5	75	68.8	504	4.62
2	–	–	3	2.8	7	6.4	33	30.3	66	60.6	489	4.49
3	11	10.1	8	7.3	13	11.9	24	22	53	48.6	427	3.92
4	–	–	2	1.8	10	9.2	40	36.7	57	52.3	479	4.39
5	8	7.3	13	11.9	11	10.1	31	28.4	46	42.2	421	3.86
6	10	9.2	34	31.2	15	13.8	37	33.9	13	11.9	336	3.08
7	15	13.8	27	24.8	5	4.6	29	26.6	33	30.3	365	3.35
8	–	–	6	5.5	16	14.7	32	29.4	55	50.5	463	4.25
9	–	–	4	3.7	3	2.8	35	32.1	67	61.5	492	4.51
10	4	3.7	7	6.4	13	11.9	39	35.8	46	42.2	443	4.06
11	3	2.8	5	4.6	10	9.2	47	43.1	44	40.4	451	4.14
12	–	–	6	3.7	7	6.4	49	45	47	43.1	464	4.26
13	–	–	4	3.7	6	5.5	28	25.7	71	65.1	493	4.52
14	–	–	6	5.5	7	6.4	40	36.7	56	51.4	473	4.34
15	–	–	5	4.6	6	5.5	49	45	49	45	469	4.30
16	–	–	7	6.4	7	6.4	56	51.4	39	35.8	454	4.17
17	11	10.1	44	40.4	44	40.4	10	9.2	–	–	271	2.49
18	13	11.9	58	53.2	10	9.2	21	19.3	7	6.4	278	2.55
19	18	16.5	33	30.3	16	14.7	30	27.5	12	11	312	2.86
20	3	2.8	41	37.6	31	28.4	25	22.9	9	8.3	323	2.96
21	–	–	6	5.5	5	4.6	53	48.6	45	41.3	464	4.26
22	–	–	5	4.6	3	2.8	38	34.9	63	57.8	486	4.46
23	–	–	3	2.8	2	1.8	34	31.2	70	64.2	498	4.57
24	–	–	2	1.8	4	3.7	48	44	55	50.5	483	4.43
G mean												3.95

In Table 2, the items related to assumptions about active learning and advantages of active learning were presented properly to find out their perceptions. Item 1 aims to assess if students' lack of

interest and motivation had affected the implementation of active learning. As it can be seen in Table2, 105 (96.3%) respondents and the mean value of their responses (4.62) ranged from 'Agree' to 'Strongly Agree.' Hence, most of the teachers agreed on the idea.

Item 2 shows that 66 (60.6%) respondents strongly agreed on the idea that active learning is a suitable method to change student beliefs and attitudes,33 (30.3%) respondents agreed on it and the other respondents, 7 (6.4%) and 3 (2.8%) of them, respectively, were undecided and disagreed; the mean value of their response (4.49) ranged from 'Agree' to 'Strongly Agree.' The result implies that most of the teachers assume that active learning strategies are suitable to change students' beliefs and attitudes.

Item 3 shows that teachers' lack of interest and motivation towards the teaching profession affected the implementation of active learning. Consequently, 48.6% of them strongly agreed and 22% of them agreed on the idea. However, 7.3% of the sample respondents disagreed that their teachers' lack of interest and motivation towards the teaching profession affected the implementation of active learning and 10.1% of them strongly disagree on it. Finally, 11.9% of the sample respondents were 'undecided' and the mean value was 3.92. From Table 2, the majority of the sample teachers positively responded to their teachers' lack of interest and motivation towards the teaching profession being affected by the implementation of active learning.

For item 4, the mean value of the responses was 4.39. This indicates that teachers strongly agreed on the issues which say teachers must prepare students to communicate effectively. Item 9 says 'active learning creates the opportunities to share experiences and encourage friendship among students.' Regarding this item, 61.5% of the respondents showed their strong agreement with the issue. Furthermore, the mean value of the responses (4.51) strengthens the support to the assumption raised. Item 11 says 'Active learning creates a democratic relationship between the teachers and the students,' and 40.4% and 43.1% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed with the statements, respectively, and the mean value of their response (4.14) ranged from 'Agree' to 'Strongly Agree.' The result implies that most of the teachers positively responded to the concepts.

For items 12 and 21, the mean values of the responses were 4.26 each. This shows that teachers agreed to strongly agree on the issues which say active learning makes students responsible for their own learning and students have a chance to reflect in the teaching learning process. Item 13 says that students learn best when they actively involve and when they practice and 'learning by doing'; for this item, 65.1% of the respondents showed their strong agreement with the issue and the mean value of the response was 4.52. This means that most of the teachers agreed on the issue. Supporting this idea 'learning by doing' is a theme that many educators have stressed since John Dewey's convincing argument that students must be engaged in all active quests for learning new ideas. Students should be presented with real-life problems and then be helped to discover information required to solve the problems.

On the other hand, item 14 assesses whether active learning enhances students' level of understanding and involves them in problem-solving. The percentages for 'strongly agree' and 'agree' were 56 (51.4%) and 40 (36.7%), respectively, and the mean value for this response was 4.34. This means that teachers replicated their strong agreement. This implies that most of the teachers believed that active learning strategies can enhance students' level of understanding and enables them to solve problems independently. Item 15 assess whether active learning methods have a great contribution to scale up the quality of education. As it can be seen in Table 2, 90% strongly agree plus agree, and the mean value of their responses (4.30) ranged from 'Agree' to 'Strongly Agree. The item directs that most teachers seem to have positive attitudes towards active learning strategies.

According to Table 2, for item 18, 58 (53.2%) respondents disagreed with the idea and the mean value was 2.55. This means that teaching as the sole responsibility of teachers is not the way in which students are benefited. In addition, they were asked to express their view on whether teaching is enough to prepare students to understand their environment, which is stated in item 17.

Consequently, among the teachers, except 10 respondents said 'agree,' but the others replied as neutral and disagree (44, 40.4%), and 11 (10.1%) responded with strongly disagree; the mean value was 2.49. Item 20 'The teacher holds most of the knowledge necessary for the students' had a mean value of 2.96 between 2 and 3, i.e., the teachers reflected their disagreement. This implies that the teachers believe that students can also be sources of knowledge/information.

Item 22 shows that 63 (57.8%) of the sample respondents strongly agreed on the idea that active learning enhances self-confidence and independent learning of students, 38 (34.9%) of them also agreed on it and the other respondents, 3 (6.4%) and 5 (4.6%), were undecided and disagreed, respectively, and the mean value of their response (4.46) ranged from 'Agree' to 'Strongly Agree.' The result implies that most of the teachers had a positive attitude towards the questions. Item 23, which says: 'I believe that active learning prepares for participation,' was supported by the majority (64.2%) of the respondents. The mean value of the responses (4.57) ranged between 'Agree' and 'strongly agree'.

The general analysis of all the items indicates that most teachers seem to have a positive attitude towards active learning. The grand mean value (3.95) of all the responses supports the values for 'agree'. Hence, one can assume that the groups of teachers perceived active learning strategies positively.

Table 3. Frequency, percentage and mean values of teachers' use of active learning strategies

Items	1 = Not at all		2 = rarely		3 = sometimes		4 = frequently		5 = always		(∑vxf)	X = ∑Vxfn	M. Ranking
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%			
1. Group work	–	–	2	1.8	64	58.7	25	22.9	18	16.5	386	3.54	6
2. Problem-solving method	10	9.2	29	26.6	33	30.3	27	24.8	10	9.2	325	2.98	9
3. Role playing	21	19.3	36	33.0	32	29.4	13	11.9	7	6.4	276	2.53	11
4. Brain storming	4	3.7	23	21.1	33	30.3	28	25.7	21	19.3	366	3.36	7
5. Group discussion	1	0.9	2	1.8	35	32.1	45	41.3	26	23.9	420	3.85	3
6. Project method	23	21.1	36	33	40	36.7	5	4.6	5	4.6	260	2.39	12
7. Peer teaching	5	4.6	22	20.2	56	51.4	21	19.3	5	4.6	326	2.99	8
8. Demonstration	–	–	2	1.8	47	43.1	34	31.2	26	23.9	411	3.77	5
9. Debating	28	25.7	34	31.2	34	31.2	8	7.3	5	4.6	255	2.34	13
10. Lecture method	–	–	–	–	10	9.2	41	37.6	58	53.2	486	4.44	1
11. Question and answer	1	0.9	6	5.5	25	22.9	38	34.9	39	35.8	435	3.99	2
12. Cooperative learning	12	11.0	22	20.2	44	40.4	24	22	7	6.4	319	2.93	10
13. Field trip	73	67	21	19.3	10	9.2	1	0.9	4	3.7	169	1.55	15
14. Discovery method	38	34.9	41	37.6	18	16.5	10	9.2	2	1.8	224	2.06	14
15. Student independent work by giving homework/assignment	1	0.9	10	9.2	31	28.4	31	28.4	36	33	418	3.83	4
G mean												3.10	

As can be seen from Table 3, different active learning strategies were provided as representatives. Accordingly, the frequency distribution of the use of these strategies by respondents is presented in the following paragraphs.

The first one is the teacher-focused method, which is the 'lecture' method. It was reflected by almost 53.2% of the teachers as it has been used always. But the mean value of the responses (4.44) indicates frequently used. In response to the item, teachers pretended that they use lecture method frequently.

On the other hand, among the common active learning strategies presented in the Table3, 'Group work' was answered by 58.7% of the respondents. This method is employed 'sometimes'. The mean value for group work was 3.54. This value also indicates that the use of group work in the secondary schools under study occurred 'sometimes'.

The other active learning strategies used by the teachers was 'questioning and answering'. The mean value of 3.99 indicates that the teachers use 'questioning and answering' nearly close to the values for sometimes. The mean value for 'discussion' (3.85) is nearly close to the values for 'sometimes'. This value also indicates that the teachers employ this strategy in their classrooms sometimes. On the other hand, students' independent work by giving homework/assignments was answered by 33%, 28.4% and 28.4% of the teachers as it has been used always, frequently and sometimes, respectively. The mean value of the response was 3.83, indicating that it is sometimes used by the teachers.

Another commonly used active learning strategy, 'demonstration,' is indicated by the mean value of 3.77. The mean value shows that the active learning strategy is used by the teachers sometimes. On the other hand, 'brainstorming' showed a mean value of 3.36and was sometimes employed by the teachers. The grand mean (3.10) approaching three is equal to the value for 'sometimes'. From the teachers' responses, therefore, one can say that active learning is sometimes employed in the secondary schools.

**Table 4. Frequency, percentage and mean values of factors affecting teachers'
implementation of active learning**

Items	1 = Not Serious		2 = Undecided		3 = Serious		4 = Most serious		($\sum vxf$)	$X = \sum Vxfn$	M. Ranking
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%			
1. Lack of commitment	8	7.3	4	3.7	58	53.2	39	35.8	346	3.17	4
2. Shortage of time to practice active learning	8	7.3	7	6.4	45	41.3	49	45	353	3.24	3
3. Communication problems	15	13.8	5	4.6	54	49.5	35	32.1	327	3.00	7
4. Students' lack of interest in active learning	6	5.5	1	0.9	46	42.2	56	51.4	370	3.39	2
5. Students' belief and perception	5	4.6	7	6.4	65	59.6	32	29.4	342	3.14	5
6. Teachers' lack of interest	13	11.9	21	19.3	45	41.3	30	27.5	310	2.84	10
7. Teachers' belief and perception	20	18.3	18	16.5	46	42.2	25	22.9	294	2.70	11
8. Large class size	2	1.8	–	–	31	28.4	76	69.7	399	3.66	1
9. Diversity of teachers' interest	11	10.1	3	2.8	60	55	35	32.1	337	3.09	6
10. Lack of instructional materials	16	14.7	8	7.3	51	46.8	34	31.2	321	2.94	9

11. The design of curriculum materials(text book, teacher guide, syllabus)	21	19.3	8	7.3	34	31.2	46	42.2	323	2.96	8
G Mean										3.10	

Table 4 shows the factors affecting teachers' implementation of active learning. In this part, there were eleven factors that were assumed to be affecting the implementation of active learning. Among these factors, the researchers selected six to be discussed. The factors were selected because they were indicated by the respondents to be factors that significantly affected the implementation of active learning. There is no question that interest, belief and perceptions are crucial factors in implementing active learning in classrooms. As can be seen from Table 4, one of the hindering factors for the implementation of active learning is the lack of students' interest in active learning. This factor is proposed by 51.4% of the teachers as a most serious one. Another negatively affecting factor of the implementation of active learning proposed by the teachers is students' belief and perception (59.6%).

According to the principals, vice principals and supervisors' interview, students do not like to be taught by active learning strategies. Hence, teachers find it difficult to implement active learning.

It is also very difficult to apply active learning in large classes and in a situation where there is lack of teachers' commitment. In line with this, 69.7% of the teachers identified that large class size and 53.2% of the teachers identified that lack of commitment are the most serious factors affecting the implementation of active learning strategies. Like any other educational issues in the teaching–learning process, it is also possible to think that active learning may have limitations during its implementation in the real classroom conditions.

3.3. Presentations and analysis of data obtained through interview

School principals, vice principals and supervisors can be considered as prominent figures in the school system as long as he/she is the one who is assigned to lead all activities that go on in the school environment. It is common experience that school principals, vice principals and supervisors are responsible for both academic and administrative affairs in the school. So, taking this idea into consideration, the researchers conducted interviews with five school principals, five vice principals and two supervisors. Accordingly, through smooth introduction, the researchers the conducted interviews. All the school principals, vice principals and supervisors were second-degree holders. For the questions that were presented to them to explain about the understanding towards active learning strategies, all of them explained that they have awareness about active learning, and how do you judge the implementation of active learning strategies, for this question their responses were summarised as the traditional teacher-centred methods which give more focus than active learning strategies. In this case, it is the teacher who does a lot in the classroom by lecturing, whereas students are passive learners and in teacher-centred methods more focus is on memorising facts than applying what they have learned and to enhance the quality of education.

With regard to the following questions –Is your school environment conducive to implement active learning strategies? Are there sufficient instructional resources? Do teachers utilise the allocated instructional time properly? – All principals, vice principals and supervisors say that there is no conducive learning environment to implement active learning strategies. Concerning the availability of educational facilities, almost all school principals, vice principals and supervisors know there is shortage of instructional materials, especially for practical activities which may affect the implementation of active learning, but in the near future these problems will be solved. The last question design for the school principals, vice principals and supervisors was about the major factors influencing the implementation of active learning strategies. Their responses were that teachers and students' attitudes towards active learning is not positive due to the large class size, the content of textbook being very broad (for instance, history text book) and the period is not balance to cover the

text throughout the academic year, lack of confidence and knowledge gap in some teachers, lack of adequate training on teaching methodologies and shortage of instructional materials/recourses.

4. Discussion

The discussion of the results is supported by there view of literature, which includes the views of scholars and other research findings.

4.1. Perception of teachers in active learning

Various research findings have confirmed that there is a strong link between teachers' attitudes towards active learning and their efforts in implementing. Sguazzin and Grann (2008) showed that teachers' attitudes have a great influence on the effective implementation of active learning. In line with these ideas, 24 statements for the teachers were included in the questionnaires with the intention of assessing their knowledge or perception of active learning strategies. Hence, it appeared that almost all of the teachers showed their agreement and strong agreement with the assumption of active learning strategies raised in the questionnaires, and the grand mean was3.95. This indicated that teachers have positive attitudes towards active learning strategies.

The level of their agreement with the assumptions of active learning shows us that they have perceived active learning positively. But their positive perception does not let them practice active learning strategies in their classroom. This was also obtained through interviews.

4.2. Practices of active learning strategies

To assess the extent to which active learning strategies have been practically implemented in secondary schools, teachers reacted through questionnaires and principals, vice principals and supervisors reacted through interviews. To validate the data, an observation checklist was also made. Accordingly, the teachers identified the frequency with which they implemented active learning from the responses of the questionnaire. These data indicate that the teachers implement active learning strategies occasionally/sometimes in their classroom.

The most frequently practiced active learning strategy reported by the teachers was the traditional lecture method. This method was employed widely because most probably the teachers were familiar with this method. But this strategy can help to develop only a lower level of the cognitive domain. On the other hand, other active learning strategies related to a higher level of the cognitive domain are believed to develop critical thinking and problem-solving ability of the students, which are not widely practiced. The majority of the teachers revealed that these strategies were employed rarely.

Chickering and Gamson (1997) and Lue (2000) in their research noted that students do not learn much by just sitting in the class and listening to teachers, memorising package assignment and spitting out answers. They must talk about what they learn, write reflectively about it, relate it to past experiences and apply it to their daily life. They must engage in solving problems. Similar to the previous one, role play, panel discussion, project work and problem-solving had been practiced sometimes or not at all in the schools shown in the finding.

4.3. Factors affecting the implementation of active learning strategies

In this study, shortage of time is among these factors. With respect to this problem, the teacher respondents agreed that the time table was the third major problem negatively affecting the implementation of active learning strategies. Supporting this fact, Farrant (1980) explains the effect of time. The author stresses that the shortage of time limits teachers and students encountered to implementing active learning strategies in the classroom. Capel, Leask and Younie (1995), for example, explain that even some teachers discourage active learning simply because it brings an extra demand

in the planning, preparation and evaluation. They believe that active learning is pressurised by limited time and over-crowed subject matter.

As a result, even some come to the conclusion the participatory, activity-based learning is best in theory but unrealistic in practice. This may arise from inadequate knowledge on the area and inappropriate utilisation.

5. Major findings of the study

The analysis of the data shows that almost all the respondents of the study have perceived active learning strategies positively. Moreover, it was indicated that:

➢ The participants assure that when the teachers use active learning, the students learn better and develop the ability to express their feelings confidently and students have a chance to reflect on the teaching and learning process.
➢ The teachers state that active learning plays an important role in developing self-confidence and independent learning of students.
➢ Peer teaching, cooperative learning, project method, debating, discovery method and problem-solving methods are active learning strategies, but they have been employed rarely. Finally, field trip is not at all employed in secondary schools.
➢ Large class size is indicated as a major problem in implementing active learning strategies.
➢ Students' lack of interest in active learning is also another dominant factor in implementing active learning.

6. Conclusion

The analysis of the data indicates that most of the participants of the study have perceived active learning strategies positively. However, the extent of perception varies between the teachers. Moreover, it indicated that the teachers were assured that when they use active learning, the students' learn better and develop the ability to express their feelings confidently and solve problems; they believe that active learning plays an important role in developing self-confidence and enhances the development of sense of commitment. Thus, it can be concluded that the teachers perceived active learning strategies positively. The analysis of the data disclosed that the extent of the practices of active learning in the secondary school was found to be low. The teachers confirmed that they practice active learning in their classrooms 'sometimes', which leads to the conclusion that the practices of active learning are low. On the other hand, the practices of active learning varied as indicated in the analysis of the data.

7. Recommendations

• The stakeholders should be aware of the implementation of active leaning strategies in the classroom in collaboration with school principals, vice principals and supervisors.
• School principals should be equipped with necessary attitudes, which would enable them to play a crucial role in facilitating the teaching–learning process in general and the implementation of active learning strategies in particular.
• To enhance the effective implementation of active learning strategies, educational experts, such as supervisors and principals, should provide well-organised training workshops in each cluster centre for teachers.

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