RESEARCH ARTICLE

Research Engagement by English Language Teachers in a Philippine University: Insights From a Qualitative Study

Veronico N. Tarrayo,* Philippe Jose S. Hernandez, and Judith Ma. Angelica S. Claustro
University of Santo Tomas, Manila, Philippines
*vntarrayo@ust.edu.ph

Abstract: Engaging in research helps teachers improve their own classroom practices, thereby increasing the chance to foster an engaging classroom environment where fresh materials and strategies are used. However, there remains to be some form of the dichotomy between teaching and research, even in the context of universities. What little research is available in the ASEAN and Philippine contexts regarding teachers' research engagement reports perennial problems such as lack of time, heavy workload, and lack of research skills. This study aimed to add to the literature in the Philippine English language teaching (ELT) context by uncovering university teachers' perceptions on the benefits of and challenges in doing research, as well as their own research practices and the academic environment they are in. A group of 22 English language teachers participated in semi-structured online interviews. The thematic analysis of interview data revealed that both personal and professional considerations permeated the issues on benefits, challenges, and practices, corroborating or contradicting previous studies. The participants likewise highlighted enabling and hindering factors concerning research engagements in their own university context and even proffered points for improvement. The study concludes that many teachers have engaged and want to engage in research, but variations can be seen in their level of engagement, exposure to research, and reasons for engaging in such endeavor.

Keywords: English language teaching (ELT), teacher professional development, teacher research, teachers' research practices

Research engagement may help teachers find a space to (re)discover and refine their own voices, questioning and reflecting on their practice. With exposure to the latest research findings, teachers can try new things in the classroom and eventually gain new insights about teaching and learning, transforming or replacing traditional teaching techniques with new ones, proving what Feamster (2013) claimed: "research results instill fresh material in the classroom" (para. 5). In a broader perspective, the more work is informed by credible research, the better teachers can make sound decisions about educational experiences and contribute to both curriculum development and whole-school improvement. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2007), who echo a similar view on the importance of the teaching-research nexus (Brennan et al., 2019;

Li et al., 2020), avow that teacher research constitutes an important avenue into critical inquiries about the nuanced complexities of classroom teaching. Such inquiries by practitioners themselves can eventually benefit school policies and wider deliberations about education.

Practitioners in the field of English language teaching (ELT) are not exempted from this research-driven education initiative, which is aptly called "knowledge mobilization" that refers to "efforts to understand and strengthen the relationship between research and practice" (Levin, 2013, p. 2). ELT teachers are encouraged to employ research-based strategies and conduct research to clarify and address issues and concerns in the classroom in an attempt to maximize opportunities for language learning. It is within this context that several teaching (pedagogical) and academic (research) journals have been publishing critical papers dealing with issues in language education and applied linguistics such as the *ELT Journal*, *Modern English Teacher*, *ELTWO*, *TESOL Journal*, *Applied Linguistics*, *Language Learning*, and *TESOL Quarterly* (Renandya, 2014). These journals offer a range of fresh perspectives and empirical traditions that may help address challenges in the ELT classroom and beyond.

The literature is rich in terms of acknowledging the importance that doing research has on the professional development of teachers. For example, conducting research equips teachers with skills to identify and address school or classroom issues systematically (Bughio, 2015; Cain, 2015; Hine, 2013). Previous studies have likewise reported that conducting action or practitioner research allows teachers to self-evaluate their teaching and boosts their reflective practices (Ado, 2013; Anwaruddin, 2019; Cain & Harris, 2013; Hong & Lawrence, 2011; Mahani & Molki, 2012; Morales, 2016). However, in spite of favorable effects on teaching and learning, recent studies have found some impediments preventing teachers from engaging with/in research, which probably have emerged from a relatively unconducive research climate in educational institutions: crowded teaching schedule, heavy workload, and lack of time (Kutlay, 2012; Ulla, 2018); lack of financial support (Biruk, 2013; Firth, 2016; Vecaldo et al., 2019); and insufficient research training and skills (Allison & Carey, 2007; Ellis & Loughland, 2016; Norasmah & Chia, 2016; Zhou, 2012).

In the Philippine context, schools, both in the basic and the higher education levels, are highly encouraged to articulate much drive in knowledge generation through research (Wa-Mbaleka, 2015). Certain policies for research and development have been implemented to strengthen the contribution of schools to research productivity and utilization. For instance, in basic education, the Department of Education's (DepEd) research agenda for 2016–2022 stipulates the "conduct of education research … to protect and promote the right of every Filipino to quality, equitable, culture-based, and complete basic education" (DepEd, 2016).

Meanwhile, for degree-granting higher education institutions (HEIs), the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) expects universities and colleges to produce high-quality research that advances higher learning and national development and maintains the international comparability of the Philippine education system, specifically in the Asian region. In fact, to fulfill these thrusts, promises of rewards and incentives (e.g., financial grants and cash incentives for research published in reputable journals such as those indexed in Scopus) have been crafted to establish a firm research foundation among teachers and generate a relatively significant quantity of quality research. Research dissemination efforts through paper presentations and publications have likewise become critical components of evaluation for faculty promotion or academic ranking.

At the classroom level, some teachers handle research or research-related subjects and are encouraged to adopt research-led teaching to enhance the research skills of students. As part of their curricular services, teachers also supervise student research requirements (e.g., bachelors' theses).

Although Philippine regulatory agencies and educational institutions have been consistent in calling on teachers to be involved in research, it seems that the response to this call has been relatively minimal. Ulla et al. (2017) have reported that only a few public secondary-school teachers have tried doing research, whereas Ayala and Garcia's (2013) study found that only a small percentage of HEI faculty members are engaged in research. In the field of English language education, teachers' research engagement has been relatively insignificant as revealed in a few recent works conducted in foreign contexts, which pointed to specific issues and constraints such as lack of time (Kutlay, 2012; Marsden & Kasprowicz, 2017), skills

(Crookes & Arakaki, 1999; Fareh & Saeed, 2011), and expertise in research production and utilization (Burns & Kurtoglu-Hooton, 2014; Dehghan & Sahragard, 2015); and heavy workload (Allison & Carey, 2007).

In reality, it seems that with daily responsibilities of teaching and competing demands of the instructional practice within a school, it becomes easy for teachers to put their inquiries and research ideas on the backburner. In this case, the question of how teachers engage in research, given their circumstances, becomes crucial.

In the Philippines, even though research is highly encouraged by CHED among teachers in HEIs, there seems to be a relative lack of implementation as these teachers may only focus on one role, which is to teach. In most HEIs in the country, academics may not necessarily be doctorate or master's degree holders to be hired to teach; in certain instances, these academics may only have bachelor's degrees, and only a few have postgraduate degrees. CHED's (2019) report on the number of highest academic degrees attained by HEI faculty members in 2018 to 2019 disclosed the following information: 21,488 held bachelor's degrees; 18,139 held master's degrees; and 11,801 held doctorate degrees. Based on these statistics, it can be inferred that Philippine HEI teachers may only be recruited to teach and that there seems to be relatively minimal attention given to research. Apparently, the seemingly insignificant number of teachers who hold doctorate degrees, who may be expected to generate new knowledge through research given their skills and expertise, may be one of the reasons for the lack of research (and research climate) in Philippine higher education, although those who have bachelor's and master's degrees may also be encouraged or obliged to research and publish.

Against this background, the present study aims to investigate teachers' research engagement based on self-reported experiences of ELT practitioners in one comprehensive Philippine university. Because studies relating to teachers as researchers in the ASEAN context remain scant (Ulla, 2018), especially in the Philippines (Morales et al., 2016; Ulla, 2018; Ulla et al., 2017; Vecaldo et al., 2019), this investigation endeavors to fill a gap in the literature. More so, although related works have been recently conducted in the ELT field, no single study (or perhaps very limited) exists, which examined research experiences of Filipino ELT practitioners. Thus, the present study

was conducted to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the practices of Filipino university English language teachers in doing research?
2. What are the benefits of engaging with/in research as perceived by these teachers?
3. What challenges do these teachers encounter when doing research?
4. What factors affect research climate in the university as perceived by these teachers?

Methods

Participants

Purposive-convenience sampling was used to select a group of 22 English language teachers from a university in Manila, the Philippines, who volunteered to participate in semi-structured online interviews (see Table 1 for the profile of the participants). The University was selected as the research site based upon the following reasons. First, it is a research university according to CHED's typology. CHED (2012) defined universities as those that "contribute to nation-building by providing highly specialized educational experiences to train experts in the various technical and disciplinal areas and by emphasizing the development of new knowledge and skills through research and development" (p. 8). To qualify as such, an institution must have a range of bachelor's to doctoral programs, learning resources to provide knowledge, and faculty members who are engaged in research, as evidenced by patents and publications. Academic programs must also require the "submission of a thesis/project/research papers" (CHED, 2012, p. 20). This regulation led to the subject university providing a research environment that complies with the requirements, and it permeates to the basic education level. Second, the University houses six research centers covering studies in engineering, and science and technology; humanities and social sciences; health sciences; theology and religion. Third, it has an array of academic offerings that encourage research production and dissemination; and fourth, its state-of-the-art library facilities provide access to the most updated academic resources such as international literature and journals.

Table 1

Profile of the Participants

Profile	Frequency and Percentage
Gender	
Male	5 (22.78%)
Female	17 (77.27%)
Highest Degree	
Bachelor's	2 (9.09%)
Master's	17 (77.27%)
Doctorate	3 (13.64%)

The average age of the participants is 40.55 years, and a majority of them have been teaching English for almost 20 years at the time of the study. They teach different English and research-related courses such as Purposive Communication and thesis/research writing. Some of them serve as research advisers or supervisors and as resident researchers in the University's research centers. As researchers, they are given a grant by the University to undertake a year-long study that must be disseminated upon completion.

Data Collection and Analysis

A request letter was sent to concerned offices to secure permission to conduct the interviews. The letter stipulated that the teachers' participation in the study was voluntary and that their responses would remain confidential and anonymous. Upon approval of the request, we emailed the target participants to ask for their voluntary involvement. The said email also clearly discussed the purpose of the study. Out of 35 target participants, 22 agreed to participate in the interviews, which were intended to gather detailed accounts of the teacher-participants' perceptions of the research questions under consideration.

As the study was conducted in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic, data collection was conducted online, where the written interview form was emailed to the participants. The turnaround time for the initial phase of the interview was two weeks (see Appendix A for the interview questions). For validation purposes, follow-up interviews were done either through email or chat in Facebook Messenger, which lasted for one week. Specifically, the semi-structured interviews were conducted in English and were composed of open-ended questions and elicited responses on the following aspects: the teachers' practices in doing

research, the benefits they gain from engaging with/ in research, the challenges they face when doing research, and the factors they perceive to be affecting research climate in the university. The interview form likewise asked for information about the participants' profiles. The consolidated interview data were sent back to the participants for correction, addition, and approval to ensure validity. Then the interview data were thoroughly transcribed and repeatedly read and examined; subsequently, the transcripts, through a thematic-analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006), were condensed and categorized based on themes and subthemes. Keyword analysis was manually done to identify these themes. Specifically, three steps were carefully taken to code the interview transcripts: "making the text manageable," "hearing [noting] what was said," and "developing theory" (Lewins & Silver, 2007, pp. 262–267). The transcripts were identified by codes for the participants, for example, T1 (teacher 1) and T2 (teacher 2), to preserve anonymity.

Findings and Discussion

In this section, the research questions are answered under the light of the findings that set out to explore the following facets as regards the teacher-participants' research engagement and experiences as ELT practitioners: their research practices, the benefits they gain from engaging with/in research, the challenges they face when doing research, and the factors they perceive to be affecting research climate in the university.

Research Practices

On the aspect of research practices, the participants disclosed how they equip themselves for research undertakings. Foremost among these is immersion in the language and content of research, with participants stating that they regularly read research articles. Such activity is part of the weekly routine of T9, who allots "at least one day for library work and journal readings." This finding of the current study does not support previous research (Kutlay, 2012; Marsden & Kasprowicz, 2017), which reported that most teachers rarely read a research paper. It is vital to note that reading research has a direct link to ELT practices and can create a favorable change in a teacher's classroom practices (Rankin & Becker, 2006). As Dikilitaş and

Comoglu (2020) put it, "reading research or doing research can help teachers develop knowledge of teaching, empower their views of teaching and consolidate their particular beliefs about learning and teaching" (p. 4).

The participants also stated that participating in research-related events such as conferences, symposia, colloquia, and even the more informal brown-bag sessions help in their continued immersion in research. With the rise of technology, the participants also highlighted the importance of the university's library database and social networks for the academe, such as Academia.edu and ResearchGate, as sources of the latest studies. Technology also aided in knowledge-seeking, as participants can now reach out to authors "who are really generous with their articles," as stated by T5. The ease by which technology makes access to research or studies free and swift has been noted by the participants. However, this ease of access also brings to fore the problem of low-quality studies becoming exposed to academics.

As if to address this concern, the importance of communicating with and seeking advice from more experienced colleagues and recognized experts was also reported by participants. This act is bolstered by discussions with colleagues who are also starting their research journey, with students who become mentees or advisees of the faculty members, and those who, according to T17, "have already travelled the road [of research]." Cordingley's (2008) study found that colleagues' personal recommendations influenced what research other teachers would ponder on. Likewise, those who conduct research can share with their colleagues best pedagogical practices (Grima-Farrell, 2017; Simms, 2013). In fact, T13 expressed that part of his goal to continue researching is because "what [he learns] will ultimately benefit my [his] students." For those who are pursuing their graduate degrees, the practice of regularly consulting with the adviser or mentor in the department was highlighted, as indicated in the statement by T8:

> Having mentors in my department is also important. Whenever I am in doubt, it never hurts to consult a colleague or a former professor whom I know can help me in the process.

The participants also disclosed their strategies to make research doable, especially against the backdrop of time constraints. Time management and efficiency concerns were the most mentioned area, with participants indicating that this is the first thing they manage. Making research part of his routine was the experience of T17, who said that "I make sure to track my progress from time to time. I have committed spending at least a couple of hours on weekends for research." The practice of setting deadlines and targets was also reported by T10 and T12. The institutional practice of "deloading" in terms of teaching to make room for research load frees time for research, and the project must be accomplished within one academic year. Although this issue on lack of time to engage with/in research has been reported in previous studies (Ulla et al., 2017; Ulla, 2018; Vecaldo et al., 2019; Wa-Mbaleka, 2015), the findings of the present study revealed otherwise.

Benefits of Engaging With/in Research

When asked about the benefits of doing research, personal and professional benefits were mentioned.

Personal Benefits

Personal benefits in conducting research related to the unique and individual advantages the teacher-participants gain in conducting research.

First, doing research provides some form of monetary benefit, whether through salary or external funding. Publishing and disseminating research also provide the faculty members with points for moving up in the academic ranks, which ultimately redound to increase in compensation.

Beyond material benefits derived from doing research, however, the participants reported a sense of validation because successfully doing research helps them "gain academic credibility" (T15) among students and peers. This redounds to increased "confidence in teaching" because one is able to share the "new and more profound insights" they personally discovered (T16).

The acts of finishing the research and disseminating information also provide avenues for the participants to network with experts and gain support through the expert advice the former give. These encounters are largely facilitated by the chance to "attend local and international conferences" (T8), where they get to present their studies and "connect with sources of information and networks of professional support" (T2).

Engaging with/in research also helps realize one's advocacy and promotes positive change in people's lives. One participant noted: "Doing research has also made me more critical of my research practices and others' practices too. Right now, my research has a more concrete impact on lives of my participants" (T5).

Professional Benefits

Professional benefits may refer to the rewards or merits they receive in doing research related to their teaching profession. Participants reported the acquisition of new knowledge and skills, as well as the deepening of their understanding in relation to their work. The development of skills in critical thinking, logic, and objectivity were reported by several participants, such as T16, who reported to have learned to "be objective whenever dealing with students, especially in the aspect of assessment."

Through research, a participant reported being able to "create his own teaching style" (T14) that was informed by research findings. Exposure to such findings "provides fresh and cutting-edge insights as regards language teaching and learning," which eventually benefit students (T10). Dissemination of findings also provides teachers the chance to "contribute to the existing body of knowledge on pedagogy," and to the disciplines they study (T17).

Most of the above-perceived benefits of engaging with/in research corroborate the findings in previous studies (Borg, 2014; Hine, 2013; Grima-Farrell, 2017; Morales, 2016; Ulla, 2018). However, two insights emerged as additional personal and professional benefits: gaining academic credibility or scholarly respect, and realizing one's advocacy and promoting positive change in people's lives. Admittedly, academics should not only conduct research as a way to gain scholarly respect. Rather, they should also contribute to the development of society by thinking and writing in a manner that is grounded in the reality of life, and by speaking, writing, and even acting to address issues affecting society.

Challenges Encountered When Doing Research

Experiencing challenges is part of the research process, and these may be personal or professional obstacles that may result in dismissive reactions and perceptions toward doing research. On the one hand, personal *challenges* refer to hindrances that emanated from a researcher's personal traits and circumstances.

On the other hand, professional challenges relate to workplace factors that may affect successful or optimum research completion.

In the present study, the participants' responses dealt with limitations and undesirable experiences that discouraged them from doing research. On a personal level, for example, "lack of research skills/ knowledge is the obstacle that prevents me from conducting research" (T2). This reported challenge corroborates the findings in previous research (Ulla et al., 2017; Ulla, 2018; Vecaldo et al., 2019; Wa-Mbaleka, 2015), which revealed teachers' lack of professional knowledge and skills in doing research. Furthermore, T16 experienced "smart shaming" that may cause stress and frustration. Lack of focus in the chosen field of specialization as mentioned by T9 may also pose as a restriction, a challenge that would require tailoring one's research interest and choice through mentorship.

Next is the lack of budget to conduct research. Research does not come cheap. It requires a budget for expenses that may be essential when doing fieldwork, administering interviews, or gathering data. T5 mentioned the importance of funding: "another would be funding especially for research that can be conducted in communities or contexts beyond the university." Although institutional efforts are already in place for funding research projects and incentivizing them, financial support appears to be needed still for those who want to engage in research despite non-affiliation in research centers.

On the professional level, lack of time is the most obtrusive challenge that emerged from the participants' answers. It is important to note that 17 participants specified this answer. The participants mentioned that the workload and the number of responsibilities of teachers caused this limitation, a similar challenge reported in recent studies (Kutlay, 2012; Morales, 2016; Ulla, 2018). T8 expressed her frustration by noting, "I would love to do more ethnographic research, but my teaching responsibilities prevent me from doing so." Moreover, the participants also cited the insufficient support of the school administration as a challenge. Finally, T5 mentioned that "some policies are not helpful too as permissions take time and there are offices that needed to be dealt with in terms of requirements." These are the hurdles that a researcher must face and overcome to commit and accept the challenge of doing research.

Factors Affecting Research Climate in the University

On the question of the institutional environment and its practices, the participants shared their experiences and insights, which are divided into enabling and hindering factors, as well as points for improvement.

Enabling Factors

The participants recognized institutional practices found in the university, such as the efforts at the department and university levels to foster collaboration and mentoring, availability of research load in research centers, and opportunities to attend research events.

Collaborative research provides the participants, who are on varying degrees of self-reported capacity to conduct research, a chance to learn from and help one another. T4 noted "the departmental initiative to organize faculty members into research clusters," where experienced researchers guide those who may only be starting but have expressed interest in the field. Building research collaborations is an excellent way to introduce themselves to other academics and peer experts (Barfield, 2016). Likewise, this collaboration, which begins at the department level and can extend to international partners, helps widen the participants' perspective while lightening the load that will otherwise be given only to the sole researcher.

An environment that fosters collaboration also helps engender a culture of mentoring, whether between fellow faculty members or teachers and their advisees. Through this, mentors can help hone their colleagues' or students' technical and research skills, which can be done by facilitating the discovery of "student ownership and voice through tailoring an individual research experience using mentee interests and choices" (Walkington et al., 2020, p. 1528).

Institutionalization of research in the university was most recognized by the participants through the presence of research centers, whose affiliate faculty members are given a research load allocation. This allocation "is a big help to give faculty-researchers the time and resources they need to be able to conduct research" (T8). Affiliation to a research center requires research dissemination efforts such as, but not limited to, presentation and publication, which T3 found as an enabling factor for researchers to "exert effort to publish their work." The centers are also composed of a mixture of experienced and newbie researchers, providing an environment for mentoring to take place.

The articulation of research policies and agenda, as well as the availability of material and financial resources (through the use of memoranda, calls for proposals, and holding of research orientations and events), were also highlighted as enabling factors, which do not support the findings in previous research (Ulla et al., 2017; Vecaldo et al., 2019).

Furthermore, the conduct of research-related events, ranging from conferences, colloquia, symposia to trainings, seminars, and brown bag sessions, helps provide "exposure to research" to beginning faculty researchers and give all those involved a chance to share what they have been working on. T11 highlighted this practice as "developmental," where researchers are "guided from the point they write their proposal, to when they gather and analyze initial data, and eventually finish the study." This finding is congruent to those revealed in previous studies by Behrstock-Sherratt et al. (2011), Cordingley (2008), and Procter (2015). In case the school is not the one hosting the event, funding opportunities are available and can be used to defray the costs of participation, travel, accommodations, and any other needs. Attendance in these events exposes participants to fellow researchers and noted scholars with whom they can interact. T5 found that "The intelligent and scholarly discussions (though informal at times) helped me set my directions and supported me in finishing the project."

Opportunities for research publication are also helped by the presence of the institution's own research journals, one of which is focused on English language studies. It is important to note that academic publishing is one key element toward a university's internationalization (Tayeb, 2016) and academics' career progression (Olenick et al., 2019). The participants also mentioned the "practice of holding research-writing and publication seminars/trainings as useful" (T18), whereas those taking their graduate degrees reported, "the curricular requirement of publication" (T7) as helpful.

The participants likewise pointed to institutional practices of recognition, which can range from news articles published by the university on the Internet to formal recognitions accorded to exemplary faculty researchers. The University-wide research recognitions can be found in the Gold and Silver Series, as well

as the International Publication Award, which are given biennially. The joint management-faculty union recognition ceremony likewise grants the Saint Albert the Great Award for research excellence.

Hindering Factors

Consistent with the findings as regards challenges, striking a balance between teaching and research was found to be the dominant theme, for it translates to a heavy workload. This heavy workload was also reported to be compounded by graduate studies or administrative work in some participants.

Another hindering factor reported is the perception of research being too complex and demanding, which may discourage people from devoting time to it and instead considering it "as a waste of time" (T17). A similar view was expressed by Wiggins (2015), who claimed that teachers work more overtime than any other professionals. This reported challenge might warrant the need to provide more trainings geared toward the development of teachers' professional knowledge and skills in doing research, which is an issue identified in previous studies (Ulla et al., 2017; Ulla, 2018; Vecaldo et al., 2019; Wa-Mbaleka, 2015). It will be good to factor in the teachers' own academic background in understanding their disposition toward research. As CHED only recently rolled out its typology that distinguishes colleges from research universities, the emphasis on research in HEIs may be relatively new, and faculty members may have been trained in an environment that focused more on preparing them to teach rather than to research.

Some participants likewise expressed that there is a lack of financial support for research endeavors, especially for those who are not affiliated with research centers, which have a limited research load available. These faculty members who are not affiliated with research centers are instead entitled to a portion of the faculty development fund and may try to avail of grants from their academic unit, subject to the approval of the dean.

Given that faculty members are hired first and foremost to teach, there is an impression that research endeavors still take a backseat to teaching. Although teaching, doing research, and community involvement are among the three main responsibilities of higher-education academics (Tayeb, 2016; Wa-Mbaleka, 2015), the teacher-participants viewed teaching as their primary role in the academe.

Points for Improvement

The participants recommended some modifications in policy to give more premium to research endeavors. In terms of hiring, apart from finding someone who can be a good teacher, the institution may also look for potential good researchers. Corollary to this, T11 suggested a research-only employment contract because the current scenario is a mixture of teaching and research. However, a good balance between teaching and research may be more promising, for the teaching-research nexus (Brennan et al., 2019; Li et al., 2020) can provide teachers professional skills and a theoretical lens to better understand and eventually address knowledge gaps and pedagogical issues.

Once the faculty is in the institution, the general sentiment is to revisit teaching and research loads, with the aim of reducing teaching requirements to free up time to do research. T12 said that "Deloading [is necessary] so that faculty can really focus if they want to engage in research." Collaboration with external partners and the continued availing of grants were suggested to address the financial implications of this suggestion.

Another dominant response is the continuation and even expansion of provided opportunities to attend research-related events, which provide opportunities for networking, mentorship, and dissemination of findings.

Conclusion

This study aimed to add to the literature in the Philippine ELT context by uncovering university teachers' perceptions on the benefits of and challenges in doing research, as well as their own research practices and the academic environment they are in. The thematic analysis of interview data revealed that both personal and professional considerations permeated the issues on benefits, challenges, and practices, corroborating or contradicting previous studies. The teacher-participants value the teaching-research nexus in a way that they can bring into the classroom relevant information borne out of research, which can enhance the teaching-learning experience.

The participants, however, highlighted the hindering factors concerning research engagements in their own university context, which involve heavy teaching workload, limited research load available,

and incapability to handle the complexity and demands of research. Sustaining one's drive for research engagement seems arduous and challenging, but it can be done given the right conditions and conducive research climate. Academics should put a premium on the teaching-research nexus; thus, they need to keep up with the pleasurable pressure of maintaining the balance between their teaching and research competence. In performing these two roles, they should not only impart knowledge to students through teaching, but they should also contribute meaningfully to their academic disciplines through research.

The findings add to recurring concerns reported in previous studies and point to a need to review national and institutional policies and practices on teaching and doing research in Philippine HEIs. Institutions can capitalize on reported successes of existing practices, such as incentivizing research efforts, providing the needed resources for research, and integrating research-related topics/courses in curricula. A review of these interventions can help validate the sentiments reported in this paper and chart future courses of action.

Making research undertakings a salient feature of faculty recruitment, classification, and promotion policies can also help institutionalize research in an HEI faculty member's tasks instead of simply being an addition to teaching. Addressing these issues can help, on a bigger scale, in the country's research productivity as measured in publications. It is worthy of consideration that based on the country ranking released by Scimago in 2019, the Philippines ranked 14th with only 5,201 published research documents among countries in the Asiatic region, lagging behind Bangladesh, Vietnam, Thailand, Singapore, and Pakistan. It should be noted that the research productivity of HEI academics, especially in terms of academic publishing, helps achieve the international comparability of Philippine education.

Although certain institutional policies and practices can be reviewed and revisited to address the challenges hindering teachers' receptivity to and interest in research, such as lack of time, resources, and professional knowledge and skills in doing (and publishing) research, further research may also investigate teachers' personal circumstances that interfere with their research engagement. The teaching-research nexus can also be investigated, especially for those who claimed that their research undertakings inform their teaching practice.

Future studies may also investigate teacher-researcher perceptions about experiences in attempting to publish in reputable journals to understand how the dissemination process has been for them. Going beyond publication concerns, future research undertakings may consider the dimension of research utilization, as seen in how research outputs help produce concrete interventions and changes that can impact the academe, communities, and the industry.

Declaration of ownership:

This report is our original work.

Conflict of interest:

None.

Ethical clearance:

This study was approved by the institution.

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Appendix A

Interview Questions

1. Why do you research?

2. How were you exposed to doing research?

3. What good research practices in your educational institution have you observed or experienced?

4. What practices have you adopted to make research doable and feasible despite your challenges?

5. How do you equip yourself to conduct research?

6. What, for you, are the benefits of doing research?

7. Do you believe that conducting research is helpful in becoming a competent teacher?

8. What are the obstacles that prevent you from conducting research?

9. Is research collaboration a feasible alternative to overcome obstacles experienced by teachers in conducting research? Explain.

10. What keeps/kept you doing research despite these obstacles?

11. What research policies/programs in your institution enable/hinder you from doing research?