



## Competence and Challenges Encountered by Teacher-Researchers: Basis for Research Capacity Building

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### How to cite

Borreo, R. (2023). Competence and Challenges Encountered by Teacher-Researchers: Basis for Research Capacity Building. *Current Perspectives in Educational Research*, 6(1), 40-53.

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### ABSTRACT

Conducting action research requires some skills and abilities and extra time to plan and complete it. As a result, few teachers engage in action research. To dive into this issue, this paper attempted to conduct a research investigation with a focus on the competence and challenges encountered by the teacher-researchers in conducting action research in Infanta District in Philippines during the school year 2022-2023. The aim of this research was also to propose a research capacity building. The researcher used purposive sampling, employing descriptive-quantitative method. 39 teacher-researchers were involved in the study. Data collecting instrument used was a researcher-made survey questionnaire. The results revealed that the teacher-researchers assessed their competence as “slightly competent” as reflected by the overall mean of 2.14. Meanwhile, one item was evaluated where the teacher-researchers was “not competent” which this is about making an introduction using CARS Model. On the other hand, the challenges encountered by the teacher-researchers were interpreted as “slightly serious” with an overall weighted mean of 2.53. While, four problems were identified as “serious” such as they do not know the difference between an action research and basic research, they need individuals who can guide them in making their research paper, someone who can give them technical assistance and they do not have a background in the process of making action research. Moreover, two “very serious” challenges were found such as they do not have training in Action Research and due to this lack of training, it made them reluctant in doing one. In the meantime, the computed coefficient or  $r$  value was .56 which signified a considerable moderate correlation. Therefore, the teacher-researchers’ competence registered a relationship with the challenges they encountered. To address the serious and very serious problems encountered, the teacher-researchers may find the research capacity building proposed in this paper. The capacity building is purposely designed to resolve and overcome the challenges encountered by the teacher-researchers in implementing action research.

### KEYWORDS

Teacher-researchers; action research; research capacity building.

## INTRODUCTION

Individuals who are engaged in the task of education have to face many such problems which hinder the education of children. Thus, teachers need to find out solutions of such problems on the basis of their own investigation as this process will immediately point out to remedial measures to be adopted. In this regard, one of scientific methods that can be used in addressing the said problems is through a research-based plans and solutions that should be implemented in schools (Jha, 2022)

Moreover, as stipulated in the Research Management Guidelines (Republic of Philippines Department of Education, 2017) that supports the department's policy development process, research agenda, and program development and implementation, the Department of Education aims to support and strengthen the culture of research in basic education.

Bongcayao (2023) stressed that teachers as frontliners of basic education may conduct action research to assess their teaching practices, reflect on learning outcomes, and generate practical ways of improving their pedagogical competence through innovations and interventions that will result in positive educational impact and school effectiveness. Meanwhile, it is also presented that still many teachers are experiencing difficulties in the conduct of action research from the identification of their research problem until the publication of the results of the research. The results may imply that teachers do not yet possess the required skills in writing action researches.

However, Tindowen (2019) conducted a study regarding the conception and difficulties experienced by teachers in conducting action research and found out that still many teachers are experiencing difficulties in the conduct of action research from the identification of their research problem until the publication of the results of the research. The results may imply that teachers do not yet possess the required skills in writing action researches.

Moreover, according to Bullo, et.al. (2021), conducting educational research has become one of the most challenging tasks to most of the teachers, especially because it has been an additional work to them. Their study revealed that most of respondents encountered challenges in conducting research like the lack of time, having anxieties in writing and conducting the study and perceived research as an additional burden on their part.

These issues pushed the researcher to conduct a research investigation aimed at identifying the competence and challenges encountered by the teacher-researchers in conducting action research in Infanta, a city in the province of Quezon in Philippines, for school year 2022-2023 as a basis in proposing a research capability building.

### Research Questions

This research aimed to determine the competence and the problems encountered by the teacher-researchers in Infanta, Quezon (Philippines), as a basis in formulating a research capacity building. Specifically, this research sought to answer the following specific questions:

- What is the level of the competence among teacher-researchers in Infanta in conducting action research?
- What are the problems encountered by the teacher-researchers in Infanta in conducting

action research?

- Is there a significant relationship to the competence and the challenges encountered by the teacher-researchers in Infanta in conducting action research?
- Based on the findings of this research, what research capacity building program may be designed for the teacher-researchers in Infanta?

### **BRIEF REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

This section presents the related literature and studies for this research investigation. In addition, the related literature and studies included in this section address the different ideas and concepts related to the study that served as a guide for the researcher in the development of the study. Meanwhile, this study utilized a thematic type of related literature review, which means organizing the literature by theme or category, for example, by independent variables, are used by the researchers (Rommelspacher, 2020).

#### **Competence in Conducting an Action Research**

Albalawi and Johnson (2022), conducted a study on the degree of public-school teachers' skills in conducting action research. The results of the study showed that previously conducted action researches played an important role in supporting qualitative educational research among Saudi Arabian teachers, contributing to the improvement of the teaching environment and helping teachers to solve students' problems via action research. They concluded that the teacher participants residing in both countries, the Kalamazoo metropolitan area (US) and Tabuk (Saudi Arabia), who had previously participated action research studies claimed to have benefitted in various ways from the relevant activities and training courses.

Meanwhile, Alipio (2019), focused on the determining the effect on improving the research skills of teachers through a localized division initiative. His paper explored on the level of research skills of respondents before and after the conduct of research intervention activities and determine its effect. The study revealed that the local research initiatives through trainings had significantly improved the research skills. He concluded that research activities such as capacity building and trainings greatly improved the teaching skills in the following aspects: pedagogical knowledge (subject area) of teachers, ability to adjust instruction to meet student's needs and ability to plan for instruction. Likewise, it had greatly improved the research skills of the respondents such as the reading skills, ability to ask questions and ability to collaborate well with others.

Oestar and Marzo (2022) conducted an investigation on the impact of capacity building and trainings to improve the ability of teachers and found out that found out that competencies with low WAM ratings should be mastered through capability-building activities. Some of the barriers that hinder the engagement of teachers in action research making were the knowledge, attitude, and resource factors. Moreover, less appreciation of the usefulness of action research in enhancing instruction has the highest results in terms of attitude barriers. While, lack of budget has the greatest weighted mean in terms of resource barriers. To remedy such issues and corners, it can be recommended that teachers may personally attend additional training and workshops that focus on

the importance and benefits of action research and enhance competencies, specifically in data analysis and publication of research.

As revealed in the study of Caingcoy (2020), teachers were slightly capable to conduct research and having neutral attitudes toward it, as well as had a low motivation to write research and had had a high level of difficulties in research processes, and moderately capable of action planning. It was concluded that research capability can be an advice to motivate teachers to conduct researches and benefit from it.

### **Challenges Encountered in Conducting an Action Research**

According to Bullo et al. (2021), conducting educational research has become one of the most challenging tasks to most of the teachers, especially because it has been an additional work to them. Their study revealed that most of respondents encountered challenges in conducting research like the lack of time, have anxieties in writing and conducting the study and perceived research as an additional burden on their part. Additionally, analyzing the quantitative and qualitative data in identifying the issues to be investigated has been a tough challenge to them as well. They recommended that teachers should be given sufficient seminars, trainings, and workshops on research, and they must religiously attend to these to acquire research skills and processes so that they can come up with quality research.

While Azarcon (2019) stated that conducting action researches are the most important activities for bringing changes and improvements in the teaching-learning process. The gap, however, is that most teachers admit they lack interest in conducting action research. The study revealed that educational attainment has a significant relationship to the challenges encountered by master teachers in conducting action research. As recommended, the Department of Education has to deploy enough number of teachers to each school to lessen the teaching load of the master teachers so that they can conduct action research within the required period. They also have to instigate seminars, training, and workshops that would develop the analytical capacity and skills of the master teachers in conducting action research. The school administration has to initiate a School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) to give sufficient time for master teachers to conduct action research.

Abrenica and Cascolan (2022) found out that action research, according to the teachers, has a positive impact in the teaching-learning process. Thus, a plan of action could be followed to help the teachers in doing action research and address the encountered challenges in conducting action research. They recommended that since this study discovered that action research is extremely beneficial in education, particularly in the teaching-learning process, teacher professional development, and curriculum creation, teachers should be encouraged to perform their own action research. For the administration, they may take the advice and revise their rules for doing action research so that instructors don't have trouble following the procedure. While reducing teaching loads is not an option, as six hours should be spent on teaching and two hours on nonteaching tasks such as lesson planning and the like, administrators should look into other ways to assist instructors.

On the other hand, De Borja (2018) concluded that writing the framework of the study is the most difficult part. Likewise, it was found out that knowledge of statistics or data analyses was one of the hindrances encountered by teachers in conducting action research. It appears that time spent in conducting action research is one big factor that makes this activity difficult for teachers. It implied from the study that Parts of action research, which were difficult for teachers should be the of training and development for teachers. Likewise, the number of teaching load and teacher tasks require too much time that they cannot devote for research. Thus, in order for teachers to conduct researches, there should be lesser teaching load to provide extra time for institutional researches and support more teacher researchers.

While Tingabngab and Binayao (2023) stressed that many teachers in the Department of Education (DepEd), both in elementary and secondary schools, continue to be uninterested in conducting action research despite the DepEd's efforts to update and inform the public-school teachers of the importance of doing research. Furthermore, the said teachers also have a deficiency in their practical knowledge, resources, and skills in conducting action research. The shortcomings of these teachers need to be addressed because they are integral to resolving classroom issues and improving teaching skills leading to the better academic performance of learners. They found out from their study that the teacher participants experienced the following in conducting their action research namely: struggling during the initial stage, the feeling of rejection, the complexity of demands, constraints with set priorities, difficulties in recognizing relevant theories, inadequate background knowledge on theories, lack of skills in the formulation of objectives, demonstrating low-spiritedness, lack of methods and techniques, falling short of pre-notification process, and inadequate skills in data analysis.

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

This research investigation utilized quantitative research that employed a descriptive research design since the competence and challenges encountered by the teacher-researchers in conducting action research were measured and evaluated quantitatively.

### Sampling

Purposive sampling was used since the researcher utilized some criteria for the respondents such as the respondents otherwise known as the teacher-researchers may be a research coordinator or a teacher who is passionate to conduct action research in Infanta District. Also, teacher-researchers had to be willing enough to train in the four-day proposed research capacity building. Thus, this research investigation involved 39 teacher-researchers who served as the research respondents.

### Instrumentation and Validation

The instrument used was a researcher-made survey questionnaire. It was designed to measure the competence and the challenges encountered by the teacher-researchers in conducting action research for school year 2022-2023. The said instrument is consisting of two parts: the first part measures the research enthusiasts' competence (10 items) and the second part deals with the challenges they encountered in conducting action research.

To contextualize the survey instrument and to validate the content/ items, a dry run was conducted. This dry-run was conducted from the same district which involved twenty (20) research enthusiasts who were not part of the study. The researcher asked the permission to conduct the said dry-run to the district supervisor through a letter.

The data gathered from the dry-run was subjected to a statistic Cronbach's Alpha to determine its reliability. The computed coefficient which was 0.81 confirmed that the survey instrument was good and valid.

### **Statistical tools**

In order to interpret and analyze the data collected from the respondents, the following statistical tools were used:

**Weighted Mean:** This was used in analyzing the level of the competence and the challenges encountered by the teacher-researchers in conducting an Action Research. This method was used to calculate the average value of the data by providing different weights to some of the individual values.

**Pearson Product Moment Correlation (Pearson r):** This was used in determining the relationship between the teacher-researchers' competence and the challenges they encountered. This Pearson r finds the degree of association of two sets of variables.

**Cronbach's alpha:** This was used to validate the survey questionnaire and to measure the internal consistency of a set of items, or how closely connected they are to one another as a group. It can be expressed in terms of the quantity of test items and their average intercorrelation.

To interpret the results of the teacher-researchers' competence in conducting action research, the scale below was used:

3.26-4.00	Highly Competent
2.51-3.25	Competent
1.76-2.50	Slightly Competent
1.00-1.75	Not Competent

Meanwhile, to interpret the challenges encountered by the teacher-researchers in conducting action research, the scale below was used:

3.26-4.00	Challenge is Very Serious
2.51-3.25	Challenge is Serious
1.76-2.50	Challenge is Slightly Serious
1.00-1.75	Not a Challenge at All

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This section covers the results and discussion concerning the competence and challenges encountered by teacher-researchers in conducting action research. The order of the discussion follows the research questions.

### Research Question 1: What is the level of the competence among teacher-researchers in Infanta in conducting action research?

**Table 1.**

*The Level of Competence of Teacher-researchers in Research*

	<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Weighted Mean</b>	<b>Verbal Interpretation</b>	<b>Rank</b>
1	I know how to make a research introduction using CARS Model.	1.62	Not Competent	10
2	I can construct Statement of the Problem (SOP) logically.	2.33	Slightly Competent	2
3	I am able to efficiently write Review of Related Literature and Studies.	3.11	Competent	1
4	I know the different Research Designs in making an Action Research.	2.18	Slightly Competent	4.5
5	I know how to make a sampling from the total population.	1.92	Slightly Competent	7
6	I can interpret the data gathered with supporting Related Literature and Studies.	1.88	Slightly Competent	8
7	I can systematically generate conclusions based on the given findings.	1.81	Slightly Competent	9
8	I can generate recommendations based on the given findings and conclusions.	2.11	Slightly Competent	6
9	I know how to facilitate research dissemination and utilization.	2.28	Slightly Competent	3
10	I know the research ethics very well.	2.18	Slightly Competent	4.5
<b>Average Weighted Mean</b>		<b>2.14</b>	<b>Slightly Competent</b>	

Table 1 presents the weighted means, verbal interpretations and ranks on the competence of teacher-researchers in conducting action research for School Year 2022-2023. As shown above, one out of ten categories had a verbal interpretation as ‘Competent’. “I am able to efficiently write Review of Related Literature and Studies” ranked 1 with a weighted mean of 3.11.

On the other hand, 8 out of ten categories had a verbal interpretation of “Slightly Competent”. “I can construct Statement of the Problem (SOP) logically” ranked 2 with a weighted

mean of 2.33. Having a weighted mean of 2.28 is “I know how to facilitate research dissemination and utilization” ranked 3. “I know the different Research Designs in making an Action Research” and “I know the research ethics very well” both ranked 4.5 with a weighted mean of 2.18. “I can generate recommendations based on the given findings and conclusions” ranked 6 with a weighted mean of 2.11. Ranked 7 is “I know how to make a sampling from the total population” with a weighted mean of 1.92. Ranked 8 and 9 is “I can interpret the data gathered with supporting Related Literature and Studies” and “I can systematically generate conclusions based on the given findings” had weighted means of 1.88 and 1.81 respectively.

While, one item out of ten had a verbal interpretation of “Not Competent” which is “I know how to make a research introduction using CARS Model” ranked 10 with a weighted mean of 1.62.

As disclosed, only one item had a verbal interpretation of “competent”. While the rest of the items were verbally interpreted as “Slightly Competent” and one had “Not Competent” having an average weighted mean of 2.14 with was verbally interpreted as “Slightly Competent”. The results of the data speak that teacher-researchers need to be equipped with trainings and capacity building as to develop and enrich their competence in making action research.

The findings of the study is supported by Oestar and Marzo (2022) who conducted an investigation on the impact of capacity building and trainings to improve the ability of teachers. Their findings revealed that competencies with low ratings should be mastered through capability-building activities. Some of the barriers that hinder the engagement of teachers in action research making were the knowledge, attitude, and resource factors. To remedy such issues and corners, it can be recommended that teachers may personally attend additional training and workshops that focus on the importance and benefits of action research and enhance competencies.

### **Research Question 2: What are the problems encountered by the Teacher-researchers in Infanta in conducting action research?**

Table 2 presents the weighted means, verbal interpretations and ranks on the challenges encountered by teacher-researchers in conducting action research for School Year 2020-2021. As shown above, 2 out of 10 items had verbal interpretation as “Challenge is Very Serious” . “I do not have enough training in making an Action Research” ranked 1 with a weighted mean of 3.42, while “Lack of training in making an Action Research makes me reluctant in doing one” ranked 2 with a weighted mean of 3.31.

Meanwhile, 4 out of 10 items had a verbal interpretation of “Challenge is Serious”. “I do not have a background regarding the process of making an Action Research” ranked 3 with a weighted mean of 3.17. Ranked 4 with a weighted mean of 3.14 is “I need someone who can coach/give me technical assistance in making my research paper”. Ranked 5 is “I do not know the difference between an Action Research and Basic Research” with weighted mean of 2.85. Ranked 6 is “I cannot give Technical Assistance to my colleagues even if I am their research’ with a weighted mean of 2.79.



**Table 2.**  
*Challenges Encountered by Teachers in Conducting Action Research*

	<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Weighted Mean</b>	<b>Verbal Interpretation</b>	<b>Rank</b>
1	I do not have enough training in making an Action Research.	3.42	Challenge is Very Serious	1
2	Lack of training in making an Action Research makes me reluctant in doing one.	3.31	Challenge is Very Serious	2
3	I do not know the difference between an Action Research and Basic Research.	2.85	Challenge is Serious	5
4	I need someone who can coach/give me technical assistance in making my research paper.	3.14	Challenge is Serious	4
5	I cannot find time in making action research because of so many ancillaries in school.	1.68	Not A Challenge at All	8.5
6	Conducting an Action Research is not actually my forte.	1.72	Not A Challenge at All	7
7	I cannot give Technical Assistance to my colleagues even if I am their research.	2.79	Challenge is Serious	6
8	I do not have a background regarding the process of making an Action Research.	3.17	Challenge is Serious	3
9	I do not have the resources to complete my research paper.	1.68	Not A Challenge At All	8.5
10	I am hesitant to conduct an Action Research because I might receive a lot of Technical Assistance once I submit my paper.	1.56	Not A Challenge at All	10
<b>Average Weighted Mean</b>		<b>2.53</b>	<b>Challenge is Slightly Serious</b>	

On the other hand, 4 items had a verbal interpretation of “Not A Problem at All”. “Conducting an Action Research is not actually my forte” ranked 7 with a weighted mean of 1.72. “I cannot find time in making action research because of so many ancillaries in school” and “I do not have the resources to complete my research paper” both ranked 8.5 and had a weighted mean of 1.68 while “I am hesitant to conduct an Action Research because I might receive a lot of Technical Assistance once I submit my paper” ranked 10 with a weighted mean of 1.56.

The challenges encountered of the teacher-researchers had an average weighted mean of 2.53 and verbally interpreted as “Challenge is Slightly Serious”.

As disclosed, although there are items that fall under “Challenge is Slightly Serious”, there are also items under “Challenge is Very Serious” and “Challenge is Serious” which denote that there are some factors to be considered as to help the teacher-researchers with the challenges they encountered in conducting action research.

The findings of the study are supported by Abrenica and Cascolan (2022) who found out that Action research, according to the teachers, has a positive impact in the teaching-learning process. However, there are challenges that need to be addressed in conducting action research.

While Alipio (2019) stressed that since teachers encountered problems in conducting in action research, they need to participate to various division initiative. He concluded that research activities such as capacity building and trainings. Likewise, through capacity building, the challenges of the teachers in conducting action research can be addressed as it had greatly improved the research skills of the respondents.

**Research Question 3: Is there a significant relationship to the competence and the challenges encountered by the teacher-researchers in Infanta in conducting action research?**

**Table 3.**

*Correlations between Competence and Challenges Encountered by Teacher-researchers*

Scores Paired	Coefficient of Correlation r	Level of Significance	Interpretation	Decision
Teacher-researchers' Competence Vs Challenges Encountered	0.56	0.05	With Significant Relationship	Reject Ho

**Scale: Range of Values**

± 0.90 – 1.00 Very high correlation; very dependable relationship

± 0.70 – 0.89 High correlation; marked relationship

± 0.40 – 0.69 Moderate correlation; substantial relationship

± 0.20 – 0.39 Low correlation; definite but small relationship

Less than ± 0.20 Negligible correlation

The computed coefficient correlation or r value was 0.56 which signified a considerable moderate correlation. Therefore, the teacher-researchers' competence registered a relationship with the challenges they encountered.

Hence, the findings rejected the null hypothesis. This only means that there is a significant relationship between the teacher-researchers' competence with the challenges they encountered in conducting action research.

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**Research Question 4: Based on the findings of this research, what research capacity building program may be designed for the teacher-researchers in Infanta?**

The global COVID-19 pandemic has caused an unprecedented change in all walks of life. It has clutched different sectors and overthrown people around the world to a new social and economic crisis. Unfortunately, education is one of the fields affected since around 1.52 billion students remain out of school and over 60.2 million teachers are stranded at home. (UN Secretary General as cited by Sarif, 2020).

Having said that, according to Domingue (2021), there is a grave concern about "learning loss" among learners given the scope of the COVID-19 pandemic disruptions. He further said that "learning loss" refers to the discrepancy between a student's real abilities after the disruptions caused by COVID-19 and the abilities the student would have developed in the context of conventional educational practice. Likewise, he said that if nothing is done, the pandemic's effects on pupils' learning development will likely have a long-term negative effect. Nevertheless, he asserted that this issue may still be resolved by figuring out what is taking place in specific schools so that practical solutions can be widely disseminated. Thus, it can be argued that seminars, trainings, and workshops must be organized so that teachers would be trained and competent to create their own interventions in order to prevent the learners' learning loss.

In line with this, the Infanta District Research Committee will organize a seminar-workshop to enrich the teacher-researchers' knowledge and action research skills in response to the learning loss brought by the COVID-19 pandemic. The theme of the proposed research capacity building is crafted in addressing the learning loss among learners. Thus, crafting of Action Research shall be facilitated in response to the said learning loss brought by the pandemic.

**The Proposed Research Capacity Building Seminar-Workshop**

**Theme:** District Capacity Building for Teachers in Combatting Learning Loss Through Action Research

**Objectives:** After the four-day training-workshop, teachers are expected to:

- Acquire new knowledge and skills in making their own action research
- Develop a Complete Action Research.

**Participants:** Public Schools District Supervisor, District Research Committee, Teachers

**Expected Outputs:**

- Complete action research
- Newly designed interventions to combat the learning loss among learners.

**Monitoring and Evaluation:** The Public Schools District Supervisor together with the District Research Committee will conduct the monitoring and evaluation to ensure proper utilization of funds, precise management and effectiveness of the training.

**Table 4.***Training Matrix of Proposed Seminar-Workshop*

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topics</b>
Day 1	Organizing Research Introduction
Day 2	Gathering Related Literature and Studies
Day 3	Formulating Research Methodology
Day 4	Interpreting the Research Findings and Supplying Discussions Drawing Conclusions and Recommendations

### **CONCLUSIONS**

Based on the foregoing findings, the following conclusions had been derived:

- The teacher-researchers are just marginally competent in conducting action research.
- The challenges encountered by the teacher-researchers were slightly bearable. However, some challenges were serious and very serious like they don't have enough trainings in conducting action research, and needed individuals who will guide them in doing it.
- The competence of the teacher-researchers registered a relationship with the challenges they encountered. Hence, the findings rejected the null hypothesis. Therefore, one can determine that since teacher-researchers feel that they lack in terms of their research competence, there will be some challenges that they will encounter in making action research.

### **RECOMMENNDATIONS**

In the light of the aforementioned findings and conclusions, the following are hereby recommended:

- The public schools district supervisor needs to:
  - Plan and implement more research programs such as trainings/capacity building to capacitate the teacher-researchers and equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge in making action research by adopting and utilizing the research capacity building proposed in this research paper.
  - Facilitate and conduct monitoring and evaluation together with the District Research Committee every month to the school research coordinators and teacher-researchers and assist them through giving of Technical Assistance.
- The school heads may consider to encourage and help the teachers in attending research trainings initiated and facilitated by the Department of Education and other private organizations to develop their research competence by aiding them on their financial needs by including the said trainings to the Annual Implementation Plan (AIP) and other means and ways whether it may be from Canteen Funds, donations, etc.
- The teacher-researchers need to:

- Attend and participate to research trainings/capacity building from the district, division, regional, national and international level to improve their research competence.
  - Establish a well-planned and systematic Research Plan/Timeline as to give research directions and to monitor their research paper's progress.
  - Initiate a dialogue to the District Research Committee for them to be given assistance on their research paper.
- To the future researchers: Conduct an in-depth investigation on the possible impact of Research Capacity Building/trainings in developing the teacher-researchers' competence in making action research.

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