



TEACHERS AS RESEARCHERS IN THE MODERN TIMES: UNFLATTERING OR PLEASING?

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ABSTRACT :

Teachers do not only teach but also engage into research. This qualitative study employing narrative aimed at identifying the challenges and opportunities of being a researcher. Teachers in the Department of Education especially from the Municipality of Arakan served as the informants of this study. Their narratives were examined on their perspectives to the value of being a teacher and a researcher. This was conducted during the Second Semester of School Year 2023-2024. The challenges they faced involved the inadequate of knowledge and skills, budget constraint, additional workload, lack of interest, and time management. They realized that the school-based action research helped them improved their teaching strategies and they gained from it professional. A training was designed to improve enhance their research skills. Implications were drawn to provide perspectives in educational practice and research.

Keywords: challenges and opportunities, perspective of teacher as a researcher

Introduction :

Research is one of the fundamental functions of teachers. Classroom problems can be best answered and explored through research. With the implementation of School Based Action Research, teachers can now solve their own pedagogical problems as well on the behavioral problems of their students. This will give them the doors of opportunities to bring change in their own classes.

Doing research can be tough for teachers. Aside from ancillary responsibilities vested upon them, they have to make it sure that learnings happen at the end of the day (Into & Gempes, 2018; Salise et al., 2021). This seems to be the constant reminder for teachers. They have to process learning as well as in making the children ready to face the new chapters of their lives.

In the Philippines, teachers are not only tasked to teach. They too are responsible in conducting School Based Action Research (SBAR) (Anzaldo & Cudiamat, 2019). Teachers cried for this as additional burden to their already complicated work (Tolibas & Lydia, 2022). Classrooms are not conducive for learning because of the number of learners they catered. Being a researcher is still a big challenge for them. Moreover, many teachers are not inclined into research (Morales et al., 2016).

The lack of appreciation toward research is a big challenge for school heads. By looking into this perspective, supposedly, teachers can help learners increase participation and learning through research (Babkie & Provost, 2004). Numerous studies stated related to teachers as researchers in the Philippines (Ulla et al., 2017; Ulla, 2018). However, their perspectives are different from the present study like it is on the aspect of Philippine university language teachers only (Tarrayo et al., 2020).

This endeavor will look into the challenges of teachers as researchers. Listening them will enable researchers and leaders understand them. At one hand, there will be some realizations that teachers have to ponder in conducting researches in their respective classes. Giving them the needed trainings will help them generate more of these that could solve pedagogical problems.

Statement of the Problem:

This study conducted to find out the perspectives of teachers as to their roles as researchers. Learning the School Based Action Research would be paramount considerations. Particularly, the following research questions would be addressed:

1. What are the challenges of teachers in doing School Based Action Research?
2. What opportunities do teachers realize in doing School Based Action Research?
3. What trainings do teachers need to further enhance their research skills?

Scope and Limitation of the Study:

This study focused on identifying the challenges and opportunities of being a researcher. Teachers in the Department of Education especially from the Municipality of Arakan would serve as the informants of this study. Their narratives would be examined on their perspectives to the value of being a teacher and a researcher. This would be conducted during the Second Semester of School Year 2023-2024.

Method Used

Qualitative-narrative research design was applied in this study. Qualitative research was methodology in gathering the data. Data were usually in forms of words, pictures, films, and the like. Researchers who engaged in qualitative approach collected the data in the location where the informants can be found. Data would be taken from them directly and see them act directly in a natural context (Tenny et al., 2017; Arifin, 2018).

Phenomenology seeks to understand the occurrence of the phenomena. Here, the researcher digs a phenomenon known from informants' experiences working. The data will be analyzed by identifying the meaning of the phenomenon (Norlyk & Harder, 2010).

Moreover, the used qualitative was to understand the viewpoints of the informants in the real setting. It would be surmised that only their responses would be taken into considerations. Hence, phenomenology would lead me to know the challenges and opportunities as perceived by the SBAR coordinators in the elementary schools in the Municipality of Arakan.

Sources of Data

This study used primary sources of data. There were eleven (11) informants who participated in the conduct of the study. All informants were interviewed through in-depth interview (IDI). The responses of the informants were the main sources of the data. A series of questions were asked to each of the informants to provide an in-depth perspective of the phenomenon.

Sampling Technique

The sampling technique is used in the proper selection of the informants. In this study, the researcher applied the purposive sampling. Specifically, the researcher used the criterion-based sampling. Indeed, the criteria is the basis for the selection to trim down the number of the informants. The following are the criteria for the selection of informants: an elementary school teacher; presently assigned in Elementary Schools in Arakan West District; School Based Action Research (SBAR) Coordinator; has been conducted and or presented an SBAR. There were (11) informants used in this study.

Results and Discussions

Challenges of Teachers in doing School Based Action Research

The first research question deals with the challenges of teachers in conducting the School Based Action Research (SBAR). There are five emergent themes. These are inadequate knowledge and skills, budget constraint, additional workload, lack of interest, and time management. On table 1, there are five themes which were generated from the responses of the informants.

Table 1. Challenges of Teachers in doing School Based Action Research

Themes	Core Ideas
Inadequate knowledge and skills	Teachers do not have the necessary training in coming up action research
Budget constraint	Teachers faced the problem with the availability of funds
Additional Workload	Teachers perceived the conduct of SBAR as additional burden
Lack of interest	Teachers do not have the enthusiasm in conducting action research.
Time Management	Teachers do not have the ample time in conducting action research aside from being a full-time teacher.

Inadequate Knowledge and Skills. This theme implies that teachers are facing the problem in doing the School Based Action Research (SBAR). In the same manner, action research requires careful planning and design to ensure that the interventions implemented are appropriate and effective. Without adequate knowledge, researchers may design interventions that are not aligned with the problem or fail to consider unintended consequences. This can lead to wasted time, effort, and resources.

The narrative of the informant justified this theme. She stated that:

“Some of the challenges that teachers faced in doing School Based Action Research are inadequate knowledge or training, writing anxiety, lack of budget for needed materials of the study, and most especially lack of time which will maybe consider as an additional workload and burden for some teachers who were handling/teaching subjects more than the required teacher's assignment.” (Informant 1)

The process of doing the action research has hindered the informant.

“They are actually a lot of challenges to teachers when it comes to School Based Action Research number one and the most common is maybe the difficulty in the process on how to do the research, and at the same time is the time to the teachers, we do manage a lot of students and at the same time teachers are not familiar on how to conduct School Based Action Research as process.” (Informant 7)

Apparently, action research is a cyclical process that involves continuous reflection, learning, and adaptation (Burns, 2009). Insufficient knowledge on how to facilitate reflection and learning can hinder the researcher’s ability to make informed decisions, modify interventions based on feedback, and generate new knowledge to improve practice (Feyisa et al., 2022).

Budget Constraint. Budget constraint can indeed pose challenges when conducting school-based action research. It can restrict access to essential resources needed for data collection, analysis, and intervention implementation. This may include material, equipment, software for data analysis, or teacher’s support. Without these, researchers may struggle to gather comprehensive data or implement interventions effectively.

It was reiterated by the informant, that teachers are hesitant of exploring action research because of the budget constraint.

“So, I think many teachers are not interested in research among the reasons include being busy with our own teaching practice and personal life. Another is lack of clear role of teachers in the school to conduct research. Do not have enough knowledge to do research, do not have much support from the school, insufficient budget, no motivation to do research and maybe lack of recognition.” (Informant 3)

As mentioned by Cohen et al. (2017) action research aims to contribute to knowledge sharing and improve educational practices. However, limited funds can restrict opportunities for presenting research findings at conferences, publishing in journals, or disseminating results to a wider audience. This can hinder the potential impact of the research and limit its reach beyond the immediate school context.

Additional Workload. School-based action research has gained significant recognition as a powerful tool for improving teaching practices, enhancing student learning outcomes and fostering professional growth among educators. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that engaging in action research places an additional workload on teachers. One of the primary concerns when undertaking this is the increased time commitment it demands from teachers.

Workload was mentioned as one of the challenges in the statement of this informant.

“The challenges of the teacher doing School Based action Research although there is an annual conduct of seminar for the School Based Action Research but the conflict or the problem is that the lack of time, second is the work load pressure and other axillary activities.” (Informant 8)

Designing research questions, collecting and analyzing data, implementing interventions, and reflecting on outcomes require dedicated time and effort. Teachers often juggle various responsibilities including lesson planning, grading, and administrative tasks. Adding action research to their workload can be daunting.

This predicament has been shared by the informant during the in-depth interview. She revealed that:

“The challenges the teachers experienced during the SBAR or the School Based Action Research are additional workload, lack of time, writing anxiety, inadequate knowledge about research and oncourse staying motivated in the course of study.” (Informant 2)

Teachers already serve as educators, mentors, and facilitators. Taking on the role of a researcher can be overwhelming, especially when it involves conducting rigorous investigation within the school setting. The need to balance these multiple roles, along with the associated responsibilities, can create additional pressure on teachers (Cortes & Reyes, 2021).

Lack of interest. Lack of interest in doing action research can have several negative impacts on individuals, schools, and the overall educational landscape. It serves as a catalyst for growth and improvement in teaching practices. When there is lack of interest in doing it, teachers may become complacent with their current methods and strategies. This can lead to stagnation in their teaching practices, hindering their ability to adapt to new pedagogical approaches and meet the evolving needs of students.

Indeed, this is in consonance with the response of the informant. Lack of interest in doing action research is considered as one of the challenges.

“Yes, there is problem related to conduct School Based Action Research specially in school first, most of the teachers are not interested because it is difficult for them. Aside from teaching there are a lot of another task that given to them.” (Informant 7)

In fact, this is one of the challenges mentioned by the informant.

“The challenges of teachers in doing SBAR is that teachers admit the lack of interest in conducting action research. Teachers are still reluctant to conduct for a few reasons like lack of time, workload pressure, and other administrative works.” (Informant 4)

Therefore, it should be remembered that action research is driven by the desire to improve student learning outcomes (Burns, 2009; Somekh, 2005). When there is a lack of interest in doing it, the focus on understanding and addressing the needs of the students may diminish as well. This can result in a disconnect between teaching practices and student learning, potentially leading to suboptimal educational experiences for students (Aryand, 2022).

Time Management. It can be noted that doing School-based action research is difficult on the part of the teacher especially on balancing their time. As such, it is necessary for them to prioritize instructional time to ensure quality teaching and student engagement. Balancing action research activities with teaching responsibilities can be demanding, as teachers strive to meet curriculum requirements, cover content, and provide timely feedback to students. The need to maintain a focus on teaching may leave little time for research-related tasks.

During the interview, it was shared by one of the informants that:

“I think there is a problem related to the conduct of School Based Action Research. So, conducting School Based Action Research is difficult on the side of the teachers of course because we need to give enough time to conduct the research. So, an elementary teacher so we have vacant time because we teach all the subjects from morning to afternoon. Last, we have a lot of coordinator ship in school, paper works and online reports. And even in the maintenance of our cleanliness and beautification both outside and inside of our classroom. So, sometimes we cannot cope up our daily school chores because we have a lot of programs in the Department of Education that need to implement in the school. So, one of the problems also is we have

limited knowledge in conducting Action Research so we need to learn more or enhance our knowledge in conducting the Action Research.” (Informant 3)

This is also the predicament of Informant 4, she shared during the interview that:

“Yes, teachers face when doing SBAR for instance first misunderstand the research, second mistrust university researchers, third lack of time, fourth inadequate library resource, fifth lack of theoretical guidance or knowledge skills and last feel pressure or frustration.” (Informant 4)

In the same manner,

“The challenges of teachers in doing the School Based action Research are the following: deadlines to submission of paper works, schedule for classroom observation, and time for going through the process of Action Research, Time management, lack of financial in doing SBAR, and the last is lack of comprehension in their Action Research assignment.” (Informant 5)

Adding to this,

“Yes, lack of time, and also the insufficient knowledge in statistics especially if your research is quantitative research, the lack of knowledge in terms in doing action research, we can do encoding at night but when it comes to statistics it very difficult to handle.” (Informant 6)

In line of this, action research is typically an ongoing process that involves multiple cycles and iterations. Maintaining consistency and sustaining momentum over an extended period can be demanding for teachers who already have a myriad responsibility (Aryand, 2022). It requires effective time management skills to ensure that research activities are consistently integrated into their routines (Rodriguez & Brown, 2009).

Realizations of Teachers in doing School Based Action Research

The second research question underscores the realizations of teachers in doing school-based action research. They shared two relevant themes. These are to improve teaching strategies and professional gain.

Table 2. Realizations of Teachers in doing School Based Action Research

Themes	Core Ideas
Improve teaching strategies	The conduct of the School Based Action Research enhances the quality of instruction.
Professional Gain	The conduct of School Based Action Research empowers teachers to become professionally active.

Improve Teaching Strategies. In doing an action research, teachers will be encouraged to engage in reflective practice by critically examining their teaching methods, strategies, and their impact on student learning. Through systematic reflection and analysis of data, teachers gain insights into what works well in the classroom and identify areas for improvement. In the same vein, teachers can tailor their instructional approaches to meet the specific needs of their students. By collecting data analyzing student performance, teachers can actually identify learners’ strengths and weaknesses. Additionally, this enables them to differentiate instruction and implement personalized strategies to better support student learning.

The significance of action research has been verbalized in this extract.

“The positive thing that School Based Action Research helped me as a teacher is that it makes more responsive to the needs of my learners especially on their numeracy skills. Through conducting research, my teaching strategies also improved, and I became more efficient in dealing with my students.” (Informant 1)

Similarly,

“The positive things that SBAR help me as a teacher it helps me find solutions to particular problems arising in a classroom under been professional learning of knowledge and skills, skills and understanding and of course it helps me connect with the sources of information and networks of professional support.” (Informant 2)

More importantly, the informant reiterated in the interview that:

“So, I think we have a lot of positive things that SBAR help our teachers or in myself as a teacher also. So, the process allows us to experience the problem solving and to model if or our students so we carefully collect data to diagnose problems of course search for solution hen we have to take action on promising possibilities and monitor whether on how will the action work. So, Action Research is focus on solving a problem or informing individual in community-based knowledge in a way that impact teaching learning and other related processes. So, it is less focus on contributing theoretical input instead producing actionable input.” (Informant 3)

Furthermore, she added that:

“I think Action Research can help teachers to learn more about their classroom practices in reach their pedagogical skills and reflect on the way we teach. Through action research teachers attitude professional identities and expertise can help can keep involving as they consider their needs on their own context.” (Informant 3)

Henceforth, action research emphasizes the use of evidence to inform decision making in the classroom. By collecting and analyzing data on student performance and the effectiveness of different instructional strategies, teachers can make informed decisions about their teaching methods. This evidence-based approach ensure that instructional choices are grounded in data rather than assumptions or personal preferences. Through research, teachers explore instructional approaches that promote active learning, student engagement, and critical thinking. This shift from a traditional lecture-based approach to student-centered instruction enhances the learning experience and improves student outcomes (Koshy, 2009; Hine, 2013).

Professional Gain. School-based action research provides teachers with a lot of opportunities to reflect on their teaching practices by identifying areas for improvement, and by implementing changes based on evidences. By systematically examining their own teaching methods, instructional approaches and make informed decisions to enhance teaching effectiveness. Similarly, teachers’ knowledge on educational theories as

well as research methodologies and best practices will be further deepened. Through the research process, teachers review relevant literature, engage in data collection and analysis, and engage in critical thinking. This experience helps them expand their knowledge base and develop expertise in their subject area or pedagogy.

Learning the action research enabled teachers to have the positive viewpoint about it. They grow in their profession. In the following extract, it was shared by the informant that:

“The positive things that SBAR help me as a teacher it helps me find solutions to particular problems arising in a classroom under been professional learning of knowledge and skills, skills and understanding and of course it helps me connect with the sources of information and networks of professional support.” (Informant 2)

Gaining something is the meaning of the response of informant 4.

“The positive things that SBAR help me as a teacher is to prove that involving oneself in an Action Research leads to professional growth through ranking and promotion.” (Informant 4)

Engaging in action research is a big help for promotion. As such, it was shared during the interview:

“Aside from the opportunity for us, teachers to help students, SBAR also help us with the recruitments for promotion/ IPCRF, these are just two positive things that I think SBAR could offer to teachers.

In support, engaging in action research empowers teachers to take ownership of their professional development and teaching practices. By being actively involved in the research process, teachers have a voice in decision-making and can contribute to the improvement of their classrooms and schools. This fosters a greater sense of job satisfaction and professional fulfillment. Definitely, teachers can transform their classrooms into dynamic learning environment by improving their teaching practices and positively impact student outcomes. The professional gains experienced through action research entails continuous growth, collaboration, and innovation in teaching that ultimately leads to enhance the educational experiences of both teachers and students (Koshy, 2009).

Training Plan

Rationale

School-Based Action Research (SBAR) is timely and relevant. Teachers have to realize that teaching alone cannot suffice the need to respond the classroom problems. They have to realize that teaching is always coupled with research. Its function is undeniably changing the educational parlance.

In this training plan, teachers will be able to internalize the different facets of research. At first, their experiences will be considered to determine which part of research writing they need the immediate intervention. Also, this indicates that they need all skills not only in writing but also in searching for literatures that will guide them in the formulation of their studies.

Furthermore, this training plan was designed to navigate the interest of the teachers to become research oriented. They will never be negative towards it. More so, they will design different interventions that will ensure to increase learners' participation and performance.

This training plan was within the context of the responses of one of the informants. She shared during the interview that:

“The need of a training for teachers is timely and relevant. There are those who do not even know how to use the search engines for research like the Google Scholar and others.” (Informant 1)

In congruence, another conformed that:

“In order to have the uniformity of the bodies of knowledge, teachers need to learn the parts of the SBAR. Some said that it needs inferential statistics. However, in one of the online conferences which I had attended, the speaker said that it is more of personal experiences. “ (Informant 2)

The need of the training for teachers is tantamount to their readiness towards solving classroom problems. Hence, there is a need for them to have the writing skills.

“The crafting of the SBAR is related to having the writing skills. Without it teachers cannot formulate problems as well as doing the whole paper.” (Informant 4)

Finally, this training looks forward to enhancing quality education. This is in accordance with the statement of the informant. She stated that:

“Knowing the SBAR means we are developing our students. The fact that we have to look into the problems that arise in our respective classes. Having the training will solidify teachers commitment as well as skills.” (Informant 7)

Proponent: Christy Lyn T. Jangco

Participants: All Teachers in Arakan West

Identified Skill Gap	Description of Training	Training Providers	Indicative Cost	Delivery Date	Performance Indicator
Identifying Research Problems	This training enables teachers to increase their research				

Identifying research sources (Google Scholar, PubMed, Research Gate, and etcetera)	participation. The will be honed as research enthusiasts who know how to apply its significance in the teaching- learning process. Aside from that, this training will be conducted to illuminate teachers of the process and to demystify the concepts of conducting the School-Based Action Research (SBAR).	Research Speakers	P20,000.00	May 10-12, 2023	90 %
Determining the parts of the SBAR					
Writing of the SBAR					
Reporting of the SBAR					

Summary

Research is important in the parlance of education. Conducting the School Based Action Research (SBAR) is a big help in determining perennial problems that affect the performance of the students. Knowing the root causes of these problems help improve instructions and learning. Teachers on the other hand, can design learning activities that best-suited to the capabilities of their learners.

In the same manner, research is misunderstood of its value. Teachers who lacked the interest of doing research would be left behind. Aside that it is part of the promotion, it will even widen their horizon. They would not only blame the problems to the students and to the government but by their failure of as a whole. Because teachers who engaged into research can ensure that everything can be attained regardless of the predicaments.

Furthermore, the introduction of School Based Action Research is never a boon. It is an advantage on the part of the teachers. As 21st century teachers, their roles are not only revolved around teaching. As such, they have to accept the mere fact that research is part of professional growth. One cannot reach the zenith of success without considering research as an integral tool in instruction.

Finally, SBAR should be taught to teachers in manner that they can appreciate its values. As a matter of fact, they will be considered as empowered teachers if they have to engage into research. They always have to remember that everything has an answer because of the wonders of research in human's lives.

The training for teachers will help them enhance their skills in SBAR. Without it, these teachers will never know its intricacies. Somehow, they will just become contented of focusing only in teaching and not into solving classroom problems that eventually have caused learning problems. At the end of the day, teachers have to engage into research to make them more dynamic and ready to conquer the impossibilities.

Conclusions

This study solidifies the foundation of the school-based action research. Without this, school cannot grow and survive with the presence of different learning problems. Problems are said to be cyclical and never-ending. Thus, the conduct of this endeavor in school should and will always be the priority. They have to inculcate the true essence of conducting action research. Indeed, it improves instructions which leads to the learners' growth and development.

As a researcher, this study is a reflection that action research encourages every teacher to explore innovative teaching approaches and interventions. By trying new strategies, implementing changes, and evaluating their effectiveness, teachers can apprise a culture of innovation in their classrooms. Action research provides a structured framework for testing new ideas, experimenting with instructional methods, and seeking continuous improvement.

More so, action research involves collaboration and networking among teachers. Through collaborative inquiry and sharing of experiences, teachers can learn from one another, exchange ideas, and benefit from different perspectives. Similarly, it nurtures a sense of community among teachers and promotes the sharing of best practices within professional learning communities.

Aside from that, action research encourages teachers to adopt a student-centered approach to instruction. By engaging in research, teachers can better understand their learners. In the like manner, action research promotes teachers' empowerment to become advocates of educational change. Through the conduct of action research and gather evidence, teachers can contribute to discussions on educational policies, instructional practices, and student outcomes. It should be noted that it provides teachers with platform to share their findings, voice their perspectives, and drive positive changes in their classrooms, schools, and the broader educational milieu.

Recommendations

This endeavor involved only the School Based Action Research Coordinator of the Department of Education schools. Thus, the need to conduct the same study in the wider parlance is being looked forward. For example, researchers may try utilize to have teachers as the participants of the Focus Group Interview (FGI). They can support or negate the responses of the informants.

As such, this study implies that future researchers may explore the mixed methodology in coming up with a questionnaire and the Structural Equation Model (SEM) to look into the factors that influence the challenges of teachers in doing School Based Action Research. Through this, the tool can be used to navigate their experiences in different contexts. In the same vein, teachers can use this study as the source of their inspiration to come up their own research.

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