

# TEACHERS' CONCEPTIONS AND DIFFICULTIES IN CONDUCTING ACTION RESEARCH: BASIS FOR TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

CEDENIA F. FADRIQUELA<sup>1</sup>, IRENE C. GUMIRAN<sup>2</sup>, ZENAIDA C. SOTTO<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Isaac Lopez Integrated School, Mandaluyong City, Philippines,*

<sup>2</sup>*College of Education, Rizal Technological University, Mandaluyong City, Philippines,*

<sup>3</sup>*Isaac Lopez Integrated School, Mandaluyong City, Philippines,*

**Abstract:** This study investigated Junior High School Teachers' conceptions and difficulties regarding action research. A descriptive survey method with a mixed-methods approach was employed. A researcher-developed questionnaire with quantitative (checklist and rating scale) and qualitative (open-ended questions) sections was used to collect data from 20 Isaac Lopez Integrated School teachers. Results showed that while teachers acknowledged the benefits of action research for professional development and student learning, the majority had not conducted research since 2015. Thematic analysis of qualitative data revealed five key challenges faced by teachers: a) workload, b) writing anxiety, c) time constraints, 4) inadequate knowledge, and 5) data interpretation difficulties. The study suggests a need for workshops and training to equip teachers with the necessary skills to conduct and write action research effectively. This can improve teacher knowledge and capacity, and ultimately improve educational practices.

**Keywords -** Action Research, Conceptions and Difficulties, Intervention Program, Writing Anxiety, Workload

---

## 1. Introduction

Action research is a process of systematic, reflective inquiry to improve educational practices or resolve problems in any operating unit such as in the school, classroom, and office (Department of Education, 2017). Furthermore, action research is related to ideas of reflective teachers and teachers as researchers. Action research involves taking a self-reflective, critical, and systematic way to explore one's teaching contexts, and seeks to intervene deliberately in the problematic situation to bring about changes and even better improvements in practice. Also, action research is in the hands of teachers, and reflexivity, action, and transformation are embedded in the process of teachers examining their teaching practices (Burns, 2014).

Many studies and previous literature have proven the positive outcomes of action research in many academic aspects, such as improvement of teaching and learning, reflection of teachers' practice, and professional growth of teachers. It most especially leads to positive educational outcomes for students such as improved academic performance, promotion of positive behavior and values, and enhancement of life and survival skills (Burns, 2011; Dick, 2006; Taylor & Medina, 2013). The Department of Education implemented and initiated many activities and programs for the institutionalization of action research in Basic Education. Some of the major initiatives of the department about action research are the implementation of the DepEd No. 24 series of 2010 or the Basic Education Research Fund, DepEd No. 13 Series of 2013 or the Establishment of a Policy Development Process at the Department of Education, DepEd No. 13 series of 2015 or the Revised Guidelines for the Basic

Education Research Fund, DepEd No. 4 Series of 2016 or the Amendment to DepEd No. 43 Series of 2015, and DepEd No. 39 series of 2016 or the Adoption of the Basic Education Research Agenda.

However, despite the institutionalization of research in basic education and many initiatives and programs of the Department of Education, the research productivity of teachers is still low (Vinluan, 2011; Mapa, 2017; Kiley & Mullins, 2005).

Results of previous studies revealed that teachers in basic education such as in junior high school are still in the adjustment phase in embracing action research as part of their educational culture (Salazar-Clemena, 2006; Hirsch, 2005). In addition, many studies conducted focused on the status of research productivity of teachers' action research (Kusure, Mutanda, Maware, & Dhliwayo, 2006; Chen, Nixon, Gupta, & Hoshower, 2010; Arnold, 2008), but limited studies were conducted to look into the root cause of this low productivity of teachers, such as looking on their conceptions and difficulties in conducting action research (Inanc & Tuncer, 2011; Ynalvez & Shrum, 2011).

Chevalier & Buckles (2019) stated that research provides valuable knowledge for classroom practice and provides a context for the transformation of practice. Furthermore, one important function of action research is that it fills the gaps between theory and practice. The objectives of this study are to provide assistance and develop programs for the teachers, and solve an immediate educational problem and issues such as pedagogy, classroom management, teaching and learning, assessment and instructional strategy, and community and school activities. This research serves as a basis for developing programs that focus on the school-wide or district-wide pursuit of student learning goals.

In Isaac Lopez Integrated School, since 2015, out of 124 teachers, only 15 teachers conducted school-level research, or equivalent to 12% conducted action research. This study was conducted to describe the conceptions of teachers toward action research and explore their difficulties and challenges in conducting action research. As a research coordinator of the school, the researchers observed that the productivity of the teachers is low. With this study, the result will address the issue of the root cause of this low productivity of teachers in doing action research. With the result, this will serve as a basis for the school administration to come up with an intervention program to enhance and improve the teachers' development program in school.

## **2. Proposed Innovation, Intervention, and Strategy**

The conduct of research is found to help make sound decisions, especially in schools. School heads, teachers, and other personnel of the school were encouraged to conduct research that addresses issues and concerns on learners and gender and development through orientations, training, and other activities. The conduct of research is one of the duties and responsibilities of master teachers, specialists, and supervisors though, in a more profound sense, it is considered to be an important aspect of every educator's professional life. Action research offers contextualized and localized approaches to problem-solving. Scholars have advocated the benefits of research in the field of leadership education on practices common in teacher education (Carver C. & Klein Z. 2013) to come up with a relevant and timely solution to existing institutional or organizational problems. Through research, educators become empowered individuals in creating innovative solutions to the demands and needs of the times especially in the 21<sup>st</sup> century education.

Moreover, research would not be functional if not disseminated and used by the researchers. One of the strategic ways of research dissemination is during the LAC session, conference, or meeting where all school heads and teachers are present and are tasked to improve their respective schools' access, quality, and governance as SBM indicators. In every in-service training or meeting, there should be at least one researcher to present and discuss his/her research with its corresponding output. The majority of research outputs submitted were enhancement programs, strategic intervention materials, modules, strategic plans, etc. which could be used by the school to increase the school's performance. Furthermore, the research coordinator will track down the status of research using an online and offline database called "Research Tracker". The initiative of creating an online database could be accessed where all of the necessary files in research are uploaded and can be downloaded by researchers such as research materials or references, research updates, and other communications.

### 3. Methodology

The researchers used a descriptive survey method combining quantitative (using a checklist and rating scale) and qualitative approaches (open-ended questions) to assess teachers' conceptions and difficulties in conducting action research.

#### Quantitative Instrument

The study utilized a questionnaire developed by the researchers to examine the conceptions and difficulties teachers face when doing action research. The said tool has two parts with 10 items each. The first part shows the teachers' conceptions of the outcomes of action research, while the second part shows the difficulties encountered by the teachers in conceptualizing action research.

#### Qualitative Instrument

The study also utilized an open-ended questionnaire to explore the issues encountered by junior high school teachers in the conduct of action research.

#### Participants and or/ Other Sources of Data and Information

The respondents of the study are the selected junior high school teachers of Isaac Lopez Integrated School. All the 20 teachers were given questionnaires. The majority of the respondents have not conducted action research since 2015.

#### Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using the percentage score to describe the teachers' conceptions of action research and the difficulties encountered by the teachers in conceptualizing and conducting action research. For the qualitative data, thematic analysis was used to explore the issues and challenges of the junior high school teachers in the conduct of action research.

### 4. Results and Discussion

TABLE 1: Teachers' Conception of Action Research

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Action research is one of the tools to improve our teaching and learning strategies			15%		85%
2. Action research develops the 21 <sup>st</sup> century skills of our students.				30%	25%
3. Action research is a valuable way to enhance my knowledge and capacity as teacher.			5%	20%	75%
4. Action research has a big impact to the students' learning.			5%	35%	60%
5. Action research helps to resolve our school and classroom problems.			10%	15%	75%

6. Action research offers beneficial opportunities and facilitates our professional development as teachers.			5%	25%	70%
7. Action research provides us knowledge and understanding to improve educational practices.			5%	25%	70%
8. Action research strengthens our relationship between school and society.			5%	30%	60%
9. Action research helps us understand the educational system.			5%	35%	60%
10. Action research improves the performance of our school as a whole.			5%	40%	55%

Table 1 presents the teacher's conceptions about action research. It can be shown in the table that 1 action research is one of the tools to improve the teaching and learning strategies of teachers. 30% of the teachers agree that research develops the 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills of the students. 75% of junior high school teachers also state that action research is a valuable way to enhance knowledge and capacity as a teacher. The teachers strongly agree that action research has a big impact on the students' learning, resolves school and classroom problems, offers beneficial opportunities and development for teachers, provides knowledge and understanding to improve educational practices, strengthens the relationship between school and society, and improves the performance of our school as a whole. Many educational researchers and theorists have defined action research as a tool for improving teaching and learning (Halim, Buang, & Meerah, 2010; McIntosh, 2010). Hence, teachers of the Junior High School in Isaac Lopez Integrated School affirmed this claim on the role of action research in the classroom.

**TABLE 2: Difficulties Encountered by The Teachers in Conceptualizing and Conducting Action Research**

ITEMS	Very Difficult	Difficult	Fair	Easy	Very Easy
1. Searching for related literature and study	20%	40%	35%	5%	

2. Identifying issues and problems to be investigated	5%	25%	50%	20%	
3. Organizing and writing the findings of the study	20%	30%	40%	10%	
4. Writing the statement of problem and research question	5%	45%	45%	5%	
5. Analyzing the data of the study	15%	60%	20%	5%	
6. Writing the research proposal	25%	25%	40%	10%	
7. Using the appropriate research methodology in research	15%	60%	20%	15%	
8. Summarizing the result and finding of the study	10%	45%	40%	5%	
9. Interpreting data and result of the research study	15%	65%	15%	5%	
10. Writing the introduction of the study	10%	30%	50%	10%	

Table 2 presents the difficulties encountered by the teachers in conceptualizing and conducting action research. It can be gleaned from the table that teachers encounter difficulty in conducting action research. Many teachers state that searching for related literature and studies identifying issues and problems to be investigated are some of the difficulties they encounter in conceptualizing and conducting action research. The most difficult item and part of action research that the teachers encounter is the interpretation of data. They also state that they struggle in analyzing the data of the study, using the appropriate research methodology, and summarizing the results and findings of the study. The results may imply that teachers do not yet possess the required skills in writing action research.

**T1:** “Gusto ko talagang magsagawa ng action research, ang problema maraming mga papeles na isusumite at maraming mga deadline na dapat gawin sa tamang oras. Wala akong oras sa paggawa ng action research. Kapag tapos na ako sa aking mga kinakailangan sa paaralan, kailangan ko ring alagaan ang aking mga anak at ang aking pamilya. Problema rin talaga ang oras sa pagsasagawa ng action research.”

**T14:** “For me, I know how important action research is in the classroom. However, sometimes, doing action research is a burden on my part because you know our workload in the high school. We need to submit many requirements and reports in school. Hence, we do not have any time doing action research. Research is time consuming and needs focus and attention.

**T7:** “Ang pagtuturo sa high school ay napaka-stress. Kailangan mong isaalang-alang ang maraming mga bagay tulad ng sa mga saloobin ng mga mag-aaral, ang mga diskarte sa pagtuturo at pagsulat ng action research ay hindi ko priority.”

**T2:** “Sa totoo lang, wala akong kakayahan sa pagsulat lalo na sa pagsulat ng pananaliksik. Natatakot ako na maraming grammatical lapses ang susuriin ng aking mga mambabasa at ng mga panelist. Nag-aalangan akong mag-research, kailangan ko pa ng mga training at seminar sa research writing.”

**T6:** “Sana ay isaalang-alang din ng paaralan ang sapat na oras para matapos ang lahat ng mga kinakailangan ng paaralan. Tuwing weekends, wala rin akong time na magsagawa ng action research dahil busy din ako para sa master’s degree ko.” Ang mga guro ay dapat bigyan ng sapat na kargamento sa pagtuturo upang magkaroon ng dagdag na oras sa paggawa at pagsasagawa ng action research.”

**T15:** “Seminars and trainings can help the teachers in writing action research. This training must be held every quarter to sustain the interest in writing action research. Teachers must be updated with the current trends in writing action research.”

## 5. Conclusion

The majority of the respondents agreed that research develops the 21st-century skills of the students. Thus, it was also concluded that action research is a valuable way to enhance knowledge and capacity as a teacher, resolve school and classroom problems, offer beneficial opportunities and development for teachers, and provide knowledge and understanding to improve educational practices.

The respondents also stated that some of the difficulties encountered by the teachers in conducting action research are the following: searching for related literature and identifying issues and problems to be investigated are some of the difficulties they encounter in conceptualizing action research. They also mentioned that the most difficult item and part of action research that the teachers encounter is the interpretation of data. They also claimed that using the appropriate research methodology and summarizing the results and findings of the study needs more training and discussion in writing action research. The results of the study implied that teachers do not yet possess the required skills in writing action research. In terms of the issues and concerns encountered by the teachers in the conduct of action research, five themes emerged as the major issues and challenges of teachers in the conduct of research, namely: additional workload and burden on the part of the teacher, writing anxiety, lack of time, and inadequate knowledge regarding the conduct of action research.

## 6. Recommendation

1. The school administrators must encourage and support their teachers in doing action research by designing an institutional action research policy for the faculty. The institutional action research policy may include processes and policies in the conduct of action research. Initiatives and programs that will sustain and enhance teachers’ motivation to engage in doing action research must also be considered.
2. An extensive faculty development program on action research must be developed through research presentations and training.
3. Avenues for teachers to be exposed to action research should be provided and adopted by the schools such as the emphasis on doing participatory and collaborative action research, support peer mentoring and advising, and other mechanisms that may be formalized and institutionalized.
4. A collaboration with other schools is also recommended to share a good research partnership and extension services among teachers and researchers.
5. An intensified **TITsearch** (Teachers’ Innovative Technique Through Research) Project and Partnership that provides free mentoring and coaching for the teachers. This kind of project enhances research writing skills, increases pedagogical and instructional knowledge, and continuous professional development among the teachers.
6. This study is highly recommended as a reference for future researchers.

## 7. REFERENCES

1. Abaya, E. (2017, April). Situating action research in the institutionalization of culture of research and teacher agency. Paper presented at the National Conference on Research in Teacher Education, University of the Philippines.
2. Arnold, I. J. (2008). Course level and the relationship between research productivity and teaching effectiveness. *The Journal of Economic Education*, 39(4), 307-321.
3. Brookmyer, J. (2007). Findings from a survey of the CRESS Teacher Research Program. *Windows on Our Classrooms*, 12, 123-133.
4. Burns, A. (2011). Action research in the field of second language teaching and learning. In J. P. Williams & J. C. Meister (Eds.), *Handbook of research in second language teaching and learning* (Vol. 2, pp. 237-253). Sage Publications, Inc.
5. Burns, D. (2014). Systemic action research: Changing system dynamics to support sustainable change. *Action Research*, 12(1), 3-18.
6. Cain, T. (2011). Teachers' classroom-based action research. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education*, 34(1), 3-16.
7. Calhoun, E. F. (1994). *How to use action research in the self-renewing school?* Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
8. Cardno, C., & Piggot-Irvine, E. (1996). Incorporating action research in school senior management training. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 10(5), 19-24.
9. Chen, X. B., & Kessler, G. (2013). Action research tablets for informal language learning: Student usage and attitudes.
10. Mapa, D. S. (2017, July). Research culture in the Philippines. Paper presented at the National Academy of Science and Technology, Philippines (NAST PHIL).
11. Kemmis, S., & McTaggart, R. (1988). *The action research planner*. Deakin University Press.
12. McKernan, J. (1991). *Curriculum action research: A handbook of methods and resources for the reflective practitioner*. Kogan Page. Strambler,
13. M. J., & McKown, C. (2013). Promoting student engagement through evidence-based action research with teachers. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*, 23(2), 87-114.
14. Stringer, E. T. (2008). *Action research in education* (2nd ed.). Pearson Education.
15. Taylor, P. C., & Medina, M. N. D. (2013). Educational research paradigms: From positivism to multi-paradigmatic. *The Journal of Meaning-Centered Education*, 1(2), 1-13.

### INFO

**Corresponding Author: IRENE C. GUMIRAN, College of Education, Rizal Technological University, Mandaluyong City, Philippines.**

**How to cite/reference this article: IRENE C. GUMIRAN, CEDENIA F. FADRIQUELA, ZENAIDA C. SOTTO, TEACHERS' CONCEPTIONS AND DIFFICULTIES IN CONDUCTING ACTION RESEARCH: BASIS FOR TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM, *Asian. Jour. Social. Scie. Mgmt. Tech.* 2024; 6(4): 178-184.**