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Teachers' Challenges in Research Engagement: Basis for a Proposed Technical Assistance Plan

LEA V. VERGARA[1], EVELYN J. SUBLAY[1],
[1]Palo Alto Integrated School, Palo Alto, Philippines

Corresponding author: lea.vergara001@deped.gov.ph

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ABSTRACT

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This study aimed to investigate the factors teachers perceived as the challenges in their research engagement. A total of sixty (60) teacher-respondents were included in this study. Forty-five (45) teachers participated in the survey, while the other fifteen (15) participated in the in-depth interview. The research also utilized an exploratory sequential mixed-method design to sustain triangulation. Based on the findings, three (3) superordinate themes emerged from the qualitative data, which include: (1) Limitations in Teachers' Time and Workloads; (2) Unsupportive School Culture and Teachers' Attitude toward Research; and (3) Teachers' Limited Research Knowledge and Skills. The survey reveals that teachers face challenges in research engagement due to heavy workloads, lack of support, limited knowledge of the research process, lack of confidence, fear of rejection, and insufficient skills in crafting titles, research questions, reading research works, and preparing references using various citation styles. The most

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important finding of this study is that it demonstrates how education is altering its perceptions about research. Educators concur that education research is crucial, particularly in enhancing the provision of basic educational services. Teachers were deterred from conducting research despite their willingness due to several factors. For successful engagement of teachers in research, all identified factors preventing them from research engagement must be addressed properly.

INTRODUCTION

Teachers' research skills have long been considered crucial to their professional growth and classroom instruction. Integrating teaching and research activities will significantly increase the effectiveness of instruction. Literature has largely acknowledged the value of research for teachers' professional growth and practices. One benefit is that it gives teachers the tools to figure out problems and how to solve them methodically (Hine, 2013). Lastly, it is an excellent way to enhance teachers' ongoing professional development and lifelong learning (Bughio, 2015).

Several advantages have been noted when teachers perform their research or even just read and use the research of others. Among these are promoting teachers' self-confidence, encouraging teachers to think critically, and raising their awareness of students' needs (Luu et al., 2017). Furthermore, it is said that teachers who conduct research will have a beneficial effect on both teaching and learning. By providing teachers, students, and other stakeholders with information that will enable them to teach and lead more strategically and effectively, educational research enhances the teaching and learning processes (Boud & Brew, 2013). Educational research is helpful for both students and teachers in applying knowledge to practical situations (Dehghan & Sahragard, 2015). More significantly, it is said that participating in research helps teachers' professional development (Ulla, 2018). In the context of teaching and learning processes, research should be considered as a thorough investigation of information or current problems to gain a thorough understanding of the subject (Ellis & Loughland, 2020). Fundamentally, research aids teachers in challenging elements of their instructional strategies and assessing learning procedures with a clearer sense of how those processes relate to their professional development. It assists in evaluating certain situations to follow the standards demanded in the pedagogical sector. In turn, this makes the teaching and learning process fun, improving symbiotic ties between and among the teachers and the students while also being meaningful (Kyvik, 2012, 2013). This scenario's teaching/learning process shouldn't be under any strain or tension. Long-term guarantees exist for

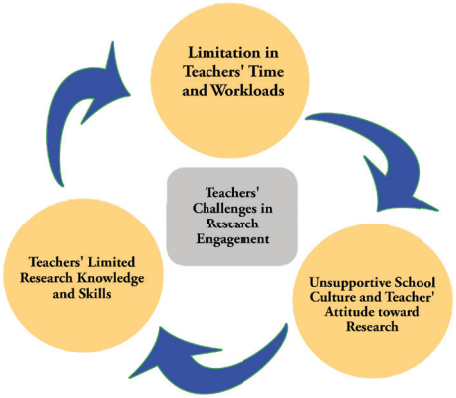
the caliber of education provided by the school.

Teachers can benefit from research by learning what works and why, the short- and long-term ramifications, providing an explanation and rationale for decisions and actions, developing a repertory to deal with the unexpected, identifying problems, informing improvement, and other things. Under DepEd Order No. 16, s. 2017, the Department of Education (DepEd) continues to promote and strengthen the culture of research in basic education. DepEd establishes the Research Management Guidelines (RMG) to guide the management of research initiatives at the national, regional, school division, and school levels. This policy, built on the gains in evidence-based decision-making from various educational reforms or initiatives, shall strengthen the department's research culture. In addition, it improves the fund-sourcing mechanisms and reinforces the link of research to education processes through research dissemination, utilization, and advocacy.

Although conducting research has many benefits, not all teachers are open to doing so. More teachers are hesitant and not confident in their ability to conduct research. Conducting educational research has become one of the most challenging tasks for most teachers, mainly because it has been additional work for them (Abelardo et al., 2019; Bullo et al., 2021). In the study of Bullo et al. (2021), some of the challenges of teacher researchers were lack of time, writing anxiety in conducting research, and viewing it as an additional workload and burden on their part. Furthermore, they also experienced difficulties analyzing quantitative and qualitative data and identifying issues and problems to investigate. In this regard, the researchers aim to thoroughly explore the issues prohibiting teachers from engaging in research. The foundation for the enhancement was the study's outcome.

FRAMEWORK

Figure 1
Research Framework of the Study



The framework shows the teachers' challenges in research engagement. Based on the framework, the following challenges are: (1) limitation in teachers' time and workloads; (2) unsupportive school culture and teachers' attitude toward research; and (3) teachers' limited knowledge and skills in research writing.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study was conducted specifically to identify the challenges of teachers that prevent them from research engagement, discuss the emerging themes from the testimonies of the participants, and propose an action plan to improve the provision of technical assistance to teachers.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study used an exploratory sequential mixed-method research design. Prior to gathering quantitative data, the exploratory sequential design gathers qualitative data. When investigating a subject before gathering any quantitative data is the aim, this kind of mixed methods research is employed.

Research Site

This study was conducted in SDO Calamba City. The forty-five (45) respondents were teachers from Palo Alto Integrated School who answered the survey form and fifteen (15) teacher-participants who joined in the interview and focus group discussion (FGD).

Participants

The respondents of the study were the ninety-five (95) teachers of Palo Alto of Palo Integrated School who willingly answered the survey form and the fifteen (15) teacher-participants who joined in the interview and focus group discussion (FGD).

Instrumentation

The survey questionnaire, which had fifteen indicators, was the primary data collection tool. These factors were taken from research literature that was reviewed and other investigations. They were collated and combined to create a single survey questionnaire, and the Cronbach Alpha procedure was used to evaluate and assess the reliability of the questionnaire. This ensures that the instrument will elicit the desired responses from the respondents. Before the questionnaire's final distribution, peers reviewed the validity, and a random sample of 100 questionnaires was employed to test reliability. Cronbach's Alpha results revealed 90% reliability. Another instrument used in this study is the structured in-depth interview questions, validated by a third-member research expert who knows qualitative research design.

Research Ethics Protocol

This research involved co-researchers use; their privacy and security were considered. These issues were highlighted beforehand to avoid future concerns that might have arisen throughout the research process. The important factors considered were privacy and anonymity, confidentiality, and work acknowledgment. The research's integrity was protected. After being told of the study's purpose, participants are requested to provide written informed consent by email and SMS. Verbal consent was sought before recording, and participant identities were kept confidential. Giving adequate acknowledgment to the data sources by correctly citing them and ensuring that the citations are done correctly is another ethical consideration in this study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Challenges that Prevent Teachers from Research Engagement

As to the challenges of teachers in research engagement, the following superordinate themes emerged: (1) Limitations in Teachers' Time and Workloads; (2) Unsupportive School Culture and Teachers' Attitude toward Research; and (3) Teachers' Limited Research Knowledge and Skills.

Limitations in Teachers' Time and Workloads

Both respondents' input for the questionnaire and quotes from the interviews were data sources that clearly described the teachers' challenges in research engagement.

Data from the questionnaire and interviews show that teachers' main research obstacles are time constraints and workloads. The weighted mean of 4.0 (Table 1) indicates that teachers 'strongly agreed' that they do not have ample time to conduct research because of too much teaching workload. Many participants did not have time to do research. Sir John said that he felt upset because he did not have enough time to do research. Participants were overloaded with schoolwork; their time was very tight in school, where they needed to tend to discharge primary professional responsibilities, and at home, where they performed domestic obligations. These are some of the reasons that they could not conduct research. This is like the findings of (Al-Ghattami & Al-Husseini, 2014), who emphasized that workloads and time constraints were some of the teachers' perceived hindering factors in conducting research. Ma'am Anna asserted that she was so overburdened with teaching, grading, and extracurricular activities that she could not conduct research or contemplate it. Another teacher mentioned that teachers are very busy with their classes and other responsibilities. In addition to their familial and social obligations, teachers also have additional school-related responsibilities at home.

On the other hand, other studies indicated comparable explanations for instructors' modest research engagement on a more personal level. According to the study, time is a prevalent component (Erba, 2013; Juliano & Zabala, 2019). Teachers cite time as a significant obstacle to conducting research. Research takes a lot of time and work. Teachers' current responsibilities hinder them from researching because, in their eyes, their job is to educate, not conduct study. A teacher's likelihood to conduct research decreases as their teaching load increases (Epstein & Menis, 2013; Sarkar, 2014).

Unsupportive School Culture and Teachers' Attitude toward Research

Teacher engagement, which may be obtained by creating locally based interpretive communities where instructors can collaborate to use and generate research, is the cornerstone of a teaching profession founded on educational research (Juliano & Zabala, 2019). Research communities act as social networks, places to conduct relevant research, and where teachers can collaborate to bring about change (Brew et al., 2016). Fostering an environment that values research evidence will encourage its use to direct and inform classroom practice in several ways, such as exemplifying how to use research, outlining its application to stakeholders, and increasing teachers' confidence in conducting research (Judkins et al. 2014).

Teachers can gain a deeper grasp of pedagogical techniques and educational practices by researching. They can use the research results to enhance and improve their teaching strategies, resulting in more efficient and interesting education (Angrist et al., 2020). On the contrary, data also revealed that the respondents "agreed" that they do not see the connection and importance of research in their professional development, as presented in the weighted mean average of 2.4 (Table 1). This is perhaps because some teachers do not see the value of their research efforts. As one of the teachers shared, she felt her research efforts were in vain because its results and recommendations were not considered seriously. Ma'am Jo-anne explained that she did not know what came next after she did the research. My research results seemed useless because they gathered dust on the shelf.

Teachers felt unmotivated to research because they thought their research would only stay as a document and be left inside the drawer. Teachers' conceptions, involvement, and attitudes toward practicing research vary in a way that influences their engagement and how they benefit from research in classroom practice (Burns, 2017). Based on the mean perception of respondents on teachers from research engagement, respondents "agreed" (2.5) that teachers cannot understand how research helps their teaching workloads.

Teachers' Limited Research Knowledge and Skills

From the result of the survey, respondents 'agreed' that some of the factors that hinder teachers from research engagements are the following: limited awareness, beliefs, skills, and knowledge of research process (2.86); no adequate skills, training, or knowledge to research according to empirical requirements (2.64); not confident about their research skills (2.42) do not know how to craft title and research questions (2.28); and do not know how to start a research problem (2.28). Teachers' reluctance and lack of self-confidence in conducting

research are not new. Teachers felt embarrassed to share that they could not research because it seemed very "grand" to them (Anwaruddin, 2015). Ma'am May shared that research seems so technical to me. She felt that she is not an expert.

According to many researchers, a lack of understanding is one of the primary reasons why people decide not to perform research. Due to their lack of knowledge of the methods employed in educational research, teachers are less likely to do research. The challenges of doing research are thereby made more challenging. They do not have access to consultants or technical assistance, which makes the situation worse (Maldonado & Shappeck, 2014).

Table 1

Mean perception of respondents on the factors that hinder teachers from research engagement.

Factors Inhibiting Teachers from Research Engagement	Mean	SD	Descriptive Interpretation
1. I lack support or collaboration from colleagues and superiors.	3.3	.75	Agree
2. I observe factions of research-engaged and non-research engaged staff.	1.45	0.76	Strongly Disagree
3. I have limited awareness, beliefs, skills, and knowledge of research process.	2.86	0.66	Agree
4. I do not see the connection and importance of research in my professional development.	2.4	0.51	Agree
5. I have no interest in reading the research works of others.	2.24	0.51	Agree
6. I don't have adequate skills, training, or knowledge to carry out research according to empirical requirements.	2.64	0.61	Agree
7. I have limited time to conduct research because of too many teaching workloads.	4.0	0.40	Strongly Agree
8. I cannot understand how research helps in my teaching workloads.	2.4	0.51	Agree
9. I do not know how to craft titles and research questions for my research.	2.28	0.72	Agree
10. I do not know what research design and statistical treatment I should use.	1.65	0.57	Disagree

11. I do not know where and how to start a research problem.	2.28	0.51	Agree
12. I am not good at writing sentences and paragraphs.	1.91	0.68	Disagree
13. I do not know how to prepare a list of references using various citation styles (APA, MLA, etc.).	2.2	0.60	Agree
14. I am afraid of rejections and mistakes.	2.37	0.56	Agree
15. I am not confident about my research skills.	2.42	0.70	Agree
Mean	2.43	0.60	Agree

Table 1 shows the respondents' mean perception of the factors that hinder teachers in research engagement. The survey results indicate that the following factors challenged teachers' research engagement. I have limited time to conduct research because of too much teaching workload. (4.0); I lack support or collaboration from colleagues and superiors. (3.3) I have limited awareness, beliefs, skills, and knowledge of the research process. (2.86); I do not have adequate skills, training, or knowledge to conduct research according to empirical requirements. (2.64); I am not confident about my research skills. (2.42); I am afraid of rejection and mistakes (2.37); I do not know how to craft titles and research questions for my research (2.28); I have no interest in reading research works of others (2.24); and I do not know how to prepare the list of references using various citation styles (APA, MLA,0, etc.) (2.2).

When undertaking research, teachers frequently struggle to juggle their twin responsibilities as investigators and instructors. Teaching duties, such as lesson planning, grading, and classroom management, provide little time for systematic research efforts, making time restrictions a major obstacle (Tingabngab & Binayao, 2023). Another issue is access to resources; teachers may not have access to academic publications, institutional support, or money, which restricts their capacity to carry out or stay current with current research. Furthermore, ethical considerations can be difficult since educators must deal with concerns about student privacy, consent, and preventing disturbances in the classroom (Abelardo et al., 2019; Bullo et al., 2021).

CONCLUSION

The emerging themes from the testimonies of the participants in the qualitative aspect of the research on the challenges of teachers in research engagement include (1) Limitations in Teachers' Time and Workloads, (2) Unsupportive School Culture and Teachers' Attitude toward Research, and (3) Teachers' Limited Research Knowledge and Skills. The survey, on the other hand, also supports the findings of the qualitative research, which show that teachers experienced limited time, lack of support or collaboration from colleagues and superiors, limited skills, and inadequate training. Moreover, the most significant outcome of this study is that it shows how education is changing its views toward research. School administrators and teachers agree that education research is important, especially in improving the delivery of fundamental education services. Although they were willing to conduct the study, teachers were discouraged by several circumstances.

TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH

Previous research has highlighted challenges teachers face in research engagement, including time constraints, unsupportive school culture, and limited knowledge and skills. These factors impact active and passive researchers, leading to feelings of vainness and potential quitting. Teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards research influence their engagement and use of research to improve classroom practice. To increase involvement, efforts should focus on keeping less motivated teachers engaged, improving their concepts, attitudes, and understandings, and providing necessary resources for active research. This study would be an insightful initiative for school leaders to make plans for how teachers could be engaged in conducting research. Understanding the teacher's situation will help them craft an action plan to address the obstacles of these interested and willing teachers to improve their instruction to benefit their learners.

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