

Unveiling the Proficiency of School Leaders in Action Research: A Comprehensive Examination of Practices and Impact on Educational Advancement

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ABSTRACT

This research aimed to explore the challenges, support systems, and current practices of school heads in conducting action research within the Gumaca West District, highlighting its importance for enhancing educational practices and decision-making. Addressing the problem of limited engagement and success in action research, the study examined competencies, district-level support, resources, professional development opportunities, and specific challenges faced by school leaders. A mixed-method approach was employed, combining quantitative data from structured surveys and qualitative insights from interviews. Findings revealed that while school leaders exhibited moderate proficiency in core action research competencies, significant gaps persisted in interpreting data and report writing. The district provided strong frameworks and ethical guidelines but lacked resource allocation, mentorship, and regular professional development opportunities. Time constraints, overlapping responsibilities, and health-related challenges emerged as major barriers to effective research practice. Implications point to the need for targeted professional development, enhanced resource support, and systemic changes to align action research with district goals. Recommendations include dedicating time and resources to research, fostering a collaborative environment, providing technical and methodological training, and creating a sustainable culture of inquiry. By addressing these gaps, the district can empower school heads to leverage action research for continuous improvement, ensuring its relevance and impact on educational systems and learner outcomes. This study highlights the significance of district-level advocacy and systemic support in promoting effective action research practices among academic leaders.

Keywords: Action Research, Challenges, Support Systems, and Current Practices

INTRODUCTION

Rexter J. Anda, Principal II of Plaza Rizal Elementary School, emphasized in his study Project I-CARE: Research Capability Program to Improve the Conduct of Action Research by School Heads and Teachers in Gumaca West District, the critical need to enhance the research capacities of school leaders and educators. Presented during the 2021 Quezon Educational Research Conference (QERC, 2021), his findings highlighted the importance of empowering educators through capacity-building programs to foster relevant and responsive research initiatives. This aligns closely with the focus of the current research, which seeks to address the pressing need for school leaders in the Gumaca West District to engage effectively in action research. Gumaca West District, located in Gumaca, Quezon, action research has emerged as a vital tool for addressing specific educational challenges and enhancing teaching, learning, and overall school management. It promotes data-driven decision-making and innovative problem-solving. However, effective engagement in action research requires proficiency and access to robust support systems. Despite the growing emphasis in the Philippines on evidence-based educational practices, a gap persists in understanding the competencies school leaders need and the support mechanisms necessary for conducting meaningful research.

This study examines the essential competencies and skills required of district school heads. It examines the types of support, structural, resource-based, and professional development opportunities that the Office of the Public Schools District Supervisor (PSDS) can provide. It also seeks to understand the relationship between these competencies and the support available to improve action research capabilities.

Aligned with the Department of Education's Matatag Agenda, which emphasizes leadership development and evidence-based practices, this research addresses the need for more substantial research competencies within school leadership. The study's outcomes are expected to inform actionable plans, including professional development programs and resource allocation, to foster continuous improvement in educational policies and practices within the Gumaca West District and potentially beyond.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Competencies and Skills Required for Action Research

Research indicates that school leaders need technical and adaptive skills to conduct effective action research. These competencies include understanding research design, data analysis, reflective practices, and collaboration. Effective engagement requires skills in identifying relevant problems, formulating research questions, and employing methods to collect and interpret data. Studies on DepEd's initiatives, such as the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSSH), emphasize competencies in instructional leadership and curriculum management as crucial to action research, aligning well with the demands of a data-informed approach to educational improvement (DepEd,2020)

Action research by school leaders is instrumental in addressing ongoing challenges within the Philippine educational system, particularly under the Department of Education's MATATAG Agenda (2023), which aims to improve student learning outcomes and teacher support. The MATATAG Agenda seeks to enhance essential education quality by focusing on curriculum relevancy, infrastructure improvement, and comprehensive support for educators and learners. This initiative aligns closely with action research, which empowers school heads to identify and address specific issues in their contexts, promoting evidence-based practices to drive educational reform and innovation.

Research highlights a gap in the structured support and training for school leaders in the competencies required for conducting and utilizing action research effectively. The MATATAG Agenda acknowledges these challenges by emphasizing the development of localized training programs, teacher career progression, and instructional leadership, which are pivotal for school leaders engaging in action research. Moreover, the National Learning Recovery Program (NLRP), a MATATAG Agenda component, collaborates with local government units (LGUs) to support school-based initiatives that address literacy and numeracy gaps, underscoring the significance of data-driven strategies and local interventions in addressing educational disparities.

Support Structures and Resources from District Offices

District offices are crucial in facilitating action research by offering institutional support through policies and resources. DepEd Order No. 16, s. 2017 highlights the need for district supervisors to provide structural support, such as scheduling time for research activities and offering resources like the Basic Education Research Fund (BERF). The BERF, as described in guidelines from TeacherPH, enables funding for research projects, thus aiding school heads with financial resources critical for implementing and sustaining research endeavors. (Llego,2020)

Studies consistently indicate that effective action research requires research methodology, data analysis, and result dissemination competencies. These skills are often underdeveloped due to limited professional development opportunities, especially in rural and resource-constrained areas. Existing research emphasizes the need for targeted professional development and supportive infrastructure to build these competencies among school leaders, which is integral for their ability to initiate, conduct, and utilize research findings in their schools.

The Union of Local Authorities of the Philippines (ULAP) supports the MATATAG Agenda. It has highlighted that the successful implementation of action research at the school level also depends on systemic support structures such as resource allocation and training initiatives from supervisory offices. In response, the MATATAG Curriculum aims to address these structural needs by encouraging practices like annual National Learning Camps and locally driven instructional programs to foster skills development in educators. (DepEd, 2023)

Professional Development Opportunities

Learning Action Cells (LACs) have provided a platform for continuous professional development. These teacher-led sessions facilitate peer learning, allowing school leaders to share experiences, refine research skills, and apply best practices within their schools. TeacherPH's analysis shows that LACs foster a collaborative environment, enhancing school heads' motivation and capability to conduct meaningful action research. Challenges remain, however, in ensuring consistent participation and balancing research duties with administrative responsibilities, especially in time-constrained school settings (DepEd, 2023)

Continuous Improvement Plans for Enhancing Competencies

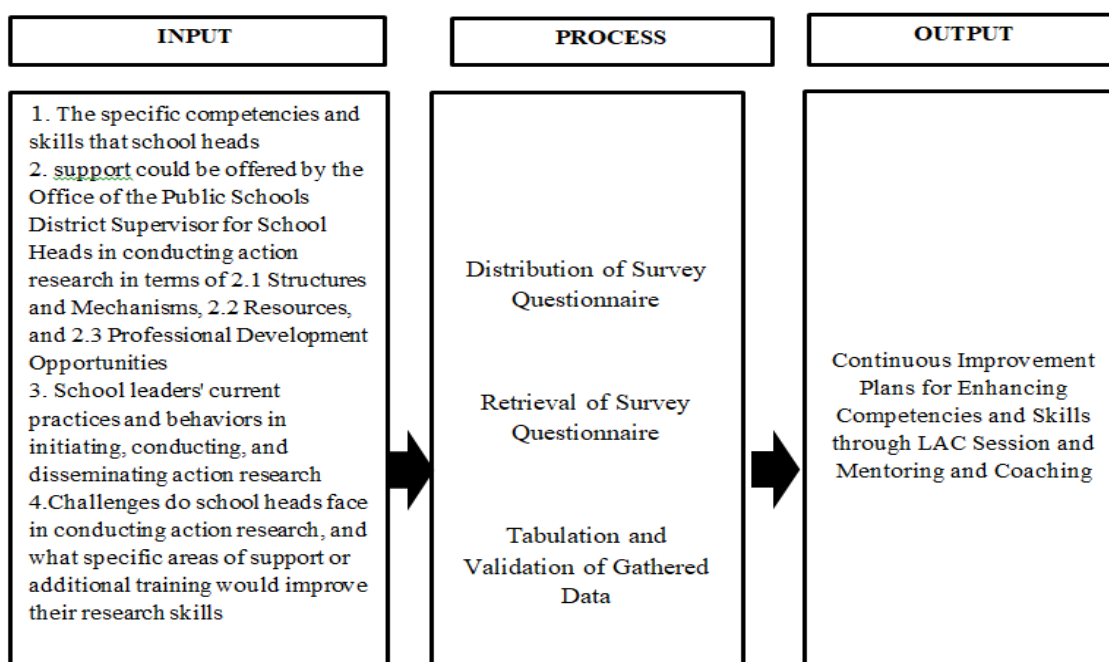
To further support school leaders, improvement plans should focus on building research literacy, enhancing access to resources, and fostering a culture of continuous improvement. Creating structured professional development plans that integrate action research skills with leadership development is critical. A comprehensive plan might involve specific goals for skill development, regular assessments of competencies, and collaborative initiatives like joint research projects among schools in the district, fostering a broader community of inquiry (TeacherPH, 2023). Additionally, current literature points to a gap in evaluating the long-term impact of action research on student outcomes. While the MATATAG Agenda underscores teacher support and school improvement, systematic studies that track the effects of action research on these objectives are limited. This gap suggests a need for research that not only documents the immediate outputs of action research but also investigates its broader impact on educational practices and student learning.

Conceptual Framework

This study will operate within a framework considering three main domains: competencies in action research, support systems (both structural and professional), and outcome dissemination. Through this framework, the study will examine how school heads in Gumaca West District can leverage their skills and available support to conduct action research and effectively implement findings for school improvement. The research model will emphasize the interactions between these domains to understand how they collectively influence educational practices and policies at the school level.

This study examines school leaders' competencies, available support structures, and their effect on educational outcomes. It aims to contribute valuable insights to the MATATAG Agenda's goal of fostering robust, action-oriented educational leadership.

Figure 1 Research Paradigm



As shown in Figure 1, the input stage of the research paradigm identifies the elements that serve as the foundation for the study. These include the competencies, skills, support mechanisms, practices, and challenges associated with school heads' proficiency in action research. First, the study explores the specific competencies and skills school heads require, such as identifying educational issues, designing methodologies, collecting and analyzing data, and communicating findings effectively. These skills are essential for conducting meaningful and impactful action research.

Next, the paradigm considers the support provided by the Office of the Public Schools District Supervisor, focusing on three aspects: (1) Structures and Mechanisms, such as established processes and policies for facilitating action research; (2) Resources, including access to tools, funding, and materials; and (3) Professional Development Opportunities, such as training, workshops, and mentoring programs.

School leaders' current practices and behaviors in initiating, conducting, and disseminating action research are also examined. This includes their strategies for integrating research into school operations and sharing findings with stakeholders. Additionally, the framework identifies the challenges faced by school heads in action research, such as time constraints, lack of resources, or limited skills. It explores the specific support or additional training needed to overcome these barriers and enhance their proficiency.

The process focuses on the practical steps of data collection and analysis. This involves distributing a survey questionnaire to respondents, retrieving completed surveys, and tabulating and validating gathered data to ensure accuracy and reliability. These activities align with the study's quantitative approach and ensure that the data is systematically analyzed.

Finally, the study's output is the development of continuous improvement plans to enhance the competencies and skills of school heads. These plans aim to address identified gaps, strengthen research practices, and support school leaders in implementing evidence-based improvements in their educational environments. This holistic approach highlights the importance of targeted interventions and sustainable development in action research proficiency.

Research Questions

This study aims to determine the Unveiling Proficiency of School Leaders in Action Research: A Comprehensive Examination of Practices and Impact on Educational Advancement.

Specifically, these are the questions to be investigated: The following questions guide this study within the Gumaca West District:

1. What are the specific competencies and skills that school heads in Gumaca West District require for effective engagement in action research?
2. What support could be offered by the Office of the Public Schools District Supervisor for School Heads in conducting action research in terms of:
 - 2.1 Structures and Mechanisms,
 - 2.2 Resources, and
 - 2.3 Professional Development Opportunities?
3. What are school leaders' current practices and behaviors in initiating, conducting, and disseminating action research within their schools in Gumaca West District?
4. What challenges do school heads face in conducting action research, and what specific areas of support or additional training would improve their research skills, along with recommendations to enhance district-level support mechanisms?

5. What continuous improvement plan can be made to enhance the competencies and skills of school heads in writing action research?

Scope and Limitation

This study was conducted within the Gumaca West District, Gumaca, Quezon, during the 2024-2025 academic year. It focuses explicitly on 16 school heads: 13 elementary school heads and three secondary school heads. The study assessed their competencies, current practices, and the level of support they receive in engaging with action research, including resources, structures, and professional development provided by the Office of the Public Schools District Supervisor.

The research was structured to collect data on the respondents' skills, their approaches to action research, competencies, and the support systems in place. The findings are expected to inform continuous improvement plans for enhancing research proficiency among school leaders in this district.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Sampling

The primary participants for this study were school heads from the Gumaca West District, Gumaca, Quezon, with 16 individuals: 13 elementary school heads and three secondary school heads. These participants were provided insights on competencies, current practices, and support needs in conducting action research. Secondary data may be collected from relevant documents, reports, and existing research initiatives by the Office of the Public Schools District Supervisor.

The sample comprises 16 school heads, encompassing leaders from both elementary and secondary levels. These school heads were selected as they are responsible for implementing school-based action research and are directly supported by the district's resources and policies. Their role as primary decision-makers in their schools positions them as key informants on research proficiency, practices, and district support.

This study used purposeful sampling, a non-probability sampling method that allows the researcher to intentionally select participants with specific characteristics relevant to the study's goals. Given the focus on enhancing action research practices and the supportive role of district offices, selecting school heads directly involved in these processes will yield the most applicable insights.

School heads were included based on their unique position and direct engagement in leading school-based research initiatives. To be eligible, participants must be current school heads within the Gumaca West District during the 2024-2025 academic year. Their participation is essential to understanding the competencies required and the systemic supports available, aligning with the study's objective of examining factors that impact the effectiveness of action research in educational advancement.

Data Collection

Data was collected using a mixed-methods approach, incorporating quantitative and qualitative methods to gather comprehensive insights. The primary data was collected through a researcher-made questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. This two-pronged approach is chosen because it allows for a broad quantitative assessment of competencies and support systems and an in-depth qualitative exploration of individual practices and perspectives.

The survey questionnaire provides a structured way to collect data on specific competencies, skills, and support structures relevant to action research among school heads. This aligns with research questions about the level of competencies and available support. Meanwhile, interviews allowed for more detailed descriptions of the current practices, behaviors, and attitudes toward action research, addressing the questions about school heads' experiences and perceived challenges in initiating and conducting research. This combination of

methods aligns with the study's objective of identifying measurable trends and contextual insights into the factors affecting action research proficiency.

Data Analysis

For this study, quantitative data collected through survey questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical methods to address the research questions. Descriptive statistics provided an overview of school heads' competencies, support structures, and current practices.

Data organized in Excel for initial cleaning, coding, and preparation, including assigning numerical values to responses for analysis. This pre-processed data then be imported into the Jamovi software for comprehensive statistical analysis.

Descriptive statistics, such as weighted mean using a 5-point Likert scale, summarized the competencies, skills, and support provided to school heads. These measures answered research questions 1 to 3 by quantifying specific competencies and resources available for action research.

Qualitative Analysis (Supporting Analysis): Although the focus is on quantitative data, qualitative interview responses regarding Challenges School Heads Face in Conducting Action Research and What Specific Areas of Support or Additional Training Would Improve Their Research Skills, Along with Recommendations To Enhance District-Level Support Mechanisms in research question 4 will be coded thematically to identify trends that complement the quantitative findings.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The gathered data are presented here together with the results, analysis, and interpretation based on the problems presented in the research.

Part 1. Competencies and Skills in Action Research

Table 1 Level of Proficiency in the Following Competencies and Skills in Action Research

Competencies and Skills	WM	Interpretation
1. Identifying relevant educational issues to address through research.	3.00	Moderate Proficient
2. Formulating clear and achievable research objectives.	2.88	Moderate Proficient
3. Designing research methods appropriate to address educational issues.	2.63	Moderate Proficient
4. Collecting and analyzing data systematically.	2.63	Moderate Proficient
5. Interpreting data to inform educational practices.	2.44	Basic Proficient
6. Writing research reports effectively.	2.50	Basic Proficient
7. Communicating research findings to stakeholders.	2.81	Moderate Proficient
8. Implementing action research findings in school programs and policies.	2.75	Moderate Proficient
9. Promoting Collaborative Engagement in Research Activities	2.81	Moderate Proficient
10. Monitoring and Evaluating the Impact of Action Research	2.88	Moderate Proficient
Composite Mean	2.73	Moderate Proficient

Highly Proficient-4.21-5.00

Proficient-3.41-4.20

Moderate Proficient- 2.61-3.40

Basic Proficient-1.81-2.60

Not Proficient-1.00-1.80

As shown in Table 1, school heads in the Gumaca West District exhibit moderate proficiency in key action research competencies, as evidenced by a composite mean of 2.73. These results highlight strengths in formulating clear objectives and engaging collaboratively in research, but they also reveal challenges in critical areas such as data interpretation and research reporting. Studies have emphasized the importance of these skills

for school leaders to foster evidence-based decision-making effectively. For instance, Anda (2021) underscored the significance of capacity-building programs to enhance educators' research capabilities, particularly in technical areas like data analysis and systematic reporting. Moreover, research by Stringer (2014) asserts that developing action research skills not only empowers educators to address localized issues but also enhances their ability to contribute to broader educational reforms. The need for targeted training and resource support is further corroborated by the Union of Local Authorities of the Philippines (ULAP), which has advocated for systemic improvements in research structures and mechanisms to bolster the effectiveness of action research under the MATATAG Curriculum (ULAP, 2023). Addressing these competency gaps through structured interventions will enable school heads to implement impactful research that directly improves teaching and learning outcomes.

Part 2. Offered by the Office of the Public Schools District Supervisor for School Heads in Conducting Action Research

Table 2.1 Offered by the Office of the Public Schools District Supervisor for School Heads in Conducting Action Research in terms of Structures and Mechanisms

Statements	WM	Interpretation
1. The district provides a clear framework for conducting action research.	4.56	Strongly Agree
2. There are established guidelines for research ethics and data management.	4.56	Strongly Agree
3. Action research is incorporated into professional development plans within the district.	3.75	Agree
4. There is a support team or mentor available to guide school heads in action research.	3.38	Neutral
5. Regular monitoring and feedback mechanisms are in place to ensure the quality and relevance of action research conducted by school heads.	3.38	Neutral
Composite Mean	3.93	Agree

Strongly Agree-4.21-5.00

Agree-3.41-4.20

Neutral-2.61-3.40

Disagree-1.81-2.60

Strongly Disagree-1.00-1.80

As gleaned in Table 2.1, indicates that the support provided by the Office of the Public Schools District Supervisor (PSDS) in terms of structures and mechanisms for action research is perceived as generally favorable, with a composite mean of 3.93, interpreted as "Agree." Notably, respondents strongly agreed that the district provides a clear framework for conducting action research and has established guidelines for research ethics and data management, with a weighted mean of 4.56 for both statements. This reflects the district's strong commitment to formalizing action research processes, aligning with practices highlighted in the MATATAG Curriculum, which emphasizes systemic support for research-based practices (ULAP, 2023).

However, the results also show neutral responses with a 3.38 for the availability of support teams or mentors and the existence of regular monitoring and feedback mechanisms. These findings suggest potential gaps in direct, hands-on guidance and continuous oversight, which are critical for ensuring the quality and sustainability of action research efforts. As Anda (2021) notes, mentorship and structured feedback are pivotal in building the confidence and capacity of school heads to conduct impactful research. Additionally, Stringer (2014) emphasizes that robust support systems, including mentorship and iterative feedback, enhance the practical application of action research findings.

The findings underscore the need for the district to strengthen mentoring programs and establish systematic monitoring mechanisms to ensure that school heads receive consistent support throughout the research process. By addressing these areas, the PSDS can further enhance the effectiveness of action research in driving educational improvement within the district.

Table 2.2 Offered by the Office of the Public Schools District Supervisor for School Heads in Conducting Action Research in terms of Resources

Statements	WM	Interpretation
1. Sufficient resources (time, funds, materials) are allocated for conducting action research.	2.75	Neutral
2. The district provides access to data and research materials.	3.50	Agree
3. Necessary facilities and technological resources are available for research activities.	2.94	Neutral
4. Professional development sessions include hands-on training for utilizing resources effectively in action research.	3.19	Neutral
5. Collaboration opportunities are facilitated to share and optimize resources among school heads and researchers.	3.31	Neutral
Composite Mean	3.14	Neutral

Strongly Agree-4.21-5.00

Agree-3.41-4.20

Neutral-2.61-3.40

Disagree-1.81-2.60

Strongly Disagree-1.00-1.80

As stated in Table 2.2, the resources provided by the Office of the Public Schools District Supervisor (PSDS) reveal a composite mean score of 3.14, interpreted as "Neutral," indicating that while some resource provisions exist, significant improvements are needed. The highest-rated statement, "The district provides access to data and research materials" with a weighted mean of 3.50 or agrees, highlights the district's efforts in offering relevant research tools, which aligns with the need for accessible resources to produce high-quality research (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). However, other key resource areas fall short of expectations. For instance, "Sufficient resources (time, funds, materials) are allocated" scored 2.75 (Neutral), suggesting limitations in these critical supports, which are foundational for effective research initiatives (O'Byrne et al., 2018).

Similarly, "Necessary facilities and technological resources are available" with a weighted mean of 2.94, and "Professional development sessions include hands-on training for utilizing resources effectively" with a weighted mean of 3.19, reflect moderate availability and application of tools and skills. These findings emphasize the importance of upgrading infrastructure and integrating practical, resource-oriented workshops into training programs (Fullan, 2020). Moreover, "Collaboration opportunities are facilitated" with a weighted mean of 3.31, while slightly higher, indicating a need for improved networking and peer-sharing mechanisms, as collective efforts can enhance the impact of research (Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018).

Table 2.3 Offered by the Office of the Public Schools District Supervisor for School Heads in Conducting Action Research in terms of Professional Development Opportunities

Statements	WM	Interpretation
1. Regular training on action research is provided for school heads.	3.06	Neutral
2. The district organizes workshops that focus on research methodologies.	3.63	Agree
3. School heads receive opportunities to attend seminars and conferences on educational research.	3.31	Neutral
4. Peer mentoring and collaboration sessions are conducted to enhance practical research skills.	3.38	Neutral
5. Follow-up sessions are scheduled to evaluate the application of research training in school settings.	3.19	Neutral
Composite Mean	3.31	Neutral

Strongly Agree-4.21-5.00

Agree-3.41-4.20

Neutral-2.61-3.40

Disagree-1.81-2.60

Strongly Disagree-1.00-1.80

As presented in Table 2.3, The professional development opportunities provided by the Office of the Public Schools District Supervisor (PSDS) reveal a composite mean of 3.31, interpreted as "Neutral," indicating room

for improvement in enhancing professional growth for school heads in conducting action research. Among the statements, “The district organizes workshops that focus on research methodologies” with a weighted mean of 3.63 or Agree scored the highest, showing that some effort is being made to provide relevant training. This aligns with the emphasis on capacity-building programs as essential for promoting evidence-based practices in educational leadership (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

However, other aspects of professional development require attention. For example, “Regular training on action research is provided” with a weighted mean of 3.06 and “School heads receive opportunities to attend seminars and conferences” with a weighted mean of 3.31 indicate only moderate provision of these critical growth avenues. Research suggests that consistent training and exposure to academic discourse are vital for fostering proficiency in research (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012).

Additionally, “Peer mentoring and collaboration sessions” with a weighted mean of 3.38 and “Follow-up sessions to evaluate research training” with a weighted mean of 3.19 received lower ratings, underscoring the need for structured, ongoing support. Studies highlight that collaborative and reflective practices, such as mentoring and follow-ups, significantly enhance the practical application of research skills (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

Part 3. Current Practices and Behaviors of School Leaders in Initiating, Conducting, and Disseminating Action Research Within Their Schools in Gumaca West District

Table 3 Current Practices and Behaviors of School Leaders in Initiating, Conducting, and Disseminating Action Research

Statements	WM	Interpretation
1. Initiating action research projects based on observed school needs.	3.44	Often
2. Collaborating with colleagues or other school heads on research projects.	3.31	Sometimes
3. Applying findings from action research to improve school practices.	3.06	Sometimes
4. Sharing research findings with staff, parents, and other stakeholders.	2.88	Sometimes
5. Documenting and publishing research results for future reference.	2.75	Sometimes
Composite Mean	3.09	Sometimes

Always-4.21-5.00 Often-3.41-4.20 Sometimes-2.61-3.40

Rarely-1.81-2.60 Never-1.00-1.80

As shown in Table 3, the current practices and behaviors of school leaders in initiating, conducting, and disseminating action research within the Gumaca West District reveal a composite mean of 3.09, interpreted as "Sometimes." This indicates that while school leaders are somewhat engaged in action research activities, there is a need for stronger and more consistent practices to maximize the impact of research initiatives.

The highest-rated behavior, “Initiating action research projects based on observed school needs” with a weighted mean of 3.44, Often, reflects that school leaders are proactive in identifying research areas that address immediate challenges. This aligns with the findings of Johnson and Christensen (2020), who emphasized the importance of situational awareness in conducting relevant and impactful action research. However, the composite mean suggests that this practice is not uniformly consistent across the district.

Behaviors such as “Collaborating with colleagues or other school heads on research projects” with a weighted mean of 3.31, Sometimes, and “Applying findings from action research to improve school practices” with a weighted mean of 3.06, Sometimes indicate moderate engagement in collaborative and application-focused practices. Collaborative research is a critical factor in creating a culture of inquiry, as suggested by Hargreaves and Fullan (2012), yet these scores suggest opportunities to strengthen teamwork and the integration of findings into practical solutions.

Lower ratings were observed for “Sharing research findings with stakeholders” with a weighted mean of 2.88 and “Documenting and publishing research results for future reference” with a weighted mean of 2.75. These

findings suggest gaps in dissemination and knowledge management, which are essential for fostering a wider impact and for building a repository of actionable insights. Effective dissemination, according to Creswell and Creswell (2017), enhances stakeholder buy-in and ensures that research contributes to systemic improvements.

To enhance these practices, the district could implement structured initiatives such as research mentoring programs, collaborative workshops, and dissemination platforms like school-based research fairs or publications. These steps would not only encourage a more active research culture but also ensure that findings are effectively applied to improve educational practices and outcomes.

Part 4. Challenges Do School Heads Face in Conducting Action Research, And What Specific Areas of Support or Additional Training Would Improve Their Research Skills, Along with Recommendations to Enhance District-Level Support Mechanisms

Thematic Analysis of School Heads' Responses

Challenges in Conducting Action Research

School heads in Gumaca West District face several significant challenges in conducting action research, with time constraints being the most frequently cited obstacle. The demanding schedules of school leaders, who must juggle various administrative tasks, supervisory duties, and immediate learner needs, make it difficult to allocate dedicated time for research activities. As one respondent pointed out, *"Finding dedicated time for research can be a significant hurdle considering the school head's demanding schedule."* Moreover, the iterative nature of action research, which requires cycles of planning, action, observation, and reflection, further complicates the process, especially for those with multiple commitments. As another school head noted, *"Action research is iterative, requiring continuous cycles of planning, action, observation, and reflection, which can be time-consuming, especially for researchers with multiple commitments."* The inability to carve out sufficient time for data collection, analysis, and implementation of changes exacerbates this issue. The lack of adequate time not only limits the effectiveness of research but also strains the quality of school management activities.

Another challenge highlighted is the overlapping responsibilities that school heads must navigate. Several respondents noted that their multiple duties often intersect, leading to scheduling conflicts that prevent them from dedicating time to research. One school head mentioned, *"Overlapping of work-related activities and reports"* as a barrier to effective action research. Moreover, this overlap impacts teachers as well, who are unable to set aside time to collaborate on research due to their busy schedules. This constraint underscores the need for systemic changes that would allow school leaders and teachers to engage in research without compromising their other responsibilities.

Additionally, health and personal barriers play a role in hindering the participation of some school heads in action research. As one school head explained, *"My age and medical condition become the challenge in everything I plan to do."* Other responses pointed to personal health and external factors, such as financial constraints and staying up-to-date with new trends in action research, as significant barriers. A school head summed this up, stating, *"Some of the challenges I have encountered are Time constraints, source of funds, personal health, and latest trends about action research."*

In summary, the challenges faced by school heads in Gumaca West District when conducting action research are multifaceted, encompassing time management issues, overlapping responsibilities, and personal barriers such as health concerns. These obstacles highlight the importance of addressing these structural and personal constraints to enhance the effectiveness and participation in action research within schools.

Specific Areas for Support and Training:

School heads in the Gumaca West District have identified several key areas where targeted support and training could significantly enhance their research skills and overall effectiveness in conducting action research. One major area of need is research methodology and skills. Respondents emphasized the importance of receiving comprehensive training on research methodologies, particularly in addressing challenges related

to research design, implementation, and data analysis. As one participant mentioned, *"Training on research methodologies to address the challenges on research design, implementation, and analysis"* is crucial. Additionally, training in statistical treatment for research plans was seen as essential for properly analyzing data and drawing valid conclusions. Several school heads also highlighted the necessity of familiarizing themselves with modern trends in utilizing ICT and AI in research, which could greatly enhance data analysis and overall research efficiency. A respondent noted the importance of *"Training on modern trends in utilizing ICT and AI in research,"* recognizing that these technologies offer opportunities to streamline data collection, processing, and analysis. Moreover, a more holistic approach to research training was emphasized, with one school head suggesting that training should *"focus on improving both the technical aspects of research as well as broader skills required to conduct successful and ethical studies."*

Another area identified for improvement is long-term research management. School leaders expressed a need for training on how to effectively manage extended research projects. This includes skills for setting goals, timelines, and managing resources throughout the research process. One school head pointed out that, *"Developing strategies for managing long-term research projects, including setting goals, timelines, and resource allocation,"* would be highly beneficial for maintaining project momentum. Additionally, budget allocation for research was seen as a vital support mechanism, as securing adequate funding is often a barrier to initiating and completing meaningful research projects.

Finally, there was a call for general professional development specifically tailored to school heads and their role in conducting action research. Participants suggested that more structured School Head Training focused on the specific needs and responsibilities of school leaders in conducting research would help fill existing gaps. One respondent noted the importance of *"School Head Training in conducting School Head Related Research,"* which would provide leaders with the skills and insights needed to initiate and guide research projects effectively. Furthermore, offering training on content and technicalities related to research, including workshops, would provide school heads with the necessary tools to complete research projects.

In summary, to improve research skills, school heads in the Gumaca West District have highlighted the need for focused training in research methodologies, long-term project management, and general professional development. Providing support in these areas will empower school leaders to overcome existing challenges and contribute to a more robust culture of research within the district.

Recommendations to Enhance District-Level Support:

School heads in the Gumaca West District have shared valuable insights on how district-level support for action research can be enhanced, focusing on several key areas: dedicated time and resources, capacity building and professional development, and sustainability and mentorship.

One of the main recommendations is the allocation of dedicated time and resources for both teachers and staff to engage in action research. Participants emphasized the importance of creating structured time within the school calendar for research activities. As one respondent suggested, *"Allocate dedicated time for teachers and staff to engage in action research, such as during professional development days or through reduced teaching loads."* This would help alleviate the time constraints that school heads often face, allowing them to prioritize research alongside their other responsibilities. Additionally, there is a need to provide access to research tools, data collection software, or funding for materials, which would empower educators to conduct thorough and high-quality research. Such resources are essential for overcoming the challenges of limited access to appropriate tools, which often hampers research initiatives.

Capacity building and professional development were also highlighted as critical areas for improvement. School heads recommended that the district implement capacity-building initiatives to better equip school leaders with the skills necessary for conducting action research. One school head pointed out the importance of *"Capacity-building for school heads on the conduct of action research,"* to ensure leaders are not only knowledgeable but also capable of mentoring their staff through the research process. Furthermore, there is a call for more training on research methodologies for teaching and non-teaching personnel to ensure that the entire school community is familiar with research practices. To support this, the district should provide a

comprehensive framework that includes not just professional development but also sufficient time, resources, and recognition for research efforts. This integrated approach would ensure that research is seen as an essential part of educational improvement, rather than an add-on task.

Finally, sustainability and mentorship emerged as crucial elements in fostering a culture of continuous research in schools. Several school heads emphasized the need for ongoing support, with one participant stating, *"Sustainability and continuous support should be provided to this program."* This includes maintaining a support team or mentor to guide school heads through the action research process. Such mentorship would provide much-needed expertise and encouragement, especially for those who may be new to conducting research. In addition, fostering a collaborative environment within the district, where research is aligned with district goals, technical support is readily available, and findings are shared widely, would create a more dynamic and effective research culture. As one participant stated, *"Foster a collaborative environment, aligning research with district goals, offering technical support, and facilitating the dissemination of findings."*

In conclusion, the recommendations provided by school heads in the Gumaca West District emphasize the need for more time, resources, and support to ensure the success of action research initiatives. By focusing on capacity building, providing access to necessary tools, and fostering an environment of collaboration and continuous support, the district can significantly enhance the impact and sustainability of action research in schools.

After coding the responses, themes were generated based on recurring patterns of ideas. These themes represent the core challenges, training needs, and recommendations for improvement.

Themes:

1. Time and Workload Management:

- Time constraints, overlapping responsibilities, and the difficulty of balancing action research with administrative tasks.

2. Personal Barriers and Health Issues:

- Age, medical conditions, and personal health as limiting factors for engaging in research activities.

3. Need for Research Training:

- Gaps in research methodologies, statistical knowledge, and data analysis capabilities, along with a desire for modern ICT and AI integration.

4. Resource and Budget Constraints:

- Limited financial resources, inadequate access to research tools, and insufficient facilities for research projects.

5. Support for Long-Term Research Projects:

- Strategies for managing long-term projects, with emphasis on goal setting, timelines, and resource allocation.

6. Need for Ongoing Professional Development:

- Continuous professional development and tailored training programs to build competency in action research.

7. Recommendations for District Support:

- Enhanced district-level support with better resource allocation, dedicated time, mentorship, and professional development opportunities.

Table 4 Summary of Themes

Category	Themes	Quotes
Challenges in Action Research	Time and Workload Management	"Finding the time to collect data, analyze it, and implement changes can be difficult." "Overlapping of work-related activities and reports."
	Personal Barriers and Health Issues	"My age and medical condition become a challenge in everything I plan to do."
	Resource and Budget Constraints	"Source of funds, personal health, and latest trends about action research."
Training Needs	Need for Research Training	"Training on research methodologies to address the challenges of research design, implementation, and analysis." "Training on statistical treatment."
	Support for Long-Term Research Projects	"Developing strategies for managing long-term research projects, including setting goals, timelines, and resource allocation."
Recommendations	Ongoing Professional Development and District Support	"Sustain the support team or mentor available to guide school heads in action research." "Allocate dedicated time for teachers and staff to engage in action research."

As shown in Table 4, the thematic analysis of the responses highlights key barriers school heads face when conducting action research, including time management and personal health challenges. Additionally, there is a recognized need for advanced training in research methodologies, data analysis, and statistical tools. School heads also indicated a lack of resources and funding for conducting action research, as well as the necessity for long-term research project management training. To address these challenges, school heads recommended the provision of ongoing professional development and district-level support mechanisms like dedicated time, research resources, and mentorship programs. These findings underscore the importance of systemic support at the school and district levels to ensure that action research becomes a sustainable and impactful practice within the district.

Implications

The findings from the data collected in this study indicate several key implications regarding action research in the Gumaca West District. School leaders show moderate proficiency in essential action research skills, suggesting the need for targeted professional development, particularly in data analysis and research reporting. While the district has established clear frameworks and ethical guidelines for action research, there is a gap in mentoring support and regular feedback mechanisms, emphasizing the importance of continuous mentorship and monitoring. The availability of resources, particularly time, funding, and facilities, remains a concern, highlighting the need for better resource allocation to facilitate research. Despite offering workshops on research methodologies, the district needs to address gaps in sustained professional development and peer collaboration. Challenges such as time constraints, overlapping responsibilities, and personal barriers further complicate the execution of action research. These findings underscore the importance of providing more dedicated time, resources, and professional development opportunities, as well as fostering a supportive, collaborative environment to enhance the success of action research initiatives.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made to improve action research practices in the Gumaca West District:

1. Given that school leaders show moderate proficiency in competencies such as data interpretation and writing research reports, it is essential to focus professional development efforts on these areas. This can be achieved by offering workshops that target specific skills in research analysis, data interpretation, and writing effective research reports. Providing follow-up sessions to ensure the practical application of these skills in school settings is also crucial.

2. Although the district has a framework for action research, there is a need for more structured mentoring and feedback systems. School heads would benefit from having dedicated mentors or support teams to guide them through the research process. Furthermore, the establishment of regular monitoring and feedback mechanisms can help ensure that action research projects are continuously evaluated for relevance and quality.
3. Time and resources remain significant barriers to conducting action research. It is recommended that the district allocate more time for research activities, possibly by reducing teaching loads or setting aside dedicated professional development days. Additionally, providing access to necessary research tools, software, and funding for materials would alleviate the challenges posed by insufficient resources.
4. While the district offers training on research methodologies, a more comprehensive and continuous professional development program is needed. School heads and teachers should have access to ongoing training on modern research techniques, including the use of ICT and AI in research. Additionally, organizing peer mentoring programs and collaborative sessions could help develop research skills more effectively.
5. Given that time constraints and overlapping responsibilities are some of the most common challenges faced by school heads, it is essential to create a supportive environment where dedicated time for research can be guaranteed. This could include offering reduced teaching hours or designated time slots for action research, as well as ensuring that research activities are aligned with school goals to make them more relevant and manageable.
6. To promote a culture of action research, the district should encourage collaboration among school heads, teachers, and other stakeholders. This could include organizing research-focused workshops or establishing research networks where school leaders can share findings and best practices. Collaboration can also help optimize resources and provide additional support for conducting and disseminating research.
7. The district must ensure that all schools have access to a clear and consistent framework for conducting action research. This includes not only formal guidelines but also practical support, such as research toolkits, training resources, and technical assistance, to ensure that research is conducted effectively and can contribute meaningfully to school improvement.

Dissemination and Advocacy Plan

The dissemination of the research findings will be strategically designed to ensure that they reach the relevant stakeholders and are effectively used to improve policies, systems, and practices. Initially, the research results will be presented in district-level meetings, such as the District Research Plenum and the Technical Working Group (TWG) sessions, providing an opportunity for school leaders and education supervisors to engage with the findings. This forum will encourage feedback and discussions on how the research can inform future strategies within the district. Additionally, workshops and professional development sessions will be organized for school heads, teachers, and educational leaders, with a focus on applying the research findings in practice. These workshops will provide actionable strategies for improving research competencies, managing resources, and addressing challenges identified in the study.

The research findings will also be shared through detailed reports and concise policy briefs. These documents will be distributed to district supervisors, school heads, and other educational leaders to ensure that the study's recommendations are considered in decision-making processes. To extend the reach, summaries of the findings and key recommendations will be shared via social media platforms, educational blogs, and through collaboration with regional educational organizations. This will help foster a broader conversation on the role of action research in enhancing educational practices.

Furthermore, ongoing advocacy will be prioritized by engaging stakeholders in discussions, gathering their feedback, and adapting the recommendations as needed. By incorporating feedback from those directly involved in the education system, the researcher aims to ensure that the recommendations are not only practical but also relevant to the needs of the district. Through these efforts, the goal is to create a sustained focus on action research, fostering an environment where continuous improvement is encouraged and

supported. These dissemination efforts will ultimately contribute to policy changes and enhanced educational practices within the Gumaca West District.

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