

## **Engagement in Research of Public Elementary School Teachers in Sta. Maria District, Department of Education, Schools Division of Bulacan**

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### **Abstract**

*The study delved on the teacher's engagement in research in the workplace, as they face tremendous challenges and experiences in the school. It aimed to look into the level of the teacher's research engagement, factors influencing their level of engagement, experiences in doing research, training needs and the implications of the elementary school teachers' engagement in research. This study employed the case analysis type of qualitative research. It was conducted in Sta. Maria District, Schools Division of Bulacan, Department of Education during the school year 2016-2017. A total of 204 elementary school teachers participated in the study. As a result, the primary and intermediate grade school teachers had high, moderate, and low level of engagement in research. Teachers with high rank, low rank, middle ages; and shorter length of services have desire to conduct research. Teachers who are about to retire had lost their passion and motivation to do research. Teachers' burden lies on heavy workloads, time constraints, financial capability and research technical know-how. The teachers need training in the conceptualization of research problem, writing skills, statistical data analysis, identifying research designs, methods, and development of data gathering instruments. Teachers feel fulfilled and proud when their research works were finished and validated by the Department of Education and other agency.*

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**Keywords:** *engagement; research; challenges; motivation; workloads*

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### **Introduction**

Teachers are faced and challenged with different teaching tasks in school which include actual conduct of classes, preparation of lessons and audio-visual materials, evaluating and making reports on students' learning, and managing the classrooms to promote and maintain healthy learning environment. Teachers are required to keep and maintain accurate class records, attendance of pupils including absences and tardiness. In addition to these, they are also expected to act as supportive members of school teams as classroom adviser, guidance counsellor, coordinator, and so forth. Also, teachers frequently have the responsibility to accurately and promptly provide information and reports asked by their school heads.

Teachers still have other roles. Many advance the idea that educational research should be integrated with the work of teachers in school in the form of the teacher-as-researcher (Hammersley, 2006). Teachers as researchers are creators of theory who can inform and generate sound instructional practices (Flake&Kuh, Donnelly, & Ebert, 1995).

Several research studies show the link of research to teaching. Zaman (2004) said that research and quality teaching are not contradictory roles. Research has the potential to support teaching (Prince, Felder & Brent, 2007). Brew and Boud (1995) claim that teaching and research have vital link to learning. As there are those who posit the positive relationship between research and teaching, there are also groups who say otherwise. Hughs (2004) said that research diverts attention of teachers away from their teaching and other duties.

As provided for in Department of Education Order No 48 s. 2015, teachers are encouraged to engage in research to improve the delivery of basic education. Research is an academic undertaking requiring capabilities and skills such as creativity, organization, and persistence (Swartch, 2008). Creativity requires originality and authenticity. Without organization, it is difficult to finish a work on time. Persistence is the drive and determination not to give up with the work in spite of encountered difficulty or opposition.

Engagement in research of teachers will be improved when they have a clearer viewpoint on their roles as teacher-researcher, when their training essentials in research were addressed and when they were properly guided and motivated.

The foregoing premises prompted the conduct of this study to delve further the necessity to conduct research among public school teachers.

### Objectives

1. What is the level of the elementary teachers' engagement in research?
2. What factors influence the elementary teachers' level of engagement in research?
3. What are the experiences of elementary teachers which influence their engagement in research?
4. What are the training needs of the teachers in doing research?
5. What are the implications of the elementary teachers' engagement in research to their;
  - 5.1. Teaching function;
  - 5.2. Professional growth and development, and
  - 5.3. Research engagement in school?

The Department of Education Order No. 24, s. 2010, the Basic Education Research Fund, which aims to finance the conduct of education-related researches/studies, undertaking researches in the Department of Education is still unpopular. This is evident with the release of a subsequent Dep Ed Order No. 43, s. 2015 which stressed on the statement that “after 4 years of implementation [BERF], only twelve (12) research proposals have been approved and completed”. The department considered the low intake of BERF to be attributed to lack of system in its implementation, hence, the issuance of the Revised Guidelines for the Basic Education Research Fund.

In addition to the existing guidelines, Department of Education Order 43, s. 2015 focuses on three areas: a. improving access to education, b. improving the quality of education, and c. improving governance. Evident to the move to engage classroom teachers into conducting researches was the inclusion of action researches in the school level that would improve teaching and learning. Also, Department of Education Regional Memorandum No. 144, s. 2015 recognizes the importance of research in contributing to understanding the root causes of problems in education.

Though at the policy making level, as the role of research is recognized, what had been the reasons for the low research outputs? Is this situation unique in this country? In the research conducted by Simon Borg (2013) regarding research engagement in different countries, 38.8% to 58.5% of the respondents do research occasionally. Though figures may

appear high if these figures are compared with the situation here in the Philippines, literature still believes that this reported level of doing research is still low.

A research conducted by Borg and Liu (2013) in China; in United Kingdom (Borg, 2005) and in Saudi Arabia (Borg and Alshumaimeri, 2011), agreed upon by Moore (2011) which studied Cambodian English teachers' conceptions of and engagement with research. This means that the situation of having low research outputs is not entirely unique to this country. Hence, results of this researches can be parallel with the experiences here in the Philippines.

According to Vazquez, some advantages of being a teacher-researcher includes privilege access to real life data (reliable, and realistic solution to problems), possibility to adopt multi-functional approach (changing roles), continuing professional development (always updated), and direct benefits on the teaching practice, on institutions and society. Despite the many recognized advantages of the conduct of researches by teachers to learning, the number of action researches remains to be low. Some teachers consider research as very tasking and require a considerable amount of time. The level of difficulty intimidates teachers in thinking of venturing into research. This is supported by Hatch (2006) whom argues that important questions inside the classroom can only be answered by data from research. Goswami et. al (2009) reminded teachers that research answers the looming questions of educators on their efficacy as educator and further proves how privileged teachers to be major role-players of the academe. Cochran-Smith & Lytle (1999) further deepens Goswame et. al's findings by emphasizing the teachers' situation to see and interpret educational settings and institutions in an inside-out approach that cannot be duplicated by any other research method. Amidst all these findings, the looming question lies on why teachers refrain from doing researches.

In an annual lecture in 1996, David H. Hargreaves pointed out the exclusivity of educational researches from teachers. He reasoned out that teachers are less involved in commissioned educational researches hence making these researches plainly knowledge-based and not directed into actual practice. He concluded that due to this exclusion, improvement of practice is never realized. This generalization is also supported by Cochran-Smith (2005) who found out that the teacher researches separate work and their research endeavours because researches on their individual classroom settings are shunned upon by policy makers. In addition, Wilson, Floden, & Ferrini-Mundy (2001) cite lack of generalization to a larger scale as factors why teacher-made researchers are shunned upon.

Anwaruddin (2015) also investigated about research engagement of teachers, according to him research is not popular among teachers because teachers cannot apply researches of research practitioners [university based] because they cannot interpret the researcher's findings, and with this context, findings of researchers are distant to the real situation and merely texts written by researchers [university based]. In addition to this, he also cited that knowledge managers often treat teachers as passive, uncritical customers of research knowledge and teachers are merely practitioners who are not-yet-professionals. This situation creates a blunder between research and teaching or what he called the research-practice split in education.

The involvement of teachers in the conduct of educational researches is the key towards a research-based teaching profession and this can be achieved by creating locally-based interpretive communities where teachers can collaboratively engage in the utilization and creation of researches. Even reading researches are unpopular among teachers, according to teacher respondents "...research did not solve practical problems in the classroom", "research

is not designed to solve local problems” hence putting great value to engage teachers with research for immediate and direct positive impacts on the classroom.

On the contrary, in a more personal level, several researches cited similar reasons of moderate engagement of teachers in research. The common factor according researches primarily is time. Teacher respondents consider time as a significant barrier engaging in research Moore (2011), Borg (2011) and (2013). Research needs a lot of effort and time. Current duties of teachers prevent them from doing researches considering that according to teachers, their work was to teach and not to do research. The more teaching load a teacher has, the less likely they engage in research (Epstein and Menis, 2013). Knowledge is also a popular reason that hinders teachers in conducting researches, many teachers are unfamiliar with action research and feel there are major challenges for them in conducting one (Davies and Howes, 2007). These reasons sounding more attitudinal in nature making the low engagement of teachers in researches (Borg, 2007).

Another reason why teachers have moderate research engagement is that of their conceptions about research. Most teachers view research to require large sample sizes to be conclusive. This limits teachers on choices on research methods if they are not competent with statistics or do not have access to a large number of sample. With this conception, qualitative researches are placed out of the picture. Suffice it to say that several researchers support that lack of knowledge is also considered as one of the top reasons for not doing research. The lack of knowledge on educational research methods of teachers make them less likely to be engaged in research. This is magnified by the lack of advisors or technical assistance available to them which increases the rigors of doing research (Borg and Liu, 2013).

With these conceptions in mind, how do teachers utilize educational researches? In a research conducted by Rickinson (2015), he cited the works of Mori (2004) and Taggart et al. (2004) which have some level of agreement that teachers only use research as basis of their classroom practice occasionally. Going back to the claim that educational researches are irrelevant to teacher practice and so they find of little interest (Hammersley, 1993). And so he concluded that in his point of view that the role of a teacher and educational researcher must not be integrated because it is undesirable both from the point of view of teaching and research.

Teachers’ engagement in research is also affected by institutional research culture. Most teachers feel that doing research is an important part of their job, but also believes that time for doing research is not built into teachers’ workloads. If an organization would like to create teacher-researchers, the access to research books and journals are necessary. It is also important that teachers be given support to attend conferences, encouragement by management to do research, provided with awareness on institutional research policies, and build research into teachers’ workloads. Goodnough (2010) presents research communities as support systems, a space to create relevant researches, places of change through collaborative relationships among fellow teachers. This is agreed upon by the Judkins et al. (2014), that creating the right environment that values research evidence will encourage its use to inform and guide classroom practice in several ways such as: research evidence used for decision making, properly informed stakeholders on the changes, show how to use research, and encourage teachers to feel more confident in conducting research. Teachers who come from schools with history of research work are more receptive of participating and conducting research work (Burns, 2000). Working with seniors or mentors and being associated with research institutions with active research backgrounds also contribute to a positive chance of teachers getting engaged with research.

Though many researches has been conducted in the aim to measure the level of engagement of teachers in research, it is still within the recommendation of researchers that

interviews must be included to deepen the understanding on why respondents selected the reasons why they undertake or did not undertake researches (Borg, 2007).

Also an important finding is that educational qualification and experience did not emerge as a significant factor in research engagement (Borg, 2007). In to this, senior and experienced, with postgraduate qualification teachers are more into using research than conducting researches which is more popular among junior teachers (Everton, 2000 as cited in Rickinson, 2005) These findings are in direct contrast with a the findings of Webster, Scott, and Haywood (2012) wherein they cited that studies suggest that research is more likely amongst school staff who are more senior and experienced and have postgraduate qualifications. And that having postgraduate experience on doing research enhances the teacher's confidence in initiating research projects (Oliver, 2005).

Equipping teachers however doesn't end in getting degrees in universities. Ozer (2004) and Palardy & Rumberger (2008) found out in their researches that teachers are not readily equipped with adequate pedagogical skills and knowledge when they graduate from the university. This is being supported by Seferoglu (2007), Demirtas (2010) and Oral & Saglam (2010) who claims that teachers need in-service training as much as pre-service trainings in order to learn whatever skills and knowledge lacking graduation from the universities.

Training teachers can go a long way. Visser, Coenders, Terlouw & Pieters (2010) points out that above all, the teachers have direct effect on the achievement of students; Several researches proves that achievement of students are directly correlated to the quality of teachers (Colbert, Brown, Choi, & Thomas, 2008; Meister, 2010; Opfer & Pedder, 2011. Also, Souto-Manning (2012) and Zeichner (2007) points out that in order to facilitate teacher researches properly, trainings must be done to the realms of teacher education.

Teachers engaging in research (Oliver, 2005). But in order to realize teacher-research potential, the following conditions according to Simon Borg should be met: awareness, motivation, knowledge and skills, choice, mentoring, time, recognition, expectations, community, and dissemination potential.

As per mentioned in the previous literatures, the researcher will look on the following factors that affects teachers' research engagement: Time constraints (Moore, 2011; Borg, 2011; Borg, 2013), Heavy teaching load, (Epstein and Menis, 2013), Lack of knowledge in research (Davies and Howes, 2007).

## **Methodology**

The study employed the case analysis type of qualitative research. The case studied was the engagement in research of public elementary teachers, their level of engagement, the factors influencing their level of engagement, and their experiences in doing research. The study was conducted in three districts at Sta. Maria, Department of Education - Division of Bulacan.

The respondents were 204 elementary teachers in the primary and intermediate grade levels, the distribution of which is as follows: Primary – 118, Intermediate- 76, both Primary and Intermediate – 10. Stratified sampling was used to divide the gathering of respondents into location subgroups. Since Santa Maria is divided into three districts the researcher gathered equal respondents from each district, then, convenience sampling was used to determine the six (6) schools per district.

From the 204 teachers, a sample of 29 teachers were chosen using purposive random sampling based on different levels of research engagement to describe their experiences in doing research, 50 teachers underwent focused group discussions.

The data were gathered using three instruments: questionnaire, interview guide, and journal writing form. The questionnaire was used to survey the number and teachers' level of

engagement in research, factors influencing their research engagement, and training needs. The journal writing form was used to elicit information on the teachers' experiences in doing research. The interview guide was used to gather data needing further explanation on their research engagement.

Before the actual administration of the instruments to the chosen respondents, these were "tried out" to determine clarity of contents and directions to 25 elementary teachers in San Pascual Elementary School in Hagonoy West District of the Schools Division of Bulacan.

Prior to the administration of the instruments used in the study, permission was sought from the Schools Division Superintendent of Department of Education Bulacan. After the permission was sought, coordination with the school heads and chosen respondents was made.

The researcher first determined the sixty-eight (68) teachers from six (6) schools of each district of Sta. Maria, namely: Sta. Maria East, Sta. Maria West, and Sta. Maria Central with a total of 204 teachers. The proponent went to the eighteen schools, gathered the selected teachers in each school in one area where the questionnaires were administered. The result of the questionnaire given to the 204 teachers were categorized as to their level of research engagement based on the teacher's grade level assignment, age, position, length of service and their educational attainment. A sample of 29 teachers with different levels of research engagement was drawn from the population of 204 teachers to narrate their experiences. The proponent once again went to the school of the 29 selected teachers and asked them to narrate their experiences. To intensify the claim of the 29 teachers who narrated their experience the proponent conveniently selected 50 teachers with different levels of research engagement from the five (5) big schools of the three districts: namely, Cornelia M.de Jesus Memorial School, Cay Pombo Elementary School, Sta. Maria Central School, St. Mary Ville Elementary School, Parada Elementary School and Mag- Asawang Sapa Elementary School. Ten (10) teachers per school were selected. The proponent went to each school and gathered the selected teachers to share their experiences during focused group discussion.

After data collection, the researcher organized the data gathered by creating a database or spread sheet. The narratives in the journal writing and focused group discussion were summarized.

## Results and Discussions

### Level of Engagement in Research of the Elementary Teachers

Teachers with **high, moderate and low** levels of research engagement were teaching in the primary and intermediate levels, and none in both grade levels. No research engagement was common in all levels as indicated by the high percentage of 86.80%. When described differently, about 87 out of every 100 teachers had no engagement in research. Five (5) out of every 100 teachers had conceptualized research topics, written the research concept, had written some parts of the research paper, but were left unfinished. Four (4) out of every 100 teachers finished their research but was not validated by Department of Education and other agencies. Only three (3) teachers out of every 100, had finished research studies and submitted the research outputs to Department of Education and other agencies. These figures show the **very low turnout** of research outputs among the elementary teachers. This finding agrees with the findings of research engagement in other countries on the low level of research engagement of elementary teachers. (Moore 2011).

The teacher belonging to the retiring age group of 61 to 65 had no research output. Seven (7) teachers in the 21-30, 31-40, 41-50, and 51-60 age groups were able to produce completed researches. Twenty (20) teachers of the same age groups: 21-30, 31-40, 41-50, and 51-60 tried to engage in research but were not able to complete their researches. These results

tend to suggest that teachers who are young and of middle age do research for some reasons like promotion, upgrade in salary, and self-fulfilment. When teachers are nearing the retirement age, they lost their drive and passion to do research.

Teachers occupying the lowest (T1) and highest (MT2) positions had high engagement in research. One of the reasons prompting teachers to do research is the weight (10 to 12 pts) given to research outputs during ranking of teachers. The three Master Teachers who had completed researches made use of their researches to get promoted to their present position. The four teachers who had completed researches also wanted to use this criterion to upgrade their positions and salary. No engagement in research was common among all teaching positions.

Four teachers who had been teaching for 31 to 40 years had no research engagement. These are the same teachers whose ages are nearing retirement. Seven teachers, whose length of service were below 30 years, pursued and completed their researches to earn additional points for promotion, the twenty (20) teachers who had low and moderate researches had the same length of service. When some of them were interviewed, they claimed that they wanted to upgrade their positions and salary, so they attempted to do research.

Five (5) out of seven (7) teachers or 83.33% who had high level of research engagement are teachers who had finished their master's Degree. One teacher who finished master's degree had no research engagement. When asked why, she stated that she finished n on thesis course. There was no teacher who enrolled in doctoral Degree. No research engagement was common to teachers with master's units and bachelor degree graduates. The factors influencing the teachers' level of research engagement are categorized into compelling and hindering reasons.

From the twenty- seven (27) teachers who had low, moderate and high levels of research engagement, the foremost reason given by eleven (11) teachers as to why they engaged in this endeavour was "for promotion". With the points (10 to 12 points) given to research during ranking, they believed that "doing research" give them better chances of getting higher ranks and promotions. Two teachers said that they conducted research to "uplift performance of pupils". One teacher claimed that research can be utilized to "know the reasons to school problems". Two teachers reasoned out that doing research gives them chances to upgrade their salary and two teachers said that it doing research is their passion and interest. The teachers chose their top priority reasons.

The reasons why teachers conducted research are personal in nature. The teachers did research for personal reason (promotion in rank) which eventually translates to economic benefit through increase in salary. Very few teachers (two teachers) did research to find solution to existing problems of pupils and the school. The teachers with no research engagement felt contented with their present status and do not aspire to attain higher ranks. This finding is consistent with the result of the study of Anwaruddin (2015) that research is not popular to teachers.

Based on the narratives during FGD improvement of pupil performance, and promotion in general was found to inspire teachers in doing research. Public elementary schools have a lot of problems to deal with and according to them are sources of research inspirations. Promotion can be viewed as a motivator since it can provide an opportunity for salary increase that commensurate with the position being aspired for. From a total of 177 teachers surveyed, the foremost reason why teachers could not research was "lack of time". This was also the reason of teachers in other countries why they have moderate and low level of research engagement (Moore, 2011; Borg, 2011). Time was a significant barrier in research engagement. Research needs effort and time, and the plenty of duties that teachers have; the additional teaching loads (Epstein and Mennis, 2013) hinder them to do so. Financial difficulty

was another reason that hindered 105 teachers (53.30%) to do research. Department of Education issued Order no.24, s.2010 (Basic Education Research Fund), to answer this problem but only few teachers receive the offer. There was a low intake of BERF. If there was a low intake of this offer of Department of Education, it can be construed that the financial assistance being offered was not enough.

### **Narratives of Teachers with No research engagement**

There were 177 out of 204 respondents who had no engagement in research. Fourteen (14) of them were randomly chosen to share their reasons, opinions why they were not able to do research work. Following are some examples of the experiences of respondents who made no attempt to engage to research.

#### **Teacher 1**

Teacher 1 made no attempt to engage in research, for she had no time because of the volume of paper works in school and heavy workload was given by her school head in addition to her obligation to her children and husband. Her little knowledge in computer and her financial difficulty were also reasons and she preferred not to do research so she could provide the needs of her family.

#### **Teacher 2**

Teacher 2 states that she was not able to do research for she had no background in research so she lacked the research skills and had no idea where she could get information about this. Lack of time and work overload were her other reasons.

#### **Teacher 3**

Teacher 3 said that the main reason why she not engages in research was lack of time and financial constraints.

#### **Teacher 4**

Teacher 4 explained that she was not emotionally ready, had no enough knowledge and had no time in writing a research so, she made no attempt to do a research, and according to her, research is additional burden for her.

#### **Teacher 5**

Teacher 5 specified that family and teaching were her utmost priority, so she did not engage in research work which needed extra time and money. She also stated that she had limited research capabilities and knowledge in new technologies which are essential in research writing

#### **Teacher 6**

Teacher 6 detailed in her story that time management and lack of time was the reasons why she was not able to make a research. According to her if the agency will give study leave for those teachers who are writing researches then she may be able to conduct a research.

#### **Teacher 7**

Teacher 7 said that engaging in research was not her plan yet because she had no enough courage and her writing ability and research skills were limited and also she had no enough fund and time to write a research paper.



### **Teacher 8**

Teacher 8 indicated that, no enough time and budget, lots of paper works and family obligations were the reasons why she was not able to do a research work.

### **Teacher 9**

According to Teacher 9, money and her duty as a mother to her two kids who are in their tender age were the hindering factors why she made no attempt to engage in research work. But, she had a plan to make a research in the near future

### **Teacher 10**

Teacher 10 said that she had no extra time and she has too many paper works in the school. She did not want to sacrifice her time and money for her family just to be able to do a research work. She is now contented for what she had accomplished.

### **Teacher 11**

Teacher 11 made no effort to engage in research because she had no time for she is busy taking care of her baby besides doing her obligation in school. Money matters was also a problem.

### **Teacher 12**

Teacher 12 said that, duties in school and home deferred her in writing a research. According to her if only she had time and financial assistance, her limited knowledge, background and skills in writing research work could still be remedied.

### **Teacher 13**

Teacher 13 said that although research work is important she was not able to produce one.

### **Teacher 14**

Teacher 14 made no attempt to engage in research because she did not have enough confidence since she is timid and lacked in professional motivation and support system. Furthermore, she said that, availability of reading materials at hand; time and money were also factors that hinder her in writing a research work.

An analysis on the narratives given by the 14 elementary teachers who had no research engagement reveals the following:

#### **1. Time constraints**

Most of them stated that they did not have enough time and couldn't manage their time to write because they had too many paper works in school and they were burdened with heavy load that engaging in research will be an additional burden to them, aside from the fact that they also had obligation to their families. In addition, one of the respondents said that if only they have study leave they could be able to do a research.

#### **2. Financial constraints**

Another factor of their low engagement in research was their financial stability. According to them, the monetary expenses when one engaged in research held them to make no attempt to participate in research. Their finances were just enough for the needs of their family and they can't afford the additional expenses.

### **3. Technical constraints**

Research needs technical know-how, writing skills, research capabilities, technical assistance, statistical knowledge and access to other researches. Studies and journals were also needed to be able to do research work and according to some of the respondents they do not possessed these things and these hindered them in making a research paper.

### **4. Lack of Professional motivation and support system**

Research work is a difficult task and most teachers were afraid to embark in research because of lack of professional motivation and support system. Another thing is they were not emotionally prepared. They were worried that they will not be able to finish it so instead of engaging, they opted not to engage in research work.

5. Teachers' age and computer illiteracy were also hindering factors of low research engagement among elementary teachers. Most elementary teachers nearing retirement age were not literate in computer and its application that can help them do their work easily, thus they had a hard time engaging to research.

6. One teacher stated that she was contented in her current position so she did not have an intention to make a research.

### **Narratives of Eight elementary teachers describing their experiences and opinions and their reasons and sentiments why they had low and moderate level of research engagement**

#### **Teacher 15**

Teacher 15 said she had no choice but to make a research because her profession calls for it. At the same time she was motivated by her principal and colleagues, so she did it. She experienced difficulties and had a hard time writing her research paper so she asked help from others and searched in the internet. She spent sleepless nights while doing the research. She conducted the research but did not submit the result of the study to Department of Education.

#### **Teacher 16**

Teacher 16 briefly narrated her experience with her unfinished research.

#### **Teacher 17**

Teacher 17 stated that writing her research was taking too much of her time so she decided to stop because she had other things that required her time.

#### **Respondent 18**

Teacher 18 narrated that she got engage in research for her professional and personal growth and development. In finishing her research, she encountered difficulties because she was overloaded with too many tasks to finish, so, she had no time to work on it, however she also needed money to complete it.

#### **Teacher 19**

Teacher 19 stated that she only finished chapter 1 to 3 of her research because it is what she needed in her Master's Degree. She also said that she needed a lot of time and patience and she had a plan in completing her research paper.

#### **Teacher 20**

Teacher 20 said that it was difficult to do research but when given enough time she can do it.

### **Teacher 21**

Teacher 21 specified the significant role of computer in people's day to day activities and how it can hook learners to focus on their studies to facilitate effective learning is the reason why she conducted a research work. However, he faced difficulties in gathering related literature, statistical analysis in addition to time constraints in doing research.

### **Teacher 22**

Teacher 22 narrated the difference of the learners' attitude then and now. How relaxed and unconcern are today's learners and this thing prompted her to start a research entitled "Behaviour of Pupil and its' Impact to Academic Performance". In doing this research work she spent sleepless nights, hunger, headaches and other pains, but felt rewarded when she partially completed it.

Eight (8) teachers who had a low and moderate level of research engagement were able to conduct research study but were not able submit the result of the study to Department of Education or other agency nor disseminate the research results through publication or research forum. Based on their testimony they engaged in research for professional and personal growth and development, to help learners in their difficulties in learning areas, to improve learners' behaviour and because they were encouraged by their immediate head and colleagues and because it was a prerequisite to their Masters subjects. While writing their research they experienced difficulties like: Lack of time – teachers experienced difficulty because they had no enough time, some of them even stayed late in school, had sleepless nights, missed meal time and can't do family obligation so, some decided to stop while others were still finishing their research. Financial difficulty – According to them writing a research needs money to finance the expenses incurred in doing it and this will be an additional burden to them. Lack of research Skills –teachers stated that research skills such as gathering related literature, statistical analysis, writings skills and gathering data are very essential in writing a research work and teacher had difficulties in these areas so these hinder them in finishing their research work. Emotional preparedness of teacher was also hindrance according to teacher respondents and one must be prepared because his/her patience will be tested. Heavy load is another concern of teachers. According to them they were overloaded and writing a research means an additional load to them. At the end when the teachers were slowly finishing their research work they said they felt rewarded and proud.

### **Seven (7) teachers who had high engagement in research narrated their story.**

#### **Teacher 23**

Teacher 23 related her experiences while doing her research work. According to her she did a lot of sacrifices like spending extra time and money, failure to do family obligation, countless sleepless night and late meals. She overcomes all of these because of her patience and perseverance. But all of these were rewarded when she finished it. She used this when she joined the ranking and was promoted from Teacher III to Master Teacher I.

#### **Teacher 24**

Teacher 24 said that in spite of the adversities. She faced while doing the study, she was so proud when she finished it.

#### **Teacher 25**

Doing research work was difficult says Teacher 25. You will encounter lots of problem like poor internet connections, lack of time, limited knowledge in the steps and processes of research and new technologies but with the help of others she was able to finish it.

### **Respondent 26**

Teacher 26 states how important and relevant researches were to school, to pupils and to the one making the research. She also said that she encountered difficulties before she completed it like she needed to stay late in school, computer malfunctions, need to interview parents, but when she finished, she felt happy and fulfilled.

### **Respondent 27**

Teacher 27 narrated how he developed his research work step by step and said that in order to accomplish research work a researcher needed a lot of strength, patience, money, sacrifices, understanding, love and inspiration from his/her family extended during the difficult times.

### **Respondent 28**

Teacher 28 detailed her feelings while doing PROMAM (Project Marunong Akong Magbasang Marungko). At first she was nervous, excited, tensed, hopeful and frightened it might be rejected. In overcoming these, she developed her writing skills and get ready. Finally, she finished her research because she had a will power to do it and believed that nothing is impossible to a teacher who has better plans for her pupils. That's why no matter how hard it is she was able to finish her research.

### **Respondent 29**

Teacher 29 said that she was hesitant to engage in research because she was not ready and had many hindrances, but her school head encouraged and sent her to attend seminars to equip her in writing research. From the start of the research she guided her. They were so proud when her research was approved and validated by Department of Education. She said that when one gives his /her 100% dedication and commitment he/she will be able to finish his/her work.

The seven teachers who had finished their research was hesitant at first to engaged in research, they were nervous, tensed but excited at the same time, hopeful and frightened because they doubt that they will be able to finished it. All of them experienced different challenges while preparing their work but their patience, perseverance, commitment, dedication and lots of sacrifices paid off. The encouragement of their immediate superiors, colleagues and love ones push them to continue during difficult times. When their work was validated and approved by the Department of Education they were so proud and fulfilled. Just like what teacher23 said "If you have a will power to do it and believed that nothing is impossible to teacher who has better plans for her pupils then nothing is impossible especially when GOD is our guide and inspiration".

### **Narratives of other Elementary Teachers during Focused Group Discussion**

Additional insight from the Fifty (50) teachers who go through the focused group discussion to gather data needing further explanations on their research engagement.

Most teachers described their day to day activities positively. Some of the most used words to describe their day to day activities includes: productive, fulfilling, challenging, and enjoyable. But even how positive their remarks are they still considered their day to day activities to be stressful, tiring and difficult which are attributed mainly to the implementation of the K to 12 curriculum which requires the teachers to adapt to the challenges brought by the curriculum to them. But nonetheless, teachers are flexible and can easily adapt to new situations. Some of the statements given by the teachers to prove their willingness to do their duties are as follows:

- a. *"...challenging but at the same time fulfilling because day by day I share the knowledge to my students"*

b. *“...difficult but fulfilling especially when my students learned something new from the day’s activities”*

c. *“I give activities that will surely make my pupils understand our lesson quickly. I provide them different activities to make them more attentive and cooperative”*

Aside from teaching, most of the teachers involved in the FGD also performed additional functions like coaching students for competitions and serve as coordinators in different subject areas, preparing reports, during vacant periods help non-readers and non-numerates, cook for feeding the malnourished pupils, canteen manager, agriculturist and many more. This is common in elementary schools especially in small schools.

Out of the 50 teachers in the FGD only 15 have engaged in research in addition to their teaching function. Some of whom were engaged since research is necessary to other programs of Department of Education like the Continuous Improvement Program (CIP).

There were some similarities in the respondents’ engagement in terms of research output. Some respondents were assigned as research coordinators, while others were coordinators of their CIP projects. Respondents described their engagement as to requiring a lot of time, focus, and patience. Some claimed to have improved their teaching strategies through engagement in research. Something common among the responses described their experience to be “hard but fulfilling”.

Improvement of pupil performance, and promotion in general were found to inspire teachers in doing research. Public elementary schools have a lot of problems to deal with and according to them are sources of research inspirations. Promotion can be viewed as a motivator since it can provide an opportunity for salary increase that commensurate with the position being aspired.

There are teachers who are eager to do more research even after completing the research study. Respondents said that in an ideal situation, there are still so many problems that need to be addressed. And through research, these problems can be solved properly through systematic and data driven solutions.

According to one respondent when asked: *Are you willing to do a research “... [the answer is] yes, if I have the time and less priorities and doing research will not affect my work and time with my family, and because it is a good experience on my part and I learn more how to improve my teaching abilities”*

Low to non-engagement in research can be attributed mainly to these reasons: lack of time, financial resources, lack of technical expertise and heavy work load.

Teachers in the elementary school are in class the whole day and are mostly mothers who tend to the needs of their family at home. One of the respondents even stressed that *“...I have a baby to take care of...”* and looking at this situation can easily discourage someone to undergo research which was perceived to require time, focus, and financial resources. Teachers are supposed to have 6 hours contact hours and two hours for lesson preparation and other teaching related matters. But since two hours is hardly enough for these tasks, teachers go beyond these hours prescribed to finish their workload for the day.

Lack of technical expertise which can be read as limited research capabilities. In this premise, teachers are hesitant to even try to plan conducting researches. Confidence is very important in conducting research consequently, according to one of the respondents, *“...teachers lack the basic in conducting research and poor professional technical support”*. According to them, it is also good to look into the training from Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) which attributed the end result of teachers as not having the research culture that is expected of them. Technical support according to them is also unavailable, their questions cannot be easily addressed and their needed guidance in conducting researches is almost next to impossible.

Teachers attributed non-engagement to research due to heavy workloads. Additional assignments like coordinator ship and area chairmanship require a lot of reports [paperwork] especially in the implementation of the K to 12 program. “*Due to many activities or tasks to do, we do not prioritize research...*” as one respondent clearly explained.

Incentives had a roundabout from a simple certificate of recognition, lesser workload, scholarship and promotion. Teachers are very much aware that doing action researches can help them gain points in ranking for promotion. Teachers also wished that engagement on research can help them get scholarships for their graduate education.

Since time is a problem in conducting research, respondents believe that it is sensible that teacher-researchers be given less workloads in teaching and in other paperwork. Some expressed that “*...maybe it helps the elementary teachers to engage themselves in researches if their paperwork’s are lessened...*” justifying that paperwork’s are really burdensome to them.

Seeing how teachers pointed out possible situations wherein research problems can be generated, we can say that they are very learner centred. It is the welfare of the students that they wanted to improve as expressed in the summarized samples of their responses: (a) high rate of absenteeism/ dropout, (b) pupils’ study habits, (c) lack of interest to learning, (d) learners’ behaviour, (e) reading and comprehension and (d) classroom management.

The following are identified by respondents as problems and difficulties that they want to be addressed: (a) time, (b) financial sources, (c) technical know-how and (d) Statistical analysis.

### **1. Data Collection procedure and research design**

Though time and financial constraints still topped the list, it is notable that teachers who are engaged in research expressed the need for training on technical know-how and statistical knowledge. This means that even if they are already engaged, they still need the necessary training to sharpen their abilities in writing researches.

### **2. Areas of Research Where Elementary Teachers Wanted to be Trained**

Based on the multiple responses of teachers’, conceptualization of research problem was the primary areas in research where most of the teachers wanted to be trained. They said that they wanted to enhance their writing skills in research. Statistics was also an area of concern and they want to be knowledgeable in it. They stated that they wanted to develop their skills in identifying research design and method. Format of an action research and development of data gathering instruments were their least areas of concerns.

### **3. The implication of elementary teachers ‘research engagement to**

#### **3.1 Teaching Functions**

Improvement of teaching function is very evident since; action researches are experimental in nature. The result of researches help in developing new teaching techniques, basis for improving teaching strategies and in determining if the new teaching materials were effective or not.

#### **3.2 Professional Growth and Development**

Professional development is defined as the process of improving skills and competencies needed to produce outstanding performance and the beneficiaries are the students. When teachers are engaged in research their personality, intellectual abilities and skills will be enhanced. As teachers do thorough investigation and exploration they discover their strengths and weaknesses and turn their weaknesses as their assets. Furthermore, they can use their research paper when they join ranking for promotions. Just like what some of the

teachers did when they joined the Ranking for Master Teacher position the teachers who researches have got the first slot and was the first to be promoted. In addition, through research engagement, teachers felt fulfilled and inspired.

Professional development of teachers is the key to meeting today's educational demands and they can achieve this through research engagement.

### **3.3 School's Performance**

All respondents believe that teaching can be improved through research. Students' learning on the other hand can also be improved several ways. Through research, problems in learning can be solved based on what the results show. The respondents believe that using innovation and applying their skills in action researches can improve learning. The effectiveness of applying new teaching strategies and adaptation to new trends in education can be very helpful since learners are quickly evolving because of the advent of technology.

Research engagement improves teaching functions of a teacher and a tool for professional development. Performance in school improves thus improves pupils' proficiency levels and will result to outstanding performance of schools. Though it is not visible in the data gathered in this research, the school where the teachers with high research engagement were the performing schools in the three districts of Sta. Maria, Bulacan, Philippines.

### **Conclusions**

1. Primary and intermediate grade teachers had high, moderate, and low level of engagement. Teachers with high and low ranks; of low and middle ages; and shorter length of service are those that have the desire to conduct research. Teachers who are about to retire had lost their passion and motivation to do research. In general, elementary teachers have low engagement in research.
2. Teachers engaged in research for promotion, self-development, work obligation, school improvement and self-fulfilment.
3. Teachers heavy workloads, time, financial capability, research technical know-how are factors affecting their engagement in research
4. The experiences of the teachers in engaging in research revealed the circumstances that prompted them in doing so.
5. The teachers need training in the conceptualization of research problem, writing skills in statistical analysis of data, identifying research designs and methods, and development of data gathering instruments.
6. Teachers feel fulfilled and proud when their research works were finished and validated by Department of Education and other agency.

### **Recommendations**

1. Teacher with low level of engagement in research engagement of teachers, the Department of Education may provide them more enticing rewards and incentives them to motivate them to do research. In addition, for promotion in position and salary, additional monetary rewards may be considered as perk.
2. The Department of Education may consider professional development and training program for their teachers to upgrade their research capabilities.
3. The teachers are encouraged to be trained on work-time management to balance their work in school and at home, so that they may have time to engage in research.
4. Department of Education, Regional Office, division office, should provide higher budget allocation for research works.
5. School administrators may establish linkages with the community and stakeholders to finance research works of teachers.

6. School administrators may encourage their teachers to do research in collaboration with their fellow teachers.
7. School administrators may lessen the teaching loads of teachers who will do researches by delegating their other teaching loads to teachers who are not doing researches, and take turns in doing this.
8. Future researches are recommended to conduct other studies along teachers' research engagement in support to earlier findings.

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