

Leadership and Scholarly Praxis: Elevating the Potentials of School Research Coordinators

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DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.903SEDU0527>

Received: 30 August 2025; Accepted: 04 September 2025; Published: 04 October 2025

ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to determine the relationship of leadership skills, capabilities, and challenges of school research coordinators as a basis for the development of a district-wide training program. A descriptive correlation research design was employed, utilizing a researcher-made and adapted survey questionnaire that consisted of the demographic profile of the respondents, their leadership skills level, research capabilities, and the challenges encountered by school research coordinators during the research process. The researcher considered all the research school coordinators in the 4th Congressional District of Iloilo. Statistical tools used were mean and standard deviation for descriptive statistics, t-test, Pearson r, Kruskal-Wallis Wallis and Post Hoc test for inferential statistics. Results revealed that the school research coordinators as a whole exhibit a relatively high level of administrative skills, moderately capable for capabilities in research, and a lot of challenges encountered during the conduct of research. The findings suggest that the level of leadership skills in terms of highest educational attainment, years in service, years as research coordinator, and research conducted did not significantly impact the level of their administrative skills. There was no significant difference in the level of research capabilities according to the highest educational attainment. There was a notable difference in teachers' years in service, years as research coordinator, and research conducted. There was a significant correlation existed between leadership skills and research capabilities of school research coordinators. The challenges encountered by the school research coordinators during the conduct of research were limited resources, lack of time, lack of funds, and lack of training. It is recommended that the administration should support the teachers in any possible way, depending on their needs and continued professional development, especially in taking up postgraduate education like a master's degree and a doctorate degree to foster teachers' effectiveness in the conduct of research. It is also recommended that teachers should be encouraged to attend seminars, training, and conferences related to research.

Keywords— Leadership Skills, Research Capabilities, School Research Coordinators, Challenges in Research.

INTRODUCTION

Background of Study

Research plays a vital role in improving the quality of life as it provides new knowledge, insights, and solutions to real-world problems. In the field of education, research has become an indispensable academic activity that helps teachers evaluate practices, enhance instruction, and promote higher standards of teaching and learning (Hine, 2013). Despite its value, many teachers, particularly in basic education, continue to find research a challenging endeavor (Manila et al., 2022).

To address this, school research coordinators have emerged as crucial figures in cultivating a culture of research within educational institutions. They are expected not only to manage and oversee research activities but also to lead in motivating and guiding teachers and learners to engage in evidence-based practices. However, these coordinators often face numerous challenges such as limited institutional support, unclear role expectations, and the need for stronger leadership and technical skills (Llego, 2020; Suzan, 2021).

Leadership skills are essential in enabling research coordinators to carry out their roles effectively. According to

Gunawan (2015), an organization functions well when its leaders demonstrate sound leadership traits aligned with recognized standards. In the school setting, this means that coordinators must be equipped with both research competence and leadership capabilities to effectively lead initiatives, foster collaboration, and translate research findings into meaningful educational practices.

The theoretical foundations of this study draw from several perspectives. Skills Leadership Theory emphasizes the integration of technical, human, and conceptual skills as crucial to effective leadership (Indeed Editorial Team, 2025). Amartya Sen's Capability Theory underscores the importance of enhancing individuals' capacities to achieve meaningful outcomes, shifting the focus from mere provision of resources to actual empowerment (Centeno, 2020). Complementing these is Toynbee's Challenge and Response Theory, which highlights how organizations—and by extension, coordinators—grow by responding innovatively to the challenges they face (Shye, 2020). Together, these theories provide a lens for examining the leadership skills, research capabilities, and challenges of school research coordinators.

In the Philippine context, particularly in the 4th Congressional District of Iloilo, school research coordinators are tasked with bridging the gap between policy and practice by advancing research at the grassroots level. However, little is known about their actual leadership competencies, research capabilities, and the challenges they encounter in fulfilling their responsibilities. Addressing this gap is important not only for improving their effectiveness but also for informing the design of support mechanisms such as capacity-building programs.

Thus, this study seeks to determine the leadership skills, research capabilities, and challenges of school research coordinators as the basis for developing a district-wide training program. By investigating these areas, the research aims to provide insights that can strengthen research leadership in schools, empower teachers to undertake meaningful studies, and ultimately improve teaching and learning outcomes.

Statements of the Problem

This study aimed to determine the leadership skills, capabilities, and challenges of research coordinators in the 4th Congressional District of Iloilo during the school year 2023-2024 as the basis for the development of a district-wide training program.

Specifically, this study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of leadership skills of research coordinators when taken as a whole and when classified according to educational background, years in service, years as a coordinator, and number of research conducted?
2. What is the level of research capabilities of research coordinators when taken as a whole and when classified according to educational background, years in service, years as coordinator, and number of research conducted?
3. Is there a significant difference in the level of leadership skills of research coordinators when classified according to educational background, years in service, years as a coordinator, and number of research conducted?
4. Is there a significant difference in the level of research capabilities of research coordinators when classified according to educational background, years in service, years as coordinators, and number of research conducted?
5. Are there significant relationships between leadership skills and research capabilities of school research coordinators?
6. What are the challenges encountered by research coordinators in the conduct of research?
7. What district-wide training program can be proposed based on the results of the study?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework of the Study

The role of School Research Coordinators (SRCs) is mandated by DepEd policies (RA 9155; DepEd Order No. 16, s. 2017) to foster a culture of research, assist teachers in action research, uphold ethical standards, and provide technical assistance. Studies (Llego, 2022; Thorne, 2018; Division Memo 348, s. 2021) emphasize SRCs' administrative and liaison roles in planning, monitoring, and coordinating research initiatives aligned with the Basic Education Research Agenda.

Leadership skills are essential for effective research management. Scholars (Goleman, 2019; Prastiawan et al., 2020; Northouse, 2010) highlight leadership as the process of influencing others toward common goals, encompassing styles such as servant, transactional, emotional, and transformational leadership. Core skills include conceptual, human, and technical skills (Mulyono, 2018), which enable planning, collaboration, and innovation in educational settings.

Research capability refers to teachers' ability to conceptualize, design, and conduct studies to improve instruction and quality of life (Mahani, 2013; Caingcoy, 2020). However, research productivity in Philippine basic education remains low due to limited skills and motivation (Ulla, 2017; Wong, 2019). Training, professional development, and institutional support are critical to enhancing teachers' and coordinators' research competencies (Salom, 2013; BERA, 2018).

Challenges in conducting research include lack of time, resources, and funding, as well as difficulty in securing participants and ensuring stakeholder support (Crawford, 2020; Lemery, 2018; Nguyen, 2023). Organizational undervaluing of research and mismatch in expectations between researchers and stakeholders also hinder effective implementation (Nichols, 2023).

Overall, literature suggests that strong leadership skills, improved research capability, and support systems are essential to overcoming challenges and fostering a sustainable research culture in schools.

Conceptual Framework of the Study

The study investigates the leadership skills, research capabilities, and challenges of school research coordinators in the 4th Congressional District of Iloilo (SY 2023–2024) as bases for a district-wide training program. It examines the relationship between independent variables (educational background, years in service, years as coordinator, and number of research conducted) and dependent variables (leadership skills, research capabilities, and challenges). Guided by a conceptual framework, the independent variables serve as inputs, the analysis of their relationships as the process, and the development of a tailored training program as the output.

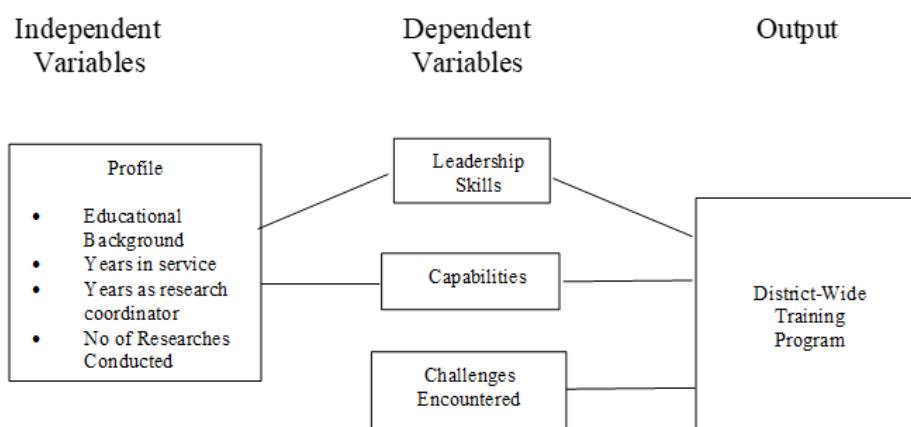


Figure 1. A Schematic diagram of the study on the level of leadership skills, capabilities, and challenges of school research coordinators.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods design, integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches to capture a comprehensive understanding of school research coordinators' leadership skills, research capabilities, and challenges. The quantitative component utilized a descriptive-correlational design to determine relationships among variables without manipulation, while the qualitative component used open-ended questionnaires to explore coordinators' lived experiences and challenges.

Respondents and Locale

The respondents were 51 designated school research coordinators from three school districts—Anilao (n=18), Banate (n=13), and Barotac Nuevo (n=20)—within the 4th Congressional District of Iloilo during School Year 2023–2024. Of the respondents, 53% held a baccalaureate degree and 47% a post-baccalaureate degree. Most had 0–5 years of teaching experience (37%) and 71% had served as coordinators for less than six years. Nearly half (49%) had conducted one to two research studies, while 51% had no research experience. This profile indicates the need for capacity-building interventions in both leadership and research engagement.

Research Instruments

Three instruments were employed in this study. The first was the Leadership Skills Questionnaire, an adapted 17-item tool based on Northouse (2015) that used a five-point Likert scale (1 = Not True to 5 = Very True) to assess coordinators' administrative and leadership competencies. The second was the Research Capability Questionnaire, a researcher-developed 11-item instrument designed to measure coordinators' ability to design and write research proposals, with responses rated on a five-point scale (1 = Not Capable to 5 = Highly Capable). The third was the Challenges Questionnaire, an open-ended instrument that explored the difficulties encountered in conducting research. To ensure validity and reliability, the instruments underwent expert validation for content appropriateness and were pilot-tested with 30 research writers from the 5th Congressional District of Iloilo. Reliability testing using the Kuder-Richardson Formula 20 yielded acceptable coefficients (≥ 0.70), confirming internal consistency.

Data Gathering Procedure

Permissions were secured from the Department of Education, including the Division Superintendent, District Supervisors, and School Heads. Questionnaires were personally distributed by the researcher and retrieved on the same day to ensure high response rates. For the qualitative component, participants responded to open-ended questions, with follow-up clarifications gathered as needed. All responses were recorded and treated with strict confidentiality.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS, employing descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, frequency, and percentage) to summarize respondents' profiles, leadership skills, and research capabilities. Inferential tests, including t-tests, Mann-Whitney U, Kruskal-Wallis, and Pearson's r , were applied as appropriate to examine group differences and relationships among variables. Assumptions of normality and variance were considered in the choice of statistical tests.

Qualitative data from open-ended responses were subjected to thematic analysis, allowing recurring themes and patterns on the challenges faced by school research coordinators to emerge.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical standards were strictly observed. Respondents were informed of the study's purpose, voluntary participation, and their right to withdraw at any stage. Informed consent was obtained, and confidentiality of

responses was guaranteed. Official approval was secured from the Department of Education, Division of Iloilo, including endorsements from school principals, ensuring compliance with institutional protocols.

FINDINGS

Leadership Skills of School Research Coordinators

Table 3 Level of Leadership Skills of School Research Coordinators

Here's your data converted into a clean table format:

Categories	N	Mean	SD	Description
As a whole	51	4.72	0.43	Very High
Highest Educational Attainment				
Baccalaureate Degree	27	4.20	0.42	High
Post Baccalaureate Degree	24	4.35	0.38	Very High
Years in Service				
0–5 years	19	4.39	0.35	Very High
6–10 years	18	4.21	0.50	Very High
11–15 years	14	4.19	0.44	High
Years as Research Coordinator				
0–5 years	36	4.20	0.42	High
6–10 years	15	4.44	0.43	Very High
Number of Research Conducted				
None	26	4.21	0.41	Very High
1–3	25	4.34	0.46	Very High

Table 3 presents the leadership skills of school research coordinators as a whole and when grouped by educational background, years in service, years as coordinator, and number of research conducted. Overall, the coordinators reported a very high level of leadership skills ($M = 4.27$, $SD = 0.43$), suggesting strong confidence in their ability to perform leadership roles.

When classified by educational attainment, coordinators with post-baccalaureate degrees demonstrated very high leadership skills ($M = 4.35$, $SD = 0.38$), while those with a baccalaureate degree reported high skills ($M = 4.20$, $SD = 0.42$). This reinforces findings in the literature (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Prastiawan et al., 2020) that advanced education enhances analytical and leadership competencies.

In terms of years in service, early-career coordinators (0–5 years) showed very high leadership perceptions ($M = 4.39$, $SD = 0.35$), comparable to those with 6–10 years ($M = 4.21$, $SD = 0.50$). Interestingly, coordinators with 11–15 years reported slightly lower leadership skills ($M = 4.19$, $SD = 0.44$), suggesting possible stagnation without continuous professional development. A similar trend was observed in years of experience as coordinator: 0–5 years reflected high leadership skills ($M = 4.20$, $SD = 0.42$), while 6–10 years showed very high skills ($M = 4.44$, $SD = 0.43$), pointing to consolidation of confidence over time.

Research experience also appeared influential. Coordinators who had conducted 1–2 research studies rated themselves very high ($M = 4.34$, $SD = 0.46$), slightly higher than those with no research output ($M = 4.21$, SD

= 0.41). This finding aligns with prior work (Katz, 2018; IMD, 2022) underscoring the role of hands-on research in strengthening leadership through problem-solving, innovation, and evidence-based practice.

Taken together, the results suggest that leadership skills are shaped by both educational attainment and practical research engagement. Continuous training, advanced study opportunities, and structured support for research practice are therefore essential to sustain and enhance the leadership effectiveness of school research coordinators.

Level of Research Capabilities of School Research Coordinators as a Whole and in Terms of Educational Background, Years in Service, Years as Coordinator, and Number of Research Conducted The findings of the study regarding the research capabilities of school research coordinators reveal critical insights into the professional preparedness of educators tasked with leading school-based research initiatives. As a whole, the coordinators demonstrated a mean score of 3.14 (SD = 0.99), interpreted as moderately capable. This rating suggests that coordinators are generally able to complete research tasks with minimal supervision and occasional support, yet significant gaps remain in higher-level competencies such as advanced methodological design, data interpretation, and scholarly dissemination.

When analyzed by highest educational attainment, those with a baccalaureate degree were rated as moderately capable (M = 2.93, SD = 1.00), indicating that while they can perform research tasks, their skills remain foundational and may require reinforcement. The variability in responses suggests uneven preparedness, likely influenced by differences in undergraduate training quality and research exposure. In contrast, coordinators with post-baccalaureate degrees reported higher competence (M = 3.37, SD = 0.95), reflecting the positive impact of graduate-level preparation on research confidence and skills. This aligns with Barlow, Boland, and Smith (2021), who emphasized that advanced education significantly strengthens educators' ability to engage with complex research methodologies.

Table 4 Level of Research Capabilities of School Research Coordinator

Categories	N	Mean	SD	Description
As a whole	51	3.14	0.99	Moderately Capable
Highest Educational Attainment				
Baccalaureate Degree	27	2.93	1.00	Moderately Capable
Post Baccalaureate Degree	24	3.37	0.95	Moderately Capable
Years in Service				
0–5 years	19	3.03	1.08	Moderately Capable
6–10 years	18	3.31	0.89	Moderately Capable
11–15 years	14	3.05	1.03	Moderately Capable
Years as Research Coordinator				
0–5 years	36	2.92	0.84	Moderately Capable
6–10 years	15	3.66	1.15	Capable
Research Conducted				
None	26	2.74	0.86	Moderately Capable
1–2	25	3.55	0.96	Capable

When classified according to years in service, the results illustrate a nuanced trend. Early-career coordinators (0–5 years) reported being moderately capable (M = 3.03, SD = 1.08), reflecting their formative stage in developing research expertise. The wide variation in responses indicates that while some are well-prepared,

others require more structured mentoring and research exposure. Mid-career coordinators (6–10 years) demonstrated higher confidence ($M = 3.31$, $SD = 0.89$), suggesting that accumulated teaching and research-related experiences improve competence. Interestingly, coordinators with 11–15 years in service reverted to a moderately capable level ($M = 3.05$, $SD = 1.03$), indicating potential stagnation in research engagement without continuous professional development—an issue also raised by Bartell (2017).

In terms of years as research coordinator, early-stage coordinators (0–5 years) were moderately capable ($M = 2.92$, $SD = 0.84$), reflecting their adjustment period in handling leadership responsibilities related to research. By contrast, those with 6–10 years in the role reported being capable ($M = 3.66$, $SD = 1.15$), demonstrating that sustained practice and accumulated experiences significantly enhance confidence and proficiency. This supports Brew, Boud, and Malfroy (2017), who emphasized that research capacity develops within supportive cultures of practice, mentorship, and institutional backing.

Finally, when grouped according to the number of researches conducted, a clear pattern emerged. Coordinators with no research experience rated themselves as only moderately capable ($M = 2.74$, $SD = 0.86$), highlighting the crucial role of practical involvement in building competence. Without hands-on experience, coordinators may have theoretical knowledge but lack the skills to apply research processes effectively. On the other hand, those who had conducted 1–2 research projects reported higher capability ($M = 3.55$, $SD = 0.96$), suggesting that even limited engagement provides meaningful growth in skills such as problem identification, methodology design, and data interpretation. This underscores the value of practical research experience in shaping effective research leaders (Caingcoy, 2020).

Overall, the findings reveal that while school research coordinators demonstrate moderate capability as a whole, significant improvements are evident among those with postgraduate education, sustained years as coordinators, and practical research experience. These results highlight the importance of structured professional development, mentorship, and research engagement opportunities to address capability gaps and sustain a robust research culture in schools.

Differences in Leadership Skills and Research Capabilities

Table 5 presents the comparison of leadership skills and research capabilities of school research coordinators when grouped according to selected profile variables.

Variable	Leadership Skills (Test, p-value)	Research Capabilities (Test, p-value)	Interpretation
Educational Attainment	$U = 261.00$, $p = 0.234$	$H = 2.669$, $p = 0.102$	Not significant
Years in Service	$F = 1.190$, $p = 0.313$	$F = 0.435$, $p = 0.650$	Not significant
Years as Research Coordinator	$U = 188.00$, $p = 0.090$	$U = 163.00$, $p = 0.027^*$	Significant
No. of Researches Conducted	$U = 274.50$, $p = 0.341$	$U = 171.50$, $p = 0.004^*$	Significant

The results reveal that leadership skills did not differ significantly across educational attainment, length of service, tenure as coordinator, or research output. This indicates that leadership competencies are relatively stable regardless of academic credentials or work experience. As Warren (2021) emphasized, leadership is often shaped more by context and institutional culture than by formal qualifications, echoing Thorne’s (2018) claim that degrees alone do not guarantee leadership effectiveness.

In contrast, research capabilities showed significant differences when coordinators were grouped by years of service as coordinator and by number of researches conducted. Those with longer tenure in the role and greater research output demonstrated higher research capabilities. This supports Caingcoy’s (2020) findings that research motivation and productivity are strengthened by active involvement, and Serdyukov’s (2017) observation that repeated engagement in research fosters technical skill and confidence. Basilio and Bueno (2019) likewise argued that sustained practice in research contributes to greater proficiency, while Salom (2013)

highlighted the link between direct research involvement and higher competency.

Overall, the findings suggest that while leadership skills may remain consistent across profiles, research capability is largely a function of experience and practice. This aligns with Mahan (2013) and Manila et al. (2020), who noted that despite institutional mandates, uneven productivity persists in basic education. Thus, targeted professional development should not only build research-related skills but also provide structured opportunities for coordinators to design, implement, and disseminate studies—ensuring that experience translates into capacity and confidence.

Relationships Between Leadership Skills and Research Capabilities of School Research Coordinators

The analysis revealed a statistically significant relationship between the leadership skills and research capabilities of school research coordinators ($Z = -5.947$, $p = 0.000$), indicating that leadership competence is closely associated with the ability to design, manage, and produce research outputs (Table 13). The highly significant result ($p < 0.01$) suggests that as coordinators demonstrate stronger leadership skills, their research capabilities also tend to increase. This finding underscores the role of leadership in fostering research productivity and cultivating a culture of inquiry within schools.

Table 13 Significant Relationship Between Leadership Skills and Research Capabilities of School Research Coordinators

	N	Sum of Ranks	Z	p-value
Research Capabilities (–rank)	46	—	–5.947	0.000*
Leadership Skills (+rank)	4	21.50		
Ties	1			
Total	51			

* $p < 0.01$

The significant correlation between leadership and research skills affirms the argument of Basilio and Bueno (2019) that research functions are strengthened when leaders exhibit strong administrative competencies and initiative. Similarly, Caingcoy (2020) emphasized that the capacity of teacher-leaders to support research hinges on their ability to organize, motivate, and collaborate with peers. The present findings extend these insights by showing that leadership is not only crucial in administrative contexts but also in the generation and dissemination of knowledge within schools.

Interestingly, this finding diverges from Centeno (2020), who reported that leadership capability displayed no direct effect on organizational performance, while other factors such as learning orientation and strategic flexibility were significant predictors. In the present study, leadership and research capability are strongly intertwined, suggesting that in the context of schools, coordinators who lead effectively are more likely to excel in research management. These coordinators often exhibit effective communication, collaboration, and team-building, which are necessary to mentor teacher-researchers and sustain research productivity.

Taken together, the results indicate that strengthening leadership skills among research coordinators is not only beneficial for school governance but also for improving the quality and quantity of educational research. This highlights the need for professional development programs that integrate leadership training with research capability-building to ensure that coordinators can function as both effective leaders and competent researchers.

Challenges Encountered in Initiating and Conducting Research

The open-ended responses revealed four primary challenges encountered by school research coordinators: limited resources, lack of time, insufficient funds, and inadequate training. These findings align with previous studies noting that structural and institutional barriers often hinder the implementation of school-based research

(Salom, 2013; Caingcoy, 2020).

Limited resources were identified as a major obstacle, with participants citing inadequate materials and logistical support. This supports Maffea (2020), who emphasized that resource scarcity compromises both teaching quality and research productivity. Similarly, time constraints emerged as a recurrent issue, as coordinators often balanced research duties with teaching and administrative tasks. Consistent with Reigo (2025), the lack of dedicated time forced some to simplify research designs, limiting the depth of inquiry.

Another critical barrier was lack of funding. Participants noted that research allocations were either absent or insufficient, echoing national reports on the low prioritization of research and development in the Philippines (Haimann, 2023). Without stable financial support, projects were often delayed or scaled down, which corroborates Kawaguchi's (2022) argument that inadequate funding structures impede innovation. Finally, lack of training constrained coordinators' ability to conceptualize and execute research projects effectively. This aligns with Pabroa (2024), who highlighted that insufficient training undermines teachers' confidence and research engagement.

Despite these challenges, coordinators identified strategies to overcome barriers. These included time management (prioritizing urgent tasks and using time-blocking), attending seminars and training (to strengthen research skills and confidence), and maintaining a positive outlook (fostering resilience and motivation). Such strategies echo the recommendations of Serdyukov (2017), who argued that sustained professional development and collaborative inquiry practices are essential for embedding research in schools.

Overall, the findings highlight the systemic constraints that impede research productivity while also pointing to practical coping mechanisms. Addressing these barriers through structured training programs, adequate funding, and institutional support may significantly enhance coordinators' ability to lead research initiatives and contribute to evidence-based educational improvement.

CONCLUSIONS

The study concludes that while school research coordinators exhibit strong leadership skills, their research capabilities remain moderate and are significantly enhanced by practical experience and higher qualifications. Leadership appears to be influenced more by personal motivation and institutional support than by demographic factors, while research competence is strengthened through sustained engagement in actual research. Both domains are strongly correlated, underscoring the need for integrated training programs. However, systemic barriers such as limited time, inadequate resources, and insufficient institutional support constrain research productivity. To address these gaps, the study recommends institutionalizing continuous leadership and research development initiatives, fostering partnerships with higher education institutions, expanding opportunities for coordinators to engage in research, and implementing the proposed structured training program with sustained monitoring and support to strengthen the research culture in schools.

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