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## Researchers' Perspectives in Conducting Action Research

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### Abstract

**Aim:** This study was conducted to describe the researchers' lived experiences in engaging in action research. In addition, it also explored the perspectives and challenges of researchers in conducting action research.

**Methodology:** The research employed the qualitative method of research, particularly phenomenological approach, for the in-depth examination of the participants' engagement in research. Nine researchers in the locale, either as teachers or administrative personnel, participated in the study. Colaizzi's seven steps in phenomenological analysis was used to explicate the field texts for the data analysis.

**Results:** The themes that emerged were stated in the acronym SOFIA – Skills in getting reliable sources is important, Obstruct the scheduled time-frame due to suspensions of classes and other related activities, Finding solutions to the problem inside the classroom and giving remediations and interventions to the learners, Improved teaching strategies and approaches, and Additional paper works and stress to the teachers. Consequently, professional growth was the primary gain in conducting action research. Specifically, self-improvement and reflection are achieved after doing research-related activities. Improved teaching strategies and approaches facilitating the students' performance were also an important research contribution.

**Conclusion:** Faculty and personnel engaged in research and must be extended the corresponding rewards through job promotion. Moreover, researchers also encountered challenges along the way namely, insufficiency of time to do research and the unavailability of the respondents due to the pandemic. Conducting action research is an important facet of teaching-learning activities.

**Keywords:** Action Research, Researcher's Perspective, Research Benefits, Challenges

### INTRODUCTION

The educational landscape in the Philippines has been evolving due to several considerations such as globalization, global competitiveness, ASEAN integration, and inclusions of ICT in the teaching-learning activities. These factors contribute to the development of the educational system in the country. The demands of the fast-changing world give opportunity to teachers to conduct research as it is one of the functions of a teacher in the 21st century (Chou, 2011; Hazelton & Haigh, 2010). As part of their supervision and provision of technical assistance, school leaders are therefore called to support and motivate their teachers in the conduct of research (Salendab & Dapitan, 2021). Morales, et al. (2016) quoted, "One powerful form of professional development for teachers is the use of action research" (Johnson & Button, 2000; Johnson, 2012; Muñoz & Sanchez, 2023). Moreover, Hine (2013) postulates that action research can be defined as the process of studying a school situation to understand and improve the educative process (Hensen, 1996; Johnson, 2012; McTaggart, 1997).

The Philippine Department of Education supports the importance of doing action research to improve educational practices and learning delivery and resolve problem in the classroom and in the school (DepEd Order No. 16, s. 2017). Despite the recent global health crisis, i.e., the COVID-19 which shifted the teaching-learning activity thru the online platform, teachers were not stopped from undertaking research activities (Flores, 2022; Sanchez, et al., 2022).

However, a review of the recent research accomplishments of the faculty researchers in school years 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 revealed a dwindling number of completed action researches within the locale. To determine



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the reasons behind this is a function of further investigations, specifically of faculty perspectives on research engagement.

### Objective

This study sought to describe the perspectives of researchers in engaging in research. Specifically, the following questions were raised:

1. What are the participants' perspectives on the conduct of an action research?
2. How do the participants describe their experiences as they undertake action research?
3. What are the benefits in conducting action research?
4. What challenges did the participants encounter in conducting action research?

### METHODS

#### Research Design

The study employed the qualitative method of research to explore the perspectives of researchers in engaging in research. Qualitative methods "is an approach that allows one to examine people's experiences in detail by using a specific set of research methods such as in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, observation, content analysis, visual methods and life histories or biographies (Hennenk, Hutter & Bailey, 2020). Specifically, the study used the phenomenological approach to explore the research engagements of the researchers.

#### Participants

The convenience and purposive sampling techniques were used to select participants of the study. Those who were involved in research activities, whether from the roster of faculty or in the list of school administrators and had conducted at least one action research were asked to participate in the study. There were nine (9) participants who volunteered to join the online interview via Zoom platform since the present study was done during the pandemic.

#### Instrument

The study used interview guide questions which were validated by experts in the field.

#### Procedure

Permission to record the interview for accurate transcriptions was secured. The interview was open-ended focusing on the probing questions that seized the research engagement experiences of the participants of the study. The participants' identities were coded to preserve their anonymity and confidentiality.

#### Ethical Consideration

All ethics in research were adhered into by the researcher.

#### Data Analysis

The field texts were read and re-read. Significant statements reflective to participants' experiences were identified, extracted, and categorized. Themes that emerged during data analysis were then unfolded. The consolidated interview data were sent back to the participants for correction, addition, and approval to ensure validity. Colaizzi's seven steps of phenomenological analysis were used to gather in-depth information from the participants. Further, Colaizzi's processes were rigorously adhered to delve into the experiences of the participants.

### RESULTS and DISCUSSION

#### Researchers' Perspectives and Experiences

On the researchers' perspectives and experiences, the themes that emerged during the data analysis were identified using the acronym **SOPIA**: (1) **S**kills in Getting Reliable Sources and Data are Important, (2) **O**bstacle to the Scheduled Time- Frame due to Suspensions of Classes and Other Related Activities, (3) **F**inding Solutions to the Problem Inside the Classroom and Giving Remediations and Interventions to the Learners, (4) **I**mproved Teaching Strategies and Approaches, and (5) **A**dditional Paper Works and Stress to the Teachers.



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#### *Skills in Getting Reliable Sources and data are Important.*

Gathering research materials and sources requires rigorous time. It involves skills in evaluating and assessing the available information. On the other hand, countless sources of information are available over the internet. One of the participants disclosed that (P1) "Gathering resources, it is easier because we are always facing the computer but you really have to rely on your own effort and your own skill in gathering the reliable sources that you can get from the internet". Another participant (P5) explained, "Of course I did my best to come up with the data with the information that we needed to accomplish the research and it's also a very good experience. I get to learn what I didn't know before like how to collect information, what are the possible sources of this different information".

While the participants of the study found facility in data collection, the study of Morales, et al. (2016), however, reported that gathering data, those that were valid and accurate, was viewed by the researcher-respondents to be a problem, one that entailed difficulty. Data collection was also found to be challenging by the teacher-researchers, in a study conducted by Ulla in 2018.

With the advent of technology, the participants of the study expressed appreciation of the importance of research databases and social networks for the academe for easy access of online data and information (Tarrayo, et al., 2021). The study conducted by Hine (2020) and Flores (2019) on the importance of action research in teacher education programs supported the present finding that teachers are empowered when they can collect data and literature in making informed decisions. Moreover, an article authored by Burns (2010) posits that gathering and collecting data and information are part of the process in doing action research.

#### *Obstruct the Scheduled Time- Frame due to Suspensions of Classes and Other Related Activities*

Burns (2010) stated that action research involves critical and systematic approach to exploring one's teaching context. Hence, researcher participants of this study prepared for their calendar of activities where the specific dates and activities will be carried out. Moreover, they have the time frame for each task within the research parameter. However, class cancellations and work suspensions brought about by typhoons, flooding and other weather disturbances and calamities affected the scheduled activities of the researchers. The planned activities for a particular time were hampered and suspended as well. The participant (P4) divulged this experience " Nagtagal kami ng ilang months, though meron tayong time frame na sinusunod for that, pero parang nagkaroon lang kami ng delay, dahil nga yung mga klase- dahil dun sa mga hindi namin ine-expect na suspensions, yung mga ganyan, na-delayed nang na-delayed yung lessons, and syempre dahil nga may time frame na sinusunod, minsan, yung supposed na topic na kailangan namin, dapat yung MELCS namin, or may sinusunod kaming MELCS ". ("We extended our research for months, though we are following time frame, but it was delayed because of unexpected school activities and suspensions of classes, resulting to a delayed lesson and of course the time-frame that we set are not followed since we have these MELCS [Most Essential Learning Competency] to follow every week.") The actualizations of MELCS or the Most Essential Learning Competencies happen every week for proper discussion of the topic. In other words, it has a time table (DepEd, 2020).

Another participant (P7) explained his experience of an interrupted schedule for data collection from the students because of pandemic which resulted to unfinished research. "Yung action research namin has something to do with work immersion and during the time na I-co-conduct na namin yung action research , is that hindi na available yung mga students natin kasi nandyan nga dumating yung pandemic so hindi sila matatalaga dun sa mga designated workplace na naka-assign sa kanila aligned doon sa strand or track na kanilang kinuha". ("The action research that we were doing was about work immersion, however when we were about to conduct it the students were not available due to COVID-19 pandemic, thus they can no longer be assigned to their respective workplace that is aligned to their strand or track.")

An article released by UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund) explained that "During the coronavirus pandemic, many of the constraints to producing inclusive data have tightened, due to the competing urgency of multiple public health threats that require monitoring as well general disruptions to data collection protocols. Ongoing monitoring efforts, including surveys and censuses, have been severely affected". (Cappa & De Castro, 2020) Furthermore, the collection of data protocols has largely been replaced by those conducted over the telephone or internet.

Another participant revealed that "Diba po gumagawa po tayo ng calendar, sa action research tapos meron pagbabago meron hindi inaasahan na mababago yung calendar kasi may mga instances na maaring magkaroon ng



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holiday or nagkaroon ng biglaang event na nag-postpone doon sa iyong action research". ("We also have calendar of activities in doing action research then it will be changed due to holidays or unexpected school activities that resulted to postponement of the conduct of action research.")

These lived experiences of the participant revealed the situations that hinder the systematic flow in conducting action research.

#### *Finding Solutions to the Problem Inside the Classroom and Giving Remediations and Interventions to the Learners*

Teachers play an important role in shaping the success of educational landscape (Folres, 2020; Morales, et al., 2016; Sanchez & Sarmiento, 2020; Sanchez, 2023a). In addition, competent and trained teachers are agents of societal development. It is also believed that doing classroom research helps improve the various aspects of learning. In the present study, participants construed that doing action research helped them find solutions to the problems inside the classroom and give appropriate and tailored-fit remediations and interventions. Participant (P4) stated that "kino-conduct ng mga teachers para mabigyan ng kaagarang remediation yung nakikita nating- or intervention yung nakikita nating, problem within a particular, area or within a particular place. Like, school ganyan po or in a classroom." ("The teachers are conducting action research to give the students immediate remediation and intervention within a particular area or place, like school or classroom.") This supported the study of Morales et al. (2016) which highlighted that one of the potentials of action research is its utilization as a tool serving as basis for solutions and interventions to classroom concerns on pedagogy, achievement, and behavior. Tindowen, Guzman and Macanang (2019) posited that action research is a process of systematic, reflective inquiry to improve educational practices or resolve problems in any operating unit and office (Department of Education, 2017). Another participant (P5) surmised that "Research is usually done to address a problem inside a classroom, so when you are doing an action research, you should focus on classroom-based problem that you want to find solution. And it could be a form of teaching strategy or a way to improve the academic performance of the students." Tindowen, et al. (2019) surmised that "this means that teachers view action research as an important tool in the successful delivery of instruction in the classroom that will lead to positive learning outcomes".

Additionally, participant (P7) reported that doing action research means to be "Able to unlock new knowledge lalo na if our research has something to do with yung mga strategies or interventions na magagamit natin inside the classroom. Alamin muna natin ano ba yung problem na dapat nating bigyan ng solution or problem inside the classroom na dapat natin bigyan ng intervention or solution". ("Doing action research means to unlock new knowledge especially if it's about teaching strategies or interventions that can be used. We need to know the problem first before we can give solution."). Participant (P8) added that "It solves problems inside a classroom and also pwede tayo ding mag-innovate, sa action research, ng ating mga strategies sa- inside the classroom." ("Doing action research can solve problems inside the classroom and we can also innovate and use some strategies.")

The finding strengthens the position that doing action research equips teachers and other educational practitioners for identifying the problem in school and knowing how to address it in a systematic way (Ulla, 2018). The same is emphasized by the DepEd and CHED statement (Ulla, 2017) that doing research has become one of the significant professional developments for teachers. Participant (P9) wrapped it up by explaining that "action research is a way of making a thorough study after finding out a problem and systematic collection and analysis to come up with effective solutions that will improve and promote students' learning". Action research is fulfilled by teachers in the classroom to solve problems and improve teaching and learning process (Burns, 2010).

#### *Improved Teaching Strategies and Approaches*

Burns (2010), Dizon and Sanchez (2020) and Flores (2019) supported that action research can be a very beneficial way to enhance teaching skills and gain more understanding of oneself as a teacher. Thus, doing action research is primarily self-reflective. Morales, et al. (2016) emphasized that self- evaluation and reflection are underlined in the conduct of action research which improves teacher's reflective practice in the classroom. The result likewise bears similar results from the past studies, and this was elaborated during the interview with the participants. P3 remarked, "Makakatulong doon sa ating sistema po syempre po nasa teaching po tayo mas makakatulong po kung mag ko-conduct po tayo ng action research which is related doon sa ating profession para madevelop at madagdagan ano ba yung kakulangan, ano ba yung dapat i-enhance doon sa pagtuturo. Maaring makita natin yung mga kakulangan yung mga kailangan pang dagdagan". ("Doing action research helps us develop strategies that can be used in teaching and augment what is needed to enhance in teaching.") Tarrayo, Hernandez



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and Claustro (2021) explicated that teachers' involvement in research refine their own voices, questioning and reflecting on their practice. Therefore, when teacher conducts action research, it gives them the opportunity to learn and improve their craft. Thus, appropriate strategies and approaches are actualized as a result of a systematic process of action research. Previous studies have stated that doing action research allows teachers to evaluate themselves and boost their reflective practices (Tarrayo, et al., 2021). Participant (P4) explained her experience as "And then, magandang experience yun, kasi nakita namin na pwede palang ituro yung ganung topic sa ganitong approach, in-open namin ni sir sa ibang teachers about sa guided approach na malaking bagay siya, wherein, mabigyan ng intervention yung mga batang nahihirapan doon sa topic na 'yon'. ("It was a nice experience because we were able to discover that we can also teach the same lesson using different approach to teach students who are struggling with the lesson.") The result is consistent with the study of Morales, et al (2016) who emphasized that through action research, teachers can discover new strategies and different methods that will help them in their teaching. Teachers also perceived themselves more effective when encouraged to assess their own work. In an interview conducted by Burns (2010), it was noted that "self-reflective inquiry" is necessary in order to improve the rationality of and justice of their own social and educational practices. Hence, conducting action research gives teachers the opportunity to upgrade themselves by discovering teaching strategies and approaches to enhance teaching-learning process.

#### *Additional Paper Works and Stress to the Teachers*

Researchers' perception in conducting action research is not always on a positive note. Participants of this study recounted their experiences in doing such systematic process of inquiry. In addition, Morales, et al. (2016) established that for some teachers, doing research is not one of their responsibilities. Some of the participants shared the same sentiments with other teachers. Participant (P8) reacted that "feeling ko ang research ay stressful. Medyo nakaka i-stress talaga". ("I felt that doing research is stressful.") Teacher's perception on action research corroborates with Tarrayo, et al. (2021) who noted that doing research is additional workload to teachers and the nature of the work being too complex and demanding, causes stress as well. Moreover, Tindowen, et al. (2019) stressed that action research proceeding in spiral steps and each of which is composed of planning, action, and the evaluation of the result of action (Lewin, 1946). The rigors that go with research undertaking is coupled with the additional paper works that teacher need to fulfill and accomplish. Public school teachers' working hours as stipulated in DM 291, s. 2008 is eight hours per workday. The work hours are spent in teaching inside the classroom, checking students' outputs, conducting remediation to students at risk, and preparing of lesson plans and instructional materials. This is not to mention the ancillary tasks given to teachers. Another participant (P7) surmised "Nung una ko sya narinig nung na introduce sa atin itong action research parang burden sya sa mga teachers lalo na nung dumating yung IPCRF kasi sa case ng mga master teachers parang kailangan nila, one of the MOV's that kailangan nila atleast makapag conduct ng research in a school year". ("the first time I heard this action research it really seems a burden to us teachers, especially to master teachers because of IPCRF [Individual Performance Commitment and Review Form]. They need to submit action research as part of MOV's (means of verification). Master teachers are required to conduct at least one action research in every school year as part of their duties and responsibilities (DO 2, s. 2015). This explains that doing research gives stress and additional paper works to teachers.

#### **Benefits in Conducting Action Research**

The result of the present study so far shows that participants are concerned on their professional growth. According to Tarrayo, et al. (2021) and Sanchez (2022), "professional benefits may refer to the rewards or merits they received in doing research related to their teaching profession". Participant (P1) shared that "when it comes to our professional growth, okey if you will be having or engaging in ranking of course you will gain points that will help you to have a career growth or to be in the position that you are eyeing for". This corroborates the study of Ulla (2018) who reported that doing research is a way of promotion in the job and results to increase in salary. Furthermore, one participant (P5) explained that "professionally speaking, it would benefit you to become a better teacher to discover new things that would improve your teaching and learning process, also help the students because you would find the weaknesses or the problems that really need the immediate attention." Research findings revealed that teachers who conducted research -related activities acquired new knowledge and skills as well as deepening their understanding in relation to their work (Tarrayo et al., 2021). Consequently, this career growth gave opportunities to teachers in different facets of teaching. "Una, we would be more become familiar in doing research, na i-is strengthen nya yung knowledge na we are able to come up with a possible solutions doon sa mga



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situation or problems na nae-encounter natin sa loob ng ating classroom (P7). ("First, we would be more familiar in doing research, it also widens my knowledge in coming up with solutions to the problems that we encounter inside the classroom.")

### Challenges in Conducting Action Research

Insufficiency of time and unavailability of respondents are the themes that emerged from the present study. Most of the participants stressed that the major challenge in conducting an action research is their insufficiency of time. Participant (P8) stated that "Challenges- uh, finding extra time po para, harapin or gawin yung action research". The study of Tindowen (2019) and Sanchez (2023b) reported that insufficiency of time is one of the challenges that teachers faced in doing action research. The participants experienced difficulty in allotting time to conduct action research because of the different tasks that they do within their waking hours.

"Next is since I'm a mother, of course I really have to attend to other tasks. I mean, it will come a time that there are some distractions at home of course that you need to attend to and prioritize especially if you have kids which are requiring also your attention" (P1). It is noticed that teachers are also attending to the needs of their children as part of their obligation as a parent. Lack of time is the most prominent challenge that surfaced from the participants' responses, thus it explicated that job assignment and other responsibilities of teachers caused this limitation and similar difficulties as may be found in the study of Terrayo (2021), Ulla (2018), and Morales (2016). Another participant (P3) shared that "Yung oras mam parang ano mam kasi diba mam nagtuturo din tayo tapos hindi mo alam kung saan mo isisingit yung oras ng paggawa ng action research kasi parang sa pagtuturo palang, pag rerecord palang nung mga gawain ng mga bata parang nagco-consume na po sya ng time" (Time is very limited, we are teaching inside the classroom and recording their outputs and then we still need to do research."). Conducting action research requires time. "Research is very intensive, so you really have to dig deeper to look for different resources to look for different probably maybe source of problem, source of information. And it requires really a lot of time," confided another participant.

Moreover, the pandemic also hit the research fieldwork by hampering the availability of the respondents. One of the participants (P9) explained "It's difficult reaching out to respondents since it requires a level of access to technology (gadgets and budget), getting access requires a strong internet connection to carry out making research, it's really difficult compared to face to face".

In an article released by UNICEF in 2020, Cappa and De Castro stated: "During the coronavirus pandemic, many of the constraints to producing inclusive data have tightened, due to the competing urgency of multiple public health threats that require monitoring as well general disruptions to data collection protocols. Further, participant (P7) stated that "Yung mga challenges na na-encounter namin during na... in engaging yung action research ay una of course yung available materials, although it was funded, available materials pati doon sa mga estudyante kasi nga nagkaroon ng pandemic kaya nahirapan kami pag dating doon". (The challenges that we experienced are available materials although it was funded and the access to students because it is pandemic.")

P8 stated that "during this pandemic ma'am, uhm, isang, uh, challenge ko yung participation po ng mga learners, kasi di natin sila kaharap, di nakakapag online, so yung participation po nila sa research ang nagiging problema". ("during the pandemic the students' participation are difficult. They cannot do online because of some reasons.")

The respondents' participation in every study plays a crucial role because they provide data through interview or survey question which will be analyzed and interpreted.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, action research plays a significant part of the educative process. It improves the teaching-learning activity and promotes professional growth. Thus, teacher's pedagogical repertoire, knowledge, and skills to impact learners' achievement are utmost reflected in the study. It can be gleaned from the study that teachers are empowered when they do action research hence it adds to their decision-making skills to apply teaching strategies and approaches as a result of their systematic process. Skills in getting reliable sources and data are important to researchers to strengthen the foundation of their topic. In addition, addressing the problems and finding solutions to those are essential in giving tailored fit remediation and intervention to learners which is significant in doing action research. Support and acknowledgement in doing research-related activities from the institution is paramount to them. Acknowledging their efforts in the process of conducting action research is important.



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The findings also revealed that suspensions of classes hamper the systematic flow of the process which postponed the data collection and other important related activities. Researchers need to make contingency plan to or adjusted timeframe to minimal the delay provided in the calendar of activities.

Although the participants are willing to conduct action research, sometimes the workload and other paper works do not permit it. Furthermore, working hours devoted in teaching and other domestic chores require time to accomplish. Time management and tolerable demand of workload is actualized to perform another task and researching.

The result also unveiled the challenge or difficulty in collecting data from the respondents, especially in the time of pandemic that prompted them to gather it via internet and over the phone.

The study provided a thorough description of the lived experiences of the participants in engaging in research. Consequently, future researchers may consider other study sites in undertaking a similar investigation.

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