Filipino School Heads in Basic Education as Research Leaders: Practices, Challenges, and Opportunities

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Abstract: This study disclosed the practices, challenges, and opportunities experienced by the school heads in research leadership. It was conducted in Northern Mindanao, Philippines in the school year 2022-2023. The five school heads were purposively chosen based on their research-related accomplishments. The study utilized qualitative research, particularly a narrative case study design. The use of guided questions allowed the researcher to collect rich, detailed information from participants about their experiences and perspectives related to research leadership, and is supplemented by research-related documents, such as research proposals, reports, publications, as well as accomplishment reports, communications, and information about relevant training and workshops. Results revealed three themes: (1) *research leadership practices as inputs: enablers and hinders*, (2) *research leadership challenges as process: ups and downs*, and (3) *research leadership opportunities as output: routines and transformations*. Practices of directing, coaching, supporting, and delegating were manifested in school heads' innovative mentoring activities like learning action cell (LAC) sessions, Project CARE (Collaborative Action Research Engagement), and research hour. The school heads met challenges in research leadership, like a lack of motivation, skills, and commitment. The research opportunities paved for school heads to transform and build a school culture of research. The transformative research leadership framework was designed to aid research leaders in providing a supportive and inclusive environment that promotes innovation, excellence, and collaboration among faculty members.

Key Words: Basic education, research culture, transformative leadership

1. INTRODUCTION

The impact of one or more people on the research-related behavior, attitudes, or intellectual capabilities of others is defined as research leadership. According to Evans (2014), research leadership is a subset of higher education leadership. Her views are significant since research leadership is institutionalized and enforced at colleges and universities. However, research leadership in the basic education sector appears lacking as they are just starting. At the moment, the school leaders' knowledge, abilities, and values about research still need to be improved.

Research leadership in basic education schools refers to the role of leaders in promoting and fostering a culture of research and inquiry within the school setting. It empowers teachers, students, and other stakeholders to engage in research activities that improve teaching and learning outcomes. It encourages collaborative research projects among teachers, allowing them to work together to investigate common issues or areas of interest while integrating research into the school's professional development programs. Also, it is manifested in collaboration with external partners, such as universities, research institutions, or community organizations.

In the Philippines, research is vital to basic education's teaching and learning process. The Department of Education developed a research management guideline to guide research (Department of Education, 2017). School heads, for example, are urged to use research to promote evidence-based decision-making at all levels, including the school, division, region, and central offices (Department of Education, 2020). Furthermore, these leaders can use research to identify problems, provide interventions and strategies, and demonstrate the success of such interventions and strategies in providing quality basic education to Filipino children.

A study in Palawan disclosed that public elementary and secondary school heads have poor productivity in research (Lagrio et al., 2022). The school heads revealed that they need more training and seminars on research, have an insufficient budget to undertake research, have difficulty analyzing qualitative data, and have a heavy teaching load. The process of proposing research is very tedious and rigorous, and they are busy with their teaching practice and personal life to do research. Ulla (2018) cited similar challenges the lack of financial support, heavy teaching load, lack of research skills and knowledge, and lack of research materials and resources. However, they recognized some benefits of doing school research for their career development.

A need for more studies on the research leadership of school heads has to be established due to the dearth of research in this area. The present study attempted to document school leaders' practices,

challenges, and opportunities in research leadership to contribute knowledge to the phenomenon. This exploration may shed light on the crucial role of research leadership in enhancing the quality of basic education and improving student learning outcomes. Using Burn's (1978) transformational leadership theory as the theoretical lens of the study, the research leadership phenomenon may capture how school heads demonstrated their research leadership and, in return, look at how their teachers embrace research and later become researchers. Specifically, the study sought to answer the question: *How do school heads demonstrate research leadership as reflected in their practices, challenges, and opportunities met?*

2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

2.1 Research Design

This qualitative research utilized a narrative case study approach. A narrative case study is a fusion of two qualitative research methods, the case study and narrative inquiry (Sonday et al., 2020). The case served as the context, while the narrative inquiry was used to understand the case. Case studies are frequently qualitative and interpretative, seeking depth in their scope and analysis to particularize and yield insights of potentially broader relevance and theoretical significance (Duff, 2011). Thus, a case study is appropriate for this study because the methods used can provide a deeper understanding of research leadership through the lens of transformational leadership theory. Meanwhile, narrative inquiry is a way of understanding experience, not only limited to individuals' experiences but also to the social, cultural, and institutional narratives within which their experiences are shaped and expressed (Clandinin & Connely, 2000). This study focuses on the school heads and their teachers' narratives on research leadership. Therefore, a narrative inquiry is appropriate for inquiring narratively into school heads' practices, challenges, and opportunities met as research leaders and the social, cultural, and institutional narratives.

2.2 Locale and Participants

The participants of this study were five school heads from a school division in Northern Mindanao during the school year 2022-2023. They were purposively chosen based on their research-related accomplishments. Their age bracket ranged from twenty-six to sixty-four years old. All of them are assigned to their respective schools steering teachers who teach different subjects of diverse grade levels and do research work.

School Head 1 is an accomplished School Principal with seven years of experience leading schools. He is a highly awarded icon in the Department of Education for his exceptional research skills. Currently, he is guiding and managing a team of 47 teachers in a large-category school. On the other hand, school head 2 is Head Teacher I, with two years of experience in school leadership. He has also gained recognition for his research talents, having presented at several international research congresses. He currently leads a team of 21 teachers in a medium-category school.

School Head 3 is a highly experienced School Principal IV, having led schools for twenty-seven years. She is renowned for her back-to-back awards and recognitions in research and educational leadership. A well-seasoned school head in the Province of Bukidnon. She manages and mentors a team of 446 teaching professionals in a mega school category. Moreover, school head 4 is Head Teacher I, with two years of experience in school leadership. He has garnered a reputation for his exceptional research skills over the years. He leads a team of 19 teachers in a small school category in a far-flung location.

In addition, school head 5 is an Education Program Supervisor and the current school in charge. He is highly respected for his research capabilities and has extended his expertise to other teachers to develop their research writing skills. He is entrusted with leading and guiding a team of 31 teachers in a medium school category.

2.3 Data Gathering Procedure, Instruments, and Analysis

The researcher used a validated interview guide to gather the data. Before the conduct of the study, all needed permissions were secured, which included the approval of the Schools Division Superintendent, district supervisors, and identified participants. They signed informed consent. They were oriented about the research, with its benefits and risks. They are informed that they are free to withdraw their participation if it is prejudicial to them. They were assured of data privacy and anonymity.

During the data gathering proper, interviews were done with the participants. They could narrate their practices, challenges, and opportunities as research leaders. The interviews were recorded with their permission. After the interviews, the researcher asked for supporting documents like research-related documents, awards, training,

communications, and other evidence of their claims. The researcher analyzed the gathered data using the method of Creswell and Creswell (2018). It started by reading the data many times to understand the content thoroughly. Notes on any initial impressions, patterns, or emerging themes were listed. Initially, they were coded as the data were labeled and categorized into distinct parts. The codes were words, phrases, or concepts that summarize the meaning of the data.

After the initial codes were generated, the researcher ensured that it accurately reflected the content of the data. Code revisions or combinations were done as needed to ensure they were comprehensive and distinct. The codes were used to identify overarching themes that emerged from the data. Then, patterns, connections, and relationships between codes were utilized to identify broader themes. Once the themes have been identified, refined, or revised, a visual representation of the themes and their relatedness is developed by organizing them into a hierarchy or illustrating the connections between them. After the themes were identified and validated by evidence, the researcher subjected the results to qualitative experts to check the codes and themes. Later, the initial codes and themes were discussed with the participants for substantiation and refinement.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The researchers reconstructed narrative portraits of each participant and transformed one of these narrative portraits into a poetic representation. Here is the story of Joseph, who had thorns on his heart when his parents left him.

School heads shared their practices, challenges, and opportunities as research leaders. The recorded interviews were transcribed, and results revealed the following themes: (1) *Research Leadership Practices as Inputs: Enablers and Hinders*; (2) *Research Leadership Challenges as Process: Ups and Downs*; and (3) *Research Leadership Opportunities as Output: Routines and Transformations*. Subthemes were also presented to substantiate each theme.

Theme 1: Research Leadership Practices as Inputs: Enablers and Hinders

Research leadership can be both an enabler and a hindrance to the research process. Effective research leadership can guide, support, and provide resources to researchers, enabling them to conduct quality research studies.

Subtheme 1.1: Leadership Styles

Transformational leadership inspires and motivates team members to achieve their full potential through a shared vision and values. Understanding these different leadership styles can help leaders choose the most appropriate approach depending on the situation and organizational goals. Four leadership styles emerged in the narratives of the respondents: directing, coaching, supporting, and delegating.

Directing

These research leaders encourage their teachers to enroll in graduate school, knowing that higher education can provide them with the necessary tools and skills to conduct research more effectively. They also require their teachers to conduct research studies, giving them a clear goal and purpose. Regarding leadership styles in research, some school heads take on the role of a director. These leaders believe in providing their teachers with clear and direct guidance on completing their research studies. For them, there is no room for ambiguity or confusion. Some school heads shared that:

"I always encourage teachers to enroll to graduate school." (School Head 1)

"We require the teachers that they have to come up with a research study." (School Head 2)

In order to help their teachers, stay on track, these school heads set strict timelines and divided the months into different activities. They are like conductors, leading their teachers through a symphony of research activities and ensuring that every note is played to perfection. A school head cited that:

"I will set a timeline. I divide those months with different activities." (School Head 4)

The statement made by School Head 4 suggests that they have a strategic plan in place to achieve their goals. By setting a timeline and dividing it into different activities, School Head 4 is likely using a project management approach to ensure that they stay organized and focused on their objectives.

Coaching

There was a moment when there was a school where a group of teachers were tasked with conducting research studies in their respective fields. However, some of these teachers needed to be more confident and motivated by the prospect of conducting research. That is where the school heads stepped in to offer their guidance and support. School heads narrated that:

"For me, I always mentor my teachers in writing a research paper since I have pursued my graduate studies." (School Head 1)

"We also set timelines to organize the coaching session for teachers." (School Head 2)

"I am also doing the one-on-one coaching. To monitor their progress when writing the research paper closely." (School Head 4)

The school heads knew this leadership style was effective for teachers needing guidance and support in the research process. They believed coaching was about giving feedback and advice and motivating and encouraging their teachers. Through their coaching sessions, the administrators were able to inspire their teachers to do their best and produce high-quality research studies. The results match the study of Alshammari et al. (2021) which examined the impact of mentoring on teacher development in higher education. The study found that mentoring helped teachers develop their research skills and confidence, improving teaching effectiveness and student learning outcomes. Another related literature is a study by Manuti et al. (2015) which discussed the effectiveness of coaching as a leadership practice in education. The study found that coaching helped teachers improve their teaching practices, increased job satisfaction, and improved overall performance.

Supporting

In a small school tucked away in a peaceful town, there lived a group of dedicated school heads who wanted to inspire their teachers to delve into the world of research. They knew conducting research studies could help improve the school's practices and benefit their students. Thus, they decided to adopt a supportive leadership style that would foster a research-friendly culture. To start, the school heads created a warm and inviting research environment that would make new and experienced researchers feel at home. They provided necessary resources such as research materials, software, and equipment to make the research process easy. They also encouraged teachers to conduct LAC sessions or Learning Action Cells to improve their research writing skills and bridge the gaps. School heads echoed that:

"Developing beginner-friendly research environment without compromising the improvement of the experienced researchers in our school." (School Head 3)

"I encouraged them to conduct LAC sessions to capacitate them in research writing skills and bridge the gaps." (School Head 5)

These statements relate to the study of Cosh and Halse (2016) that research-friendly environments emphasize the importance of providing resources and support for novice researchers while also challenging and supporting experienced researchers to continue growing and improving. LAC sessions can be one effective way to build research writing skills and support teacher collaboration. To make the teachers feel valued and appreciated, the school heads created a rewards system recognizing teachers who excelled in their research studies. For instance, a simple tap on the shoulder or a heartfelt "great job" could boost a teacher's morale. Moreover, the school heads recognized those who presented at research congresses and during faculty meetings, giving them the spotlight, they deserved. A school head expressed that:

"I also use the rewards system to encourage more teachers to be involved in research writing like just tapping on their shoulders for the job well done. Also, I recognize those teachers who presented at the research congress during a faculty meeting to boost their morale so that they will conduct research again." (School Head 1)

The statement made by School Head 1 suggests a proactive approach to motivating teachers to engage in research writing. Using a rewards system, School Head 1 incentivizes teachers to participate in research activities and provides recognition for their achievements. It can create a culture of appreciation and encouragement, boosting morale and motivating teachers to continue conducting research in the future.

The teachers in the school felt supported and encouraged to conduct research studies to improve their practices; this aligns with Tomlinson's (2017) study that providing rewards and recognition can be an effective way to incentivize and motivate teachers to engage in research activities. Tapping on the shoulder or offering verbal praise can be simple yet effective ways to acknowledge and appreciate teachers' efforts. Recognizing teachers who present at research congresses or faculty meetings can also boost morale and reinforce the value of research within the school community. However, it is essential to note that rewards and recognition should be combined with other supports and resources, such as LAC sessions and access to research materials, to create a comprehensive and sustainable research-friendly environment.

Delegating

The school heads embraced the delegating leadership style and encouraged their teachers to

develop their research studies. They provided guidance and support regarding methodology and data gathering, but they ultimately trusted their teachers to complete their research and disseminate their findings on various platforms. The teachers were excited to be allowed to showcase their work. They poured their hearts and souls into their research studies, knowing their school heads believed in them. Moreover, when the time came for research congresses, forums, and LAC sessions, the teachers eagerly presented their findings. A school head shared that:

"They will come up with completed research and let them disseminate their findings in research congresses or forums and LAC sessions in school so that it will help improve the practices in the school." (School Head 5)

The delegating leadership style proved effective in creating a culture of autonomy and innovation among the teachers, aligning with Wang and Wang's (2018) study on the impact of delegating leadership style on various organizational outcomes, such as employee empowerment and organizational commitment, as well as on innovation performance.

Subtheme 1.2: Innovative Mentoring Activities

To ensure teachers have the necessary skills and support to conduct high-quality research, innovative mentoring activities come in the form of learning action cells, Project CARE, and research hour.

Learning Action Cell (LAC) Session

Innovative mentoring activities are crucial in enhancing the research capabilities of teachers in schools. One of the most common mentoring activities is the learning action cell (LAC) session, where teachers gather weekly to discuss research-related topics and improve their research writing skills. School Head 1 emphasized the importance of conducting these sessions regularly, as it helps prevent teachers from being overwhelmed with the workload that comes with conducting research. A school head narrated that:

"I always met them to LAC session which is related to research writing weekly because it will be a burden to the teacher if it is given in just two days." (School Head 1)

The statement made by the speaker suggests a commitment to supporting teachers in their research endeavors by providing regular opportunities for professional development. By conducting weekly learning action cell (LAC) sessions related to research writing, the speaker is

providing a structured forum for teachers to develop their research skills and knowledge.

In addition, some schools have integrated research management into their LAC sessions. School Head 2 shared their experience of having a program called HOPE in Research, which stands for Harmonized and Organized Program for Enhancement in Research. This program aims to provide a structured approach to research management and support teachers in conducting research studies. A school head stated that:

"One of the practices that we have done in school in terms of research management is that we integrate LAC session called Harmonized and Organized Program for Enhancement (HOPE) in Research." (School Head 2)

The responses correlate with Dizon et al. (2016) that the benefits and impact of various approaches to teaching and enhancing research writing skills, including LAC sessions and other similar programs. They highlight the importance of integrating such programs into the regular curriculum to allow for regular and consistent practice and feedback. Additionally, they discuss using concept maps and other visualization tools as effective aids in developing and organizing research writing skills.

Project CARE (Collaborative Action Research Engagement)

Moreover, Project CARE, or Collaborative Action Research Engagement, is another innovative mentoring activity that can help improve the research capabilities of teachers. School Head 3 shared that this program involves collaboration between teachers and encourages them to engage in action research to address school-related problems. A school head shared that:

"We have the Project Collaborative Action Research Engagement (CARE). It is a program for teachers to enhance their research capabilities by having those teachers mentored by other faculty knowledgeable in research." (School Head 3)

A collaborative research approach can foster a sense of shared responsibility and accountability among teachers. Teachers can share resources, ideas, and best practices by working together on research projects, ultimately improving student outcomes.

Research Hour

Some administrators also conduct research hours to closely monitor teachers' progress in conducting their research studies. School Head 5 acknowledged the importance of these research hours in bridging

the gaps and capacitating teachers in research writing skills. A school head disclosed that:

"I conduct research hours to monitor their conduct of research in the school closely." (School Head 5)

Using research hours as a tool for monitoring and supporting teacher research activities is essential to school research management. School leaders can create a culture of research and support teacher development in this area by providing dedicated time and resources for research. Research on the importance of school leaders' involvement in research management supports that school head 5's approach can be practical. For example, a study by Jurow and Tracy (2014) found that school leaders who were actively involved in promoting and supporting teacher research were able to create a culture of inquiry and improve teaching practices in their schools. Similarly, Leithwood et al. (2016) found that school leaders who were firmly committed to research-based practice were more likely to improve student outcomes successfully.

Theme 2: Research Leadership Challenges as Process: Ups and Downs

Research leadership challenges are a process that involves various ups and downs. It is not a linear process but a continuous cycle of planning, implementing, evaluating, and adjusting. Influential research leaders can navigate the ups and downs of the research process and guide their teams toward achieving their goals.

Subtheme 2.1. Lack of Motivation: Encouraged but Less Motivated

The notion of encouraged but less motivated indicates a negative perception of research among school heads and teachers. This sentiment is echoed in the other responses, where teachers express challenges in conducting research, such as feeling overwhelmed or unmotivated. These findings suggest that there may be a need for more support and guidance in research and a shift in mindset towards the value and importance of research in improving teaching practices.

The findings from the participants in the qualitative research study reflect the challenges many schools and educational institutions face in promoting research engagement among teachers. As highlighted by School Head 3, teachers often feel exhausted from their workload, hindering their motivation to participate in research activities. Additionally, School Head 4 noted that motivating teachers to conduct research can be difficult, which further compounds the challenge of research engagement. The study's results also emphasized

the issue of research anxiety among teachers, as identified by School Head 5, which can lead to their withdrawal from research activities and low motivation levels. School heads narrated that:

"In terms of challenges, one of them is that teachers are already tired in writing research." (School Head 3)

"I have a hard time enticing many teachers to deal with research." (School Head 3)

"It is tough to motivate teachers to conduct research." (School Head 4)

"One of the challenges encountered is the research anxiety that teachers withdraw themselves in conducting research that is why teachers are less motivated in the conduct of research." (School Head 5)

Research leaders can play a critical role in addressing these challenges by providing supportive measures and opportunities for professional development. It is imperative that mentorship and guidance can help teachers build their research skills and confidence. Research leaders can also promote a culture of research by offering incentives for teachers to engage in research activities and creating a supportive environment that fosters collaboration and learning. By addressing the challenges highlighted by the participants and providing support to teachers, research leaders can help create a more research-oriented school environment that benefits both teachers and students.

Subtheme 2.2. Lack of Writing Skills: Trained but not Learned

The participants' responses in this qualitative research study suggest that one of the significant challenges in promoting research engagement among teachers is the need for more understanding and skills in research. The participants noted that some teachers find research challenging to understand and may need mentors' support and guidance to comprehend its significance fully. It highlights the importance of building teachers' research skills and knowledge to encourage them to engage in research activities. School heads said that:

"That is why they will have a hard time mentoring the teachers about research because they also lack writing skills." (School Head 1)

"Research skills of the teachers and personnel need to be improved." (School Head 3)

Furthermore, the participants identified the need for more writing skills and knowledge in research

writing as a significant barrier to research engagement. This finding underscores the need for research leaders to provide writing workshops or training opportunities to help teachers improve their writing skills and feel more confident conducting research. A school head stated that:

"Lack of knowledge and writing skills on research. Not all teachers are born with technically skilled in writing." (School Head 5)

According to Zhang and Lundeberg (2011), research leaders should be aware of the ups and downs of the research process and be able to manage them effectively. Some ups include setting clear goals, providing resources and support, and fostering collaboration among team members. On the other hand, some downs include research process setbacks, conflicts among team members, and unexpected challenges.

Subtheme 2.3. Lack of Commitment: Good Starters but not Completers

The participants' responses in this qualitative research study highlight several challenges research leaders face in motivating and supporting teachers in conducting research. One significant issue identified was the lack of sustained commitment from teachers, as connoted by the phrase "good starters but not completers." This lack of commitment can be a significant barrier to the success of research projects, as teachers may need more motivation and follow through with their research goals. A school head voiced out that:

"It is a big challenge to the research leaders to have a big time to give to the teachers just to conduct research." (School Head 5)

It is congruent to David and Dimaano's (2017) study which expressed that one of the barriers to research productivity among faculty members in Philippine state universities and colleges is the need for more time to conduct research. It could be due to heavy teaching loads and administrative duties, which leave little time for research activities. This finding may support the statement that research leaders face a challenge in allocating sufficient time for teachers to conduct research. Additionally, as one participant noted, some participants expressed frustration with the need for more progress made by some teachers in conducting research. It highlights the need for ongoing support and guidance for teachers throughout the research process to ensure they can complete their research projects. School heads narrated that:

"It was disappointing to my part as a district research coordinator that majority of the teachers are just good in the beginning." (School Head 4)

"They will be discouraged from finishing their research paper because they do not know what is next." (School Head 2)

Several studies explore the challenges and factors affecting research completion and sustainability among educators. For example, a study by Kim and Lee (2018) found that teachers often need help finding time to conduct research and more support or resources to help them sustain their projects. Another study by Ramlee et al. (2019) identified a lack of skills, knowledge, and guidance as barriers to teachers' research productivity and motivation.

Theme 3. Research Leadership Opportunities as Output: Routines and Transformations

Research leadership opportunities as output is a notion that discusses the importance of research leadership in academic institutions. The theme argues that research leadership should also be considered an outcome of research activities rather than just a process or a means to an end. This shift in perspective emphasizes the value of research leadership in fostering a culture of research and promoting the dissemination and application of research findings.

Subtheme 3.1. Research as Routine: Obliged but not Mandated

The responses provided by the participants in this qualitative research study suggest that research can have both personal and professional benefits for teachers. One participant noted that engaging in research activities forced them to improve themselves, not only in the field of research but also beyond. This finding highlights the potential for research activities to foster personal and professional growth, increase job satisfaction and improve teacher performance. A school head shared that:

"It forces me to improve myself so that I can help other teachers in the field of research and even beyond." (School Head 3)

One study that supports the idea that teachers' own research experiences can influence their attitudes and practices toward research is the study by Gao and Moiduddin (2011). The study explored how teachers' research experiences affected their beliefs and practices about using research evidence in their teaching. The findings showed that teachers with positive experiences conducting research were more likely to have positive attitudes toward using research evidence in their teaching and were more

likely to engage in research-related activities. The authors concluded that teachers' personal experiences with research can significantly impact their attitudes and practices toward research.

Another participant noted that research can be tiring and challenging, but they still recognize its importance, especially as school heads. It suggests that despite the difficulties associated with research, there is a recognition of its value and a willingness to engage in it for the benefit of the school and its students. A school head cited that:

"To tell you the truth, I am tired already in research. For the longest time I have been involved in research, I garnered awards for myself and my students whom I coached on research as a teacher. Nevertheless, when I became a school head, I thought I could escape research, but I needed to lead strategically." (School Head 4)

The statement made by School Head 4 highlights the personal experience and struggles of school leaders concerning research. The school head feels exhausted from being involved in research for a long time. The school head also mentions the personal rewards gained from previous involvement in research, such as awards for themselves and their students. However, upon assuming a leadership role, the school head recognizes the importance of strategic leadership in research and the need to continue promoting research in their school.

One study by Choong and Tan (2016) explored the factors that affect teachers' willingness to conduct research in schools. The study found that teachers' lack of motivation and interest in research were among the barriers that hindered their engagement in research activities. The study also highlighted the importance of leadership support in promoting teachers' research engagement. School leaders who value research and support teachers positively influence teachers' motivation and engagement in research. It supports the statement of School Head 4, who recognized the importance of strategic leadership in promoting research culture in the school.

Lastly, another participant noted that engaging in research can have practical benefits, such as improving their documents and potentially leading to opportunities for promotion. It highlights the potential for research activities to impact teachers' careers and professional development. A school head stated that:

"Teachers will be promoted because research is a big help in their documents and given a chance for promotion." (School Head 5)

The statement implies that conducting research can benefit teachers in terms of career advancement. Research experience and outputs can be advantageous for teachers in terms of their promotion and professional growth. It can serve as a motivator for teachers to engage in research despite the challenges that they may encounter.

Subtheme 3.2. Research as Transformation: Building a School Research Culture and Forging Linkages

Building a school research culture is crucial in promoting research as a meaningful and impactful school activity. This approach can build a community of practice around research and empower teachers to engage in research that addresses real-world problems and enhances student learning outcomes. This process allows schools to become research and innovation hubs, driving continuous improvement and educational growth.

The participants' responses in this qualitative research study highlight the importance of creating a supportive and collaborative culture within schools to encourage and improve research writing skills among teachers. One participant expressed enthusiasm for the weekly LAC session on research writing, suggesting that regular training and support can help teachers develop their research skills. Another participant suggested using a reward system to boost morale and motivation among teachers, which can lead to improved research outcomes. School heads added that:

"I will also practice the reward system to boost their morale in writing a research paper." (School Head 2)

"I am looking forward to having the weekly LAC session on research writing. In there, the different parts of research are already programmed." (School Head 1)

Additionally, a participant identified the value of collaboration in generating new ideas and demonstrated the importance of guidance and supervision in fostering a collaborative culture. Research leaders can play a critical role in building a culture of research within schools by providing ongoing training and support, implementing incentives for research, and facilitating collaboration and idea exchange among teachers. A school head shared that:

"We will able to develop collaboration for we exchange ideas. Teachers are demonstrating and generating new ideas through my guidance and supervision." (School Head 5)

Such efforts can improve the quality and impact of research activities within the school and support teachers' professional growth and development.

The participants' responses in this qualitative research study highlight the importance of forging research linkages in the community. One participant emphasized the need to open their arms and welcome teachers who need guidance in research (School Head 4). Another participant recognized the importance of tapping knowledgeable teachers to mentor those needing research skills (School Head 2). They shared that:

"Opening my arms always to welcome teachers who will need my guidance in research." (School Head 4)

"I will also tap those knowledgeable teachers to mentor also those teachers in need of skills in research." (School Head 2)

These responses suggest that creating a culture of collaboration and support among teachers can enhance the research skills and productivity of individuals in the community. Mertens and Ginsberg (2009) noted that community-based participatory research (CBPR) involves partnering with community members to identify research questions, collect data, and disseminate findings, which can lead to more relevant and impactful research outcomes. Thus, forging research linkages in the community can not only improve the quality of research but also foster a sense of community engagement and empowerment. Furthermore, involving stakeholders in the research process and disseminating findings to them was identified as an essential aspect of forging research linkages in the community. This approach can promote engagement and collaboration between the research community and stakeholders, leading to more meaningful and relevant research outcomes. According to Collins and Jaeger (2016) , involving stakeholders in the research process can promote better communication and understanding of research findings, increase the relevance of research, and build trust between researchers and the community. A school head cited that:

"Ensures the dissemination of research and innovation not only for the teachers/researchers but also for the stakeholders." (School Head 3)

The themes were summarized and translated into a transformative research leadership framework. The framework in Figure 1 promotes on harnessing innovation and nurturing excellence in research which includes understanding the practices as inputs if enablers or hinders, reflecting on the challenges as process as to ups or downs, and discovering the opportunities as output, whether their just routines or transformations. The framework may help research leaders develop the skills and strategies necessary to create a culture of research of continuous improvement and transformation.

Figure 1. A Transformative Research Leadership
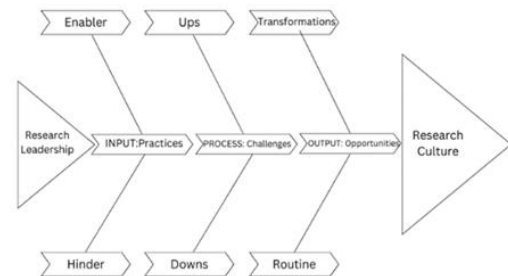
Framework

4. CONCLUSION

Research leadership in basic education schools is vital in promoting a culture of continuous learning and improvement. By fostering research skills, encouraging collaboration, and utilizing research findings, leaders empower teachers and students to contribute to advancing education actively, leading to enhanced teaching practices, student outcomes, and overall school success. Research leaders in basic education schools must create a culture that values and supports research. They must emphasize the importance of evidence-based practices and encourage teachers to research as part of their professional growth. It involves promoting a continuous improvement mindset, where research and inquiry are considered integral components of the teaching and learning process.

School heads have to provide guidance and support to teachers in conducting research. They must facilitate professional development opportunities that build teachers' research skills and knowledge. It may include training on research methodologies, data analysis, and interpretation. By empowering teachers as researchers, school leaders enable them to investigate and address educational challenges specific to their classrooms and students. Basic education schools encourage collaborative research projects among teachers, allowing them to work together to investigate common issues or areas of interest. By fostering a collaborative research culture, leaders promote shared learning and exchanging ideas, ultimately leading to improved teaching practices and student outcomes. Collaboration may involve joint research studies, action research groups, or partnerships with external research organizations. Moreover, it involves integrating research into the school's professional development programs. Leaders

provide opportunities for teachers to share their research findings, present at conferences, or participate in research symposiums. By showcasing research outcomes, leaders inspire and motivate other teachers to engage in research activities, creating a continuous improvement and innovation cycle.

Research leadership extends beyond teachers to include students. Leaders encourage students to participate in research projects, fostering their critical thinking, problem-solving, and inquiry skills. It may involve engaging students in scientific investigations, social studies projects, or community-based research. Leaders promote active learning, independent thinking, and a deeper understanding of the subject matter by involving students in research. Research leaders in basic education schools collaborate with external partners, such as universities, research institutions, or community organizations. These partnerships provide access to research initiatives' expertise, resources, and funding. Collaborating with external partners also exposes teachers and students to a more comprehensive research community, allowing them to learn from and contribute to broader educational research efforts. Effective research leadership involves utilizing research findings to inform school improvement initiatives. Leaders work with teachers to analyze and interpret research data, identifying areas for improvement and implementing evidence-based strategies. Using research as a basis for decision-making, leaders can make informed choices about curriculum development, instructional methods, and student support systems.

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