

**ACTION RESEARCH CAPABILITY BUILDING: A STRATEGY IN IMPROVING
TEACHER COMPETENCE AND CLASSROOM PRACTICE****Johnny B. Dolor**Faculty, College of Education ILOILO STATE COLLEGE OF FISHERIES Main Tiwi- Barotac Nuevo, Iloilo
jbdolor77@gmail.com**ABSTRACT**

This research dealt with the experiences and insights of faculty members as they engaged in an action research capability building conducted by the Office of Research and Development. This study was conducted among faculty members of the College of Education who participated in a two-day action research capacity building were from the proposal stage through the final presentation stage. Data are collected after the introductory action research capability building, where faculty members prepare a proposal and subsequently, after the final presentation of their respective action researches. Content analysis and descriptive statistical treatment were utilized to answer the objectives of the study. An adopted 14-item survey is divided into three parts of questions. In terms of the perceived level of difficulty of faculty members' difficulty in action research process components, defining the research question has the lowest difficulty value, and writing the literature review has the highest difficulty value. According to the perceived level of agreement of faculty members' impact in action research, this action research project positively influenced my students' learning has the lowest meanwhile this action research project positively influenced my teaching has the highest mean. Based on the impact on teaching practices categorized into three categories: professional impact, personal impact, and instructional impact. Therefore, this action research is an effective professional process that impacts daily and future teaching, and the action research process elicits change.

Keywords: *Action Research, Capability Building, Teacher Quality, and Classroom Practice*

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

According to O'Connor, Anderson, and Green (2006) "action research" is a tool used to help faculty members and other educators uncover strategies to improve teaching practices; it is a viable and realistic endeavor for all faculty members. In addition, it requires faculty members to design a study in their field of interest as they carry out in their respective classrooms. Anent to, it is considered a professional development opportunity because, frequently, faculty members test a new instructional strategy, assess a new curriculum program, or evaluate an existing pedagogical method (O'Connor, Anderson, Green, 2006 in Ferrance, 2000; Johnson & Button, 2000; Ross, Rolheiser, & Hogoboam-Gray, 1999; Sax & Fisher, 2001). These forms of change may affect teacher quality.

In addition, action research is demanding, complex, and challenging because the researcher not only assumes responsibilities for doing the research but also for enacting change. This is a challenge for faculty members to embrace the culture of research to improve their classroom practices and promote teacher quality.

Further, it allows faculty members to take into consideration of their teaching. It occurs when a faculty member with orientation in research contemplates a classroom or instructional issue, designs a study, executes it, tracks data and results, and reflects.

Hence, this capacity building is timely and relevant for College of Education faculty members to consider the role of action research in improving their competence and classroom practice to address the demands of teaching and learning as we embarked on the new face after the COVID 19 pandemic change the educational landscaped. Further, this will prepare faculty members to deal with the transformation stage of

teaching and learning on how they manage their respective virtual classrooms and make learning decisions jive with the new thrust.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This research will answer the following objectives:

- 1) to determine the most difficult parts of the action research process as reported by faculty members; and
- 2) To measure the faculty members' participation in action research and its impact on current and future instructional practices.

METHODOLOGY

The role of action research in this study may create positive change in teachers' practices; thus, this examines the experiences and insights of faculty members as they engaged in an action research capability building conducted by the Office of Research and Development. This study was conducted among 20 faculty members of the College of Education who participated in a two-day action research capacity building were from the proposal stage through the final presentation stage. The execution of the approved proposal and collecting data, analyzing data, and presenting results to the panel for approval are components of the capability training.

Data are collected after the introductory action research capability building, where faculty members prepare a proposal and subsequently, after the final presentation of their respective action researches. Content analysis and descriptive statistical treatment were utilized to answer the objectives of the study and are action research the design is systematic, occurs in an educational setting, focuses on the researchers' teaching, and is practical and relevant.

An adopted 14-item survey is divided into three parts of questions. The first part of the survey consisted of five Likert scale items. The faculty members were asked to rate the difficulty he/she experienced with components of the action research process. The rating scale for part one was a five-point Likert scale. The numerical value five indicated "extreme level of difficulty," a four indicated "high level of difficulty," a three indicated "moderate level of difficulty," a two indicated "low level of difficulty," and a one indicated "no difficulty." After each question in the first part, space was available for the respondent to explain the reason for choosing that difficulty level. The following parts consisted of five statements regarding the value of their action research experience. Respondents ranked their agreement with each statement. Similar to part one, a three-point Likert scale was utilized in this part. Circling a numerical value, three denoted that the respondent agreed with the statement. Choosing a numerical value, two meant a respondent did not feel either way strongly and marking a one signified the respondent disagreed with the statement. Again, following each statement, space was provided for the respondent to explain his/her choice. The final part of the survey had four open-ended questions. Three questions asked how participation in action research had impacted their professional careers, teaching, and instructional practices.

DATA ANALYSIS

Data from the surveys are analyzed using quantitative and qualitative techniques, specifically mean and content analysis. Content analysis entails developing categories and counting the frequency of instances when those categories occur (Silverman, 2001). In this research, the following items are identified as relevant to analyze using the content analysis approach: the second half of the survey questions one through five that stated, "Explain your /reason(s) for choosing that level of difficulty," the second half of survey questions six through ten that stated, "Explain your choice," and the final four open-ended questions, numbered 11 through 14. These

data are examined by coding and creating categories. Categories are developed based on a review of the data, and researchers noted differences and similarities within categories. Researchers formed new categories as random patterns appeared in the data (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Additionally, descriptive statistics are calculated for survey questions one through ten from the Likert scale. Means were precisely calculated and used in this study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data obtained were analyzed according to (1) to determine the most difficult parts of the action research process reported by faculty members, and (2) to measure the faculty members' participation in action research and its impact on current and future instructional practices. The findings are organized according to the research questions.

The following are the results:

(1) Based on the result, what teachers report as the most challenging parts of the action research process, is determined using the mean scores. The data suggest that defining the research question, writing the literature review, developing and writing the methodology, and organizing and writing the findings were moderately difficult tasks for the faculty members. Using the Likert scale, faculty members analyze the data as a task with a low to high difficulty level.

Table 1 reflects the mean scores on the perceived difficulty level of faculty members' difficulty in action research process components.

Table 1
Perceived level of difficulty of faculty members' difficulty in action research process components

	Mean Score	Description
1. Defining the research question	2.05	Low difficulty
2. Writing the literature review	2.58	Low difficulty
3. Developing and writing the methodology	2.36	Low difficulty
4. Analyzing the data	2.32	Low difficulty
5. Organizing and writing the findings	2.47	Low difficulty

Legend:

1.00 - 1.99	-	No Difficulty
2.00 - 2.99	-	Low difficulty
3.00 - 3.99	-	Moderate Difficulty
4.00 - 5.00	-	High Difficulty

(2) The first component, defining the research question, had a 2.05 difficulty average. Having difficulty defining the research objectives and confusion between action research and full-blown research was one of the problems answered by the majority of the respondents. Other respondents mentioned, "They are oriented on basic research as part of their requirements and seldom have they talked about action research." Overall, defining the research question was lowly difficult.

(3) The second action research component, writing the literature review, had a mean score of 2.58, indicating a low difficulty level. Most respondents informed that the "college library provides more resources for literature reviews, such as print materials and articles, full-text online peer-reviewed articles." Aside from several respondents also mentioned their training on writing reviews of related literature, using the American Psychological Association (APA) helps them organize and develop low difficulty. The low-level difficulty was the overall rating for writing the literature review.

(4) Another component identified was developing and writing the methodology. With an average of 2.36, it was considered another step in the action research process at a low difficulty level. Few of the

respondents have difficulty in detailing and thinking through the methods for the studies. Another faculty member answered, "I found the most challenging part since it is a new skill to me putting together the methodology section was deciding when and where I would fit everything in. Further, few respondents mentioned that capability training helps them in organizing research design and methodology. The low-level difficulty was the overall rating for developing and writing the methodology.

(5) Analyzing the data is another component of the survey, which had a mean score of 2.32. Most of the faculty members answered that the training in statistical analysis gives them the idea of how to analyze and interpret data and decide appropriate statistical tools in analyzing data. They further mentioned organizing data through figures and tables. However, others commented that the lack of statistical understanding made the analysis complicated. The low-level difficulty was the overall rating for analyzing the data.

(6) The final component in the action research process was organizing and writing the findings; the item received a rating of 2.47. Generally, the most frequent answer was that organizing and writing the findings, particularly for the faculty members who collected large amounts of data, was time-consuming. The low-level difficulty was the overall rating for organizing and writing the findings. Further, the mean score for writing the literature review is the most challenging step in the action research process among the low-level difficulty components.

Participation in Action Research and Impact on Current and Future Instructional Practices by Faculty Members

The respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement regarding five statements related to the second research question about how participation in the action research process has impacted their current and future instructional practices. The three-point Likert Scale indicated a level one indicated the student disagrees with the statement. A level two indicated that the student is neutral and does not feel strongly about the statement, and a level three indicated the student agrees with the statement. Table 2 presents the mean scores of faculty members' impact in action research.

Table 2
Perceived level of agreement of faculty members' impact in action research

	Mean Score	Description
1. Action research is valuable to the teaching and learning process for me as a teacher	2.90	Strongly Agree
2. Action research is valuable to the teaching and learning process for my students.	2.85	Strongly Agree
3. This action research project positively influenced my students' learning.	2.55	Strongly Agree
4. This action research project positively influenced my teaching.	2.92	Strongly Agree
5. I view myself as a teacher-researcher.	2.47	Strongly Agree

Legend:

1.00 - 1.99 - Strongly Disagree

2.00 - 3.00 - Strongly Agree

The following are the results:

(1) When respondents were asked to indicate their agreement with the statement, "Action research is valuable to the teaching and learning process for me as a teacher," there was a high level of agreement with an average of 2.90, indicating strong agreement. Teachers most frequently commented that action research was a tool that helped them look closer at their teaching. Some comments included, "I think doing action research is

valuable to me both personally and professionally. I pay close attention to my students' behavior and immediately responded to the situation. Professionally, action research provides me the teaching and learning process for me because it gives me an idea on what strategies and how I will use it." Generally, teachers agreed that action research was a valuable teaching and learning process.

(2) Teacher respondents' agreed with the statement, "Action research is valuable to the teaching and learning process for my students." All teachers agreed with the statement, with an average of 2.85. The majority of respondents agreed that action research was a valuable process for their students. Most teachers commented that finding out what works best with students benefits them because if the teachers can provide better teaching, the quality of the classroom instruction and learning will improve. According to them, "Providing the best teaching will impact the learning process of our students and will create a classroom conducive for better learning."

(3) The average mean was 2.55. Some of the teachers mentioned that not all the students' learning was impacted because not all students were getting the same instruction. Some teachers commented that more impact might be seen when implementing a program or instructional strategy with the entire group. On the other hand, many teachers commented that there was an immediate impact on their students because first, they (the teachers) were able to give more effective instructions. They said, "This capability building was a positive impact on my students because it helped me in determining effective, new teaching styles for implementing in conjunction with my current writing instruction."

(4) Generally, the respondents agreed with this statement with a mean of 2.92. The respondents agreed that the action research activity positively impacted their teaching. Teachers most often mentioned using what they learned in their action research capacity building to make adjustments to instruction, look at content differently, or utilize new instructional strategies. One of the respondents mentioned, "I was able to make adjustments in planning to meet best the needs of my students based on the findings of my action research." Teachers became more cognizant of their teaching.

(5) The statement, "I view myself as a teacher-researcher," had the lowest average, 2.57. Almost all teacher respondents responded that completing this training gave them more confidence and that they would continuously and actively engage in research best practices. A faculty member said, "I have agreed to make new studies as part of teacher development due to this training." Another mentioned that she is continuously finding new ways to make students' learning more meaningful and innovative. In contrast, some teacher trainees mentioned that completing the action research process was work-intensive and that they were still new at the research process.

IMPACT ON TEACHING PRACTICES

The design used in this study was qualitative, specifically content analysis, where both research questions from open-ended survey questions were analyzed and presented. Faculty respondents were asked to describe how the completion of their action research capability building would impact their teaching. Answers were categorized into three categories: professional impact, personal impact, and instructional impact.

The results are:

(1) When respondents were asked to describe the long-lasting effects of the action research training on their professional careers, the theme of change appeared most frequently in the teachers' answers. Teachers' responses focused on the fact that change in their profession happens progressively as they continue to learn their profession also improves. One comment, "I will continuously take risks to search for new knowledge and

the improvement of my career." "Engaging in this will make me empowered and willing to create change." They were willing to change, and there was no indication that they worried someone would prevent instructional changes they wanted to make.

(2) When the respondents were asked how the action research training experience empowered them or their teaching, the overwhelming response was that they perceived themselves as more effective teachers. Repeatedly, comments were made regarding being a more aware and confident educator. "This action research training has increased my awareness of carefully analyzing students' work. I found themes and patterns emerged in my classroom that I would not have been aware of if it had not been through the careful analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data." Replied by one teacher during the conduct of the study. Action research appears to be a personal development opportunity that affects teachers positively, including building confidence and autonomy.

(3) Respondents answered a question about how their action research training has informed instructional practices. The most frequently mentioned answers were focused on awareness to change daily teaching practices. They further stated that they needed to change some of their daily pedagogical practices after completing the action research process. Teachers' responses included, "I need to change some of my instructional practices. I realized that learning and teaching could still be fun." Teachers also spoke about how the action research process was instrumental in affirming and confirming daily instructional practices.

CONCLUSIONS

The study's findings lead to two general conclusions about the action research process: action research is an effective professional process that impacts daily and future teaching, and the action research process elicits change.

Teachers' participation in action research training impacts their daily and future instructional practices. This agrees with Parsons and Brown (2002), the benefit of action research is that it leads to improvements in educational practice. The participants in this study valued action research as a valuable tool that impacted their teaching. In this study, teachers consistently commented that the action research process made them more aware of their teaching practices and more cognizant of their students' needs. Most importantly, teachers discussed how the action research process confirmed, affirmed, or expanded particular instructional practices and curriculum programs. Teachers also mentioned that the action research process made them more aware of new strategies and confident to try them. Similarly, Ferrance (2000) and Sax and Fisher (2001) found similar results; action research gives teachers more confidence in their work. Teachers appeared empowered and confident concerning daily and future pedagogical practices and decisions.

Action research will help improve personal and professional growth to occur, especially if it is pushed out of a comfort zone is challenging. Accordingly, action research puts the teacher in many new roles, teacher as researcher, teacher as the decision-maker (Mertler, 2006), and teacher as a change agent. Implementing the action research process has helped inform daily instruction and has transformed, changed, and expanded teachers' curriculum perspectives, choices, and thinking.

The completion of action research capability training was instrumental in changing teachers' practices. As Auger & Wideman, 2000; Johnson & Button, 2000), teachers perceived the action research process as time-consuming and overwhelming. In particular, the data analysis stage tended to be the most challenging step for teachers in this study. Universities and colleges need to be knowledgeable about the professional development

opportunity that action research offers and realize that support during the implementation steps of an action research study, specifically during the data analysis phase, is essential to the teacher's and school's success.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, it is recommended that teachers' universities and colleges conduct either a parallel or a longitudinal study. Teachers in this action research study took part in the action research process to enhance/improve their research skills in action research as part of making classroom decisions and making the classrooms adapt to modern trends and practices.

Research related to school-wide action research could be another avenue to explore. Action research is a valuable experience in the teaching and learning process. When teachers design a study and collect data, they become decision-makers. This leads to teacher empowerment when teachers become the leaders, the researchers, and the decision-makers, all outcomes of the action research process. Such teacher empowerment allows teachers to implement instructional programs that best meet the needs of their students (Johnson, 2005; Mertler, 2006). Action research provides teachers with a solid and powerful tool in which to accomplish that goal.

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