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RESEARCH CHARACTERISTICS AND CHALLENGES OF DEPED:

RESEARCH CHARACTERISTICS AND CHALLENGES OF DEPED: TOWARDS A PROPOSED PROGRAM

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Title: **RESEARCH CHARACTERISTICS AND CHALLENGES OF DEPED: TOWARDS A PROPOSED PROGRAM**
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ABSTRACT

This study examined the research characteristics and challenges of mega national high schools with SBM Level III status of practice in the region. Particularly, it attempted to (1) describe DepEd – Region III's research characteristics along the areas of institutional, individual and leadership; (2) determine the challenges encountered by school heads in facilitating research; (3) propose a research program to address these challenges; and (4) draw implications from the proposed program to educational management. The descriptive research design was employed to address these. Using the Cochran's formula and through stratified and chain-referral system of snowball sampling, 53 school heads and 385 secondary school teachers were considered adequate representatives of the participants. Confirmations of existing research characteristics were recorded using a modified checklist-questionnaire based on the tools of Iqbal, Jalal and Mahmood (2018) and Adekunle and Madukoma (2022) while challenges encountered were determined through a self-structured checklist-questionnaire.

These research characteristics were all evident in DepEd secondary schools; whereas, challenges encountered stemmed from limited research orientation and prioritization; hence, the proposal of a program which decentralizes research management through a school research committee tasked to structure and supervise activities meant to further enhance research expertise, experience and motivations; utilization shall be achieved through research presentations and expansion of reach shall be attained through publication of relevant findings.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Through the mandates of the Republic Act 7722 which lawfully birthed the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) in 1994, state-run and private higher education institutions (HEIs) in the Philippines had derived the directives and encouragement to maximize and capitalize on the research enterprise in the country. Pertaining to the global market as having a knowledge-based and data-driven economy, CHED stressed on the relevance, utility and social impact of locally funded studies of university and college teaching and administrative personnel. As such, making HEIs the ultimate venues of knowledge production and transfer in the country, paving the way for mutually beneficial partnerships and collaborations with industries, business enterprises and other societal sectors.

Research norms and activities are typically embedded and characteristic of universities and colleges. In 2014, the University of the Philippines Media and Public Relations Office similarly inferred that a deliberate investment in research is strongly contributory to becoming a leading university in the world and this powerful conclusion seem to have attracted the three consecutive years of successful placement of the UP in the QS University Rankings since. Therefore, the value and quality of research productivity is closely linked to quality university education (Olvido, 2021).

However, such research vocation in the context of basic education had been rarely ventured upon by researchers themselves, creating a wide void in literature of academic research. In retrospect, Republic Act 9155 or the Governance of Basic Education Act of 2001 strongly reinforces an evidence-oriented decision-making process in the Department of Education, particularly in policy formulation and development.

In consonance, the launching of monthly research forums dubbed as "Research o' Clock" in 2018 through the Planning Service – Policy Research and Development Division, supporting the Adoption of the Basic Education Research Agenda (DepEd Order No. 39, series of 2016) and the implementation of the Research Management Guidelines (DepEd Order No. 16, series of 2017), reflects the initial moves in cultivating a culture of research in public schools. These urge the systematic, information-driven and collaborative creation of policies and critical decisions leading to necessary educational reforms, reinforcing its vision to "continuously improve itself to better serve its stakeholders" as "a learner-centered public institution".

Through the DepEd Order No. 014, series of 2022, the establishment of 'E-Saliksik', DepEd's own research portal, conforms to its progressive orientation and reinforces wider research engagement. This facility assists in the archiving, wider dissemination and easier and instantaneous retrieval of studies conducted and completed in schools financially supported by the Basic Education Research Fund (BERF). This may also house research fulfilled by DepEd's external partners in the field with respective authors' consent.

Supposedly, these mechanisms and legislations were to bolster a data-driven DepEd, yet involvement in research activities, i.e. conduct of action and/or applied research, seem to have been reduced to and regarded as means of verifications (MOVs) for teaching-related professional development endeavors of teachers appended in their RPMS portfolios, and crucial credit points source for promotion to head teacher and master teacher positions or higher posts. Such is consistent with the said position advancement specifications stipulated in the 2019 Guidelines for Master Teacher Promotion and the Modified Qualification Standards for the Positions of Head Teachers and Principals.

Despite these claims and some proofs, research talks were not extensive. Proofs of a growing research tradition seem numbered. Perks from research involvement are too light while teachers' loads and tasks are too burdensome. Pulled from both ends by problems on illiteracy and numeracy and other higher demands relative to the nature of their job, teachers no longer have the time and concentration that research requires. Additionally, the influx of extra-curricular activities occupies them similarly. Assigned to accompany, monitor, or personally train learners for upcoming competitions such as campus journalism, athletic meets and festival of talents, and events such as backyard camping and jamboree and capacity-building, teachers are physically and mentally exhausted to be persistently invested in research.

In the context with which the development of research characteristics and addressing corresponding challenges seem to have not been thoroughly investigated and appraised so far in the Department of Education – Region III, this study was proposed and purposefully undertaken.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Through the communicated status quo of the DepEd – Region III schools research characteristics and the hindrances encountered, this paper derived relevant information from narratives and previous related investigations and experts' suggestions crucial to its proposal of a research program driven towards promoting research engagement in schools. Similarly, such route was imperative in drawing critical implications for this study.

Specifically, it attempted to address the following questions:

1. How was the Department of Education – Region III's research characteristics described in terms of the following:
    1.1. institutional;
    1.2. individual; and,
    1.3. leadership?
2. What are the challenges encountered by the school heads in facilitating research?
3. What research program could be proposed to address these challenges?
4. What are the implications of the proposed research program to educational management?

METHODOLOGY

Attending to the problems it raised, this paper had utilized the descriptive research design. Distinctively, this method emphasizes the existence of current conditions; conditions of the relationships that exist; practices that prevail; beliefs, processes that are going on; effects that are being felt, or trends that are developing (Calderon & Gonzales, 1993). It concludes on the significance of what is being described, comparing and contrasting data through measurements, analysis and evaluation.

Findings of study utilizing this method are derived by looking into multiple variables in characterizing a population, identifying problems that exist within a unit, an organization, or an institution, and looking at the variations in their respective characteristics and practices (Siedlecki, 2020). Specifically, this investigation attempted to describe the level of development of research characteristics among the public high schools in Region III – Central Luzon by confirming from the secondary school heads and high school teachers the existence of institutional, individual and leadership characteristics essential in the cultivation of research in their respective schools.

Moreover, inputs as to the challenges impeding such development were similarly obtained from the school heads from the identified public secondary academic institutions from its composing divisions. These data were harmonized with the information obtained relative to the absence or presence of institutional, individual and leadership characteristics essential to research, justifying the proposal of the research program meant to address the conveyed challenges.

RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS
A. Modified Checklist-Questionnaire on the Essential Characteristics Promoting and Reinforcing Research Culture Development

Addressing the first problem raised by this study, the quantitative data were derived using the modified checklist-questionnaire based on Iqbal, Jalal and Mahmood's (2018) tool, determining the environmental and institutional factors, and Adekunle and Madukoma's (2022) instrument, assessing the participants' perceived level of research self-efficacy. Additionally, categories of characteristics were borrowed as concepts from Bland, Center, Finstad, Risbey and Staples' (2005) study.

B. Checklist-Questionnaire on the Challenges Encountered by Secondary School Principals in Facilitating Research

Securing answers for the second problem, a self-structured checklist- questionnaire was subsequently administered to the school heads, deriving conceptual underpinnings from Marchant's (2009) Classifications of Obstacles to Staff Research. These categories of hindrances experienced by school administrators were originally written in phrases from the source paper which were transformed into statements.

Responses of school heads communicating their level of confirmation of having had encountered the problems related to facilitating research activities in their respective areas of assignment were conveyed through them ticking the boxes which correspond to statements mirroring said challenges. Composing this data-gathering instrument were 14 statements. In the 15th and last item, they were encouraged to input other challenges related to facilitating research that were not originally included in the information-collection tool.

RESULTS
Below are the findings written in summary:
1. Participants' responses confirmed the "evident" or perceivable existence of institutional (2.7), individual (3.2) and leadership characteristics (2.7) promoting and reinforcing the culture of research in mega national high schools with SBM Level III status of practice in DepEd – Region III.
2. Majority of the school heads expressed confirmation on having encountered all of the challenges indicated in the research instrument while facilitating research. Remarkably, strongest affirmations were reported for the following statements as evidenced by the frequencies of responses, assigning their ordinal sequence: the school's culture is more teaching focused rather than research-focused (52), teachers are already overwhelmed by teaching loads (51), teachers are already bombarded by teaching designations and other special assignments (50), curricular development and delivery receive greater emphasis than research involvement (49), teachers lack

essential skills in interdisciplinary research (48), schools lack research experts to mentor teachers (48), teachers lack adequate research experience (48), because of limitation on finances, external funding, school-based resources and administrative support, teachers' research ventures were limited (47), due to limitations on financial resources, confidence and communicative competence, teachers rarely venture into research presentations (45), and personal limitations like lack of persistence, time and knowledge as well as feelings of discouragement deter research publication (44).

3. The proposed research program is a school-based research management program, aiming to convene key personnel who will compose the School Research Committee, scout and groom research experts and mentors among prospective researchers in secondary schools in the region, launch regular research colloquiums as venues of localized research presentations, and produce a digital and print publication compiling locally conducted research.

4. The proposed program seeks to assist DepEd – Region III in advancing to higher stages of research culture development, transitioning from its current status of gestation towards maturation through its grassroots approach of addressing challenges encountered in facilitating research and its commitment and investment on the empowerment of schools which may result to greater evidences and manifestations of the institutional, individual and leadership characteristics conducive for the development of research culture in the secondary schools.

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