

TEACHERS AS RESEARCHERS, ANYONE?

by:

Gina C. Bugay

Teacher II, Samal National High School – Main

I tried asking colleagues about their first impressions of research endeavors. Some of the responses are surprising:

Teacher 1: [deep sigh] “Mahirap! Legit!” (it’s complicated)

Teacher 2: [hesitating] “Oh my... challenging!”

Teacher 3: “It’s difficult but useful.”

Teacher 4 overheard me asking everyone: [while hiding her face and looking away] “Research? Oh no! Don’t ask me!”

Funny, isn’t it? But this scene is not unusual. Significantly few teachers engage in conducting research. Maybe because they think it’s difficult and no fun.

Queenan (1987) has reported that teachers did not heed the call even after encouragement from the research community, including funding and technical support. This phenomenon can be explained in the study of Tindowen, Guzman, and Macanang (2019), where teachers found researching as “an additional workload and burden” where their “writing anxiety, lack of time, and inadequate knowledge in [conducting] action research” do not do much help either.

If such is the case, something must be done to prompt teachers and encourage them better to conduct action research. It is imperative if the Department of Education wants to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the school systems.

Classroom research, more commonly known in the DepEd as Action Research, is a “reflective process” where teachers collect empirical pieces of evidence to address issues in the classroom and “improve their teaching practices (The American University in Cairo, n.d.)” This kind of reflection is not subjective as it is based on the results of careful data analysis. It also helps decision-makers like the school administration to form definitive actions that will help implement necessary developments.

The conduct of these kinds of studies will enrich not only the classroom involved but will be more generally applied as a norm or standard in the entire school population. These kinds of studies can be a basis for policy developments and programs. Thus, it is more apparent that something must be done to bridge the gap of passivity among teachers to embark on a research journey.

Thus, if the DepEd wants to create a culture of research among its teachers, it needs to provide them with every aspect of support they need to find the courage even to try. If teachers claim that research is simply an additional workload and burden, then we can assume that including research in their official school workloads will make it imperative for them to start working on one. If they claim to have writing anxiety and limited knowledge of the research process, it is a complex skill that can be learned, and conducting writeshops on research writing can ease the way. When I talk of writeshops, I do not only mean a one-week or 10-day training. We suggest setting up a core group that will facilitate and assist teachers along the way, providing the necessary technical support and feedback they will need during their research writing.

Suppose teachers are given proper assistance in this manner, and the importance of research is inculcated more often in schools. In that case, we can hope that there will be more faculty researchers in the academic circle, especially in DepEd.

Teachers must not be satisfied with lukewarm classroom results and performances. Some things can be improved and changed in the teaching-learning

process by properly conducting a systematic study of every teacher's issue and problem. All there's left to do is to have the courage to pick up your pen (or keyboard) and start writing your next action research report.

Teachers become better in their craft by being reflective in their practices. And writing in reflective journals will only leave their concerns on the parchment. When the ink dries up, so will the issues become fossilized. Doing action research will bring forth the necessary action and generate new knowledge for immediate classroom implementation.

Do action research now!

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