Action Research Writing Ability among Secondary School Teachers

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Abstract
This study focused on the action research writing ability of secondary school teachers in Tabuk City Division, Philippines, as affected by their socio-demographic profile. There were 15 secondary schools in the division; however, only 7 schools were participating in research. This was planned as a basis in giving technical assistance to improve teachers' action research writing ability. The study involved 41 chosen teachers who have conducted action researches. It was a quantitative study and employed descriptive research design. The data on respondents' socio-demographic profile was presented in percentage. Furthermore, Chi-square test was used to determine the association of the action research writing ability of the teachers with their socio-demographic profile. Results showed that most of the respondents were in the field of English, followed by Science, Math and Filipino. Majority were 36-50 (70.70%) years old, female (78%), master's degree holders (75.6%), in the service for ten years and below (53.7%), with three or more trainings on research writing (65.9%), and with one action research conducted. Almost half (46.3%) hold Teacher III positions and the rest hold either a Master Teacher or Teacher II position. Results further showed that the overall action research writing ability of the respondents is at *moderate* level. Furthermore, Chi-square test revealed that the action research writing ability of the teachers does not have significant association with their educational attainment, teaching position, and length of service but have significant association with their field of specialization, age, gender, number of trainings attended and number of action research conducted.

Keywords: research writing ability, secondary school teachers, Tabuk City

Introduction

The word research is the momentum for positive change leading to the main goal of teachers "We care, we share and we make a difference". Through research, teachers could make new policies and could address the immediate need of our students. According to Hanover (2014) as stated in the study conducted by Padsoyan (2016), "a culture of research provides a supportive context in which research is uniformly expected, discussed, produced, and valued". In line with RA 9155, the Department of Education had to enable policies and mechanisms from which the delivery of quality basic education could be continuously improved. Chapter 1, Section 7 (5) of R.A. 9155 stated that DepEd is mandated to "undertake national educational research and studies" from which it could become part of the basis for necessary reforms and policy inputs. In fact, one objective in the Individual Performance Commitment and Review (IPCR) for DepEd teachers was to conduct one (1) action research per school year. It was also one of the criteria for ranking in Teacher II to Master teacher II, teaching related positions, and non-teaching promotions. Koshy (2005) claimed that learning through action leads to personal and professional development. Grossman and McDonald's (2008) study also indicated that experiential learning of implementing action research combined with knowledge of action research might provide fruitful combination for learning. Action research as methodology had provided teachers with opportunity to develop research skills and practitioner disposition that created reflective practice as well. Thus, encouraging teachers to continue using action research as a tool for improvement was necessary. Neapolitan (2000) found that teachers believed that engaging in action research helped them grow personally and professionally and enabled them to influence other teachers toward improving curriculum and instruction. On the contrary, despite the importance of conducting action research in improving curriculum and instruction, according to Allwright, et.al (1993), lack of expertise or skills in research, lack of support especially from within their own institution, and threats to their self-image as a teacher were some reasons why teachers were not able to make one. Sardo, et.al (1995) also emphasized their interactions with experienced classroom teachers that teachers encountered major barriers to conducting action research. These included fear of the perceived technical nature of research, the tendency to believe that research was not within the domain of practicing teachers, the belief that research was not relevant to teachers' everyday lives, lack of time and flexibility in the school day to do action research, concerns about the potentially sensitive nature of action research topics to parents and other stakeholders, and either the lack of administrative support or administrative resistance to conducting action research. Among the strategies offered, the authors suggested better training of teachers and administrators in conducting action research starting with pre-service education. Some said they were not interested to do action research while the others were very much willing but they did not know when and how to start. These reasons had driven the researcher to assess the action research writing ability among secondary school teachers and the problems encountered in conducting action research. Findings of this study would be an empirical evidence to aid policy formulation.

This study focused on the action research writing ability of secondary school teachers in Tabuk City Division, Philippines, as affected by their socio-demographic profile. There were 15 secondary schools in the division; however, only 7 schools were participating in research. This was planned as a basis in giving technical assistance to

improve teachers' action research writing ability. The study involved 41 chosen teachers who have conducted action researches. It was a quantitative study and employed descriptive research design. The data on respondents' socio-demographic profile was presented in percentage. Furthermore, Chi-square test was used to determine the association of the action research writing ability of the teachers with their socio-demographic profile.

As to Socio-demographic Profile of Respondents, the highest number of 14 or 34.1 percent was those teachers teaching English and the least with a frequency of 1 or 2.4 percent were teachers teaching Araling Panlipunan and TLE. No action research was conducted by teachers teaching MAPEH. The data implies that research is an application of writing skills where English teachers are equipped with. Based on survey, most of the local researches conducted on action research were case studies which were focused on English teachers' awareness in teaching and conducting action research particularly on colleges and Universities (Mesfin, 2003; and Emiru, 2012). Since research is scientifically based, science and math teachers are more adept in doing research. Conducting research is an application of scientific principles in which these two subjects are anchored. The results contradict the findings of Zeleke (2014) in his study entitled "The Status of Action Research Conducted in Government Secondary Schools of Addis Ababa". He found out that majority of the respondents was found to be from the Natural Sciences followed by Social Studies and the Languages. The Technology and Livelihood Education teachers were more focused on the application of life skills rather than writing, computing and reading. Related to the finding, Bautista (2018) highlighted in her article entitled TLE Teaching Strategies that with the advent of 21st century education, TLE has become a very important subject. Educators are now employing strategies that will make TLE inviting and more focused, particularly with the inputs and output of the students gained from the subject. This is also true with MAPEH teachers who find researching taxing on their part since their skills are leaned toward kinesthetic application. However, for AP teachers, it could have been easier for them since they are expected to read a lot and be updated. The finding contradicts Zeleke's (2014) finding wherein Social Studies ranked second in the "Status of Action Research Conducted in Government Secondary Schools of Addis Ababa".

The highest number of 29 or 70.7 percent was those whose age group is 36- 50 followed by 12 or 29.3 percent aged 21 – 35. The result implies that teachers who were at the age group of 36-50 were at the height of their energy in doing activities that would eventually enhance their teaching career. At this age group, these teachers are already teacher 3 and master teachers 1 and 2; therefore, they are expected to be the leaders in the development of the school especially in instruction. In the previous study of the author on the research writing ability of teachers in Tabuk City National High School, Tabuk City Division, she found out that out of 84 respondents, 56 were at the age group of 21-35 while 28 were at the age group of 36-50. However, in this study, most of the teachers who were able to conduct action research came from the age group 36-50.

The teaching field is dominated by the female with the higher number of 32 or 78 percent and the male gender with lower number of 9 or 22 percent. This implies that the teaching profession in the country is dominated by females. And since it was so, it would follow that there would be more female teachers who would conduct teaching

related activities such as conducting action research. This data corroborates with the study entitled "Evaluation of attitude to knowledge of and barriers toward research among medical science students conducted by Memarpour, et.al (2015). They found out that female students had greater knowledge than males. Barriers were emphasized as lack of funding support and lack of time for research. The finding is in contrast with the findings of Horeto (2013) in his study entitled "School Related Factors Affecting Teachers Participation in Conducting Action Research in Secondary Schools" conducted in Ethiopia. He found out that out of 208 teacher respondents,160 (76.9%) and 48 (23.1%) were males and females respectively. In this place, the teaching profession was dominated by the males. Moreover, the majority 81.1% of respondents of Zeleke (2014) were males while the remaining 18.9 % were females.

The teachers with master's degree obtained a higher number of 31 or 75.6 percent and those with baccalaureate degree obtained the least frequency of 3 or 7.3 percent. This result implies that many of the secondary teachers were able to finish graduate school and few were able to finish post graduate school. Moreover, after acquiring master's degree, this group of teachers are still fresh with the ideas and skills in research they recently conducted as a requirement in their master's degree and were ready to apply these skills not only for personal. The finding is consistent with the previous findings of the studies of Kincheloe (1991) and Keyes (1999) as cited by Gray and Campbell-Evans (2002) which indicated that many teachers, and particularly beginning teachers, do not feel that they can confidently engage in debates on issues within the classrooms and were reluctant to admit that they have done any research in the classroom. In short, they have yet to develop confidence in doing activities related to their teaching responsibilities. Moreover, findings of Seider and Lemma (2006) revealed that teachers involved in action research projects as part of their graduate work requirements saw this work as professionally and personally worthwhile. To this degree, the assumption that teachers would see value in conducting action research was realized, but perhaps only during the capstone semesters and the Masters' program. It seems that once they completed their university requirements, only some teachers continued to initiate additional action researches. Zeleke (2014) in his study, which examined the current status of action research conducted by teachers in government secondary schools of Addis Ababa, found out that 95 % of the respondents were found to have first degrees and the remaining 5 % had their second degrees (MA/MSc). However, the result contradicts on the study conducted by the author (2016) entitled Level of research writing ability among TCNHS teachers wherein most of the TCNHS Teachers have baccalaureate degree with a percentage of 56. There are 41.7 % teachers with master's degree and only 2.4 % of the teachers graduated with doctorate degree.

Teacher III obtained the highest number while teacher II obtained the least frequency of 2 or 4.9 percent. No T-I participant was noted. The data manifested the expectation that is regarded to teachers who are of higher positions. They are expected to do more than those who are of lower positions. They should be the drivers of curriculum development. As observed for those with teacher 3 position, they give more effort and spend extra time since these are needed for them to step to a much higher positions as stipulated in the D.O 66. s. 2017 which is the "Guidelines on the Appointment and Promotion of other Teaching, Related Teaching and Non- Teaching Positions" and DECS Order No. 51, s.1999 "Guidelines in the Promotion for Master Teacher I and II." Zeleke (2014) claimed that novice teachers are expected to conduct action

research as they have already written their theses, senior essays or projects before their graduation from college or university.

Teachers whose length of service was 10 years and below obtained highest number of 22 or 53.7 percent and teachers with 11-20 years of teaching experienced obtained the least with 8 or 19.5 percent. This implies that within the early years of teachers' teaching service, they conduct action research more than when teachers stay in the service for more than 10 years. This is another evidence to the claim of the Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research (CALDER) that the impact of experience is strongest during the first few years of teaching; after that, marginal returns diminish. Ladd (2008) as cited in a meta-analysis by the Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research (CALDER) (2010) found out that teachers with more than 20 years of experience are more effective than teachers with no experience, but are not much more effective than those with 5 years of experience. The center also claims that studies have also documented some evidence that effectiveness declines after some point, particularly among high school teachers. While this meta-analysis on the impact of teacher experience refers to the effectiveness of teachers in teaching per se but it is a clear proof the performance of teachers in all aspects, including conducting researches, is affected by their teaching experience.

Teachers with three or more trainings attended obtained the highest number of 27 or 65.9 percent and teachers with one training attended obtained the least frequency of 5 or 12.2 percent. The data implies that secondary school teachers do attend trainings on conducting action research. Aside from learning about research in baccalaureate and graduate schools and the conduct of in-service trainings, DepEd mandated the conduct of School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) through D.O. No. 35 s. 2016 which could be an avenue for teachers to have trainings and workshops on making an action research. However, teachers' knowledge on the process of conducting research does not guarantee their participation in making action research. The findings contradict with the Authors' (2016) previous study where 29.8 % teachers attended only one training, 10.7 % had two and 7.1 % were able to attend three or more trainings. The study of Zeleke (2014) entitled, "The Status of Action Research Conducted in Government Secondary Schools," confirms this finding. It found out that although teachers in secondary schools have some skills to conduct action research, their participation was very low. In the study of Meerah, et.al (2016) entitled, "What Motivates Teachers to Conduct Research," it was found that having the knowledge and skills in research do not necessarily involve teachers in research. It should emphasize on changing the teachers' attitudes to conduct research rather than providing only research knowledge and skills.

Teachers with one conducted action research obtained the highest number of 34 or 82.9 percent and teachers with three conducted action research obtained the least frequency of 1 or 2.4 percent. Based from observation, teachers are contented on having conducted one action research since action research is usually geared toward making an innovation. Once a teacher is able to complete an action research with an innovation, he/ she is assured of 25 points when he/ she applies for promotion. It also confirms from the authors (2016) previous study that there are 14.3 % teachers conducted only one, 3.6 % had three or more and 2.4 % were able to conduct two action researches in Tabuk City National High School. Unfortunately, there are 79.8

% teachers who do not have action research. The findings of Seider and Lemma (2006) substantiate the data gathered wherein only few teachers began new research projects since the original one had been conducted. Nonetheless, through interview data, it appears that action research is becoming an option for teachers' professional development. This further implies that conducting an action research often did not serve its purpose as stipulated in its very own meaning. In connection with the number of trainings attended by the teachers, the data does not guarantee that the more trainings they attended, the more action research conducted. This observation supports the results of Meerah, et.al (2016) that very few teachers had conducted action research regularly and twenty percent of those who have attended in-service course have done so. Much lower frequencies were obtained from those who did not attend any action research courses. In order to encourage teachers to carry out research in schools, one teacher succinctly noted from the same study. She emphasized that what is more important is, the teacher should be self-motivated. Have internal focus control. The teacher should feel action research is for their self-improvement, so that teaching becomes more effective for personal reasons and not because somebody asked you to do or to seek reward. Evans (2011) claimed that a more positive attitude towards research will lead to intrinsic motivation to engage in research.

The action research writing ability among secondary school teachers in Tabuk City division along introduction obtained a total average weighted mean of 3.61 described as "high ability". The finding indicates that the teachers know how to write an introductory part of an action research. This is expected because all trainings and seminars on research writing emphasize on the introductory part research which includes the background, framework, objectives and review of related literature. These results justify the earlier finding which showed that the respondents had attended two and three trainings in action research which have given them high ability in writing the introduction. However, this contradicts the findings of Padsoyan (2016) that there was a fair level of action research writing ability along introduction among teaching and teaching related personnel of Baguio City Division.

The action research writing ability among secondary school teachers in Tabuk City division along methodology obtained a total average weighted mean of 2.78 described as "fair ability". The abilities in writing the methodology of an action research, along "concrete planning on how the results of the research will be disseminated," "detailed explanation of encoding/coding procedures, quality control, plan for data analysis," and "use of appropriate program software" obtained lower means of 2.63, 2.39 and 1.68 described as moderate, fair and poor abilities, respectively. Despite the rigid trainings and SLAC conducted, close supervision on these indicators is needed since it involves the use of statistics. The researcher as the member of the School Review and Evaluation Committee (SREC) since 2016 also encountered problems in evaluating action researches. She found out that most of the teachers' research proposals and final research reports had a problem on identifying what statistical tool to be used to test the significant difference between groups. Consequently, analyzing their data is a chaos. The researcher reiterated in her action plan that there is a need to enhance the writing ability of teachers in action research especially in analyzing the data year round. Once teachers are enabled and equipped in analyzing data, it is easier for them to give meaning and implications of the data presented.

The action research writing ability among secondary school teachers in Tabuk City division along results/findings and discussion was “moderate” as evidenced by the total average weighted mean of 2.95. From the 5 identified criteria in assessing the respondents writing ability of the results/findings and discussion, “Presented appropriate data using tables or figures” obtained the highest mean of 3.22 described as “moderate ability”. This means that the respondents know how to present the data in their studies using tables or figures but they still need mentoring and guidance from research experts. On the other hand, the indicator “Found and chose appropriate studies to corroborate the findings/results of the study” obtained the lowest mean of 2.22 described as “fair ability”. This means that the respondents have difficulty in researching and reviewing literature related to their action research topics thereby having difficulty in choosing appropriate findings to corroborate the results of their action researches.

The action research writing ability of secondary school teachers in Tabuk City Division along conclusion, recommendation and referencing is “moderate” as evidenced by the total average weighted mean of 3.22.

Results further showed that the overall action research writing ability of the respondents is at *moderate* level. Furthermore, Chi-square test revealed that the action research writing ability of the teachers does not have significant association with their educational attainment, teaching position, and length of service but have significant association with their field of specialization, age, gender, number of trainings attended and number of action research conducted.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the respondents varied in their demographic profile along field of specialization, age, gender, educational attainment, teaching position, length of service, number of trainings conducted, and number of action research conducted. As to the overall action research writing ability of the respondents is at *moderate* level. Furthermore, Chi-square test revealed that the action research writing ability of the teachers does not have significant association with their educational attainment, teaching position, and length of service but have significant association with their field of specialization, age, gender, number of trainings attended and number of action research conducted.

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