AN EVALUATION OF THE QUALITY OF ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT REPORTS IN BACHELOR OF EDUCATION (HONS.) IN SPECIAL NEEDS EDUCATION DEGREE PROGRAMME

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Abstract

The action research project is a major component in the Bachelor of Education (Hons.) in Special Needs Education (BEDSNE) Degree programme offered by the Department of Special Needs Education, the Open University of Sri Lanka. The study was conducted based on the requests and comments of supervisors of the BEDSNE pogramme. This study aimed to evaluate the quality of the action research projects which were completed by students (The academic year 2021/2022). The research followed a quantitative approach, and a survey design was used. All 78 action research project reports were purposively selected for the documentary survey. The primary data were collected by documentary survey using 50 standard criteria to evaluate the quality of the action research project reports. This study revealed that the categories of the factors of the reports are average and less than average in quality. The stranded deviations of almost one and above, it also strong evidence of the deviation in quality of the factors in the action research project reports. As a recommendation, the Department of Special Needs Education has to take action to improve the quality of action research projects in the future by developing proper guidelines for action research projects and conducting more sessions in relation to the action research project.

Keywords: Action Research Project Reports, Quality, Special Needs Education.

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INTRODUCTION

The Faculty of Education at the Open University of Sri Lanka offers a Bachelor of Education (Hons.) in Special Needs Education Degree programme since 2013. The aim of the programme to develop competent graduates with broad knowledge, skills, and positive attitudes to provide qualified graduates with a wide range of knowledge, abilities, and positive attitudes who can deliver high-quality care in every area of teaching practice. The total of 78 students were enrolled in the academic year - 2020/2021 as the fifth batch of BEDSNE in all three mediums. This is a 4-year programme with 120 credits weight. Level 5 and 6 of BEDSNE programme consists of 20 compulsory courses with 60 credits. The highest amount of credit rate consisted in the Teaching Practice (practical component) and the Action Research Project with eight credits weightages, according to the proposal of Sri Lanka Qualitative Framework. The action research component consists of 8 credits values, 6 contact day school sessions with 300 Notional hours are included 248 hours for independent learning hours, 38 theory hours, and 4.5 assignment hours. The academics of the department were engaging with guiding the students for the action research projects in many ways such as conducting six-day schools, appointing supervisors, and giving feedback while engage and writing the action research projects are the certain roles are play by academic staff during action research project. Action research is a type of study that teachers may undertake to try to address problems and enhance professional practices in their own classrooms. It entails systematic observations and data gathering, which the practitioner-researcher may then utilize for reflection, decision-making, and the creation of more successful classroom techniques (Parsons & Brown, 2002). According to Miller and Christine (2007) with the help of action research, teachers can focus their efforts on better understanding the reasons, triggers, and mechanisms that lead to student learning improvement. However, in Sri Lanka there is a gap

in relation to the action research practices. Kodituwakku (2016) suggested that to strengthening action research culture in Sri Lanka will facilitate the grassroots base for educational policy formulation. Moreover, De Silva et al. (2020) revealed in relation to the action research, lack of commitment of students, inadequate referencing of literature, difficulties of students in academic writing, lack of punctuality of the students, poor interactions between students and supervisors and the heavy workload of the supervisors are the major challenges faced by the supervisors. Accordingly, this study assesses the BEDSNE action research projects completed by the students, to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the BEDSNE action research projects completed by the students. To identify the perceptions of supervision of BEDSNE action research projects completed by the students. to propose suggestions to improve BEDSNE action research component.

AIM OF THE STUDY

To evaluate the quality of the action research projects which were completed by students of the Bachelor of Education (Hons.) in Special Needs Education Degree Programme - 2021/2022).

METHODOLOGY

Aim of the study is to evaluate the quality of the action research projects which were completed by BEDSNE students (academic year 2021/2022). The study followed the quantitative approach, and survey design was used to conduct the study. All 78 action research project reports purposively selected for the documentary survey. The primary data was collected by a documentary survey using 50 standard criteria. Data collected form all 78 action research projects analysed in Descriptive Analytics manner with supports of using SPSS programme and it presented using mean value and std. deviation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This data analysis follows the Descriptive Analytics method for analysing the data collected from documentary review. The documentary review undertaken based of the 78 project reports of the Bachelor of Education (Hons.) in Special Needs Education (BEDSNE) programme 2021/2022. The documentary review had been undertaken based on seven main themes namely structure of the project report, introduction of the study, literature review of the study, methodology of the study, data analysis and interpretation of the study, conclusions and recommendations of the study, and references and appendixes of the study. Mean value

and standard deviation used for analyses and interpretation and percentage used for exploring the analysis and interpretation of the data analysis.

Structure of the Report

The following figure – 1 explores the mean value and Std. deviation of the factors in relation to the structure of the project reports. Accordingly, mean vale of cover page of the project report is 3.79, mean value of front page of the project report is 3.28, mean value of declaration of the researcher is 3.63, mean value of acknowledgment of the researcher is 3.22, mean value of the list of content of the project report is 3.63, and mean value of fronts, space, margins, page numbers of the report is 3.14. These mean values illustrate that above mentioned factors of the project reports are more than average (good or very good). However, the std, deviations of above-mentioned factor are almost one and above. It shows, the deviation of the above-mentioned factors of the project reports is not satisfactory stranded of all project reports.

In other hand, mean value of the list of tables and figures of the report is 2.76, and mean value of the list of appendixes of the report is 2.62. It confirmed that mean values of above-mentioned factors lower than average (poor or very poor). Meanwhile, std. deviation of the above-mentioned factors more than one. These stands show, these parts of the project report need to be improved.
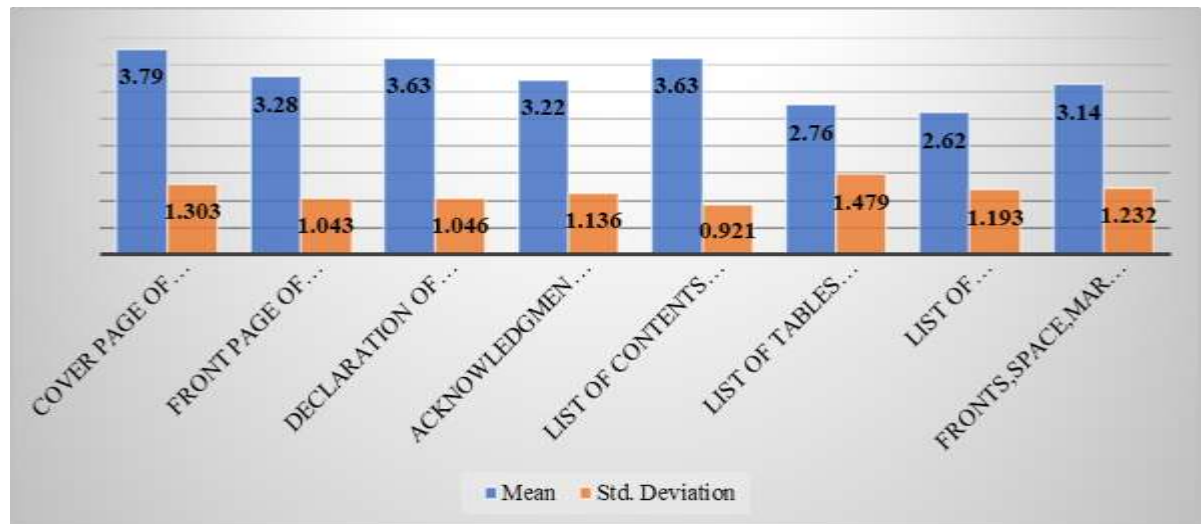

Figure 1: **Mean Value and Std. Deviation of the Factors in the Structure of the Project Reports**

Introduction Chapter of the Report

The following figure – 2 explores the mean value and std. deviation of the factors in relation to the introduction chapter. Accordingly, mean value of the aim/objective/research question of the study is 3.81, mean value of the statement of the problem of the study is 3.18, and mean value of the significance of the study is 3.1. It scribes that above mentioned three factors have the mean value above the average (good or very good) and most of the report have consisted above mentioned three factors in accepted manner. However, std. deviation of above-mentioned factors almost one and more than one and it shows higher deviation is available in the quality of the three factors among in the reports.

In other hand, there are factors less than average in introduction of the chapter such. Mean value of the factor introduction of the chapter is 2.54 and summary of the chapter is 2.32. furthermore, std. deviation of the above-mentioned factors is more than 1.3. It also shows the deviation in quality of the above mentioned two factors in the research report.
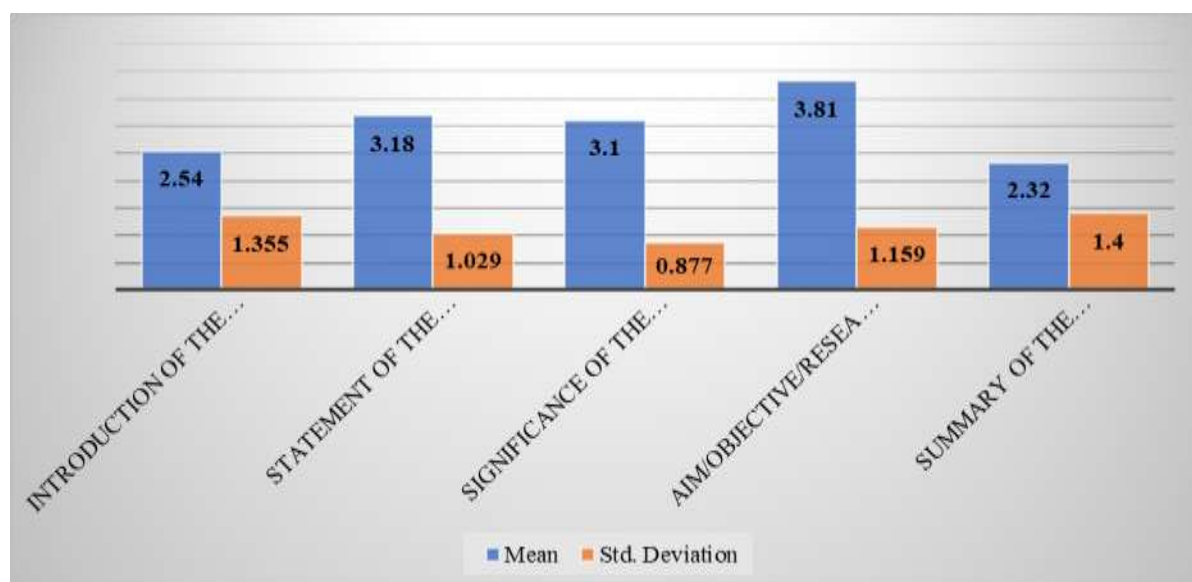

Figure 2: **Mean Value and Std. Deviation of the Factors in relation to the Introduction Chapter**

Chapter Literature Review

The following figure – 3 illustrates the mean value and std. deviation of the factors in relation to the chapter literature review. Accordingly, the main factors of the chapters such as theoretical literature reviews (3.33) and empirical literature reviews (3.0) have more than average mean value and std. deviation less than one (0.878 and 0.967). it shows both factors theoretical literature reviews and empirical literature reviews are strand in the research reports.

In other words, mean value of the factors such introduction of the chapter (2.99), summary of the chapter (2.38) and in-test citation in the chapter (2.62) lower than average (poor or very poor). Moreover, std. deviations of the above-mentioned factors are more than one it also illustrates, the quality of introduction of the chapter, summary of the chapter, and in-test citation in the chapter need to be improved.
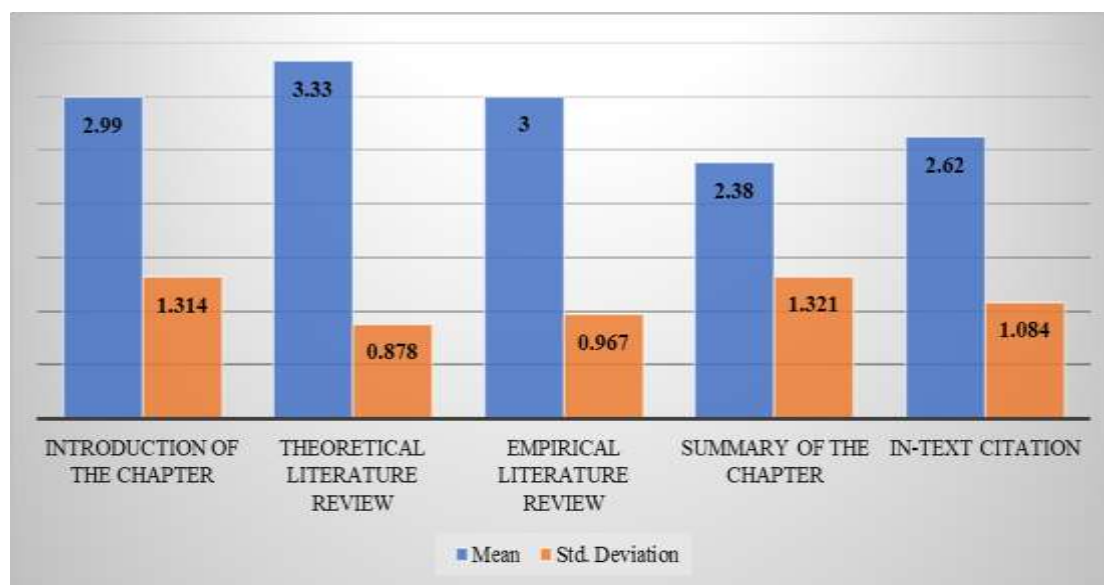

Figure – 3: **Mean Value and Std. Deviation of the Factors in relation to the Chapter Literature Review**

Chapter Methodology of the Project Report

The following figure – 4 illustrates the mean value and std. deviation of the factors in relation to the chapter methodology. Accordingly, introduction of the chapter has 3.23 mean value, aim/objectives/questions of the chapter have 3.68 mean value, identification of the sample of the chapter has 3.38 mean vale, selection of data collection instruments of the chapter has 3.58 mean value, each development of data collection instruments and administration of data collection instruments of the chapter has 3.1 mean value, development of data collection instruments of the chapter has 3.01 mean value, and time frame of research in the chapter has 3.91 mean value. It shows, above mentioned factors of the chapter methodology have qualified more than average (good or very good). It may strength of the research project of the BEDSNE programme. However, std. deviations of above-mentioned factors of the chapter methodology between rage of 0.8 to 1.2. it may higher deviation of the quality and availability of the above-mentioned factors of the methodology chapter.

In other hand, following factors of the chapter methodology have mean values less than average such as approach of the study (2.57), design of the study (2.75), analysis of data of the study (2.87), limitations of the study and summary of the chapter (2.5). furthermore, above mentioned factors have the std. deviations more than one and it shows higher

deviations in the quality and availability of these factors in the research reports, even though these factors are more important in the action research reports.
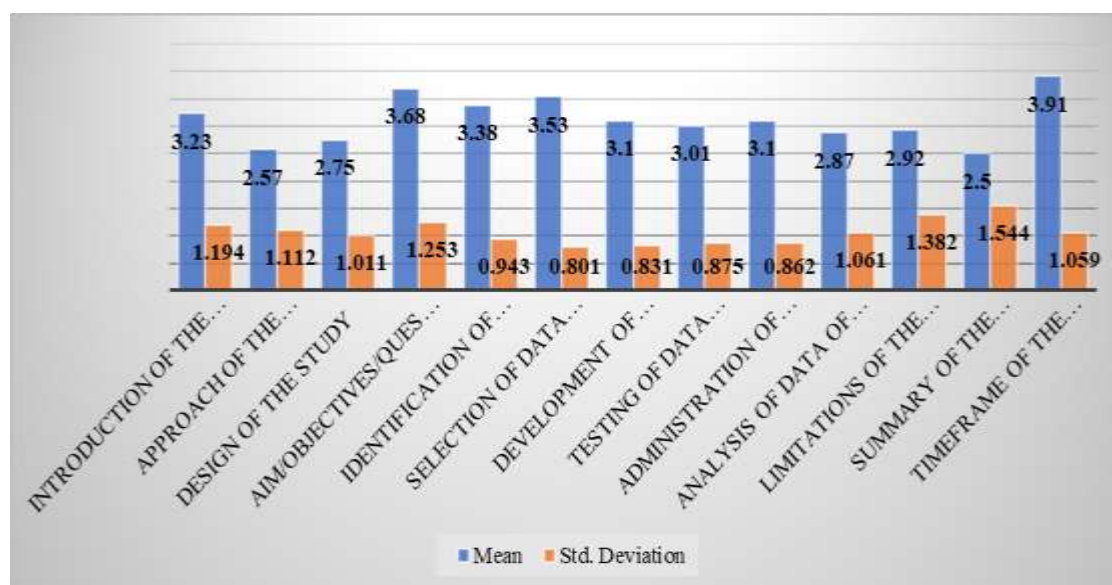

Figure – 4: **Mean Value and Std. Deviation of the Factors in relation to the Chapter Methodology**

Chapter Data Analysis and Interpretations

The following figure – 5 illustrates about the mean value and std. deviation of the factors in relation to the chapter data analysis and interpretations. Accordingly, mean value of the factor introduction of the chapter is 3.12, presentation of analysis of data is 3.24, interpretation of the analysis is 3.27, discuss of the analysis is 3.36, and analysis according to the objective/questions is 3.37. it shows, majority of the factors under the chapter data analysis and interpretations are more than average (good or very good). However, std. deviation of above-mentioned factors almost one and above. It confirmed, the deviation of the availability and quality of the above factors are weak.

On the other hand, mean value of the summary of the chapter is 2.32 and its lover than average. Also, the std. deviation is 1.4. it shows the weakness of the quality and availability of the summary of the chapter in research reports.
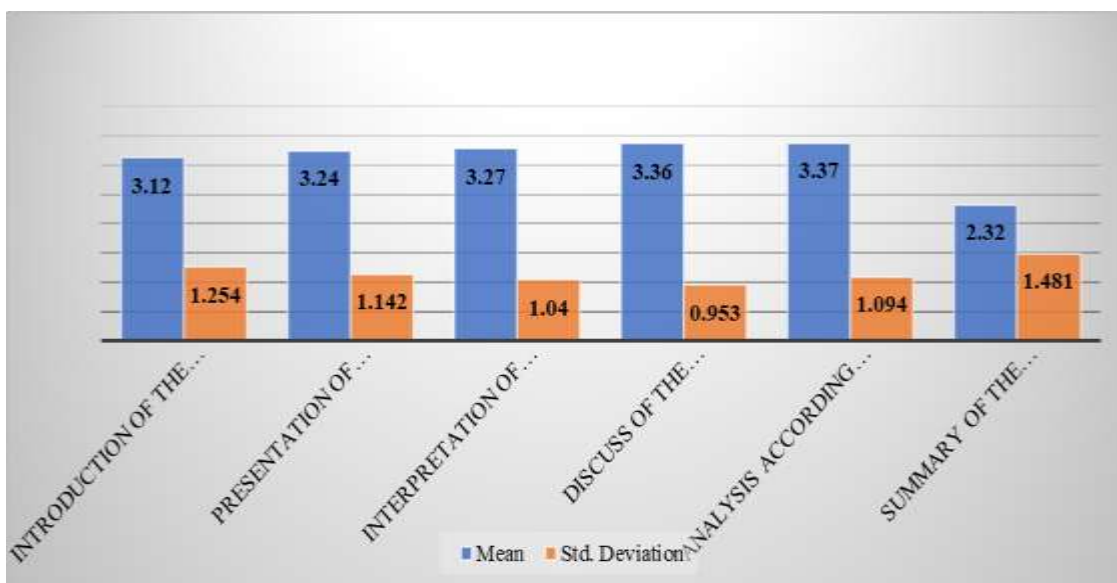
Figure – 5: **Mean Value and Std. Deviation of the Factors in relation to the Chapter Data Analysis and Interpretations**

Chapter Conclusion and Recommendation

The following figure – 6 illustrates the mean value and std. deviation of the factors in relation to the chapter conclusion and recommendation. Accordingly, mean value of the factor introduction of the chapter is 3.04, conclusion of the study is 3.42, and recommendation of the study is 3.35. It shows the availability and quality of the above-mentioned factors in the chapter conclusion and recommendation of the research reports. However, std. deviations of above-mentioned factors between 0.85 to 1.35. It may reason of weakness of the factors in the research reports. Moreover, mean value of the factor summary of the chapter is 1.38 and std. deviation is 1.35. It also indicates the unavailability and weakness of the summary part in the chapter of every reports.
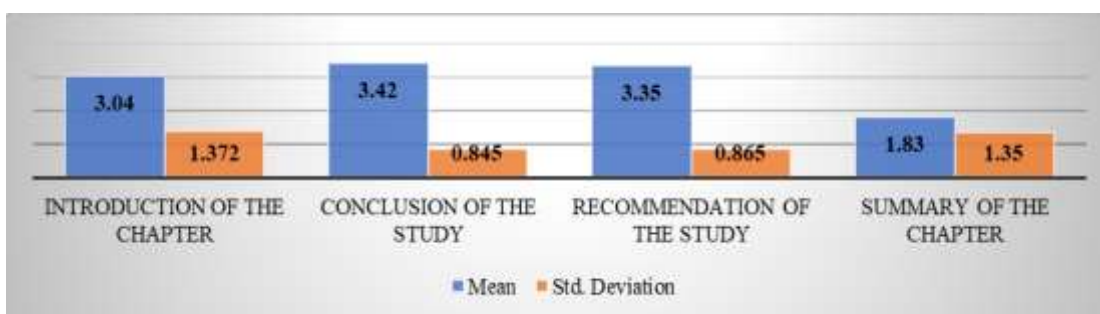

Figure – 6: **Mean Value and Std. Deviation of the Factors in relation to the Chapter Conclusion and Recommendation**

References and Appendixes of the Reports

The following figure – 7 illustrates above the mean value and std. deviation of the factors in relation to the references and appendixes of the research reports of BEDSNE students. Accordingly, mean value of factors reflective journal is 3.88 and appendixes of the report is 3.29. However, std. deviations of the factors above mentioned more than 1.2 and it illustrates higher deviations of the availability and quality of the factors in the reports.

In other hand, reference and citation in-text are more important in the research. However, mean value of the factors reference in recommended format is 2.37 and Citation in-text citation in the report is 2.47. Moreover, std. deviations of the factors above mentioned more than 1.1 and it illustrates higher deviations of the availability and quality of the factors in the reports. It needs to be improved further.
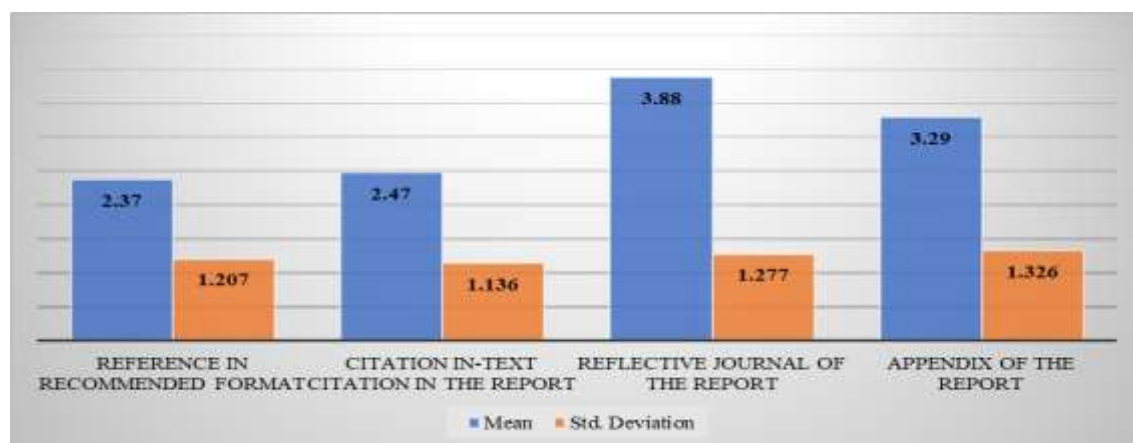

Figure – 7: **Mean Value and Std. Deviation of the Factors in relation to the References and Appendixes**

The following table – 7 provides more explanation by giving description about distribution of the percentages of the factors in relation to the references and appendixes in the reports. It will provide understandable details above analyses of figure – 7.

CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

Majority of the factors of the categories and structure of the reports including introduction chapter, literature review, methodology, data analysis and interpretations, conclusions and recommendations, references, and appendixes of the reports have average and less than average in quality. The stranded deviations almost one and above, it shows the strong evidence of gap of the quality of action research report. Therefore, the Department of Special Needs Education need to implement innovative strategies by developing proper guidelines for

action research project, conducting more activity-based day school sessions in relation the action research project, creating clear awareness for supervisors, and developing a mechanism to reduce the communication gaps between supervisors and students through the period of supervisions. Moreover, department need to take action to re-arrange the student guideline manual according to research findings.

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