

Walls Too High: Challenges Faced by DepEd Teachers in Embracing Educational Research

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the lived experiences of Senior High School (SHS) teachers in Burauen, Leyte, under the Department of Education (DepEd) Leyte Division, regarding their engagement with educational research. Using a qualitative phenomenological design, the study sought to understand the barriers, perceptions, and potential strategies that shape teachers' involvement in research. Ten (10) purposively selected SHS teachers from various public schools participated in in-depth interviews, and data were analyzed thematically to capture recurring patterns of meaning across participants' narratives. Findings revealed three major themes: (1)

Fear of Failure and Lack of Support, (2) Improved Pedagogy and (3) Time and Workload Adjustment, along with subthemes on Time Constraints, Difficulty Translating Research to Practice, and Boosting Research Engagement. Teachers expressed strong recognition of the value of educational research for enhancing teaching and learning, yet they faced significant barriers such as inadequate training, limited mentorship, insufficient institutional support, and heavy workloads. Despite these constraints, teachers perceived research as a tool for pedagogical improvement and professional growth. They emphasized that sustained training, accessible resources, and collaborative support systems could foster a more research-oriented culture in schools. The study concludes that meaningful engagement in educational research among SHS teachers requires systematic support mechanisms, protected research time, and continuous capacity-building aligned with DepEd's professional development framework. It recommends the institutionalization of mentoring programs, regular research training, workload adjustments, and recognition systems to encourage teachers' active participation in research endeavors. These initiatives can help integrate research into daily teaching practice and strengthen the link between classroom instruction and educational innovation. Ultimately, this study contributes to the ongoing pursuit of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 – Quality Education, particularly Target 4.c, which underscores the importance of developing qualified and research-informed educators. By addressing the barriers identified, schools and educational

leaders can cultivate a supportive, research-driven teaching community that enhances both teacher effectiveness and student learning outcomes.

Keywords: *educational research, teacher engagement, phenomenology, professional development, DepEd, Burauen Leyte, Sustainable Development Goal 4*

INTRODUCTION

The integration of educational research into classroom practices is essential for improving teaching effectiveness and enhancing student learning outcomes. However, teachers often struggle to see the relevance of academic research to their specific classroom contexts, which leads to a disconnect between research findings and their application in everyday teaching (Baildon and Ong, 2022). The increasing administrative workload and classroom responsibilities further reduce the time and energy available for teachers to engage with educational research, further hindering their ability to incorporate research into their practice (Creagh et al., 2023).

In the Philippines, the Department of Education (DepEd) has made significant strides in encouraging evidence-based practices (Cariaga, 2023). Yet, despite the availability of research findings and policy support, many teachers face challenges in embracing educational research. It is sad to note that barriers such as limited access to research resources, insufficient time for professional development and the gap between theoretical research and the practical realities of classroom instruction persist (Joyce and Cartwright, 2020).

In particular, teachers in Region VIII, including those in Senior High Schools in Burauen, Leyte of Leyte Division, experience a disconnect between the theoretical nature of academic research and the practical demands of teaching in diverse classrooms. The academic language of research often feels distant from the day-to-day teaching experience, deterring teachers from embracing and applying research findings (Awagu, 2021). Additionally, some teachers lack the confidence or expertise to interpret and utilize research meaningfully, resulting in reluctance or resistance to incorporating it into their practices.

Given these challenges, it is essential to understand the specific barriers that Senior High School teachers in Leyte Division specifically Senior High School Teachers of Burauen Leyte faces in engaging with educational research. This semi-urban municipalities in Leyte, presents unique contextual factors that impact teachers' ability to engage with educational research. These factors include geographical isolation, limited access to infrastructure, and varying levels of access to modern educational resources, all of which can impede teachers' ability to embrace research.

This study was focused on investigating the factors that affect teachers' engagement with educational research. Hence, issues such as limited access to digital platforms, libraries and professional development opportunities in rural areas was explored. Time constraints, stemming from large class sizes, additional responsibilities and community-based duties, was also examined.

Furthermore, the study investigated how teachers in this region perceive the relevance of educational research to their local contexts, where teaching conditions and student needs may differ from those in urbanized areas.

Ultimately, this study aimed to identify and address the challenges that hinder teachers in DepEd from embracing educational research solely by identifying these barriers, the research seeks to develop strategies that empowered teachers with the tools and support they need to engage with research, enhancing their teaching practices and fostering a more research-informed educational system within the DepEd context.

This study explored the challenges faced by Senior High School teachers in Burauen Leyte of Leyte Division in engaging with educational research. It identified key barriers and explored strategies to improve research integration into teaching practices, aiming to enhance both teaching effectiveness and student outcomes.

Hence, the study answered the following questions;

1. What are the key barriers Senior High School teachers in Burauen Leyte of DepEd Leyte Division face in engaging with educational research?
2. How do Senior High School teachers in Burauen Leyte of DepEd Leyte Division perceive the relevance of educational research to their classroom practices and student outcomes?
3. What strategies can be developed to enhance SHS teachers' engagement with educational research in Burauen Leyte of DepEd Leyte Division?

METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlined the research methodology that will be utilized to investigate the experiences and challenges of Senior High School teachers in Burauen, Leyte, in engaging with educational research. It described the research design, participant selection and sampling technique, research setting, data collection procedures, data analysis and ethical considerations that guided the study.

Research Design

This research is a qualitative in nature, it utilized a phenomenological research design to explore the lived experiences of Senior High School (SHS) teachers in Burauen, Leyte, under the Leyte Division. The focus of the study was to understand the challenges these teachers encountered in engaging with educational research. It aims to identify and describe these challenges, as well as the coping strategies and support systems that help them navigate research-related responsibilities in their instructional roles.

Hence, guided by Creswell's (2013) framework for phenomenological inquiry, the study seeks to capture the essence of the participants' experiences. This approach was considered appropriate as it allowed for an in-depth exploration of how SHS teachers perceive and interpret their engagement with research within the context of their professional duties. Through in-depth interviews and thematic analysis, the researcher aims to uncover meaningful insights that can contribute to a deeper understanding of teacher engagement in educational research.

Participants and Sampling Technique

This study employed a **purposive sampling** technique to select Senior High School (SHS) teachers from schools in Burauen Leyte of Leyte Division. Purposive sampling was appropriate because it allowed the researcher to select teachers who are directly involved in classroom instruction and are likely to have firsthand experience with the challenges of engaging with educational research (McCombes, 2019). The participants consisted of SHS teachers from various subjects to provide a diverse perspective on the barriers they face. More so, it was determined based on data saturation, ensuring that a comprehensive range of experiences and challenges is captured.

Research Setting

The study was conducted in selected Senior High Schools located in Burauen, Leyte, within the Leyte Division. These schools represent a variety of academic disciplines and vocational tracks and serve students in Grades 11 and 12 under the supervision of the Department of Education. This setting provided a relevant context for exploring the experiences of Senior High School teachers in relation to educational research.

Data Collection

The data gathering process for this study employed qualitative methods, including interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs). The data collection procedure for this study will involve one-on-one in-depth interviews. First, the researcher obtained approval from school administrators in Burauen, Leyte of Leyte Division and secure informed consent from participating Senior High School (SHS) teachers.

This individual interview provided an opportunity for a more detailed exploration of the teachers' personal experiences with educational research and their views on overcoming barriers (Mashuri et al., 2022). The interviews conducted either in person or via digital platforms, with all session's audio-recorded with participants' consent. The data collection process took approximately 2-3 weeks, allowing time for the completion and individual interviews. Lastly, all data was securely stored and analyzed qualitatively to identify key themes and patterns related to teachers' engagement with educational research.

Data Analysis

For the qualitative data collected through the one-on-one in-depth interviews, the analysis followed a thematic analysis approach to identify, analyze, and report patterns or themes within the data. The first step involved transcribing all the audio-recorded interviews verbatim, ensuring that every detail from the conversations is captured. After transcriptions are completed, the researcher immersed themselves in the data by reading through the interview transcripts multiple times to become familiar with the content and the context of the responses.

Next, the researcher began the coding process, where segments of the text that are relevant to the research questions such as teachers' experiences with barriers to engaging with educational research assigned codes. These codes were based on recurring words, phrases, or ideas. Once initial coding is done, the researcher grouped similar codes into broader themes that capture the underlying ideas shared by the teachers. After the themes are identified, the researcher engaged in theme refinement, which involves reviewing and possibly reworking the themes to ensure they accurately represent the data and the research questions. The researcher also looks for relationships between the themes to deepen the understanding of how these barriers interact and influence teachers' engagement with educational research. Throughout the process, the researcher continually compared and contrast the themes to ensure consistency and validity in the interpretation.

Finally, the themes and patterns derived from the qualitative data was interpreted within the context of the research objectives, helping to answer key questions about the challenges faced by teachers in Burauen Leyte of Leyte Division in adopting educational research. The insights gained from this analysis provided a detailed understanding of the factors influencing teachers' engagement with educational research and offer practical recommendations for addressing these challenges.

Ethical Considerations

In conducting this study, several ethical considerations were prioritized to ensure the integrity of the research process and the protection of participants' rights. First, informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring that they are fully aware of the study's purpose, procedures, and their right to voluntary participation. Participant were informed that they can withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences. The responses of the participants will be treated with strict confidentiality; personal identifiers will be removed and responses were anonymized to protect the identity of the teachers involved. Additionally, privacy shall be respected, with interviews conducted in private settings, either in person or through digital platforms, to prevent unauthorized access to sensitive information.

Furthermore, audio recording of interviews only occurred with the explicit consent of the participants and recordings were stored securely. The researcher also ensured that any information shared by participants during the interviews is used solely for the purpose of the study and not

disclosed to unauthorized individuals. Lastly, the study adhered to ethical guidelines regarding the non-coercion of participants, ensuring that their decision to participate is made freely, without any undue pressure. Lastly, this approach that uphold the ethical principles of respect, integrity and responsibility in conducting the research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter presents the narrative accounts of the data gathered from the participants. It discusses the themes and sub-themes that emerged from their responses. The primary goal of this study was to understand the challenges and opportunities related to Senior High School (SHS) teachers' engagement with educational research in Burauen, Leyte, under the Department of Education (DepEd) Leyte Division.

Using a qualitative research design, specifically the phenomenological approach, this study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the key barriers Senior High School teachers in Burauen Leyte of DepEd Leyte Division face in engaging with educational research?
2. How do Senior High School teachers in Burauen Leyte of DepEd Leyte Division perceive the relevance of educational research to their classroom practices and student outcomes?
3. What strategies can be developed to enhance SHS teachers' engagement with educational research in Burauen Leyte of DepEd Leyte Division?

The research participants consisted of ten (10) purposively selected Senior High School teachers from various senior high schools in Burauen, Leyte. Hence, the selection was based on their direct teaching experience and varying levels of involvement in educational research and data saturation was achieved by the 7th interview.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, focusing on participants' experiences, perceptions and suggestions regarding the integration of educational research into teaching practice. The analysis followed a thematic process, identifying recurring ideas and experiences that aligned with the study's objectives.

To ensure the validity of the findings, verbatim transcriptions of the interviews were returned to the participants for member checking, allowing them to confirm the accuracy of the recorded information. This step ensured that the results genuinely reflected the participants' perspectives.

For presentation purposes, verbatim responses of the participants were labeled as SHS P1 through SHS TP7, with "SHS TP1" standing for Senior High School Teacher Participant. The responses were italicized, with translations provided in parentheses when necessary. The quoted

statements, along with the researcher's interpretative analysis, are presented as supporting evidence for each theme and sub-theme identified.

I. KEY BARRIERS

Theme 1 Fear of Failure & Lack of Support

This fear was compounded by the perception that mistakes in research would lead to negative judgment from peers, administrators, or evaluators (Salihoğlu, 2024). Raaper et al., (2021) emphasized that the absence of a strong support network further deepened these concerns, as teachers felt they were navigating research demands on their own, with minimal guidance or encouragement.

The following are some of the participants' experiences to these experiences:

"Waray ako oras. Puno it ak schedule ha pagtutdo, ngan bisan karuyag ko mag- research, nauubos it ak oras ha mga paper works." [I don't have time. My teaching schedule is full, and even if I want to do research, my time is consumed by paperwork]. -**SHS TP1**

"Diri ako maaram maghimò hin research hin maupay. Kulang kami hin training para hito." [I don't know how to properly do research. We lack training for that]. **SHS TP2**

"Mayda ako kahadlok nga sayop it ak buhaton. Waray man mentor o giya ha amon eskwelahan." [I'm afraid I might do it wrong. We don't have mentors or guidance in our school]. **SHS TP3**

The results show that this combination of fear and insufficient institutional support discourages teachers from participating in research activities. Hence, even when they recognize the value of research for improving teaching strategies and student outcomes, the emotional and practical barriers prevent them from taking action (Salihoğlu, 2024). Teachers indicated that structured mentoring programs, access to research resources and dedicated time allocations could reduce these fears and empower them to pursue scholarly work with confidence (Kuhn et al., 2024).

The implications of these findings point to the need for deliberate efforts by school leaders and the DepEd Leyte Division to foster a positive, research-friendly culture. Building teachers' confidence through regular training, peer collaboration and constructive feedback can transform

fear into motivation. Additionally, institutionalizing mentorship and providing tangible resources will not only address teachers' apprehensions but also establish research as an integral part of professional growth. Ultimately, empowering teachers to overcome fear and access support will lead to more meaningful research contributions that directly enhance teaching quality and student learning.

Sub-theme 1: Time Constraints as a Demotivating Factor

Time Constraints as a demotivating factor reflects the challenge teachers face in balancing research with heavy teaching and administrative workloads. Packed schedules often leave little room for research, making it feel like an extra burden rather than a valuable professional activity (Collinson and Cook, 2001).

The following are some of the participants' experiences to these experiences:

“Dati motivated gud ako pag-research, labi na hadton may training kami. Pero yana, damo assignments ngan modules it ginpapabuhat. Parang nababawasan na ak gana kay pirme may deadlines.” [Used to be very motivated to do research, especially when we had training. But now, with so many assignments and modules to prepare, my enthusiasm has declined because there are always deadlines]. **SHS TP3**

“Gin-uupay ko man unta oras ko para makapag-research, pero kulang la gihapon. Napuputol an momentum ko kay may mga urgent nga school activities, sayang it effort usahay”. [I really try to manage my time to do research, but it's still not enough. My momentum gets interrupted by urgent school activities, and sometimes it feels like my efforts are wasted]. **SHS TP6**

“Interesado ako mag-research, labi na kon makakabulig ha students. Pero kay damo na requirements ha klase, nauuna la talaga an pagtutdo. Research naging last priority na”. [I'm interested in doing research, especially if it helps my students. But with all the classroom requirements, teaching always comes first. Research has become the last priority]. **SHH TP4**

Findings show that this lack of time reduces motivation, even among teachers who recognize the benefits of research. Without dedicated research hours or lighter workloads, research is often postponed in favor of more immediate responsibilities (Arkoudis, 2024). Hence, some participants suggested setting aside specific periods in the school calendar for research.

These results imply the need for policies that protect research time and adjust teacher workloads by addressing time constraints, schools can encourage meaningful teacher engagement in research, leading to improved teaching practices and student outcomes.

Theme 2 Improved Pedagogy

This theme reflects teachers' recognition that engaging in educational research can enhance their teaching strategies and methods. Thus, participants noted that research allows them to identify

effective approaches, adapt lessons to student needs and incorporate evidence-based practices into the classroom (Franklin and Harrington, 2019).

The following are some of the participants' experiences to these experiences:

"Nabulig ini ha ak paghibaro kun ano nga pamaagi it mas epektibo ha ak klase." [It helps me know which teaching method is more effective for my class]. **SHS TP1**

"Ha kamatuoran, diri ko pa ito nagamit kay diri ako maaram kun paonan-o ko ig-integrate ha lesson." [Honestly, I haven't used it because I don't know how to integrate it into my lesson]. **SHS TP2**

"Usa nga panahon naggamit ako hin action research, ngan nakita ko nga mas naenganyo an kabataan." [I once used action research, and I saw that students became more engaged]. **SHS TP3**

Solely, the results shows that teachers who apply research findings experience better student engagement and improved learning outcomes as they also reported increased confidence in designing lessons and assessing student progress. However, not all teachers have the skills or opportunities to translate research into practice consistently (Franklin and Harrington, 2019).

These findings imply the need for training programs that bridge the gap between research and classroom application. Strengthening teachers' capacity to integrate research into pedagogy can lead to more effective instruction and sustained improvements in student performance.

Sub-theme 2.1 Difficulty Translating Research to Practice

Difficulty Translating Research to Practice talks about the teachers' struggles in applying research findings to their classroom realities. Hence, participants noted that research often uses technical language, presents contexts different from their own and requires interpretation skills they have not fully developed (Moldovan, 2022).

The following are some of the participants' experiences to these experiences:

"Usahay diri tugma an mga ginsusurat ha research ha sitwasyon ha classroom. Iba an context ha akon estudyante" [Sometimes the things written in research don't match the situation in the classroom. My students' context is different]. **SHS TP3**

“Diri ko naintindihan it ibang terms ha research. Medyo technical ngan kulang ak training para interpret” [I don’t understand some research terms. They’re a bit too technical, and I lack training to interpret them]. **SHS TP6**

“Kulop la ako may time magbasa-basa pero pirme ako kapoy. Diri ko na siya ma-prioritize bisan gusto Ko” [I only have time to read in the evening, but I’m always tired. I can’t prioritize it even if I want to]. **SHS TP4**

Solely, the results show that even when teachers recognize the value of research, comprehension barriers and contextual mismatches limit its practical use. Moldovan (2022) on his paper and emphasized that time constraints further reduce opportunities to read, reflect on, and adapt research for classroom application.

These findings imply the need for training that simplifies research language, contextualizes findings for local settings and provides strategies for classroom integration. Such efforts can help bridge the gap between research and practice, enhancing teaching quality and student learning

Theme 3 Time and Workload Adjustment

This theme highlights teachers’ need for dedicated research time and reduced non-teaching duties and participants shared that heavy teaching loads, combined with administrative and extracurricular responsibilities, often make research work unrealistic within their schedules (Ulla, 2017).

The following are some of the participants' experiences to these experiences:

"Kun mayda la regular nga training ngan mentoring, sigurado ako nga mas magkakaada kami kumpiyansa mag-research." If there were regular training and mentoring, we’d surely have more confidence to do research. **SHS TP 1**

“Kinahanglan liwat hin oras para la ha research. Diri madali pagsabayon ha damo nga klase.” [We also need time specifically for research. It’s hard to balance with a heavy teaching load]. **SHS TP2**

"Kun may panag-urusa o teamwork, mas masayon ngan damo pa kami nahibabaroan tikang ha usa’t usa." [If there is teamwork, it becomes easier and we learn a lot from each other]. **SHS TP3**

More so, the results show that without adjusting workloads or allotting protected research hours, teachers tend to deprioritize research despite recognizing its value (Ulla, 2017). Further, suggestions included designating research periods in the school calendar and integrating research tasks into regular work plans.

These findings imply that schools and the DepEd Leyte Division should implement policies that safeguard research time and streamline workloads. Such measures can enable teachers to engage meaningfully in research, leading to innovations in teaching and improved student outcomes

Sub-theme 3.1 Boosting Research Engagement

This theme focuses on strategies that encourage SHS teachers to take part in educational research. Hence, participants stressed the need for training, access to resources, and mentorship to make research more relevant and manageable in their work (Asampong et al., 2023).

The following are some of the participants' experiences to these experiences:

“Kon nakikita namon nga may impact it research ha eskwelahan, syempre mas maupay an amon interest”. [If we see that research has an impact on the school, of course, our interest increases]. **SHS TP 5**

“Maupay kon ginre-recognize an effort han mga nagre-research, sugad han awards o points ha promotion”. [It helps when the effort of those doing research is recognized, like through awards or points for promotion]. **SHS TP7**

“Na-inspire ako kon may mga success stories han iba nga teachers. Parang nakakaengganyo liwat magsugod”. [I get inspired when I hear success stories from other teachers. It encourages me to try too]. **SHS TP6**

Results indicate that guidance, collaboration and recognition increase teachers' motivation to engage in research. Hence, supportive leadership and a positive school research culture help shift research from being seen as an added task to a tool for professional growth (Asampong et al., 2023).

These findings imply that schools and the DepEd Leyte Division should provide mentorship, professional development and collaborative platforms. Embedding research into teaching culture can lead to better instructional practices and improved student outcomes.

Findings

The study revealed that Senior High School teachers in Burauen, Leyte faced multiple barriers to engaging in educational research, including fear of failure, limited support, time constraints and challenges in translating research into practice. Many participants cited a lack of training, absence of mentorship and the burden of heavy workloads and administrative tasks as key obstacles.

Despite these challenges, teachers acknowledged the importance of research in enhancing pedagogy and student outcomes. Suggested strategies to increase engagement included allocating

protected research time, reducing non-teaching duties, providing regular training and mentorship, improving access to resources, and recognizing research contributions.

Overall, the findings highlight that creating a supportive and research-oriented school culture, reinforced by policy changes, can transform research work from an additional responsibility into a valuable driver of professional growth and innovation in teaching.

Conclusion

This chapter presents the findings from in-depth interviews with ten Senior High School teachers in Burauen, Leyte, aimed at exploring the barriers, perceptions and strategies related to educational research engagement. Using a phenomenological approach, the study identified recurring themes and sub-themes from teachers' narratives, ensuring accuracy through member checking. Participants shared personal experiences reflecting both challenges and opportunities in integrating research into teaching practice.

More so, key barriers emerged, including fear of failure and lack of support, time constraints, and difficulty translating research into practice. Teachers expressed anxiety over research skills, limited training and absence of mentorship, compounded by heavy workloads and administrative duties. While many recognized the value of research in improving pedagogy and student outcomes, practical and emotional obstacles often hindered their participation.

Further, participants suggested strategies to boost research engagement, such as protected research time, reduced non-teaching tasks, regular training, mentorship programs, resource access and recognition of research efforts. The findings imply that fostering a supportive, research-friendly school culture, backed by policy adjustments, can transform research from an added burden into a meaningful tool for professional growth and innovation in teaching.

Implications

The findings suggest that meaningful engagement in educational research among Senior High School teachers requires both structural and cultural changes within schools. Providing protected time for research, reducing administrative burdens, and ensuring access to resources can directly address practical barriers.

Hence, institutionalizing regular training and mentorship programs will help build teachers' confidence and competence, reducing fear of failure and increasing the likelihood of research integration into classroom practice. Thus, recognizing and rewarding research contributions can further motivate teachers and reinforce the value of research in improving teaching and learning.

Ultimately, fostering a supportive, research-friendly environment backed by clear policies has the potential to transform research from a perceived burden into a strategic tool for professional development and educational innovation.

Recommendation

The following are the recommendations that were drawn from the study

1. Provide capacity-building programs, such as regular research training and peer mentoring, to build confidence and skills in integrating research into teaching practice.
2. Allocate dedicated time, resources, and administrative support to foster a school culture that encourages and sustains research engagement.
3. Develop and implement inclusive, localized research support frameworks that address the specific needs of educators in semi-urban and resource-limited contexts.
4. Conduct further studies exploring research engagement in various educational settings to deepen understanding and strengthen strategies for teacher professional development.

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