Self-Efficacy, Productivity, and Challenges in Conducting Action Research among Public School Teachers

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Abstract: Action research serves a pivotal purpose in enhancing educational practices as well as the achievement of students, as teachers can now take a more proactive role in the process. Success in action research initiatives depends on the self-efficacy of teacher researchers, their capability to handle their research roles, and the challenges they experience in initiating action research. This study looked into the research self-efficacy, productivity, and the issues the teachers face in conducting action research in one school district in the Philippines. Data were collected through interviews with eight teacher-researchers. Findings show the tendency of less self-efficacy in the teachers' research activities due to inadequate research time due to their demands for teaching and poor self-confidence in engaging in research. Teachers experienced work overload, compounding the problem of observing time for research activities. Further, they also lack sufficient funding for action research and institutional support from schools to help facilitate it. To tackle such challenges and warrant the participation of the teachers in research, there is a need for improved work schedules and a boost in institutional support for capacitating teachers.

Keywords: *capacitating teachers, DepEd schools, professional development, research culture*

Introduction

Action research has undeniably impacted education as it involves practices that analyze school environments to comprehend and enhance the quality of the educational process. It gives teachers new insights into enhancing instructional strategies or addressing pressing issues in classrooms and schools. There is a need to conduct action research worldwide to address school or classroom issues and envision a future of global competence, especially for students. Ryan (2018) argues that action research must be included in a global competency model and recognizes further that action research is a tool that facilitates achieving a level of global competence within various digital societies. Action research in education can enhance practical experiences while improving formal learning, augmenting interpersonal interactions, and increasing teacher self-awareness within a culture.

In the Philippines, the Department of Education implemented the role of action research through its programs like the Basic Education Research Agenda. This framework helps teachers conduct education research, whether formal, informal, action research, or any study, and utilize the results to improve or reform planning, policy, and program development (DepEd Order No. 43, s. 2015, DepEd Order No. 4, s. 2016, DepEd Order No. 39, s. 2016, DepEd Order No. 16, s. 2017). Thus, action research focuses on professional development for public school teachers (Anzaldo & Cudiamat, 2019; Pentang, 2022). However, while DepEd has implemented the PASUC-DepEd Manual on Action Research for almost a decade, most Filipino teachers still struggle to recognize and handle it because of inadequate training and knowledge. Some challenges that affect teachers' participation include too tight teaching calendars and cumbersome workloads, which are barriers to the research activities. Besides, teachers may lack interest and motivation. These difficulties reflect various factors, which include competence regarding research, self-confidence, time, and concern from school authorities. For instance, elementary school teachers, particularly in Taytay District II, demonstrate this as they have rarely or never taken part in action research, even though training was provided for this purpose. This concerns research self-efficacy, in which the teacher's confidence level about conducting the

research activities is crucial. In Adekunle and Madukoma (2022) and Pentang and Domingo (2024), research self-efficacy is portrayed as a potent predictor of research productivity.

Moreover, there is no sufficient study done on the research self-efficacy of teachers in public schools despite the studies that have been done on self-efficacy in schools. Therefore, this study aims to raise awareness of the research self-efficacy from the teachers' perspective and the problems they face in action research. The implications of its study can be relevant to educators, administrators, and policymakers in establishing professional development for practice and reducing the impediments against undertaking practice action research. Furthermore, increasing active research self-efficiency is crucial for rallying educators as, in turn, raising research efficiency and ultimately, the learning achievement of learners.

Research Questions

Public school teachers are crucial in advancing educational practices through action research. However, despite the recognized benefits of action research in improving teaching and learning outcomes, its implementation remains a significant challenge among teacher researchers in Taytay District II. The following qualitative research questions prompt the need for further investigation:

1. What influences the teacher's research self-efficacy?
2. What are the teacher's strategies to be productive in action research?
3. What are the teacher's challenges in conducting action research?

Methodology

Research Design and Sample

This study used a qualitative-narrative research design to explore the themes of research self-efficacy, productivity, and challenges encountered by public school teachers engaged in action research within Taytay District II. This design allows for exploring the contexts and the overall picture of the ties between research self-efficacy, the rates of research activities, and the difficulties teachers face. This research involved 12 purposively selected public school teachers of Taytay District II in Taytay, Palawan, Philippines, who have research engagement.

Data Collection and Instruments

Data were gathered using structured interviews (see Appendix) with teacher-participants from schools in Taytay District II, considering the participants' convenience. The interview was structured by gathering their background information, such as roles and years of experience. The next part explored factors influencing their confidence in engaging in research activities. Also, encourage the participants to share successful experiences with action research, highlighting factors contributing to their success. The third part determined the teachers' research productivity, which involves their strategies to stay organized and efficient despite having teaching responsibilities. It was followed by the participants' challenges encountered when conducting action research. This study also measured the impact of these challenges on the research progress and outcomes. The last part collected recommendations to improve the support and resources available for teacher-researches in Taytay District II.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was employed in the data obtained from the interviews. This involves systematically coding, categorizing, and interpreting the data to identify recurring themes and patterns related to research self-efficacy, productivity, and challenges teacher-researchers face. The analysis was conducted iteratively, with constant data comparison across participants to ensure the reliability and validity of the findings.

Ethical Consideration

Participants informed consent was sought, and they explained the intended research purpose, the privacy features, and the withdrawal rights of participants from the study at their own will without any consequences. Further, participant's identities were anonymized in transcripts and reports to protect their privacy. Strict protocols were followed to ensure secure storage and handling of data.

Results and Discussion

Research Self-Efficacy

Interviews revealed two factors affecting the teachers' research self-efficacy: time constraints and priorities (Table 1). It shows that the time factor is a challenge for teachers influencing their research self-efficacy (Ulla et al., 2017). Participant 5 responded, "*Because we are busy with our job as a teacher in DepEd, I cannot do all the tasks simultaneously.*". This shows that they feel frustrated due to multiple responsibilities, resulting in insufficient time for research. Teachers cannot dedicate sufficient time to research activities, making engaging in the research process difficult. These findings align with the previous study showing that teachers do not have extra time for action research (Tindowen et al., 2019). This lack of time may prevent them from thoroughly exploring research topics, influencing their confidence in their research skills.

Further, teachers prioritize teaching over research and see research as a burden instead of a chance to grow professionally. It makes them less confident and might stop them from starting research projects. Participant 10 stated, "*Master Teacher has much work to do. If only the load will be lessened, I can conduct research.*" This may be due to the different roles that Filipino teachers have except from teaching, including responsibilities such as class adviser, coach, committee member, and various administrative tasks. The time constraints push these teachers to prioritize teaching over research, affecting their confidence in finishing their research projects. Action research is vital to improving teaching and learning (Pentang, 2022). Thus, the administrators should consider this low interest in action research as a lack of teachers' awareness of the relevance of an action-research, especially if they claim to love the teaching process.

Table 1. Research Self-Efficacy

Theme	Code	Quote
Factors Influencing Confidence	Time Constraints	"*Number 1 is time. I have more time to teach. For me, research is a last choice.*" - P3
		"*Time, because we are busy with our job as a teacher in DepEd, so I cannot do all the tasks simultaneously.*" - P5
		"*Maybe the biggest factor is time. That made it hard for me to finish my research.*" - P7
	Priorities and Interest	"*As I say, Master Teacher has much work to do. If only the load will be lessened, I can conduct research.*" - P10
		"*I am more in love with teaching than research. However, if research is required, I need to do it. However, I am not a fan of research.*" - P12

Productivity in Conducting Action Research

Regarding productivity in Taytay District II, action research is the most demanding aspect of the teacher-researchers in this study. Though teachers recognize the significance of research in enhancing teaching and learning, most find it hard to cope with the pressure of teaching requirements and research activities. Most of the teachers in the survey responded that they felt pressured by the volume of work in teaching and could not find much time to do research. The demanding nature of teachers' jobs makes action research challenging. Workload directly influences the research productivity of teacher researchers (Henry et al., 2020). However, employing strategies for efficiency may alleviate this difficulty. Teachers addressed strategies to make action research more efficient (Table 2).

Organizational strategies are revealed to be necessary. For instance, P7 stated,*" We make plans, and we follow the timetable we set for every part of the research*," highlighting the necessity of planning ahead of time. For teacher-researchers, goal setting and planning benefit their research productivity due to their guiding influence and sense of purpose (Camp, 2017). It gives teachers a roadmap for their research, especially creating a timetable, since balancing teaching responsibilities with action research is challenging. However, clear goal setting assists them in being efficient. Teachers acknowledged the need for a structured organization to manage research activities alongside their

teaching responsibilities effectively. Teachers emphasized the need to set clear goals for their research. This means they see the value in having specific objectives to guide and keep their work on track. Setting achievable goals helps them focus and prioritize tasks, making their research more efficient. Moreover, teachers recognize the importance of staying disciplined in their research, showing the need to stay focused and consistent despite challenges like limited time.

Time allocation and prioritization were also highlighted in the interviews as the pivotal constraints for most participants in allocating time and exerting effort in their research. They described the demanding nature of teaching and the complexities of research as parallel processes that result in the mismanagement of time, hence the need for simplification. The most crucial attribute a teacher needs is proficient time management within the school setting (Okoth, 2013). Hence, participants emphasized the need for strategic planning to enhance efficiency in conducting action research. In line with this, P6 proposed that "*to stay organized in conducting action research, I think one should employ having a clear plan then set milestones: break the project into smaller, manageable tasks with deadlines.*"

Table 2. Productivity in Conducting Action Research

Theme	Code	Quote
Strategies for Efficiency	*Organizational Strategies*	"*As much as possible, we make plans, and we follow the timetable we set for every part of the research.*" - P7
		"*You have to set goals. I know I am a busy teacher, but I also have to give enough time for research.*" - P10
		"*You should have a target and goal. Discipline is important.*" - P11 "*There are many ancillary works in school. Research needs time; it is essential.*" - P2
	Time Allocation and Prioritization	"*To stay organized in conducting action research, I think one should employ having a clear plan then set milestones: break the project into smaller, manageable tasks with deadlines.*" - P6

Challenges in Conducting Action Research

The current qualitative study established that teacher-researchers face significant difficulties contacting potential research participants. These challenges were categorized into three major themes: difficulty engaging participants, time management, and lack of institutional support.

Difficulty in Engaging Participants. Teacher-researchers revealed that finding and facing the participants was more challenging than expected (Table 3a). Some participants were not cooperative due to other priorities, and some were willing, but their responses should be confidential. This unexpected difficulty in engaging the participants in the action research showed how challenging it can be among public school teachers (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021). In addition, the complexity regarding the participants' engagement underscores a challenge in competing with the priorities that participants may face to participate fully in conducting action research. Hence, this emphasizes that teacher-researchers need to formulate strategies that could accommodate the constraints of participants towards the conduct of action research.

The nature of engaging participants in action research poses a significant challenge for teacher researchers. In facing the participants, they mentioned that confidentiality among the participants and their uncooperativeness were the factors that hindered them from engaging in the action research. In line with this, Participant 5 highlighted the need to study the target participants. Further, "*it would be best to inform them about your research limitations and targets.*" Also, they hinted that some participants are not cooperative because they have other priorities. This implies that teacher-researchers must invest time and effort into understanding the target participants and employing a structured process to engage them in action research effectively. Similarly, it was revealed that the participants may hesitate to provide honest and credible information if their responses are not kept confidential (Şensoy & Ikiz, 2022). This concept is a barrier to obtaining accurate and valuable data, as some participants may be uncooperative due to various reasons, such as lack of interest and competing priorities (El Baz & Ruel, 2021). However, it was emphasized that when teachers engaged themselves in conducting research studies, the responses were more likely to produce

actionable findings (Meyer et al., 2022). This shows that teachers' active engagement and responses towards action research ensure that the findings are relevant, actionable, and capable of driving meaningful improvements in educational practice and policy. Furthermore, the teacher-researchers should develop clear protocols for maintaining confidentiality to address the participants' concerns regarding the privacy of their responses. Moreover, some participants were uncooperative due to a lack of understanding of the research process and other priorities. Therefore, flexible engagement strategies must accommodate participants' diverse schedules and commitments.

Table 3a. Challenges in Conducting Action Research: Difficulty in Engaging Participants

Theme	Code	Quote
Difficulty in Engaging Participants	Confidentiality and Personal Matter	*"You need to study your target participants. You have to undergo a process. It would be best to inform them about your research limitations and targets."* - P5 *"My co-teachers are willing, but there should be confidentiality in their answers."* - P12
	Not Cooperative	*"…participants are not cooperative."* - P6 *"Some participants are not cooperative because they have other priorities. They are poorly informed in research, so they do not communicate much."* - P8

Time Management Challenges: One of the concrete issues stated by the teacher-researchers of Taytay District II was the time management experienced by teachers when conducting action research. The daily teaching loads, in addition to the research tasks, lead to time mismanagement and a situation where instructors attend to their daily teaching duties while setting aside minimal time for research activities (Aramali et al., 2022). This shows that teacher-researchers often focused more on teaching tasks, leaving them with limited time to conduct their action research. The excessive workload of teacher-researchers not only restrained them from dedicating sufficient time to research tasks but also affected the quality and performance of their action research (Razalli et al., 2021). Therefore, prioritizing time management skills and strategies to accommodate both research and teaching tasks is imperative for optimizing the productivity and effectiveness of teacher-researchers.

Table 3b. Challenges in Conducting Action Research: Time Management Challenges

Theme	Code	Quote
Time Management	Heavy Workloads and Teaching Responsibilities	*"Time, because other than the research itself, you have other tasks to do, so it was tough."* - P2 *"The first challenge is time. Sometimes, my conscience attacks me because there are moments that I should be teaching instead of doing research."* - P9 *"Time. Because we have another task like teaching, this is an additional workload."* - P11
	Divided Tasks	*"I still need time. I cannot do all the tasks at the same time. There is overlapping. I want to focus on the task at hand. Nevertheless, when it is like this, you have a lot to do, and you cannot do it."* - P1
	Deadline	*"Deadline is a challenge. You have to be ready for the division summit, for example, while not forgetting that you also have teaching responsibilities."* - P10

Due to heavy workloads and teaching responsibilities, divided tasks, and deadlines, teacher-researchers encountered significant difficulties in allocating time for action research (Table 3b). Participant 11 responded, "*We have another task like teaching, and this is an additional workload,*" which indicates that conducting action research makes it even harder to find time for them. Similar studies also revealed that heavy teaching and responsibilities, divided tasks, and deadlines are barriers to engaging teachers in their research studies (Bullo et al., 2021). Furthermore, it was also found that teachers often struggle to complete research projects on time due to busy school schedules and tasks, even though they are competent in conducting their action research (Vaughan, 2020). This finding shows the impact of time constraints on teacher researchers, pointing out the need for interventions to tackle this problem. In essence, this indicates that school administration and department heads must devise a plan to reduce teachers' heavy workloads and set up a manageable deadline considering the conduct of their action research. Consequently,

this approach underscores the importance of fostering a supportive environment that prioritizes the professional development and research aspirations of teacher-researchers (Pentang, 2022). Thus, teacher-researchers could improve and innovate educational settings since it is conducive to conducting meaningful action research.

Lack of Institutional Support: The lack of institutional support for conducting action research compromises the quality and impact of action research (Table 3c). Since institutional support significantly impacts the innovation of emerging research and studies, its presence or absence holds considerable sway over the pace and direction of innovation within the progressive research outcomes (Yang & Yu, 2023). Financial support was essential for the execution and success of action research projects, nurturing environments conducive to collaboration and fostering partnerships among stakeholders (Mahoney et al., 2021). This emphasizes how crucial institutional support is for advancing and succeeding in research. This also shows the necessity for solid support systems to encourage innovation and progress in action research in public schools. Teacher-researchers highlighted this challenge in conducting action research through financial and material resources and administration support.

The lack of financial and material resources was pointed out as one of the challenges in supporting the conduct of action research among public school teachers. For instance, Master Teacher 1 stressed that "*it is expensive to conduct action research*," which underscores that the high cost of conducting action research hinders the ability of teacher-researchers to allocate resources effectively, impacting the overall quality and scope of research activities (Ramchurn & Nundy, 2023). Similar studies agreed that the financial constraints faced by public school teachers and institutions can hinder teachers' engagement in research activities (Lan, 2022; Oestar & Marzo, 2022). However, a comprehensive understanding of cost implications and the prioritization of research activities based on available resources is required to address the financial constraints in conducting research studies (Paul et al., 2020). Furthermore, research grants and dissemination grants play a crucial role in research as they foster innovation and push the boundaries of knowledge within various fields (Heyard & Hottenrott, 2021). This shows that public school teachers' expensive conduct of action research may be addressed by employing a comprehensive understanding of cost implications and strategic prioritization of research activities, alongside continued investment in research grants to foster innovation and advance knowledge across various fields. Hence, it is essential to address teacher-researchers financial challenges so they can be more involved in research activities and ensure a better quality of action research in educational settings.

Table 3c. Challenges in Conducting Action Research: Lack of Institutional Support

Theme	Code	Quote
Lack of Institutional Support	Financial and Material Resources	"*It is expensive to conduct action research.*" - P1
		" *You have to submit your needed budget, but I requested a printer for that matter, which was not approved.*" - P2
		"*That time, I was not so computer-literate. There are things that I need to learn so it will be easier for me to enter data in my research paper. So it is a challenge for all the teachers.*" - P5
	Administration Support	"*Some school heads are not supportive in research.*" - P7
		"*I cannot ask for support because most will say they do not know how to do it. There is no willingness. That is why I told myself I must learn it myself.*" - P8
		"*So the challenge is we want to have our paper checked, but our principal will not permit us to go out. It was burdensome.*" - P10
		"*During my time, my participants were farmers, and my school head was the number one who did not allow us to do action research.*" - P12

On top of that, public school teachers face a significant challenge in carrying out action research projects due to the lack of support from school administrators. As mentioned by one participant, There are "*some school heads who are not supportive in terms of research*," indicating that teacher researchers felt unsupported and undervalued in their efforts to innovate and improve educational practices through research (Johnson, 2023). In line with this, teacher researchers' lack of support in conducting research from school administrators fostered a challenging environment among teachers, hindering their professional growth and innovative practices within educational settings (Zhao & Song, 2021). Additionally, this could further hinder the progress in conducting research and may hamper innovation

based on the implications of research studies. This indicates that administrative support is crucial to securing necessary approvals, accessing relevant data and information, and fostering a collaborative environment conducive to research inquiry. Moreover, in the absence of administrative support for action research, teacher-researchers may find themselves unsupported in pursuing their research efforts, which hinders them from fully realizing the potential impact of action research on their instructional practices. Hence, teacher-researchers need administrative guidance and encouragement to navigate action research initiatives effectively.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Action research promotes professional development among teachers. Despite the initiative of the Department of Education to integrate action research within its frameworks, Filipino educators encounter foundational obstacles, including insufficient training, burdensome workloads, and other internal and external factors that hinder their self-efficacy and productivity in action research. Time management proves critical; the teaching load continues to be challenging and, more often than not, overwhelms research initiatives. Moreover, many practical issues arise throughout the teaching-research process, such as recruiting participants, dealing with administrative barriers, and lack of access to the subjects. Nevertheless, teachers still show resilience amidst the challenges and try to overcome them through setting goals and managing time better. Further, collaboration and support from institutions are also crucial for success.

The study indicates that training modules for a specific teacher should be developed to improve teachers' self-efficacy in action research. This can also be useful in this respect to attend workshops and seminars or engage in a mentorship with somebody experienced in the field. Secondly, it is necessary to help teachers organize their work and find ideas with which they will be able to divide time between lessons and research activities effectively. It can entail setting up specific hours for the research, offering help with chores that take time, or offering ideas or sources on how to organize time well. Also, this study suggests that promoting intra-school interactions between teacher-researchers, school administrators, and other external stakeholders could remove the barriers that hinder action research. However, there are still uncertainties for each individual in conducting action research. Hence, organizational concern could be a platform to encourage sharing best practices, peer support, and teamwork in solving problems. Lastly, frequently evaluate the success of support structures and activities that enhance teacher-researchers confidence and productivity in action research. Based on the received feedback and evaluation, it shows a need to modify the approaches towards action research, if any, to respond to emerging difficulties and enhance the support arrangements. Furthermore, these recommendations will be put into practice, and stakeholders will be able to foster an environment that will facilitate and support the increased involvement of teacher-researchers in the Taytay District II to improve the practices and the quality of the education system through action research.

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Authorship Contribution

Caabas (12%): Concept and design, writing the manuscript. Diaz (11%): Data gathering, writing the manuscript. Luna (11%): Data gathering, writing the manuscript. Borris, Julaida (11%): Data gathering, writing the manuscript. Borris, Juraida (11%): Data gathering, and writing the manuscript. Dadule (11%): Data interpretation, editing the manuscript. Saac (11%): Data interpretation, editing the manuscript. Pentang (10%): Supervision, reviewing and editing the manuscript. Dangkulos (6%): Reviewing and editing the manuscript. Bitangcol (6%): Reviewing and editing the manuscript.

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Appendix

Interview Guide

I.   Background Information
A. What is your current role in the Department of Education?
B. How many years of experience do you have as a teacher?

II.   Research Self-Efficacy
A. How confident do you feel in your ability to conduct action research?
B. What factors contribute to your confidence or lack thereof in conducting research?
C. Can you describe a successful experience you have had with action research? What made it successful?

III. Productivity in Conducting Action Research
A. Do you prioritize your time when conducting action research alongside your teaching responsibilities?
B. What strategies do you use to stay organized and efficient during the research process?
C. Have you faced any challenges in maintaining productivity while conducting action research? If so, what were they?

IV.   Challenges in Conducting Action Research
A. What are the main challenges you encounter when conducting action research?
B. How do these challenges impact your research progress and outcomes?
C. Have you sought support or resources to overcome these challenges? If yes, what kind of support was most helpful?

V.   Recommendations
A. What recommendations would you offer to improve the support and resources available for teacher-researchers in the Department of Education?
B. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences with action research or any other thoughts on this topic?