

Assessing the Research Capability of Public Elementary School Teachers: Basis for a Research Capability Enhancement Program

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Abstract

Most educational institutions strive to deliver quality instruction and services, prompting continuous reformulation, implementation, and evaluation of policies grounded in research-based evidence. As such, research has become a vital institutional function, particularly in improving teaching and learning, fostering innovation, and ensuring quality assurance. This expectation presents a challenge to teachers in both basic and higher education to conduct classroom-based research that addresses instructional issues and contributes to system improvement in line with institutional mandates. Anchored on this premise, this descriptive-correlational study examined the research capability of 160 public elementary school teachers. A survey questionnaire was employed to assess their competence in key areas, including technical research skills, problem conceptualization, research planning, and data processing. Findings revealed that teachers demonstrated a moderate level of research capability, indicating their ability to perform research tasks with minimal supervision. The majority of respondents were female, held bachelor's degrees with master's units, and occupied Teacher I–III positions. However, most had limited participation in international, national, and regional research trainings and reported minimal research engagement, as evidenced by a lack of completed, presented, or published studies. Key challenges identified included limited time due to teaching and administrative workload, insufficient writing and referencing skills, inadequate data analysis competence, and financial constraints. Based on these findings, the study recommends the development of a research capability enhancement program in collaboration with the Department of Education and research-oriented stakeholders to strengthen teachers' engagement in research.

Keywords: Research capability; action research; public elementary school teachers; enhancement program

1. Introduction

Research is widely recognized as a critical driver of national and global development, as it generates knowledge that informs innovation, policy, and practice, ultimately contributing to the improvement of quality of life. In contemporary education, research plays a pivotal role in addressing complex instructional challenges and in promoting evidence-based decision-making (OECD, 2020). In the Philippine context, Department of Education Order No. 43, s. 2015 reinforces the importance of action research by emphasizing evidence-based policy development and continuous improvement in educational practices. This directive has encouraged teachers to integrate research into their professional responsibilities and to utilize findings to enhance teaching and learning outcomes.

Research capability refers to an individual's capacity to design, conduct, analyze, and disseminate high-quality research. Recent studies conceptualize it as a multidimensional competence encompassing technical, analytical, and reflective skills developed through sustained training and practice (Ulla et al., 2021; Morales, 2020). Such capability evolves over time through professional development opportunities, collaborative learning, and engagement in research activities. Moreover, continuous application of research knowledge and skills is essential in fostering innovation and generating meaningful outputs that address educational issues.

Teachers' research capability is therefore integral to school improvement, curriculum enhancement, and professional growth. However, many educators continue to face challenges in producing quality research and sustaining productivity due to limited training, time constraints, and insufficient support systems (Ulla et al., 2021). In response, this study assessed the research capability of public elementary school teachers and identified areas for enhancement. The findings provide empirical bases for designing strategic interventions and support mechanisms aimed at strengthening teachers' research engagement and productivity. Ultimately, this study contributes to the advancement of Sustainable

Development Goal 4 by promoting inclusive, equitable, and quality education through research-informed practice.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design

A descriptive-correlational research design was employed to examine the demographic profile of elementary school teachers in the southern sector of the division. The study considered variables such as sex, age, educational attainment, academic rank, number and level of research-related trainings, seminars, or webinars attended, and research productivity in terms of completed, presented, and published outputs. The study further assessed teachers' level of research capability across key domains, including technical skills, problem conceptualization, research design, and data processing. It also identified the challenges and issues encountered by teachers in conducting research. In addition, the study explored the relationships between selected demographic variables and teachers' research capability to provide a comprehensive basis for targeted interventions.

2.2 Locale of the Study

The study was conducted in selected central elementary schools located in the southern part of Eastern Samar Division. The participating schools included Lawaan Central Elementary School, Balangiga Central Elementary School, Giporlos Central Elementary School, Quinapondan Central Elementary School, General MacArthur Central Elementary School, Salcedo Central Elementary School, Mercedes Central Elementary School, and Guiuan East Central Elementary School. These schools were purposively selected due to their accessibility, as they are situated within the town centers of their respective municipalities, thereby facilitating efficient data collection and coordination.

2.3 Sample and Sampling

The respondents of the study were one hundred sixty (160) elementary teachers with regular permanent items from the identified central schools in the Southern Part of the Division of Eastern Samar, chosen through complete enumeration process.

2.4 Data Gathering Procedure

Prior to the conduct of the study, formal permission was obtained from the Schools Division Superintendent. Subsequently, written requests were submitted to the respective District Supervisors of the selected central elementary schools. Upon approval, the researchers coordinated with school authorities and facilitated the systematic distribution and retrieval of the questionnaires among the identified respondents.

The study utilized an adapted questionnaire developed by Abarro, J.O. and Mariño, W.P. (2016) to assess teachers' research capability. The instrument measured four key dimensions: Technical Skills (8 items), Skills in Conceptualizing a Research Problem (7 items), Knowledge and Skills in Designing the Research Plan (8 items), and Skills in Research Data Processing (5 items). In addition, a separate instrument was used to identify the problems or issues encountered by teachers in conducting research. Prior to administration, both instruments were reviewed for content validity by a panel of experts in educational research. A pilot test was conducted to ensure clarity and reliability, yielding satisfactory Cronbach's alpha coefficients that confirmed the internal consistency of the items across all dimensions. These instruments provided comprehensive data on teachers' research competence as well as the challenges they face in research engagement.

2.5 Data Analysis

In this study, descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, and mean, were computed using SPSS to summarize the demographic profile of the respondents and their levels of research capability. To test the hypothesized relationships between selected demographic variables and teachers' research capability, several correlation statistics were employed based on the nature of the variables: Point-Biserial Coefficients for dichotomous and continuous variables, Eta Correlation for nominal and interval variables, and Pearson's *r* for relationships between continuous variables. The level of significance was set at 0.05 to determine whether to reject or accept the hypotheses, ensuring that the statistical interpretations were conducted at a standard confidence level.

3. Results and Discussion

Table 1 presents the descriptive analysis of the respondents' demographic profile, professional development experiences, and research outputs. The table summarizes key variables providing a clear overview of the characteristics and research engagement of the participating elementary school teachers. The data indicate that the teaching workforce is predominantly female (81.3%), which aligns with global and national trends showing the feminization of the teaching profession, particularly at the elementary level (UNESCO, 2021). The majority of respondents were within the 35–44 age

group (53.1%), suggesting a relatively experienced and professionally active cohort. In terms of educational attainment, most teachers had pursued graduate studies, with 57.5% holding a bachelor's degree with master's units, although only a small proportion (12.5%) had completed a master's degree. This reflects ongoing efforts toward professional advancement, consistent with continuing professional development initiatives in education (Ulla et al., 2021).

However, participation in research-related training, particularly at the international (98.8%) and national (96.9%) levels, remained minimal, with greater engagement observed only at the local or school level. This limited exposure to higher-level training opportunities may contribute to the low research productivity observed, as evidenced by the high percentage of teachers with no completed (92.5%), presented (95.6%), or published (90%) research outputs. Similar findings have been reported in recent studies, which highlight insufficient training and support as key barriers to teachers' research engagement (Morales, 2020; Ulla et al., 2021).

Furthermore, the majority of respondents were classified under Teacher I–III (80%), indicating that most are in entry to mid-level teaching positions, with very few occupying leadership roles. Overall, while the teachers demonstrate professional experience and engagement in graduate studies, their limited participation in advanced research training and low research output underscore the need for targeted interventions. Strengthening research capability through structured training, mentoring, and institutional support is essential to foster a more research-oriented teaching workforce and promote evidence-based educational practices.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Public Elementary School Teachers (n=160)

<i>Gender</i>	<i>Frequency (f)</i>		<i>Percent</i>		
Male	30		18.8		
Female	130		81.3		
<i>Age</i>	<i>Frequency (f)</i>		<i>Percent</i>		
22-34 years old	22		13.8		
35-44 years old	85		53.1		
45-64 years old	53		33.1		
<i>Educational Attainment</i>	<i>Frequency (f)</i>		<i>Percent</i>		
BS Graduate with Masteral Units	92		57.5		
Master’s Degree Holder	20		12.5		
<i>Trainings Attended</i>					
	International	National	Regional	Provincial	Local/School
Below 2	158 (98.8)	155 (96.9)	143 (89.4)	94 (58.8)	83 (51.9)
2-3	1 (.6)	4 (2.5)	10 (6.3)	38 (23.8)	15 (9.4)
Above 3	1 (.6)	1 (.6)	7 (4.4)	28 (17.5)	62 (38.8)
<i>Number of Research Outputs</i>					
	Completed		Presented		Published
None	148 (92.5)		153 (95.6)		144 (90.0)
1-2	11 (6.9)		7 (4.4)		9 (5.6)
Above 2	1 (.6)		0		7 (4.4)
<i>Academic Rank</i>	<i>Frequency (f)</i>		<i>Percent</i>		
Teacher I-III	128		80.0		
Head Teacher	5		3.1		
Master Teacher	26		16.3		
Assistant School Principal/Principal	1		.6		

Table 2 presents the descriptive data on the research capability of elementary school teachers across four key dimensions: technical skills, skills in conceptualizing a research problem, knowledge and skills in designing a research plan, and research data processing. The results indicate that respondents were moderately capable in all areas, with the highest mean observed in Technical Skills (3.10) and the lowest in Research Data Processing (2.72). Skills in conceptualizing a research problem (2.92) and designing a research plan (2.86) likewise fell within the moderate range. The overall mean of

3.10 suggests that teachers possess a functional level of research competence, enabling them to perform basic research tasks with minimal supervision.

These findings are consistent with recent studies indicating that while teachers demonstrate foundational research skills, there are persistent gaps in more complex competencies such as data analysis and research design (Morales, 2020; Ulla et al., 2021). Research capability is recognized as a multidimensional construct that develops through continuous training, practice, and institutional support (Caingcoy, 2020). The relatively lower mean in data processing highlights a common challenge among teachers, particularly in the application of statistical tools and interpretation of results, which has been identified as a critical barrier to research productivity (Ulla et al., 2021). The moderate level of capability underscores the need for sustained capacity-building initiatives, particularly in advanced research skills such as data analysis and research planning. Strengthening these areas through targeted training and mentoring can enhance teachers' ability to produce quality research and contribute to evidence-based educational practices.

Table 2. Research Capability of Public Elementary School Teachers (n=160)

Research Capability Dimension	Mean	Description
Technical Skills	3.10	Moderately Capable
Conceptualizing a Research Problem	2.92	Moderately Capable
Knowledge and Skills in Designing a Research Plan	2.86	Moderately Capable
Research Data Processing	2.72	Moderately Capable
Overall Mean	2.90	Moderately Capable

Table 3 presents the relationships between selected demographic and professional variables and teachers' technical skills in research. The findings reveal significant positive correlations for age ($r = 0.219$, $p = 0.005$), sex ($r = 0.274$, $p = 0.002$), educational attainment ($r = 0.358$, $p < 0.001$), participation in international ($r = 0.362$, $p < 0.001$) and national trainings ($r = 0.418$, $p < 0.001$), and number of published research outputs ($r = 0.266$, $p = 0.009$). Among these variables, participation in national trainings demonstrated the strongest relationship, indicating that increased exposure to professional development opportunities significantly enhances teachers' technical research skills.

These findings support existing literature emphasizing the critical role of continuous professional development and advanced training in strengthening teachers' research competence (Ulla et al., 2021; Morales, 2020). Higher educational attainment likewise contributes to improved research skills, as it exposes teachers to more rigorous academic and research experiences (Caingcoy, 2020). Furthermore, engagement in research dissemination, such as publishing studies, reinforces technical competence through practical application and reflective practice.

Table 3. Relationship Between Research Capability in terms of Technical Skills and Profile of Teachers

Independent	Dependent	r-value	p-value	Interpretation
Age	Technical Skills	.219	.005	Significant
Sex		.274	.002	Significant
Educational Attainment		.358	.000	Significant
International Trainings		.362	.000	Significant
National Trainings		.418	.000	Significant
Number of Published Research Outputs		.266	.009	Significant

Table 4 presents the relationships between selected demographic and professional variables and teachers' skills in conceptualizing a research problem. The findings reveal significant positive correlations for sex ($r = 0.219$, $p = 0.021$), educational attainment ($r = 0.280$, $p = 0.002$), participation in division-level trainings ($r = 0.337$, $p < 0.001$) and international trainings ($r = 0.342$, $p < 0.001$), number of published research outputs ($r = 0.274$, $p = 0.007$), and academic rank ($r = 0.265$, $p = 0.010$). These results indicate that both individual characteristics and professional development experiences are significantly associated with teachers' competence in identifying and defining research problems.

Consistent with prior studies, higher educational attainment and engagement in research-related training enhance teachers' ability to critically analyze classroom issues and formulate relevant research questions (Morales, 2020; Ulla et al., 2021). Exposure to training, particularly at broader levels, provides teachers with frameworks and strategies for problem

identification and inquiry development. Additionally, research dissemination and higher academic rank may reflect accumulated experience, which further strengthens teachers' conceptual understanding of research processes (Caingcoy, 2020).

Table 4. Relationship Between Research Capability in Conceptualizing a Research Problem and Profile of Teachers

Independent	Dependent	r-value	p-value	Interpretation
Sex	Conceptualizing a Research Problem	.219	.021	Significant
Educational Attainment		.280	.002	Significant
International Trainings		.337	.000	Significant
Number of Published Research Papers		.274	.007	Significant
Academic Rank		.265	.010	Significant

Table 5 presents the relationships between selected demographic and professional variables and teachers' knowledge and skills in designing a research plan. The results reveal significant positive correlations for sex ($r = 0.202$, $p = 0.038$), educational attainment ($r = 0.269$, $p = 0.003$), participation in division-level trainings ($r = 0.365$, $p < 0.001$) and local/school-based trainings ($r = 0.363$, $p < 0.001$), number of published research outputs ($r = 0.271$, $p = 0.008$), and academic rank ($r = 0.282$, $p = 0.005$). These findings indicate that both individual characteristics and professional development experiences significantly influence teachers' competence in designing research plans.

Consistent with existing literature, participation in research-related training enhances teachers' understanding of research methodologies, planning procedures, and ethical considerations, which are essential components of effective research design (Ulla et al., 2021; Morales, 2020). Similarly, higher educational attainment and academic rank are associated with greater exposure to formal research training and practice, thereby strengthening teachers' capacity to develop structured and methodologically sound research plans (Caingcoy, 2020). Engagement in research dissemination, such as publishing outputs, further reinforces these competencies through experiential learning and reflective practice.

Table 5. Relationship Between Research Capability in Designing the Research Plan and Profile of Teachers

Independent	Dependent	r-value	p-value	Interpretation
Sex	Designing the Research Plan	.202	.038	Significant
Educational Attainment		.269	.003	Significant
Division Trainings		.365	.000	Significant
Local/School Trainings		.363	.000	Significant
Published		.271	.008	Significant
Academic Rank		.282	.005	Significant

Table 6 presents the relationships between selected demographic and professional variables and teachers' skills in research data processing. The findings reveal significant positive correlations for sex ($r = 0.231$, $p = 0.014$), educational attainment ($r = 0.243$, $p = 0.008$), participation in division-level trainings ($r = 0.375$, $p < 0.001$) and local/school-based trainings ($r = 0.337$, $p < 0.001$), number of published research outputs ($r = 0.271$, $p = 0.008$), and academic rank ($r = 0.259$, $p = 0.013$). These results indicate that both demographic characteristics and professional development experiences significantly influence teachers' competence in research data processing, with training participation demonstrating relatively stronger associations.

These findings are consistent with previous studies emphasizing that research training plays a critical role in developing teachers' analytical and statistical skills, particularly in data handling, interpretation, and the use of statistical tools (Ulla et al., 2021; Morales, 2020). Data processing is often identified as one of the most challenging aspects of research, requiring not only technical knowledge but also practical experience in applying statistical techniques (Hair et al., 2020). Furthermore, higher educational attainment and academic rank are associated with increased exposure to research methodologies and quantitative analysis, thereby enhancing competence in data processing (Caingcoy, 2020). Engagement in research dissemination, such as publishing outputs, also reinforces these skills through continuous practice and application (Barrot, 2021). The results highlight the importance of sustained and targeted training in data analysis and statistical methods, as well as opportunities for hands-on research experience.

Table 6. Relationship Between Research Capability in Data Processing and Profile of Teachers

Independent	Dependent	r-value	p-value	Interpretation
Sex	Data Processing	.231	.014	Significant
Educational Attainment		.243	.008	Significant
Division Trainings		.375	.000	Significant
Local/School Trainings		.337	.000	Significant
Published		.271	.008	Significant
Academic Rank		.259	.013	Significant

Table 7 presents the problems encountered by teachers in conducting research. The findings reveal that the most prevalent challenges were lack of time (83.1%) and insufficient writing, citing, and referencing skills (83.1%), followed by being preoccupied with teaching and administrative workload (76.3%). Other notable concerns include lack of data analysis skills (68.8%), financial constraints (67.5%), and limited access to research training (65.0%). In contrast, fewer respondents reported difficulties related to materials and tools (49.4%) and retrieval of questionnaires (45.6%).

These results are consistent with existing literature identifying time constraints, heavy workload, and limited research skills as major barriers to teachers' research engagement (Ulla et al., 2021; Barrot, 2021). Teachers often prioritize instructional and administrative responsibilities, leaving minimal time for research activities. Additionally, deficiencies in academic writing and data analysis skills hinder their ability to complete and disseminate research outputs (Morales, 2020). Financial limitations and insufficient access to professional development opportunities further constrain teachers' capacity to engage in research (Caingcoy, 2020; Manila, 2022). The findings underscore that both structural and skill-related factors impede teachers' participation in research. Addressing these barriers requires comprehensive interventions, including targeted training in research writing and data analysis, provision of institutional support and resources, and the implementation of workload management strategies to foster a more research-oriented teaching environment.

Table 7. Problems or Issues Encountered by Teachers in Conducting Research

Problems Identified	Frequency (f)/Percent	
	Yes	No
Lack of time	133 (83.1)	26 (16.3)
Lack of Training	104 (65.0)	56 (35.0)
Lack of Data Analysis Skills	110 (68.8)	50 (31.3)
Lack of Writing Skills/Citing/Referencing	133 (83.1)	26 (16.3)
Financial Constraints	108 (67.5)	52 (32.5)
Problems with Materials and Tools	79 (49.4)	81 (50.6)
Preoccupied with Teaching and Paperwork	122 (76.3)	33 (20.6)
Retrieval of Questionnaires	73 (45.6)	82 (51.3)

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the study found that public elementary school teachers possess a moderate level of research capability but demonstrate low research engagement and productivity. While demographic and professional variables—particularly educational attainment, training participation, and academic rank—were significantly associated with research capability, training exposure showed the strongest influence across all dimensions. However, major barriers such as limited time, heavy workload, and insufficient skills in writing and data analysis hinder teachers' active involvement in research. These findings highlight the need for a targeted research capability enhancement program that integrates professional development, mentoring, and institutional support to strengthen teachers' research competence and promote evidence-based educational practices.

5. Recommendation

It is recommended that a comprehensive research capability enhancement program be implemented, focusing on sustained training in research writing, data analysis, and research design, complemented by mentoring and coaching support. Schools and educational authorities should also provide structured time, reduced workload, and financial and institutional support to enable teachers to actively engage in research. Strengthening participation in higher-level research trainings and encouraging research dissemination are likewise essential to improve teachers' research productivity and promote evidence-based practice.

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